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Knowledge sharing in the context of mentoring

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ABSTRACT

The research examines individual level horizontal knowledge sharing across MNC subsidiaries taking place in the context of mentoring. The aim is to look beyond traditional career related outcomes associated with mentoring and explore how it affects ability, motivation and opportunity to share knowledge. The theoretical review is guided by the knowledge governance approach and factors affecting knowledge sharing are discussed with the help of the AMO-framework.

The research is a qualitative case study of a MNC's international business unit. Data was collected by conducting structured theme interviews. The empirical part of the research is based on the integrative framework derived from existing scientific literature on the research topic. The data was first analyzed to form a comprehensive picture about the current state of knowledge sharing in the business unit. Then, knowledge sharing in the context of mentoring was taken under closer examination. In the end, factors affecting an individual's motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge within and outside the mentoring relationship were compared with each other for conclusions to be drawn.

The findings suggest that knowledge sharing at the local level is mostly affected by a siloing effect arising from internal competition and an entrepreneurial organizational culture, whereas cross-border sharing is still in its infancy and is characterized by lack of structures. Mentoring can be considered as a commitment-based knowledge governance mechanism, which improves individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge by transcending barriers otherwise present in the business unit. Nevertheless, perceived organizational commitment, prior mentoring experience and a wide work related experience gap were shown to have a negative effect on knowledge sharing, even in the context of mentoring.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge sharing, Mentoring, AMO, MNC

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

"If the doctrinal history of management research in the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium ever comes to be written, a central – and perhaps the central – chapter will concern how 'knowledge' became a dominant construct in a number of management fields."

–Foss et al. (2010: 455)

Knowledge and its management have received a lot of attention in the last two decades. It has been widely agreed upon that those companies, which create, identify, transfer and use knowledge reach better performance (Davenport & Prusak 1998). For example O'Dell and Grayson (1998:157) highlight in their article the additional capacity gained by Texas Instruments equal to building a new production facility worth several hundred of millions by identifying and transferring knowledge within the company. According to OECD (1996) we live in a knowledge economy characterized by the production, distribution and use of knowledge instead of tangible resources. As a corollary to the resource-based view (RBV), the knowledge-based view (KBV) regards knowledge as the most important source of sustainable competitive advantage because of its intangible, hard to imitate nature (Davenport & Prusak 1998). The KBV is a result of companies trying to succeed in an ever more competitive and rapidly changing global economy. This view applies especially to large multinational corporations (MNCs), which existence has been validated through their superior capabilities to leverage and integrate world wide knowledge repositories to the use of the entire company (e.g. Kogut & Zander 1993; Grant 1996; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000 a; Yang et al. 2008).

Even though its importance and potential payoffs, transferring knowledge does not happen easily. Knowledge transfer is a delicate process with many determinants such as motivational factors of the source and the recipient and different knowledge characteristics affecting the very occurrence of the process. Szulanski (1996) uses the term "sticky" in describing impediments and barriers hindering knowledge transfer. In cross-boarder spanning MNCs additional hardship is encountered do to colliding national and organizational cultures and institutions of the parent company and its subsidiaries. The stickiness of intra-firm knowledge transfer and its effects on MNCs is

well crystalized in the words of former Chairman, President and CEO of Hewlett-Packard Lewis E. Platt: "I wish we knew what we know at HP." (O'Dell & Grayson 1998: 154).

Knowledge resides in several levels within the organization and is transferred across functions, departments and organizational boundaries. However, all levels of knowledge transferring originate from knowledge sharing taking place at the individual level. Individuals are the ones in possession of knowledge, which can be shared to the organizational level where it is transformed into economic value for the company (Ipe 2003). As such, it is in the interest of MNCs to affect individual-level conditions of action in order to promote and secure required levels of knowledge sharing between for example their foreign subsidiaries. Despite the identified importance of individual level knowledge sharing, extant literature has been criticized to neglect micro level analysis and leap straight to explaining causal links between macro (i.e. organizational, collective) variables (see e.g. Minbaeva, Mäkelä & Rabbiosi 2012; Foss, Husted & Michaiova 2010).

The emerged knowledge governance approach or KGA encompass the management of organizational structures and mechanisms that influence the creating, sharing, integrating and using of knowledge and the guiding of these processes in preferred directions (Foss, Husted & Michailova 2010: 456). The KGA differentiates between macro and micro level analysis and brings forward the importance of understanding how companies can manage organizational outcomes through influencing individual-level conditions of action (Foss 2007). According to Foss et al. (2010), by concentrating on micro level constructs existing gaps, problems, unresolved issues and untested claims characterizing literature on knowledge and organizations could be addressed.

Following the KGA, a number of recent publications have addressed the link between HRM practices and knowledge management efforts (Prieto Pastor et al. 2010; Minbaeva et al. 2012), employee behavior (Kehoe & Wright 2013) as well as knowledge-based performance of the company (Minbaeva 2013). For example Minbaeva et al. (2013) view HRM as a mechanism to influence individual conditions determining individual action. Indeed, different HRM practices can be regarded as mechanisms to govern the antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior. Nevertheless, Minbaeva (2013) states that the relevant underlying mechanisms characterizing the causal relation between HRM and knowledge processes are only partially understood and deserve further examination.

Based on the well-established AMO framework knowledge sharing is essentially determined by an individual's ability, motivation and opportunity to share knowledge (Argote et al. 2003). Thus it is in the interest of organizations to implement HRM practices, which promote these antecedents in order to increase their organizational knowledge sharing. Literature on knowledge sharing has identified several factors affecting these antecedents, however, only few studies have made the effort to explore how a given HRM practice could affect the ability, motivation and opportunity to share knowledge.

In the past couple of decades, mentoring has increasingly been recognized as a mechanism for the transferring of knowledge within organizations (Swap, Leonard, Shields & Abrams 2001). However, despite the obvious notions of growth and development associated with mentoring, only little research has studied how knowledge is shared in mentoring relationships (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban & Wilbanks 2011). Indeed, as a channel and governance mechanism bringing individuals closer together, mentoring should have mostly a positive effect on knowledge sharing because it creates a context for the purpose of developing employees. Nevertheless, only few studies have looked into this channel to actually prove or disapprove mentoring as a channel for knowledge sharing. More precisely, mentoring has been shown to result in career related outcomes through for example challenging assignments, raised self-esteem and visibility but findings on mentoring as an effective channel for the sharing of firm specific best practice is scarce. In their review of the evolution of mentoring, Kram and Ragins (2007) argue that scholars have focused on a relatively narrow area of research. Ragins and Verbos (2007 as cited by Kram & Ragins 2007: 8) state that research has overly emphasized mentoring as a one-sided relationship resulting in career related outcomes. Also Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt an Crosby (2007: 380) criticize the depth of existing mentoring research by stating that practitioners will not be able to leverage the full potential of mentoring before researchers shift their focus from demonstrating that mentoring works to explaining why it does so.

The traditional hierarchical view of the headquarters (HQ) providing knowledge to its production intensive subsidiaries has changed to a more heterarchical network-based perspective regarding subsidiaries as sources of valuable knowledge (Ambos, Ambos & Schlegelmilch 2006; Michailova & Mustaffa 2011). MNCs are perceived as social communities, where power is decentralized and subsidiaries are granted with strategically important roles providing competitive advantage by contributing to the overall knowledge base of the company. As a result, successful horizontal knowledge

transfers taking place across borders between different MNC units have become an important determinant whether or not the company succeeds in being more than the sum of its parts. This research approaches these sticky horizontal knowledge flows through studying individual level knowledge sharing taking place in the context of mentoring between a mentor and a protégé from different country organizations. More precisely, mentoring is perceived as a mechanism to govern and ultimately secure horizontal cross-border knowledge transfers through affecting individual-level conditions of action dictating the knowledge sharing behavior of mentors and protégés.

1.2 Research questions and objective

Due to the identified research gap in existing literature the aim of this study is to look beyond traditional career and psychosocial outcomes associated with mentoring and explore how mentoring affects the ability, motivation and opportunity of mentors and protégés to share knowledge, and as such, helps to facilitate horizontal knowledge flows between MNC subsidiaries. The adopted individual level analysis together with the AMO framework is expected to shed light on the functioning of mentoring as a channel and governance mechanism for cross-border horizontal knowledge sharing. Furthermore, instead of following extant literature and proving that mentoring works, the knowledge sharing perspective could be considered as a step closer in answering the question of why it does so.

The research questions are defined as follows:

1. *What affects individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge within and across MNC subsidiaries?*

2. *How does mentoring affect the antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior?*

The first research question is a preliminary question and needs to be answered first for the effects of mentoring on individual's motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge to be discovered.

1.3 Scope of the study

This study is limited to the context of knowledge sharing taking place in the case MNC. More precisely, to the context of formal mentoring relationships in the Power Distribution business unit. This study assumes that knowledge already exists in individuals and therefore the organizational challenge is to encourage and support it's sharing so that the entire company can benefit from it. Following the work of Ipe (2003), while acknowledging that knowledge is present at many levels in the organization, the focus is on knowledge that exists within individuals and factors that affect its sharing in a formal workplace mentoring program between a mentor and a protégé. The scope of this study is limited to individual level knowledge sharing behavior and therefore knowledge sharing outcomes on the organizational level are not covered.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into five sections. The first section is an introduction to the study. It provides background information, identifies the research gap in existing literature and presents the research problem, objectives and questions. Furthermore, the introduction outlines the scope of the study and presents an overview on the structure of the thesis. The second section comprises theoretical perspectives of the study. It is written in the form of a literature review on conducted research on the topic. First knowledge sharing and factors affecting it are taken under examination after which the concept of mentoring will be covered. The second section formulates a conceptual framework on which the empirical part of the study is based. The third section presents the methodology of the research followed by the forth section, in which obtained results of the study are presented. This section follows the structure of the literature review and presents results on the current state of knowledge sharing before integrating mentoring and its effects into the contemplation. In the end of the fourth section factors affecting knowledge sharing within and outside of the mentoring relationship are contrasted with each other and a summary of the findings is presented. The fifth and final section of the research summarizes the research and discusses the findings for conclusions to be drawn. After having answered the research questions limitations of the research are identified and both implications for practice and areas for future research are suggested.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Knowledge-based view and the MNC

The multinational corporation, or the MNC, is regarded as a complex multidimensional organizational entity, which has been identified by extant literature as a powerful economic and political player in the global economy (Geppert, Becker-Ritterspach & Mudambi 2013). For example the OECD (2013) acknowledges the role played by MNCs in shaping the international business environment through job creation, human capital development, the distribution of capital, and the transferring of technology, skills and knowledge. MNCs have had and continue to have significant effects on the economic growth and development of their home and host countries and the global economy.

The explanation for the existence of the MNC as an economic institution has its roots in the internalization theory. According to the theory, the MNC serves as a superior internal market through which it can exploit internally created company specific advantages without the fear of negative externalities present in external market transactions (Buckley & Casson 1976 as cited by Johanson & Mattson 1988: 307). According to Bouquet and Birkinshaw (2008 a), early conceptualizations of the MNC were mainly concentrated on transaction cost economics before the 1980s when different theoretical lenses through which the MNC could be interpreted started to emerge. One of these lenses was the resource-based view of the firm (RBV). According to the RBV, a company needs to build its competitive advantage through resources, capabilities and distinctive competences superior to its competitors (Wills-Johnson 2008: 215–217). In line with this view Grant (1996: 375) argues that under dynamic competition and unstable market conditions caused by innovation organizational capabilities rather than positioning are the basis on which to build long-term strategies. Grant's argument illustrates the shift from industry-based view and Porter's Five Forces –model to the RBV emphasizing the importance of key resources in building sustainable competitive advantage.

The ever more complex and demanding nature of customers, the urge in meeting shortened development times and constantly changing environments in the more and more competitive global economy have brought up the value of firm specific, intangible

and hard to imitate resources for MNCs (Davenport & Prusak 1998). It is challenging for companies to establish an edge over competitors. Technologies are imitated and best practices benchmarked: Competitors are short to tag along. As a result focus has shifted to knowledge and the knowledge-based view (KBV) of the firm. Knowledge has always been understood as an integral part of growth and development. However its relative importance has grown over the last three decades because economies have become increasingly dependent on the production, distribution and use of knowledge (OECD 1996: 9). According to OECD (1996) the share of high-technology industries in total manufacturing more than doubled from 1970 to 1994 while the knowledge intensive service sector grew even faster. Over 50 percent of OECD major economies' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to be knowledge-based. Indeed a "knowledge – based economy" has emerged. Knowledge, just like technology, offsets the basic assumption behind the neo-classical production function according to which added capital to the economy diminishes returns. According to the new knowledge-based growth theory knowledge raises returns on investment by enhancing production methods and stimulating new and better products and services. Consequently a constant flow of investments has the possibility to continuously accelerate a country's growth rate (OECD 1996: 11).

As a corollary to the RBV, the KBV considers knowledge as the most important source in achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Davenport & Prusak 1998; Gupta & Govidarajan 2000 a; Yang, Mudambi & Meyer 2008). People and organizations have always, at least subconsciously, searched and valued knowledge. It is not new for organizations to try to recruit the most skillful individuals and then try to keep them on the payroll of the company. Knowledge has always been there, it is not new. What is new is the recognition of knowledge as a corporate asset. Just like the more tangible, easy to grasp resources knowledge should also receive the same amount of attention, investments and management. Knowledge should be regarded as any other asset in the company (Davenport & Prusak 1998: 12). However, the mere existence or possession of knowledge does not guarantee competitive advantage: A company must be able to create new knowledge as well as build on existing one. Unlike more material resources, knowledge assets grow when used. Davenport and Prusak (1998: 17) state that ideas serve as a foundation for new ones and shared knowledge is not lost by the sender and benefits the receiver. However, if not managed properly and leveraged or transferred to the use of the company, this intangible asset stays un-valuable. In large MNCs knowledge is widely dispersed among subsidiaries in different levels around the world

making knowledge integration a crucial component regarding the competitiveness of MNCs (Gupta & Govidarajan 2000 a: 473; Kogut and Zander 1993: 625).

Ghoshal and Bartlett (1990) observe the MNC as an entity consisting of a group of geographically dispersed organizations including the headquarters and national subsidiaries. Adopting a network perspective, they conceptualize the MNC as an interorganizational network embedded in an external network composed of actors with which different MNC units interact. In other words, MNCs are cross-border spanning internal networks that are present in a combination of external markets meaning the external networks in which subsidiaries are embedded (Nell, Ambos and Schlegelmilch 2011). According to Bouquet and Birkinshaw (2008 a), the concept of interorganizational network drawing mainly from the social network theory brings forth the importance of semiautonomous subsidiaries with their specific environments and resources capable of making their own strategic choices. In line with this view, Michailova and Mustaffa (2012: 383) state that the traditional hierarchical perspective of the MNC regarding the HQ as the provider of knowledge to geographically dispersed subsidiaries has changed to a more heterarchical, network-based view, which recognizes the subsidiary as a valuable source of knowledge. Subsidiaries are no longer seen as only production intensive implementers and are granted with strategic independence. Indeed, MNCs are perceived as social communities, where power is decentralized and subsidiaries are granted with strategically important roles providing competitive advantage by contributing to the overall knowledge base of the company. Conducted research regard subsidiaries, for example, as knowledge intensive innovators, competence creators and centers of excellence playing an essential role in the knowledge network of the entire MNC (Gupta & Govindarajan 1991; Yang, et al. 2008; Frost, Birkinshaw & Ensigne 2002).

Emanating from internalization theory, transaction cost economics, social network theory and the KBV, Gupta & Govindarajan (2000 a: 473) state, that the MNC is a "bundle of knowledge", which existence is based on its superior abilities in transferring and exploiting knowledge compared to external market mechanisms. Kogut and Zander (1993: 625) argue accordingly that all firms can be regarded as social communities specialized in the internal transfer and creation of knowledge but particularly the MNC stands out as an efficient "organizational vehicle" transferring knowledge across boarders. Thus the MNC as an organizational form has a significant benefit in tapping into the different knowledge repositories of its geographically dispersed subsidiaries. According to Grant (1996: 375–384), knowledge being the most important resource of

the company, the primary task of the organization in pursuing sustainable competitive advantage is the integration of multiple knowledge bases. In other words, to maximize value attainable through sharing, transferring and combining MNC specific resources created and situated in every part of the company. Thus transforming subsidiary and HQ specific advantages into MNC-specific assets making the global company more than the sum of its parts (Bouquet & Birkinshaw 2008 b).

2.2 Perspectives on knowledge

To be able to understand the concept of knowledge transfer in MNCs one must first understand the different approaches regarding knowledge. The literature presents differentiating definitions, categorizations and terms of knowledge depending on adopted perspective of conducted research. One tendency is to separate between types, dimensions and characteristics of knowledge. However, this separation is far from consistent, and hence distinction between types, dimensions and characteristics of knowledge is blurred and different terms are often used in the same context (Michailowa & Mustaffa 2011: 4–5). For example Gupta and Govidarajan (2000 a) regard knowledge as all-inclusive by addressing it as organizational, whereas other researchers talk about customer, marketing and product knowledge or concentrate solely on technological knowledge (Davenport & Prusak; Håkanson & Nobel 2000). In addition to characteristics and types of knowledge scholars also use different terms for instance capabilities, best practices, know-how etc. when describing knowledge (Michailova & Mustaffa 2011).

Knowledge originates from individuals and is situated in every part of the organization. According to De Long and Fahey (2000: 114) knowledge can be located in individuals, collectives or embedded in routines or processes depending on the context. The type, dimension and location of knowledge define its characteristics, which again, proven by the literature (e.g. Bhagat, Harveston & Triandis 2002; Michailova & Mustaffa 2011), affect its transferability. Therefore, it is crucial to understand different aspects of knowledge.

Davenport and Prusak (1998: 1–2) suggest that a good starting point is to understand differences between data, information and knowledge. These three terms are often used interchangeably as synonyms despite they have a hierarchical relationship. Knowledge

derives from information, which is data with meaning and purpose. Without proper distinction between data, information and knowledge the organization will be likely to face problems along its knowledge management efforts (Davenport & Prusak 1998:1–6).

Data is best described as a compilation of discrete, tangible and objective facts. Unlike information, data does not create an impact. It constitutes of signs without a meaning ready to be used as raw material. In organizations data is usually stored with the help of information technology and is valued through its accessibility. The importance of data is its function as raw material for creating information. (Davenport & Prusak 1998: 2–3; Bhagat et al. 2002: 205–206.)

Information is data with relevance and purpose. It can be seen as a message, with a sender and a receiver, which brings human action to the focus (Davenport & Prusak 1998: 3; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995: 58–59). Unlike data, information is organized, contextualized and corrected. It has a shape and is given importance only if the receiver regards it as useful or more than data. As a message, information can flow in organizations whereas data stays stored in records. (Davenport & Prusak 1998: 1–4.)

Knowledge is a complex mix of information with beliefs, commitment, experience and values with an expert insight. Knowledge is deeper than information and gives a platform for assimilating more information, experiences and expertize. It is embedded in every part of the organization from employees to processes and is thus both fluid and structured not to mention complex making it very hard to define. Unlike information, knowledge is constantly changing. An essential point is that information cannot evolve to knowledge without human action. Knowledge is considered valuable because it is complex and always about some end. For example knowledge can lead to better decision-making. (Ipe 2003; Bhagat et al. 2002: 205; Davenport & Prusak 1998: 5–6; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995: 58–59.)

Conducted research on characteristics of knowledge often defines knowledge through the distinction between *tacit* and *explicit* knowledge (Michailowa & Mustaffa 2011: 4; Chini 2005: 8). Michael Polyani first introduced this classification in 1966 (Szulanski 1996). According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explicit knowledge is publicly expressed knowledge, which is easily articulated with words and numbers through social interaction and written documents. It is "codified" therefor revealed by its communication, easy to store and transmit (Grant 1996: 111; Viitala 2006: 131; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995: 59). Tacit knowledge is more cognitive and subjective, thus harder to

access or communicate. It is located in the minds of individuals and has been developed and internalized over time, which makes it very difficult to articulate or capture (Davenport & Prusak 1998: 70). Like explicit knowledge is revealed by its communication tacit knowledge comes visible through its application (Grant 1996: 111). Viitala (2006) states that individuals may not even be aware of the tacit knowledge they possess. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995: 60) continue by describing explicit knowledge as "the tip of the iceberg" tacit knowledge being hidden under water.

Another way to understand knowledge is to conceive it through which questions it helps to answer. OECD (1996) presents four different types of knowledge: *know-what, know-why, know-how* and *know-who*. Know-what is closest to data or explicit knowledge that can be seen as facts supporting basic functions and processes. Know-why is scientific knowledge retrieved from universities or external networks. This kind of knowledge is more tacit than know-what and is related to product and process development. Know-how can be described as firm specific capabilities and skills. Know-how equals to complex and valuable knowledge that can differentiate a company from its competitors. It constitutes mostly of tacit components. Know-who constitutes of the awareness of the location of knowledge and the way the knowledgeable uses his or her knowledge. This means that know-who includes parts of know-how, which enables the company to use effectively its overall knowledge, thus possessing this type of knowledge is the key in achieving competitive advantage. Because of their differing tacitness and explicitness all of the above-mentioned knowledge types are obtained from different sources: Know-what and −why can be retrieved from databases or reading a book, whereas know-how and −who need to be learned through practical experience including social interaction. (OECD 1996.)

De Long and Fahey (2000) state that confusion revolving around the definition of knowledge would cease if the three types of individual, social and structured knowledge would be recognized. Building on this typology Bhagat et al. (2002) combined the aforementioned types with three dimensions of knowledge proposed by Garud and Nayyar (1994) to create a comprehensive view on knowledge. The types and dimensions of knowledge are presented in Figure 1.
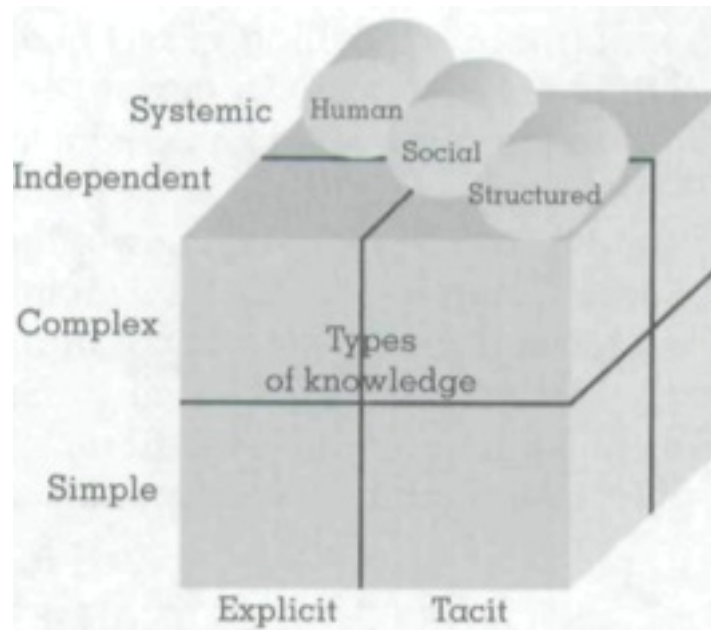
Figure 1. Knowledge types and dimensions (Bhagat et al. 2002).

Human knowledge is what individuals know. This type of knowledge can be tacit as well as explicit or both. According to De Long and Fahey (2000) human knowledge comprise skills like how to ride a bike or interview a customer. *Social knowledge* is created and shared within groups and teams as a result of working together, thus it is mostly tacit. Social or collective knowledge reflects cultural norms of the group, which can make it hard to transfer to an outsider (De Long & Fahey 2000; Bhagat et al. 2002). The third type of knowledge is *Structured knowledge*. This kind of knowledge is largely explicit and can therefore exist also independently in the routines, processes and systems of the organization (De Long and Fahey 2000).

Garud and Nayyar (1994) argue that knowledge can be situated along three dimensions of knowledge: *explicit* versus *tacit*, *simple* versus *complex* and *independent* versus *systemic*. The position of knowledge on these dimensions affects the amount of information or additional knowledge needed to articulate it, which again influences the level of hardship encountered when transferring this knowledge (Garud & Nayyar 1994). For example complex knowledge requires naturally more effort to be understood than simple knowledge. Accordingly, systemic knowledge is embedded in the organizational context and can therefore be understood properly only through the wisdom (i.e. existing body of knowledge) of the transferring organization, whereas independent knowledge is more separable and thus easier to transfer. The concepts of explicit and tacit knowledge

were presented earlier but as a reminder this dimension follows same kind of rules tacit knowledge being harder to transfer than the more easily articulated explicit knowledge. (Bhagat et al. 2002.)

In the model presented in Figure 1. the types and dimensions of knowledge are combined. Bhagat et al. (2002) argue that different types of knowledge tend to position differently on the three dimensions of knowledge. For example the type of social knowledge tends to be more tacit and systemic whereas structured knowledge is more likely explicit than tacit. In all, the more the type of knowledge is tacit, complex and systemic the more difficult it will be to transfer (Garud & Nayyar 1994: 370; Bhagat et al. 2002: 207). Nevertheless, the more tacit and complex the knowledge, the more it tends to provide competitive advantage and is thus perceived as valuable.

Indeed, the classifications of knowledge help in explaining different knowledge characteristics, which again influence its transferability. The model presented in Figure 1. adapted from Bhagat et al. (2002) was originally created to shed light on how different characteristics of knowledge in addition to cultural differences affect the effectiveness of cross-border knowledge transfers in MNCs. According to Bhagat et al. (2002) among cultural differences and the cognitive styles of individuals the type of knowledge is the most important factor affecting the effectiveness of cross-border knowledge transfers. Similarly to the model of Bhagat et al. (2002) Kogut & Zander (1993) present the three constructs of knowledge c*odifiability*, t*eachability* and *complexity* embodying different amounts of tacit and explicit elements determining the easiness or difficulty of knowledge transfers. Riusala and Suutari (2004) used these constructs in their study on international knowledge transfers through expatriates.

Considering the scope of this study and for the sake of simplicity, this thesis follows the well-established view of knowledge as a combination of tacit and explicit components presented by Polyani. The more tacit the knowledge, the more complex and hard it is to transfer. However, this type of knowledge is most valuable to the company because it is hard to imitate and constitutes of a combination of accrued experiences, values and beliefs molded in the context of the organization. Knowledge resides in every part of the organization but originates from individuals and their interaction. The different classifications of knowledge are summarized in Table 1.

Author	Perspective on knowledge
Polyani (1996)	Tacit & Explicit
Kogut & Zander (1993)	Codifiability-Teachability-Complexity
Garrud & Nayyar (1994)	Three dimensions of knowledge: • Explicit vs. Tacit • Simple vs. Complex • Independent vs. Systemic
OECD (1996)	Know-what, -why, -how and who
Davenport & Prusak (1998)	Data-Information-Knowledge
De Long & Fahey (2000)	Three types of knowledge: • Individual • Social • Structured
Bhagat, Harveston & Triandis (2002)	The types of individual, social and structured knowledge position differently on explicit vs. tacit, simple vs. complex and independent vs. systemic dimensions of knowledge.

Table 1. Knowledge classifications.

2.3 Knowledge transfer as part of knowledge management

With the rise of the KBV of the firm, knowledge is considered as the most important asset of the company and needs to be managed like any other tangible resource. According to Davenport, De Long and Beers (1998: 43) organizational processes aiming at more effective creation, transfer and utilization of knowledge are all part of knowledge management. The literature presents a variety of definitions of knowledge management including various numbers of different terms but in general they all embody the three objectives of creating, retaining and transferring of knowledge.

Gupta and Govindarajan (2000 b) argue that the objective of knowledge management is to mold the organization into a "knowledge machine" with a "social ecology" composed of culture, structure, information systems, reward systems, processes, people and leadership. This machine needs to effectively create, acquire, share and mobilize knowledge to stay competitive. As it is visible in the forgoing words of Gupta and

Govindarajan (2000 b) the sphere of influence of knowledge management is deep involving the whole organization from employees to top managers, people to structures, systems and processes. Hansen, Nohria and Tierney (1999: 116) argue that knowledge management requires the attention of the CEO and general managers and needs to be coordinated with functional departments of IT and HR and the competitive strategy of the company. If not, both the company and its customers suffer. Davenport et al. (1998) state accordingly that knowledge management and its processes are seen as the modern company's strategic tools in achieving competitive advantage.

Knowledge transfer is an important part of the knowledge management cycle. See Figure 2. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000 b) regard knowledge management consisting of two main tasks of accumulating and mobilizing (i.e. transferring) knowledge. These main tasks can be subdivided into the elements of knowledge creation, acquisition, retention, identification, outflow, transmission and inflow. Knowledge creation equals learning or could be considered as innovating whereas acquisition is the process of internalizing knowledge gained outside the company. Retention consists of efforts to retain created and acquired knowledge. These three elements are all part of knowledge accumulation in a company. Mobilizing knowledge starts with the identification of opportunities to share knowledge. Next, the company must encourage knowledge outflow by motivating knowledgeable people to share their knowing keeping in mind that knowledge, to be transmitted, needs effective and efficient channels. For the mobilizing of knowledge to succeed knowledge receivers must also be encouraged to accept and utilize the inflowing knowledge. (Gupta & Govindarajan 2000 b: 73.)
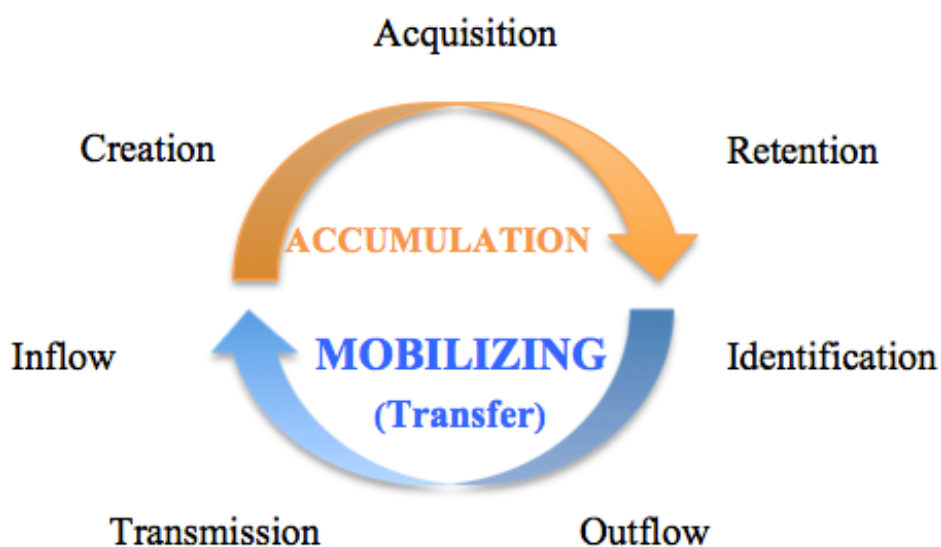

Figure 2. Km-cycle based on (Gupta & Govindarajan 2000 b).

According to Argote, McEvily and Reagans (2003) research conducted on organizational learning and knowledge management is highly differentiated combining several disciplinary perspectives. The researchers argue that the heterogeneity of knowledge management research cuts across the disciplines of economics, information systems, organizational behavior and theory, psychology, strategic management and sociology. This observation is very much in line with the arguments of the sphere of influence of knowledge management in the organization presented earlier (e.g. Gupta and Govindarajan 2000 b; Hansen et al. 1999; Davenport et al. 1998). In their attempt to organize the literature on knowledge management and bring forward existing interconnections between the different disciplinary perspectives Argote et al. (2003) created a framework structured around the two dimensions of knowledge management outcomes and knowledge management context.

Emanating from the literature Argote et al. (2003) divide knowledge management outcomes to the three factors of creating, retaining and transferring of knowledge. In line with the knowledge management cycle presented by Gupta and Govindarajan (2000 b), Argote et al. (2003) perceive the creation, retention and transferring of knowledge as interrelated. In other words, if one of these outcomes is missing or not implemented effectively the cycle breaks and knowledge is neither created, nor transferred properly. For example, if a company wishes to gain competitive advantage it is not enough to accumulate knowledge, but also to transfer it. On the other hand, mobilizing knowledge is not possible if it is not accumulated, or like Gupta and Govindarajan (2000 b) put it: created, acquired and held on to. Furthermore, the transferring and combining of knowledge can create new knowledge to be shared (Argote et al. 2003; Davenport & Prusak 1998).

Literature tends to explain the context in which knowledge management takes place through the properties of units, properties of the relationships between units and properties of the knowledge itself depending on adopted theories and perspectives. In other words, "different theories of knowledge management give causal priority to different contextual properties" (Argote et al. 2003: 572). According to Argote et al. (2003) these properties illustrate how researchers have addressed the issue of *what* affects the creation, retention and transferring of knowledge (i.e. knowledge management outcomes). However, the contextual properties of knowledge management do not explain the reason behind the very occurrence of the outcomes. Thus fail to answer the question *why* a given property of the context affects a chosen outcome. To answer this question, for example why the relationship between two individuals affects

knowledge transfer, researchers must adopt a more micro-level approach and concentrate on mechanisms affecting individual level behavior. This is especially true when studying individual level knowledge sharing instead of organizational knowledge transfer between for example two subsidiaries. After all, understanding individual level knowledge sharing forms the basis for understanding MNC wide knowledge integration (Ipe 2007). MNC knowledge flows and knowledge sharing will be covered next under the following section.

2.4 MNC knowledge sharing

Conducted research on MNC knowledge transfers has identified different kinds of knowledge flows present in the global company (e.g. Michailova & Mustaffa 2012; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000 a). Due to the multidimensional nature of the MNC, knowledge flows in several directions and across multiple organizational levels (Gupta & Govindarajan 2000 a). On a general level MNC participates in two kinds of knowledge exchange: internal and external knowledge transfers. The former encompasses knowledge flows within the borderlines of the company the latter comprising knowledge transfers with external third parties. The focus of this study is limited to internal transfers which can further be broken down into inter unit or intra unit flows. According to Michailova and Mustaffa (2012) inter unit knowledge flows can be divided into knowledge in- and outflows depending on if the focal unit of analysis is receiving or dispatching knowledge. When knowledge flows between two subsidiaries it is referred as being horizontal whereas if the knowledge is transferred between the HQ and a sister unit it is called vertical knowledge flow. When the subsidiary transfers knowledge to the HQ, or engages in vertical outflow, it can also be referred as reverse knowledge transfer (Ambos et al. 2006). Intra unit knowledge transfers flow along the same directions as inter unit transfers with the exception that they do so within a MNC unit not between them. For example intra unit knowledge flows occur between different divisions and business functions and the hierarchical structures of a given subsidiary. However, when the MNC is considered as the unit of analysis, researchers can utilize the term intra unit instead of inter unit in describing a knowledge transfer between two MNC units. The different MNC knowledge flows are summarized in Figure 3.
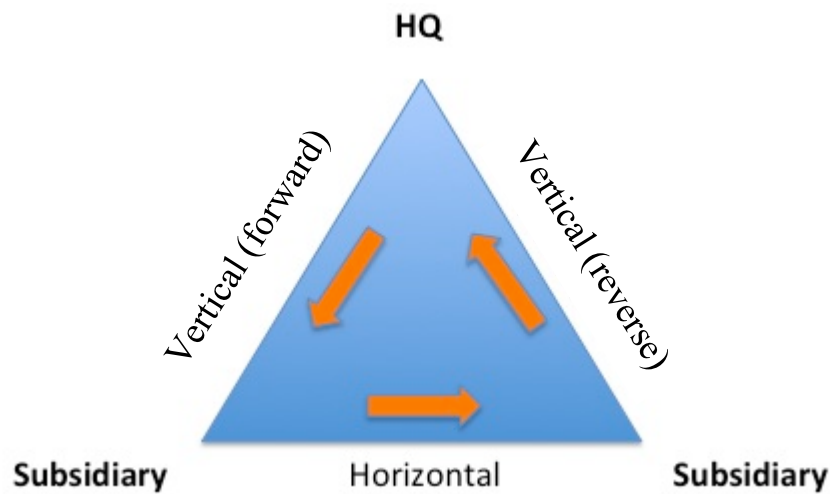
Figure 3. MNC knowledge flows

The discussion so far has been on the organizational level of knowledge transferring: between units, functions and divisions. However, the most fundamental form of knowledge transferring happens at the individual level between two or more employees either from the same or between different MNC units. According to Minbaeva, Mäkelä and Rabbiosi (2012: 389), there exists a shared understanding in knowledge transfer research that organizational level knowledge transfer emanates from individuals. In line with this view Mäkelä and Brewster (2009) identify an increase in the recognition of interpersonal interaction as an important channel for inter unit knowledge flows. For example Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) state that knowledge sharing is a key enabler of knowledge transfer within organizations. Also Shotter and Bontis (2009) argue that direct linkages and communication enabling person-to-person interaction are needed for all kinds of knowledge flows to happen. One of the most cited arguments is the one presented by Foss (2007) according to which an understanding of intra organizational knowledge transfers cannot be reached by excluding the individual level of knowledge sharing from the examination (see e.g. Husted et al. 2012; Minbaeva et al. 2012; Michailova & Minbaeva 2012).

The so-called "people perspective" of knowledge management stresses the importance of individuals who possess knowledge that needs to be disseminated to the level of groups and eventually up to the organizational level where it can be transformed into competitive and economic value for the company (Ipe 2003). For example, Foss, Husted and Michailova (2010) argue that individual level knowledge sharing results in

organizational knowledge. Research assuming this perspective adopt individual level of knowledge sharing as their focal point of analysis compared to studies concentrating on the more organizational level of knowledge transferring. Like mentioned earlier, knowledge assets grow when used and existing knowledge serves as a foundation on top of which new knowledge can be created. Thus the effective leveraging of knowledge is dependent on the capabilities of employees to share their knowledge while building on the knowledge received from others. According to Ipe (2003: 341) knowledge sharing is studied at the most basic level between individuals as "an act of making knowledge available to others". The focus of this study is to take a closer look on mentoring as a context and/or channel for individual level knowledge sharing between employees from different MNC subsidiaries.

2.4.1 Knowledge sharing and its barriers

Knowledge transfer and thus sharing is a complex and intricate process because of its many determinants (Szulanski 2003; Minbaeva 2007: 568; Ipe 2003). Conducted research traditionally approaches this process through a communication model or signaling metaphor by specifying the five elements of the source, recipient, channel, message and context (Szulanski 2000: 11). In other words, the sharing process takes place in a given environment including at least two individuals, one acting as the source or sender of a message (i.e. knowledge) the other adopting the role of a recipient to whom, the message is sent through a chosen channel. Szulanski (2003) argues that the transfer of best practices within an organization is the recreation of a superior practice in another setting. Thus the act of sharing knowledge can be considered successful not until the shared knowledge is received, understood and utilized by the recipient.

Szulanski (1996, 2003) divides the transferring of knowledge into four stages: initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration. Initiation stage starts when there exists a gap between someone's knowing and what is known in the organization. The discovering of a need to fill this gap triggers a search for superior knowledge. On the other hand, coming across knowledge, which renders an existing situation unsatisfactory might reveal a need to acquire new knowledge. In short, the initiation stage includes actions and situations that ultimately lead to the decision to share knowledge (Szulanski 1996). The implementation stage comprises the actual sharing of knowledge. Social ties are established and the shared knowledge is refined to the needs of he recipient and shaped into an easily understandable form. The implementation stage comes to an end when the receiver starts to use the shared knowledge. During the ramp-up stage the source

receives support in the utilization of the newly acquired knowledge. Occurring problems are solved and the ineffective use of knowledge is "ramped up" to satisfactory levels. The integration stage is about making the shared knowledge routinized. Established shared meanings and behaviors are reflected in knowledge related actions. As a consequence behavior becomes understandable, predictable and stable. In the end of the process knowledge becomes institutionalized.

The process view of exchanging knowledge has been criticized due to its simplistic approach on a complex phenomenon. According to Harvey (2012) conducted research has suggested that knowledge transfer is better understood through mutual exchanges compared to the generic source-recipient model. As the former entails a one-way process where knowledge is modified by the sender to be easily recreated in another setting, the latter model considers a deeper level of sharing know-how through a back and forth movement, socialization and shared experiences resulting in new skills and a mutual understanding of issues (Harvey 2012). The mutual exchange model stresses the importance of interaction through discussion and the reciprocity of the relationship between the sender and the receiver of knowledge. For example Harvey (2012) found mentoring and storytelling groups to enhance knowledge transfer through interaction and learning taking place in discussions. The knowledge being sent was constantly adapted to meet the needs of the recipient and refined with the input of both the sender and the receiver. However, one could argue that the model of mutual exchange relies heavily on the basics of the source-recipient model. The back and forth exchanges can be understood as a mix of individual acts of sharing knowledge explained by the source-recipient model. The two models are summarized in Figure 4.
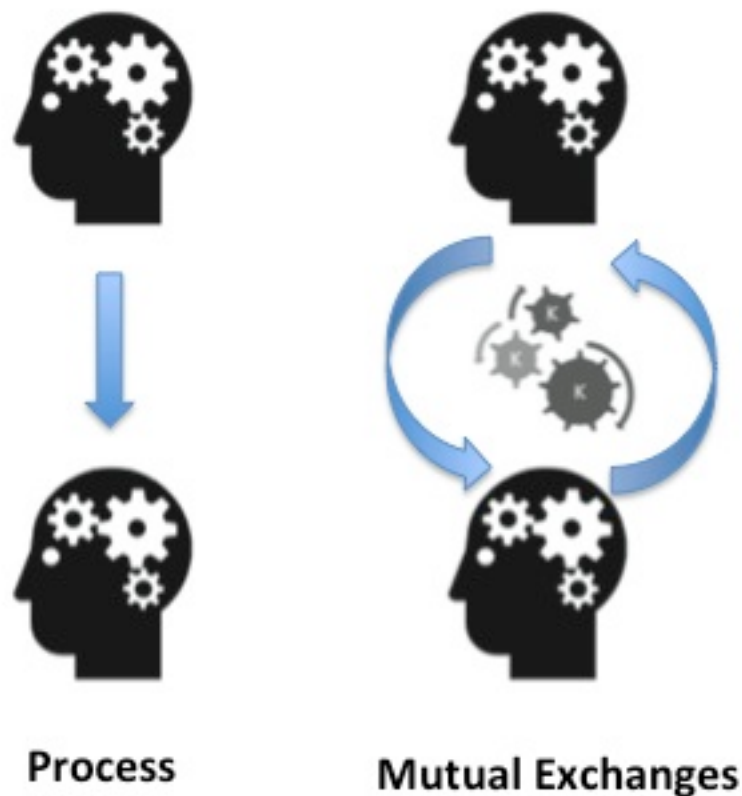
Figure 4. Knowledge sharing models (based on Harvey 2012).

Emanating from both, the sender-receiver and the mutual exchange model, Michailova and Minbaeva (2012) view knowledge sharing as a relational act based on a sender-receiver relationship composed of multiple concurrent exchanges between the participants. During this ongoing act (or process) none of the participants relinquish ownership of their knowledge. On the contrary, the outcome is joint ownership of the shared knowledge, which might even be a refined version of the original due to the input of the receiver (Ipe 2003 as cited by Michailova & Minbaeva 2012: 60). This thesis adopts the definition of knowledge sharing presented by Michailova and Minbaeva (2012).

In an ideal situation knowledge would circulate around the organization from knowledgeable to knowledge seekers regenerating the knowledge bases of the company and enabling full leveraging of individual's know-how. However, contrary to popular belief and despite of its axiomatic benefits, research has shown that knowledge sharing does not happen by itself and has even been referred as being "sticky" (Szulanski 1996). Knowledge sharing, its occurrence and stickiness have been explained through the variables of the source-recipient model. That is, research has identified several aspects

of the source, recipient (and the relationship between them), knowledge and the context to have an effect on knowledge sharing. A good example of such research is the work conducted by Szulanski (1996; 2000; 2003) on different knowledge barriers or "stickiness factors".

Szulanski (1996) argues that both the source and knowledge being transferred might lack credibility or there exists uncertainty how a given practice can be recreated in a new context, thus it suffers from "causal ambiguity". It is also possible that the source lacks credibility or is not motivated to engage in knowledge transfer because of a fear of loosing a favorable role or not getting a fair compensation from the valuable asset he or she has created. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000 b: 73–74) refer to this unwillingness to share as the "Knowledge is power –syndrome". Likewise, the recipient could lack motivation to search or even accept knowledge outside its boundaries. This is referred as the "Not Invented Here" or NIH –syndrome (Szulanski 1996: 31). In addition, the recipient might suffer from low absorptive and retentive capacities to even receive, utilize and keep transferred knowledge. Szulanski (1996) also brings forth the negative effects of a barren organizational culture and arduous relationship hindering the process of transferring knowledge. The presented stickiness factors have different effects during the stages of the transfer process: in the beginning source related factors dominate but as the transfer process unfolds their importance decreases while the recipient's characteristics stand out (Szulanski 2003). Furthermore, given the context of the MNC, the presented barriers for effective knowledge transfer are raised higher by the international dimension of cross border knowledge transfers. More precisely, colliding organizational and national cultures, institutions, norms and values not to mention relationships and power balances between the different MNC units can cause extra hardship regarding the effective transferring of knowledge.

Indeed, the process or act of sharing knowledge, which starts from the identification of a need and ends with the internalization of know-how encompass many determinants, which together or in isolation can act as barriers for the effective sharing of knowledge. Even though discussed at the level of organizational knowledge transfer, the above-mentioned barriers and their effects on knowledge transfer are equally valid at the individual level of knowledge sharing.

2.4.2 The Knowledge governance approach and AMO framework

Even though acknowledged as a fundamental building block of organizational knowledge sharing, conducted research has been claimed to pay insufficient attention to individual level constructs and mechanisms of knowledge sharing (Foss et al. 2010). For knowledge sharing to occur conscious action is needed on behalf of the individual in possession of the knowledge and/or the individual receiving the shared knowledge (Ipe 2003). Therefore, like mentioned earlier under the section of knowledge management, there exists a need to explain individual level behavior regarding knowledge sharing. More precisely, adopting a micro level approach to complement the well-established macro level research is warranted. As a response to this need a new approach on knowledge sharing has emerged: the knowledge governance approach or KGA.

The knowledge governance approach (KGA) makes a distinction between micro and macro levels. According to Foss (2007) extant literature on the "knowledge movement" is confined to studying macro level phenomenon or the correlation between macro phenomena. For example how organizational antecedent, like control mechanisms affect knowledge sharing outcomes. However, by concentrating solely on macro variables or the links between them and neglecting mediating micro variables and interconnectedness researchers end up with a shorthand explanation of a complicated multilevel phenomenon (Foss et al. (2010). See Figure 5 for different macro and macro links underlying the KGA approach.
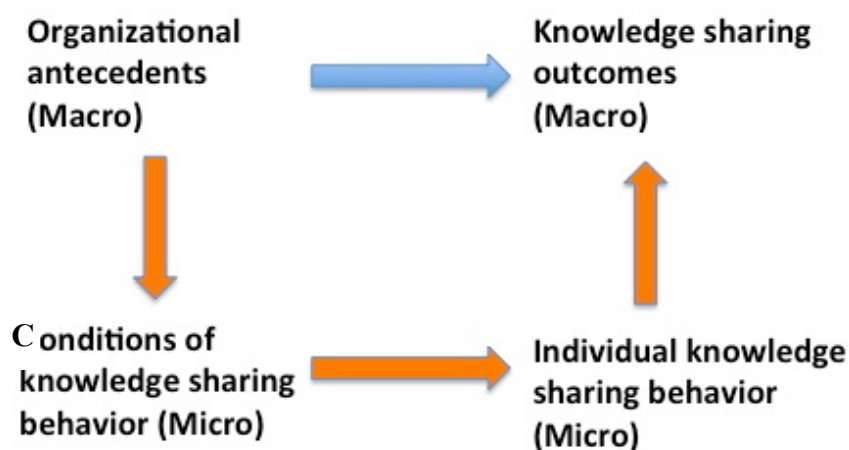

Figure 5. Different levels of analysis (Modified from Foss et al. 2010).

Based on the work of Coleman 1990, Foss et al. (2010) argue that and ideal level of analysis considers a macro level outcome (upper-right corner), for example organizational knowledge sharing as a result of individual level behavior and action (lower-right corner), which in turn is affected by surrounded conditions (lower-left corner) determined by organizational antecedents (upper-left corner). According to Gooderham, Minbaeva and Pedersen (2011) this causal process from organizational to individual level and back brings forward important individual level factors such as beliefs, perceptions, expectations, decision-making and abilities, which all occupy an essential role in explaining knowledge sharing. Bock et al. (2005) stress the importance of the willingness of individuals to make their knowledge available. Thus effective knowledge sharing is dependent on the understanding and proper management of factors inducing such behavior. The underlying assumption presented by the KGA is that organizations have the possibility to impact conditions in which knowledge sharing takes place through for example HRM practices and thus affect individual knowledge sharing behavior that aggregates to the organizational level (Foss 2007; Foss et al 2010; Gooderham et al. 2011).

One widely utilized approach in explaining knowledge sharing behavior, its antecedents and the relationship between them is the AMO framework. According to Hughes (2007) the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity framework spawns formal, meta and midrange theories, which serve as a basis for understanding human behavior. For example, applying the framework in the context of knowledge management Argote et al. (2003) argue that the causal mechanisms of ability, motivation and opportunity answer the questions of how and why properties of the context affect the creation, retention and transferring of knowledge. The three mechanisms are often considered as complementary and interconnected, having a combined effect on knowledge sharing. However, like suggested by Siemsen, Roth and Balasubramanian (2008) it is also possible to consider which one of the AMO variables present itself as the constraining factor ultimately impeding desired behavior.

Regarding the topic of this thesis, knowledge sharing behavior can be understood by analyzing an individual's ability, motivation and opportunity to engage in knowledge sharing. Siemsen, Roth and Balasubramanian (2008) condense that ability refers to an individual's skills and existing knowledge regarding the action to be initiated. Motivation encompasses the individual's willingness to act whereas opportunity embodies exogenous factors such as environmental and contextual mechanisms enabling or restricting action. Indeed, the AMO framework guides analysis towards the

conditions of individual behavior and helps to synthesize literature on factors affecting knowledge sharing. Next, different factors affecting MNC knowledge sharing will be taken under closer examination utilizing ability, motivation and opportunity as the three mechanisms constructing the conditions for knowledge sharing behavior.

2.5 Factors affecting knowledge sharing

Factors affecting knowledge sharing presented in this section are accumulated from several academic sources covering the topics of knowledge sharing and transferring. The following division of the identified factors under the constructs of the AMO framework should not be considered as all-encompassing or definite but rather as a generalization offering insight and clarity in understanding knowledge sharing and its antecedents.

2.5.1 Motivation

Huang et al. (2013) argue that motivation serves as the core proposition behind various theories such as social exchange theory, agency theory, expectancy-value frameworks and social capital theory all used to explain knowledge sharing behavior. The focal role of motivation in explaining knowledge sharing behavior is also visible in the work of Bock et al. (2005) in which motivation serves as the underlying driver for an individual's intention to share knowledge. Conducted research on motivation tends to make a division between internal an external motivational factors or discuss about intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (See e.g. Ipe 2003; Minbaeva et al. 2012; Bock et al. 2005). According to Minbaeva et al. (2012) extrinsic motivation is affected by exogenous factors originating from the surrounding context. It is a result of indirectly satisfied needs, through for example financial compensation or gaining recognition (Osterloh, Frost & Frey 2002 as cited by Minbaeva et al. 2013: 391). Thus extrinsic motivation to do something is fundamentally composed from expectations of external rewards. The concept of extrinsic motivation has been widely used for example in research on compensation and reward systems to incentivize knowledge sharing. In contrast to extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation to share knowledge comes form within the individual the only reward from engaging in the behavior being the activity itself. In other words, an intrinsically motivated individual engages in knowledge sharing because it satisfies internal needs (Minbaeva et al 2012). Nevertheless, extant

literature is not unambiguous about the terminology. For example, extrinsic motivation is often linked solely to monetary compensation.

A similar division is also visible in the theory of reasoned action or TRA presented first by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. According to the theory a certain behavior is preceded by an intention to perform that behavior, which again is dependent on an individual's attitudes as well as subjective norms towards and concerning the behavior to be conducted (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). Attitudes are composed of personal beliefs about the consequences of the behavior, for example the individual might consider attainable benefits if engaging in the behavior. Subjective norms on the other hand are a result of normative beliefs about the behavior, for example an individual's intention might be affected by the general acceptability of the intended behavior. Bock et al. (2005) view the TRA as an integrative framework, which brings together forces, both internal and external, constituting an individual's willingness to share knowledge. In short, motivational factors are embedded in intentions, which ultimately affect behavior as proposed by Ajzen (1991 as cited by Gagné 2009: 572). If motivation is the core proposition behind theories explaining knowledge sharing behavior then TRA and the notions of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations can be argued to serve as the underlying ideas behind motivation itself. According to Cabrera and Cabrera (2005: 721–722), the theories of social exchange, social dilemma and social capital shed light on factors affecting knowledge sharing attitudes and what constitutes an environment conducive to sharing knowledge (i.e. subjective norms). Next motivation will be taken under closer examination with the help of these theories.

From the perspective of extrinsic motivation an individual's decision-making process about whether or not to share knowledge is comparable to a cost-benefit analysis (Cabrera & Cabrera 2002 as cited by Minbaeva et al. 2012: 391). Based on conducted research, Bock et al. (2005) state that knowledge-sharing participants have to endure costs in the form of lost time and effort. Therefor, perceived benefits must outweigh costs for an individual to engage in knowledge sharing. According to Bock et al. (2005), an individual's personal belief structures regarding the sharing of knowledge are composed of the consideration between individual, group and organizational level gains from monetary rewards to gaining reputation and loosing power. This self-interested analysis of cost and benefits is usually placed under the theory of social exchange according to which expected benefits can also manifest themselves in an intangible form for example as an expectation of reciprocity in the future (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005).

According to Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) an individual's expectations of reciprocity are regulated by trust that sharing of knowledge will, at some point, be reciprocated. Without trust of getting compensated, it is not rational to engage in knowledge sharing. Indeed, the cost-benefit -ratio can be altered in two ways. First, the organization can rely in commitment-based "communal governance" aimed and leveraging individuals' volunteerism and intrinsic motivation driven by the psychological mechanisms of trust, loyalty and commitment. Second, tangible and explicit incentives can be implement to more or less force desired behavior. Nevertheless, research has shown little or negative effects of transaction-based governance on knowledge sharing behavior. For example, Husted et al. (2012) found transaction –based governance to strengthen individuals' reasons for hoarding and rejecting knowledge and argue that knowledge sharing cannot be ruled or paid but rather stimulated by affecting intrinsic motivation. Monetary and other tangible incentivizing of knowledge sharing behavior have a negative effect on volunteer exchanging of know-how and accentuate the "politics of information" in the company (Davenport, Eccles & Prusal 1992 as cited by Ipe 2003: 346).

Closely related to the idea of expected benefits and the social exchange theory is the earlier mentioned "Knowledge is power –syndrome" (Gupta & Govindarajan 2000 b) with the exception that instead of engaging in knowledge sharing based on considerations about attainable benefits one might withdraw from the behavior in fear of loosing a benefit linked to the possession of specific knowledge. When knowledge is valued as the most important resource of the company, its possession can serve as a noticeable advantage when trying to exert influence in the power circuits of the company (Bouquet & Birkinshaw 2008 a). When knowledge is attributed with power and considered as a source of individual competitive advantage voluntary sharing of knowledge is discouraged (Ipe 2003; Husted et al. 2012). Attached value to knowledge might in addition create a need among employees to create and utilize their own knowledge instead of receiving it from someone else due to professional pride (Husted et al. 2012). Related to the notion of professional pride, Michailova and Minbaeva (2012) state that managers in a higher hierarchical position might be reluctant to receive knowledge from employees at lower hierarchical levels. Likewise, subordinates could withhold knowledge in order to appear less knowledgeable than their manager. The rejection of knowledge might also be a result of missing trust in the source or the knowledge being shared. A strong group affiliation might even cause a "them versus us" differentiation. According to Husted et al. (2012), all of the above-mentioned issues related to receiving knowledge can be grouped under the not-invented-here syndrome.

According to Bock et al. (2005), in addition to an unfavorable cost and benefit –ratio, missing trust or value attached to knowledge, a lack of motivation to engage in knowledge sharing might originate from a public good dilemma. Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) argue accordingly that knowledge contribution to the repositories of the company is comparable to the same social dilemma identified to exist with public goods. In short, once shared in the organization, knowledge is available for everyone, even for those who have not made any contribution in return (Bock et al. 2005). Thus the fear of free-riding has a negative effect on motivation to share knowledge resulting in a suboptimal outcome from the standpoint of the organization. In line with this view Kramer (1999 as cited by Ipe 2003: 347) identify perceptions of others not contributing equally or exploiting cooperative efforts produce barriers to trust resulting in decreased motivation to share. As such, social dilemma is closely related to expectations of reciprocity. Nevertheless, Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) state that by lowering perceived costs of contributing and increasing perceived rewards when sharing knowledge, the public good dilemma can be overcome. In addition to relying solely on extrinsic motivation, the public good dilemma can be fought with the help of individual needs, the components of intrinsic motivation. For example, knowledge sharing is more likely to take place when an individual regards his or her knowledge as helpful and valuable to others and shares it out of personal joy and satisfaction. Thus the contribution of sharing possessed knowledge is expected to have a positive impact on the receiver's life. This kind of behavior results from other-oriented empathy and helpfulness (Allen 2003). Furthermore, an individual's willingness to share and receive knowledge is influenced by his or her level of "self-efficacy", that is, the person's beliefs about the achievability of the task at hand (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005: 723). A final option to fight the public good dilemma is to increase group identification among individuals, which is also touched upon the relational dimension of social capital.

Nahapiet and Ghosal (1998: 243) define social capital as: "...the sum of the actual and the potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit." In other words, social capital reflects the quality of relationships: a dense social capital enhances the creation and sharing of intellectual capital (i.e. knowledge) (Nahapiet and Ghosal 1998). Researchers usually distinguish between three dimensions of social capital: structural, relational and cognitive (e.g. Nahapiet & Ghosal 1998; Cabrera & Cabrera 2005). The structural dimension constitutes of the ties and bonds or linkages between actors. It describes the density of network ties and refers to the pattern of social interactions

among individuals. The cognitive dimension embodies factors increasing mutual understanding and enabling effective communication such as shared language, codes and the way actors impress themselves. The relational dimension comprises emotional attachments including shared trust, identity, norms and obligations affecting individual behavior. The shared trust that forms in socialization processes and originates from the relational social capital is a prerequisite for the beliefs of reciprocity affecting knowledge sharing motivation to exist (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005). The relational dimension of social capital resembles closely the constructs of intention presented by the theory of reasoned action. Indeed, attitudes and subjective norms are composed of beliefs about the consequences of and beliefs about an intended behavior. In line with this view, Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) argue that it is the relational dimension of social capital, which determines the willingness to share knowledge the other two dimensions mainly affecting the opportunity to engage in knowledge sharing.

As presented earlier under the topic of knowledge barriers, the organizational culture plays an essential role in the success or failure of the knowledge sharing process. Szulanksi (1996) argues that an organizational culture may either be barren or fertile towards the sharing of knowledge. Organizational culture constitutes of values, norms and practices, which affect the behavior of the company including the way it creates, uses and shares knowledge (De Long & Fahey 2000). Kostova (1999) argues accordingly that organizational culture affects at both the general level on how learning, innovation and change are perceived and at the practice level on how the values of a given practice match with the ones of the receiving party. Michailova and Minbaeva (2012: 60) argue that organizational values that operate both on behavioral and cognitive levels are the most important elements forming organizational culture. According to the researchers organizational values affect established patterns of behavior, thus affect knowledge sharing. By studying the espousing, enacting and internalizing of the value of dialogue Michailova and Minbaeva (2012) found out that knowledge sharing behavior of individuals is not influenced by organizational values *per se* but by the degree of their internalization among organizational members within and across departments.

If the value of sharing knowledge occupies an integral part in the organization employees are more likely to be motivated to share and receive knowledge because the behavior is valued in the company and among colleagues. Thus, attitudes and subjective norms forming the intention to share knowledge are more likely to be positive and supportive than negative. For example, the internalization of the value of sharing

knowledge can be decisive whether sharing knowledge is considered as a laborious extra-role behavior or daily in-role behavior (Wang & Noe 2010). Also Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) identify organizational culture as a normative guideline for supporting knowledge sharing. However, in addition to creating a hospitable environment for sharing to take place through social norms depicting the importance of knowledge sharing, organizational culture should be utilized to construct an environment of fairness and trust. Among others Ipe (2003) and Bock et al. (2005) stress the role of an open, trusting and fair culture whereas Husted et al. (2012) discuss about tolerance towards making mistakes. Cabrera and Cabrera (2005: 729) state that extant literature on knowledge sharing seems to unanimously agree that willingness to share is increased in an open and trusting environment.

The linkage between organizational culture and knowledge sharing is emphasized in the case of MNCs, which might comprise of multiple subcultures (Michailova & Minbaeva 2012). Individuals from different MNC units may not always share the same norms and values. Differences in values can originate from the operating environment, such as the national culture, as well as differing appointed unit roles in the corporation. As a result even though the corporate headquarters would promote and foster a culture of sharing knowledge some units may decide not to adhere to the parent company mandate, which will be reflected at the individual level. Researchers have identified this situation as a principal-agent dilemma (e.g. Björkman, Wilhelm, Barner-Rasmussen & Li 2004). According to the agency theory, or agency dilemma, due to differing interests and information asymmetries, the agent (e.g. subsidiary) might not act as the principal (e.g. HQ) whishes. Even though the principal would value knowledge sharing the agent might not. Because of differing values the agent might consider knowledge sharing initiatives as costly or in vein. In this kind of situation the role of organizational culture as an enabler of a conducive environment bringing individuals closer together both physically and mentally is emphasized. Factors affecting motivation to share knowledge are presented in Table 2.

Factors affecting knowledge sharing motivation	
Source	Expected costs & rewards
	Expectations of reciprocity
	Prosocial behavior
Recipient	Professional pride

	Them vs. us
General	Trust
	Self-efficacy
	Hierarchies
	Value related to knowledge
	Open, trusting & fair culture

Table 2. Factors affecting knowledge sharing motivation.

2.5.2 Opportunity

Siemsen et al. (2008) view the opportunity to share as a vague concept compared to motivation and ability and argue that the construct of opportunity captures the remaining exogenous factors affecting knowledge sharing. Nevertheless, without the existence of sharing channels, enabling structures and facilitating technology knowledge sharing is impeded.

Opportunity to share knowledge is highly dependent on the existence, availability and quality of proper sharing channels. In other words, knowledge sharing opportunity and the success or failure of the sharing process is conditional on the relationships between individuals and the surrounding context. Argote et al. (2003) argue that organizational relationships physically and psychologically reduce the amount of distance between individuals and provide employees the opportunity to learn from each other. From a theoretical perspective, a dense social capital and especially its structural dimension facilitate the sharing of knowledge. Indeed, strong ties and bonds between individuals increase the opportunity of knowledge sharing (Nahapiet & Ghosal 1998).

Depending on the formulation of the relationship Ipe (2003) makes a distinction between formal and informal opportunities to share knowledge. Formal opportunities to share knowledge or "purposive learning channels" are specifically designed by the organization to enable and support the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. The organization can create such opportunities for example through establishing communities of practice, work teams and training programs all of which provide necessary tools and create a structured environment for knowledge sharing to take place (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Ipe 2003). Furthermore, the existence of such channels can be seen to reflect top management's support toward knowledge initiatives. On the

contrary, informal opportunities or "relational learning channels" arise from interpersonal relationships and social networks. Unlike opportunities created through formal interventions of management, informal opportunities can only be supported by the organization for example through creating a fertile environment for employees to interact and build relational channels (Ipe 2003). The utilization of these channels is optional, thus occurring opportunities to engage in knowledge sharing are informal in nature. Nevertheless, informal learning channels can be blocked by hierarchical or organizational structures dictating strict information reporting procedures and building silos around functions and departments (Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi & Mohammed 2007). As a consequence knowledge sharing becomes laborious and takes place on a restricted level mostly between top management from which it is assimilated downwards. Another barrier for informal knowledge sharing to take place is the absence of suitable places. According to Swap et al. (2001) knowledge is shared unconsciously and incidentally while at work. Therefor, closed offices and small coffee rooms inhibit knowledge sharing (Al-Alawi et al. 2007).

According to Ipe (2003: 349) the advantage of formal opportunities is their effectiveness. The company has the possibility to control the amount and experience of employees it whishes to bring closer together. Even though the dissemination of knowledge taking place, for example in training, is fast and reaches a large number of individuals, the knowledge being shared has been shown to be mostly explicit in nature (Ipe 2003). Research has shown that the majority of knowledge being shared takes place in informal settings through relational channels due to the fact that individuals prefer informal opportunities to formal ones (Stevenson and Gilly 1991 as cited by Ipe 2003: 350). Relational channels support face-to-face interaction, which again results in closer relationships between individuals. Employees learn to trust and respect each other, which increases their motivation to share knowledge. However, one could argue that regardless of the explicitness of the knowledge being shared, purposive learning channels such as training and cross-functional teams create space and time for employees to socialize and form relationships both formal and informal. Cabrera and Cabrera (2005: 722) concur that when employees spend more time together the resulting increased interaction breathes continual communication, which again builds a foundation for a shared language to form. Thus formal opportunities may spawn informal ones and reflect the organization's positive attitudes toward knowledge sharing. In line with this view Argote et al. (2003) stress the importance of proximity enabling individuals to learn who knows what and where in the company lowering the bar to search for knowledge in the organization. Thus employees are more likely to seek

knowledge further than the next office down the hall. Accordingly Boschma (2005 as cited by Harvey 2012: 403) states that proximity is geographical but also cognitive, organizational, institutional and social and therefor plays an important part in the process of sharing knowledge.

While identifying the importance of proximity and the organization's role in facilitating the occurrence of knowledge sharing, Siemsen et al. (2008) argue that opportunity is essentially dependent on available time. If employees do not have enough slack time between their regular work routines and tasks, informal knowledge sharing will not occur. In fact, Siemsen et al. (2008) found opportunity, operationalized as time availability, to have an indirect effect on knowledge sharing behavior through motivation and ability. More precisely, lack of time presents itself as a barrier for motivation and ability thus no matter how willing or able an individual might be, without time no knowledge will be shared.

A final, important factor affecting opportunity to share knowledge is the availability of technology. Indeed, instant messaging enabling software such as office communicator and videoconference technology help to overcome physical distance and time related problems (Siemsen et al. 2008). IT -based systems can also be deployed to help store and disseminate knowledge. However, the creation of databases risks excessive focusing on the collection instead of sharing of knowledge. Furthermore, the possibility of storing experience and real know-how (i.e. codification of tacit knowledge) into databases and the active retrieving of the stored knowledge has been widely criticized (Davenport & Prusak 1998). In addition to the availability of technology and proximity, a related enabler of knowledge sharing opportunities is the company's policies regarding travelling expenses. Indeed, Argote et al. (2003) argue that personnel movement across organizational and unit borders increase knowledge sharing opportunity.

In the end, opportunity to share knowledge originates from interpersonal relationships. Organizations can rely on building formal or support the formation of informal face-to-face opportunities to share knowledge. These learning channels should cut across organizational and hierarchical boundaries creating a time and space for individuals to interact and share knowledge. Factors affecting knowledge sharing opportunity are summarized in Table 3.

Factors affecting knowledge sharing opportunity	
General	Existence of formal learning channels
	Existence of informal learning channels
	Proximity
	Available time & place
	Technology
	Hierarchical & organizational structures

Table 3. Factors affecting knowledge sharing opportunity.

2.5.3 Ability

Siemsen et al. (2008) understand ability as the level of skills and competencies needed to engage in knowledge sharing. Thus: "…is a construct that reflects an individual's general capacity to perform in specific types of situations." (Cummings & Schwab 1973; Rothschild 1999 as cited by Siemsen et al. 2008: 432). Abilities are innate but can be a result of training as well. For example Argote et al. (2003) argue that training in analogical reasoning makes it easier for an employee to utilize accumulated knowledge in other tasks. Drawing from the social capital theory, individuals on the same cognitive levels are better suited to share knowledge with each other because they share the same language, codes and way to express themselves.

One of the most established reasons having a negative effect on knowledge sharing ability is the tacitness of and complexities surrounding the knowledge being shared. For example, Szulanski (1996) found causal ambiguity and the lack of absorptive capacity of the recipient in addition to an arduous relationship being the most important factors affecting internal knowledge transferring. Szulanski (1996: 30–31) defines causal ambiguity as the uncertainty surrounding the process of recreating a practice in a new, different setting: The reasons for the knowledge transfer to succeed or to fail are unknown. This "irreducible uncertainty" could be a result of tacitness, the source's week capabilities to articulate the knowledge being transferred or the recipient's difficulties in clarifying the environment where the knowledge will be applied (Szulanski 1996: 30; 2000: 14). Absorptive capacity is related to the recipient's ability to exploit sources of knowledge other than its own and is linked to the prior, related knowledge of the recipient. According to Szulanksi (1996) both absorptive capacity and causal ambiguity are knowledge related factors. In line with the work of Szulanski (1996), Argote et al. (2003) argue that individuals understand, learn and absorb new

knowledge by associating it with what they already know. Hence, the ability to share and receive knowledge is greatly affected by the characteristics of the knowledge being shared and the existing knowledge bases of the source and the recipient.

Adopting the perspective of the sender, Hinds and Pfeiffer (2003) argue that the sharing of expertise is affected by cognitive limitations of the source. More precisely, how a knowledgeable individual stores, process and articulates knowledge may present itself as a barrier for effective knowledge sharing. According to Hinds and Pfeiffer (2003) the way experts mentally represent a task is distinct because as expertise develops mental representations become more abstract and simplified. This simplification process helps experts to adopt a holistic view on a task, process information rapidly and avoid getting stuck on details. Abstract and simplified representations make knowledge sharing between experts rich and effective. However, when there exists an expertise gap between the sender and receiver or when tacit knowledge is being articulated knowledge sharing is impeded.

According to Hinds and Pfeiffer (2003), experts suffer from cognitive limitations, which inhibit them from establishing a common ground with recipients of their knowledge. Research has shown that experts fail to provide concrete and detailed enough background information and use an understandable language when sharing their knowledge with less knowledgeable individuals (Hinds & Pfeffer 2003). As a result, even though experts would be willing to share their knowledge they might not be able to do so because of the existing gap in expertise between the source and recipient. In line with the work of Szulanski (1996), Hinds and Pfeiffer (2003) identify knowledge related factors to have an effect on knowledge sharing. Experts' knowledge is a combination of tacit and explicit components from which the former might be challenging to share no matter the level of expertise. Unlike explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge resides at the unconscious level and is therefor hard to articulate and share. Another knowledge related cognitive problem is its embeddedness. Indeed, Hinds and Pfeiffer (2003) argue that knowledge created and utilized in one environment may not serve its owner in a new and different setting. Closely related to the concept of causal ambiguity, knowledge embeddedness may present itself as a cause for the recipient to refuse the shared knowledge. Hence, the not-invented-here syndrome might be caused by other than motivational factors alone (Hinds & Pfeiffer 2003).

One could argue that factors such as tenure, position and spoken language also play an important role regarding one's ability to share and receive knowledge. A longer tenure

is often related to experience and a good understanding of the business (Pacharapha & Ractham 2012). Likewise, a senior position in the company denotes a strong track record but also a better view on the overall business of the company due to for example a wider range of responsibilities compared to employees on the shop floor. Hence, these employees are better suited to share and understand knowledge. Nevertheless, regardless of the tenure or position, knowledge sharing and receiving can still be hindered because of knowledge related factors and cognitive limitations presented earlier. For example, Kang and Hau (2014) found, contrary to expectations, employees with longer company tenure to demonstrate lower levels of acceptability toward new knowledge. Finally, even in the situation of a perfect cognitive alignment between the source and the recipient language skills might present itself as an insurmountable barrier for knowledge sharing. Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman (2005) found language skills to play a crucial role in the success of inter unit knowledge transfers. Indeed, no matter the motivation or opportunity if the parties do not speak each other's language no knowledge will be shared.

In parallel with language skills, cultural differences can affect individuals' ability to engage in knowledge sharing. As an open, trusting and faire organizational culture can have a positive effect on individuals' motivation to share knowledge, colliding national cultures and institutions have the potential to decrease employees' ability to engage in knowledge sharing. The concept of national culture has been defined in various ways Hofstede's dimensions of national culture along which societies differ being one of the most seminal and used (Hofstede-Geert 2012). The four dimensions of power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and uncertainty avoidance were later on complemented with the dimensions of long-term vs. short-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint. Hofstede and Bond (1988: 6) regard culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from those of another." Instead of interpreting national cultures and their differences by placing them on various continuums, Kostova (1999) distinguishes national cultures based on their regulative, normative and cognitive institutions forming specific country institutional profiles or CIPs. The regulatory component of the CIP embody formal institutions like laws and rules whereas the cognitive and normative components refer to more informal institutions like "the way people notice, categorize and interpret stimuli from their environment" and the norms and values of a given country (Kostova 1999: 317–318). Nevertheless, understood whether in dimensions or CIPs, colliding national cultures have a negative impact on individual level knowledge sharing. For example Bhagat et al. (2002) argue that among the type of knowledge

being transferred and the cognitive styles of the source and the recipient such as preferred problem solving styles (signature skills), way of thinking (holistic vs. analytical) and tolerance for ambiguity the cultural variations have an impact on the effectiveness of cross-border knowledge sharing. Factors affecting the ability to share and receive knowledge are summarized in Table 4.

Factors affecting knowledge sharing ability	
Source	Cognitive limitations
Recipient	Absorptive capacity
	Experience gap
General	Causal ambiguity
	Tacitness of knowledge
	Language skills, cultural differences & tenure

Table 4. Factors affecting knowledge sharing ability.

2.6 Knowledge sharing in the context of mentoring

Having presented general factors identified by literature to have an effect on the ability, motivation and opportunity to engage in knowledge sharing behavior, the aim of this section is to contemplate how the aforementioned antecedents of knowledge sharing are shaped within the context of mentoring. First the concept of mentoring is defined to lay the ground for following contemplation on the context of mentoring and its effects on individual level knowledge sharing.

2.6.1 Mentoring defined

According to Ragins and Kram (2007), mentoring and mentoring relationships have their roots in ancient mythology and have been present in both social and working life for thousands of years. Finkelstein and Poteet (2007: 346) state that both academic and practical articles give away that many companies have or have had mentoring programs in place. In their review of literature on workplace mentoring dating from 1980 Haggard, Dougherty, Turban and Wilbanks (2011) found 40 different definitions of mentoring

ranging from very detailed to more vague conceptualizations. Nevertheless, the researchers acknowledge that scholars share a general view on mentoring, which follows the theoretical foundations laid by Kram in 1985 on the developmental relationships at work. According to Kram (1985 as cited by Ragins & Kram 2007: 4) mentoring is defined as a relationship between an older and more experienced individual referred as the mentor and a younger less experienced individual usually titled as a protégé or mentee with the aim of helping and developing the protégé's career.

Haggard et al. (2011), identify the three "core attributes" of reciprocity, developmental benefits and consistent interaction distinguishing mentoring relationships from other work-related ties. Mentoring is composed of mutual social exchanges requiring reciprocity. Unlike teaching, coaching and supervising mentoring promotes two-way discussion between the mentor and protégé. Developmental benefits resulting from mentoring exceed skills obtained from training or required by the organization. Traditionally these benefits are linked with the protégé's work and career development but research has shown that also mentors benefit from the relationship. For example, Kram and Isabella (1985) state that both parties are expected to benefit from a mentoring relationship. Furthermore, Kram and Ragins (2007) argue that research on mentoring has found mentored employees to enjoy higher incomes, receive more promotions and are more committed and satisfied with their work and career compared to non-mentored colleagues. Likewise, mentors have been shown to benefit from improved job performance, career success and revitalization, recognition and a sense of personal fulfillment and satisfaction. These individual level benefits are aggregated on the organizational level for example as improved job satisfaction and organizational socialization as well as reduced employee turnover intentions (Ragins & Cotton 1999). Lastly, mentoring relationships are characterized by a level of commitment, which is manifested in the consistent communication between the mentor and the protégé during a longer period of time compared to for example other working relationships (Haggard et al. 2011).

Traditionally mentors are seen to provide their protégés' with two sets of functions. Career enhancing functions are dependent on the mentor's position and influence in the organization. The mentor can for example offer exposure and visibility, coaching, sponsorship and challenging assignments to prepare the protégé for a higher position in the organization. In addition to career enhancing functions, mentors can concentrate on the professional and personal growth (e.g. self-efficacy and self-worth) of their protégés by providing psychosocial functions (Kram & Ragins 2007). These functions are

conditional on the quality of emotional bonds and psychosocial attachments between the mentor and the protégé. They include the building of trust, intimacy and ties between the two parties through for example friendship, acceptance and confirmation. As such, the quality and nature of the mentoring relationships in addition to professional traits of the mentor dictate the functions provided in mentoring. According to Kram and Ragins (2007), every relationship is different, thus so is the composition of mentoring functions. The researchers state that the range and degree of mentor output is driven by the needs of the protégé and the mentor, the mentor's ability and interest to meet the protégé's needs, the mentoring relationship and the organizational context. Nevertheless, Haggard et al. (2011) criticize the overly emphasis put on attainable benefits and stress the importance of identifying causes for mentoring relationships to fail. Indeed, mentoring relationships can vary from effective to ineffective and dysfunctional. The relational problems arise not only from the characteristics of the mentor and the protégé but also from the type of mentoring relationship, which has been identified as the core enabler or inhibitor of successful mentoring (Young & Perrewé 2000).

Workplace mentoring relationships can be initiated informally as a consequence of employees' voluntary actions or formally through managerial intervention. According to Chao et al. (1992) the fundamental distinction between formal and informal mentorships stems from how the relationship is formed. Informal mentoring relationships evolve naturally, thus are not separately supported or guided by the organization. These relationships are formed spontaneously and can be initiated on behalf of both the mentor and the protégé as a result of mutual identification in terms of providing assistance for someone resembling oneself, seeking advice from a role model, mutual comfort, desired competences and respect (Ragins & Cotton 1999). On the contrary, formal mentoring relationships arise from formal mentoring programs governed and sanctioned by the organization (Chao et al. 1992). In this case, the mentoring relationship is a product of "deliberate pairing" (Haggard et al. 2011). Weinberg and Lankau (2011) state that formal mentoring programs encompass the need to recruit and select mentors and match them with potential protégés. In addition to the formulation of the relationship Ragins and Cotton (1999) argue that informal and formal mentorships have other structural differences. According to the researchers informal mentoring relationships can last from three to six years whereas formal mentorships are usually restricted in a time span of six months up to a year. Furthermore, the goals, mode and frequency of meetings are usually agreed upon and controlled in formal mentoring relationships. Informal relationships have more time to evolve and follow the specific needs and goals originating from the participants careers and work. As a result,

more mentoring functions are provided, trust and emotional closeness are created and long-term career as well psychosocial needs are better fulfilled (Ragins & Cotton 1999).

Conducted research has found informal mentorships to produce greater benefits, more career and psychosocial functions as well as overall satisfaction compared to formal mentoring (e.g. Ragins and Cotton 1999; Chao et al. 1992). At the center of these findings are the notions of more intimate relations and better alignment originating from the natural screening process of mentoring pairs. In fact formal mentoring programs are seen as managerial efforts to replicate informal mentoring or at least are encouraged to do so (Chao et al. 1992; Ragins & Cotton 1999; Weinberg & Lankau 2011). Indeed, by avoiding the creation of obligation and intimidation of participation and by carefully matching mentors and mentees (i.e. imitating the formation of informal mentoring relationships) organizations are able to leverage individual and organizational benefits attainable from mentoring (Chao et al. 1992). Formal mentoring programs serve as a managerial mechanism to promote and create beneficial developmental relationships across a greater number of their organizational members. As such, this governance mechanism gives structure to and institutionalizes mentoring, thus excludes the situation where developmental relationships are left to form by chance.

In their review of the evolution of mentoring, Kram and Ragins (2007) argue that scholars have focused on a relatively narrow area of research. Ragins and Verbos (2007 as cited by Kram & Ragins 2007: 8) state that research has overly emphasized mentoring as a one-sided relationship resulting in career related outcomes. Also Bearman et al. (2007: 380) criticize the depth of existing mentoring research by stating that practitioners will not be able to leverage the full potential of mentoring before researchers shift their focus from demonstrating that mentoring works to explaining why it does so. Nevertheless, together with Haggard et al. (2011) for example Scandura and Pellegrini (2007: 71) note that new theoretical models and types of mentoring have emerged on the side of the traditional, hierarchical, face-to-face and dyadic mentoring relationship. Such forms of mentoring as multiple mentoring, e-mentoring, peer mentoring and team mentoring create new opportunities and challenges for companies wishing to leverage benefits attainable from mentoring. In line with this view Kram and Ragins (2007 as cited by Haggard et al. 2011: 294) encourage future study of mentoring to encompass several types of developmental relationships. For example, developmental networks shift focus from dyads to relationships encompassing multiple participants and protégés are "reverse mentoring" more senior employees. According to Haggard et al. (2011: 294) any developmental relationship embodying the three "core attributes" of a

workplace mentoring relationship (i.e. reciprocity, developmental benefits and consistent interaction) can be considered as mentoring.

The recent advances in mentoring research have set the stage for new avenues for research. One of such avenues is to study knowledge sharing and learning taking place in mentoring relationships. This approach seems well warranted since mentoring is fundamentally about developing individuals and building up the core capabilities of an organization. Thus the sharing of knowledge can be regarded as a key component and objective of mentoring (Swap et al. 2001).

2.6.2 Mentoring and knowledge sharing

According to Haggard et al. (2011) research on knowledge sharing and the type of knowledge being shared in the context of mentoring is scarce. This gap in existing literature is noteworthy because of the notions of growth, development and learning associated with mentoring relationship. Nevertheless, for example Swap et al. (2001) argue that the positive outcomes of developmental relationships emanate from learning and absorbing knowledge from knowledgeable employees and recognize mentoring as a mechanism for transferring knowledge. Drawing from past studies the researchers argue that mentoring includes the transferring of skills, managerial systems and values forming the best practices of the organization. Best practices or knowledge accrues from experience and includes both tacit and explicit components making it hard to share or even understand. According to Swap et al. (2001) the role of mentoring is to support the sharing of tacit knowledge between the mentor and the protégé (socialization) and turn explicit knowledge into a tacit form (internalization). Furthermore, one could also expect tacit knowledge to be externalized into explicit know-how in the context of mentoring. Indeed, mentoring promotes the sharing of experiences and learning by doing.

A number of recent publications have addressed the link between HRM practices and knowledge management efforts (Prieto Pastor et al. 2010; Minbaeva et al. 2012), employee behavior (Kehoe & Wright 2013) as well as knowledge-based performance of the company (Minbaeva 2013). In line with the knowledge governance approach Minbaeva (2013) argues that knowledge-based organizational level outcomes originate from strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices influencing individual level antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior: ability, motivation and opportunity. Along these lines of argumentation Prieto Pastor et al. (2010) explain the effects of

HRM on the KM outcomes of knowledge sharing, retention and creation by making a distinction between practices influencing the aforementioned three micro-antecedents of individual action. Also Kehoe and Wright (2013) acknowledge the explanatory power of the components of AMO framework regarding individual level behavior.

Unlike the mentioned studies, instead of concentrating on the conjoint effects of several HRM practices the purpose of this study is to take a closer look on how the single practice of formal mentoring affects the antecedents of knowledge sharing. The implementation of a formal mentoring program is understood as the active management of knowledge sharing furthering the integration of MNC wide knowledge repositories. The knowledge sharing perspective on mentoring could serve as a worthwhile avenue in exploring the causal links between mentoring and its positive outcomes. This perspective has the potential to answer the so far neglected question of why mentoring works. Furthermore, this research answers the call for more micro-level research on knowledge sharing and its management by concentrating on the influence of a formal mentoring program on the conditions of individual level behavior setting the stage for individual action, which ultimately aggregates to the organizational level. See Figure 6.
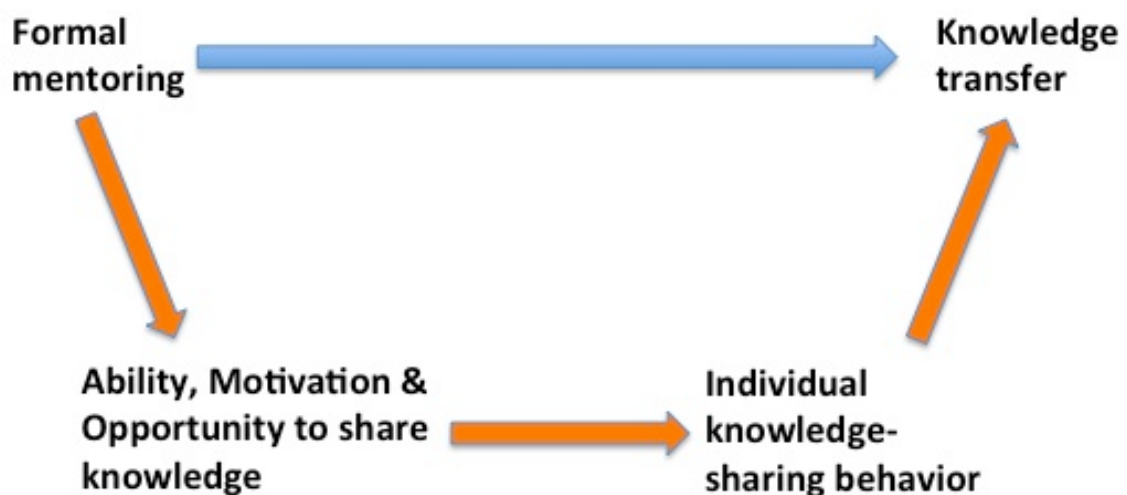

Figure 6. Mentoring and knowledge sharing.

For the purpose of this study mentoring is defined as a formal learning opportunity taking the form of a reciprocal developmental relationship in which a more experienced mentor shares knowledge with a less experienced protégé through back and forth

exchanges of knowledge. Mentoring creates a conducive channel to share knowledge and serves as a mechanism for the organization to govern individual level knowledge-sharing behavior, which ultimately aggregates to the level of MNC knowledge flows.

2.6.3 Mentoring and motivation to share knowledge

Husted et al. (2012: 759) divide knowledge governance mechanisms (KGMs) aimed at influencing knowledge sharing behavior into commitment –based and transaction-based endeavors. The researchers found transaction –based mechanisms such as provisions of ownership rights and monetary rewards to promote knowledge hoarding, rejecting and negative attitudes towards sharing. On the contrary, commitment-based mechanisms, which leverage intrinsic motivation, volunteerism and rely on the building of trust, loyalty and commitment were found to have a diminishing effect on knowledge sharing "hostility" (i.e. hoarding, rejecting and negative attitudes). Emanating from past research, Husted et al. (2012), define such KGMs as commitment-based HR practices centered around long-term, reciprocal relationships including training and development or opportunities for growth and professional advancement. Based on the work and definition of Husted et al. (2012) one could argue that mentoring, at its best, is a commitment-based knowledge governance mechanism drawing from the intrinsic motivation of the participants in which case also knowledge sharing should be enhanced. In line with this view Allen and Eby (2007) regard mentoring to fulfill an individual's inherent need to form and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, which result for example in increased life satisfaction, self-esteem and commitment, and drive positive affective, cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

In concordance with the work of Husted et al. (2012), Minbaeva et al. (2012: 390) argue HRM practices to influence knowledge-sharing behavior through the individual level conditions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, engagement in social behavior and individual-level perceptions of organizational commitment to knowledge sharing. More precisely, they state that existing HRM practices have the potential to signal the importance of knowledge sharing in the company and thus affect individuals' perceptions of organizational commitment towards this behavior. When the organization is perceived committed to promoting knowledge sharing an individual's intrinsic motivation to share and likelihood to engage in social behavior for the purpose of sharing knowledge increases. In line with this view, Bryant (2005) found mentoring to significantly correlate with perceptions of knowledge creation and sharing. In addition to this so-called "signaling effect", HRM affects knowledge sharing behavior

through extrinsic motivation for example by financially compensating or formally recognizing desired behavior. As such, the signaling effect explains how HRM practices can create a shared appreciation towards the sharing of knowledge and construct a fertile organizational culture for the exchange of know-how. Furthermore, the notion of extrinsic motivation illustrates how individuals turn into weighing costs and benefits in the absence of intrinsic motivation.

The argumentation presented by Finkelstein and Poteet (2007) on organizational support towards and purpose of mentoring sheds light on the signaling effect of different HRM practices presented by Minbaeva et al. (2012). The researchers argue that management can sow support by communicating and making visible the importance of the program in the company. Support can take the form of structural changes for example changed design of work to make sure that mentoring is not perceived as an extra role behavior on top of everyday work. Some researchers have proposed the use of reward systems to support the participation in the program (Granfield 1993 as cited by Finkelstein & Poteet 2007: 346). Nevertheless, emanating from the knowledge sharing literature, one could argue that monetary rewards could distort the motives to engage in mentoring relationships. Therefore, support would be better communicated through for example linking successful mentoring with employee development or otherwise making a clear statement about the stance and importance of mentoring in the company. For example Cunningham (1993 as cited by Finkelstein & Poteet 2007) argue that organizations should aim at creating a philosophy statement around mentoring programs. The visibility of mentoring can be secured for example through communicating participant names inside the organization and informing the starting points and termination of different programs.

Another important factor to consider in addition to management support is the identification of the purpose of the mentoring program. Finkelstein and Poteet (2007) state that for a mentoring program to fulfill its purpose it has to address clear needs. In other words, organizations need to set objectives which fulfill the identified needs and communicate them to the participants. Clear setting of objectives can be expected to guide the behavior of mentors and protégés and help them set the basis for their relationship. For example Eby and Lockwood (2005 as cited by Finkelstein & Poteet) found mentors and protégés to regard company set objectives for the program as a means of improving the mentoring relationship. As such, mentoring can be seen to signal the importance of knowledge sharing if the program receives managerial support and knowledge sharing is announced as one of its objectives. Furthermore, specified

program objectives will undoubtedly guide the selection of participants (Finkelstein & Poteet 2007).

Based on the work of Minbaeva et al. (2012) and Finkelstein and Poteet (2007), mentoring can signal the importance of knowledge sharing and the organizational expectations towards this behavior. As such, the existence of a mentoring program in the organization should have a positive effect on the motivation to share knowledge. Nevertheless, Minbaeva et al. (2012) point out that the sheer existence of knowledge sharing opportunities is meaningless unless employees use them. Indeed, knowledge sharing is dependent on employees' willingness to engage in the program and seize the presented opportunity. For example Allen (2003), found factors underlying motivation to mentor others to have a direct effect on mentoring outcomes. Thus, motivation to engage in mentoring can be expected to affect (at least on some level) the motivation to share knowledge in the mentoring relationship. Literature on willingness to participate in mentorships has identified factors such as previous experience in mentoring, perceived costs and benefits as well as empathy to affect the decision to enroll in a mentoring program (Ragins & Scandura 1999; Allen 2003). What is of interest to this study is whether the decision to participate in the mentoring program is a result of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation or even obligation.

In the case that mentoring signals the organization's positive stance towards knowledge sharing, employees that voluntarily participate in the program must have internalized the value of exchanging know-how or, like argued by Allen (2003), possess a prosocial personality composed of other-oriented empathy and helpfulness. Furthermore, as a commitment-based KGA mentoring should build trust, loyalty, fulfill a need to belong and result in an intimate relationship between the participants (Allen & Eby 2007; Husted et al. 2012). On the supposition that participation is voluntary, mentoring can be seen to filter out extrinsic considerations regarding knowledge sharing. In other words, mentoring supports the creation of intrinsic motivation to share knowledge, cultivates a trusting, open and fair culture and dilutes the value attached to knowledge, expectations of reciprocity, the weighing of costs and benefits as well as lowers hierarchical differences and fights back the "us versus them" –mentality. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that candidates participate in the program to satisfy indirect needs despite the prevailing organizational culture and signaling effect of mentoring. For example, a mentor can be more interested in gaining recognition, boosting his/her career or expects to be compensated in the future as a result of engaging in the mentorship. Likewise, the protégé might expect a fast climb in the corporate ladder and value attainable

connections or being in the spotlight over sharing experiences that could benefit the entire company. At the worst mentors and protégés are obliged to participate in mentoring. According to Finkelstein and Poteet (2007: 351) forced participation or fear of repercussion if not attending result in feelings of resentment and reduced efforts and dedication towards the mentoring relationship.

Motivation to share knowledge is not the same thing as motivation to participate in a mentoring program. However, they are closely related to each other. As contemplated above, the latter determines the disposition to the former. As such, depending on if participation is assigned, made voluntary or if mentors and protégés have the option to decline participation without fear of repercussions, mentoring's effects on motivation to share knowledge will be different. Furthermore, because mentoring in general is said to create an intimate and trusting relationship between the mentor and the protégé intrinsic motivation to share knowledge should prevail over extrinsic considerations. Lastly, if the mentoring program signals organizational commitment to knowledge sharing, both mentors and protégés should be more willing to participate in the program for the purpose of exchanging knowledge.

2.6.4 Mentoring and opportunity to share knowledge

Because mentoring itself is understood as a mechanism for sharing knowledge, it can be argued that the actual management and implementation of this channel determines what kind of opportunity it presents for knowledge sharing to take place. Indeed, mentoring can be considered as a formal channel for learning discussed by Ipe (2003), including distinct structural components supporting the relationship in which knowledge sharing occurs. Furthermore, mentoring can be argued to create an opportunity for the converting of tacit and explicit knowledge by linking two individuals closely together.

According to Nonaka, von Krogh and Voelpel (2006), organizations should provide conditions under which people can come together to share, create and retain knowledge. Organizations are responsible for creating a time and space, or what they refer as "Ba" (Nonaka & Konno 1998 as cited by Nonaka et al. 2006: 1185), for knowledge sharing to occur. Ba can consist of physical, virtual and mental aspects and supports the conversion of explicit and tacit knowledge. To join Ba one is expected to engage in knowledge creation, dialogue, get familiar with new practices while shaping old ones

and understand one's own perceptual limitations (Nonaka et al. 2006). In this study, mentoring is considered to create Ba and an opportunity for the sharing of knowledge.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) define knowledge creation as the organizational capability to create knowledge, disseminate it throughout the company and integrate it in products and services. This process can be described as a spiral conveying knowledge from individuals to groups and the organization through the four modes of knowledge conversion emerging from the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge: socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. Even though Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995: 57) describe these four modes experienced by individuals as the "engine" of the knowledge-creation process, the researchers state that: "They are also the mechanisms by which individual knowledge gets articulated and amplified into and throughout the organization.". As such, to create an opportunity for knowledge sharing to happen, mentoring should enable and support the four modes of knowledge conversion.

The knowledge spiral starting from socialization and ending in internalization is upheld by shifts between the different modes of knowledge conversion, which again are generated by the four distinct triggers of field building, dialogue, linking explicit knowledge and learning by doing (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). The establishment of a field of interaction precedes socialization, which is comparable to sharing experiences resulting in the creation of more tacit knowledge. The next mode of conversion is triggered by meaningful dialogue or collective reflection along which participants make sense of their hidden tacit knowledge and try to convert it into explicit forms. After having externalized their tacit knowledge participants start to link their newly acquired knowledge with existing articulated knowledge in the company. The combination of explicit knowledge will ultimately result in new concepts of products or for example managerial systems. In the end of the knowledge spiral, individuals learn by doing, which triggers the internalization of explicit knowledge into a tacit form.

Bryant (2005) found the interpersonal nature of peer mentoring to provide individual- and group-level tools and a dynamic and continuous opportunity for the creation and sharing of knowledge by linking knowledgeable mentors with less experienced protégés. In addition to establishing a field for sharing explicit knowledge and learning by doing the mentoring context supports the sharing of tacit knowledge and turning it into explicit forms because the personal contact gives time for organizing thoughts, and share relevant and accurate knowledge in an easily understandable way (Swap et. al.

2001; Bryant 2005). According to Bryant (2005) mentors can for example share explicit knowledge how to use databases and management tools or combine verbal and visual demonstrations to share tacit knowledge on how to solve a particular problem. Mentoring, by definition, includes the triggers of knowledge conversion, thus creates an opportunity for knowledge to be shared.

In line with this view Harvey (2012) argues that mentoring is a practical demonstration of the mutual exchange model depicting knowledge sharing presented earlier. In his research on how late career nurses pass their experience to younger colleagues Harvey (2012) concluded mentoring as a back and forth exchange of knowledge between nurses. Experienced nurses were found to build upon the knowledge presented by their protégés to share their own expertise. After putting their newly acquired knowledge to use, young nurses returned to their mentors with new insights and knowledge to be shared and refined. In concordance with the arguments presented by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), Bryant (2005) as well as Swap et al. (2001), Harvey (2012) views mentoring as a phenomenon embodying the, socialization, externalization, combination and internalization of explicit and tacit knowledge. Furthermore, Harvey (2012: 409) states that the mutual exchange model explains how individual level knowledge sharing aggregates to the collective level and emphasizes mentoring as an effective knowledge sharing method, which creates a time and place for the sharing of expertise. However, whether or not mentoring provides a place and time for knowledge sharing to take place is most likely dependent on the level of support the program receives or is perceived to have. If mentoring occupies an inferior position in the order of importance vis-à-vis carrying out every day work assignments, the program will have limited effects on the opportunity to share knowledge because of the remaining problem with time-availability. Indeed, managerial support does not only support the signaling effect but also the time-availability, an important factor affecting the opportunity to share knowledge.

Lastly, according to Finkelstein and Poteet (2007), the strength of a formal mentoring relationship emanates from the way it is structured. The context of a formal mentoring relationship is structured from the following components: setting of expectations, defining of meeting frequency and method, determining the duration of the relationship, monitoring and evaluation. The existence, absence and design of these components can be seen to ultimately determine what kind of opportunity mentoring provides for knowledge sharing. In other words, the structuring of the mentoring relationship enables its purpose.

The goals and objectives of the mentoring program, or its purpose, are set by the organization. However, how these objectives are adhered to and reached is determined by the set goals and expectations within the mentoring dyad. Therefor, organizations have relied on different methods to ensure that expectations, goals and responsibilities are discussed and agreed on in the beginning of the program (Finkelstein & Poteet 2007). These methods can vary from signing a mentoring contract outlining expectations and a vision for the relationship to including protégé managers for the proper charting of mentoring needs. According to Finkelstein and Poteet (2007), despite the shared view on the importance of setting expectations and goals for the relationship there exists little empirical evidence to prove it. Nevertheless, it seems that setting of expectations and goals serve as a mean to give structure and meaning for the relationship fostering the dedication of the participants to the program. Furthermore, set objectives help to determine whether or not the mentoring relationship was successful or not. Drawing from extant mentoring literature Finkelstein and Poteet (2007) regard evaluation and monitoring of the mentoring relationships to enable amongst other things the repairing of troubled relationships, evaluating costs, effectiveness and achieved objectives. However, the most important outcomes of monitoring and evaluating a mentoring relationship are generated improvement ideas and possibility to communicate results for obtaining and sustaining top management support (Forret et al. 1996 as cited by Finkelstein & Poteet 2007: 360).

Other important factors to address early on in the mentoring relationship or even in the setting of expectations are the frequency and mode of interaction and the duration of the relationship. Finkelstein and Poteet (2007) state that most surveys indicate face-to-face meetings as the preferred mode of interaction. However, due to resent advances in technology, different communication tools including video chats have become available. While the shortcomings of emails and phone calls are evident, the utilization of a video conference call as a mode of interaction is comparable to face-to-face meetings. Nevertheless, does the absence of physical proximity lead to a close and trusting relationship is questionable. Participants can for example agree on meeting once every month or the organization can mandate a minimum number of meetings during the program. Regardless of the frequency and method of meetings or the set guidelines, conducted research agrees on the positive relationship between meeting regularly and program effectiveness and satisfaction (Finkelstein & Poteet 2007). What comes to the duration of the relationship, formal mentoring relationships can last from 3 months up to a year. From a knowledge sharing perspective, the longer the relationships and denser

the frequency of interaction (preferably face-to-face), the better the opportunity to share knowledge.

2.6.5 Mentoring and ability to share knowledge

Arguably such factors as insufficient language skills, cultural differences and tenure affecting the ability to share knowledge remain in a mentoring relationship if not screened out in selecting or matching candidates. However, as presented by Swap et al. (2001), the mentoring relationship encompasses or provides distinct cognitive mechanisms for learning, which can be argued to affect the participant's ability to share their knowledge.

In line with arguments presented in the knowledge sharing literature Swap et al. (2001) identify the existing experience gap between the mentor and the protégé as a major barrier for learning in the mentoring relationship. The researchers argue that it is not possible for a novice to simply leap over different levels of knowledge acquisition to becoming an expert. As a consequence, both patience and the ability to perceive the situation from the viewpoint of the protégé are required on behalf of the mentor. Indeed, in line with the knowledge sharing literature and the notions of cognitive limitations, experience gap, absorptive capacity, tacitness of knowledge and causal ambiguity Swap et al. (2001) present cognitive mechanisms affecting learning and knowledge sharing within a mentoring relationship.

According to Swap et al. (2001), the context and nature of mentoring relationship fights the issue of absorptive capacity. The more experienced mentor has the possibility to gradually increase the protégé's knowledge base so that he or she is capable of absorbing and internalizing even the most complicated knowledge. Furthermore, mentors can support active learning of their protégés by providing actual or virtual learning experiences. By assigning challenging assignments or presenting case studies encouraging experimentation with new ideas and allowing new discoveries, mentors can promote learning by doing and the internalization of shared knowledge. By participating in the assigned tasks or case studies, mentors can also promote the sharing of knowledge through learning by observing. In addition to creating hands-on experiences and serving as models, mentors rely on the construct of metacognition and monitoring to give constructive feedback (Swap et al. 2001).

Metacognition defined as the "self-aware thinking about one's own mental processes" describes how an individual observes a problem, identifies additional information needed for the understanding of the issue, and seeks the missing information to fill in the missing parts (Swap et al 2001). Thus, the protégé's ability to receive knowledge is affected by his/her level of metacognition. On the other hand, mentors can utilize metacognition and self-monitoring as a mechanism to reveal the protégé's level of comprehension. According to Swap et al. (2001), experts, or in this case mentors, self-monitor their understanding through their metacognition. As such, mentors ability to promote this kind of self-monitoring behavior in their protégé enables more knowledge to be shared and a deeper exploration of issues. Swap et al. (2001) refer to this process as a "Socratic dialogue", which serves as a "learning by thinking" -alternative compared to active learning promoting internalization and learning by doing. To exercise this kind of behavior, the mentor can for example ask questions and give feedback on the task at hand to guide the thinking process of the protégé. Furthermore, input that focuses on the competence level of the protégé should be avoided (Swap et al. 2001). Metacognition and self-monitoring stress the importance of bidirectional sharing of knowledge presented by the mutual exchange model according to which shared knowledge is refined by the input of both parties involved in the transferring process.

Indeed, mentoring supports the occurrence of active learning and utilization of metacognition as mechanisms for sharing knowledge. Closely related to the concept of mutual exchange model presented by Harvey (2012), Hinds and Pfeiffer (2003: 18) argue that cognitive limitations can be overcome by encouraging two-way interaction between novices and experts. Together the two mechanisms of active learning and metacognition coupled with monitoring fight any uncertainties surrounding the shared knowledge or its utilization. The two-way interaction and dialogue characterizing the mentoring relationship functions as a safety net to attenuate problems arising from existing cognitive limitations, experience gap, absorptive capacity and causal ambiguity all found to have an effect on the ability to share knowledge. Furthermore, problems arising from colliding national cultures and institutions are more likely to be addressed in the context of a trusting mentoring relationship. As such, the bi-directional knowledge sharing enabled in mentoring does not only create an opportunity for the sharing of complex knowledge but it also supports specific types of learning, which could be expected to have a positive effect on sharing best practices across the organization.

In their review of practitioner articles Finkelstein and Poteet (2007) found in almost every publication at least some mentioning of a need to train mentoring participants. Training sessions preceding the initiation of a mentoring relationship can focus on building participants' readiness by concentrating on listening and communication skills, training conflict resolution and motivation techniques or simply revising typical mentoring problems (Finkelstein & Poteet 2007). Research has shown that training can also take the form of orientation and include the defining of mentoring, revising of roles and responsibilities, setting of expectations as well as outlining program goals etc. to secure participant's understanding of the task at hand and their commitment to it (Finkelstein & Poteet 2007). Despite the myriad types of suggestions there exist only little empirical evidence on the impacts of training regarding mentoring. However, for example the work of Allen and colleagues (in Finkelstein & Poteet 2007: 356–357), Bryant (2005) and Harvey (2012) all found training to have mainly a positive effect on mentoring. Indeed the researchers found training to increase program understanding and success, improve mentoring skills and knowledge and help refine output.

Identified as an event or context in which knowledge is socialized, externalized, combined and internalized through learning-by-doing, learning-by-thinking and simply through the sharing of experiences, mentoring should ease the problems encountered when sharing knowledge with tacit components. This should hold true at least when the mentor and protégé cherish face-to-face encounters and are willing to engage in knowledge sharing.

2.7 Theoretical framework

The previous two sections have presented general factors identified by literature to have an effect on the ability, motivation and opportunity of an individual to engage in knowledge sharing behavior and how the aforementioned antecedents of knowledge sharing are potentially shaped within the context of mentoring. In this section these two strands of research are integrated to form a theoretical framework, which will serve as a basis for the empirical part of the thesis. For a comprehensive view of the theoretical perspectives of the study please see Table 5 below.

Factors affecting antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior		Effects of mentoring on AMO constructs
Motivation		
Source	Expected costs & rewards	• Managerial support & purpose of the program signal expectations towards knowledge sharing
	Expectations of reciprocity	
	Prosocial behavior	• Motivation behind enrolling in the mentoring program acts as predisposition to share knowledge
Recipient	Professional pride	
	Them vs. us	
General	Trust	• Mentoring relationship favors intrinsic motivation over extrinsic considerations
	Self-efficacy	
	Hierarchies	
	Value related to knowledge	
	Open, trusting & fair culture	
Opportunity		
General	Existence of formal learning channels	• Creates Ba
	Existence of informal learning channels	• Supports socialization, externalization, combination and internalization of knowledge
	Proximity	
	Available time & place	
	Technology	• Provides structure, time and a place for relationship
	Hierarchical & organizational structures	
Ability		
Source	Cognitive limitations	Mentoring supports learning mechanisms affecting the ability to share knowledge:
Recipient	Absorptive capacity	
	Experience gap	• Preparedness for learning
General	Causal ambiguity	• Active learning
	Tacitness of knowledge	• Metacognition & Monitoring
	Language skills, cultural differences & tenure	• Learning by doing-thinking-observing
		• Training

Table 5. Factors expected to have an influence on the knowledge sharing behavior of mentoring participants and how mentoring could address these issues.

Despite the well-established nature of the AMO framework it is in the end a tool for the categorization of different perspectives and theories regarding the sharing of knowledge. The categorization is far from straightforward because most of the knowledge sharing literature tends to view the stickiness or smoothness of exchanging knowledge as a result of several interrelated factors with conjoint effects. Indeed, the multiplicity of variables and the number of ways they have been combined as well as approached in existing literature in order to explain individual level knowledge sharing make the allocation of different factors having an effect on knowledge sharing under the three categories of ability, motivation and opportunity a challenging task. Furthermore, the framework has been criticized for not taking a clear stance on the relative strength of each antecedent by viewing them as interconnected: one affecting the other. On one hand, this assumption somehow dilutes the meaning of categorizing factors under the three antecedents as conclusions are automatically guided towards seeking conjoint effects of several factors affecting more than one antecedent, which again affect each other. On the other hand, the assumption of interconnectedness gives great meaning to context as it helps to understand links between motivation, ability and opportunity to engage in knowledge sharing in a given situation. As such, the clearly defined context of mentoring should prove as helpful in interpreting obtained results and drawing conclusions.

It is also worth mentioning that combining knowledge sharing and mentoring through the AMO-framework and viewing mentoring solely from the perspective of knowledge sharing is somewhat a new endeavor. Indeed, literature on mentoring and knowledge sharing is scarce. At first glance, it could be argued that the most important role of mentoring is simply to create a controlled opportunity for individuals to interact (i.e. a managerial tool) while motivation and ability to do so are dictated by factors outside of the mentoring relationship. Nevertheless, in addition to creating an opportunity for the sharing of knowledge, literature on mentoring gives away the potential of this context to induce motivation and increase ability to share one's knowledge. More precisely, mentoring can overcome issues related to knowledge sharing otherwise present in the company and could even increase participants knowledge sharing outside of the mentoring dyad.

The theoretical, or integrative, framework has been composed from several sources following the set objectives, devised research questions and purpose of the study. Therefore, presented factors affecting individual level knowledge sharing and their division under the constructs of the AMO framework should not be considered as all

encompassing or definite. Likewise, although carefully devised from literature, the potential effects of mentoring on these factors are not certain. Nevertheless, the purpose of the framework is to guide the empirical part of the study, which will reveal the weaknesses of the framework.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research approach and strategy

The approach of the empirical investigation is situated in the middle of the deductive-inductive dimension, thus the research adopts an abductive approach. The purpose of the study is not to prove or disapprove an existing theory nor does it proceed from gathering data upon which to create a conceptual framework. This study aims at answering the formulated research questions by creating a conceptual framework from existing literature based on which data is collected to explore the phenomenon at hand. The purpose is to identify themes and patterns that can then be reflected to the created conceptual framework permitting the researcher to reflect on existing theory and draw conclusions. Because the research at hand seeks to shed light on various factors affecting individual motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge in the context of mentoring, the nature of the research design is at least partly exploratory. Nevertheless, the adopted research angle also increases understanding on knowledge sharing and its antecedents with the help of the established AMO framework, which connects existing theories and thus reveals cause and effect, connections and interactions. Therefore, the research design is somewhat explanatory as well. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012: 143–148.)

Considering the research topic and its partly exploratory nature, the study will follow a qualitative research design as a methodological choice. Single embedded case study portrays the research strategy of the study due to the fact that the research is concentrated in multiple levels of the chosen business unit, meaning country organizations and hierarchical positions. According to Saunders et al. (2012: 179) a case study strategy is often used in exploratory studies because it provides answers to the questions why, what and how, which suit well the research questions at hand. Dul and Hak (2008: 25) state that a case study is plausible when the topic is broad and complex, poor in available theory and the context is very important. All of these criteria are fullfilled regarding the chosen research topic. Given the expected breadth of a Master's thesis and the availabilty of the researcher's resources the time horizon of the study is cross-sectional instead of longitudinal. In addition, the purpose is not to research change nor development patterns but rather take a "snap shot" of occuring factors (Saunders et al. 2012).

3.2 Background information of case study company

Eltel is a Swedish public limited liability company specialized in providing technical services for infrastructure networks or "Infranets" dealing with power, communication and transportation. Eltel has its root in Finland and Sweden. The Sweden –based parent company Eltel AB overlooks multiple subsidiaries forming a so-called Group carrying out its business in over 26 countries. Most of the Group's activities are performed in the Finnish –based Eltel Group Oy in charge of the subsidiaries. Eltel was established in 2001 as Fortum Oy outsourced its field service organization. The Infranet service industry was formed over a decade ago when operators of infrastructure networks started to outsource their service organizations as a result of the de-regulation of telecom and power markets in Europe. See Figure 7. for an overview on the Infranet industry.
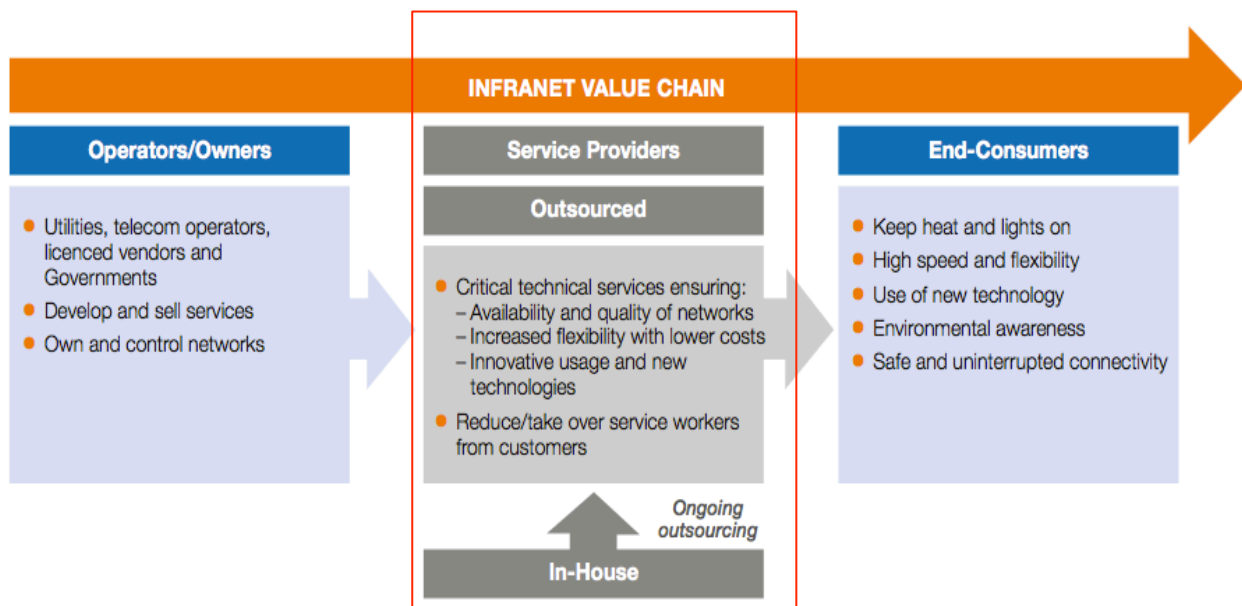

Figure 7. Overview of the Infranet Industry.

The Group employs around 8500 employees out of which approximately 7000 are technicians. The company is present in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, the Baltic Countries, Poland, Germany and the United Kingdom. Because of its roots Eltel has a strong presences in the Nordic region (75% of Group's net sales) but enjoys also a

market leading position in the Baltic region (4%) and Poland (12%). Furthermore, Eltel's footprint includes established growth platforms in Germany (2%) and the United Kingdom (1%). Eltel has also conducted several Power Transmission and Distribution projects in Africa (5%). In 2013 the Group generated net sales of EUR 1,153.7 million and reported an EBITA of 52.4 million. Eltel's vision is to be the leading Infranet services company in Europe.

The company offers maintenance, upgrade and project delivery services across the Group's three business segments of Power, Communication and Transport & Defence. The Power segment generated 42 % of the Group's net sales in the year 2013 and consists of both power transmission and power distribution services. The former comprises services around high voltage power lines and substation and the latter is focused on the designing, building and maintaining of overhead lines, underground cables, substations and outdoor lightening as well as large smart meter roll-outs. The scope of this study is limited to the Power Distribution unit of the Power segment.

Eltel is characterized by a decentralized organizational structure. The company used to be structured around country organizations with their own business units. However, true to its vision of becoming a leading international player, Eltel reorganized its structure in 2011 to follow cross-border spanning business units instead of sticking to geographically lead entities. Like every other business unit (BU), Power distribution has its own President to whom each country's Area Business Unit Manager reports (ABUs). ABUs are further divided into districts run by District Managers in charge of teams comprising a Team Manager and Technicians. A District may also include project managers and for example designers. A CFO and Sales Manager support the President of Power distribution BU. Furthermore, every ABU have their country-specific Shared Services -organizations responsible for, for example, finance management, accounting, purchasing and human resources. IT is in the progress of becoming a global support function encompassing the entire Group. All of the three business segments and their units are following the same kind of structuring with minor differences. The organizational structure of the Power distribution BU is shown in Figure 8.
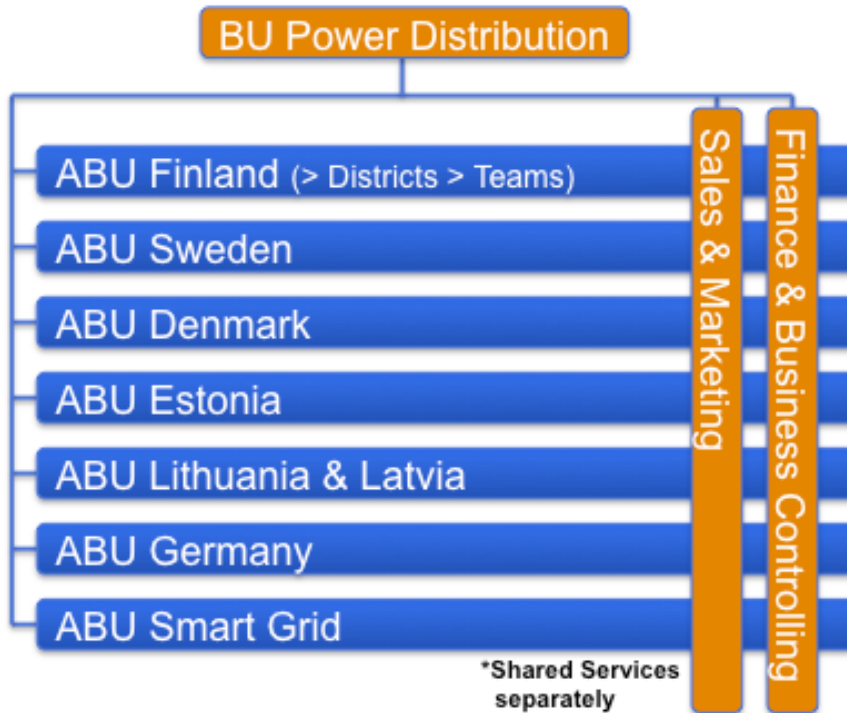
Figure 8. Power Distribution business unit.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Data was collected from the employees of the Power Distribution business unit around the world. The chosen data collection method is interview due to the qualitative nature of the research design. More precisely, semi-structured theme interviews were conducted. Thus, the interviewer had a list of formulated questions covering key themes identified during the process of writing the literature review. This type of interview enables the acquisition of background and contextual insight, which play an important role in answering the formulated research questions (Sanders et al. 2012: 377). Even though Saunders et al. (2012) identify unstructured, in depth interviews as a better choice for exploratory studies, it can be argued that semi-structured interviews provide the means to secure effective interviews through structure and planning. Furthermore, semi-structured theme interviews did not exclude the possibility to change the interview structure during the conversations and deepen as well as clarify questions and topics if needed. Due to the intimate nature of mentoring and the contents of the relationship, interviewing provides an opportunity to reassure the participants about the confidential use of the gathered information (Saunders 2009: 324).

Altogether three mentoring pairs were interviewed: three mentors and three protégés. In addition, interviews were conducted with the CEO of the Power Distribution unit and a supervisor of one of the mentees. The interviewees occupied different managerial positions in the company ranging from project managers to head of ABUs. In all, the international mentoring pairs together with the other two interviewees represented four nationalities. The choice of interviewees was based on the suggestions made by the CEO of the Power Distribution unit whose interview shed light on the top management's view on knowledge sharing as well as on the expectations and intended purpose of the program. The original plan was to interview supervisors of every protégé to capture the recipient organizations' perspectives on the outcomes of mentoring but due to organizational changes and other issues out of the sphere of influence of the interviewer only one supervisory interview was conducted. Nevertheless, the conducted interview produced little or no results due to the supervisor's limited knowledge of the mentoring program and little insight on the effects it had had on the subordinate. Interviews were conducted face-to-face as well as via phone and video call. The interviewer took notes during the interviews, which were in addition audio recorded. Results were transcribed shortly after the interviews. The primary data obtained from conducted interviews was complemented with secondary data collected from multiple sources such as the company's Intranet, internal publications, webpages, annual reports and a listing prospectus. Secondary data was also gathered from the results of a small-scale mid-program survey originally devised to check on the progress of the mentoring pairs in June 2014. Secondary data proved to be valuable in understanding and interpreting primary data.

Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with a pre-prepared participant information sheet (see Appendix A). encompassing information about the thesis and its objectives to reduce anxiety (Saunders et al. 2009: 331). Before going through the devised themes, interviewees were asked structured questions for example about their position, tenure, and how they got involved in the mentoring program. This background information helped to understand some of the obtained answers by providing clarity about the nature of the particular relationship (See Haggard et al. 2011: 293). The interviews were divided along three themes. The first section concentrated in mapping the status quo of knowledge sharing in the Power Distribution business unit. The goal was to accomplish a robust idea about the factors affecting the interviewees' ability, motivation and opportunity to share knowledge. In the second section, the focus was on mentoring and how this particular context affected knowledge sharing and its

antecedents. The third and final set of questions was aimed at discovering the outcomes of mentoring and to get interviewees to reflect on their mentoring experiences. See Appendix B for interview questions (n.b. interviews conducted with the CEO of Power Distribution and one of the supervisors of a protégé are not included because they took the form of open discussions).

The data analysis followed a display and analysis approach or analytic strategy based on the work of Miles and Huberman (1994 as cited by Saunders et al. 2009: 493). The idea was to reduce the data from its "extended" form so that it could be organized and categorized as well as displayed in a more easily approachable way. This helped the researcher to interpret and analyze obtained data, recognize relationships and patterns and compare it with theory. Data analysis started with the researcher devising three tables on separate Excel spread sheets illustrating the themes present in the interviews. The tables included the names of the interviewees and their varying answers to each questions copied from the transcriptions. The data was condensed and simplified as it was transferred in the tables. This enabled the researcher to get an overall picture of the collected data, contrast answers given by mentors with the ones provided by their protégés and other mentors, and most importantly, to start a categorization process for the identification of patterns and relationships. Different colors were utilized to mark answers dealing with ability, motivation and opportunity to share knowledge. Furthermore, unexpected answers were given a distinctive color for them to be analyzed separately. In addition to colors, the researcher wrote notes on the side of the tables. This categorization enabled the comparison of obtained data with the devised theoretical framework for further analysis to be made. The process of categorizing and analyzing the data was organized and directed by the devised theoretical framework around which the interview themes and questions were also constructed. Thus, an approach of guided content analysis was adopted (Hsieh & Shannon 2005).

On a general level data analysis followed the structure of the interviews. First, focus was placed on making sense of the current state of knowledge sharing in the business unit by identifying and pointing out factors affecting individual level knowledge sharing. This was done by assessing findings from all of the individual interviews and comparing them with each other, the obtained secondary data and the theoretical framework. After this, the findings from the second and third themes were taken under closer examination shifting the focus of analysis to mentoring. Parallel to the first step but in the context of mentoring, the aim was to analyze the occurrence of knowledge sharing and individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to engage in it. Furthermore,

the outcomes of mentoring were scrutinized. For conclusions to be drawn, the two perspectives were contrasted with each other to gain understanding of factors affecting the antecedents of individual level knowledge sharing outside and within the context of mentoring.

The analysis of the findings obtained from the interviews was constantly contrasted with the devised theoretical framework. Similarities and differences between the framework and the empirical findings were addressed and explanations discussed. For the sake of clarity, the researcher used tables and direct quotes in presenting the results.

3.4 Validity and reliability

According to Saunders et al. (2009) a good research design leads to credible research findings by minimizing the possibility of getting answers to the research questions wrong. The credibility of findings can be evaluated through the concepts of reliability and validity.

Validity can be approached from different directions such as internal validity, constructive validity and external validity. Internal validity is concerned with the cause and effect relationships in a given study. For example, research findings can be considered as internally valid if one can be confident that there exist no other alternative causes that would explain the observations and drawn conclusions (Saunders et al. 2009). Nevertheless, internal validity is not relevant in the case of an exploratory study, which does not strictly aim at establishing causal relationships (Yin 2009). Construct validity defines how well the research design measures what it was intended to do. The operational measures used in the case study were carefully derived from established theories regarding mentoring and knowledge sharing. Indeed, the integrated theoretical framework serves as a chain of evidence and as such as a proof of constructive validity (Yin 2009). This study was conducted based on a clearly communicated need on behalf of the case company to learn more about their mentoring program and how it could be improved. As such, the topic and focus of the study were rigorously discussed and fine tuned before the actual research commenced. Interviewees were carefully chosen amongst a group of employees who participated in the mentoring program with the help of the CEO of the unit. Interviewees consisted of both mentors and protégés to capture a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon at hand. The international dimension and

approach was secured through conducting interviews with the representatives of different country organizations, which gave space for cultural issues and other tensions emanating from the MNC's international context to arise. Furthermore, interviewees represented different hierarchical positions in the company expanding the richness of collected data. The interviews were anonymous and the researcher made sure that answers could not be traced back to the respondents. This was also communicated to the interviewees enabling a secure environment for more sensitive information to be disclosed and mitigate participant bias. The extensive use of secondary data gathered from multiple sources helped to understand the research context and construct valid measures to answer the research questions.

What comes to the external validity or generalizability of the research findings, the study took place in the context of a mentoring program carrying company specific attributes such as goals and purposes in addition to a distinctive structuring. As such, the findings are not directly generalizable to other mentoring programs unless they are identical to the one studied in this thesis. Nevertheless, the integrative framework was put together from well-established knowledge sharing and mentoring theories, which have been proved to apply in other settings as well.

The reliability of a research describes the consistency and authenticity of the study. According to Saunders et al. (2009: 156) the consistency aspect of reliability refers to the extent to which the chosen data collection techniques and analysis has the potential to yield the same conclusions on a different occasion and by another researcher. Authenticity can be measured by the extent to which the chain of thought from raw data to conclusions is transparent and retraceable. Documenting and clearly presenting the chosen data collection methods and procedures improve the reliability of the research. Likewise, the use of direct quotes and tables secures the transparency of made conclusions. Concerning the consistency aspect of the reliability of the study, the data collection techniques were carefully chosen based on the agenda of the research. That is, the chosen method reflects the objectives and research questions. Furthermore, every participant of the mentoring program was presented with the same set of questions, which secured consistency. The semi-structured nature of the interviews reduces observer error as the same questions are asked from every interviewee. Both secondary data and the researcher's personal experience as an employee of the company prevented observer bias and false interpretations. However it should be acknowledged that interviews conducted with the CEO of Power Distribution and a supervisor of one protégé took the form of open discussions about the research topic and therefore cannot

be traced back because of lacking documentation. These two interviews are hard to reproduce and thus decrease the reliability of the research.

4. FINDINGS

In this section the findings obtained from the interviews are presented. First, the current state of knowledge sharing is presented together with factors affecting individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge. Next, mentoring and its effect on the antecedent of individual level knowledge sharing are taken under closer examination. In the end of this section knowledge sharing in the context of mentoring is contrasted with knowledge sharing taking place outside of the mentoring relationship.

4.1 State of knowledge sharing in the case-company

Conducted interviews together with secondary data revealed both horizontal and vertical knowledge sharing taking place in the case company. At the level of area business units (ABUs) a strict reporting structure and practices secure vertical exchange of mainly explicit knowledge from team managers up the corporate ladder to the head of the ABU. Horizontal sharing of knowledge between districts has been minimal despite monthly review meetings gathering district managers in one place in addition to occasional transfers of the workforce. According to the interviewees more tacit knowledge flows effortlessly within the districts from technicians to managers and back. This knowledge, shared outside of the reporting meetings, is a mix of best practices, practical examples and experience from the actual work being done on the field. Nevertheless, until recently this valuable knowledge has stayed trapped inside of a small part of the organization because of the lack of horizontal channels between districts, the rugged performance orientation of the reporting meetings and internal competition resulting from an entrepreneurial culture. Knowledge sharing within ABUs and more precisely between districts has improved drastically over the past five years as a result of managerial actions aimed at increasing horizontal cooperation. However, the results suggest that even though the silo walls surrounding districts have been broken down, psychological barriers still remain.

The history of having separate country organizations with little or no interaction with each other is still visible. International sharing of knowledge happens mainly on the top management level between ABU managers and the CEO of Power Distribution. On the operational level the sharing of knowledge is limited to temporary cross-border transfers

of the workforce. In other words the international sharing of knowledge between different Eltel countries is still in its infancy. However, along with the new organizational structure and improved levels of intra unit knowledge sharing, the barriers between country organizations have started to crumble. For example, the number of cross-border projects making use of resources from several countries is steadily increasing. Management shares a strong state of mind towards becoming a truly international company, which has also been communicated to the lover hierarchical levels inside the business unit. Nevertheless, factors affecting knowledge sharing within the country organizations are undoubtedly reflected at the international level and complemented with issues arising from cultural and legislative contexts. A shared business service model called the Eltel Way, which governs the context and thus affects the antecedents of individual level knowledge sharing, essentially defines the state of knowledge sharing in the case company.

The company's structure, culture and way of conducting business emanate from the Group's business service model called the Eltel Way. At the hearth of this model is a relatively flat and simple organizational structure in which decision-making is decentralized at the level of over 400 profit centers governed by a transparent and uniform steering model. Indeed, every business unit is composed of area business units, which again can be broken down into districts and teams. The structural uniformity enables a straightforward line of reporting within each business unit including Power Distribution. Reporting includes monthly meetings and benchmarking of business unit specific key performance indices (KPIs). The empowerment of team managers with profit responsibilities has created an entrepreneurial organizational culture that values proactivity, specialization and continuous development with a strong focus on the bottom line. This strong "performance culture" is supported by monetary incentives dependent on individual as well as the overall performance of the company. The purpose behind the Eltel Way is that it differentiates the company from its competitors by securing consistency and high quality in service delivery throughout the business segments and across geographical areas. Operational efficiency is sought after cost efficiency for example through the sharing of workforce cross-borders in order to optimize resources. The model was introduced approximately seven years ago and the implementation of the Eltel Way method in all Eltel units is enforced through a separately prepared policy addressing all of the five elements forming the business service model: structure, reporting, culture and people, operational efficiency and organic growth.

Despite managerial actions aimed at improving the level of knowledge sharing within and across ABUs tensions between districts and the history of having separate country organizations are still visible and affecting the attitudes of individuals. The state of knowledge sharing taking place within the borders of country organizations and across them in the Power Distribution business unit will be taken under closer examination in the following sections.

4.1.1 ABU -level knowledge sharing –silo thinking

Surprisingly, the majority of the interviewees reported a history of little or no cooperation at all between their home country districts and ABUs. Along the guidelines of the Eltel Way the Power Distribution business unit follows a straightforward line of reporting consisting of business review, team, strategy and sales meetings. According to a separately devised business unit manual business reviews are held monthly top down between the CEO of Power Distribution and his ABU managers, ABU managers and their district managers as well as between district managers and their teams. On the operational level, team managers organize quarterly team meetings with their technicians. Furthermore, strategy as well as sales meetings are held once or twice a year within every area business unit. What is noticeable is the vertical nature of the line of reporting between the aforementioned four hierarchical levels. For example, the only reporting interface between districts within one country is the monthly business review held by the ABU manager. Similarly knowledge sharing between country organizations is dependent on top management meetings. More precisely, team managers and technicians from one district used to have occasional or no interaction at all with their counterparts in other districts, let alone in other countries. As a result, districts were forming separate entities, which became evident from the words of two interviewees:

"Approximately five years ago cooperation was really restricted, especially between districts. It felt like there were no cooperation at all."

"...We were like a small business inside of a big company."

The strict reporting responsibilities are a necessity given the sheer size of districts, the independent nature of the work and the fact that technicians are constantly on the move. In some cases a team manager might be in charge of a small local office far away from the one where the district manager is located. The given situation restricts opportunities for knowledge sharing to happen naturally making beforehand-agreed meetings and

reporting the only possibility to ensure interaction between teams. All of the interviewees mentioned their reporting responsibilities and most of them saw the present practices as functional and useful:

"I think that all the reporting in Eltel is very good because we are reporting something that makes sense."

"...this structure and knowledge sharing for the operating issues it is a really good thing and is giving a lot of benefits in solving the problems faster and following up the action points that you have made in the meetings and in the teleconferences. So if not using these kinds of meetings it's hard to expect that someone would voluntarily share their questions with others. I think that knowledge sharing would not happen automatically. When you sit down and talk or have a telephone call or anything and go through every point, I think that forces to share the knowledge."

The latter comment suggests that reporting meetings between district and team managers do not only provide a snapshot of each team's standing but also provide an opportunity to share more practical knowledge. District level managers possess practical experience and can be characterized by a hands-on approach regarding their work. Despite the nature of the work and scattered teams, it seems that communication between district and team managers as well as technicians is quite effortless and hierarchies do not pose any significant issues. The sharing of knowledge about projects and sparring of best practices happens through face-to-face and videoconference meetings, phone calls and emails:

"I have several teams in my area and I am constantly in contact with their managers during the day. We discuss about all kinds of things but it is mainly about sparring each other's ideas and sharing them."

"Of course there are differences between managers and some are more easily approachable than others. However, in general I would say that even technicians can approach their district managers. They are not afraid to get their hands dirty and are well aware of the work being done on the field. They speak pretty much the same language."

"But the knowledge sharing is only like basically it's done naturally. If I have some questions I ask them and we organize some meetings and discuss about certain

projects and their development. We share not only certain things about the project but also how to do it better and better. So that's what has been the practice in our local firm and my practice here."

The aforementioned comments confirm that knowledge sharing within districts does happen naturally outside of the strict reporting practices. However, because of the lack of horizontal interaction districts have a history of working in their own silos. Out of the 8500 employees working for the company approximately 7000 are technicians. A similar ratio applies to the Power Distribution business unit. Without downplaying the importance of administration and support functions such as marketing and HR, the core competences of the company originate from the field where the actual work is carried out. That is, both team managers and technicians possess valuable knowledge and best practices vital for the success of the company. Nevertheless, due to the vertical reporting structure this knowledge is likely to stay trapped inside the districts. Furthermore, after the district management level the nature of reporting changes and the focus shifts from operational level issues to more administrative concerns, which further complicates the situation. The gaps between hierarchical levels are quite large. Indeed, most of the interviewees saw the reporting meetings to focus strictly on the business side of the work from the point of view of performance indices, HSE (Health, Security and Environment) reporting and different overviews on more general topics such as the situation of projects and tenders. In other words, the reporting structures leave little chance for district specific best practices to spread in the home organization or to rise on the agenda of top management meetings between Eltel country managers. In addition to organizational structures and reporting practices the effects of a strong entrepreneurial culture have intensified the silo walls between districts.

In line with the Eltel Way a given country's districts are structural replicas of each other. Combined with a straightforward structuring, the entrepreneurial culture pushing profit responsibility down to districts and teams has generated a feel of internal competition. The relatively independent districts are concerned with their own wellbeing instead of the collective performance of the company and thus resemble small companies within larger ABUs. Hence, the lack of interface between districts is not the only factor affecting cooperation and knowledge sharing within ABUs:

"We have very tight profit responsibilities from districts to teams, which has presented itself as a challenge when it comes to cooperation between areas and teams. What has happened is that districts, with little or no communication with each other,

are jealous of each other's projects and assignments, which is also visible between teams because they too have their separate profit responsibilities. People have selfishly wanted to hold on to their share of work and good employees."

"I think that a lot of business managers and so forth have not seen Eltel from a higher perspective. Instead they have just seen their own boxes and how they could earn money and did not think about Eltel as an entity, from a higher perspective."

Indeed, the lack of horizontal reporting between identical districts and the rugged performance orientation of the reporting practices together with an entrepreneurial culture resulting in internal competition has created silos around districts in the possession of valuable knowledge. The siloing effect and internal competition on the ABU level is well acknowledged and management has been taking informed steps in order to break down the silos during the last years. Interviewees shared a general observation about progress and reported an improved level of cooperation between districts:

"The barriers were before. When I came everyone worked for themselves asking who is better than who… now we are talking about that we win and loose as a team or the whole ABU and these days the whole BU. Now the attitude is that if you help someone maybe you will get help back."

" In my opinion during the years that I've worked for the company, the level of cooperation has improved considerably. We have taken big steps and continue to do so in the future as well."

"I think that right now the cooperation between districts is very good. But if you had asked me a year ago I would have said then that it is really bad. But I would say that during the last 6 or 9 months it has improved a lot."

The interviewees who made the above comments all referred to a fairly recent extension to the existing reporting practices within Power Distribution. Management has started to create horizontal channels between districts by establishing a forum for the sharing of district specific best practices. The implementation of the initiative is varying across countries from district managers getting to know each other to established quarterly meetings with distributed responsibilities. In one country the forum is composed around seven product categories or streams (e.g. project management, designing, overhead

cables, underground cables, excavation work etc.) all of which is directed by a district manager with special knowledge in a given area. Quarterly meetings bring district employees together to discuss and share knowledge about one of the seven topics. Parallel to the other lines of reporting, participation is made mandatory and some of the managers' bonuses are even dependent on it. This kind of formal learning channel has forced districts to start sharing what they know with each other and the results are evident:

"On the practical level we have started to share best practices as a result of a newly adopted reporting model. Every district is responsible for presenting best practices that they think could benefit other districts. This is an example of management's systematic urge to improve cooperation and it has been working well."

"Some months ago we started these training or meeting sessions and we've met several times now. All of the district managers and managers got together and learned how to talk to each other, how to work with each other and so forth. This has helped us very much to talk with each other and look at our country organization from a higher perspective. We can discuss about everything but maybe 80% of the time is discussing about how would you do this and that and the rest is about football or holidays."

The above comments illustrate well the nonsimultaneous spread of the initiative. According to the interviewee who made the latter comment he had neither contact with nor idea about what was going on in some of the other districts in his country organization before the introduction of this additional reporting channel. Despite the identical nature of work, the interviewee reported to have learned a lot from other districts. In addition to building formal learning channels, management has been pushing exchanges of resources and workforce in every ABU instead of just recommending it.

Despite the remarkable positive changes in the level of cooperation between districts, interviewees brought up the issues related to silothinking from three out of the four countries represented in the study. Even though all of the interviewees implied the situation to have greatly improved, it is inconsiderate to assume that the silo walls are no more, especially when considering the starting point of no cooperation at all. Indeed, it seems that even though the silos have been broken down in practice through the fortification of horizontal channels it seems that they have left a mark and still remain in the attitudes and behavior of individuals. These will be taken under closer examination

after having incorporated the current situation of cross-border knowledge sharing into the examination.

4.1.2 Cross-border knowledge sharing –an articulated ambition

Even though management has succeeded in imprinting the Eltel Way throughout the business unit it seems that ABUs are not leveraging the full potential of the similarities, for example in terms of structuring and operating models, which have been established between them. Before the structural changes in 2011 every Eltel country were more or less functioning in isolation following the mandate of the parent company. The introduction of the new organizational structure brought country organizations closer together in the form an international top management team, which opened a horizontal cross-border channel between ABU managers and the CEO of Power Distribution. Nevertheless, cross-border cooperation is still in its infancy, which becomes evident from the following comments:

"Cooperation with other Eltel countries has been varying a lot. It has been quite occasional. We have been following different kinds of structures, which have had an effect on the level of cross-border cooperation… When we had a purely geographical structure the barriers between different countries were quite high. People weren't that interested in what was going on in other countries and concentrated instead on their home markets."

"What comes to everyday knowledge sharing, it usually happens more within the borders of my country organization. Cross-border cooperation boils down to resource needs regarding workforce. I have some contact persons abroad but I call them very seldom, like once a month or so."

"We mainly work within our own country and that is a problem."

"Even though we have one international business unit people identify themselves with their closest circle, which is their home country."

As suggested by the above comments the level of international cooperation on the operational level has been quite low resting on occasional cross-border transfers of the workforce, which have forced countries to work together. A part from top management meetings, Eltel countries do not have established structures, which would support

international sharing of knowledge on the operational level, for example between districts in different countries. In other words, country organizations remain distant to each other and, parallel to the district level, suffer from a silo problem. However, as the silos between the districts have started to disappear more and more efforts have been focused on international initiatives:

"...then the cooperation between districts started to slowly open up and today we are talking about and starting, or have already started a couple of years ago, to cooperate on an international level. It has rather grown bigger on a steady basis and taken steps towards the right direction."

"During the past year we have started cooperation with our neighboring country… We have transferred our know-how through carrying out some of their work and projects with our technicians as well as team managers. I think that this is probably the most fruitful way to actually go there and demonstrate in practice how the job could be carried out. And that is also the way how the job gets done. On the management level it is a bit different: for example, how one makes results and the other does not. Basically the nature of the conversation changes quite drastically."

"International sharing of knowledge is getting better every meeting… We have gone from doing nothing to sharing experiences and discussing different aspects of the business. It's getting better every day."

Despite the scarcity of established horizontal cross-border channels, every interviewee shared a common positive attitude towards international cooperation. It seems that management has been systematically pushing countries to work together after the introduction of the new organizational structure not only to balance out shortages of workforce but also increasingly to level out differences in competences. This support has been taking the form of monetary incentivizing by tying yearly bonuses with the effective use of cross-border resources as well as spreading awareness and stressing the importance of an internationally functioning Eltel:

"A couple of years ago when we started cooperation between countries we used to have monetary incentives linked to our success in utilizing foreign workforce to our advantage."

"Indirectly we have that incentive but mainly I think that all of the management is very positive about it and everybody wants us to start this cooperation. I think that we are supported there definitely."

"If we are ever going to utilize the fact that we are one of the biggest companies in Europe we need to work across borders and that is our strength in business compared to other power distribution companies…"

It seems that attitudes originating from the era of a fragmented company have started to changes. However, this change has not yet been fully implemented in practice. The present stage of cross-border knowledge sharing is well summarized in the words of one of the interviewees:

"I think that it is happening at the level of articulated ambition to do so. In reality it is in the infancy basically, in the very early beginning. Of course we do communicate, we do have management meetings where we do share thinking but when it comes to actual cross-border performance we are not far from the start yet I would say."

4.1.3 Antecedents of individual level knowledge sharing

MOTIVATION

Despite management's efforts to support and incentivize cooperation across districts and borders attitudinal issues remain at the individual level. One of the most influential factors affecting individuals' motivation to share knowledge is the prevailing entrepreneurial organizational culture and decentralized decision-making with profit responsibilities. Sharing of one's knowledge with an employee from a different district is perceived as giving the upper hand to the competition. In the end, employees from different districts are compared with each other and the wealthiest one sets the bar for the others. Looking from a theoretical perspective, the expected costs of giving away one's knowledge are quite high. The costs outweigh attainable rewards, which are, or could be, bound to a personal bonus dependent on the individual's participation in the earlier mentioned meetings between districts as well as mandated reporting practices. As long as the reporting responsibilities are fulfilled bonuses are achieved. More precisely, individual's extrinsic motivation is low because the sharing of knowledge across district borders is not properly incentivized nor does there exist any trust of being

reciprocated in the future. Furthermore, internal competition has constrained prosocial behavior to exist only within districts: it makes no sense to help other districts. Thus also the level of intrinsic motivation to share knowledge with employees from other districts can be interpreted as low. The lack of trust and low motivation related with giving away one's knowledge are well visible in the words of one interviewee:

"I've noticed that my sharing of knowledge to others is affected with some kind of a lack of trust. The circles in our industry are quite small and we conduct business close to our competitors. You cannot help but think that if you share this and that with this person and even though it is between employees from the same company, you cannot be sure where the knowledge ends up. You need to think about the backgrounds because we are a large company and people come and go."

Because of the prevailing situation, for example the independent nature of the work, distance and a history of separate country organizations, the sharing of knowledge has been perceived as something that needs to be formally secured. This has led to the extensive and incentivized reporting practices taking place in the company. Management has relied on a transaction-based governance mechanism to alter the cost-benefit –ratio of knowledge sharing in the desired direction. Like shown by past research and discussed in existing literature, the favoring of transaction-based mechanisms over commitment-based ones leveraging intrinsic motivation and building of volunteerism and trust could result in the unintentional activating of "the politics of information":

"Some employees are afraid to share what they know and are holding on to their knowledge. They think they can secure their position in the company when they possess something that forces others to turn to them."

"It is a matter of principle. It doesn't matter how good or effective you are in building cables…when you try to share your practice with other countries the general attitude is always the same: we don't want to copy what you do, we know how to do our jobs. The same applies in our country, between districts: what might work in the North cannot function in the South. This kind of natural resistance is quite common. It is some kind of territorial pride: we know what to do and we don't need to go and ask anyone else about it, not here nor from another country."

"These things happening over country borders, they are never easy when everyone thinks that they are wise in their own doings. Carrying wisdom to other countries has been attempted but it hasn't worked that well… Of course there are cultural as well as self-esteem issues. Every country relies on their own knowledge and understanding "

Based on the comments of the interviewees, one could argue that the case-company suffers from the "knowledge is power" and "not invented here" –syndromes. Indeed, The above comments give away the value attached to knowledge in the company. Two issues stand out. First, employees are hoarding their knowledge because it might not only secure the success of their district but it may also provide more downright outcomes in the form of a secured position in the company. Second, attached value to knowledge has generated a need among employees to create and utilize their own knowledge instead of receiving it from someone else due to professional pride. This "us versus them" –mentality carries the symptoms of the NIH –syndrome and are reinforced in the organization because of the competitive tension between districts and the remaining physical as well as psychological distance between country organizations. These observations are very much in line with Bock et al.'s (2005) argument that an individual's personal belief structures regarding the sharing of knowledge are composed of the consideration between individual, group and organizational level gains from monetary rewards to gaining reputation and loosing power.

OPPORTUNITY

The reporting structures at place in the business unit present themselves as formal opportunities for the sharing of knowledge. These opportunities, or purposive learning channels, are specifically designed by management to enable and support the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge in the organization. These channels are aimed at building organizational relationships to physically and psychologically reduce the distance between individuals. Nevertheless, the formal opportunities are limited within the borders of ABUs. Like mentioned earlier, reporting between countries happens at the top management level while managers at the lower hierarchical levels have no formal linkages with their foreign counterparts. The lack of structures, which could support the sharing of knowledge across borders, becomes evident from the comments of one of the interviewees:

"Coming from my previous employer I have seen a faire share of policies and structures. I think we lack quite a bit of it to have a fully functional cooperation between different areas and countries and so on… The framework is getting better but I think we have a long way to go before it is up to some good standard... We need to work together across borders and then we need more structures how to do it and more experience to do it. I think that there is a lot of experience that is missing… But still a lot of structures are missing to make it functional so that is why it is not happening."

Knowledge sharing opportunity and the success of the sharing process is essentially conditional on the relationships between individuals, formal or informal, and the surrounding context or structures, which support the forming of these relationships. Without any connections between countries knowledge cannot be expected to travel from one country to the other. Especially if no one has any experience how to do it. Furthermore, like suggested in existing literature, the most valuable knowledge is usually shared in informal settings whereas knowledge being shared via formal channels is mostly explicit in nature. Interpersonal relationships and social networks create informal opportunities to share knowledge but they seem to be limited within the borders of one's district. As argued by Al-Alawi et al. (2007), the forming of informal opportunities can be restricted by strict reporting procedures, which have the potential to build silos around functions and limit the sharing of knowledge to happen only on a certain organizational level, for example between top managers. The researchers' argument seems to hold true in the case company. Nevertheless, given the geographical spread of one district's technicians and teams, formal opportunities are a necessity to secure at least some level of interaction. In the end, informal opportunities for unconscious and incidental sharing of knowledge to happen are rare even within districts. This could be accounted to physical as well as psychological distance, thus a lack of geographical, cognitive, organizational, institutional and social proximity between employees from different districts and country organizations. What is interesting is that interviewees argued to be well aware where to look for particular knowledge. Nevertheless, this awareness was again restricted within the borders of the employee's own ABU:

"I think I got a pretty good idea if you look at the Power Distribution in my ABU but I have no idea, really, if we look at Eltel Group or Power Distribution internationally. No I don't have a clue actually."

"I think that because of my experience I am well aware whom to contact to ask questions and get a second opinion. From abroad, I don't know that many persons…"

Opportunity to share knowledge in the Power Distribution unit is also affected by a fast pace of working. All of the interviewees viewed time as a rare commodity in their work. This problem of time availability can be seen to restrict the searching of best available solutions, thus the acquisition of knowledge from other parts of the company. Furthermore, constant hurry and the lack of slack time are decreasing the chance of informal opportunities to share knowledge to occur. Like suggested by Siemesen et al. (2008) time availability can even present itself as a bottleneck factor for knowledge sharing behavior, even in the case of high motivation and ability to engage in it:

"Sometimes it just happens that we don't have the time to search for the best alternative… We have been discussing about this situation of not having enough time to look at things from different perspectives, from the outside… to have enough time to figure out how it could be done differently, more wisely. In this kind of operating environment no one simply has the time for that."

"I would say that no, I don't have enough time so you have to find ways to structure projects and workforce… I would have liked to have more time just talking to the workforce because I never had that time unless it was strictly business related."

"Everybody has a lot to do so again I think that it is hard to find the time and if people see that they don't have the time they will not do it voluntarily it must be incentivized from top-down…in a way that you are ordered to attend this meeting…"

The interviewee who made the last comment stressed the importance of building a shared value structure around the need for everyone to participate equally in the sharing of best practices in the Power Distribution business unit. Monetary incentivizing was not seen as a valid option. Along the results presented earlier, it seems that more commitment-based governance mechanisms could be needed.

What became clear from the interviews was the extensive use of available technology in everyday knowledge sharing. Interviewees reported the use of emails and phone calls as the most common way of sharing and receiving knowledge. Sometimes phone call is the only option because technicians do not have computers or proper connections on the field. The use of video conference calls and a chat feature of an Office Communicator –

software also enabling the sharing of one's computer screen with others, were also in frequent use. Nevertheless, majority of the interviewees preferred face-to-face meetings when ever possible and especially when discussing something more complicated. In this regard, the opportunity to share knowledge is certainly not dependent on available technology or tools.

ABILITY

As a result of the shared business model, The Eltel Way, business is for the most part conducted in a similar way all around the business unit. Differing legislative contexts as well as conditions such as terrain bring about some country specific characteristics but the work conducted on the field stays pretty much the same. Therefor, knowledge from one ABU is in general perceived as easily applicable in other countries:

"I think we can use my technicians almost everywhere and we have seen that the standards for the Power Distribution building process are quite similar all over Northern Europe so even the engineers could be used in other parts of the company… The problem is the salaries because our technicians are so expensive."

"From my point of view when we are starting new businesses in abroad countries there are always some differences to which we are always trying to adapt, always. And in-house the structure and working principles stay the same but we also try to adapt to what is different in every country. But I could say that's, yes our knowledge is similar, at least in some cases, but not 100%. In the end we do the same work, we have the same structure."

"We work with power distribution. There isn't that many differences but we have noticed that even the smallest disparities can lead to challenges. However, we are talking about minor issues so our doings are perfectly transferrable to other countries."

The type of knowledge being shared between individuals from different districts is related to carrying out projects successfully. For example team managers consult their supervisor on a regular basis for efficient solutions regarding subcontracting, procurement and the buying of materials. Projects may vary in size and magnitude hence the customers' demands ultimately dictate the needed experience and knowledge for successful execution. Every district and team possesses the basic know-how to execute their daily work. However, it is the accumulated knowledge and expertise from

out of the ordinary situations distinctive to a given geographical area or even a country, which separates one ABU's knowledge from the rest of the company. Nevertheless, like suggested by the earlier comments made by three interviewees, these minor differences are not perceived as a barrier for cross-border knowledge sharing. On the contrary, adaptation and refining of new knowledge to better fit one's own purposes is seen as a natural thing to do:

"...if the Finnish guys do it in one way, I have learned how to do it in my country and the other way around. We have been sharing 50% of my district's know-how with the Finns but the rest I think that we are the only one in Eltel who are doing it so we have not been sharing that part with anyone."

In the case of the Power Distribution business unit the type of knowledge being shared does not pose any problems regarding an individual's ability to share his or her knowledge. This result contradicts theory according to which stickiness of knowledge sharing or transferring is related to the characteristics of the knowledge being sent or received. Nevertheless, the knowledge being shared within the business unit is of high relevance no matter between whom it is exchanged and therefor it can be argued that it's type does not present itself as a barrier.

Instead of the characteristics of knowledge such as tacitness, differing levels of experience or knowledge base and cognitive misalignments were seen as constraining factors regarding the interviewees' ability to share and receive knowledge. One of the interviewees brought up the difficulties in articulating certain steps or workload to technicians because of their lack of knowledge about the whole project and its follow through. Looking from a theoretical perspective this situation could be interpreted as the technicians' weak absorptive capacity due to their differing knowledge bases as well as the source's cognitive limitations to deliver the message in an understandable manner:

"I think that most of them don't have the training. They have the training, well, to work with tools out on the field but they don't have the analytical tools. So if you want to teach them how to interpret the contract you need to have a lot of time and a lot of sit downs and repeat the information a bunch of times."

Another interviewee saw the recreating of certain knowledge in a new context as challenging. Like mentioned earlier, the customer's demands might vary from one project to the other, which is then reflected to the environment in which existing

knowledge is applied to. In theoretical terms the characteristics of causal ambiguity or irreducible uncertainty are well visible in the following comment made by an interviewee:

"You cannot just push everything the way you want it to be. You have to reflect...I think when you are working with people it is very hard to take the knowledge you have and implement it on different cases because every time the situation is different and the persons are different."

Apart from the interviewees who made the above two comments, interviewees saw the in-house sharing of knowledge as effortless. A majority was referring to similar ways of approaching issues and a way of working, which again is probably attributable to the shared business service model, The Eltel Way. The most hardship was encountered when trying to find a common ground with external parties such as customers. Even though the sharing of knowledge with external parties is out of the scope of this study, this result suggest that without The Eltel Way, cognitive limitations and differing experiences or knowledge bases could play a much bigger role in individuals' ability to share knowledge.

Nevertheless, despite the visible benefits and functionality of the imprinted business service model the interviews revealed slight differences in the way countries are adhering to it. The most differences were seen to exist between Northern European and the Baltic Countries. For example, one interviewee mentioned that every initiative whished to be implemented in these countries must first go through top management or else it would not get approved. These and other differences were seen to emanate from cultural differences:

"Eltel shares the same values throughout the company. The values have been evolving into a shared entity but of course countries have their own ways to interpret them and own perspectives on things."

"When I have been talking to Estonia or Poland it's like talking to another company, not very similar at all. But they know and I know that we are in the same group it's not a problem but it's not that we have much in common. It's more like having a subcontractor."

"Of course there are some differences. There are some differences but not huge ones but some. And every time you start to work with a new country you see them. I don't say that they are somehow having a bad influence but it's different, it's natural, normal."

A final issue affecting the ability to share knowledge closely related to cultural differences was language. Managers together with the new generation of technicians speak English and are not afraid to use it. However, the older generation is used to utilizing their native language when at work. For example, it came to light that some employees had turned down the opportunity to participate in the mentoring program because of a lack of trust in their own language skills. In addition to motivational factors, one of the interviewees view language as one of the main challenges regarding the transferring of best practices from one country to the other:

"I think that there's leverage across countries but language barrier and perceptions are the two major obstacles with this one. So actually I think that you can perform work across borders but because of different safety issues and collaborative requirements that language is actually in the way of that so that they can communicate at the local levels basically."

Factors affecting the antecedents of individual level knowledge sharing in the case company are summarized in Table 6.

Factors affecting the antecedent of knowledge sharing	
MOTIVATION	Entrepreneurial organizational culture and decentralized decision-making with profit responsibilities foster internal competition between individuals from different districts: siloing effect
	Value attached to knowledge has resulted in NIH- & knowledge is power -syndromes (politics of information)
	Cost-benefit –ratio to share knowledge is leveled out with only transaction-based mechanisms
	Lack of trust
OPPORTUNITY	Absence of structures to support cross-border knowledge sharing on lower hierarchical levels
	Physical and psychological distance between ABUs
	Time availability

	Scarcity of informal opportunities to share knowledge in and between ABUs
ABILITY	Country specific differences arising from the operating environment
	Absorptive capacity of technicians due to limited knowledge stock
	Cognitive misalignments between hierarchical levels
	Causal ambiguity emanating from customer specific demands
	Cultural difference in executing the Eltel Way
	Language skills

Table 6. Present state of knowledge sharing.

4.2 Knowledge sharing in the context of mentoring

4.2.1 Background information about the mentoring program and participants

The "We are stronger together –mentorship program" was initiated in the beginning of March 2014 and was planned to last for a year. The mission of the mentoring program consisted of two entities. First, the purposes of the program was to support the growth of potential and identified talents in the Power Distribution unit and provide them with a push in becoming even better managers and leaders. Second, the idea was to create a channel for mentors to spread their best practices across borders and challenge their own experience and views on how to conduct their business. Altogether eight international mentoring pairs were set up representing six nationalities. Two pairs dropped out in the early stages of the program due to relational problems and language barriers. The remaining participants ranged from team, project and district managers to the head of ABUs. The mentoring pairs consisted of a more experienced senior manager as the mentor and a less experienced junior manager as the protégé. None of the pairs had a supervisor-subordinate relationship.

The idea for the program originated from the CEO of Power Distribution business unit who had been previously mentored by a professional mentor. The initiative was started by approaching potential participants most of whom gladly agreed to take part in the program. Some declined participation due to weak language skills. The participants were invited to join a videoconference kick-off meeting aimed at presenting the mission of the program and providing instructions and giveaways for successful mentoring. For example, mentors were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and think what they

would have to offer for their mentees. Likewise, protégés were instructed to come up with at least one area of improvement in their work tasks or management skills. Furthermore, for the first meeting mentoring pairs were advised to take the time to get to know each other, agree on a meeting schedule consisting of tree to four meetings and to decide on a common goal regarding the mentoring relationship and devise a plan how to get there. After the kick-off meeting and the provided guidelines mentoring pairs were responsible for the execution of the program. The adopted definition of mentoring and mission of the program together with background information about the interviewees are presented in Table 7.

We are stronger together –mentorship program	
Definition of mentoring	Sharing best practices Making tacit knowledge visible Coaching new employees Learning new ways of working Discovering full potential as managers/leaders Confidential relationship with mutual respect
Mission of the program	**1.** To inspire mentees to fulfill their full potential, on all levels of leadership and management, and have them become even better managers & leaders **2.** To give mentors a channel to spread own best practices, processes and own way of conducting business as well as being open for inspiration and be challenged on "conventional wisdom" in return
Participants	6 international pairs chosen by senior management 6 nationalities Based on voluntary participation
Interviewees	3 international pairs 4 nationalities Average tenure of around 5 years (1 to 14 years) 2/6 participants had prior mentoring experience
Mode and frequency of interaction	0 to 4 face-to-face meetings/pair 1 to 2 videoconference calls/pair 1/3 pairs called each other Exchange of emails between mentors and mentees

Table 7. Facts about the mentoring program and background information about interviewees.

4.2.2 Mentoring and motivation to share knowledge

Virtually all of the interviewees were aware of the purpose of the mentoring program and saw it as a means to spread knowledge and best practices and support the development of individuals while bringing employees from different country organizations closer together. The program was also perceived as a way to spread awareness of the company as an international player with spread resources and capabilities that can be mobilized across borders. As such, every interviewee had understood and internalized the expectations of management, thus the purpose behind the initiation of the program, as becomes evident from the following comments:

"…to increase the knowledge in the company and not use other people outside of the business. To be able to use the knowledge we already have in the business. And help younger bosses to get more knowledge faster."

"I think it was to get mainly management to know each other across borders and get up the feel to us that we are a part of something larger…to develop our feelings for Eltel as a company and see how the values work in other parts."

"It was a first attempt to get the sharing of best practices across borders started. Management wants to open up the borders of Eltel countries."

"We have quite young organizations abroad and fresh employees so I think that there existed a need to increase their competences and probably strengthen their belief in Eltel and what kinds of opportunities there exists in the company. Basically to increase their awareness."

Based on the above comments the mentoring program succeeded in signaling organizational commitment and desire to increase cross-border knowledge sharing and as such, could be considered as a proper knowledge governance mechanism. Because of the signaling of the importance of knowledge sharing combined with voluntary participation, it can be argued that both mentors and protégés knew what they signed up for and were willing to fulfill the signaled purpose of the program and meet managerial expectations. Participants were not incentivized in any way nor were their names published inside the business unit. Hence, the only concrete reward was the acknowledgement and actual nomination to the program. In the case of mentors nomination was considered as a sign of good performance and an acknowledgement of

the value of possessed experience whereas protégés were mainly proud of the investment their organization was ready to make in them. Nevertheless, participants were also expecting to get something out of the program. As could be predicted, protégés were mainly expecting to receive valuable knowledge and insight from their more experienced mentors. Surprisingly, all of the mentors were looking forward to not only share what they know but also to receive something from their protégés. The situation is well visible in the following comments illustrating the participants' expectations towards the mentoring program:

"When I received a mentee I expected to gain something as well. I was really interested in their organization and way of working as well as in this entire initiative. I was expecting to get some pointers from his side of the table for example how we could do things differently and better."

"I thought it was fun to meet new persons and listen to the mentee and what drives him and wondering how could I help him and could he help me with something."

I expected interaction. I was interested in sparring our experiences and learn how they conduct certain aspects of their work and figure out if I would have something to contribute. Tell how we do it and see if it would be possible to transfer to them."

"I thought that I would be gaining some experience when participating and gain some knowledge… The target for me was to gain experience and clear some questions."

These comments imply that mentoring invoked extrinsic considerations in the form of participants' expectations to gain something out of the relationship. This remark stands true for both mentors and protégés. Nevertheless, in the absence of monetary rewards and attainable reputation or other external incentives, mentors appeared to be also fulfilling an internal need and true interest to share what they know with someone less experienced in the field. Like suggested in the literature review, in the situation where mentoring signals a positive organizational stance towards knowledge sharing, employees that voluntarily participate in the program seem to have internalized the value of exchanging know-how. In other words, a clear and communicated purpose of the program including knowledge sharing together with voluntary participation filters out most extrinsic considerations and favors participants with an internal need to share knowledge –at least in the case of mentors. This prosocial behavior or other-oriented empathy is most likely the reason for voluntary participation in the program in the first

place. However, as suggested by a comment made by one of the mentors, the positive feeling of being acknowledged as a suitable mentor could have also triggered or boosted internal willingness to share one's knowledge:

"I believed mentoring to play an integral part regarding Eltel's operations. Of course I will help when ever I get the opportunity to do so."

Despite the deliberate pairing of mentors and protégés, participants were able to form close relationships since the commencement of the program. Interviewees reported little or no initiation problems even though none of the pairs knew each other from before. Both mentors and protégés described their mentoring relationships as natural and open. Furthermore, the importance of establishing trust was mentioned. It became apparent that the interviewees had no inhibitions to engage in conversations or experienced any feelings of mistrust towards their mentoring pair. It was taken for a self-evident truth that nothing mentioned in the context of mentoring would travel further in the organization. Both mentors and protégés seemed to trust the integrity of the mentoring relationship enabling an open and informal dialogue with no fear of judgment:

"Its all about trust… He trusts me and I trust him back. So I am trying to say that we have a really good relationship. We talk about anything."

"...when we started to talk I realized that this person has the same amount of experience I wish to gain and there's an opportunity to learn new thing and it was interesting and it got flowing and natural."

"In my opinion we've had an open relationship since the first phone call. I noticed that both of us were on the same page and we could discuss without restrictions. What was good was that neither of us was afraid to share and that made the interaction really open."

"It was definitely a trusting relationship and I felt that I could discuss about anything with him."

Based on the above comments, a mentoring relationship creates an open and trusting context in which knowledge can be shared freely. The complete lack of the symptoms of the politics of information imply that the mentoring context has the potential to dilute value attached to knowledge and fight back the us versus them -mentality. The results

suggest that mentoring in this case company carries the characteristics of a commitment-based knowledge governance mechanism, which leverages the intrinsic motivation and volunteerism of participants and relies on the building of trust, loyalty and commitment. As such, the mentoring context supports motivation to share knowledge and has the potential to transcend the politics of information otherwise taking effect in the knowledge sharing behavior of individuals.

4.2.3 Mentoring and opportunity to share knowledge

The results on what kind of an opportunity mentoring offers for knowledge sharing to take place are not as unambiguous as its effects on individual motivation to engage in sharing. Even though mentoring seems to foster an open and trusting relationship, which, in addition to affecting motivation, undeniably creates a place for knowledge sharing to happen, it still seems to fail in securing frequent levels of interaction. In other words, mentoring succeeds in creating the so called Ba where knowledge can be internalized, externalized, socialized and combined but does not necessarily help to fight the problem of time availability or provide structure to support and secure interaction. The interviews unveil several possible factors explaining the situation, however, along the argumentation presented in the literature review, most of the issues can be seen to emanate from the way the formal learning channel has been structured and implemented.

All of the interviewees described their interaction as a dialogue loosely guided by the mentor. Topics ranged from past time activities to everyday business. A shared theme was the comparing of country organizations and their operational environments. This mutual interest in the mentoring pair's home country guided the discussion to more specific issues. For example, one protégé reported to have learned about contract management, the other about potential demand for directional drilling services in his mentor's markets and the third protégé internalized a new way of managing his workload. Furthermore, all of the mentors complemented their protégés' understanding of Eltel, the company's ownership arrangements, structures and upcoming projects and tenders in the Power Distribution business unit:

"During the conversations we reflected my operational environment with the one in my mentee's country. We also discussed his experiences from other Eltel countries… At least half of the time we discussed about hobbies and everything else that came to our mind"

"...it was a two-way conversation. It is never one way. I have always new things to learn even if someone is younger or in another role or something. I learn new things almost every day so it was a good conversation."

"My mentor explained to me who were the main net holders of the Power Distribution function and what is their main plan for the up-coming years and what are the projects Eltel is trying to get and expect to win."

"We had a functional dialogue but we faded a lot into the business area and we discussed a lot about difference between our countries because it was something that we were both interested in to learn about so that was what we were discussing mostly."

The protégé who made the last comment had previous mentoring experiences and suggested that this time around the mentoring relationship stayed on a conversation level and therefore did not contribute to his personal development. This view was also shared with a second mentee who had no previous experiences from mentoring. The third mentee was satisfied with the depth of his mentoring relationship. In fact, all of the mentees reported to have received some useful knowledge they could implement in their everyday work but only one (i.e. the third mentee) reported actual development of individual skills and competences in the form of a new mindset. The result is interesting given the prevailing tendency of existing mentoring literature to concentrate on career related functions and personal growth:

"I don't really think that we got that far that it would have had an impact in my personal traits. It has the potential but we didn't get that far."

"Like I said I think we stayed at the surface level so I don't see that mentoring had any bigger impacts on me. Of course it gave something but it didn't make any impact."

Despite the above comments and the fact that only one mentee reported to have developed his personal traits knowledge was shared in every mentoring pair and all of the participants reported to have learned something. In addition to protégés, all of the mentors said to have gained a better understanding of their mentoring pairs' home markets and the causes for some of the existing differences between countries. None of the mentors mentioned the mentoring experience to have advanced their managerial

skills or other personal traits. However, one mentor was pleased with the challenge of rethinking his own knowledge and experience when communicating it to someone else. The following comments give better insight on the interviewees' perceived gains from mentoring. The first 3 comments are made by mentors and the last 2 by protégés:

"It was a new experience and I got to know a new person and learned about our business in my mentee's country and around it ...Everyone have slightly different starting points and face different challenges. I got a better picture about our company. However, it didn't contribute to my own work."

"I got some information about my mentee's home market and our company there. It was very important to me… So it gave me more knowledge because I am new in the company."

"I don't think that it had any direct impact on my day-to-day work. Definitely as an experience it was very good and then I had to challenge myself when I tried to think about what I could have to offer and what do I actually know. When you share your knowledge you question your own doings and come up with new ideas."

"He had a functional contract how would you get most out of it, well, contract management. One part that I was inexperienced in and he had experience in. I asked a lot of questions about that and he gave me some tips and then I tried to use them with my customer so that was good…"

"He thought me that I can do everything that I believe in and that I have to stay focused on the targets and if you don't believe it, skip it and move on… Be happy and make sure the ones close to you are happy and all of this will add up and will definitely be visible in the bottom line."

The results suggest that already a superficial mentoring relationship enables the sharing of knowledge between the mentor and the protégé whereas a deeper connection results in the development of personal traits such as managerial skills. Indeed, despite the scarcity of face-to-face meetings participants made most out their time and shared what they knew and thought would be of benefit for their mentoring pair. Both explicit and tacit knowledge were exchanged, combined and modified to fit a new environment. For example, one protégé refined the knowledge of his mentor about contract management to fit the legislative demands of his operating environment. Likewise, another protégé

made use of his mentor's experience in handling difficult staff to address a supervisor-subordinate issue of his own. Furthermore, the actual context of mentoring was interpreted as contributory for the sharing of knowledge:

"For me, every meeting is to share. But when you meet in that kind of mentoring meeting both are prepared to give and take. So we were in the right modes when we met."

"... in a mentoring program, it is more often that you meet to talk things through and you have for example half-a-day meetings even though it might happen a bit too rarely. On the other side, seeking information and knowledge from abroad by a call happens more often but you have the information in smaller pieces. It's more detailed; you can share the knowledge more deeply and cover the foundations of the issues more profoundly when you meet face-to-face in a mentoring program."

"...actually when you had a meeting scheduled you would sit down and take your time and you talked just about developing the organization or some personal trait. That is what is better and different because when you have meetings everyday in the office you just talk about day-to-day business. Here it were a bit more scope and strategy discussions. The conversation has the potential to go on a deeper level."

As such, it is safe to argue that mentoring creates an opportunity for the sharing of knowledge. The mentoring context enables and supports internalization, externalization, socialization and combination of knowledge and includes the triggers of field building, dialogue, linking explicit knowledge and learning by doing presented by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). Nevertheless, the scarcity of face-to-face meetings and comments made by the interviewees reveal that mentoring did not help to overcome the problem of time availability. None of the studied mentoring pairs succeeded in meeting once every quarter as requested by management, which has most certainly had an impact on the realized depth of the mentoring relationships. Indeed, one explanation for the superficial nature of the studied mentoring relationships certainly lies in the frequency and mode of interaction. Even though the importance of commitment to the program was stressed in the kick-off meeting participants were unable to break loose from their everyday work an make time to meet more often with their mentoring pairs. Both mentors and protégés admitted that it was hard for them to prioritize mentoring over everyday work tasks, which lead to the favoring of emails and phone calls over scheduled face-to-face meetings requiring a complete detachment of one's daily work:

"We could be doing even better. Now that I think about it ... So, you get stuck in everyday business and you don't forget but it's longer down in the to do list."

"It was very hard to find time. I think I planned about three trips but then I cancelled every time because something came up. So that's why we did it via emails and so on."

"...the distance was the biggest problem. Because we are so busy so it doesn't fit very well in the everyday business we do but not say that it's a bad thing, definitely not, but it is something that you can say no to, so I choose to do other things. It's too easy to say no but also wrong to say that. You have to have the time to do it and it is very hard to schedule it."

"This kind of remote contacting via phone and such is not hard. The challenge is to set a date for a face-to-face meeting and write it down in your calendar."

These comments confirm that mentoring was not considered as priority and therefor got easily placed lower on the to-do list whenever something else came up. Even though participants were motivated to engage in knowledge sharing and even described their mentoring relationships as trusting and open it was not enough to secure frequent interaction and cherish face-to-face meetings. The interviewees were unanimous about the reasons behind their low levels of engagement in the program:

"...it would have been easier to make it a priority if we would have had this structure related to that mentoring program ...it was all up to us. I expected more structure around it that it would be more guided and around it maybe some lectures or some preliminary goals or something like that. We got that from the start and I was expecting it to continue like that but it was only one meeting and then, hey, here is your mentor and good luck."

"In the beginning it felt really good that the program wasn't that controlled. Even the provided information sheet seemed a bit harsh. But now, I would say that it would have been a good thing to have more guidance around it. It could be more fruitful."

"I think that it would had been a good thing if all of the program participants would have met before the starting of the program...go through the case and what is expected from us and what we will get out of it and so forth instead of just a video meeting... That would give a good kick to the program and it could start a little bit better. Just to brake the ice..."

The interviewees who made the above comments were referring to a lack of structures and support on behalf of the organization in carrying out the mentoring program. A single virtual kick-off meeting including an informative slide show with the purpose and goals of the program was not perceived to provide enough guidance nor reflect management's commitment to the program and its successful completion. A part from one short online questionnaire in the summer of 2014, participants had not heard from the coordinators of the program since its initiation. As brought up by one of the protégés, participants felt that they were left alone after the videoconference ended. Without anyone looking over the shoulders of the participants and expressing interest in their progress, it was made too easy for them to neglect their responsibilities as mentors and protégés. All of the participants reported to have set initial goals and discussed their expectations with their mentoring pair as was instructed in the information sheet. However, only one pair succeeded in following set goals and achieved them. The other two pairs reported their agreed goals to have been forgotten along the way. These were also the two pairs, which protégés felt that mentoring did not have any impact on their individual traits or personal development. The only mentor with former mentoring experiences mentored the protégé who felt that he had developed his managerial skills during the program.

Despite the communicated need for more structure and support participants did not want to add any reporting responsibilities in the mentoring program. However it was clearly stated that some kind of a follow up is a prerequisite for the improvement of the program. Organizational intervention in the form of, for example, monthly reporting forcing certain kind of behavior was seen to have only negative effects on the mentoring relationship and its outcomes:

"I don't think we would need more formal meetings. Everyone has already said yes to participate and it is up to individuals to act like grownups and make it happen. It cannot be too scheduled."

"It's not for anyone else you do it for yourself. That is the whole idea. Reporting is not necessary but some kind of structures goals or systems… And if the chemistry is right between the mentor and mentee it will progress the mentoring process I would say. Just to have the goals written down somewhere."

Mentoring and its outcomes were understood as a result of the actual mentoring relationship and therefor it was agreed that a universal solution would be hard to come by. Once started, the actual process of mentoring was perceived as something out of the reach of the organization and in the hands of the participants. In other words, after the initiation of the program the organizational responsibility is to provide support and encourage participants instead of intervene in the content of their relationship. In line with the latter comment presented above, both mentors and protégés agreed on the usefulness of a more informative kick-off meeting with clearer guidelines and rules of the game to be followed along the program. Like presented in the literature review: setting of expectations and goals serve as a mean to give structure and meaning for the relationship, which again fosters dedication to the program. Furthermore, it was suggested that the organization could bring the participants in one place a couple of times during the program enabling everyone to get to know each other and set dates around which one-on-one mentoring meetings could be scheduled. The perceived lack of organizational support, not intervention, seems to have a negative effect on a participant's level of engagement in the mentoring program ultimately affecting the opportunity it creates to share knowledge.

Even though relationships were reported to be superficial and participants were not able to engage in the program properly, mentoring created a channel between individuals that otherwise would have remained complete strangers to each other in the business unit. When asked if the participants would have ever engaged in conversation with their mentoring pair without taking part in the mentoring program both mentors and protégés gave a negative answer. In addition, interviews revealed that mentoring has spawned informal relationships and mentoring pairs continue to keep in touch or at least acknowledge their former mentor or protégé as a valuable contact in another Eltel country. More precisely, only one pair regards the mentoring program to have ended but have still stayed in touch in business related issues. The other two pairs view mentoring as a life long endeavor: the frequency of interaction might change but the relationship never seizes to exist. Along with arguments presented in the literature review, the results suggest that formal learning channels have the potential to spawn informal ones by brining people closer together (see e.g. Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Argote et al. 2003):

"...this is a starting of a relationship and I don't see any end even though the mentoring program would end. He can always call me and I can call him... Because to me its life long."

"...it comes naturally so I believe that it will be the same when the program closes. I don't feel that the program is neither closed or ongoing so I don't think that there will be any differences."

"*A mentoring program never really stops. There is no one who can stop it and that is a good thing. My mentor answers my emails whenever I write to him and I will keep on contacting him in the future as well... I will have his support and someone to contact when I need support or advise."*

"I think both of us see that the program has ended but it hasn't stopped us from keeping in contact."

4.2.4 Mentoring and ability to share knowledge

All of the interviewees described their interaction as an informal dialogue loosely directed by the mentor. As a result, the two-way interaction led to more specific topics and areas of interests of the protégés. All of the mentors reported to have utilized practical examples from their own work to support the sharing of knowledge. Protégés' comments confirm the utilization of practical examples. Mentors also relied on the use of different materials during the conversations. One mentoring pair devised a brochure whereas another pair exchanged and worked on existing customer contracts and contract initiation steps. Furthermore, all of the mentors reported to have given their protégés some kind of assignments relating to their discussions. As such, protégés were exposed to the components of active learning and witnessed not only learning-by-listening and -thinking but also learning-by-doing. None of the interviewees reported to have witnesses any difficulties in understanding their mentoring pair. On the contrary, participants described their interaction as effortless. Only one mentor stated to have noticed little cultural difference according to which he then adapted his output. The course and nature of interaction taking place in the mentoring dyad is well described by one of the interviewees:

"You have to be good listener, you have to be interested and how others have done it. And then you have to take it in and make it your own thing. And do it your own way. So you should not copy paste anyone and think that I do it like him… You build on your own and everyone's knowledge then you compare it and mix it and then out of that comes someone else's knowledge. I learn from the meeting and I take that and that and then it becomes my knowledge…"

The findings suggest that the two-way interaction or dialogue helped to overcome issues arising from cognitive misalignments, causal ambiguity, tacitness of knowledge and absorptive capacity. As such, in addition to creating an opportunity for the sharing of knowledge, mentoring supports specific mechanisms for learning, which increase the participants' ability to share knowledge with each other. Even though the bidirectional interaction permits the modification of the message and thus fights any uncertainties surrounding it or its utilization, issues arising from differing experiences from a given field of work and the lack of prior mentoring experience still remain.

As already touched upon in the previous section, only one of the three mentors had previous experience from being a mentor. The protégé of the same mentor reported to have gained managerial skills and insight into his work and confirmed the reaching of discussed goals. The other two protégés didn't stick to their goals and described their mentoring relationships to have stayed at a superficial level. In addition, mentors with no prior mentoring experience were not completely satisfied with the outcomes of their mentoring relationships and described them as teacher-student arrangements. According to the mentors, program participants could have benefitted more if mentors and protégés would have shared the same levels of experience and similar positions in the company. In other words, these interviewees would have preferred peer mentoring to the traditional model. The results suggest that neither of the mentors felt perfectly comfortable in their roles as mentors. The first mentor was expecting discussions to circulate around the topic of power distribution and the business. However, the protégé had a different background, which made the mentor feel that he had nothing to contribute. As a result mentoring was harnessed to serve the business related needs of the protégé. The second mentor encountered difficulties in guiding conversations to deeper levels. According to the mentor dialogue was slowed down because of difficulties in clarifying the needs of the protégé, who was not that active in asking questions.

"Scope of our works was so different that the target was more like selling support… It was a bit like that and I didn't have much to contribute… In my opinion, it was like that since the start and we didn't share a common view on mentoring."

"We were actively starting conversations, but it was really hard for me to picture what he actually needed even though we tried to figure out his situation and business cases. This was the most challenging part for me."

Mentors who made the above comments were suggesting that the pairing process should be done better for the backgrounds of the participants to match creating mutual interests and enabling conversations to flow more naturally. In theoretical terms, these mentors saw the existing experience gap between them and their protégés to have a negative effect on their ability to mentor and engage in deeper sharing of experiences. However, looking from another perspective, it could be argued that the mentors were lacking competences to face the challenges emanating from differing positions and work tasks as well as an inactive protégé, which ultimately led to moderate mentoring outcomes. For example, mentors could have alternatively concentrated on developing their protégés' managerial or leadership skills. Indeed, the mentors did not succeed in taking control over their relationships to guide them on the desired paths. In line with this view, another mentor and a protégé brought up the importance of considering participants' competences to act as a protégé or mentor when choosing them. These interviewees did not view differing experiences to pose any problems as long as protégés and especially the mentors possess proper mentoring skills:

"Mentoring is not easy and being a mentee is not easy either because you need to ask the right questions and as a mentor you need to be more, well, educated how you mentor someone so that it can become successful."

"I think when we pick the mentors we have to be more careful who we pick and to whom they mentor. And how motivated they are to share with others because it has to be a good experience."

In general, mentoring can be seen to have a positive effect on the participants' ability to share knowledge with each other. More precisely, the context of mentoring supports different learning mechanisms and enables two-way interaction, which together help to attenuate issues arising from existing cognitive limitations, absorptive capacity, tacitness of knowledge and causal ambiguity. Nevertheless, the results suggest that the

context of mentoring does not automatically lower knowledge sharing barriers arising from existing experience gaps within the mentoring dyad. If the experience gap is perceived as too wide, the mentors start to feel that they have nothing to contribute and the interaction is stuck at a superficial level. According to the interviewees this problem could be solved by matching mentors and protégés with similar experiences or by selecting participants with the right skills to succeed in the program and produce desired mentoring outcomes. Even in the presence of wide experience gaps. Indeed, the ability to embrace the role and responsibilities of a mentor or protégé ultimately affects the ability to share knowledge.

4.3 Effects of mentoring on the antecedent of individual level knowledge sharing

This subsection is a summary of the findings. It the present state of knowledge sharing and the previously identified factors having a negative effect on individual level knowledge sharing are compared and contrasted with the factors present in the mentoring context. The results are presented in Table 8.

Factors affecting the antecedent of knowledge sharing		
Outside of mentoring relationship		In mentoring relationship
MOTIVATION	Entrepreneurial organizational culture and decentralized decision -making with profit responsibilities foster internal competition between districts Value attached to knowledge has resulted in NIH- & knowledge is power -syndromes (politics of information) Cost-benefit –ratio to share knowledge is leveled out with only transaction-based mechanisms Lack of trust	Mentoring fosters an open and trusting relationship in which knowledge is shared freely Mentoring present itself as a commitment-based KGM favoring intrinsic motivation to extrinsic considerations Dilutes value attached to knowledge

OPPORTUNITY	Absence of structures to support cross-border knowledge sharing on lower hierarchical levels
	Physical and psychological distance between ABUs
	Time availability
	Scarcity of informal opportunities to share knowledge in and between ABUs
		Connects individuals from different countries
		Formal relationships bread informal ones
		Creates Ba
		Remaining barriers:
		Participants' low engagement in the program
		   • Absence of organizational support
		   • Time availability
		   • Superficial relationships

ABILITY	Country specific differences arising from the operating environment Absorptive capacity of technicians due to limited knowledge stock Cognitive misalignments between hierarchical levels Causal ambiguity emanating from customer specific demands Cultural differences in executing the Eltel Way Language skills	Mentoring supports different learning mechanisms and enables two-way interaction, which fights back issues of causal ambiguity, absorptive capacity and cognitive limitations Choosing of participants and voluntary participation screens out language barriers Cultural differences were not seen to cause bigger issues in mentoring relationships **Remaining barriers:** Work related experience gap within the mentoring dyad Prior mentoring experience

Table 8. Effects of mentoring on the antecedents of individual level knowledge sharing.

The findings suggest that mentoring has the potential to act as a commitment-based knowledge governance mechanism, which alleviates individuals' motivational issues to share knowledge. Because of voluntary participation and the signaling effect of the program regarding management's stance on knowledge sharing extrinsic considerations give way to intrinsic considerations. Mentoring creates an open and fertile relationship between the mentor and the protégé. More importantly, the integrity of the mentoring relationship creates trust, which again seems to dilute value attached to knowledge and terminate the politics of information. As such, the created relationship transcends the otherwise dominant entrepreneurial culture and internal competition.

Mentoring served as a first attempt to formally connect employees from different Eltel countries. The program created a platform and an opportunity for individuals to get to know each other and form relationships. These relationships would have had little or no chance to form naturally because of the absence of structures supporting cross-border

horizontal knowledge sharing on lower hierarchical levels. Findings revealed that participants perceived knowledge sharing to be a natural part of mentoring and regarded the context as contributory to deeper level conversations. Nevertheless, mentoring did not help to fight back the reported problem of time availability. Both mentors and protégés found it difficult to detach from their daily work and fully commit to the program. Despite the mentioned openness and trust, the low engagement left most of the mentoring relationships at a superficial level. One explanation certainly lies in the constructs of the program. Indeed, participants felt left alone with the execution of the program and would have wanted more support on behalf of the organization.

Instead of perceiving country specific differences as a barrier for knowledge sharing participants regarded them as interesting and spent time to learn from each other's operating environments. Cultural differences were mentioned but they were not seen to pose any significant obstacles regarding the sharing of knowledge. As predicted, the sharing of knowledge was bidirectional and took the form of an open dialogue where both the mentor and protégé shared and received knowledge. This allowed for the message to be refined and for the scope of the conversation to be narrowed down to more specific topics. Mentors used learning mechanisms to promote learning-by-listening, -thinking and –doing. These mechanisms together with bidirectional knowledge sharing diluted the effects of absorptive capacity, cognitive limitations and causal ambiguity otherwise having an effect on individuals' ability to share knowledge. Despite these advantages, the results show that the mentoring context does not dilute the negative effects of a wide experience gap. Even though not present outside of the mentoring relationship, a wide work related experience gap seemed to decrease mentors' ability to share knowledge. Nevertheless, this could be also attributed to a lack of mentoring experience and ability to take charge of the relationship. The findings will be discussed in more detail in the following and final section.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this final section the main findings of the study are discussed and conclusions are drawn. After presenting answers to the research questions, limitations of the research are pointed out. In the end, both implications for research and practice are suggested.

5.1 Discussion and summary of the findings

The aim of this study was to explore how mentoring affects an individual's ability, motivation and opportunity to share knowledge. The research questions were defined as follows:

1. *What affects individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge within and across MNC subsidiaries?*

2. *How does mentoring affect the antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior?*

The importance of knowledge sharing and the integration of best practices and know-how within an international MNC were well established in the case of the Power Distribution business unit. In line with the knowledge sharing literature, effective integration and use of company specific knowledge repositories are perceived as prerequisites for success and a differentiator regarding competition. Nevertheless, the notions of knowledge sharing being sticky are equally valid as is visible in the findings of this research. Indeed, for the business unit to become a truly international player it still has a lot of barriers to cross.

Relating to the first research question, individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge were affected with the same factors locally and across borders. Nevertheless, at the local level most of the issues arise from internal competition whereas the cross-border knowledge sharing is characterized by a lack of structures. At the local level an entrepreneurial culture encourages internal competition and knowledge hoarding, which had resulted in the siloing of districts. Employees view

knowledge as valuable in retaining their jobs and differentiating themselves from both external and internal competitors. It is clear that knowledge is hoarded because of the presence of the politics of information and a lack of trust in the reciprocal behavior of other employees. This finding is very much in line with existing literature and the argument of the pivotal role trust plays in individual level knowledge sharing and motivation to engage in it (see e.g. Cabrera & Cabrera 2005). Even though the silo walls between districts have started to crumble thanks to knowledge sharing initiatives individual attitudes remain and affect employees' motivation to engage in knowledge sharing. In theoretical terms, intention to share one's knowledge is no longer withdrawn due to subjective norms like the general acceptability of the action but rather the individual's personal beliefs about the consequences of the behavior (see e.g. Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). One could argue that managerial actions to reduce competition and increase the level of knowledge exchange has already started to imprint on the subjective norms of employees but has not yet reached their attitudes or personal beliefs. This will probably take a while and need continuous efforts on behalf of management.

Not only does the costs of sharing one's knowledge outweigh attainable rewards as well as expected reciprocal behavior, but in addition, the nature of work minimizes informal opportunities to share knowledge as technicians have little or no chance to meet other employees outside of their own team, not to mention districts. This unavoidable isolation of individuals partly explains the need for strict reporting procedures for the maintaining of knowledge exchanges. However, the situation has lead to an overly emphasis on transaction-based mechanisms at the expense of more commitment-based initiatives. As a result, individuals gather in one place when they are asked to, but may not fully engage in sharing their best practices as attitudinal issues remain. The situation bears resemblance to issues described by past research and discussed in existing literature. Indeed, the favoring of transaction-based mechanisms over commitment-based ones leveraging intrinsic motivation and building of volunteerism and trust could result in the unintentional activating of the politics of information. Furthermore, the reporting structures and responsibilities favor structured and explicit knowledge and do not support the dissemination of tacit knowledge and valuable insight from the field. This argument is in line with existing literature according to which the most valuable knowledge is usually shared in informal settings whereas knowledge being shared via formal channels is mostly explicit in nature.

The above-mentioned formal learning channels are aimed at building organizational relationships to physically and psychologically reduce the distance between individuals.

Nevertheless, these formal opportunities are limited within the borders of ABUs. Like mentioned earlier, reporting between countries happens at the top management level while managers at the lower hierarchical levels have no formal linkages with their foreign counterparts. As argued by Al-Alawi et al. (2007), the forming of informal opportunities can be restricted by strict reporting procedures, which have the potential to build silos around functions and limit the sharing of knowledge to happen only on a certain organizational level, for example between top managers. The researchers' argument seems to hold true in the case company. Indeed, at the international level the history of having separate country organizations manifests itself as a remaining psychological distance between ABUs and a lack of structures supporting horizontal cross-border knowledge sharing. In general, the scarcity of face-to-face encounters between lower hierarchical levels both locally and internationally gives little chance for relational channels to form. According to existing literature, face-to-face interaction is a crucial component in the generation of closer relationships, which again foster informal settings where the most valuable knowledge gets shared more frequently (Ipe 2003). In short, the state of cross-border, horizontal knowledge sharing between different subsidiaries seems to be still in its infancy.

The findings regarding factors affecting individuals' ability to share knowledge are well in line with the ones presented in the theoretical framework. Especially issues related to absorptive capacity, cognitive limitations and causal ambiguity stood out. For example, Szulanski (1996) has argued causal ambiguity and the lack of absorptive capacity of the recipient in addition to an arduous relationship to be the most important factors affecting internal knowledge transferring. Like predicted, cultural differences had an effect on individual level knowledge sharing across borders. Most of the issues were seen to originate from regulatory differences between countries. That is, differing formal institutions make every subsidiary's operational environment slightly different which again had an impact on exchanging and understanding work related knowledge and its generalizability. Cultural differences were also seen to affect the way different subsidiaries adhered to and understood the shared business service model. Following the work of Kostova (1999), these differences emanate from the informal cognitive and normative institutions guided by values and norms of a given country. Indeed, cultural differences seem to have created little variations of the Eltel Way creating slight confusion in the exchanges of knowledge. Nevertheless, cultural differences were not considered as a major issue and employees considered them as interesting and something that requires adaptation rather than a major barrier. However, language was

considered as an obstacle for effective cross-border knowledge sharing especially between lower hierarchical positions.

Factors defining the state of knowledge sharing in the business unit are presented in Table 8. The findings are consistent with the factors presented in the integrative framework with few exceptions. First, the negative effects of an entrepreneurial organizational culture were not discussed nor was the culture expected to form silos around districts. Nevertheless, strict reporting structures have been argued to do so (See Al-Alawi et al. 2007). Second, despite the presence of causal ambiguity and absorptive capacity, strictly knowledge related factors, such as its tacitness or type, did not cause expected hardship regarding knowledge sharing. This could certainly be attributed to the shared business service model the Eltel Way and the similar characteristics and nature of the work through out the business unit. Lastly, tenure did not have any effect on the sharing of knowledge.

What comes to the second research question, in the light of the findings, mentoring serves as a mechanism for the organization to govern knowledge-sharing behavior and signal its importance. Voluntary participation and the absence of incentives screened out most extrinsic consideration to participate in the program. Indeed, participants did not receive any recognition or compensation for their efforts. Neither were the participants nor the existence of the program announced or made public in any way. Thus, the engagement in the program was relying heavily on the intrinsic motivation of the participants, aware of the purpose of the program. Nevertheless, like argued by Minbaeva et al. (2012), the overall motivation to engage in knowledge exchange across employee boundaries is a product of intrinsic but also extrinsic motivation. Therefore, as long as it will not evoke the politics of information, securing more recognition to the participants could increase their extrinsic motivation. An interesting point was that monetary incentivizing was not seen as a necessity because mentoring itself was perceived to benefit the participants and therefore should be something that an individual does for him- or herself. In the context of mentoring all motivational issues otherwise present in individual level knowledge sharing disappeared. As such, the findings are in line with existing theorization of mentoring as a commitment-based governance mechanism fostering intrinsic motivation, volunteerism and trust all diminishing motivational issues arising from knowledge hostility and the politics of information (see e.g. Husted et al. 2012). However, it could be argued that even though the findings suggest mentoring to dilute value attached to knowledge and in general help to overcome motivational issues to engage in knowledge sharing, there remains

room for doubt whether this is solely attributable to mentoring. Given the state of cross-border knowledge sharing and lack of sustained cooperation, it might well be that mentoring pairs did not felt intimidated by their foreign colleagues. As a result, such factors as internal competition, lack of trust or value attached to knowledge did not restrict the sharing of best practices.

Because the state of cross-border knowledge sharing is in its infancy and the existence of structures between ABUs is scarce the role of mentoring as a first introductory channel or formal initiative towards building connections between employees from different countries was emphasized. Indeed, mentoring allowed for horizontal cross-border knowledge sharing between foreign subsidiaries to take place. More importantly, the created formal relationships were considered to continue as informal ones even after the program ends. As such, arguments about formal learning opportunities creating informal relationships for more knowledge sharing to follow are confirmed. Mentoring created a valid opportunity for the sharing of knowledge whenever mentoring pairs managed to get together or be in contact. Indeed, time, and more precisely the lack of it, presented itself as a major obstacle. Like brought up in the literature review, time can act as a bottleneck factor restricting both motivation and ability to engage in knowledge sharing (see Siemsen et al. 2008). Participants found it hard to fully commit to the program because of difficulties in detaching from their daily work. Mentoring does promote motivation and ability to share knowledge but in this case time availability did not allow participants to capitalize on this fruitful context.

According to the findings, a major reason hindering the making of time to meet and interact on a more steady level was the lack of perceived organizational support for the program. Participants felt that the execution of the program was left solely on their shoulders after the kick-off meeting. It seems that the novelty and even excitement surrounding the program was lost and mentoring became just another thing to do on top of everyday work. The situation is comparable to the arguments presented by Minbaeva et al. (2012) according to which individual engagement in knowledge sharing is heavily affected by the perceived organizational commitment to knowledge sharing. In this situation, perceived organizational commitment to the program resulted in low engagement in mentoring and in the end knowledge sharing. The situation is twofold: it has been suggested and argued that formal mentoring programs should imitate the formulation of informal mentoring relationships and managerial intervention should be left at minimal levels for natural relationships to form. The results of this study are in line with the arguments concerning intervention but witness a clear need for some kind

of supporting structures or procedures around the program to reflect organizational commitment to the cause. In essence, the problem of time availability brings forward underlying motivational issues. Even though, the context of mentoring fosters individuals' intrinsic motivation to share knowledge organizational actions regarding the program can dilute this positive effect, which emphasizes the importance of careful planning of mentoring programs. Nevertheless, demonstrating commitment should not take the form of mandated reporting responsibilities because the mentoring relationship and its contents were interpreted as the property of the mentor and the protégé. This is understandable given the trusting relationships and the potentially delicate nature of topics being discussed. Like suggested by one of the interviewees, the support could take the form of organized mentoring days, with training and guidance for successful mentoring.

The findings lend support to theoretical criticism of the generic source-recipient model and the process view of knowledge sharing (Harvey 2012). Knowledge sharing was shown to consist of mutual exchanges in the form of a two-way interaction along which the message is shaped and refined by the input of both the sender and the receiver. As predicted, the context of mentoring enabled the use of a bundle of learning mechanisms. Together, these two factors increased participants' ability to share, receive and understand knowledge. Nevertheless, mentors' ability to share knowledge was still negatively affected by a wide work related experience gap. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the lack of prior mentoring experience resulted in superficial relationships, where knowledge got shared but personal development and improved managerial skills were not reached. Both mentors and protégés brought up the challenging nature of mentoring and being mentored. The results are inconclusive whether the differences in experience could also be attributed to a lack of prior mentoring experience. One could also speculate that the articulated need for more support could at least to some extent originate from mentors' and protégés' uncertainties and ability to take charge of the mentoring relationship. Based on the integrative framework it was argued that mentoring includes the potential for training participants, which could improve their ability to share knowledge. The findings suggest that one form of support and expressing commitment to the program could take the form of training program participants.

As a conclusion, mentoring is a commitment-based knowledge governance mechanism, which improves individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge by transcending barriers otherwise present in the business unit. Mentoring does not only

promote personal growth and result in career related outcomes but it enables the sharing of knowledge and formulation of relationships between individuals that otherwise would never be in contact with each other. Even a superficial mentoring relationship provides a fruitful channel for the sharing of knowledge whereas a deeper connection is needed for managerial skills and personal attributes to develop. Mentoring has a positive image in the minds of employees and being nominated in the program is considered as an acknowledgement of valuable experience or potential. Despite the components of the AMO-framework are interconnected, one affecting the other, this study highlights perceived organizational commitment and previous mentoring experience together with a wide work related experience gap as the bottleneck factors hindering knowledge sharing in the mentoring context. As a result, the opportunity that mentoring created for the sharing of knowledge was never fully put to use, participants were not able to agree on a common direction for their relationships and stick to it and lastly two out of three relationships studied were reported to have stayed at a superficial level. As the motivational foundation seems to be solid, the remaining issues could be tackled with minor investments such as more careful screening and pairing of participants, training and visible organizational commitment to the program.

What comes to the bigger picture, mentoring works because it creates a natural environment for knowledge sharing to take place. The positive effects of mentoring on the antecedents of individual level knowledge sharing are undeniable. It is a misconception to regard mentoring as a one-sided relationship resulting only in career related outcomes. In the light of the findings of this study the benefits of mentoring are attributable to the positive effects it has on knowledge sharing behavior. As such, mentoring does not only serve as developmental tool for HIPOs but as a HRM tool to manage individual level knowledge sharing, which in the end affects the knowledge flows of the MNC.

5.2 Limitations of the research

First and foremost a significant limitation of the study originates from the small number of conducted interviewees. Nine interviews cannot be considered to reveal a comprehensive picture about the research topic. Furthermore, interviews were conducted via three different methods: face-to-face, meetings, video and phone calls. The varying mode of interaction might have given interviewees differing starting points

in providing answers, which could have had an effect on the results of the study. Otherwise, the chosen data collection method proved useful given the obtained answers and their contents. Indeed, a quantitative method would not have served the exploratory nature of the study. Nevertheless, qualitative results are more open to various interpretations compared to results obtained from quantitative studies.

The constructed integrative framework cannot be considered as all-inclusive. The knowledge sharing literature encompasses a variety of different perspectives on factors affecting the sharing of knowledge. Even though the AMO-framework served as a theoretical lens in the construction of the framework, literature on mentoring from the perspective of knowledge sharing was scarce. Therefore, the literature part on mentoring was knitted together from several sources leaving room for misinterpretation and error. Despite the novel topic of the study the existing literature proved accurate and helped to construct a robust integrative framework, which is visible in the consistency of the results with the presented literature. A noteworthy limitation is the fact that the study did not close the so-called KGA-circle because the scope was limited to individual level knowledge sharing behavior and therefore knowledge sharing outcomes on the organizational level were not covered.

A final limitation of the study is the low generalizability of the findings. Mentoring programs are structured differently according to their purpose and are therefore company specific. A multiple-case study including interviewees from different companies and mentoring programs could have produced more generalizable results and enabled the identification of patterns. Furthermore, it would have been appropriate to map individuals' motivation, opportunity and ability to share knowledge in the beginning, during and in the end of the mentoring program. Nevertheless, within the scope of a master's thesis such elements would have been very difficult to integrate in the research.

5.3 Implications for research

By adopting the knowledge governance approach and concentrating on the antecedents of individual level behavior instead of comparing macro-level factors, this study answers the call for more micro-level research, thus levels out the imbalances present in existing knowledge sharing literature. The study provides further support for the mutual

exchange model of knowledge sharing and the functionality of the AMO-framework as an integrative theoretical lens regarding factors affecting individual level knowledge sharing. The study sheds new light on existing literature, which has overly emphasized mentoring as a one-sided relationship resulting in career related outcomes. Furthermore, the adopted perspective complements literature on HRM practices and their effects on individual level behavior. As such, this study can be considered as a step closer in answering the question of why mentoring works instead of proving that is does.

The findings reveal the importance of conveying organizational commitment to the mentoring program from its initiation until the end. The emphasis should be on supporting the participants instead of intervening in the mentoring relationship and its contents. This finding raises the question of an appropriate level and form of support and opens up an interesting avenue for future research. Furthermore, the articulated need for more support questions the need for formal mentoring programs to rigorously imitate informal encounters.

Another interesting finding was that already a superficial mentoring relationship enabled the sharing of knowledge whereas a deeper connection was needed for personal traits and managerial skills to develop. The finding is not unambiguous as it could be attributed to the ability and mentoring experience of the mentor. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to gain more understanding on the circumstances in which mentoring stays at the level of knowledge sharing and, on the other hand, on the factors required for personal growth. This would widen our views on mentoring and potentially result in new recipes for formal mentoring programs depending on their purpose.

5.4 Implications for practice

The study presents a few points to consider when planning and implementing formal mentoring programs. Like discussed under the limitations of the research, it should be noted that the findings are not generalizable because every mentoring program carries its own characteristics. Therefore, the following implications for practice may not be valid in other contexts.

Because perceived organizational commitment to the program was shown to have an effect on participants' engagement in mentoring and knowledge sharing management

should provide more support along the progression of the program. The right amount and mode of support is hard to determine because mentoring participants and their relationships are not alike. However, like discussed earlier, support could take the form of added structures for example organized mentoring days bringing participants in one place to discuss about their experiences regarding the program. In addition, providing recognition to the program could increase extrinsic considerations to participate in mentoring but it can make participants feel more accountable for reaching agreed goals, which could increase their levels of engagement.

Prior mentoring experience and a wide work related experience gap were identified to have a negative effect on the knowledge sharing ability of participants. A point of concern raised buy the interviewees was that neither mentoring nor being mentored was considered as easy and therefore it was presented that not everyone is suitable for the program. As such, the company could consider the integration of a more systematic and organized way of choosing and pairing participants in the program.

Because of the current state of cross-border knowledge sharing the formulation of international mentoring pairs was justifiable but perhaps too soon considering the lack of other structures between ABUs. Participants expressed a need for more knowledge sharing within their home ABUs and regarded mentoring as a valid mechanism in fulfilling this need. In the light of the findings, a mentoring program connecting employees from different districts could help to fight the remaining attitudinal issues and silo walls. Management could also consider implementing a peer mentoring program, which would decrease the potential issues arising from differing work related experiences and the mentioned teacher-student configuration. Employees from the same ABU would already be familiar with their markets, thus the conversation could reach deeper levels more easily. The purpose could be focused on sharing instead of personal growth. Language would not pose any problems and engagement in the program would be easier because of shorter distances. The program could result in informal relationships, which would compensate for the lack of interpersonal interaction between districts. Individuals from successful pairs could be then considered for an international program.

The present study showed that mentoring relationships do not necessarily have to reach the level of personal growth and development for knowledge sharing to take place. On the contrary, knowledge sharing seemed to take place even in relatively shallow mentoring relationships with little face-to-face meetings because trust and openness

were easily formed. As such, management could consider to clearly defining the purpose of a mentoring program to aim for open dialogue. In this way, participants with higher expectations regarding personal growth or career advancements would consider their mentoring successful instead of considering it to have stayed on a superficial level. In other words, management could benefit from setting up two kinds of mentoring programs: one that requires less commitment and is aiming for knowledge sharing, and another that focuses on personal development and growth, which would naturally demand more dedication and mentoring skills from participants. The former could encompass peers and the latter a traditional setup with a more experienced mentor and a protégé.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Participant information sheet.

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

The purpose of this study is to research knowledge sharing taking place in the context of mentoring. The aim is to shed light on the effects of mentoring on individuals and their knowledge sharing behavior. Furthermore, the objective is to explore knowledge sharing and mentoring on a more general level.

In this study knowledge and knowledge sharing are understood as follows:

Individual's know-how, best practices or something, which is helpful in solving problems in the organization or improving processes and services. Knowledge sharing means providing or transferring one's knowledge to others. Knowledge sharing is possible through various methods such as formal and/or informal meetings and information systems. –Bock et al. (2005)

The interview starts with initial background questions followed by three themes around which the rest of the interview is structured. First, knowledge sharing and its occurrence in the company are discussed. In the second part the focus shifts to mentoring. In the third and final part, mentoring outcomes and effects on knowledge sharing are covered. The interviewer will have prepared questions, but the aim is to have an open discussion about mentoring and knowledge sharing. There are no right or wrong answers. The participant has the right to interrupt the interview at any time and refrain from answering a question. Participation is anonymous.

Feel free to ask anything from the interviewer.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B. Interview questions.

<u>**Structured questions:**</u>

A) How did you get involved in the mentoring program?

B) Frequency and mode of interaction so far?

C) What is your position in the company?

D) How long have you been working for this company?

E) How would you describe your level of experience compared to your mentoring pair?

F) Do you have a supervisory/non supervisory relationship to your mentoring pair?

G) Do you have previous mentoring experiences?

<u>**PART I: Knowledge sharing outside of mentoring (Starting point, Mentor & Protégé)**</u>

1. How would you describe the level of cooperation in your business function?
   - In home country organization / across borders?
   - Is knowledge in one country easily applicable in other countries?

2. Do your company's values and structures support the sharing of knowledge?
   - In your home country / across borders?
   - Do hierarchies matter?
   - Does it receive management's support?
   - Do you get compensated or recognized for engaging in knowledge sharing?
   - Do you have enough time to participate in knowledge sharing?

3. Can you give me examples how you share and receive knowledge in your work?
   - With whom do you share knowledge?
   - Do you know where to look for particular knowledge, what about others?
   - Does distance matter?

4. Can you give me an example of a situation where it was particularly hard to share and receive knowledge?

5. Where in your business function would you like to see more knowledge to be shared?
   - Why is it not happening?

<u>**PART II: Mentoring**</u>

Motivation

6. How would you describe your mentoring relationship?

- Formal/informal, close/distant/trusting?
- Was it natural even though someone else initiated it?

7. Describe your initial expectations towards participating in the mentoring program?
    - What did you have to offer to your mentoring pair?

8. Why was, in your opinion, the mentoring program initiated in your business function?

Opportunity

9. How would you describe the level of interaction?
    - One-way / dialogue /teaching?
    - Did you discuss personal issues or strictly business?
    - Can you give examples of knowledge you shared and received during the mentoring program?

10. How did mentoring fit your everyday work?
    - Do you feel that you had enough time to participate in mentoring?

11. Did you agree on goals and objectives for the mentoring program/relationship?
    - What was the purpose of the relationship?
    - Did you discuss your expectations?
    - Did you agree on meeting frequency and method?
    - Did you set up any kind of monitoring and/or evaluation processes?

Ability

12. How did you share/receive knowledge, can you describe the learning process?
    - Did you produce any kind of material?
    - Have you provided or received practical examples to support your sharing/receiving of knowledge?
    - Have you given/been given assignments?
    - Did you encourage self-reflection / Was self-reflection encouraged?
    - Did you adjust your output to your audience / Was it easy to understand and relate to the knowledge of the mentor?
    - Did you take any action to make sure your message had been understood / Did the mentor make sure you understood his points?

13. Did you receive enough training and orientation before the program started?
    - Did you know what you signed up for?

PART III: Knowledge sharing after mentoring (Outcomes & Changes in AMO constructs):

14. What was different about sharing knowledge in a mentoring relationship?
    - Did it work, why? Or was it about something else?
    - Can you give examples of shared knowledge that has been implemented or put to use as a result of your participation in the program?
    - Would you consider mentoring as an effective channel for sharing knowledge within your business function and across borders, why/why not?

15. Without taking part in mentoring, would you have ever engaged in knowledge sharing with your mentor/protégé, why?

16. What did you gain from participating in the mentoring program?
    - What kind of effects has mentoring had in your work?
    - Other benefits?

17. Are you planning to continue the relationship after the program ends?

18. Would you be willing to participate in another mentoring program as a mentor, protégé or peer?

19. Would you do something differently?
    - What went wrong, what was good, why?
    - Overall feeling about the program, additional thoughts?