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HOW GLOBAL TEAMS SHARE EXPERIENCES – A STUDY OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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1. Introduction

Creation, transfer and reuse of knowledge provide a basis for firms' competitive advantage [Argote and Ingram 2000]. Knowledge management is in manufacturing industry important for shortening lead times in the development stages of products, and for monitoring and controlling the progress. Meanwhile, the importance of experiences and know-how are often acknowledged in practice, but is usually not purposefully addressed. One reason for that could be related to the 'stickiness' of experiences, that is they are not only developed and possessed by individuals or groups, but also context dependent [Ipe 2003]. Another reason could be related to the engineering knowledge tradition, which companies often express straightforward as; *"if it cannot be measured it cannot be done"*. A consequence is that knowledge is formally considered as being equal, thus knowledge management can be considered as providing full coverage of the process. Yet, it has been highlighted in previous research that 80% of organisational knowledge is stored in people's heads, 16% is stored as unstructured data, and only 4% is formalised in a structured form [Bell 2006].

The categorisation of knowledge into two common types of knowledge have been guiding research for a long time, and provide insights into the dilemma of organisational knowledge transfer and reuse. The categories are the complementary concepts of 'tacit knowledge', which is characterised as practical, action-oriented, know-how, experiences, and 'explicit knowledge', which is characterised as codified, articulated in formal language and text [Polanyi 1966], [Nonaka 1994], [Nonaka et al. 2000], [Nonaka and Krogh 2009]. Some researchers highlight a relation between tacit knowledge and the concept of local knowledge, i.e. that both contents and interpretation codes are produced in local conditions [Yanow 2004]. Yet, local knowledge derives from lived experiences from within a certain team or group and can be seen as a carrier of practices, rather than theory-based 'expert' knowledge [Yanow 2004]. The concepts of tacit and explicit knowledge are also complementary since tacit knowledge, in the form of pre-knowledge, prior knowledge, pre-existing or foreknowledge, is used as a coding key for building new knowledge. This makes Polanyi [1966] claim that; *"all knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge. A wholly explicit knowledge is unthinkable."* And it inspires other researchers to describe it as a highly personal and informal type of skill [Quinn et al. 1996], [Smith 2001], [Jasimuddin et al. 2005]. Schön's [1983] work of the reflective practitioner, i.e. that new knowledge is built through reflecting *in* and *upon* practice, highlights the process of using experiences when facing new situations that needs to be understood or new problems that should be solved. However, it also indicates a 'leakage' of experiences, since it seems like the reflecting process cannot easily be captured and formalised into organisational knowledge. Consequently, a main part of the reflections, i.e. experiences, are transferred in the staffs' conversations and chats [Sveiby 2001].

Some companies have implemented lessons learned systems to, at least, make an effort to capture experiences. Such solutions are still not sufficient, for example they do not provide collective creation of knowledge [Chirumalla 2013]. And other companies are using text-based documents to capture experiences, but expressing tacit knowledge as experience statements is still hard to do. Nevertheless, a more extensive knowledge base is vital when solving problems in product development teams.
Global teams working together in product development projects are nowadays a common approach in manufacturing industry. Distributed technology suffered early on from technical issues, these have been addressed from many researchers. The distributed tools (videoconferencing, internet connections and similar) have become faster, better and more easily accessed via PCs, laptops and so on, but the early identified social and cultural problems of experience sharing are still valid. In conclusion, experiences and especially the hands-on knowledge type have since long ago been identified as crucial in global development teams [Tavčar et al. 2005], and they still are.
This study explores experience sharing in global development projects based on the above described dilemmas related to tacit and explicit knowledge. Also the insight that global teams consists of, not only people with different skills, but also of people from different organisational cultures have guided the the study. Furthermore, the study apply a model that addresses three types of structures in knowledge transfer situations [Sveiby 2001] to distinguish cultural differences in communication patterns.

2. Case and research approach

The case company has since long ago been active in the same branch of manufacturing industry. The company has over time, not only been officially recognised as an innovative company, but has also become more and more global in the development activities. Today, they have research and development departments as well as manufacturing sites all over the world. The company have made an effort to describe and document the cross-cultural aspects that all employees should be aware of, thus has acknowledged that culture matters. The company description captures general recommendations, but does not specifically address knowledge sharing situations.
The company structure can be described as project based, that is there exists both vertical and hierarchical communication channels and structures. For example, a team can be situated in one country and the management for that team can be situated in another country. The ‘conversation culture’ adapted by the parent business implies that such a model of culture could be considered as the standard for the comparison in this study, while it should be noted that this taken for granted style is considered important to discuss in the company. Some features of this standard are the habit of using first name and no titles (due to a regulation of the language that was implemented in early 1970’s) and the results from long-term efforts to reduce hierarchies within organisations [Carlzon 1989].
The study includes data from three national cultures, i.e. different company’s sites, but also from participation in distributed meetings between all partners. Data have been obtained from interviews, observations and workshops mainly from two project types at the company. The first type deals with technology investigation and conceptualisation, herein called knowledge project and the second project type deals with industrialisation and exploitation, herein called execution project. The projects are conducted in sequence, thus transferring knowledge and experiences from the first to the second is critical. Moreover, new knowledge and experiences are generated in the projects due to their position in early development stages. Data for this study is extracted from a three years research effort, where the knowledge project has provided perspective and particular interest. The project is global in its nature, i.e. people from different sites works in the same project. The key question for the study’s research environment is to address the issues of experience sharing in early development.
Over time, 17 semi-structured interviews with engineers and project managers at different sites have been conducted, face-to-face during visits, but also distributed using information and communication technologies as support. Semi-structured interviews, means that no question guide have been used, but rather three key topics have guided the conversations, i.e. knowledge transfer, experiences and formalisation of the two. By applying this approach the company representatives, i.e. informants, have had the possibility formulate their answers freely in relation to the introduced topics. The way of questioning has been open-ended, for example encouraging the informants to explain and describe

their personal view of experience sharing. The interview format provides rich breadth of qualitative data [Fontana and Frey 2000], but it also brings forward unexpected patterns. One such pattern was 'cultural challenges' of experience sharing in global teams. Moreover, observations and 'immersion' of distributed work have been done, but also some of the global teams daily work have been observed, i.e. a 6 weeks visit at the parent business site and visits to the other global sites. Also the daily work via distributed meetings has been followed. These efforts verified the pattern of 'cultural challenges', but it also provided insights into the advantages of variety and differences. Field notes were taken during the observations, and the interviews have been voice recorded. This procedure has provided the possibility to exemplify the informants' thoughts as excerpts in this paper.
Finally, the company have provided free access to the project portals sustaining the possibility to follow the projects daily work, and its challenges, on distance.

Sveiby's knowledge transfer model

Sveiby's [2001] model of knowledge transfer strategies has been used to structure the information and to analyse the data. The model prescribes that knowledge is specific to its context and therefore distinguishes three knowledge transfer structures, namely an internal structure, an external structure and individual competence, see Figure 1. The external and internal structure are created by the people in the organisations as 'media' or channels to express themselves, i.e. structures are not objects (even though organisations might tend to turn them into objects), but a process of interacting with each others [Sveiby 2001]. The arrows indicate knowledge transfers or knowledge conversations, and even though the word 'transfer' might point toward a one-directional movement of knowledge, it is a co-creation process [Sveiby 2001]. Sveiby provides nine knowledge transfers in relation to the suggested framework, but these are not used in this study. Instead the framework is used from the perspective of project members, that is the individual competence is interpreted as the own and personal experiences, the internal structure is interpreted as the project's experiences and the external structure is interpreted as experiences in any relationship outside the project, thus can be both inside the own organisation or outside. A core perspective of the model is that people can create organisational value by transferring and converting knowledge, either externally from or internally to their organisation [Sveiby 2001].

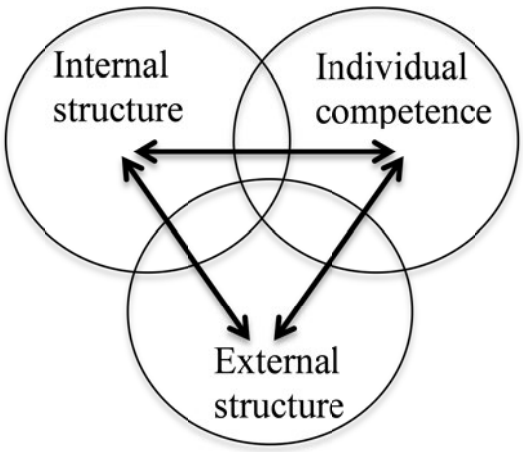

Figure 1. Knowledge transfer model (source [Sveiby 2001])

3. Knowledge conversations

One model that has set the scene for contemporary communication studies comes from the work of Shannon and Weaver [1949]. Their work originally was intended to visualise communication via technology, at the time radio and telephone. In that sense, the model has proven to be useful for the engineering society to progress the technology effectiveness and develop measures for it. It has by other researchers been criticized as not suitable, e.g. Chandler [1994]. Yet, it can be useful for the progress of a more contemporary model, as for example the one presented by Sveiby [2001].

Shannon and Weaver's [1949] model consists of an information source (creates the message), a transmitter (encode it to signals), a channel (transmits the signals), a receiver (decode the message) and a destination, see Figure 2 for a simplified version. Actually, the advantages of the model are its simplicity, generality and quantifiability, while it is also its weakness, i.e. it misleads and misrepresents of human communication [Chandler 1994].

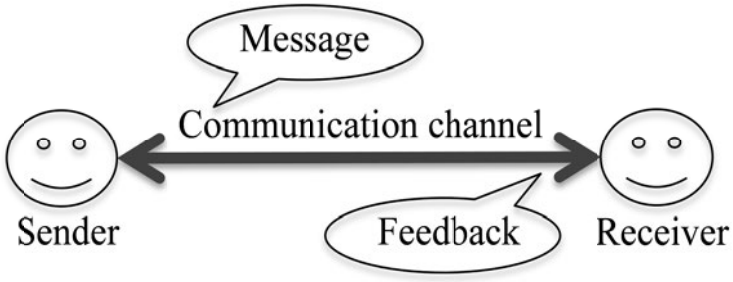

Figure 2. A simplified version of Shannon and Weaver's model

The transactional model is widely used, but has received massive critique from researchers within and outside the field. For example, critics, in the same vein also supporters of constructivist theory, conclude that the model point towards [Chandler 1994]:

- Linearity – indicating that it is the sender whom decide the meaning of the message, while in constructivist theory meaning are created actively of both actors.
- Content and meaning as being equal – but intended meaning and interpreted meaning can differ in varying degrees.
- Communication occurs independent of context – while the same text and words can be interpreted differently depending on context (situational, social, institutional, political, cultural, historical).
- Individuals as isolated – humans are social beings and communication is socio-culturally patterned, e.g. communication does not purely express individual thoughts and feelings.
- Equal relationships – expressions differs depending on the roles in which we communicate, e.g. as friends, as teachers or as leaders.
- No changes over time – while relationships shifts, as well as the circumstances hence an interpretation that seemed valid last year might not be it today.
- Indifferent to the nature of the medium/channel – while the tools have features that make them appropriate for some purposes but not for others.

Sveiby [2001] does not clearly relate to the critics in the bulleted list above, but his perspective on 'people' as the key actors in the knowledge conversations align with the view. Having the critics in mind, there is still a possibility to use the concept of a sender and a receiver to visualise that someone starts a conversation with a specific other person/team/organisation, and that the conversation supports experience sharing. Moreover, the specific characteristics of the sharing activity and the sender's/receiver's different approaches calls for specific support channels [Levitt and March 1988], [Kotnour 1999]. Hence, the communication channel should not be considered as inert, but should be considered as 'structure' as suggested in Sveiby's [2001] model.

An issue in global development is distance; at one level contemporary technology and Internet infrastructure seemingly support collaborative work. Studies have found that in one-way communication those technical solutions are invaluable [O'Dell and Grayson 1998]. Yet on another level, namely to really work together on a daily basis and thus also share experiences, the technological support could instead provide a barrier. Studies have shown that much of the time in distributed collaboration is spent on *'working the technology'* rather than working together [Larsson 2005]. Nevertheless, those contemporary solutions are what are at hand for teams today. Global development teams also face the advantages and disadvantages of so called 'double periphery', meaning that the teams have to work across horizontal/geographic periphery and vertical/hierarchical periphery [Yanow 2004]. Taking these conditions into respect of knowledge transfer and/or

experience sharing, all levels of the firm are suggested to see work practice as an multicultural organisational life [Yanow 2004].
Typically, the 'contents' in knowledge transfer are described as data, information and knowledge (e.g. [Hey 2004]), indicating that data is raw unprocessed data, information is the coding scheme and knowledge is a 'product' of such a transformation process. Some models also stresses 'wisdom', but generally knowledge is described as a construct with potential to influence action [Alavi and Leidner 2001]. In opposite, Sveiby [2001] reacts towards making objects of the relationships, instead of 'knowledge', 'transfer' and 'organisation' he suggests the verbs 'knowing' 'learning' and 'organising'. Thus, for example the conversations, reflections and language can be considered as carriers of experiences. The way tacit knowledge commonly is described is in terms of being hard, but not impossible, to articulate. The contextual dependency of tacit knowledge is hence in line with local knowledge and experiences. The fact that manufacturing firms are in a state of change in which social dimensions of product development are becoming part of the competitive edge is more visible today than just a few years ago. The change can be seen in new expressions of the companies' visions, for example from 'a product provider' to 'a trusted partner'. Hence, those relationships reveal anticipations for experience sharing in conversation structures.
Working in constellations close to partners, suppliers, customers and all types of actors, is not only an opportunity to bring in additional knowledge, but also considered as a risk. Intellectual property, i.e. mainly explicit knowledge, can be protected since it is not only identified, but also formalised, while experiences, i.e. tacit knowledge, is often lost due to being a highly personal asset. Experiences are lost through, e.g. outsourcing, mergers, and in particular if staffs leave the company [Smith 2001]. Companies that take their knowledge management processes seriously and have the objective to widen their understanding of their current and future businesses are often also developing an operational definition of knowledge, experiences and similar concepts. Those efforts make it possible for them to understand that experiences are rooted in actions and comprise of both cognitive and technical elements [Alavi and Leidner 2001].
The core idea of organising work into projects is that any project should be assembled as a 'learning laboratory' [Becerra-Fernandez and Leidner 2008], that is a project should cover different knowledge areas, skills and experiences, but also be a platform for an intentional process of learning. A project is defined as a temporary organisation that should solve a specific and detailed task over a limited time and with a limited budget [Disterer 2002], as such the distinct project members create new knowledge and generate new experiences in their daily practice. Typically, project work is reflected on afterwards, while project learning occurs continuously in the daily practice. Project learning is described as a process in which experiences provides the base for the creation of new knowledge, but it is also stressed that how the process is happening is of utterly concern [Kotnour 1999].
Lately, the integration of more intangible features in problem solving – for example the complex relationships between products, use and recycling – point towards combination, linkage and even more intertwined knowledge areas. This change in knowledge management can bring with it reasoning towards expected behaviours of products rather than solving isolated features of them [Gero 1990]. In the case of development, such context dependent knowledge, qualitative knowledge and experiences are carrying new variables and reasoning, while the decoding of the messages are highly depending on local conditions and culture.

4. Experience sharing in global teams

Knowledge management covers a broad spectrum of issues connected to processes, behaviours, people, technologies and culture. Specifically when addressing cultural aspects it seems important to stress that those are not only framed by organisational issues, but also by the individuals' different backgrounds and positions. When working in global teams, the internal and external structure (as presented in Figure 1) matters for how experiences are shared between individuals. The internal structure, that is the conversations in which they share the project's experiences, provide insights into cultural aspects related to project work. Experience sharing in global teams is a particular challenge, which are harder to manage than other organisational aspects. For example a project manager

highlighted that experience sharing in global teams is hard to centralised in the organisation, in a similar way as budget issues can be:

"You can manage finance on distance but it is more challenging with knowledge."

The project teams, not only acknowledge each other's differences in background and competence areas, but also that they have different views on knowledge. They have recognised that conversations are crucial, but they also have experienced that they do not share, for example, context and pre-knowledge, i.e. the ways they interpret and understand the new knowledge.

From observing the daily work at different sites, it became clear that the conversation 'to and from internal structure' showed an informal atmosphere and a relatively direct communication. The observed global project showed that the co-located teams acted more relaxed in their conversations between each other, than they were in the distributed meetings with the participants from the other sites. Yet, when visiting each other's sites, the differences were not as apparent. A plausible explanation for this is that distributed technologies do not support the breadth of conversations, for example eye contact and body language are commonly not supported. This hampers conversation styles that impose vital informality and a relaxed atmosphere, for example jesting or making jokes. Such conversations can easily be misunderstood if not being in place. Distributed teams thus become more formal in their conversation when it is done via technology. Moreover, due to drawback with technology, e.g. one speaker at the time, the format instil even more formal procedure in a distributed meeting, but due to the possibilities to mute the speakers the technology offers the teams to jointly discuss the subject at each site. The "muting" possibility is often used, and is more or less expected to be used.

When comparing the conversation styles at each site, one was recognised to promote less hierarchical and direct conversations. Hence, showed a relatively informal organisational culture. Another observed site showed, in comparison, a more hierarchical kind of culture. This included for example approaching a person superior in rank was always done formally. This had an impact on the conversation in the distributed team, not as long as they were on similar levels in the organisation or similar in another way, but it became difficult for the team to rely that they really shared experiences or to assess whether or not they were just acting according to the known cultural preferences.

Sharing of experiences is also done from the 'internal structure to an external structure', for example when the knowledge project interact with the subsequent execution project. In such a case, often third party (fully external structures) needs to be involved. Consequently, contracts and intellectual property rights are in general central in these conversations. Contracts, for example, might relate to the time schedule, cost or solitary tasks that are requested from the internal structure to support the project's task. Normally, as far as being observed, the 'from internal to external structure' conversations are equal and responsive. Yet, in the case of disturbances the tone can change. For example, one member from the internal structure exclaimed suddenly in a meeting:

"This is serious issue! I let them know by management. […] Now, he has to answer it again. Are the reasons to the delay documented?"

Having insight into the organisational culture and stance towards each other, such an expression and exposure is rare. Nevertheless, the cross-cultural document at the company described, for example, directness and indirectness in communication styles. The group consisting of personnel used to a structured culture and personnel used to an informal culture, had directness in their communication style, i.e. they could access the receiver and go direct to the core message. In that sense it can be interpreted that the structured conversation style might have more in common with the informal style, than these two styles have with an established hierarchical culture. The global team's meetings were commonly facilitated of a project leader or a manager from any site. When that person asked for status updates from the responsible project members, it became evident that the facilitator communicated more directly to the groups from all sites. So, one interpretation of this is that staff, in this case in the role of a facilitator, can adapt to the organisational culture, i.e. conversation style, to aid the experience sharing.

Observations showed that the indirect communication style seemed to delay problem solving of specific tasks, but observations also indicated that the direct communication supported the team to

more critically investigate their development problem. Thus, made them more informed about the situation. In one meeting the participants discussed specific issues and it was apparent that they had different opinions, however status updates were documented without being related to the different views. From an observation point of view, this was due to that nobody did confront the problem; rather they were avoiding it. One explanation is that language difficulties played an important role here, since the team started to express their point of view in written text, e.g. emailing and sharing documents with each other, when they evidently had different opinions. This procedure supported the work, but it was expressed by an informant in an interview that this was more time consuming and it did not really support preparation for the next coming work meeting, or the management of meetings as such. One interpretation could be that written text, despite becoming undifferentiated when none of the parties are using their mother tongue, could make them more equal in expressing different opinions.

The project status reporting could also include a truly external structure, i.e. the customer, in those cases the conversation style could be described as 'from an internal structure to an external structure', which could be referred to as more distant and more formal, than commonly in the project. Yet, it could be observed that in these meetings the participants made an effort to improve understanding and sharing of experiences. The example below is from such a distributed meeting that was observed from one of the sites. That site could be characterised as having a hierarchical conversation style. Besides the facilitator, there were two other participants in the meeting that participated on distance (the customer and a member from another project).

> Facilitator: *"Hi [Customer] and [project member]. So, [project member] what are you doing now?"*
> Project member: Reports on status from last meeting and what is going on right now.
> Customer: Fills in and emphasise on details and makes an effort to provide a wider picture of the situation.
> Facilitator: Asking follow-up questions and tries to explore the situation together with the customer. "*Have we understood you right?"*
> The meeting ends in what could be interpreted as a consensus about the situation. Despite this it was reported from the internal structure that they needed:
>
> *"...more communication for clearing all issues"*

Observing project members executing ordinary tasks has provided insights that a strong relationship among individuals matters. One example of experience sharing based on established relationships is when a supplier contacted an expert to discuss the task in a less formal manner, i.e. 'off the record'. It seemed, that this type of conversations were more frequent at the site that had a direct communication style, while it did not occur at the other site where a hierarchical structure was significant. A plausible interpretation can be that the directness in communication style allows for building such external strong relationships for experience sharing. Another example of this conversation culture is that when an expert (external to the project) finds it important to share some experiences with the team, s/he initiates a contact directly to the individuals and often not via a formal meeting. The structured organisational culture seems to have a 'need-to-know' approach for experience sharing, which is initialised by a specific team member. Further, only those that have permission 'to know' can officially take part of the information. A request for external information often follows the hierarchical levels when having a formal conversation culture, thus information is provided by the persons that are formally assigned with the responsibilities to report. In comparison, an informal conversation culture contribute to sharing experiences and reflections 'on the fly' and in an approach that are open to all project members, meaning reduced time from lessons learned to lessons shared. A structured approach on the other hand, might slow down experience sharing, while a great advantage is that is reduces the recurrent manner of meetings. This means that a structured approach addresses a more specific audience, consequently captures context and visualise receivers in a better way. Further, there are other pros and cons with the different approaches. For example 'on the fly' could provide daily empowerment of experiences to the team and support the task at hand, but could result in a lack of documentation and hamper reuse for future projects. Documentation of persons that possess certain knowledge is an advantage of a 'need-to-know' approach, while a disadvantage might be that

experiences is not shared. The hierarchical structure allows staff to beforehand know the channels, while it might delay knowledge sharing and in particular making daily decisions. Having the relation to the colleagues of an informal culture in mind, one employee from a more hierarchical structure expressed his view:

> *"We have more obligations and responsibilities, although not more authority to make decisions."*

Since the possibilities to make decisions are not regulated at that level of the project, the excerpt might be an expression indicating an organisational culture difference rather than managerial.
The project members share knowledge to external structures, outside the project but inside the company, e.g. between similar projects that are using same kind of technology but in other products. Knowledge sharing from the project also occurs outside the company, e.g. contact persons for partners in the supply chain. And in those cases some indications of managerial issues have been observed. Overall, all personnel have a supportive manner, while preferences for how to offer support differs. The structured conversation culture shows a more management-oriented or goal-oriented approach compared to sites having an informal communication style. One of the goal-oriented informants stated that;

> *"I want to see what is committed for me to deliver. So I mean that is crucial to me, because they* [referencing to the engineers in the project] *are the doers, the doers needs know what has been assigned to them."*

And added some thoughts about the role as project leader;

> *"The project leader needs to make sure works are getting done within its functional area, to see whether or not engineers are getting the work done, and meeting the time plan that has being committed."*

In such a case the cultural differences matters, since one is acting upon request and one take for granted that the other will notify if support is needed. Nevertheless, experience sharing between the partners might suffer.
Observations of the global team's meetings show that personal conversation styles make the experience sharing and reflections more transparent. The cultural influence is seemingly most related to personal confidence and, as observed, correlates with the expected behaviour at the specific sites. Yet, 'team spirit' seems to align with co-located teams at all sites, thus makes experience sharing more or less a local phenomenon (the sharing process itself could be compared to local knowledge). The possibilities to talk with project members in face-to-face meetings are, so far, outstanding if the conversation aims to learn and share knowledge. One informant explained:

> *"It's good to talk to someone then they understand, and you also gain better understanding yourself."*

5. Cultural implications on experience sharing

Knowledge management literature stresses on the importance to develop a structure for how to support the company and its mission with relevant knowledge delivered in time. If not it could result in, 'islands of knowledge' or 'knowledge silos' [O'Dell and Grayson 1998], meaning that different projects more or less 'reinvent the wheel' over and over again. The trend to move into global businesses could from this point of view highlight how critical it is to make local knowledge organisational accessible, for this cultural differences in how experiences are shared matters. Sveiby's model [2001], presented in Figure 1, the different conversations from and to internal and external structures could shed light on cultural aspects of experience sharing. The concepts from Sveiby's model [2001], has been used to organise the empirical data from this study to indicate cultural influences on experience sharing behaviours, see Table 1.
Many companies apply some kind of approach to document and share experiences from project work in their organisation, one example is lessons learned systems and another is document sharing. In general, experiences are difficult to express and hence to capture and disseminate, aspects to consider are the tacit and local knowledge that are part of experiences.

Table 1. Cultural influence on experience sharing behaviours in organisational structures

Sharing from; / Sharing to;	Internal structure	External structure	Individuals
Internal structure	• Informal conversation style within and between project members. Direct interaction and reflection in co-located teams. • Formal conversation style between sites.	• Formal and slightly cautious conversation style. • Conversation aiming to probe and understand the partners.	• Different due to organisational culture. 'On the fly', 'need-to-know', and hierarchical structure
External structure	• Formal and precautious conversation style. • Topics: contracts, intellectual property rights and formal issues.	• *(Not part of this study)*	• Relationship based communication. • Purpose: to support and enable supply chain partners to execute their task.
Individuals	• Structured type: direct communication, managerially oriented conversation style. • Informal type: direct communication, informal conversation style. • Hierarchical type: formal structure and formal conversation style.	• Based on a strong business relationship. • Provide possibilities to informal 'off the record' discussions.	• Willingness to share and to support. • Preferences differ for how to share.

This paper has made an effort to shed light on how conversation styles differs depending on both a 'sender' and a 'receiver' perspective, i.e. sharing from and sharing to the project. We have used a more modern converstion model to exemplify challenges of experience sharing in global teams that relates to cultural aspects. A central contribution of the study is to highlight the issue of taking culture into account when designing support for experience sharing. One implication is to provide guidance for the direction of the 'transmission' of the experiences, this is commonly lacking in contemporary approaches. It has been highlighted that cultural aspects need to be included for subsequent 'receivers' of the lessons learned.

The study has not, in-depth, considered prescriptions for how to develop guidelines for experience sharing in global teams, but are currently investigating that issue, for example following the indications from this study, it is important to address a specific receiver i.e., as visualised in the Shannon and Weaver model. Moreover, the study had omitted the 'external to external structure', but having trends like service partnerships in mind, such studies are of utmost concern for the future. Finally, strong and weak ties in business relationships needs to be addressed from an organisational culture and experience sharing perspective.

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