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MASTER THESIS

Digital Diplomacy: between promises and reality

A case study of the Swedish Foreign Service

By

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Abstract

Foreign ministries around the world encourage their diplomats to use social media within their traditional communication practices. However, despite the many advantages of social media usage, it seems like there is a gap between the possibilities and actual use of social media by embassies. This thesis aims to trace the factors that determines the social media use of embassies, and thereby come up with practical recommendations for improvement. This thesis takes a neo-institutionalist approach and argues that individuals act according to a certain set of institutional and organizational factors when they are incorporated in a political institution. It employs a qualitative methodology to examine whether theoretically specified micro-level foundations can serve as an explanation for a macro-level phenomenon. The findings contribute both to theory and practice as it found that institutional arrangements and organizational factors shape the way embassy staff uses social media. It therefore suggests that Foreign Ministries including its Foreign Representation need to develop better strategies for dealing with institutional constrains by adjusting the organizational practices.

Keywords: Digital diplomacy, social media, embassies, organizational processes and practices, management styles, strategic communication

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a rapid increase in social media on the Internet. This development has changed and revolutionized the ways of communicating. It offers opportunities for public diplomacy practitioners as it enables them to engage with its target audience in a new way (Glassman 2008). Due to its many advantages, foreign ministries encourage their diplomats to implement and use social media within their traditional communication practices (Craido et al. 2013). However, despite its many advantages, it also seems like there is a gap between the possibilities and actual implementation of social media use for governmental institutions (Meijer and Thaens 2010; Craido et al. 2013). As social media is an interactive media platform, one large change for diplomats has been to communicate more interactively and two-way, as opposed to one-way, with the public. It requires them to use new interactive communication modes to manage networks and become more 'responsive', as oppose to the old-styled top-down, or one-way information distribution models (Hocking and Melissen 2015). This interactive character also requires diplomats to interact directly with digital publics, giving up the control over messages and give up some of the secrecy and discretion of diplomatic processes (Manor 2019, p.73).

Research into this field has shown that government actors' communication through social media still mainly focuses on self-promotion and political marketing, instead of focusing on participation and increased transparency (Strauß et al. 2015; Bellström et al. 2016; Bonsón et al. 2015; Reddick et al. 2017). In regard to the language, the tone in the posts created by governments on social media are still merely neutral (Zavattaro et al. 2015) and formal (Meijer and Torenvlied 2016). Moreover, it has been shown that citizens are not engaging and responding to government posts (Reddick et al. 2017; Lev-On and Steinfeld 2015). However, this is not in line with the new way in which public diplomacy practice can be carried out in the digital sphere. This new way is called the "new public diplomacy" by scholars (Cull 2008; Melissen 2005). Cull (2008) defines the new public diplomacy as a process in which international actors aims to achieve its goals by *engaging* with the foreign public. The engagement with the foreign audience is also something that Melissen (2005) considers in his definition where the transition from monologue to dialogue and relationship-building and engagement are the main characteristics.

Research into online communication has proven that social media are powerful tools to achieve the goals of digital diplomacy (Zheng 2013). It however only has positive impact if it is used in an engaging way (Strauß et al. 2015). To achieve this dialogue, it is relevant to turn to strategic communication and a more strategic thinking within foreign ministries (Hocking and Melissen 2015). This implies a strategic usage of social media and that organizations adapt to more interactive approaches on their social media accounts (Waters and Williams 2011).

The new developments are testing diplomats' flexibility in instrumentalizing the soft power of foreign ministries. Diplomats are struggling with the notion about sharing of information that is in line with the interactive media, as this runs against the diplomatic wisdom that information is power (Hocking and Melissen 2015). It also poses challenges to the organizational structures and the traditional working processes within foreign ministries (Hocking and Melissen 2015). Foreign ministries and diplomats need to develop new working methods and skills in order to adapt to the new networking online. It also requires the foreign ministries to develop new working processes and adapt the organizational structures. Hocking and Melissen (2015) calls for social media strategies at lower levels within the MFA and embassy organization so that diplomats' behavior on social media platforms, that is still to a large extent characterized by old-style public diplomacy practices, is upgraded with new routines.

Previous studies have examined the how ICTs and the new media landscape have challenged the organizing principles of foreign ministries and embassies (Bátora 2008; Copeland 2009; Huxley 2014; Fong 2010; Hall 2012). Research has also been made on how Internet, ICTs and the new media has transformed public diplomacy by examining how diplomats uses social media, as well as which tools they use the engage with its target audience (Cull 2013; Hallams 2010). There is however a lack of studies examining the underlying factors that might explain *why* they use it in a certain way. No study has as of yet examined how the changed organizing principles might have influenced the actual use diplomats make of new interactive media. This paper takes a neo institutionalist approach and develops a theoretical framework that sought to find how macro- and micro-level factors are either individually, or in concert with each explaining the use embassies make of social media. By looking both at factors on macro-level, such as institutional arrangements, organizing principles, as well as micro-level factors connected to individual characteristics and motivations, this study sought to add to the literature on digital diplomacy and organizational sciences as it looks at the *whys* and not solely the *how*'s of modern diplomacy. The research question reads:

- *What factors determines the use embassies make of social media?*

1.1 Theoretical framework

This study aims to qualitatively study the phenomenon of social media use of embassies. It therefore takes a mechanistic approach inspired by Coleman's boat (Coleman 1990). In this way, a process going from macro to micro to macro can be specified to theoretically identify micro-level foundations for macro-level phenomena. As this study examine both factors at macro-level and micro-level, it seems suitable to take a neo-institutionalist approach. Neo-institutionalism is relevant for the purpose of this study as it deals with organizational behavior and sociology, exploring how institutional rules, norms, structures and cultures either enhances or constrains which actions and choices individuals make when they are incorporated in a political institution. Since the daily activities of social media communication is pursued by embassy employees, which are incorporated in a political institution, it is relevant to study also the individual motivations and characteristics in addition, or as complement, to the macro-level factors at organizational and institutional level.

The theoretically defined factors will be informed by the neo-institutionalist model the Enacting Electronic Government Success (EEGS) model developed by Gil-García (2012). This model provides a theoretical foundation, that draws from organizational psychology, as well as institutional theory and public management, to identify the factors that might influence government IT efforts.

1.2 Relevance and former literature

Much of the hitherto conducted research in the field of digital diplomacy has focused on the U.S. and the efforts of other countries have been ignored (Gilboa 2008). White and Radic (2014) calls for research into comparative theories and further examination on how diplomatic communication is carried out in social media. Furthermore, much of the research focuses on Twitter (Waters and Williams 2011), ignoring the potential and challenges that Facebook and other social media platforms might pose. It has been argued that Twitter is the most appropriate tool to portrait a country's foreign policy, whereas Facebook is more suitable for relationship-building with foreign publics in the digital sphere (Manor 2019). A comprehensive analysis of what role the social media platform Facebook has in meeting diplomacy goals has not yet been established (White and Radic 2014; Yepsen, 2012). This study therefore focuses on Facebook.

As the concepts related to digital diplomacy - relationship-building, dialogue, message strategies and alike (Macnamara 2012) - are merely from the research field of public relations, one should turn to public relations, strategic communication and nation branding to find the appropriate theories to apply to the actual use of social media of government. Hitherto, the theories from these research areas have been ignored in the scholarship of public and digital diplomacy (Waters & Williams, 2011) and researchers have called for public diplomacy research to make use of public relations literature related to communication strategies (Cull 2008, 2013; Yepsen 2012). This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by turning to public relations theory to examine how diplomats are currently using social media, either strategically – as suggested by scholars (Strauß et al. 2015), or ad-hoc and one-way.

Besides the gap in the public diplomacy literature concerning the actual use diplomats make of social media, there is also a lack of research into the underlying factors explaining why diplomats adopt a certain communication strategy on social media. This field of research is however related to the organizational sciences. This paper will be informed by literature from the organizational research field that is concerned with government technology adoption. Since embassies are also governmental actors, it is assumed that the policy processes, and management styles are somewhat similar as to domestic public-sector agencies.

Accordingly, there is a gap in the research field of digital diplomacy, both when it comes to empirical evidence on *how* embassies are currently using social media, as well as the determining factors explaining *why* they use it in a certain way. This study will therefore serve as an important contribution both to the research field of digital diplomacy and organizational sciences.

There are currently many normative assumptions about how governmental organizations should ideally use social media, but no empirical evidence that shows which institutional arrangements or organizational processes and structures that either hinders or enhances this ideal use. This study therefore contributes with theoretical implications about the underlying mechanisms explaining why organizations use social media in a certain way, as well as practical policy recommendations about how organizations can adapt their practices, processes and structures to adapt to the challenges that the new media landscape poses. In this way, it can serve as a foundation for future policy development for government organizations using social media.

1.3 Research design and methods

Embassies working for the Swedish Foreign Service are smaller units within a larger organizational framework. Their room for maneuver and autonomy is therefore expected to be influenced by institutional factors and larger organizational factors, such as cooperation with the headquarters in Stockholm. At the same time though, it is assumed that also micro-level factors and internal organization within the embassy influences the organizational output, which is the use of social media. Since it is assumed that macro- and micro-factors relate to each other, either in concert, or individually, it would be inappropriate to execute a quantitative large-N study. This, since valuable information about how macro-factors relate to the operational micro-level factors would go lost with such an approach. Instead, a qualitative research approach seems more suitable to answer the research question. A qualitative case study approach offers the possibilities to obtain a deeper insight into the working mechanisms within an embassy that might either individually, or in concert with other mechanisms, explain why it uses social media in a certain way. A qualitative approach is particularly useful when studying organizations from a neo-institutionalist perspective, as it offers possibilities to examine how individuals act when they are incorporated in a political institution. It also offers an effective way of examining whether the theoretically specified micro-level foundations can serve as an explanation for a macro-level phenomenon. As this study does not only look at macro-level relationships and causal connection between isolated variables, but also at individual micro-level factors, it will add both to the literature on digital diplomacy and organizational sciences.

The Sweden's Foreign Service is an interesting case to study as the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) uses social media very ambitiously. It begun its implementation of social media usage in 2013 when the existing Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt demanded in his Statement of foreign policy that all Swedish embassies should be present on social media and have their own Twitter and Facebook accounts. Bildt stated that Sweden must be in the forefront of digital diplomacy and "as open diplomacy becomes increasingly important, all Swedish embassies must be on Twitter and Facebook before the end of the month" (Bildt 2013, p. 10). His goal was that the Swedish MFA should be globally prominent in the usage of social media (ibid. p. 12). Only two months after this statement, all Swedish embassies had registered accounts on Twitter and Facebook (Brandel 2013). This implementation has forced the Swedish MFA to create a new ecosystem for digital communication.

Further reasons for the appropriateness of the case is that the author of this study was pursuing an internship at the communications department in the group for strategic communication at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm at the time of writing. The group for strategic communications is in charge of developing the digital diplomacy of the MFA and educating embassy staff in strategic communication. The author therefore had access to interview relevant government officials in the Swedish foreign service that is working with digital diplomacy.

1.4 Generalizability

This study will provide a mechanism-based explanation. This "opens up the black box (…). It turns it into a transparent box and makes visible how the participating entities and their properties, activities, and relations produce the effect of interest" (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010, p. 51). Hedström and Ylikoski (2010) defines mechanisms consisting of entities with their properties, and the activities that these entities engage in, either by themselves or in concert with other entities. These activities bring about change, and the type of change brought about depends on the properties of the entities and how the entities are organized spatially or temporally (p. 51). As the mechanisms are systemic in nature, it enables the possibility to build relevant mechanisms and to generalize them from the findings. For the current study, if it is assumed that certain set of macro- and micro-factors influence which use an embassy make of digital diplomacy, the factors might potentially be generalized to all embassies of the same type within the same organization. A representative variation of the cases will be captured by basing the case selection on the typology developed for the dependent variable.

For the generalizability of the study, it is of great importance that the theoretical framework is strong when the case is highly contextualized (Collins and Stockton 2018), as is the case in the current study of Swedish embassies. This study puts particular emphasis on creating a strong theoretical framework, so that it will be possible to transfer the findings to other contexts. To generate external validity, the arguments are crafted with general mechanisms that could then be used to deductively and inductively identify codes in the coding procedure and subsequently to identify recurring or new themes.

1.5 Disposition

The thesis is organized in the following way. This paper has been divided into four parts. It begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research, and first looks at different public relations (PR) models of communication styles to inform the dependent variable. It then looks at different factors informed by the organizational research field that can be assumed to influence a governmental organizations' social media use. The next chapter is concerned with the methodology. The subsequent chapter analyses the coded interview transcripts and presents the findings of the research, focusing on the key themes that occurred from the coding process. It concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the research, as well as lays out recommendations. The concluding chapter also includes the limitations of the paper, as well as comes up with some suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework provides this study with a clearly articulated lens for how the study will process the new knowledge. It furthermore provides a way for how the data can be used and collected. The framework will be used is derived from existing theories. As the study is situated within the organizational research field, the literature from this discipline will inform the identification of a theoretical framework. Based on the theoretical approaches presented this chapter, a theorization about mechanisms linking explanations and outcomes will be presented.

2.1 Outcome variable

This study sought to answer the research question research: *what factors determines the use embassies make of social media?*. The dependent variable that is to be explained is thus the use embassies make of social media. This includes how embassies currently work with communication through social media. To examine this dependent variable, a typology of different usages will be developed in the following section.

Macnamara (2012) highlight the similarities between new public diplomacy and public relations. The need for public relations literature regarding communication strategies in public diplomacy research is something that scholars have called for (Cull 2008; Yepsen 2012). In fact, Nye (2011) is discussing concepts from the research field of public relations when he discusses diplomatic communication. These are dialogue, engagement and relationships, which are all borrowed from the PR Excellence theory (Grunig et al. 2002, 2006).

The dependent variable in this study will be informed by the PR Excellence theory from the PR research field to create a typology explaining the specific use an embassy currently makes of social media. This theory was first developed by the PR scholars Grunig and Hunt in 1984 and classifies PR practice into four models of public relations. The models are based on the *directionality* of the communication (one-way or two-way) and the *symmetry* (symmetrical or asymmetrical) (Grunig and Hunt 1984). The *symmetry* refers to the research an organization pursues about its target groups, and to what extent it adapts its communication according to this. The dimension of *directionality* is related to the direction of the communication between the sender and the receiver. In one-way communication, the sender communicates directly to the receiver, without receiving a response (Grunig and Hunt 1984). The symmetry, however, is less important in the context of this study, as it deals more with persuasion and manipulation of behavior, which is not the end goal of public diplomacy, but is rather applied to companies using different marketing strategies.

As presented in the previous chapter, it has been argued that new interactive and responsive communication modes must be utilized in diplomacy to cope with online networks. This requires diplomats to move beyond one-way information distribution models to more interactive communication styles (Hocking and Melissen 2015). By using the two-way communication, PR practitioners can more easily achieve long-term relationships with its audience (Grunig and Hunt 1984). The directionality is therefore relevant for this study, as relationship-building with the foreign audience requires that the sender and the receiver has a dialogue, hence pursures two-way communication.

In the first model, the information flows from the sender to the receiver. The sender does not conduct audience analysis research or take feedback from the audience into account. Therefore, this model has a one-way directionality of the communication. The purpose of this communication style is mainly to reinforce the reputation of a certain organization or manipulate the behavior of the target audience, without necessarily being accurate or credible (Grunig and Hunt 1984).

The second model is also one-way, but the accuracy of the message is here of more importance than in the first model. The tactics used are mostly information distribution about an organization and press-releases. In this model, which is mostly used by government agencies, practitioners are more inclined to assemble feedback from the audience, even if they are not using any established method for this purpose. Accordingly, the first two models are one-way communication styles (ibid.).

The third model, called the two-way asymmetrical model, includes a two-way communication between the sender and the receiver, although not balanced, as the communication is used to benefit the organization and not the target audience – making it asymmetrical. Even if the model advocates a two-way communication, the goal of the communication is to "scientifically persuade" the audience and make it behave as desired by the organization. Practitioners are therefore mostly tailoring their messages to achieve the most effective reaction, without thinking about pursuing a balanced communication. This model is mainly used by advertisers (ibid.).

The fourth model, also called the two-way symmetrical model, includes feedback from the target audience and adapt its tactics and strategies according to this. What makes it symmetrical is the fact that both parties, hence the sender and the receiver, benefits from the communication. The main characteristic of this model is mutual benefit and that the communication between the actors is open and honest. One further characteristic is conflict resolution, and correcting misconceptions among the target group. This is made by two-way conversations and discussions between the sender and the receiver (ibid). Both these characteristics are, as presented in the previous chapter, important to reach the goals of digital diplomacy.

The typology created for the dependent variable in this study is inspired by the second, as well as the third and fourth model – however not distinguishing between the third and fourth model, as the main difference between them is the symmetry. The dependent variable, which is the use embassies make of social media, is therefore divided into two different communication styles based on the directionality - either one-way or two-way communication.

The use *per se* is however more complex than only looking at the directionality of the communication, as the use itself on micro level by individuals is also related to the intention and underlying thinking of the communicator. Knox (2016) argues that public organizations need to be strategic when implementing social media. This, in order to achieve dialogue and interaction. Waters and Williams (2011) also highlights the importance of strategic communication and interactive approached to achieve a maximum payoff of communication in social media. Interactivity is related to the dimension of directionality, whereas the strategic communication is more related to the thinking of individuals at micro-level. Strategic communication is defined as “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission” (Hallahan et al. 2007, p.7). This implies that the activities in social media should be oriented toward defined goals. Brønn (2001) has identified three attributes that are linked to strategic thinking. These are working with a plan; being involved with the top management and using research-based information. The latter attribute is connected to the symmetry dimension of the communication. This is, when an organization pursues research about its target group to be able to pursue communication that is more effective to reach the goals, than it would have been if there was a lack of knowledge about the target group.

Whether an embassy uses social media in a strategic or non-strategic fashion is therefore the use itself at micro level. These are the behavioral outcomes of the employees working at an embassy, and these are linked to the three attributes identified by Brønn (2001). If an embassy employee does not adopt any of the attributes that are linked to strategic thinking, it is assumed that the employee had not adopted a strategic thinking. The employee must however not adopt all three attributes in order to have adopted a strategic thinking, as some might alone account for a successful outcome in terms of the directionality. For example, if an employee has pursued research about the target group and works according to a plan, it can be assumed that a two-way communication will follow. This however might not presuppose an involvement with the top management.

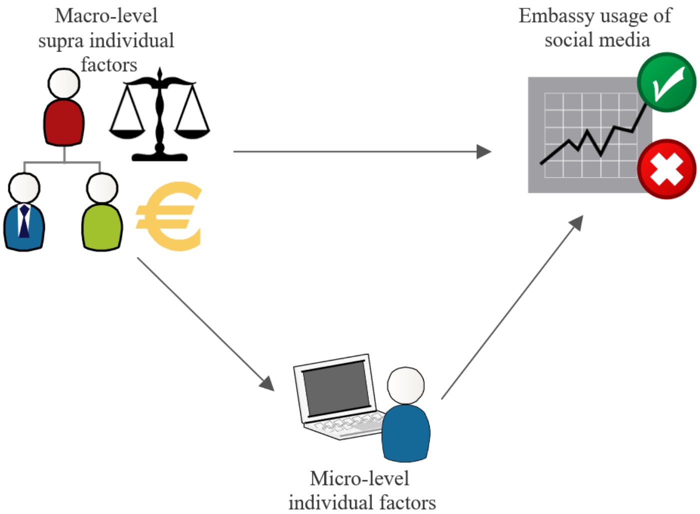
The opposite to a strategic thinking linked to the communication style is a non-strategic, or ad hoc communication style, in which the communicator does not take the above-mentioned strategic thinking into account when planning or pursuing communication on social media. When linking the strategic thinking to the outcome variable, hence the use embassies make of social media, it becomes clear that an embassy can take different approaches to the directionality of the communication. Hence, embassy staff can adopt a strategic thinking when communicating on social media, by having a communication plan, conducting research about the target group and adapt its practices accordingly. However, it can also choose to not adopt a strategy behind its social media use, but still pursue a two-way communication. This is however than not expected to generate a maximum positive effect of the digital diplomacy efforts, as this requires relationship building (Grunig and Hunt 1984).

To conclude, the dependent variable is the use an embassy makes of social media in terms of the directionality (one-way or two-way). This use on macro-level however presupposes that the employees have adopted a certain thinking behind the use. The thinking (strategic or non-strategic) is therefore the use on micro-level, which in turn is expected to influence the final outcome in terms of directionality.

2.2 The macro-micro-macro explanation

As the current study aims to qualitatively study this phenomenon, it uses a mechanistic approach inspired by Coleman's boat (Coleman 1990) to determine the process going from macro to micro to macro. In this chapter, theoretical assumptions based on the macro-micro-macro assumption will be presented. This, to theoretically specify micro-level foundations for macro-level phenomena. This paper is Y-centered and aims to find factors that might explain how embassies use social media. Following Coleman's boat mechanistic approach, this study aims to trace the mechanisms going from macro to micro to macro. Hence, it examines whether micro-level factors might serve as an explanation for macro-level phenomenon (Coleman 1990). Micro-level factors can however not be isolated and alone be considered as explanatory factors for a macro-level phenomenon. This, since it is assumed that these micro-level mechanisms, i.e. individual factors, are defined as a series of events (…) that lead from the *explanans* to the *explanandum* (Little 1991). Therefore, also supra individual macro-level factors must be considered, since they might either hinder, bolster, or set the scene for the working mechanisms.

As this study examines embassies than function within a larger organizational context, the macro-level factors appropriate to look at are the institutional and organizational factors that sets the working scene for individuals working within an embassy. When incorporating the factors expected to influence the macro-level phenomenon into an overarching theoretical framework, the following macro-micro-macro process emerge:



As there are not enough cases to observe a sufficient amount of macro data to fully support the claims that there might be a connection between the macro-level supra individual factors and the social media use of an embassy, it seems appropriate to also look at micro variables, examining the research question from a qualitative perspective. By providing a set of mechanisms by which the suggested cause brings about the effect, the assumptions become more secure. This provides stronger empirical support for the claim, as there are no possibilities to test the macro claim directly. Neo-institutionalism represents an appropriate framework to examine the factors influencing the processes of technology adoption by government agencies (Craido 2010). Neo-institutionalism is relevant for the purpose of this study as it deals with organizational behavior and sociology, exploring how institutional rules, norms, structures and cultures, hence macro-level supra individual factors, either enhances or constrains which actions and choices individuals make on micro-level when they are incorporated in a political institution.

2.3 Macro-level supra individual factors

Macro-level supra individual factors refer to the supra individual factors that might be causes of the phenomenon that is to be explained. These are macro-level characteristics of the environment that might influence individuals working in the certain setting. The macro-level supra individual factors are here perceived as a "container" for the agents. These are structures that exists prior to individual actions. In the context of this study, these are the institutional arrangements and the organizational factors in which an embassy and its staff functions.

To identify the macro-level supra individual factors that might serve as explanations for embassies' social media usage, this paper will turn to the research field of organizational science dealing with government IT adoption. The neo-institutional model appropriate for the purpose of this study is the Enacting Electronic Government Success (EEGS) model. This model provides a basis for understanding the factors influencing government information technology (IT) efforts. The EEGS model includes different alternative theoretical approaches that can be used to analyze the relationship between organizations and IT. The EEGS model includes theories from the disciplines on organizational psychology, social constructivism and structuration theory (Gil-García 2012). As this study deals with social media usage and not IT implementation, the model will however be somewhat adapted to the purpose of the current study. The following paragraph presents an analytical framework including the main factors that are assumed to be influencing the use embassies make of social media.

2.3.1 Institutional arrangements

Institutional factors are formal rules and regulations that are expected to influence the way in which people act in organizational settings. Strict rules and regulations might for instance constrain the management to act in a certain way and adapting the practices to new developments which in this case is the use of social technologies. Rules and regulations might however also facilitate the use of digital platforms if they are adapted accordingly to the developments and organizational settings. Institutional arrangements form guidelines for action, but also hinder those actions at the same time. Therefore, institutions create frameworks for how actors can operate. Government organizations are specifically sensitive for formal rules, as these normally operates according to a specific formal rule (Gil-García 2012, p. 60). Therefore, managers always take the rules and regulations into account when making decisions about a certain IT project. In the context of this paper, it is assumed that the same is valid for social media use. One example is the formal rules for the budgeting process, which is one of the most powerful set of rules in the public sector. One-year budgets therefore constrains strategies of IT initiatives (Gil-García 2012). In the same way, it is expected that one-year budgets might also constrain the use embassies make of social media, as this use also requires resources. The budgeting process is however only one set of rules that an embassy must act upon to and that might hamper or bolster the ways in which the organization can adapt to the new developments.

The decision-making within government organizations are also influenced by external influences (Gil-García 2012, p. 27f). In the context of e-government initiatives, this refers to the agency discretion. This includes the capacity of bureaucrats to influence policies and programs autonomously, without external influence (ibid., p.28). For the purpose of the current study, the agency discretion will instead be referred to as embassy discretion. Embassies reports directly to the MFA in Stockholm but are at the same time autonomous government agencies[1]. The extent to which the bureaucrats within the embassy can influence policies and programs related to digital communication autonomously is important to examine in the context of the current study as this steer the possibilities for the embassy to adapt its communication to the new developments. Embassy discretion is therefore referred to the extent to which the embassy manager, hence ambassador, have the capacity to influence programs and policies, without external influence from the headquarters or the political leadership.

Apart from formal rules and regulations, public managers and organizations might also be constrained by informal rules, actions and certain behavior that individual within an organization takes for granted (Gil-García 2012). Informal rules, hence norms, are local practices or individual working routines that every embassy has built up. The local practices therefore stand in contrast to the central rules. These informal rules are cognitive behaviors that members of the organization have accepted or been imposed to accept. Accordingly, these informal rules are not written on paper, but it is rather a question about what embassy staff deemed as important or not in their day-to-day work.

Accordingly, institutional arrangements are supra individual, macro-level factors, that might alone be causing the outcome. However, the institutional arrangements might also influence the individuals working in a certain setting, and thereby indirectly influencing the outcome. Institutional arrangements are macro-level factors that managers cannot steer in most cases. This, however, does not automatically mean that certain institutional arrangements hinder or bolsters the use embassies make of social technologies. Therefore, it does not suffice to account this macro-level factors as a singular cause for the phenomenon. Instead, one must also look at further macro-level factors that might influence the way in which individuals are working in certain settings. This framework therefore also includes organizational factors, as is also part of Gil-García's (2012) EEGS model.

[1] The Swedish foreign representation consists of Sweden's missions abroad, which include embassies, representations, delegations and consulates. These report directly to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the same time as they are autonomous government agencies (Swedish Government 2019).

2.3.2 Organizational factors

Authors have found that the organizational structures and processes, as well as management strategies directly influences the success of technology use (Luna-Reyes and Gil-García 2011). Organizations can be viewed in two ways. They can either be seen as cooperative systems from a collective action perspective (Astley and Van De Ven 1983, p. 251) or as machines controlled by bureaucracy and rules (Selznick, 1948). This study uses the former - viewing embassies as active entities emphasizing human relations within an organization. In this regard, the embassy in viewed as a collective and cooperative action entity allowing for human relation flexibility. The study will make use of this view of organizations as it takes a neo-institutionalist approach and aims to explore how the institutional arrangements either enhances or constrains individual actions and choices when they are included in a political institution. It is important to study the organization as a collective and cooperative entity since individual action and choices on all levels in the organizational hierarchy are expected to be influencing the outcome. This, since both the decisions and actions from public managers and the employees at lower levels in the hierarchy are of importance for the operational day-to-day execution of social media activities.

Organizational factors are defined as ”those variables that affect the organizational structure that the organization could adjust or change to suit its changing environment” (Teo, Tan and Buk 1997, p. 96). As mentioned above, authors have found that both management strategies and organizational structures and processes influences the success of technology use (Luna-Reyes and Gil-García 2011). It is therefore of importance to look at both variables and integrate them into an overarching framework presenting different ways in which an embassy can organize its working procedures and management strategies for the purpose of executing social media activities.

Organizational factors relevant for the study of embassies are management styles and organizational processes and procedures. Both these are related to each other as it is a managerial choice regarding which processes and procedures to apply to the daily work. The processes and procedures are related to the coordination, cooperation and responsibility distribution within the embassy (Allen 2001; Ginzberg 1980; Somers and Nelson, 2001). Cooperation refers to the control mechanisms within the embassy that are established through formal or informal means. This includes on the one hand the extent to which staff located at different places in the embassy hierarchy cooperated, and on the other hand to what extent the top-level delegates power to lower levels in the hierarchy or controls the daily activities of the lowest level. The top-level is the ambassador, the mid-level is the Councellor(s) and lowest-level is the locally employed staff.

Coordination refers to the processes and procedures of the daily work at the lower levels within the embassy, including the planning and execution of communication activities. These are closely related to the responsibility distribution, which is managed by the ambassador. Responsibility distribution includes the determination of precise and coherent responsibilities and tasks for the employees. Otherwise, the embassy runs the risk that employees does not work on the correct assigns tasks or pursues double task execution (Allen 2001; Ginzberg 1980).

Hocking and Melissen (2015) claims that the Foreign Ministry and the national diplomatic system comprises two elements. This is the center ministry, hence the headquarters (HQ), and the periphery, which is the diplomatic network. The foreign service and its embassies are part of the latter. Embassies are accordingly expected to cooperate with its HQ. This, to execute the work in a collaborative context, as in line with the collective action view of an organization. Cooperation is of high importance in the context of embassies, as this spreads the risks, reduces the costs and enhances the access to further resources. And since, as mentioned above, the institutional factor in the form of one-year budgets might constrain the actions of the embassy manager to pursue its maximum efforts for a successful output, the potential possibilities to access further resources that cooperation allows for is therefore important in this context, as it might further the possibilities for a successful output of an embassy. Hocking and Melissen (2015) further argues that the new technological developments is challenging the balance between the headquarter (HQ) and the diplomatic posts as the traditional hierarchical working procedures within the organization as a whole is challenged. As this study deals with communication, only the relationship between the functional departments at the HQ working with these issues and the embassies is considered. This is the Communications Department.

2.4 Micro-level individual factors

This part of the theoretical framework turns to micro-level explanations for the macro-level phenomenon. This is in line with the neo-institutionalist view of organizations, that takes a more sociologist view of organizations, and examines whether the organizational actions can be seen as direct consequences of individual attributes or motives. As human action of individuals is assumed to play a role in mechanism-based explanations, the mechanism-based perspective suggests that the examination of human agency should be based on findings and theories of psychological and cognitive sciences (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010).

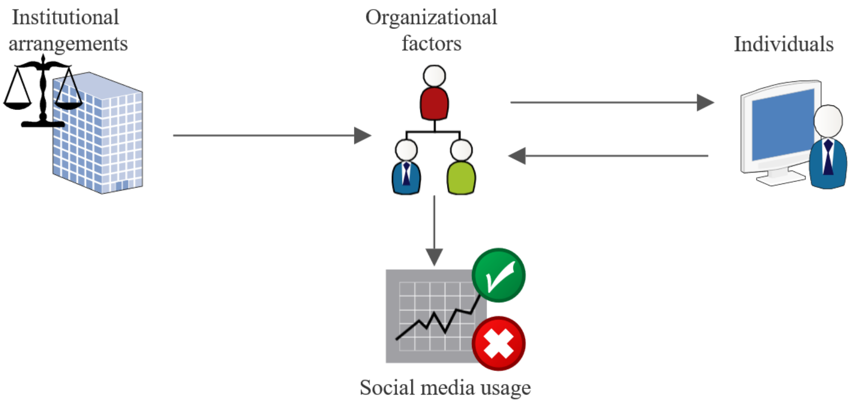
This theoretical framework proposes that the properties of the supra-individual macro-level factors cannot alone be considered as direct causes for the macro-level phenomenon. Instead, it is assumed that organizations, or in this case embassies, are affected by influences coming from within the organization. As this study examines embassies as organizations from a collective action perspective, it is important to also look at the individuals at micro-level and their properties to find out why organizations perform actions in a specific way.

In the context of this study, the agents are the employees working with digital communication on Swedish embassies. The properties and situation of the agents are in the context of this paper the micro-level individual factors that might influence the social media use of an embassy. These factors are individual attributes of the employees. The properties of the agents work as mediators between the supra individual macro-level characteristics of the organization and the actual social media use.

Factors at micro-level are related to attributes or motivation of the employees that are working in the embassy management, as well as with the daily social media work. Individuals are expected to have different capabilities and priorities depending on their experience and perceptions. The priorities and motivation of individuals are assumed to be influenced by the persons' perceived benefits of using social media. Fischer and Reuber (2011) found that the perceived time affordability influenced the level of a user's interaction on social media. Moreover, the perceived time affordability of using social media can also be assumed to be influencing an individuals' priorities and motivation. Relevant for the capabilities of an individual is its experience. For the purpose of this study, this includes the professional experience within communication, as the person might thereby be better suited to work in a strategic fashion on social media.

2.5 Institutions, organizations and individuals

To conclude the theoretical framework chapter, institutions shape the behavior of organizations and either enhances or hinders the pursuance of certain management decisions. In the context of this study, it is assumed that institutional arrangements of governmental organizations - in the form regulation, budget and discretion - influences the managerial choices that the ambassador make. Similar to how institutions shape organizations, organizations also shape the behavior of individual employees, either hindering or enhancing certain acts by pursuing certain organizational styles. Hence, both management decisions and organizational processes influences how employees can work.



Although institutions shape organizations, and organizations shape individual actions, individuals can also influence the organizational output by employing a strategic thinking or not. Therefore, organizations and its output are expected to be influenced both by institutional factors, as well as by pressures arising from within the organization itself. This might be both from the management level, hence the ambassador, as well as employees at lower levels in the hierarchy.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methods used in this study to answer the research question. The chapter furthermore includes the reasons for the case selection as well as the delimitation of material and interviews. The selection of methodology is based on the way in which the research question is posed, the time frame, as well as the resources available.

3.1 Analytical approach

This study aims to examine the topic from a qualitative, more mechanistic angle, and thereby add to the existing literature on digital diplomacy. As the current study aims to examine which factors that might influence how embassies executes digital communication in different ways, it seems appropriate that the study takes a qualitative case study approach. In this way, it might be possible to draw conclusions regarding the underlying institutional, organizational and individual-level factors that are theoretically assumed to influence the social media usage. Qualitative methods offer an effective way of examining whether the theoretically specified micro-level foundations can serve as an explanation for a macro-level phenomenon. By using a mechanistic qualitative approach, it can be examined whether the assumed factors influence the outcome together or individually. A major advantage of this method is that is does not isolate factors from each other, but instead looks at how the explanatory variables, or mechanisms, are working in concert with each other, either hindering or inducing the outcome.

Mechanisms consists of entities and the activities that these entities engage in, either by themselves or in concert with other entities (Hedström 2005). The activities that these entities then pursue bring about the change, and the type of change brought about depends on the properties of these entities and how the entities are organized (ibid.).

Embassies working for the Swedish Foreign Service are smaller units within a larger organizational framework. Their room for maneuver and autonomy is therefore expected to be influenced by institutional factors and larger organizational factors, such as cooperation with the headquarters in Stockholm as well as with external actors. At the same time though, it is assumed that also micro-level factors and internal organization within the embassy influences the final organizational output, which is the use of social media. Since it is assumed that macro- and micro-factors relate to each other, either in concert, or individually, it would be inappropriate to execute a qualitative large-N study. This, since valuable information about how macro-factors relate to the operational micro-level factors would go lost with such an approach.

A case study approach was used to allow a deeper insight into the working mechanisms within an embassy influencing how it uses social media. In this way, an assessment of how the institutional factors influences the organizational practices and processes of embassies, and also how individuals adapt to these macro-level factors can be made. A case study approach is particularly useful when studying organizations from a neo institutionalist perspective, as these consists on individuals that might act according to certain principles and adapt to particular processes when they are incorporated in a political institution. This implies that individual action plays a central role in this study, which make a mechanistic approach suitable for the purpose (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010).

Case study approach

To empirically assess what factors influences the social media use of embassies, it seems appropriate to pursue a case study design. This is a suitable methodology for exploring the how and why of a certain phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin 2004). Moreover, case studies provide a way to examine multiple perspectives to illustrate either a pattern or a singular social entity (Ritchie and Lewis 2006; Hakim 2000). The strengths with this approach in comparison to large-N studies is that it provides a number of empirical observations per case, and that it also provides an intensive reflection on the relationship between concrete empirical observations and abstract theoretical concepts (Blatter and Haverland 2012, p. 9)

By employing a case study, it will be possible to examine whether the theoretically assumed explanatory factors actually exist and influence the outcome in the expected way.

Apart from examining how the outcome might be influence by supra individual factors, it will also be possible to unfold or trace motivations for individual or collective action within the organization. In other words, it can be found whether the relationship between the macro-level explanatory factors and the outcome is truly casual, or if there might also be micro-level factors that determines the outcome, either by themselves or in concert with the macro-level factors.

3.2 Case selection

The posed research question examines which factors influence the social media use of embassies. The theoretical framework presents a number of micro- and macro-factors assumed to influence the social media usage of embassies. It might thus be several factors that, either individually or in concert with each other, influence the outcome. As the study focuses on finding several explanatory factors for the outcome, the research is Y-centered. The cases are therefore selected based on the outcome variable.

Gerring (2007) defines a case study as an extensive study of a single case where the purpose of the study is to shed light on a larger class of cases, hence a population. The population that we want to generalize to in the context of this study are all Swedish embassies in Europe. The reason for this choice is that the European embassies are expected to work in a relatively similar political context as a result of the European Union.

Since the objective of the study is to create knowledge that is generalizable and can be used to fully understand all the cases within the population, an appropriate number of representative cases, hence embassies, are selected to examine the research question.

Despite the many advantages with this methodological approach, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of this approach. Because of the small sample, individual characteristics of the entities within an embassy, or coincidences, can serve as an explanation for a certain use of social media within a case, hence embassy. To mitigate this potential bias, the study was not limited to only an in-depth study of one case, but instead several cases that differs in regard to the outcome variable.

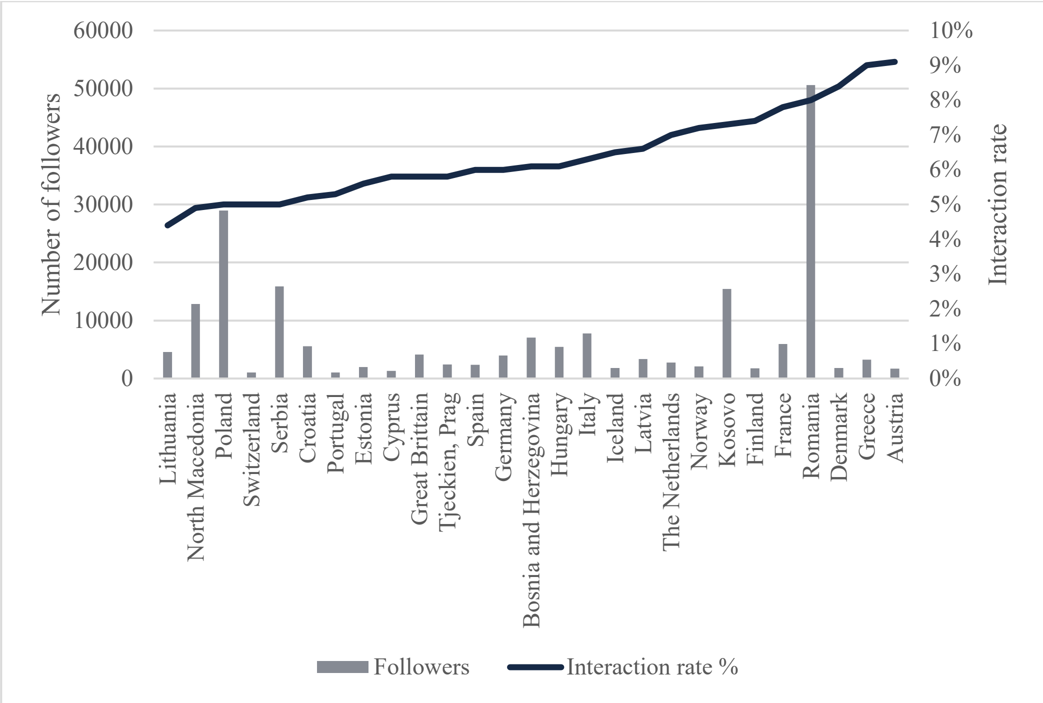
The choice of the cases was based on the criteria interaction, measures by the mean engagement rate over a selected time frame (January 2019 – April 2019). The selection was based on the dependent variable; hence the use embassies make of digital diplomacy. This is embassy-specific information containing both the below mentioned engagement rate as an indicator for the communication style (the models), as well as the data retrieved from the interviews. Based on the scale for the dependent variable, four of the embassies fall within the scope of one-way communication model, whereas the other three can be considered to employ a two-way communication on social media.

As presented in the theoretical framework chapter, the dependent variable is measured on a typology based on the directionality of the communication. In this scale, the one-way communication style (information distribution) stand in contrast to a two-way communication style (dialogue and mutual benefit). Accordingly, there are the two types of communication styles that embassies might employ on social media.

As an indicator for the directionality of the communication style, the study will make use of the *engagement rate* of an embassy's social media channel. The *engagement rate* for a post on Facebook is calculated as the *number of engaged users* divided by the *total reach* of that post. The number is than multiplied by 100 to turn it into percentage. Engagement includes reactions, comments, shares and clicks on videos and images. Therefore, the engagement is not limited to only followers, as the post can, due to Facebooks algorithms, turn up on friends' pages, or even friends of friends and so on. Therefore, if an embassy has a high number of followers, which is the case for Romania (see Figure 1), the chances of getting a high engagement rate could be expected to naturally increase. This however does not seem to be the case, as Warsaw has a high number of followers, but still not a high engagement rate (see figure 1). Greece, Austria and Denmark are further proof of this, as they have managed to maintain a high level of engagement rate, despite the low number of followers. To conclude, the followers does not seem to be decisive for the level of engagement rate, according to the data retrieved from the Swedish embassies established in Europe (see figure 1).

It is noted that the engagement rate is not the perfect measurement of two-way communication on social media, and that it might be difficult to distinguish between one-way or two-way communication by using this measure. Even if the measurement of engagement rate is not directly indicating the directionality of the communication, it is nonetheless a sign of *interest* from both parts, which in turn might be a sign of interaction, even if not directly. However, as there is a lack of other methods to determine the interaction on social media between the embassy and the users, this will make out a part of the dependent variable. To mitigate this potential bias, the dependent variable will also include information from the interviews regarding the communication style that a certain embassy employs. This information will however be retrieved first after the interviews have been made, and the case selection will therefore be based on the engagement rate.

Figure 1. *Engagement rate and number of followers of the Swedish embassies in Europe, Jan-Mar 2019*



As the engagement rate is measured in percentage, the two communication styles have to be distinguished on the continuous engagement rate scale (%). The data on the engagement rate shows that the embassies are located between the minimum of 4,4% (Lithuania) and maximum 9,1% (Austria). The mean is 6,4%, which will distinguish the two different communication styles. The cases are then selected based on this scale with an equal distribution of embassies conducting a one-way vs. two-way communication style. Those embassies located below the mean of 6,4% are considered to be conducting a one-way communication style, whereas those embassies that are located above the mean of 6,4% are conducting two-way communication. When applying the percentages to the two communication styles, the following division emerges.

Table 1. *Communication styles and engagement rate*

Communication style	*One-way*	*Two-way*
Engagement rate	> 6,4 %	> 6,4 %
Embassy	Switzerland Croatia Cyprus Italy	Finland Romania Austria

As information about the actual use on micro-level is not included in the engagement rate described above – an interview question about interaction and two-way communication was included in the questionnaire. This, to examine the actual social media use on micro-level since behavioral outcomes are expected to influence the actual use. These are the choices, behavior and actions of the employees working in an embassy that might explain the use embassies make of digital diplomacy. In the context of this study, this is the type of communicative thinking and behavior that the employees on an embassy working with digital communication have. It is of importance to look at this micro variable since the behavior of the employees is expected to influence which communication style an embassy pursues on social media platforms.

3.3 Conceptualization and operationalization

To get accurate results, the process of concept formation and operationalization is of importance as these are the starting points for the evaluation. In this chapters, the factors derived from the theoretical framework will be conceptualized and subsequently operationalized. The conceptualization includes the term as well as the attributes or specific properties of a concept that defies that specific term. In the section of operationalization, the term with its attributes have to be assigned indicators. To be able to observe certain data-level measurements of a concept, one therefore has to operationalize the concepts into a number of observable indicators. One observation consists of several dimensions, each of which may be measured as a variable. As the data provided in this study was retrieved from interview transcripts, the concepts were assigned qualitative indicators that captures the experiences of the interviewees. This includes asking questions like how, what, which, where and why.

The following sections includes the process of concept formation and operationalization of the factors defined in the theoretical framework. In the conceptualization, the definitions of the relevant concepts are provided. This process will help in providing the right parameters for the operationalization and eventually the evaluation of the qualitative concepts. Furthermore, by creating definitions, it is also possible to see where the concept stands in relation to other concepts, and to subsequently see whether some of the concepts can be grouped into the same category. Important to keep in mind through is that the definitions need to be as specific as possible to avoid ambiguity. By providing concrete and unambiguous classification criteria for the concepts, objectivity and reliability is assured (Leuffen et al. 2010).

3.3.1 Institutional arrangements

Institutional arrangements can be defined as laws, norms and meaning system that constrain the way people act in organizational settings (Scott 2001).

Institutional arrangements	Regulation
	Discretion
	Resources
	Informal rules

The regulation are the rules that embassies must follow in relation to communication and social media/digital communication. The regulations are the set of formal rules and guidelines that steers activities of the embassy. As this study only deals with Sweden promotion and communication, only the regulations for this area are relevant to look at. In addition to only analyzing the actual guidelines and guidance documents, a question about their influence on the operational day-to-day work procedures was included in the questionnaire. It might thereby be found whether the institutional arrangements in place actually influence the organizational output, and/or management style of an embassy in a certain manner.

Embassy discretion is the extent to which the ambassador and embassy staff must adapt the communication to political priorities set by the political leadership. Embassies are at the one hand autonomous agencies but must at the same time naturally adapt to its political leadership, as it is a government agency. In this sense, embassies can be seen as political entities within a broader organizational framework in which different actors compete for power and organizational control.

The embassy discretion is therefore defined as the extent to which the ambassador has the capacity to autonomously influence programs and policies, without influence by the political leadership. As this study deals solely with the policies and programs of the digital communication, the discretion - or capacity is limited to the influence of policies and programs autonomously, without having to adapt its practices solely to the political priorities.

Resources are the monetary resources reserved for digital communication. The qualitative variable regarding resources is related to the available resources for communication and Sweden promotion in general and to digital communication in particular. Hence, this is the proportion of the yearly budget that are set aside for the communication activities. The percentage of the total budget reserved for digital communication is therefore in focus. As this is a sensitive topic to discuss, a question regarding the influence of the budget on the actual communication activities was included. This, to be able to analyze whether the one-year budget is either seems to constrain or promote a successful output of the communication work. The budget for Sweden promotion and communication differs both from year to year, as well as from embassy to embassy. In this regard, the budget is something that is individually determined for each embassy. The guidelines/regulation on the other hand are rules set out for all embassies within the Swedish foreign service. Despite this difference, both can influence the organizational styles of embassies in different ways. It is thus of importance that both are included in the analysis.

Institutions are not only formal laws and regulations, but also norms or behaviors that people within organizations accepts or takes for granted (Gulati et al. 2010; Khalil 2011; Smith 2010). The informal rules are therefore in the context of this study defined as cognitive behaviors that members of the organization have accepted or been imposed to accept. Accordingly, these informal rules are not written on paper, but it is rather a question about what embassy staff deemed as important or not in their day-to-day work. Informal rules, hence norms, are local practices or individual working routines that every embassy has built up. The local practices therefore stand in contrast to the central rules.

3.3.2 Organizational factors

Organizational factors are defined as the processes, structures, and relationships that take place within an organization (Gil-García 2012). All these factors are closely related to the managerial strategies and practices, which together make out a certain management style.

Organizational factors	Management style	Control mechanisms
		Responsibility distribution
		Delegation of power
	Procedures and processes	
	Relationship to headquarters	

The management style can be divided into two dimensions. First, it includes the responsibility distribution within the embassy and to what extent the ambassador has delegated power to staff at lower levels within the embassy hierarchy. Second, it includes the control mechanisms, which is the extent to which an ambassador controls the content that is to be published on social media. Overall, the management style is related to the managerial strategies and practices that an ambassador has in relation to the communication activities. The control mechanisms can be either strict or soft. Strict control mechanisms require staff at lower levels to acquire clearance from the ambassador before publishing content on social media. Softer control mechanisms, in contrast, implies more delegated power to lower levels to publish content without clearance.

The procedures and processes are, in comparison to the management styles, related to the operational activities that the staff at lower levels in the embassy hierarchy are employing too coordinate and plan the communication activities. In order to observe this qualitative variable, an embassy must employ some kind of coordinative activities, like for instance having weekly meetings with a communication group. Moreover, they might be acting according to a working plan.

As embassies functions within a broader organizational context, the employees at embassies must also relate to its headquarters. It is therefore expected that there is a relationship between the center HQ and the embassy in the periphery. The employees responsible for the communication can select in which manner to cooperate with the headquarters. This qualitative variable is therefore how the embassies relate to the headquarter.

The qualitative variables related to organizational factors are therefore concerned with the management style of the head of mission on the one hand, and with the coordination and planning activities of the staff at lower levels. Lastly, it is also concerned with the relationship between the embassy and its headquarters.

3.3.3 Individual micro-level factors

All the factors at micro-level are related to characteristics or perceptions of the employees that are working with the daily operational social media work at the embassies. This variable aims to find out whether the organizational actions can be seen as direct consequences of individual attributes or motives.

Individual micro-level factors	Capabilities	Experience in communication
	Priorities	Perceived benefits and motivation
		Perceived time-affordability

Individuals are expected to have different capabilities and priorities that are connected to their background or personal motivations. The capabilities of the employees are connected to their professional background. For the purpose of this study, this professional background should be related to communication. This, at the previous background of the employees might lead to the adoption of a strategic thinking, which in turn might influence the final outcome.

The priorities on the other hands are related to the perceptions that an employee has regarding the benefits or time spent for social media work. If an employee perceives the benefits of social media to be larger than the drawbacks, it is more likely to be motivated to prioritize social media work over other tasks. If it on the other hand perceives that drawbacks as larger than the benefits, it might be well prioritizing other tasks. The perceptions of different actors within the embassy might also be affected by their previous backgrounds and organizational positions, leading to different social media use in practice.

3.4 Data collection process

This study bases its empirical evidence on analysis of coded semi-structured interview transcripts. Semi-structured interview data has been said to constitute the empirical backbone of much qualitative research in the social sciences (Campbell et al. 2013).

By conducting semi-structured interviews, certain themes can be identified throughout a coding process. After conducting and transcribing the interviews, the transcriptions were coded according to a coding scheme that was as consistent as possible with the literature. In addition to the deductive coding, also an inductive coding procedure took place while studying the transcripts. This, since some unexpected codes or themes might occur, that were formerly not identified in the theoretical framework. The advantage with this approach is that it allows for unexpected factors to emerge – that in the end might be decisive. After the coding process, the codes were combined into themes to see whether some patterns emerged.

The current study contains a case study of Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and its Foreign Service, hence its embassies. The embassies are the units of analysis as these are the units within the MFA responsible for the implementation and execution of digital diplomacy. Primary data were gathered through semi-structures interviews with embassy staff, which lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. The use of interviews in qualitative case studies is a well-established method in determining micro-level factors, or mechanisms. The semi-structured interview consisted both open and close questions. Thereby, both expected and unexpected factors could be identified. The theoretical framework serves as basis for the close questions, but also open questions about the interviewees own perceptions were included. This opens up for the possibility to identify unexpected mechanisms.

The criteria for selecting the subjects were as follows. Participants were recruited from 7 Swedish embassies across Europe. Primary inclusion criteria for the embassy staff were that they worked with communication and Sweden promotion. There are two types of employments at Swedish embassies - locally employed staff and Councellors from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm (Sveriges Riksdag 2014). To identify the staff working with communication on an embassy, the author asked the embassy to provide information about the staff working with communication. Due to the geographical distance between the interviewer and the interviewee, the interviews took place via Skype. Before starting the interviews, verbal ethical approval was obtained from the participants. After the interview, the recorded interview was transcribed, and coded both deductively and inductively. There was a total of 10 participants from the selected embassies including both Councellors and locally employed staff from a total of 7 embassies (see table 2).

Table 2. *Title of interviewed embassy staff*

Embassy	Councellor	Locally employed
Austria	1	-
Croatia	-	1
Cyprus	1	1
Finland	1	1
Italy	1	1
Romania	1	-
Switzerland	1	

To retrieve further views on the topic, also three interviews with communication experts at the communications department was made in addition to the embassy interviews. The interviewees were two deputy directors and one press officer with specialization in social media.

3.5 Reliability and validity

One of the cornerstones of qualitative research is to create thick and rich descriptions. For the generalizability of the study, it is of great importance that the theoretical framework is strong when the case is highly contextualized (Collins and Stockton 2018), as is the case in the current study (Swedish embassies). If not, it will not be possible to transfer the findings to other contexts. This study will provide a mechanism-based explanation. This “opens up the black box (…). It turns it into a transparent box and makes visible how the participating entities and their properties, activities, and relations produce the effect of interest” (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010, p. 51). Hedström and Ylikoski (2010) defines mechanisms consisting of entities with their properties, and the activities that these entities engage in, either by themselves or in concert with other entities. These activities bring about change, and the type of change brought about depends on the properties of the entities and how the entities are organized spatially or temporally (p. 51). In this sense, the authors emphasize the embeddedness of causal mechanisms. As the mechanisms are systemic in nature, it enables the possibility to build relevant mechanisms and to generalize them from the findings. For the current study, if it is hypothesized that certain macro or micro factors cause what kind of use a certain type of embassy make of digital diplomacy, the factors can be concerned as causes for the digital diplomacy use in all embassies of the same type.

To generate external validity, a representative variation will be captured by basing the case selection on the typology developed for the dependent variable. In small-N studies, the risk for measurement error is higher than in large N studies (Mahoney and Goertz 2006). It is therefore of importance to be concerned with the conceptual validity and focusing on not applying a concept to a case for which is it not appropriate (Sartori 1970). It is also of importance to avoid conceptual stretching (Collier and Mahon 1993)

To overcome this potential bias and achieve conceptual validity, this study has focused on creating a logical content and structure of a specific concept (Goertz 2006). It also created a precise and unambiguous classification criterion for the code definitions were created. Furthermore, the study provides detailed documentation of the data collection process, all the data sources, and the collected data.

4. Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to report the findings of the research on digital diplomacy of the Swedish Foreign Service. The findings are based on the results of interview data. The chapter will present the findings of 7 embassies that are differing in regard to the dependent variable, hence the use they make of social media. In this regard, it can be seen, whether the factors found in the interviews correspond with the assumed factors identified from the theoretical framework. The various factors (institutional arrangements, organizational factors, and individual micro-level factors) will be presented separately and examined whether they correspond as assumed to a different kinds of communication styles (one-way or two-way).

In addition to the interview data that was retrieved from the embassy staff within the Swedish Foreign Service, further interview data retrieved from interviewees at the headquarters of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, was retrieved. The interviewees were employees with different roles at the communication department, which is the department in charge of developing the digital diplomacy of the Foreign Service. By interviewing these employees, the researcher could retrieve further data on the work that embassies are doing to get a broader overview, as well as to examine to which the extent the embassies are supported or supervised by their home organization.

4.1 Social media use

The first set of questions aimed to find out in which way an embassy used social media, and whether there might have been a strategic thinking behind the use. It was of importance to include these questions, as the measurement used to identify the cases was the engagement rate. Accordingly, the engagement rate is a quantitative measure of the *number of engaged users* divided by the *total reach*. A high engagement rate might therefore be a coincidence resulting from the other factors. Therefore, questions asking the interviewees about how they look at interaction and whether they applied a certain strategy for the use was included to control whether the high engagement rate was a coincidence or not. The initial case selection based on the *engagement rate* can be seen in table 3 below. Out of 7 embassies, 4 were conducting a one-way communication style, whereas 3 were conducting a two-way communication style.

Table 3. *Engagement rate of the selected embassies*

Communication style	*One-way*	*Two-way*
Engagement rate	< 6,4 %	> 6,4 %
Embassy	Switzerland Croatia Cyprus Italy	Finland Romania Austria

4.1.1 Strategic thinking and communication style

To find out how embassies use social media, this study turned to the research area of public relations. Brønn (2001) identified three attributes that are linked to strategic thinking. There are working with a plan; being involved with the top management and using research-based information. To find out whether embassy staff at the selected embassies had adopted a strategic thinking when using social media, these three attributes have to be examined into more detail. The involvement attribute involvement with the top management is however a question related to the organizational processes within embassies and will therefore be discusses in the chapter of organizational factors.

If an embassy is working according to a communication plan is therefore an indication of strategic thinking. Using research-based information is in the case of digital diplomacy referred to research of the target group. This, as this allows embassies to adapt their digital communication so that if corresponds with the interests of the selected target group. Information about the target group is normally mirrored in the communication plan. These two attributes are therefore closely related.

All those who were interviewed, except one, had a communication plan or communication strategy in which they defined the goals, and which channels to use to reach the goals. As these is no heterogeneity between the embassies when it comes to the existence of a communication plan, it seems like this alone cannot account for the difference in the outcome. One therefore has to turn to the other attributes liked to strategic thinking as identified by Brønn (2001). One of these is the use they make of research base information, which is closely related to the aspect of knowledge about the target group.

Even if most embassies had a communication plan, it seems like there is a differing view regarding the target group on Facebook. Most interviewees agreed that the target group for Facebook communication was the domestic population. However, there is a nuance in the answers regarding the extent to which the communication should be targeted towards a target group that is already interested in Sweden, or to a target group that has no knowledge about Sweden.

The results indicate that there is a differing view about the target group on Facebook. Those that seem to employ a one-way communication style, argues that Facebook is mainly used to reach the Sweden community or to those already interested in or having a relation to Sweden. In contrast, it seems like those embassies having the domestic population as the main target group on Facebook and focusing on adapting their posts to the local debate, are employing a communication style that is two-way.

If we now turn to the communication style, a recurrent theme in the interviews was the sense among the interviewees that interaction and dialogue was something that everyone *wanted* to focus on but did not have enough time to do so. Those embassies that had adopted a strategic thinking according to the interview data - Romania, Finland, and Austria, expressed that they worked actively in the commenting field. In Austria, the interviewee expressed that they were looking at all the comments and evaluated them on a case-to-case basis. It was expressed that the answering was "multifaceted" and that their answering rate depended on the category of the comment. If there was a positive comment, they normally answered to everything, whereas with the negative comments, they were more cautious. For Romania on the other hand, which is one of the other embassies that had adopted a strategic thinking, the embassy had developed an actual strategy on how to create and maintain a dialogue in the commenting field. Their goal was to move away completely from the one-way communication, and instead move towards dialogue between the institution and its followers. To achieve this, they created a framework for the local employee working with the day-to-day operational work on social media. I will come back to this later in the section on organization and management style and elaborate more on the control mechanisms that pertain between the different hierarchical levels within the embassy.

Interestingly, there were two embassies (Croatia and Italy) that were not employing a two-way communication style, despite the fact that they had adopted a strategic thinking according to Brønns' (2001) identified attributes. This might be explained by an issue that was raised amongst all embassies that were employing a one-way communication style: that the *time* to answer to comments was not sufficient due to the limited personnel resources. Concerns were expressed about the fact that the employees normally have other, sometimes more important, tasks to perform. Therefore, the answering to comments, was not prioritized. In this sense, it seems like all interviewees were aiming at a two-way communication style, however in practice, they did either not know how to do so due to their lack of knowledge in strategic communication, or due to a lack of time.

One interesting finding was that one embassy (Switzerland) was deliberately using the Facebook page as a supplement to the embassy's webpage. In this sense, it seems like one embassy was deliberately conducting a one-way communication, using the Facebook page as a supplement to the embassy's webpage. Important to mention in this case is also that the interviewee raises issues regarding the context. As Switzerland is a country with four official languages, it is hard to decide both which target group to focus on, as well as how to reach this target group online.

After conducting the interviews, a somewhat different pattern emerged, in comparison to the pattern that was present in the case selection that was based on the measurement of *Engagement rate*. It seems like the actual social media use is more complex than solely looking at this quantitative measure. When putting the embassies into these four categories, the following division emerges.

Table 4. *Social media use by the selected embassies*

Thinking	Non-strategic	Strategic	Non-strategic	Strategic
Communication style	*One-way*	*but one-way*	*but two-way*	*Two-way*
Engagement rate	< 6,4 %	< 6,4 %	> 6,4 %	> 6,4 %
Embassy	Switzerland Cyprus	Croatia Italy		Austria Finland Romania

The findings show that the actual social media use can be strategically used in two different ways – either one-way or two-way. It can however also be one-way, even if an embassy has adopted a strategic thinking. In this sense, it is an unintentional one-way communication, which might be explained by other factors. It does not seem like the engagement rate, which was used for the case selection, is not always consistent with the way an embassy uses social media in practice. Hence, sometimes, embassies have the intention to work strategically with social media to reach interaction, but this sometimes does not reflect the actual outcome in the form of engagement level. This might have to do with other factors, which will be examined into more detailed in the following chapter.

4.2 Explanatory factors

After a coding procedure of the transcribed interviews, four overarching themes became apparent. All the themes were in line with the deductively defined codes for the assumed factors, however, also some codes within each theme were inductively identified.

Table 5. *Themes and codes identified in the coding process*

Themes	Codes
Institutional arrangements	Regulation Budget Personnel resources Discretion and informal rules
Organization and management	Personnel and priorities Procedures and control mechanisms Relation to headquarters
Micro-level individual factors	Perceived benefits Perceived drawbacks Experience communication

The first section analyzed the defining characteristics of how social media is used in different ways in embassies. The next paragraph describes which institutional arrangement that are in place for digital communication of embassies. This is both the regulation that are steering the activities for digital communication, as well as the supporting documents that an embassy must relate to when employing communication/public diplomacy on social media. It also covers the resources available for digital communication, as well as the embassy discretion. The section following the paragraph of institutional arrangements deals with organizational and managerial factors that are assumed to influence the working procedures at embassies. The subsequent section analyses the micro-level individual factors, and potential barriers to the interactive use of social media. The chapter is then concluded with a brief discussion of the findings in light of the actual social media use.

4.2.1 Institutional arrangements

Regulation

There are two guidelines for communication that the Swedish foreign service must follow. The *Communication Policy for the Government Offices* (Regeringskansliet 2012) is the common basis for both internal and external communication at the Government Offices. In this policy, it is stated that the governments' political priorities are reflected in the operational goals (in the operational plan) on departmental level. All departments, including the missions abroad, hence embassies, should also formulate an operational plan where the political priorities are reflected. According to the overarching communication policy of the government offices, the goals of communication (internal or external) are subsequently connected to the operational goals. According to this policy, two of the focus areas that the external communication should be aimed at are Providing a coherent and explanatory picture of the governments' work and politics; Contributing to the government's decisions getting an impact (Regeringskansliet 2012). The communication policy further states that openness is a prerequisite for a well-functioning democracy. Openness is to be available, to listen and to invite to dialogue. The latter is highlighted by most of the interviewees, which claimed that the external communication should further an open dialogue.

Apart from the overarching *Communication Policy for the Government Offices* (Regeringskansliet 2012), there are also the *Guidelines for the Swedish Foreign Service communication activities* (Utrikesdepartementet 2018), which proceed from formerly presented overarching communication policy. The Guidelines for the Swedish Foreign Service communication activities are steering the day-to-day work of the staff within the Swedish Foreign service including the missions abroad. In these guidelines, it is stated that the aim of the external communication is to Contribute to realizing the Government's policies; Support and be a strategic tool for the Government and leadership of the Swedish Foreign Service in the implementation of security and foreign policy, trade policy and international development cooperation~~;~~ Contribute to the promotion of Sweden and the image of Sweden. In the *Guidelines for the Swedish Foreign Service communication activities,* it is written that strategic communication should be an integral part of the core activities of departments and missions abroad and be considered a key instrument for achieving operational objectives and implementing the Government's policies (Utrikesdepartementet 2018).

Communication should therefore be formulated with a basis in the political priorities on the one hand, and the operational objectives on the other hand. That communication should be used as a tool to achieve both political priorities as well as the operational objectives of each embassy is something that every interviewee agree on. All interviewees agree that one of the perceived benefits of social media is that it is a useful tool to achieve operational goals. One further benefit with social media that was mentioned is the possibility to reach a wider target group than they could reach with the classical tools for public diplomacy – such as events and seminars.

When asking the interviewees which regulation they must follow when conducting digital communication and Sweden promotion, similar views amongst the interviewees emerge. Almost all interviewees noted their operational plan as the main guiding document. It was also reported that the communication is almost always reflected in their operational plan. However, the aspect that is most commonly mentioned by the interviewees is that the political priorities are reflected in the operational plan, as is also outlined in the *Communication Policy for the Government Offices*. Accordingly, most interviewees mention the political priorities as a main guideline when conducting communication. One interviewee explains the process:

> *"The ambassador goes to Stockholm and receives the political priorities (...). The ambassador then returns and briefs us. Based on those priorities we analyze our country and try to find out which priorities to push and in which ways. Then we create a communication plan with activities involving promotional activities among everything else".* (Croatia)

When interviewing the staff at the communications department in Stockholm (Two Deputy Directors and the Press Officer with specialization on social media), and asking about whether they believe that the regulation that the staff within the Swedish Foreign Service must relate to when communicating online, and whether they are widely known and used, several concerns were expressed:

> *"There is a basic document for everything which I believe lives its own life (...). I think people read them once and that they are then put in the drawers."* (Deputy Director UD KOM)

> *"I have referred to this document sometimes in the work that I am doing with the digital communication strategy and people have been wondering where the guidelines come from and that they have not seen them"* (Deputy Director UD KOM)

The press officer with specialization in social media expert states that there are some guidelines regarding formalities such as procurement rules, archiving and registering. It is highlighted that the communications department receives questions about the guidelines:

> *“We get questions about the guidelines. I think that it is the same with the guidelines as with the guides that we provide them with. You must work with* push *rather than* pull. *You have to remind them about* how *it should be done and* why.*”* (Press officer and social media expert, UD KOM)

The head of missions abroad should assure that there are good routines for archiving. This point also requires the head of mission to assure that the applicable legislation is followed when material is published (Utrikesdepartementet 2018) – for example copyright and GDPR. They must also assure that the external communication complies with the regulatory framework regarding registering and archiving documents. Interestingly, only a few of the interviewees mentions the guidelines regarding archiving and GDPR when being asked about which guidelines that applies when communicating on social media. This is in line with what is highlighted by the interviewees from the communications department– that the communications department often needs to provide embassy employees with information on what, why, and how they need to do it.

One interviewee at an embassy indicated that they had guidelines regarding the Sweden promotion in general, such as for budget, accounting and reporting. But regarding the communication of the Sweden promotion, they stated that “*there must certainly exist something central. I believe that there are guidelines, but not provisions*” (Cyprus).

Overall, the interviews have shown that there is a general unawareness amongst the interviewees regarding the central guideline regarding communication – the *Guidelines for the Swedish Foreign Service communication activities*. There is however no pattern of difference regarding the unawareness between embassies that employs different communication styles. In this sense, it seems like the awareness, or the lack thereof is rather random. Due to the randomness of the awareness of the communication policy, it does not seem like this can account for the difference between embassies regarding communication styles. In this sense, regulation cannot be regarded as a factor explaining the use embassies make of social media.

Budget

An initial objective of this research was to identify the factors that determine the use embassies make of digital diplomacy. One factor assumed to influence the use they make was the available resources for communication. One question for the interviewees at the embassies was therefore related to the budget for communication. Two of the embassies stated that they believed that less than 1% of the total budget was set aside for communication. This however does not include the budget for personnel resources set aside for staff working with social media, but rather the material costs of the embassy, hence the non-personnel costs. The digital communication however, was said to not be related to the budget set aside for cultural and Sweden promotion.

> *"We have a budget for the promotion of culture- and Sweden promotion one for trade promotion. Within this, everything we do is included – all the events. We do not have any specific budget that goes to communication"* (Italy)

The views on the available resources surfaced mainly in relation to the costs of the activities and events related to the cultural and Sweden promotion. A common view among the interviewees was that it was rather the physical events for the promotion that costed.

> *"For social media, we do not have to allocate any budgetary resources. It is the events and content for social media that costs"* (Switzerland)

Regarding digital communication, most of the interviewees agreed that they did not have to set aside any budgetary resources for social media. Almost all interviewees agreed that social media is very cost-effective, but that is rather the events that costs. The embassies are therefore homogenous when it comes to the perceptions of costs for promotional activities. Thus, the budget set aside for cultural and Sweden promotion cannot explain the difference between embassies´ use of social media.

Personnel resources

Accordingly, the budget set aside for promotional activities is homogenous between the embassies and can thus not account for the difference in social media use. It was instead stated the costs of digital communication was rather an aspect that was related to the personnel resources. The aspect of perceived personnel resources set aside for social media is as aspect that is heterogenous between the embassies. Divergent perspectives were expressed amongst the interviewees regarding the personnel costs. Some of the interviewees claimed that the available resources were sufficient due to their planning:

> *"We have adapted the activities to the hours and people that we have and the budget that exists. In this way, we have succeeded with the planning work" (Finland)*

However, a majority - 5 out of 7 embassies seems to perceive limited personnel resources as a challenge. Interviewees with perceived limited personnel resources stated that they would be able to do better on social media if they had more personnel resources available for the digital communication. One interviewee claimed that:

> *"As we're a small team, covering a vast array of tasks and countries, our social media work is more limited by time constraints than promotion budgets; our communications work is cost efficient".* (Austria)

One interviewee claimed that they would have been able to work more actively on social media if they would have more personnel set aside for this purpose, however interestingly, the interviewee stated that "*I would never in a budget discussion with Stockholm say that we need a social media expert or more personnel resources for this purpose*" (Cyprus).

Overall, the embassies seem to be rather homogenous when it comes to the budget set aside for personnel resources. However, it seems like the embassies are heterogenous in the perceptions of the personnel costs. A pattern in the *perceptions* of the costs set aside for personnel between the embassies emerged from the interviews. At embassies working strategically according to the outcome variable (Austria, Romania and Finland), the personnel costs do not seem to be perceived as a challenge. However, at embassies where the staff has not adopted a strategic thinking, it seems like the budget set aside for personnel is not perceived as sufficient. In this sense, it seems like the social media use of an embassy might be explained by the perceived (lack of) personnel resources. This is not the budget set aside for personnel resources per se, as this is rather homogenous between the embassies, but it is rather the *perception* of the personnel costs set aside for social media activities.

Embassy discretion and informal rules

Embassies report directly to the headquarters in Stockholm but are simultaneously autonomous government agencies. Embassy discretion thus refers to the extent to which an embassy manager, hence the ambassador, can influence policies and programs related to digital communication autonomously. This is without external influence from the headquarters or political leadership.

As mentioned in the previous section on regulation, it is stated in the *Communication Policy for the Government Offices* that the government's political priorities must be reflected in the operational goals of an embassy. All interviewees mention that their communication always reflects the political priorities of the government. One interviewee stated that there is political pressure to communicate in certain themes that are prioritized by the government (Romania). These themes are all reflected in their operational plan. There is therefore not any difference in *de jure* discretion when it comes to communicating other political topics than the ones that are prioritized by the government. However, this does not include the communication around the culture- and Sweden promotion. Due to the homogeneity in *de juro* discretion, it seems like the *de juro* discretion cannot serve as an explanation for the use an embassy makes of social media.

Accordingly, the embassies have no *de juro* discretion to act outside the political priorities (except for the promotional aspects). The empirics shows that the *Communication Policy for the Government Offices* is followed since all embassies reflect the political priorities in their operational plan. This aspect is however sometimes seen as a hindrance for the communication on social media, as some interviewees states that it is hard to communicate political issues on social media as one becomes more vulnerable when communicating these issues online.

The findings from the interviews indicate that there might be a heterogeneity in the *de facto* discretion that they enjoy. This is related to the informal rules that might prevail at an embassy. According to Gil-García (2012), public managers and organizations might be constrained by informal rules, actions and certain behavior that individual within an organization takes for granted. This is apart from the formal rules and regulations, hence the *de juro* discretion. Common for all embassies is that they must communicate with caution and use their common-sense, to neither harm the bilateral relationships, nor any individual person or group of persons. This is in line with the *Guidelines for the Foreign Service communication activities* which lays out that the heads of missions abroad must "use common sense and good judgement (…) when publishing on social media channels". One interviewee expresses that the rules are mostly about finding the right *tone* and that they apply the same principles as in the exercise of their policy objectives.

The heterogeneity in the *de facto* discretion seemed to be surfaced mainly in relation to the informal rules related to tonality and official language that the embassy must use when communication on social media. As presented in the former section, a common view amongst all the interviewees was that it is a challenge to communicate political issues online. Moreover, the challenge to deviate from the formal language is also a recurrent topic in the interview data.

> *"We notice colleagues around the world that perhaps are braver and dare to have a more playful tone. You also notice that it is appreciated and generated a successful outcome when you upload content where you have self-irony. (...) But it is not easy – what tone should you have? And how much should you dare as an embassy?"* (Italy)

Although it was a common sense among most of the interviewees that it is a challenge to find the right tone as an embassy when communicating online, there was some exceptions regarding this aspect. The two embassies that was working strategically and two-way according to the outcome variable (Romania and Finland) agreed that it was indeed important to deviate from the formal tone in order to achieve two-way communication on social media. The interviewee from the embassy in Romania mentions that it is important to dare to move away from the formal official language.

> *"Try to find issues that concerns and interests the target group. Let go of the formal – or the idea that an embassy must be a formal institution where people sit with a suit and send things to each other"* (Romania)

Finland highlighted that is hard to compete with other actors in the target country in certain, sometime similar topics, and to "profile" themselves and create an image. One example is the LGBTI-question, that is one of the political priorities of the Swedish government. The interviewee highlights that it is hard to communicate this topic in an "edgy" way as an embassy, as they must compete with other actors on the ground, as these actors can use another tonality and be more creative than the embassy. The embassy in Romania on the other hand, has focused on profiling themselves in this issue, by being the first actors that officially shed light on the topic in the country. It therefore seems like the context to a large extent influences the possibilities for an embassy to profile itself around certain topics.

Consequently, the interview data indicated that it seems to be a heterogeneity amongst the embassies when it comes to the informal rules regarding the tonality. This indicates that this might be an explanatory factor for the use an embassy makes of social media. Accordingly, two of the embassies that has been shown to be working strategically and two-way on social media highlights the importance of deviance from the formal tone. This in turn might indicate that there is a difference in the *de facto* discretion that an embassy enjoys.

The role of the ambassador

The interview data indicates that the reasons for this heterogeneity regarding the informal rules prevailing at the embassies might be explained by the motivation of the head of missions. The aspect of the ambassador is highlighted in all three interviews with the communications department in Stockholm:

> *"It depends on the ambassador – how motivated he/she is, and what interests this person has"* (Deputy Director UD KOM)

Interestingly though was that this aspect was only highlighted in one embassy interview. It was here argued that the extent to which an embassy can to adopts its communication to formal language depends on what the ambassador thinks of these issues, and that there might be "*slightly different guidelines in this regard depending on which embassy is active, and in which context you are working*" (Switzerland). That the aspect of the ambassador was only highlighted in one of the embassy interviews, but in all the interviews with the communications department raises some important questions. Why is there such a difference in the answers? It might have to do with the interviewee's positions in the organizational hierarchy. The interviewee in Switzerland was a Councellor with delegated power. It therefore had a higher hierarchy than that of the local employees that were interviewed. Nonetheless, also other interviewees had this position in the organizational hierarchy but did nevertheless not mention the motivation of the ambassador as a factor influencing the norms prevailing at the embassy. The communications department is indeed part of the MFA headquarters, and has in this sense got another position in the organizational hierarchy of the foreign ministry.

4.2.2 Organizational factors and management styles

Personnel and priorities

Turning now to the organizational factors that are assumed to influence the use embassies make of digital diplomacy. For all embassies except one (Switzerland), no one has one single person who is alone responsible for the digital communication. At most embassies included in this study, it is a locally employed employee that does the operational day-to-day work related to social media. The responsibility for the external communication is however held by a Councellor.

All interviewees claim that they have limited personnel working with social media. The main reason for this is that they have many other tasks to execute next to the digital communication. In this sense, digital communication becomes more of an "add on". Overall, this constitutes a limitation in how active they can be on social media. It seems like there is no difference in the personnel resources between embassies. This factor might therefore not *per se* be regarded as an explanatory factor for the use an embassy makes of social media. Nonetheless, the difference in the actual use might be explained by the priorities that an embassy makes. The interviewees state aspects like "*the personnel resources set the bar*" (Italy), or that it is "*a balancing act between the available resources, how much time we should invest, and what we think it is worth*" (Finland). The interview data indicates that the embassies that are working two-way and have adopted a strategic thinking, prioritizes personnel resources for the purpose of social media. Romania, which is an embassy that is executing both a two-way communication, and has adopted a strategic thinking, claims that it is all about priorities:

> *"Once you work strategically and begin to get your channels going and reach your target group in the right way, you will start growing organically fast and see that it is worth re-prioritizing and putting more resources for social media"* (Romania)

Likewise, Finland, which is an embassy executing two-way communication and have adopted a strategic thinking according to the outcome variable, claims that they have thought through the communication more strategically to reduce the workload for themselves. This might be accounted as an indication for prioritization of social media.

Procedures and control mechanisms

As regards organizational working procedures, the organization differs between the embassies. Most of the embassies have organized the work in the following way. The local employee, sometimes together with the intern, creates a draft social media plan with posts that they show to the Councellor who accepts it before posting. For more sensitive posts, the Councellor must get clearance from the ambassador before publishing. As there is no pattern in difference between the embassies when it comes to working procedures, this cannot itself account for the use an embassy makes of social media.

Despite the homogeneity of the organizational working procedures the interview data indicates that there might be some embassy internal control mechanisms prevalent that might account for the difference in the social media use. At embassies that are executing a two-way communication and have adopted a strategic thinking, the local employee working with the day-to-day activities on social media, are given free hands to publish material in non-sensitive issues. At the embassy in Romania, which is using a two-way communication style on social media, a communication group consisting of a local employee, the intern and the Councellor responsible for communication have been created. The local employee has been given a framework of given non-sensitive topics that it can post freely around. For the more sensitive posts however, the Councellor, is in charge. The interviewee from the embassy in Romania states that the reason for the importance of this control from the Councellor is that there might be a risk with giving a locally employed communicator completely free hand is that there might arise situations where a diplomatic confusion might arise:

> *An educated communicator who may have a political science background might know the subjects, but the diplomatic calibration where we protect bilateral relationships is something that only the Councellor or ambassador can assure"* (Romania)

In the *Guidelines for the Foreign Service communication activities*, the responsibilities of the communication activities should be divided between different actors. "*Every employee is responsible for communication within their area of responsibility, but the head of department or mission holds the ultimate responsibility for communication*". In the embassies, the ambassador, as head of mission, is responsible for the communication aspects of the embassy's activities. The clearance from the ambassador, or the Councellor, is something that was asked about in the interviews. This, to examine whether this clearance might be a factor influencing how embassies use social media. Overall, all embassies claim that the sensitive topics always goes from the local employee to the Councellor. And if the Councellor subsequently feels a need to check with the ambassador in certainly sensitive topics, it does so in all cases. Normally, the ambassador is not involved in the day-to-day work, or planning of the communication activities. However, before posting content in sensitive issues, the local employee normally gets clearance from either the Councellor or the ambassador to assure that the bilateral relationships are not at risk.

To conclude, the interview data shows that there is a pattern of different control mechanisms between the embassies. At embassies using social media two-way and strategically, the control mechanisms seem to be less strict than at embassies using social media one-way. Here, the head of mission has delegated power to the Councellor, which then in turn has given the local employee free hands to communicate within a framework in non-sensitive issues. This is a matter of embassy internal trust, as well as the motivation and courage of the ambassador to delegate power. At the embassies that are conducting a one-way communication on social media on the other hand, the ambassador or Councellor have maintained relatively strict control mechanism over the content that is published.

The role of the headquarter

Accordingly, there are some control mechanisms present at the embassy internally. But to examine to what extent the headquarters is also controlling the embassies work, a question regarding control mechanisms was also posed to the interviewees at the communications department in Stockholm. The interviewees from the communications department in Stockholm all answered that the did not intervene in the social media issues.

> *"We only intervene if we see that something is obviously wrong or if it is a risk that it becomes a medial issue about something, and they do not use social media they way they could to prevent this"* (Deputy Director UD KOM*)*

One further aspect that arises from the interviews with the communications department is that they do not have sufficient resources to be a "police force" or watchdog over embassies' activities on social media. It is however also highlighted that they do not want to be a "police force". Instead, it is mentioned that:

> *"A perfect scenario for me would be that I can watch the social media channels of an embassy and barely understand anything that is posted. The content shall be adapted to the local language and context. So, I don't think it should be possible to be a watchdog."* (Press officer and social media expert UD KOM)

Instead, the interviewees claim that the communications department should be more proactive in their approach towards embassies. The communications department has therefore developed e new project called *Digital Diplomacy 2.0,* where they instead individually educate all the employees, collects both quantitative and qualitative data about the embassies' digital channels, and look at their communication plans and gives recommendations accordingly. The deputy director states that this is the key for success as it is "*proactive, gives a comprehensible picture, the embassies feel that they are seen, and that there is a follow up*" (Deputy Director UD KOM).

Even though the communications department does not control the communication of embassies per se, the communication is an aspect that is highlighted in the inspections that are made every fourth year at an embassy, when the ambassador is exchanged. The aspect of social media is also included here, and the communications department is the department responsible for giving feedback on this topic to the inspectors. Inspectors requests material from the communications department on what they think of an embassy's communication work, including social media. The inspectors then bring this input to the interviews with the embassies. However, as highlighted in one of the interviews with the communications department:

> *"We do not know how our recommendations are delivered" (...) We see the inspection reports, but we do not know how the discussion between the inspector and the embassy goes"* (Deputy Director UD KOM)
>
> *"The inspections are a control mechanism and it is hard to blame someone for not communicating well enough. After all, they are looking to see mainly that money is used correctly, staff issues and those kinds of things. And then sometimes, I believe that the communication aspect is quite far down at their list of topics"* (Deputy Director UD KOM)

To conclude, the communications department in Stockholm implies that they neither have the resources to work as a watchdog over embassies' social media channels, neither that they want to take this role. This, as embassy staff should be able to develop their knowledge in communication to be able adapt its content to the local context and the language of the target group. The communications department rather want to give the embassies proactive support by educating them accordingly. It is furthermore implied that the communication aspect is hard to control for in the inspections, as it is hard to claim that someone is not communicating well enough.

4.2.3 Individual micro-level factors

Perceived benefits and drawbacks with social media

A common view amongst the interviewees was that the main benefit of using social media for public diplomacy is that they can reach more people than with traditional diplomacy. It was furthermore highlighted that one can reach out to new target groups more easily. Another reported benefit was that there is a diversity in target groups and channels that you can select from. One embassy highlighted that social media offered an opportunity to reach those parts of the domestic population that were not located where most of their physical promotional activities were located (Italy). Most interviewees states that social media is useful to reach the goals linked to promotion. Another reported benefit with social media was the cost-effectiveness. It was mentioned that the budget would not suffice to publish ads in traditional media, and that social media was therefore a more inexpensive mean to reach out to the public. One embassy also mentions that social media is a good channel to use in a consular crisis, as you reach out too many people in if a crisis would emerge.

As the perceived benefits of using social media are homogenous between the embassies, it does not seem like this factor can explain the difference between the embassy social media use. There is however one outlier when it comes to the perceived benefits and social media use. At one embassy that have adopted a strategic thinking and focuses on a two-way communication style, a "ripple effect" is mentioned as a benefit. A ripple effect refers to the possibilities to reach out to traditional media through its social media channels:

> *"It generates a ripple effect. When you have started to achieve great success on social media, you also become a reference for traditional media."* (Romania)

However, despite the fact that one embassy conducting two-way communication perceives a "ripple effect" of using social media as a benefit cannot explain the difference in social media use between the embassy. Although it might not a coincidence that this embassy uses social media more two-way due to the perceived benefits, there is no pattern of unanimity amongst the embassies conducting two-way communication regarding this factor. This perceived benefit is thus not likely to explain the difference in social media use, as all interviewees seems rather motivated to use social media due to the perceived benefits.

Overall, a small number of perceived drawbacks with social media emerged from the interview data and there is no pattern of common views. The only drawbacks that were mentioned was the possibility to get negative comments from trolls and that one gets more sensitive when communicating online. It was furthermore highlighted by one embassy that if you have a small number of followers, it might not always be worth the time you are spending on creating content for social media.

> *"We meet almost more people live on an average week at the residence than the number of followers we have on social media. We therefore ask ourselves whether it is the most effective way to use our working hours, or what gives the most results"* (Finland)

These findings that emerged from the interview data imply that there is no pattern in the perceived drawbacks of using social media. The aspects of vulnerability when communication online, as well as the extent of time invested are indeed mentioned as drawbacks, but there is no pattern of difference between embassies using social media in different way. The factor of perceived drawbacks of social media can therefore not be perceived as a factor that might explain the use an embassy makes of social media.

Experience in communication

There was a diversity in the answers regarding their experience in communication. All interviewees that had worked for several years with communication, both in the private and public sector, where interviewees that had also adopted a strategic thinking. There were however also some employees that had adopted a strategic thinking without having any experience in communication (Austria and Italy). The majority of the embassies that had adopted a strategic thinking (3 out of 5) however had experience in communication. Therefore, it seems like the experience indeed plays a role in the adoption of a strategic thinking but is however not decisive as employees without experience had also adopted a strategic thinking.

Nevertheless, it seems like the experience in communication might account for the difference between social media use in terms of communication style. At 2 out of 3 embassies that were employing a two-way communication, the embassy staff had experience in communication. At those embassies employing a one-way communication however, only one of the employees had experience in communication. To conclude, a pattern emerged from the interview data, showing that employees that had experience in communication had mostly adopted a strategic thinking and were focusing using social media two-way. The embassies are heterogenous when it comes to the experience amongst the employees in communication. Therefore, the experience in communication seem to influence how an embassy uses social media.

4.3 Discussion of findings

Taken together, these results suggest that there might be an association between institutional arrangements (personnel resources, embassy discretion and informal rules), organizational factors (control mechanisms within an embassy), and individual micro-level factors and the actual use embassies make of social media. The results suggest that institutional factors such as discretion and informal rules might foster a certain management style, which then in turn leads to a particular social media use. The results showed no notable pattern in difference between the embassies when it comes to working procedures, this cannot itself account for the use an embassy makes of social media. The results however showed a difference in the management style related to control mechanisms. This includes either strict or moderate control mechanisms between the hierarchical levels at the embassy.

The results show that informal rules prevailing at an embassy might influence which management style an ambassador selects to adopt. Informal rules include norms regarding which tonality an embassy can use. This, as they indirectly influence the selection of management style that an ambassador adopts. Hence, at an embassy where informal rules regarding the tonality prevails, the ambassador seems to be more inclined to adopt a management style that includes stricter control mechanisms. This might be a matter of embassy internal trust, as well as the motivation and courage of the ambassador. Subsequently, the results showed that embassies where the ambassador had adopted less strict control mechanisms were more often using social media two-way. Informal rules might in this sense reinforce a certain management style which then in turn either constrain or bolster the actions of individuals at lower levels in the embassy hierarchy that are working with the daily activities on social media. The tonality then in turn might be an explanatory factor for the use embassies make of social media, as embassies that are conducting a two-way communication mentions the divergence from the formal tone as a success factor. The interview data showed that the informal rules prevailing at the embassy might be explained by the motivation of the ambassador.

Whether an embassy uses social media one-way or two-way, and whether the employees have adopted a strategic thinking or not, is however not alone explained by organizational and institutional factors. The actual use is also a result of individual factors at micro-level, although these are adapting to requirements at macro-level. The results show that a perception of limited of personnel resources influences which use an embassy make of social media. There is no notable difference between the embassies when it comes to the budget for personnel set aside for social media work. Nonetheless, the difference in the actual use might be explained by the priorities that an embassy makes regarding personnel. The perceived benefits and drawbacks with using social media showed no pattern of difference between the embassies and can therefore not be accounted as an explanation for the actual use. The results however showed that the experience in communication seem to influence the use an embassy make of social media.

The results in this chapter indicate that institutional arrangements at macro-level might lead to different working procedures and organizational structures at embassies. This implies that there is variation in how embassies in different countries react to the same stimulus, which is the institutional arrangements. In the same way as the use of social media seem to have led to different ways of organizing (digital) diplomacy, also the ways of organizing diplomacy seem to influence whether an embassy uses social media two-way or not. The next chapter, therefore, moves on to substantively discuss the study's implications for theory, as well as for societal, political and organizational debates.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Aim and research gap

This thesis sought to find an answer to the research question: *What factors determine the use embassies make of social media?*. This study has discussed the reasons for why embassies use social media in a certain way. Neo institutionalist theoretical approaches in organizational analysis were used to conceptualize the factors that might influence the processes that characterizes the organizational basis of embassies when they are working with social media.

Previous analyses of the effect of IT on diplomacy has been made (Bátora 2008). Bátora (2008) examined the effects of information- and communication technologies (ICT:s) at an organizational level. Indeed, there is some literature that has investigated the organizing principles of modern diplomacy, and how ICTs or the new media has challenged the organizing principles of foreign ministries and embassies (Copeland 2009; Huxley 2014; Fong 2010; Hall 2012). Research has also been made on how Internet, ICTs and media has transformed public diplomacy (Cull 2013; Hallams 2010). It has indeed been studies how diplomats uses social media and which tools they use to engage with the citizens. However, there is a lack of literature examining the underlying factors that might explain *why* they use it in a certain way. No study has however yet examined how these changed organizing principles might influence the actual use diplomats make of new interactive media. No research or theory has hitherto explained the factors influencing why diplomats adopts a certain communication style of digital diplomacy. The key factors that might be influencing digital diplomacy adoption and implementation in different countries have also not yet been found.

This paper takes a neo institutionalist approach and develops a theoretical framework that sought to find how macro- and micro-level factors are either individually, or in concert with each other determining the use embassies make of social media. By looking at factors at macro-level, such as institutional arrangements, organizing principles, management styles, as well as individual micro-level factors, this study sought to add to the literature on digital diplomacy and organizational sciences as it looks at the *whys* and not solely the *how*'s of modern/digital diplomacy.

The empirical findings in this study provide a new understanding of why embassies use social media in a certain way. This, by moving away from quantitative macro-level relationships and instead examine the working mechanisms on micro-level that are either working in concert or individually to induce the outcome. The analysis of both macro- and micro-level factors undertaken here has extended the knowledge of how individuals act when they are incorporated in a political institution, and why they might act in a certain way.

5.2 Summary of main findings

Anchored in new institutionalist approaches in organization theory, this study developed a conceptualization of institutional arrangements as a set of formal rules and norms that regularizes organizational processes and relations within political institutions. The organizational principles are thus expected to be regularized in formal rules of foreign ministries. Organizational procedures and structures within foreign ministries and embassies are also changed with new media technologies as social media. This, as new structures and procedures must be introduced. This change includes a change in the institutional and organizational principles including the structures, procedures, norms and rules, as well as a change on the individual level of diplomats working with the day-to-day activities of digital diplomacy on social media. The change on individual level includes adapting to an appropriate language and diverge from the formal language, as well as to focus on interactive communication. The empirical evidence retrieved from the current study implies that institutional arrangements influence to what extent a foreign ministry can adapt a change in its organizational structures and procedures, as well as the extent to which diplomats can act within the traditional diplomatic norms, such as formal language and secrecy.

This study has shown that institutional factors indeed have implications for which paths the organizational change at embassies takes. The factors examined in more depth here were the formal rules, the budget, as well as the discretion of an embassy. Accordingly, the formal rules are applicable to all embassies, and does not vary. All embassies must act according to a formal set of rules, which is to focus on the realization of the government's political priorities. The embassy discretion, hence, the extent to which an embassy can diverge from the political priorities, is not differing *de jure*. However, *de facto* it seems like there might be some difference in the actual discretion they enjoy. This in turn thus seems to influence the way embassies uses social media, as some embassies seems to have the *de facto* discretion to be edgy and move away from the formal diplomatic language, whereas others follow the *de jure* discretion and does not move away from the formal language. Institutional factors therefore seem to have implications for the paths of adaption and change in an embassy's organizational structures and procedures, and in turn the organizational output.

On organizational level, the procedures, in the form of control mechanisms within the embassies seem to differ. This is an issue about which management style an ambassador adopts.

Some ambassadors seem to be more inclined to pertain control over the content that is created, than at other embassies where the ambassador seems to be motivated to delegate power to staff at lower levels in the embassy hierarchy. A management style including strict control mechanisms between the hierarchical levels within an embassy might influence social media use negatively, as this leads to slower processes of content creation and publishing. Organizational processes and institutional forces therefore seem to be mutually crucial to bolstering or hampering a two-way communication on social media.

Despite the differences in *de facto* discretion, the budget for personnel resources, as well as in management styles (strict or less strict clearance and control mechanisms), some embassies have shown to be able to nevertheless pursue a two-way communication on social media. This however only in the cases where the staff working with the daily activities have adopted a strategic thinking. This seems to be explained by micro-level factors such as the experience, knowledge and priorities of the staff working with the day-to-day activities on social media. Staff that have adopted a strategic thinking, including working with a plan and pursuing research about its target group to adapt its communication, seems to be more inclined to be pursuing a two-way communication on social media, despite existing organizational processes and institutional forces. This however presuppose that the organizational procedures within the embassy, such as the clearance and control mechanisms, are somewhat limited.

The established organizational procedures and structures for organizing (public) diplomacy are accordingly changed with new interactive media. The interest, or the lack thereof, of the ambassador to adopt the within-embassy organizational procedures to processes and procedures that supports two-way communication on social media therefore seems to be a decisive factor.

What became clear from the case studies is that every embassy had been adapting to institutional arrangements of the Swedish administrative system. There were however some divergences in the paths leading to differences in the working procedures and organizational structures, which in turn influenced the framework for the staff working with social media on micro level. The findings suggest that there are some variations in how embassies situated in different countries react to the same macro-level factors. This might have to do with the context, as embassies have reacted to the new challenges in different ways by adopting different modus of organizing its digital diplomacy efforts.

5.3 Practical implications and recommendations

Although this study focuses on social media use, the findings may well have a bearing on how to implement new working methods for other ICT use within foreign ministries. The new media landscape of the 21^{st} century poses several challenges to foreign miniseries. One already prominent includes the increased amount of disinformation online. To provide foreign ministries with working methods on how to deal with the new challenges is therefore an important contribution that this study offers.

The findings of this study have a number of practical implications. These findings suggest several courses of action for foreign ministries in general, and embassies in particular. The results suggest that the institutional factors *de facto* discretion and informal rules might be influencing the management style and organizational processes within embassies. *De juro*, embassies have a similar amount of discretion. However, de facto it seems like the discretion differs slightly depending on which informal rules that are prevailing within the embassy. The informal rules are to not diverge from the formal language, as the embassy must withhold its formal status, even if communicating online. And this, in turn, seems to influence which management style an ambassador selects to adopt. The interview data showed that these informal rules merely seems to be explained by the ambassador and its motivation to change these embassy internal norms. Currently, it seems like many ambassadors are rather risk-averse when it comes to social media, and this is something that needs to be change in order for embassies to be able to profile themselves on social media, pushing certain sensitive topics and giving up the formal language that is normally used in traditional diplomatic practices. However, this of course raises questions, as there might be several reasons for trying to avoid diplomatic confusion and political risks, potentially damaging the bilateral relationships. In this sense, the possible gains of using social media more actively must accordingly be balance against the potential risks.

If public managers within foreign ministries are more aware of the importance of institutions, better strategies for dealing with institutional constrains can be developed. This, by adjusting the organizational practices. The findings from this study suggests a number of recommendations for how practices should be adjusted or revisited. These include:

- **Awareness:** Increase ambassadors' awareness of the positive effects that social media use can bring about. This includes the possibility to achieve a 'ripple effect', i.e. obtaining increased attention by traditional media, thereby reaching out to wider audiences.

- **Motivation:** Pursue efforts that keeps ambassadors motivated to use social media interactively. This could include competitions specifically related to engagement and community building online.

- **Knowhow:** Encourage embassy staff to diverge from the norms regarding formal diplomatic language. Provide education in creative communication and how to adapt the language to the target group.

- **Method:** Encourage ambassadors to adopt a management style that allows for interactive social media use. This involves delegation of power and limited control mechanisms between an embassy's hierarchical levels.

- **Support:** Provide methodological support and education in strategic communication to both ambassadors and communication officers. Thereby, employees at all hierarchical levels can become more motivated and capable to communicate interactively.

- **Supervision**: Proactively supervise the activities of embassies on social media and collect quantitative and qualitative data about embassies' efforts.

- **Intervention:** Intervene with educational efforts and methodological support at the embassies that are not successful in terms of dialogue. Provide ambassadors with the above-mentioned knowhow and method for how their practices should be adjusted, and communication officers with education in strategic communication.

5.4 Theoretical implications

It adds not only to the literature on digital diplomacy, but also to more fundamental aspects of organizational studies, public administration and public policy. It focuses on the social media platform Facebook, but the theoretical framework and its practical implications have value beyond only this one kind of social media platform. By focusing on the organizational processes and management within embassies, it begins to fill a gap of knowledge about public management at other than embassy level, as the use of social media platforms will most likely pertain and develop, thereby requiring a continuous development of the working processes and practices within public administrations. The challenges of choosing and using social media platforms in government will most likely persist, researchers and government officials will therefore benefit from integrating the ideas presented in this study.

As a field of research, digital diplomacy is both multi-disciplinary and practice-based. As a field of practice, it is multi-dimensional and open to advice based on real life experience. The practice on digital diplomacy and research within this discipline might thus benefit from applied research that produces new knowledge both in regard to theory and practice. This study contributes to both these domains as it lays out arguments about the complexities that might challenge every foreign ministry's' effort to use social media in effective ways. This paper took a neo institutionalist approach and developed a theoretical framework that sought to find how macro- and micro-level factors are either individually, or in concert with each other determining the use embassies make of social media. It therefore offers a new understanding of the underlaying factors and interactions that might result in different degree of social media usage in different organizational environments. By looking at factors at macro-level, such as discretion, informal rules, organizing principles, and management styles, as well as individual micro-level factors, this study adds to the literature on digital diplomacy and organizational sciences as it looks at the *whys* and not solely the *how*'s of modern diplomacy. It therefore adds to the understanding and knowledge of an important new phenomena in a way that offers not only better theories, but also better governance.

5.5 Limitations and future research

A limitation of this study is that it merely examined smaller embassies. Interviewees therefore mentioned personnel resources as an important explanation for their social media use. One further limitation of the study was that it did only evaluate the use of social media at one embassy in Eastern Europe. And as the findings shows that the context might be an explanatory factor for two-way communication on social media, it is unfortunate that the study did not include more embassies that worked in that political context. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that a number of the factors might be generalizable to other embassies in Europe. This including the macro-level factors of organizational processes and management styles, as well as individual factors at micro-level. However, for future research, one should put larger emphasis on context and size in the case selection.

This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. A further study could assess the difference between large and small embassies, as well as the difference between embassies located in Eastern and Western Europe. Further research could also explore the role of the ambassadors more in depth. This is needed to fully understand the implications of the current findings. It is therefore recommended that future research needs to examine more closely the links between the different hierarchical levels both within embassies, as well as between ambassadors and the headquarters. Further research should also put an emphasis on selecting embassies based on macro-level factors such as political context, size and diplomatic relationships. The latter should be included as this might influence the extent to which the ambassador has the discretion to communicate in politically sensitive issues.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for the embassies

Introduction
Alina Engström, 27 years old, student of Utrecht University and University of Konstanz. Doing an internship at the Swedish MFA at the communications department, in the group for strategic communications. Writing my master thesis on digital diplomacy. For that reason, I am conducting this interview. Questions?

- Would you mind if I record this interview for the purpose of this thesis? Highly confidential and only for my use.
- Do you prefer that I quote you anonymously or not in the thesis?

Context
Who are you and what is your role at the embassy?

- *What kind of work do you do? How is your work related to digital communication?*
- *Have you worked with communication before?*

Social media use

How are you working with social media at the embassy?

- *What makes you use the social media the way you do?*
- *Do you have a strategy for this use? If so, what strategy?*
- *What do you want to achieve through Facebook? Are you mainly disseminating information or are you also focusing on interacting with the followers?*
- *Do you think it's important to interact with the followers?*

What are the benefits of using social media? What are the drawbacks?

- *Do you find social media useful for the purpose of reaching your operational goals with Sweden promotion and public diplomacy?*

What is deemed important at the embassy and what is deemed less important in regard to the Sweden promotion? What do you prioritize?

Operational procedures / daily practices
Could you describe how you organize the operational work of social media at your embassy? What are the day-to-day/weekly operational procedures?

- *How are the personnel resources divided for social media work?*
- *Do you feel that you have sufficient personnel resources to account for the day-to-day social media work?*
- *Do you feel that you have sufficient time to execute social media activities?*

What is the size of the budget for ICTs and communication/Sweden promotion?

- *Do you feel that the size of the budget is sufficient?*

Do you need clearance before posting something on Facebook? (from the ambassador, political officer, Stockholm headquarters for everything you post on social media)

- *Do you feel that you are able to influence programs and policies for the digital communication autonomously?*

Cooperation with headquarters
Do you encounter the Stockholm headquarters in your work related to social media?

- *In what ways do you encounter the headquarters (directly or through guidelines, information, education)?*
- *Do you discuss social media with them occasionally?*
- *How are your experiences with these actions?*
- *What is your experience with the training that is available from UD KOM for communication officers?*

What guidelines/regulations/requirements are there/do you get from Stockholm?

- *Which are important for you in relation to the social media work?*
- *Does these affect you work with social media? And if so, how? Do they help or hinder your work?*
- *How do you adapt to these official rules for the social media work?*

Other actors
How would you describe the role of other governmental actors in your social media work? (other gov. agencies: Swedish Institute, Business Sweden, Visit Sweden etc.)

- *How are your experience with these actors? How do you interact in regard to social media use?*
- *Besides the governmental actors, which other actors do you encounter in your social media work? (ex. Local partners)*
- *How do you value the role of these actors in the social media work?*

Questionnaire for the communications department

Introduction
Alina Engström, 27 years old, student of Utrecht University and University of Konstanz. Doing an internship at the Swedish MFA at the communications department, in the group for strategic communications. Writing my master thesis on digital diplomacy. For that reason, I am conducting this interview. Questions?

- Would you mind if I record this interview for the purpose of this thesis? Highly confidential and only for my use.
- Do you prefer that I quote you anonymously or not in the thesis?

1. Who are you and what is your role at the communications department?
   - *What kind of work do you do? How is your work related to digital communication?*
   - *Have you worked with communication before?*

2. How do you perceive embassies' digital communication efforts? Are they sufficient? (outcome)
   - *What could be made to improve their digital skills?*

3. In what way do you encounter the embassies? (process behind it – how do you interact)
   - *Do you (MFA Stockholm) need to approve social media posts by embassies?*
   - *Is the MFA intervening if digital communication is not working well at an embassy? If so, how?*
   - *What are your experiences with these actions?*

4. Are you educating embassy staff in digital communication? If so, how?

5. In what way are you assisting missions abroad with **methodology** (tips and advice on how communication at embassies can be developed) and **content** (photo, film, tweets, articles etc.) for external communication?
   - *How do you perceive the effectiveness of these efforts?*

6. The MFA has issued guidelines for embassies - do you think these regulations are known and observed by embassies?
   - *What role does these regulations play in the actual activities by embassies?*