An exploration into inherent socio-political tensions in the application of "workblogs" as knowledge management tools

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Abstract: Emergent technologies, such as "weblogs", are being applied by organisations in their attempts to harness the tacit knowledge of workers and thereby develop "organisational intelligence" as part of a broad knowledge management and communication strategy. This phenomenon could, potentially, also play a key role in the competence development and lifelong learning of knowledge workers and further support personal learning strategies through the reification of knowledge.

A new genre of "workblogs" could, in theory, provide organisations with access to network spaces for intelligence gathering, construction and dissemination. However, inherent in "workblog" practice there are tensions that require management by both organisations and individual "bloggers" alike. The open, relatively anonymous, and democratic nature of "social" "blogging" culture could, potentially, challenge corporate or organisational hierarchies.

Used in this context, is achieving the right balance merely a question of resolving technological issues? To what extent should deep socio-political issues also be considered?

Drawing on recent practice from Norway and the United Kingdom, analysing blog conversations, espoused policy and use by organisations as part of their communication strategy the authors introduce the notion of "protected authority"; which, in practice, could result in stifling the "open" nature of "blog" conversational culture and render ineffective

the application of this emergent technology in support of strategic knowledge management initiatives.

Keywords: weblogs, blogs, workblogs, employee blogs, corporate blogs, knowledge management, protected authority, communication strategy, online identity, projected identity, blogging, blogger.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:
[xxxxxx – to be inserted]

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1. Introduction

In order to be effective within the knowledge society, organisations must harness the personal enthusiasm of their knowledge workers to develop a competitive advantage. Frequently this enthusiasm is found in activities where employees learn, share and construct knowledge with others. Increasingly knowledge workers are part of extended learning networks that may span institutions and cross borders drawn by the more day-to-day focus of the organisations' business strategies. To identify future trends or track emerging practices, knowledge workers may be required to share information with their competitors, challenge institutional hierarchies and circumvent information management strategies. In a networked society this can be conducted through the use of

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communication technologies replacing the historical "water cooler" conversations or chance meetings in corridors.

According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weblog) the term "weblog" has been established for some ten years. However, the derivative term workblog is a quite recent evolution of the related terms "employee blog" and "corporate blog".

A cursory Google search on the term workblog reveals Scott's Workblog (http://www.cetis.ac.uk/members/scott/) as the primary result. His current employer, the Joint Information Systems Committee's Centre for Educational and Technology Interoperability Standards (JISC CETIS) service in the UK has established the use of employee workblogs as the focus of its knowledge management and communication strategy.

This has replaced a strategy that previously consisted of carefully constructed articles of interest, under a carefully managed editorial policy and written by a dedicated web journalist: The information presented was "top-down", authoritative, quality assured and in line with organisational communication policy.

The new strategy attempts to orchestrate the personal and professional voices of all of the CETIS staff in a "bottom-up" manner: in an attempt to provider much richer content, perspective and further develop organisational intelligence. This includes aggregating both existing personal blogs and creating organisational blogs. Undoubtedly more complex and challenging; the policy could also be considered controversial and inherently dangerous.

For institutions that thrive on knowledge, tapping into the undercurrent of networked societies is certainly not new. Indeed, there have been numerous attempts to use mailing lists, discussion fora, and in the very early Internet days guest books, to engage with their customers, the wider community, to solicit feedback from the market , develop new ideas and seek solutions to organisational issues.

It appears that in academic communities the use of these "traditional" channels may have gone into decline. As Jill Walker observes, concerning research and scholarly mailing lists; "most have devolved into distribution channels for conference announcements or for irregular and off-topic random postings." And she continues: "Blogs are still on the ascendant and may never go through such a decline..." (Walker 2006).

According to the Gartner hype curve of mid-2005, Corporate Blogging is on its way down to the bottom of the "Trough of Disillusionment" (Efimova & Grudin, 2007).

In this paper the authors will reflect upon the risk of disillusionment that may arise in connection with the introduction of blogging in the workspace – disillusionment which may pose a threat to the potential of bringing lifelong learners up to the "Plateau of Productivity".

In 1992 - 1993 Hoel initiated and chaired InfoNett, an online community for public information officers, run by the Association of Public Information Officers. A FirstClass bulletin board was installed in order to encourage colleagues in municipalities, counties, directorates and departments to engage in matters of national importance for public information policies. Some participants did engaged quite successfully. However, in the Norwegian Central Information Service (Statens Informasjonstjeneste) the strategists developing information policies, not having access to modems, experienced technical

difficulties in accessing the small, but very active community starting to forge an online practice.

When the first TCP/IP data packets started to be delivered to the computers of the Central Information Service they their information officers were presented with a new opportunity to engage with the InfoNett community. The new participants were uncomfortable with what they were facing: an established "Community of Practice" (Wenger, 1998) with de-facto conventions and an established communication policy.

"We do not like the language here, it is too rude! It is too political, too confrontational! We will not adjust to this pace; we cannot answer questions within the hour. We have to ask our boss first" (Hoel, 1994).

After failed attempts to engage fully with the community, the management of the Central Information Service issued a directive to their employees stating that all postings to the InfoNett community forum required prior clearance by the appropriate departmental head and that any views expressed should be in accordance and consistent with official policy.

Information officers of the Central Information Service ceased to be engaged or even peripheral members of the InfoNett community. Activity declined and the project was discontinued[1].

Was this experience an example of premature technology implementation, or was it indicative of the future organisational and social issues that are now emerging, when weblogging is a legitimate activity undertaken by workers as an element of   the organisational knowledge management and communication strategy?

2. Weblogs as personal and professional practice

Weblogs are now an established part of "mainstream" Internet culture and have become so ubiquitous that the term is almost synonymous with the "personal Web site", although as Blood (2004) attests "many commercial sites now incorporate them, too".

For the purpose of this paper the authors will use the definition of the term weblog provided by Walker (2003) as; "A frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order". The definition found at answers.com does not observe reverse ordering, but includes the characteristic of linking and commenting[2].

In general weblogs give low-threshold access to publishing tools and to getting a voice online. Focussing on weblogs in the context of the workplace another aspect of the weblog is more interesting: the weblog's ability to provide a "personal protected space"

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[1] Even if the InfoNett did not manage to bridge the whole community of public information officers, it made it to the Government White Paper under the heading "From the public debate", ref. http://www.dep.no/fad/norsk/dok/andre_dok/nou/034005-020003/ved002-bn.html#3.1

[2] answers.com defines weblog as "A website that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals and usually has links to comments on specific postings." (answers.com, accessed 2006-11-26)

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where the individual can communicate with others while retaining control (Gumbrecht, 2004).

The authors observe that this notion of "personal ownership" could conflict with organizational efforts to harness the tacit knowledge of workers, to construct knowledge and to develop organisational intelligence.

Ownership seems to be necessary to unleash the enthusiasm and effort that is required to engage workers in the practice, resulting in the regular postings that are essential to the success of the activity and ultimately to harnessing "the wisdom of the crowd" for organisational objectives.

Evidence of this notional aspect of workblogging is provided by the experience of JISC CETIS, who took a policy decision in March 2006 that "workblogging" would become an integral part of their communication and organisational knowledge management strategy.

A phased introduction occurred at the launch of the new JISC CETIS website in November 2006. One of the Assistant Directors of the service, Scott Wilson, has a well established and highly influential personal blog (or workblog). The blogging community refers to this as "A list" (It has a large number of incoming connections and is part of a dense cluster of reciprocally linked weblogs (Efimove et al 2005). When Scott's "personal" workblog is aggregated into the organisation's web site, as part of the JISC CETIS corporate voice, he is not represented by an impersonal corporate photo or mug shot but by his established personal online identity as represented iconically by a red plastic dinosaur.

Wilson's use of this personal icon in his weblog clearly illustrates the inherent ambiguity of the relatively new weblog genre, the workblog. The dinosaur icon signals his individuality or personality, and in some respects guards his personal anonymity. The name itself, Scott's Workblog, portrays a message of informality, but connected to the formal domain of the workplace. Wilson gives his full name and contact details, a clear message that he is responsible if confronted with respect to the content of his blog.

This is not unique within CETIS as other members of staff experiment with different writing styles in order to establish their own workblog voice. Some employees are confronted by issues of "how" and "what" I should write. Editorial control at a directorial level has been asserted on the "front page" of postings with respect to the appropriateness of postings; indicative of the notion of the "protected authority" that exists even within the comparatively liberal organisation that is JISC CETIS.

The Wordpress Multi User Blogging Software used on the site provides a choice of optional blog templates or "skins". Even where employees have not published articles, many have independently chosen to change the template or skin and thereby assert some individuality within the corporate voice.

CETIS did not introduce the activity with strict policy guidelines regarding use although staff were asked to "tag" their postings as individual reflections (personal), internal organisational reflections (internal), and external (public) reflections (front page). Postings that are aggregated to the web site front page are subject to editorial control.

The CETIS workblogs fall loosely into the category of a Research Blog, of which Walker (2006) has identified different kinds: She asserts that Public Intellectuals use their blogs as "a platform for political debate based on theories of political science, feminism, discourse and media analysis and so on"; Research blogs contain records of research conducted and ideas pursued; and Pseudonymous blogs about academic life are

academic blogs which "are characterised by a tongue in cheek refusal to revere the ivory tower experience".

   We anticipate that as the JISC CETIS workblog practice evolves, tensions may emerge as described in Walker's recent publication, "Blogging from Inside the Ivory Tower" (2006). She describes how she finds it harder to blog now: "I preferred blogging when most people didn't know about it." She started to blog when she was outside the academic system. "It's different though, being on the inside of the system". Her question is what happens when research blogs - and their authors - become part of the academic system rather than being outsiders trying to get in?

   It is not only the discomfort of being recognised and targeted with specific opinions and comments by persons that you never have met, making blogging within the "ivory tower" more difficult. Other more fundamental, issues are involved, pointing to the importance of hierarchy.

3. When those with Power enter the Blogosphere

In The Autumn of 2006 Web 2.0 and social software emerged on the radar of those in positions of authority within the Norwegian Educational system. One of them, a departmental head, started to test out social software by enrolling in blogger communities, writing a blog identified by a few recognisable mug-shots and (almost) the full name.

   The blogger (referred to as "A") actively commented on others' blogs and took part in many other activities.

   This apparent willingness to share information and shed some light on the priorities of the the management was well received by the community. The blog posts of A conveyed a mixture of personal and work-related experience, in a perceived manner which seemed to indicate that A was on equal terms with the community in which they were participating.

   However this proved not to be the case; one had not reached the ideal Habermasian speech situation, where participants were equally endowed with the capacities of discourse, recognising each other's basic social equality, engrossed in speech undistorted by ideology or misrecognition.

   Extracts of conversations between A, an official with government authority, and B, an active member of the educational blogging community, are included below. These extracts provide a base for our reflections on the conditions of professional dialogue across hierarchies.

Conversation 1 - About benefits of VLEs

(1) Blogger B: "Why is it that I read the news story in the last issue of X magazine on the Y Conference with such displeasure? (..) This is ideology of the worst kind; and as such ideology understood as "false consciousness".

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(2) Blogger A: "It is difficult for me to give a rational response when I read such a poisonous outburst, but I will do my best... (...) I look forward to more contributions from this blog, but if they are to be taken seriously, they should aspire to another level of rationality."

(3) Blogger B: "Concerning poisonous outbursts and rational responses: This is my personal blog, and that sets the ground rules for what you see here. If you want to know what I feel and how I privately look at the world, then read my personal blog. If you want less personal opinions and points of views that are more discreet, then go to my workblog that you can find at... It is not up to the Ministry to define the boundaries for my personal freedom of speech...."

(4) Blogger A: "Of course, you are free to say whatever you want in your personal blog, just as it is up to the reader to freely comment on your opinions."

Conversation 2 - About eGov monitor recommendations

(5) Blogger B: "I am somewhat sceptical about recommendation 1, given the situation in Norway…"

(6) Blogger A: "Could you expand on what you mean by 'given the situation in Norway…'?"

(7) Blogger B: "It is the assertion that portals are so important for e-learning, that worries me..." Blogger B then mentions the portal that was initiated by the Minister of Education and describes that as a top-down idea.

(8) Blogger A: "I see the point that top-down initiatives have their downsides. The question is if pure bottom-up initiatives are much better. The portal has shown itself to be a very positive development, but your antipathy to Portal Z is well known..."

(9) In the next comment Blogger B denies having anything against Portal Z, and asks Blogger A to prove that B's "antipathy" is well known, by pointing to public utterances to that effect.

(10) Blogger A: "I welcome your critique and critical reflections, given that they are constructive and look for solutions. I regret my remark on your attitudes towards Portal Z - it had nothing to do in you blog."

(11) Blogger B: "Your regret is noted and accepted. Then I have only one question: Who should receive my draft reflections so that they can be approved as constructive?..."

(12) Blogger A: "I think you should share your reflections with me and others as before. Approval is not required.

These conversations do not differ greatly from the heated discussion often found in mail list discussions. However, an analysis of the interaction taking place reveals that there is more to it than would appear "frontstage", to apply Goffman's concept.

B's blog represents one of Blogger B's personal identities. In this blog, B compartementalises day-to-day experiences within the domain in which they are working. The blog was started in 2003 and B has spent time "backstage" constructing the boundaries between work (and work related writing) and private life. The content style and focus (Efimova, 2006-11-20) are biased towards work, but there are clear indicators that the blog presents "personal reflections on e-learning" and disclaimers that neither the university, former employers or the Ministry of Education, nor any other authority "endorses the views and opinions expressed in the blog".

The staging of personal identity is clear in conversational extract 1 through the use of subjective phrasing, such as "I read .... with such displeasure", and through the use of invective (e.g. "worst kind").

However, the framing of the conversation (Goffman, 1974) as personal, belonging to the "free speech compartment" of B's involvement in discussions on e-learning, is not clear to A. A attacks (2) both the "tone" of speech and the level of relevance, provoking a classical discussion on the nature of deference and demeanor (Goffman, 1967). It is a style of conversation, fraught with danger according to Goffman's writing on Interaction Ritual:

> "In general then, when a rule of conduct is broken we find that two individuals run the risk of becoming discredited: one with an obligation, who should have governed himself by the rule; the other with an expectation, who should have been treated in a particular way because of this governance. Both actor and recipient are threatened." (Goffman, 1967)

In (3) B launches a counter attack, starting a discussion about frames ("this is my personal blog"). And A answers by "keying down" the issue: You're free to say whatever you like, and so am I. This change of key is quite obvious to the reader who gets the impression that A is on the defensive. The role A was playing in (2) was as a Government leader who wanted to set the matter straight. The next comment of A (4) is written in the role of a fellow citizen with a right to freedom of expression. It represents a downward shift in the hierarchy that for some could lead to resentment against the adversary.

Conversation 2 follow two weeks later. B baits the hook (5), and A bites (6) and falls off key (8) with his remark on B's "well known antipathy". Again B launches a frame discussion (9), arguing that in a public debate it is not enough to have knowledge of what is happening backstage; you also have to prove that the repugnant action has taken place frontstage in blogs or in other public places.

A answers (10) by trying to repair the social order between the two bloggers by saying they welcome critical reflection. At the same time, attempting to change the key, bringing into question what constitutes constructive debate.

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The conversation then continues with interactions 11 and 12; both repairing actions and a meta discussion on who has the right to define what is right or wrong.

Conversation 3 – Backstage

This struggle over frames between the blogger veteran, B, and the newcomer, A, could have ended harmoniously were it not for one important factor, that of hierarchy or "protected authority ".

B was then later invited to join the board of a startup organisation. This organisation had prepared an application to the government for project funding. A could be instrumental in determining whether this application was successful.

B reflects on the responsibilities of being a board member, and perceives that the interests of the organisation could be jeopardised if they were to accept.

In light of this perception B reluctantly declines the offer of board membership.

For B, the backstage has now effectively turned into the frontstage. One cannot be sure, but potentially this could also be the case for A.

4. Discussion

The relative anonymity and openness of some forms of electronic conversations may dissolve the hierarchical systems that make many organisations and systems work the way they do. Stephen & Harrison suggest this as an "interesting, if unpleasant, reason for the decline of useful, constructive discussions" in their 1994 study of the Comserve electronic community which used mailing lists (in Walker, 2006). Weblogs have in many communities of practice fulfilled the role of both the communication channel and the organisational glue that mailing lists used to offer. Hierarchies have the power to make emergent communication practices change direction.

In Walker's current position as a tenured faculty member in the hierarchical meritocracy of a university, she still "loves these inversions of conventional power relationships that blogs and other forms of online publications make possible." However, her ambivalence towards keeping an active blog emphasises the inherent tensions in blogging from the Ivory Tower. The tensions could also be a challenge for bloggers in workplaces other than Academia.

Are workblogs deemed to become silent and ineffective or to change focus as the tensions caused by hierarchy and protected authority develop?

In many domains there is an urgent need for open dialogue to develop and construct knowledge. In a paper to the 2006 ICALT conference Hoel (2006) asserts the need for open processes to develop technologies based on service-oriented approaches claiming that this has proved difficult in a country like Norway where there is a tendency to blur the distinction between the Knowledge Building and the Decision Making processes, see figure 1.
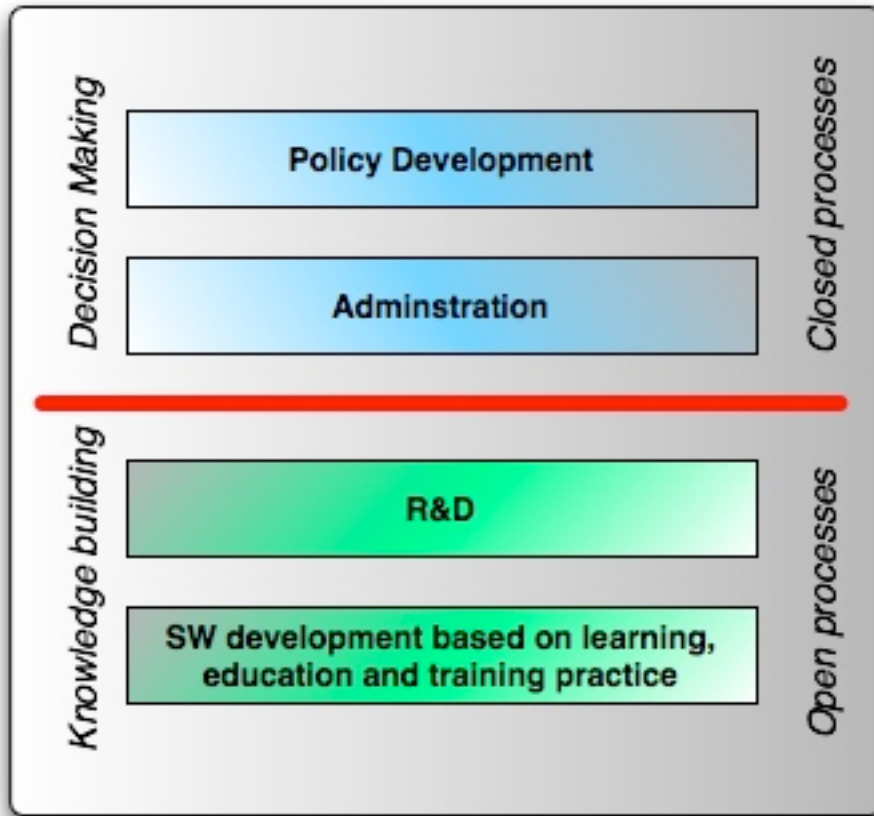
Figure 1: Process layers within public policies on development of e-learning technologies.

Within public management there is a danger that the management logic of decision making processes is invading the space for knowledge building and open discourse. If the expert communities are small, it may prove difficult to have an open and active online conversation on any issue before the web of postings and comments become entangled in hierarchical power plays. The result could be that control of the known protected authority becomes more important than exploring the unknown.

If blogging is not straightforward in academia and public administration, the stumbling blocks could be potentially more disruptive in the corporate sector where an unfortunate posting could influence the stock market. The headline "Corporate Blogging: Killer App or Corporate Killer?" from a consultant offering to help companies build effective blog strategies (Lewis, 2005) states the dilemma succinctly for those workbloggers in the private sector.

Efimova and Grudin (2007) have studied the adoption of Employee Blogs at Microsoft. They found "an experimental, rapidly-evolving terrain marked by growing sophistication about balancing personal, team, and corporate incentives and issues". Both the company and the employees struggled to find some accepted middle ground between work and private life, and between controversial issues and issues that did not reveal any

company secrets but still attracted readers. When the researchers asked if there were any guidelines for weblog practice they were repeatedly told that "the policy is that there is no policy", or "the policy is 'be smart'". Both employees and employers could benefit from weblogs, Efimova and Grudin conclude:

> "For an employee, a weblog can provide a space to share passion for work, to document and organize ideas and work practices, to find and engage others inside and outside the organization. For an employer, this can result in accelerated information flow, increased productivity, improved reputation and customer engagement, but also in greater dependence on personalities, less control over the corporate face to the outside world, and possible challenges to hierarchy." (Efimova & Grudin, 2007)

Blogging as boundary practice – consequences for the employer and the employee

Efimova has in her blog (http://blog.mathemagenic.com/) described blogging as a "boundary practice" shaped by at least three contexts, see figure 2.
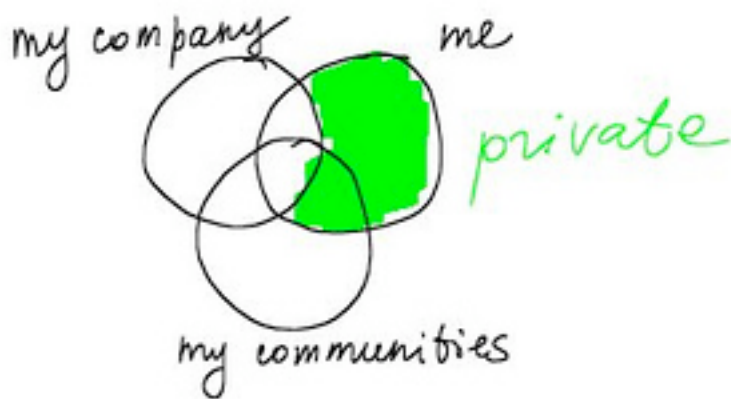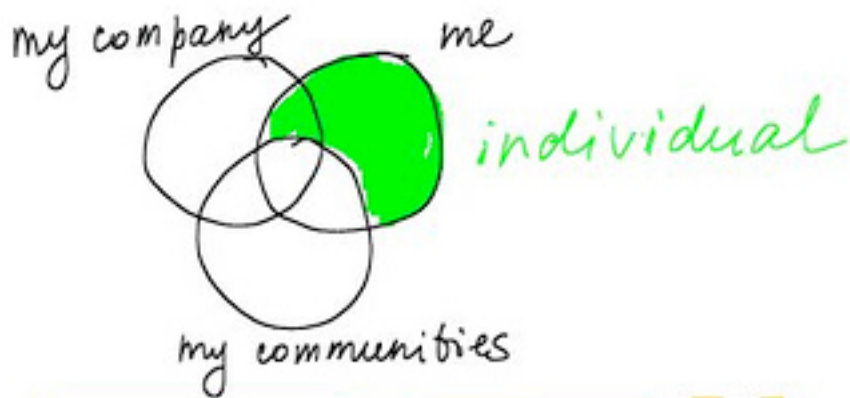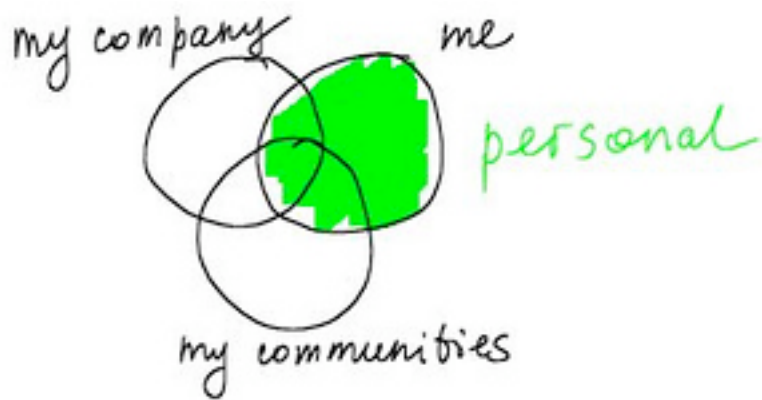
Figure 2   Personal perspectives on work seen from the knowledge worker's perspective, from
Efimova http://blog.mathemagenic.com/2006/11/06.html#a1851

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From the blogger's perspective blogging is a personal, individual and private activity. Workblogging is a subset of this activity and means that the blogger in some respects is crossing the boundaries into the company domain. However, if the company is not aware of both the personal and private aspects of blogging, it may not be able to understand the tensions that could arise when the external community starts to react to the blog posts. This is not a question of content focus or content style even if postings are thematically work related. The personal dimension of blogging activity will undoubtedly emerge.

So potentially what could organisations, such as JISC CETIS, do to address the inherent tensions in workblogging for both employer and employee?

1. Redefine the concept of a workblog - defining the genre

JISC CETIS could issue guidelines of use that imply that writing for a workblog should be handled in the same way as writing a paper for a conference - the same protocols and conventions in respect of the institutional view should apply.

2. Introduce a strict editorial process for workblog entries

CETIS already has an editorial process for selecting blog entries that authors consider (by tagging) for aggregation to the front page (http://jisc.cetis.ac.uk/). This process could be extended to cover workblogs and postings themselves.

3. Develop the workbloggers community

JISC CETIS could develop processes and protocols and exert pressure on those employees that are too political, personal or rebellious, and encourage practices that are aligned to the high level strategic aims of the service.

4. Encourage employees to write separate blogs for work and private life

JISC CETIS could cease aggregating private blogs and only expose those hosted at blog.cetis.ac.uk.

5. Introduce community workblogs with their own community identity

The organisation could give up the idea of aggregating individual personal blogs and make every contributor write in the joint JISC CETIS blogs or joint domain specific blogs, e.g. for each special interest group.

6. Give up identifiable workblogs and mask the identities of the powerbloggers

JISC CETIS could issue a general disclaimer that all aggregated blog entries should be read with caution: With clear caveats displayed indicating that entries reflect the opinions of the community, not the service and encourage employees to blog in their private space.

It is blatantly apparent that not all of the alternative actions described above are serious or practical proposals. However, they illustrate the dilemmas any organisation faces when introducing blogs.

This view is also captured in a quote from Joshua Allen, thought to be Microsoft's first corporate blogger:

> "As long as your company views your blogging as "you chatting with your neighbors in your personal time", you pose little risk. But the more that co-workers, CEOs, and so on are on-record as being cool with blogs, the more that blogs take on the timbre of being "official". The more "official" that blogs are, the more perceived risk the company takes on by allowing you to blog. And neither you nor your CEO is really keen to make things more complicated than they need to be. And this is why, IMO, you see most companies and employees today still dancing around the issue of employee blogs and seemingly settling on a "don't ask, don't tell, and please for the love of God don't do anything stupid" policy." (Presentation by Efimova, 2005 online at http://blog.mathemagenic.com/stories/2005/09/12/studyingWeblogsAtMicrosoft.html)

JISC CETIS has passed the stage of "don't tell". They endorse workblogs, and have nothing to gain from embarking on a genre discussion. Blogs and conference papers are very different. As we have discussed blogs are about identity, creating a personal voice and staging your professional appearance. Even in the most subject or content focused blog, the element of identity goes to the core of blogging activity.

We argue, in understanding the weblog as a social phenomenon, that it is not possible to enforce guidelines that blogs should be topic as opposed to author focused.

A case study provided by Efimova & Grudin (2007) showed that employee bloggers were very conscious that it was their "personal voice" that attracted readers. That was why they were very reluctant to accept proposals from the company to convey certain messages, e.g. concerning new products, new features etc. It also seems that the personal or individual identity aspect of weblogs are somewhat built into the technology itself. The social ecosystem of "blogologues" are distributed conversations between online identities (Efimova & Fiedler, 2004) supported by blogging software technologies such as blogrolls, pingbacks, permalinks etc. Even if weblogs are not more than collections of links and short commentaries, the blogs projects identity, and the bloggers themselves become "human information routers" for like-minded readers (Efimova & Fiedler, 2004).

In some organisations an editorial process for blogging means the active moderation of blog entries by an editor. For active bloggers it is possible that the very idea of introducing some kind of super-consciousness would make them withdraw. Experienced bloggers write for their perceived audience, not for their editor. It is possible that a new genre of "workblogger" could emerge, one sensitive to organisational perspectives and used to writing with editorial control in mind. Such a writer would be more akin to the journalist on a traditional publication than to the early adopters of blogging technology occupying the space just now.

However, JISC CETIS already employs loose guidelines that might be more in accordance with the ethos of social software users. Tags are introduced to help the editor to aggregate appropriate blog entries to the front page. It is an accepted convention within the blogging community to use tags to facilitate discussions on how certain pieces of information or opinion should be framed. The tacit dialogue about what might be

"constructive" between the JISC CETIS editor and the workbloggers could in itself be productive.

The tagging process could represent a valid area for further research.

The concept of having separate blogs for work and private life could be contrary to the way knowledge workers construct their identity. One of the reasons for the heated discussions we analysed earlier between A and B might be that the blog in question was too close in content focus to the workplace role of the author. In excerpt 3, B referred to the workblog, and from this it could be assumed that the private blog and the workblog of B are quite similar in style. Nevertheless, B could argue that they represent two different legitimate on-line projected identities.

For many knowledge workers the idea of having separate blogs might be strange, one for work issues and one for personal interests. Alternatively a blog with different sections might be used: An example of this practice is the chief architect of the Topic Map standard, Lars Marius Garshol, who runs a blog at www.garshol.priv.no that has three categories: Technology, Beer and Personal.

Judging from recent practice in Norway, community blogs raise some issues concerning sustainability. The Norwegian Opening University launched a "group blog" at http://norgesuniversitetet.wordpress.com/. It has not been successful as seasoned bloggers do not sign up for group accounts, prefering to maintain their own blogs, and novice bloggers do not provide stimulating enough postings to attract an audience.

Walker (2006) describes the academic "masked identity" scenario with pseudonymous blogs about academic life. We argue that this may not be a viable approach outside Academia, where employees do not experience the same degree of job protection. Companies are concerned about unflattering portrayals and leaks; there are several reported incidents which have led to employee bloggers being fired (Efimova & Grundin, 2007; Hill, 2005; Brandweek, 2006). With universities increasingly becoming more concerned about their public profiles, pseudonymous blogs could have a uncertain furture in Acacemia too.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, we argue that blogging is inherently a social activity facilitated through technology. It cannot be considered merely a technological process.

Where organisations have introduced workblogging as a central theme of their knowledge building and/or communication strategy, employees have exercised, even within the constraints of the technology and institutional guidelines, personal ownership of "their" blogspace.

It will be interesting to observe, should workblogging become ubiquitous in organisations, if a new "workblogger" will emerge, one who balances the conflicts of personal ownership with the institutional voice. Or will employees continue to exercise freedom in their postings?

"Workblogging" could emerge as an effective knowledge building and communication tool in those institutions that recognise the social ownership of the blog space and balance this with a liberal approach to their protected authority.

In order to realise the potential of blogging for knowledge building and employee personal development, institutions must embrace the challenge presented by the "wisdom

of the crowd" and strive for the undistorted Habermasian ideal of speech. It would be a fertile area for further research to explore whether this ideal situation could ever be achievable

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