A Poststructural Reading of Knowledge Sharing in a University Restructuring Process

Lesley Treleaven

Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic

Cate Jerram

College of Law and Business, School of Management
University of Western Sydney
Sydney, NSW, Australia
Email: l.treleaven@uws.edu.au

A submission to:

The Third European Conference on

Organisational Knowledge, Learning, and Capabilities

OKLC 2002

The Athens Laboratory of Business Administration

5-6 April 2002, Athens, Greece

A Poststructural Reading of Knowledge Sharing in a
University Restructuring Process

Abstract

The authors participated in a comprehensive university restructuring process that, amongst other major changes, included new College and School structures. Based on the policy proposed at university level, academics were invited to engage in collaborative processes to form new Schools across what were formerly three members of the one network university. In this policy, the School formation process was proposed as an open, collaborative and bottom up process. Of particular interest in this paper is the formation of the School(s) of Management. Despite this apparent opportunity for knowledge sharing and despite the fact that the participants were situated within the field of management, organisational studies and information systems, they were unable to create meaningful agreement on a new School/s. The decision-making processes were not only conflictual for most involved but failed to resolve the School formation problem and was eventually after considerable delay, taken by senior university executives.

In an attempt to better understand how these processes shaping our future School were so unsuccessful, a number of interviews were conducted with academic staff members from different groups - proponents for different School proposals, the appointed facilitators of the restructuring process, and several senior university administrators. In addition to the interviews, documents and emails from the University restructure process were collected and analysed. Authors themselves, two of whom were participants in the observed process, kept field notes and engaged in discussions with other participants.

Drawing on the work of Foucault and others who view power as both relational and productive, this paper offers a poststructural reading of the processes of sharing and co-creating knowledge in this complex organisational site. The multiple, competing and contradictory discourses within which the different School proposals were situated are identified by employing a textually-oriented discourse analysis. The tensions, refusals and disruptions in the struggles of different proponents to position themselves in these discourses are examined using symptomatic texts from the interviews, documents and email messages exchanged in the process. We identify participants' subject positions within traditionally uncritical discourses of power and then employ a more useful poststructuralist framework to examine power/knowledge throughout the School formation process. We identify emerging patterns of failed knowledge sharing that disrupted attempts at developing mutual understanding, and prevented the ability to take agreed action towards a School proposal.

We foreground three conditions that militated against effective knowledge sharing in an apparently open and creative process. From the study we suggest new ways of encouraging and supporting knowledge sharing and co-creation in organisations as well as organisational capability to deploy it. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that applying a poststructural theoretical framework more widely may prove useful in future organisational learning and knowledge management research directed towards opening up new possibilities for acting in organisations.

Introduction

In organisations knowledge acquisition, creation, sharing and deployment are essential for competitive performance. How knowledge is managed in organisations has been variously investigated with the aim of improving productivity and using organisational knowledge effectively. However, the pragmatic nature of most management studies does not conceptualise knowledge management as a social process in contexts that involve complex power relations. More specifically, knowledge sharing by individuals, within and between groups, and organisations, has been taken for granted, as naturally occurring and unproblematic. When failure to share knowledge is identified, it is typically attributed to inadequate communication means and a lack of knowledge transfer. As a result, companies often invest in a range of communication and groupware technologies with dubious success (Storey and Barnett, 2000; Schultze and Boland, 2000). Lacking understanding of the social nature of knowledge, current practices in knowledge management, and especially applications of technology, prove superficial and naive, and thus of little value to organisations (Swan, Newell, Scarborough and Hislop, 1999; Storey and Barnett, 2000; Galliers and Newell, 2001; Carlsson, 2001).

Understanding the social nature of knowledge creation and sharing is vital to the developing field of knowledge management. Whilst knowledge sharing may be in the interests of an organisation, attempts to capitalise on its benefits often meet with what much of the traditional management literature terms as 'resistance' and 'organisational politics'. Many of these studies of organisational change, however, neglect any focus on how knowledge in times of organisational change is created, shared and re-created. Furthermore, many of these case studies in the uncritical management literature give insufficient attention to the social relations of power.

An approach drawing on poststructuralist theory emphasises how power and knowledge are mutually constituting. For rather than power being a resource, which some people possess and others do not, Foucault sees power (1978, 1980 and 1983) as pervasively infiltrating into everyday life through language and practices. Power is thereby understood as productive of knowledges, meanings and values as well as practices. Knowledge is also expressed, shared, contested and (re)constructed through language and practices. Thus Foucault's (1977) formulation of the power/knowledge nexus opens up questions for investigating the dynamics of power relations and the ways in which organisational knowledge may also be excluded, overlooked, disrupted and lost. In turn, some ways forward in more effective knowledge sharing may be indicated. Arguably, both knowledge management and organisational studies may reap benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to questions about knowledge sharing in organisations. In particular, for successful organisational change new knowledge needs to be re-created and shared.

This paper explores knowledge sharing and power relations in an empirical study of one organisation undergoing extensive change. Namely, the paper draws on the three-year research study that investigates the consultative processes employed in the comprehensive restructuring of one 'new' Australian university. This field study is an interdisciplinary investigation, spanning the fields of information systems, knowledge management, sociology, organisational analysis, organisational change and leadership. Broadly, the empirical study sought, first, to identify the nature of the participation by the executive, staff and unions in the consultative processes; second, to understand how

knowledge was created, communicated and shared during the organisational change processes; and third, to understand the role played by computer-mediated communications (email, intranet and group systems software) in the process of communicating and sharing knowledge during the consultative processes.

The focus of this paper is on examining one part of this organisational restructure: the formation of the School of Management following the formation of Colleges in the University's substantial restructure. Many studies have followed organisational change processes, however, much less interest has been directed towards how knowledge is created, disrupted, shared and lost in the transformative struggles during organisational restructures and the impact of knowledge management systems on the new form of the organisation. This serendipitous research focus came out of our own engagement in applying our disciplinary frameworks to make sense of, and learn how organisations might handle knowledge management better during such change. It was only as we started to research the Schools formation process that we realised how tortuous our own School's formation had been in comparison to many others. Thus we do not seek to represent this specific study of the School of Management formation as indicative of the genuine attempt by the Vice Chancellor to exercise, within constraints, post-heroic leadership (Fulop and Linstead 1999) in undertaking a very complex organisational restructuring. With the growing interest in organisational discourse (see Hardy 2001, Grant and Keenoy 2001), this study responds, in some respects, to Hardy and Palmer's (1998) call for studies that examine the impact of discursive activity on those working within organisations.

The paper is in four parts. The first part describes the research site, outlines the research methodology and briefly discusses poststructural theorisations of power that form the theoretical framework applied to the case study. The second part, employing discourse analysis of symptomatic texts, examines the discursive context within which Australian universities have been restructuring, the major discourses shaping the School Formation process within the University, and the contradictory discourses shaping the formation of the School of Management. The third part analyses the power/knowledge relations in the formation of the School of Management, applying Cooper's (1994) modes of power as an analytical famework. The fourth part concludes by pointing to the disruptive and competing contradictions that militated against effective knowledge sharing in the study. Finally, this research into knowledge sharing highlights how knowledge management can benefit from drawing on the work of Foucauldian poststructuralist theory and discourse analysis.

1.0 The study

1.1 The research site

This study is located at a 'new' Australian university, referred to in the paper as the University of Eastern Australia (UEA). Upon the abolition of the binary system of higher education in Australia, UEA was created as a federated university in 1989 by the amalgamation of three former Colleges of Advanced Education. These network members have undergone several restructures in the last decade (Treleaven, Cecez-Kecmanovic and Moodie, 1999) during the rapid expansion and the changing conditions of Australian higher education. This latest restructuring brings together these three former network members into one 'unified' University, necessitating the formation of four Colleges and Schools. The UEA's former faculties have been replaced with

Colleges of Business, Humanities, Science and Health. Scattered across six campuses with 35,000 students and 2,300 students, the UEA is dispersed in nine geographic sites, situated variously from five to sixty-five kilometres apart around a large metropolitan centre.

The School formation process was presented by the UEA Vice Chancellor as "a unique moment in the history of the University - a chance to organise around our academic strengths, opportunities and student needs. It is not intended that all academic units will necessarily re-form, though many will, especially where common disciplines exist across campuses or Members. It **is** intended that staff will think laterally and creatively about the opportunities the restructure presents, meet and talk with colleagues on other campuses and design potential Schools which are innovative, flexible, intellectually coherent and capable of developing and adapting to a profoundly transforming educational environment" (Guidelines for School Formation Process [GSFP] 2000, 1).

The Vice Chancellor declared that "the process for building Schools and colleges needs to be based on shared assumptions about form, nature and purpose"(GSFP 2000, 1). Thus, a set of draft guidelines were circulated and a month later the final version was distributed. Six steps in the process of Schools formation were identified. These were the gathering and sorting by College of all documentary material relevant to School formation; calls for and appointment of a facilitation team of senior 'neutral' staff to facilitate and guide the School proposals in each College; School proposals, presented on a proforma, submitted to focus discussion of a 'first cut' of possible Schools, with several iterations anticipated and all proposals and amended proposals to be posted on an intranet; School proposals to be put to interested staff with the VC having right of veto or taking the decision where proposals competed; Heads of School to be appointed; and staff location to be decided with consultation. After preliminary feedback from staff, the finalised guidelines modified requirements concerning the size of Schools, campus spread of Schools, appointment process for Heads of School and facilitation of the School formation process.

1.2 Research methodology

Fifteen semi-structured interviews with staff were conducted in order to identify experiences, attitudes, feelings and insights regarding the School formation process and the extent of knowledge sharing using a range of media including email and intranet. The interviews, spanning the range of executive, academic staff, School proposal participants, were between one and two hours and were tape-recorded and transcribed.

In producing this paper, numerous university documents, interview transcripts and email texts on the restructuring and its parameters including the School formation process were subjected to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a means of foregrounding for examination the taken-for-granted factors (social, cultural, educational, political and historical) that shape the language people use. Accordingly, its methods include historical and cultural investigation, narrative analysis and ethnographic forms of inquiry (Lee, 1996). Discourses can be identified in symptomatic texts by 'reading' not only content but also, as Hardy and Palmer (1998) point out, the communicative processes and social interactions between people in the contexts of organisational life (Grant, Keenoy and Oswick, 1998).

The purpose in making a poststructuralist reading of selected texts is to go 'beyond the text', to foreground the conditions shaping the production of the communications over

the 'actual' or 'realist tales' (van Maanen 1988, Lather 1991) that are then placed in the background. The use of poststructural concepts and deconstructive strategies for reading symptomatic texts enables the foregrounding of dominant and alternative discourses, the range of available and desired subject positions, the varying relations of power indicated in language and practices, and the binary oppositions deeply embedded in language. What we offer here is a discourse analysis as one way of engaging usefully with rich, complex data and its representation of far more complex everyday lives in a university.

Two of the researchers were participants in the School formation process and thus had access to many documents, messages, discussions and other materials produced including field notes. As such, the researchers were thereby positioned actively within the research process itself, renegotiating subjectivities in terms of how they 'read' the material as well as bringing 'insider knowledge' (Adler and Adler, 1987; Clifford and Marcus 1986) to the empirical study. Such knowledges, though partial of course, are contextualised both historically and in terms of local meanings and enable arguably richer pictures of the breadth of organisational practices and values. In this context, it is important to acknowledge that 'observation' and data collection are always theory-laden: studies of research observation and data collection such as Reid *et al* (1996) unsettle the naivety that there is consensus even between researchers observing, recording activities, or even videoing the same research site. There is, in a sense, a 'leakiness' (Morgan, 1997) in terms of what both the researchers and the research participants contribute to this study; a reality that is unusual only to the extent, perhaps, that it is acknowledged and reflected on as part of the reflexivity of our methodology. Thus the position of the researchers constructing this text is as participants who supported the proposal for two Schools of Management needs to be declared and as such the way in which we construct the tale does not claim to represent the only 'truth' of the School formation.

1.3 Theorisations of power and power/knowledge

Whilst knowledge sharing may be in the interests of an organisation, attempts to capitalise on its benefits often meet with what much of the management literature terms as 'resistance' and 'organisational politics'. However, understanding unsuccessful attempts to encourage knowledge sharing may benefit more by taking into account the nexus between power and knowledge. Foucault's formulation of the power/knowledge nexus opens up questions for investigating the dynamics of power relations and ways in which organisational knowledge is excluded, overlooked, disrupted and lost. In turn, some ways forward in more effective knowledge sharing may be indicated.

Some useful analytical tools for investigating knowledge sharing in this research study of School formation may, therefore, lie in Foucauldian theories of discourse and the subject (Foucault, 1980 and 1983; McNay, 1992, Cooper, 1994). For with their insistence on the importance of language and practices, poststructural theories attempt to come to terms with power as a central problematic in the transformation of social relations that, in turn, discursively shape institutions such as universities.

Rather than power being a resource, which some people possess and others do not, Foucault sees power (1980 and 1983) as pervasively infiltrating into everyday life through language and practices. Power is thereby understood as productive of knowledges, meanings and values as well as practices. Power is furthermore understood as relational in terms of the organisation of inequality through relations of domination and subordination. Foucault proposes that power cannot be seized, since it

is present throughout social relations rather than centralised in a state or institutional apparatus. Instead, power is exercised through its effects on people's actions:

> what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future (Foucault, 1983:220).

The power-knowledge nexus is one of Foucault's most widely known formulations and is significant in understanding how power operates discursively:

> [P]ower produces knowledge ... power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault ,1977:27).

Not only is knowledge the effect of a particular regime of power but forms of knowledge also produce the social realities which they describe and analyse (McNay 1992:27).

Discourse, in Foucault's work (for example, 1980), is central to issues of power and knowledge, discipline and the subject. The concept of discourse, used here in a Foucauldian (1988) sense, is concerned with the ways that 'individuals' are governed by discourses and practices through the social relations of power. Discourses thereby function to regulate, maintain and reproduce the social order whilst inculcating norms of cultural authority.

In this way, the self is constituted through processes of subjectification and 'subject to' particular ways of thinking, speaking and acting. Foucault refers to:

> a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject:* subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1983:212).

In contrast to a modern identity suggested by liberal humanism as a rational, unitary and fixed individual, the postmodern subject is constituted by complex, contradictory, changing multiple selves. Such subjects are produced not only through 'techniques of domination' but also discursively through 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988).

However, the discrepancy between Foucault's theorisation of power as diffuse and productive and his specific historical analyses of power in practice as monolithic and repressive, have been underlined by both Cooper (1994) and McNay (1992:39). They point to how he neglects the view of those subject to power, their potential for productive and generative responses, and thereby positions subjects as either resistant or compliant.

Accordingly, Cooper has conceptualised power as ubiquitous, trans-historical and relational. She argues in favour of understanding power as productive and generative since this perspective opens up possibilities for radical social transformation that are not fixed in relations of social inequality. By emphasising that power itself is neither inherently (though undoubtedly potentially) oppressive nor liberatory, she contests

Foucault's historical analyses of power (1980) as a conflict of interests that produces resistance in response to the organisation of inequality.

Thus, where competing and contradictory discourses intersect and overlap, the tensions thereby produced demand attention by the subject and function as a site of potential change, or 'subject(act)ivity' as Angelides (1994) has pointed out. Such contradictions are, therefore, significant since their resolution represents productive possibilities for the formation of new discourses and subjectivities that are not fixed in the inequality of social relations.

Whilst Cooper's project is principally concerned with transforming gendered relations of power, it is arguable that her theoretical developments are of value in examining organisational change in differently constituted but, nevertheless what would also be regarded as, unequal power relations. Power can therefore be theorised variously as both relational *and* productive. By considering power as relational, the asymmetries of *unequal relations* between people positioned in different ways are taken into account. By considering power as productive, actions and responses that produce effects are accorded the potential to disrupt the maintenance and reproduction of relations of power.

Throughout the School formation process, power was exercised variously by those in different hierarchical positions within the institution. In this sense, power functioned *relationally* between the executive, facilitators and academic staff, though in no unified way within these functional groups. In another sense, power functioned *productively* according to the subject positions that members of these different institutional groups took up in different discourses. In turn, the type and extent of participation in the School formation process was shaped by the practices, values and attitudes of the discourses within which university members positioned themselves. Some of these discourses are remnants from the former network members where academic groupings had distinct pedagogical, disciplinary and research traditions.

Further, Cooper extends Foucault's delineation of knowledge and discipline as the two principal modes of power, by outlining four current modes of power: ideology, force, discipline and resources. She proposes these four modes can be distinguished whilst noting that they are closely intertwined. The fourth mode, resources as power, is employed by Cooper in something of a reversal of power as a resource and is useful in examining power/knowledge in the context of this study. The subsequent analysis therefore shifts its attention away from what may be termed 'realist tales' (van Maanen, 1988; Lather, 1991) concerned to establish the 'truth' of 'what really happened' in the School formation. Rather than research that aims to get at 'the real reasons', the paper seeks to identify how opportunities for knowledge sharing were created and disrupted in the contradictions and instabilities of the organisation and its social relations of power, thereby allowing for the formation of new Schools. For as Willis (1988:118) has pointed out, "power is not a monolithic system but a system of overlapping contradictions."

2.0 Discursive contexts and discourse analysis of symptomatic texts

In this second part of the paper, the discursive contexts within which the School formation process took place are discussed at three levels. First, the study is contextualised within the historical discourses shaping the restructuring of Australian universities. Second, the study is contextualised at the level of the University by

identifying three organisational discourses employed to govern the School formation process. Third, at the level of the School/s of Management, two conflicting discourses shaping its formation are proposed from the discourse analysis of symptomatic texts.

2.1 Historical discourses shaping the restructuring of Australian universities

Significant discursive shifts in the last decade, especially towards corporate managerialism, economic rationalism, entrepreneurialism and globalisation have necessitated that Australian universities recreate themselves (Currie and Newson, 1998; Dudley, 1998; Marginson and Considine, 2000). Concurrently, shifts in leadership and management of organisational changes have emphasised consultative processes and participation of staff in ensuing restructures, enterprise bargaining and accommodations to reduced government funding. Accordingly, university staff can no longer afford to engage only in scholarly pursuits in their discipline; their futures are increasingly shaped by their collective capability to create and share organisational knowledge and learning in an Academy under considerable challenge.

Nowhere in Australia is this perhaps more noticeable in the reform of the binary tertiary education system than in the former College of Advanced Education sector where the so-called 'new' universities since 1987 have had to both invent and re-invent themselves to meet increasing competition. There were therefore powerful forces creating a discourse of scarcity (of funding, students, resources, jobs and futures) within the UEA during its comprehensive and protracted restructuring. The discursive effects were to produce a climate of insecurity, uncertainty, fear and lack of trust.

2.2 Discourses shaping the University's School Formation Process

The UEA's origins in three former Colleges of Advanced Education, each with quite distinctive histories, cultures and practices contextualise both the attempts by the University executive to generate counter discourses and the staff's engagement in maintaining and unsettling the historical discourses. The executive wanted to achieve a unified university in place of the competitive federation and set out to restructure in order to achieve this. Whilst many of the staff, especially from two former network members could appreciate opportunities and benefits of this unification, the third member's history of secession attempts positioned them historically as less collaborative across the University.

Each former network member had its roots in different disciplinary traditions, pedagogical traditions and authority structures that varied from feudal to highly centralised and authoritarian. While one had a strong research tradition within some of its disciplines, the others were comparatively new to developing widespread research skills and collaborative linkages. Staff and student cultures were also diverse and distinctive across the network members, making trust, co-operation and open collaboration challenging. Within some parts of the federated network there was a history of collegiate conflict being managed by splitting off dysfunctional groups into new courses and Schools. Additionally, across the amalgamated UEA, there was now much duplication of courses and subjects together with administrative activities conducted across different network members according to conflicting and inconsistent procedures. These factors thereby justified the need to re-organise and present a more coherent and unified face to students, external bodies and the wider community.

These historical differences are powerfully reflected in three discourses, and their discursive practices, which the Vice Chancellor attempted to introduce into the newly 'unified' organisation in the required Schools formation process. As such, her move towards unification, a move that was not risked by any of her predecessors over the previous decade, was both bold and, many would argue, inevitable.

The three discourses can be seen as disciplining, in the Foucauldian sense, the School formation process that took place during 2000. They can be readily identified in the University documents focusing on the School formation process (both its draft and final version) as 'a university without (external or internal) walls', 'a bottom up process' and 'evidence-based decision making'. These discourses each functioned as counter discourses to those dominant discourses well established over many years in the former network members. Associated with each of these discourses were a set of prescribed procedures for data gathering, upward communication via facilitators and decision-making at different levels.

Whilst these discourses disciplined academic staff in the School formation process, they were also situated within the complex and contradictory wider discourse of scarcity. This discourse of scarcity, produced by the reduced government funding of the UEA, drove its executive to rationalise duplication, economise on administrative functions across the former network members and achieve budgetary control within tight constraints.

2.2.1 A university without walls

The purpose of the School formation was espoused in the Vice Chancellor's *Guidelines for Forming Schools and Colleges* document as:

> an opportunity to create innovative new partnerships, synergies and academic "friendships" and collaborations across …[UEA]. The new Schools therefore will be a structural manifestation of the "new …[UEA]; a University without walls not only externally, but within its own community. …In exploring different possibilities we should remember that at the heart of the reorganisation of the University is breaking down old barriers in order to open up academic programs and learning opportunities for students, create a satisfying intellectual and working environment for staff and develop the research and enterprise base of the University, thus enabling it to compete more successfully in the changing higher education environment (Guidelines 2000:1).

The Vice Chancellor stresses the importance of Schools transcending old network member structures to encompass like groupings across the University, having a sound academic rationale and being clearly differentiated in name and academic focus within a College.

These criteria can be read not only as a vision to shape the formation of new Schools but also as an attempt to generate counter discourses and new discursive activities across the former network members. Where each former network member had had different policies, procedures and practices, the new 'unified' UEA was to be consistent, economical and outwardly-focussed. As later analysis shows, this approach is consistent with how the Vice Chancellor set about exercising leadership that would, in turn, shape discursive activity at operational levels through UEA.

2.2.2 A bottom up process

There was no easy agreement or acceptance of the School formation process as being self-evident, as the Vice Chancellor openly acknowledged in the *Guidelines*:

> It is important to capture, guide and represent clearly the deliberations currently underway in the University on the optimal design of future Schools. This is a complex task which will require a flexible and cooperative spirit from all involved – and patience, goodwill, openness and tolerance among those who disagree. The Vice-Chancellor will be the final arbiter when all avenues for collegial planning and agreement have been exhausted (GSFP:7).

A bottom up approach was explicitly taken, with a member of the Implementation Steering Committee describing how the process worked in practice:

> [It was] basically to allow staff to engage with each other to come up with ideas about School formation, what structure they want and to match that against the criteria and see whether what they come up with was indeed acceptable or could you go back and do a bit more work on this. And so that is how we managed the process… When all the answers weren't in the Vice Chancellor's papers, it was a case of [the facilitator] coming to us and saying, we are sort of uncomfortable with the suggestion that there is no [guideline] on it and we would either advise - no, you can't do that for this reason or, no that is a good idea, let them pursue it or well we'll need to get some judgment or decision made about that, so we will get back to you next week (Interview #8:1-2)

This 'bottom up' process of School formation became widely labelled as such by both Executive and academic staff. Whilst the term was meant to be transparent, there were many different interpretations as to its meaning. For some staff who had participated in earlier restructures employing consultative processes (Treleaven, Cecez-Kecmanovic and Moodie, 1999), a 'bottom up' approach created expectations of co-ordinated autonomy, consultation and collegiate collaboration within specified parameters. For others, the process was understood as a rather cynical deployment of participation in decisions already taken at senior levels. A view somewhat widely held, at least at the outset, was that:

> If people feel that they're trusted by senior management they're more likely to cooperate and make those decisions than if they think that the decisions are just being made from on high and that they've had no input into the process… There was a certain sense of top-down management decision-making overriding some of the attempted bottom-up suggestion-making, if you like. But in a way it came together in a reasonable framework in the end (Interview #6:5).

Discursive evidence for upward gathering of information and horizontal co-ordination processes lies in the prescribed role of the facilitators. Potential School proposals for executive consideration were put forward via facilitators who met weekly (with the VC chairing when available) together with several senior executive staff.

> …as a mediator – to try and get all of the information on the table – that is, as a facilitator – information on the table and to try and broker exchanges between people who were often angry but for good reason – they were trying to protect their interests – and to bring about a reasonable decision making process (Interview #6:2).

The deployment of computer-mediated communications played a crucial role by increasing the dissemination of information and the circulation of competing and conflicting viewpoints as people engaged in the apparent democratisation of communication (Cecez-Kecmanovic, Treleaven and Moodie, 2000; Sproull and Kiesler, 1991). Documents, announcements, proposals, discussion papers and other relevant material were distributed via email to all University members, academic and general (administrative and technical support) staff. Discussions about major documents and

proposals were also conducted on email and many School formation proposals posted on the institution's intranet for discussion. However, one senior executive observed the difference between face to face meetings and CMC:

> The problem with a bulletin board is the same as email generally – it's impersonal. At least people feel that. [The VC] was very astute in the way that she handled it, in the restructure. She said that – knowing that she couldn't get around all the time, she said, look, send me your comments by email. Now it's impersonal, it's not as good as it could have been, but she was very assiduous at answering every email – eventually. Everyone got an answer. People felt that they had had a chance to say something, which not everybody could get at the public meetings.
>
> She was also very astute in having public meetings. Large public fora where people were allowed to – they were permitted, they were empowered to – vent. There were some pretty nasty things said at those public meetings… and [the VC and her adviser] just let it wash over them and said: yes, look I can see – either with misinformation they corrected the information or, – I think you misunderstand the meaning of that, what it actually meant was this, or we have actually addressed that and what we've done is y. And then we all said: Yes, we can see the problem um, we haven't thought of that. [The VC] at a number of sessions said quite openly: haven't thought of that. Thank you for drawing that to my attention, we will do something about it. And then went and did something about it. There is one thing about [the VC], she acts very, very quickly, usually at the same meeting. She will write memos in a meeting. You will get a memo at the end of the meeting: please release this to staff (Interview#1:27-28).

In recounting his assessment of the VC's *astute* approach to democratisation processes, there is evidence of the VC's attempt to reach widely across different communication media to deal with individual concerns. The senior executive also indicates his own and others' learning to position himself in new ways regarding inclusive participation on a wider scale than he has encountered before, moving as he does from *the VC*, to *we*, to *we all*. He also moves from *people were allowed* to *permitted* to *empowered* as he catches himself in conflicting discursive positions of giving permission to expressing concerns through more free and open communication which the VC demonstrated a willingness to accept by acknowledging *we haven't thought of that*.

2.2.3 *Evidence-based decision-making*

As a function of both the wider economic rationalism and, more locally, the variable practices and unspecified bases on which decision-making had taken place throughout former fiefdoms in the federated university members, the VC emphasised the need for evidence on which informed, and hence more organisationally-focussed, decisions could be taken. However, the assumption that evidence would be provided in an open and reliable way proved highly problematic and was challenging for facilitators and senior staff taking final decisions. Here the relations between power and knowledge were highlighted:

> whilst I felt that we had the goodwill of a number of the participating parties there, somehow or other the information provided in the final documentation – for whatever reason – was inaccurate. And I think we can all accept that if you've got the absolute facts in front of you, you can start to make sensible decisions. But if it's all still very blurry, then we couldn't make those sensible decisions (Interview #6:7).

The use of the descriptors *inaccurate* and *absolute* applied to *facts* is indicative of assumptions that do not adequately recognise the relationship between knowledge and power: in this case the power of the proponents of different School proposals to disruptively compete by providing inconsistent and unreliable information about the academic staff supporting each proposal.

Whilst these three counter discourses were significant in attempting to shape the School formation process, it remains a matter of contestation as to their relative importance in comparison to the "budget bottom line [that] became the sort of strategic plan" (Interview #9:4):

> In fact, one of the problems about the whole of the restructure if we go back to the fundamentals is from an organisational development point of view … the whole restructure started from the wrong premise. They basically sort of said, "we have to save this amount of money" instead saying "This is the organisation we want to have, this is the organisation we need to do the job that we have" (Interview #9:4).

> The cost saving targets were already predetermined and the scope for individuality was more at the level how you structure within your college … (long pause) As a more general question, I don't think it's bottom up myself. I think the Vice Chancellor has endeavoured to get ideas flowing up but I think the major changes are so complex and a desire to lead it is so strong at the top that actually the perception around the place is that decisions are being made at the [University Management Committee] level. That is not to say that it's not sometimes reflecting what has come up (Interview#7:16).

Reading these two transcripts against each other shows the importance of wider discursive contexts within which the Schools formation and the UEA's future were situated. Yet their emphasis and assessments of the restructuring process are symptomatic of the struggle by major players, as they both were, to manage that complexity in practice at different levels. The contestation around organisational development that embraces leadership and wide 'bottom up' participation is a significant issue which is taken up later in the paper in a reflexive interlude.

2.3 Discourses shaping the School of Management Formation

There is strong evidence, in the interview transcriptions, of the acceptance of the need to form new Schools. What was contested amongst the staff of the former Schools with some disciplinary relationship to Management was the rationale and membership of these new School/s. This contestation was demonstrated in the linguistic evidence of two oppositional discourses in circulation: *one size fits all* and *but we're different.*

2.3.1 One size fits all: bigger is better/an operational perspective

The first proposal that reached an early general consensus, even before the Guidelines were published and facilitators were appointed, was that all those associated with the broad discipline of management would form one School of Management. Five meetings at different campuses were held by inviting people via email. Shaping this proposal were assumptions that the large numbers of staff (approximately 70 full-time staff) and large numbers of students would position such a School favourably where resource allocation was concerned.

This early proposal thereby employed resources as power. It was a rational discourse based on deploying resources in the interests of the University, at a School level:

> I wanted to get a rationalization of what was happening. Because I've seen too many divisions in Management. My way of thinking about management in [UEA] is that it's under-resourced, understaffed and has far too great a diversity of programs and courses. That is very much at the expense of the electives that can be put forward. So if we could get a common core, you can run a common core with far fewer staff in a curriculum creation role (Interview #2:3).

Initially as people met and saw they shared a lot in common, across what was at least seven distinct discipline groups, this one School proposal was uncontested. However on reflection, some Management academics recognised that there had been no discussion of the substantive issues: of envisioning how the teaching and research might develop in an interdisciplinary sense at School level.

2.3.2 But we're different: innovative and interdisciplinary

The second proposal was developed in contrast to, and perhaps even opposition to the 'one size fits all' proposal. From a small group, an attempt began to differentiate themselves from those offering functional management subjects orientated towards professionally accrediting bodies. As efforts to make the distinctions clearer to the facilitators and executive progressed, and as more people contributed to the second proposal, the focus on an innovative approach to understanding management in organisations through interdisciplinarity was further emphasised. As one of those joining the second iteration of this proposal stated:

> It was based on the lines of organisational studies – what we were going to study separately from Management was how organisations were formed, coalesced, interact and behave … and certainly I saw information systems as being very much aligned to that. Information systems is about organisations and how they function – their information needs. [Our leader] wrote basically our position paper trying to explain to the powers that be what information systems is about… but I get the feeling it was never read thoroughly enough for people to understand what was said…. Then you exacerbate that with personalities and the whole thing gets very messy (Interview #5:3).

Historically, the initial presentation of the second proposal came rapidly out of left field. It was seen, by many across Management, to have its origins in the development of a power base without the inclusivity required to build a wide base of support. This situation *exacerbate[d] that with personalities* rather than emphasising what the second proposal began to produce in terms of innovation. These origins worked to the long-term disadvantage of those who, later becoming aware of the second proposal, began to see an opportunity to bring knowledge sharing into practice in more open communicative practices.

However, the opportunity of the restructuring to create something new and distinctive proved inviting, although difficult. The difficulty lay in engaging those beyond the discipline, such as the executive or those with an eye more on operational matters, to create new knowledge by developing mutual understanding. According to one academic:

> [The proponent of the one School proposal] sat back and did nothing which is fairly tactical, of course, because if you don't have the debate then you can't have an argument and nobody can win or lose - so he just said, well I am not arguing with you, we are staying where we are, this is our proposal and that's it. So we were always arguing from behind saying we disagree, we disagree rather than we are one side and they are the other, well, we have two points of view or whatever. It was always, no they have their point of view all encompassing and there was all these little groups on the outside yelling, look at me, look at me, I have a point to make. That died in the end because we just couldn't get sufficient numbers again to make that run (Interview#5:6).

It is worth noting that *these little groups on the outside yelling look at me, look at me I have a point to make* articulates a view that may well have been taken by those outside the less dominant group. It allows the speaker to make sense of how executive staff were unable to make the requisite distinctions to appreciate the validity of the basis on which the second proposal claimed two Schools were desirable.

A third independent proposal emerged from another former network member. The facilitators directed that both the second and third proposals be combined and reformulated. In doing so, the academic coherences developed around the second proposal were lost and many of those previously keen to support two Schools withdrew.

3.0 Analysis of power/knowledge in the School of Management formation process

The School formation process provided UEA with the opportunity to disrupt existing power relations, to establish new alliances and to attempt to improve their relative positioning. These moves within the broad field of Management occurred principally without knowledge sharing. This third part now analyses, first, how participants' subject positions within traditional notions of power as 'a thing' that can be gained or lost produced barriers to knowledge creation and sharing. Second, the ways in which different modes of power (Cooper 1994) were exercised in the School formation process are analysed, employing the more usefully theorised poststructural conceptualisation of power discussed earlier in this paper.

3.1 Traditional notions of power at work

Since all participants in the formation process of the School/s of Management were themselves academics in the discipline of Management, their theories of power, organisational politics and organisational change implicitly shaped their actions. What is extraordinary is that there were no attempts to make explicit the theoretical frameworks which participants were calling on. To explore the ways in which these frameworks informed the politics of power and militated against knowledge sharing, the reflections of several participants, positioned differently in the School formation process, are subject to discourse analysis. Each represents themselves differently in terms of engaging in the dynamic of power/ knowledge.

The primary driver of the first School proposal represents his expectations of a rational organisational process. Instead, the dynamics of power as he experienced them, contravened *the rules*:

> Initially there was a good sharing of what the needs, demands and resources of the Management grouping were. And that was sufficient to see that it was logical to put together a single School of Management. As soon as the alternatives were being put forward, a lot of that stopped. As soon as it became a political process rather than an organisational process, then it stopped. I tried to play by the rules, and that was the wrong thing to do. That meant the process spun out (Interview#2:10).

A sense of surprise is expressed by this management academic to find himself at the effect of the politics of power in his own School formation process. More generally, though, this experience points to the importance not only of Management as an operational discipline but an inadequately theorised one in terms of the politics of power and the social processes of knowledge sharing.

In contrast, early proponents of the second proposal admit to highly 'politicised' attempts to move their views forward, claiming that:

> I talked to like-minded people, discussed the kind of School that we'd like to have - I participated in writing a School proposal. I attended meetings and attempted to verbalise what I thought we should be doing. I engaged in discussion and argument with other people who didn't have similar views. Behind the scenes people like myself and … attempted to influence the process by talking to the facilitators outside the meetings - for example we got to know [ ] … we attempted to talk to

[him/her] about what we wanted and on our behalf [he/she] got information filtered down from, we thought, the Vice Chancellor level or somewhere close to the Vice Chancellor to encourage us to keep going. We got advice from people like [him/her] and there was someone else - trying to get advice about how we should - what kinds of political tactics we should use to kind of move our views forward - what else did we do - yes it was quite political (Interview#4:5).

Here access to knowledge was informal and relied on *behind the scenes people ...[we] got information filtered down from we thought the Vice Chancellor level or somewhere close to the Vice Chancellor. A* conventional notion of power as a 'thing' to be grabbed or lost, gained or withheld constructs an adversarial view in terms of *winners* and *losers* in the School formation process:

> everyone who is fighting a change in their organisation thinks themselves either a winner or a loser - what am I going to gain from this - what am I going to lose from it. I hoped that it would be an opportunity for me to gain of course, at least not lose too much, but I think the way that it has unfolded it has been very badly managed certainly at our level and it has forced people into defensive positions. We are under structured which has created opportunities for the more go getting type people to sort of establish niches for themselves … So for myself I am disappointed because I think that the opportunities I would have liked, I don't think are going to be there - certainly not with this one big management School (Interview#4:5).

For proponents of the one/two School proposals, the sense of threat and insecurity suggests *defensive* positions reduced the capacity and willingness to share information. The power/knowledge nexus is clearly at work in constructing barriers to knowledge sharing in the following interview comment:

> it's not the knowledge of what you can do, it's the threat that may be the position won't be there. The biggest threat with the degree courses that maybe you would not get sufficient students into your major stream (Interview#2:16).

In contrast to the subject positions of these two proponents, the facilitator who had also led his own School successfully through a formation process implies the close relationship between power and knowledge unavailable to those most active in the School formation process in Management:

> I was in the privileged position of knowing who to talk to, and what committees to be on to assist this School to move into the restructure as best I could. …I guess my corporate knowledge of how to work in that environment – in order to still allow us to conduct our business as university lecturers and researchers etc, we needed representation to just move the interests and needs of this group of people into the new restructure. And I was best placed to do that, because [of the senior appointments I had held from 1995] which gave me a good insight into the courses and their management… and that meant that I met with and learned who to communicate with – many of the power brokers in the new restructure. So that when things that were affecting this School needed to be discussed and debated, we at least had a personal relationship that we'd developed with people like the Vice-Chancellor and other people, who we knew we could talk with. They knew they could trust us… I don't think it's overstating the mark. We hold regular professorial dinners here, and invite various senior personnel from the university – right across the university – DVCs and etc – to come and have dinner with us to talk about what it is we're doing, to understand where they're coming from, so that we know how to assist and react, I suppose, to some of the questions that keep arising (Interview#6:1).

The dynamics of power as investigated in this study suggest a distinction needs to be made between resistance to change on the one hand and resistance to the 'status quo' (itself a problematic notion given the dynamics of organisational life) on the other. Cooper's theory of power as productive proposes that the effects of resistance and transformative struggle maybe indistinguishable except for style of engagement:

The extent to which resistance and other forms of social contestation, such as the drive for transformation, differ is questionable. In a context of permanent instability, saying 'no' to change, i.e. resistance, will not retain the status quo ante but precipitate outcomes that will probably include subsequent struggles. Thus the difference between resistance and transformative struggle may have more to do with the style of engagement with power than with the nature or quality of the outcome (Cooper 1994:453).

The point is not so much the problematic binary which Cooper does much to disperse anyhow, but rather one of distinction in everyday practice. Resisting change and thus wanting to maintain the 'status quo' contrasts significantly in intent, and hence the nature of the outcome, with resisting the apparent 'status quo' itself and wanting to transform it. However, investments in the 'status quo' and investments in alternative values, differ substantially. Thus, 'organising out' of opposition was employed by those leading the one big School proposal resisting the more transformative change of the second proposal. The struggle to get up a second School, however, derived in the long term, from alternative values in an ideological sense.

3.2. A poststructuralist analysis

Whilst the effects of power may be productive in themselves, different modes of power are exercised and different effects are produced, as highlighted below in the context of those drawing on resources as power and those drawing on ideology as power. Potentially both transform exclusions embedded in the current 'status quo', thereby changing the discourses as more diverse subject positions are opened up. Not only did the executive deploy discipline as power in shaping the School formation process but also, in the longer term, they reverted to coercion as power in exercising their final executive decision on the formation of one School of Management. Reading the dynamics of power and its effects using these four modes of power (Cooper, 1994) will demonstrate these distinctions more clearly.

3.2.1 Resources as power: one School/two Schools

Of all four modes of power, it is arguable that resources as power was dominant. Both proposals had overlapping membership that, by default, positioned the one School proposal more strongly in terms of those exercising the long-deferred decision. Situated within the same discursive field of resources as power, the one School proposal could be seen as providing budgetary economies and hence compatible with one of the major concerns shaping the restructuring of UEA. Although declaring himself not to have not engaged in political activity, the comment "the relevant parties are the people with resource powers" (Interview #2:9) proved compatible with the dominant decision-making discourse.

3.2.2 Ideology as power: functional/innovative- past disciplines/future interdisciplinary

The second School proposal put forward as an innovative approach to Management looking towards the future and interdisciplinarity, located itself within the newly emergent disciplines of organisational studies, information systems and knowledge management. Here the power of ideology shaped the proposed contribution to the UEA. However, location of this proposal within a conflicting discourse where people "heard but they didn't necessarily understand" (Interview #5:11) led to the failure of knowledge sharing with either the one School proponents or the executive. In consequence,

proponents could maintain their own subject positions in conflicting discourses without reaching mutual understanding or creating new knowledge. Nevertheless, the facilitators were able to endorse the proposal until such times as the numbers overlapped.

3.2.3 Discipline as power: 'bottom up'/democratic

Power was exercised discursively through the Guidelines which made academics 'subject to' a range of organisational practices in the School formation process. Staff were also 'disciplined', in the Foucauldian sense, through the procedures adopted by facilitators. The facilitators' responsibilities and knowledge were the subject of weekly interaction with and monitoring by members of the UEA executive. Furthermore, much of the School formation process was implemented through external consultants. Each of these constituents were situated within conflicting subject positions in the declared 'bottom up' process.

The 'bottom up' process of School formation created staff expectations of consultation, collaboration and democratisation but instead led to widespread experiences of frustration with the hierarchical control exercised throughout the School formation process. Yet demonstrably, what was on offer was not democratisation, a situation most clearly illustrated by the initial process determined for the appointment of Heads of School. When challenged in the 'bottom up' process of feedback on the Guidelines, the VC approved two directly elected staff representatives of five on the selection committees for Heads of School. Clearly, the commitment to form a university without walls shaped this decision, with the intention of breaking down former network member voting blocks.

Often in interviews, and in our field notes, were expressions of concern that

> there is too much corporate knowledge that hasn't been listened to, and too much outside – in brackets "expertise" – that has been brought in and has been listened to. That the guiding of the restructuring process by external consultants is a mistake when you haven't called upon your internal people to see what they wanted out of it. This seems to – I don't get a sense that information has been taken in and shared. There were the initial staff forums on the restructuring when a lot of concerns were put, but I don't think anything came back out of them other than "yes, you're worried about this"(Interview#2:10).

Facilitators were positioned by executive as representing the academic staff who were themselves engaging in a bottom up/democratic process. So as negotiators with senior staff, the facilitators brought a compromise solution to the dilemma of one/two School proposals in the Management field. Amongst proponents there was a willingness to form one School with substructures accommodating each of the seven disciplinary groupings. However, no substructures were permitted by the executive and this bottom up 'solution', despite agreement at lower level, had to be abandoned.

> So I think it is fairly centralised in terms of policy …But I still think the way and the slowness of the decisions being made are an indication of everything basically decided and at least agreed at the very top and that is not the impression that [the VC] is trying to create or what she is trying to do. (Interview#7:17).

Attempts to introduce consultative practices, albeit within constraints, however, in many respects conflicted with the discourse of scarcity within which the restructure was broadly situated. Thus, as Robey and Boudreau (1999), drawing on institutional theory, point out:

Under such opposing pressures, organisations may hypocritically commit to empowering their workers while pursuing efficiencies through downsizing and re-engineering (177).

In the protracted 18 months of the restructure, it became self-evident, though not formally acknowledged and only indicated in interview with one senior executive, that downsizing was to be achieved, in the first instance, by staff attrition. The effects were to drive some of the best staff out of the University, as has been documented in other re-engineering and downsizing studies, and for many remaining staff, as their organisational commitment fell, to withdraw much of their goodwill that had been invested as unpaid labour in the organisation that they now felt treated them with little respect or care.

3.2.4 Coercion/force as power: a final executive decision

After many months of delay, achieving an acceptable consensus for School formation by academic staff was deemed unlikely by the UEA executive. In exercising their responsibility to form one School of Management, the opportunity to determine our own futures through mutual understanding was taken out of our hands.

Discourse analysis of a wide range of documents points to the complexity of the executive decision that was finally imposed on the formation of the School of Management. No single 'explanation', though numerous have been proposed, is adequate. These diverse constructions can be understood as the effects of the social relations of power and particularly as the effect of Foucault's formulation of the power/knowledge nexus in which the executive was strongly placed.

The proposal for one big School was situated more powerfully within the institution's concern with operational matters than in its executive's concern to create innovative School collations. Not only did this option appear to represent cost savings by providing resources for one School only but it also avoided the need to distinguish between the two Schools for operational purposes. Furthermore, by forming one university-wide School, this option had the potential to disrupt the social relations of power vested in former network members forming smaller campus-based Schools.

Whilst proponents were positioned in contradictory discourses that were productive of misunderstanding and misinterpretations the university executive did not appear to understand this when making their final decision. When it came to making the decision, the committee was located in different contradictory discourses: on the one hand its espoused bottom up discourse and on the other its evidence based decision-making. Both proposals had added names without the express consent of their colleagues resulting in overlapping membership of proposed Schools. The committee was thereby presented with inaccurate information on which to base their decision. In consequence, the default option, to form one big School of Management, was taken by coercion.

4.0 Disruptive and competing contradictions to knowledge sharing

Extensive examination by discourse analysis of the many texts produced in the formation of the School of Management foregrounds three features that militated against effective knowledge co-creation and sharing. First, at a conceptual level, there was persistent slippage from knowledge sharing to information dissemination. Second, at a planning level, the function of facilitation was constructed as negotiation between

those with competing proposals and upwards knowledge transfer for executive consideration. Third, at the level of practice, open communication on the UEA intranet's discussion board was replaced by considerable informal and selective communication. Furthermore, organisational knowledge was lost by what appears to be its deliberate disruption in order to achieve long-term unity across the UEA.

4.1 Knowledge sharing as information dissemination

Often in interviews when asked about knowledge sharing, interviewees quickly slid into talking about data gathering, information processing and information dissemination as though they were synonymous with knowledge sharing. In fact, an argument can be put from discourse analysis of many of the senior executives' interviews that knowledge sharing was a downward process that they were in control of:

> I think that they [the VC and her adviser] have, as we all have, tried to share information, disseminate information as broadly and widely as possible. I think, to some extent, at each level, we probably will achieve it but, to some extent, we haven't. Because there is just so much information locked up inside people's heads and on people's tables, it is just physically impossible to get it all out (Interview#1:10).

A reading against the grain highlights the power/knowledge relations implicit in this response to a question about knowledge sharing practices. Knowledge sharing is seen here as a technical, and even a *physical* function, of retrieving and distributing what is *locked up inside people's heads and on people's tables*. The *people* are not the academic participants in an open-ended, creative process of School formation but the senior executive staff with repositories of already-known *information*. This conceptualisation is in stark contrast to the 'bottom up' approach that was articulated by the VC in the School formation guidelines to inform the evidence-based decision-making in respect of the Schools.

> What I found is that every thing you write is deconstructed in so many ways, has so many meanings … Words have so much more meaning than they should have and there is no easy way around that except that we are very careful in what we write - always … you have to be very careful in the written word, and in the Chancellery particularly, and in leading this restructure process. The sensitivities are absolutely extreme. We say one word that doesn't seem quite right, then we get pummelled for several days. So some of the real problems in the information sharing is making sure that is received by an audience in a way that it can be used not in a way that can be criticised and its getting the intended message out (Interview#3:19).

Here a one way flow is assumed by the speaker who attempts to control meanings by *being very careful in the written word* without recognising that effective communication is the creation of shared meanings and mutual understanding, even where there may be no agreement. In fact, in this representation there was an attempt to get fixed meanings *received by an audience in a way that it can be used not in a way that can be criticised*, to get it *right… in people's heads*.

A persuasive interpretation of these features, together with linguistic evidence in the emails for which there is not space in this paper to present, suggests that … *allowing people to have their say* and *a chance to say something* were frequent tags attached to the consultative process, especially in the context of the accessibility and democratising potential of email (Cecez-Kecmanovic, Moodie and Treleaven, 2000). However, these constructions come out of an authoritarian discourse where permission to speak is given. They arguably signal that some of the executive staff charged with the implementation process do not yet comprehend the difference between on the one hand,

creating space to vent and to ask questions in large meetings and on the other hand, ways of encouraging knowledge creation and sharing.

4.2 Facilitation as negotiation and upwards knowledge transfer

The slippage from knowledge sharing to information dissemination was also emphasised in the specified role of the facilitators as negotiators between conflicting and overlapping proposals. In their weekly meeting, they acted as conduits for horizontal coordination of information across potential Schools and Colleges and upward presentation of School proposals for executive consideration. In this sense, the meaning attached to the term 'facilitator' varied significantly from its everyday use within the UEA and especially in one of the former network members. It is possible that the facilitators were caught in difficult contradictions involving negotiation between proponents of School proposals and upwardly transferring knowledge.

Instead of a set of facilitation processes designed to develop trust, knowledge creation and knowledge sharing, consistent with the post-heroic leadership of the VC, a hierarchical structure of information gathering and reporting was imposed.

> The worst thing about the way they were set up in that old adversarial union versus management type approach was that the events they orchestrated actually created greater polarisation and if you are going to think about change management, School facilitation is about bringing people together not pushing them further apart (Interview#4:11).

Such a comment poses the question of why such Management staff did not themselves employ these crucial facilitative processes when developing their proposals as a way of engaging colleagues across the UEA.

4.3 Informal and selective communication

Without a formally-constituted inclusive process, such as a facilitated event for the former School groupings, ad hoc meetings were spread across campuses with little notice and proved difficult to attend on a consistent basis. The geographic isolation in the period of School formation and the need to develop trust in order to form new School collations exacerbated the situation:

> …given the geographical dispersion, you can see that the mutual understanding developed between people who were close to each other geographically. People in one network member - they had their own truth, their own views, what it was they wanted… the same thing happened with us here and others. And it's probably not just by chance that we here developed what we believe is innovative and different from others. So the conditions in which we found ourselves - our dislocation and lack of shared experiences and not knowing each other - allowed us to develop mutual understanding in local groups and share them only when required. Affiliation with a particular proposal developed on disciplinary and geographic bases in most cases. If you imagine a different scenario in which we were all in one building, I don't think that they would have developed as they did (Interview#13:3).

Creating a proposal based on mutual understanding required proponents to engage in an open-ended process with each other across contradictory discourses to fully explore each other's ideas. However, with the emphasis on submitting a proposal for consideration by the executive, a focus on outcomes militated against adopting positions of open inquiry. Thus, exchanges in the development of proposals were often informal and selective and not necessarily open. Furthermore, it was possible to claim transparent

democracy while contributing to a written proposal but not publicly post or read the UEA intranet discussion board, which was the available formal forum:

> I didn't use the website very much because it was so tortured getting into it and I am not very patient with technology. I didn't keep following the VC's messages and all that sort of, that kind of stuff - I was too busy - there was too much rubbish - I wiped most of it to be perfectly honest. If it was really important, somebody would tell me… (Interview#4:17).

> But I don't automatically go to email if I want information, nor do a lot of people at the age of our admin staff who tend to be a little younger than me but in their early middle age (Interview#:10).

Surprisingly, although the communication media were available to support knowledge sharing, their use was variable with older staff less likely to take up the technologies, albeit hardly sophisticated, in these days of the internet and widespread use of personal computers.

4.4 Loss of organisational knowledge

Loss of organisational knowledge and the capacity for meaningful knowledge sharing may well be at odds with the conflicting intentionality to disrupt former network member boundaries:

> People suggested to me and I am inclined to agree that there is a perception that there is a policy that if [you want to] introduce a new system and you don't want to be burdened with everyone saying that's not the way we used to do it, you shuffle everything everyone in jobs where they don't know what used to happen and you won't have that resistance (Interview#7:23).

Both within the School and more widely throughout the organisation, everyday exchanges seem to echo elements of this interpretation. In a recent email sent across at least one College, there is the postscript "I smile because I don't know what's going on".

The trade-off between losing organisational knowledge and rebuilding organisational knowledge and morale merits investigation in this research site. Alternatively, organisational capacity to re-create new organisational knowledge without destroying what knowledge is still an asset, requires consideration in other sites.

Contrasts with those Schools reported in the interviews as engaging more successfully in knowledge sharing are of interest in pointing to ways forward in seeking effective processes of knowledge sharing. This is not to say that the formation process of other Schools was without conflict or contestation. Indeed, there was considerable contestation but from within positions of engaging, exploring and attempting to understand the diversity across the former campuses in the same or related disciplines and their curricula, and especially of ideology as it pertained to pedagogy and professional standing. However, these Schools seemed to have someone who championed their colleagues in the development of a proposal. As one of them declared:

> I do really believe that the merger will be good for us but it's going to take some time for all these bottlenecks to be resolved. What I perceive will happen is that as the VC becomes more relaxed about the old members that are no longer there, there will be more delegation of power. I don't know if you saw the document that they had about delegation of powers. It would be interesting to go through that delegations document and see how it has changed over time. Initially they had the VC basically signing everything of any value at all (Interview#7:19).

This comment focusing on *the delegation powers* points to a useful indicator of organisational capacity in the longer term as the cultural change and new practices re-create UEA. The indicator is emphasised in the Chancellory by one of the executive staff:

> There is a whole lot of debate about the delegation …[the VC] has tightened them up so Heads of School can't make a decision about a budget and Directors can't make decisions. Their reaction to that is to say, you don't trust us. [The VC's] reaction is, no, I want to know proper processes are in place before I let go. So we are in the intermediate stage I think. Still many other things to do before there will be any comfort but in any large organisation you can't rely that it will be done (Interview#3:21).

Undoubtedly, resources as power was exercised as the dominant discourse throughout this School formation process and throughout the restructuring and cultural change of the University.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we attempted to foreground the discursive construction of a School formation process, as part of the University restructure. From the Guidelines, the opportunity appeared to be available for an open, creative process of School formation that would be largely self-determining. However, in its implementation, experiences of the School formation process turned out to be quite different and contentious. Analysis of the School of Management formation process presented in the paper shows that conceptual understanding of the ways in which power and knowledge are themselves socially constituted processes, rather than fixed objects, was deeply flawed. This conceptual shift required within organisations towards designing, facilitating and implementing processes for effective participation is illustrated in the following reflection from a senior Chancellory staff member:

> I think we are over processed. There is just too much process driven stuff but maybe it had to be. I'm not sure (Interview#7:6).

Within the School of Management, the inability to employ not only best practice but any management of change processes despite professional trainings in this area was testimony to other discourses, many not rational at all, in which academics were more strongly positioned. For a facilitator notes:

> The facilitation process was a lot about - there are more people issues here than academic ones (interview#6:5).

Foucault's notion of subject position in which people take up different positions within varying discourses is useful in making sense of the different meanings and constructions placed on the School formation process by those across the institution. As contradictory discourses persisted (despite apparent willingness to talk) the chances to 'listen' to others and 'hear' their arguments diminished. The contradictory beliefs, assumptions, and values of the opposing School proposals remained in the background, rarely articulated or examined. These varying positions were further emphasised in the ways different modes of power shaped the social interaction between people. What is required for knowledge sharing is engaging with these embedded contradictions and different meanings so as to reach some mutual understanding. These social processes can then be a basis on which to build new shared understanding and co-create knowledge.
.

Understanding how power and knowledge co-exist and persist in the way people relate to each other helps us explore how mutual understanding can be achieved and what conditions will enable knowledge sharing. Organisations wanting to deploy knowledge creation and knowledge sharing processes will need to develop the capabilities to design and facilitate them as human social processes recognising that such processes don't necessarily happen on their own, even when the people concerned are well educated in their use. Organisations need to do much more than just provide communication technologies; they need to investigate new ways to assist all participants at varying levels throughout an organisation to engage both across contradictory discourses and at greater depth (of beliefs, values, assumptions) with these contradictions. As such they will need to disturb the social relations of power that inhibit, control and ignore knowledge sharing and co-creation processes. Most importantly, organisations will need to recognise that data and information transmission over an intranet or email is no substitute for lively social interaction, knowledge sharing and co-creation, even when assisted by technology.

References

Adler, P. A. and Adler, P. (1987) *Membership Roles in Field Research*, Sage University Paper Series on Qualitative Research Methods, (Vol. 6). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Angelides, S. (1994) *Human Agency and the Poststructuralist Turn: Feminism and the negotiation of subject(act)ivity.* Unpublished paper, University of Melbourne.

Carlsson, S. (2001). Knowledge management in network contexts, *European Conference on Information Systems,* ECIS 2001, Bled, 616-627.

Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., Treleaven, L., and Moodie, D., (2000) CMC and the question of democratisation: A university field study, Proceedings of the 33rd *Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences HICSS'2000*, Hawaii, 3-8 January, 0-7695-0493-0/00 (*best paper nomination*).

Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. E. (Eds.) (1986) *Writing Culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cooper, D. (1994) Productive, relational, everywhere? Conceptualising power and resistance within Foucauldian feminism. *Sociology, 28*(2), 435-454.

Currie, J. and Newson, J. (Ed.) (1998) Universities and Globalisation: Critical Perspectives. Newbury Park CA:SAGE.

Dudley, J. (1998) Globalisation and education policy in Australia. In Currie, J. and Newson, J. (Ed.) *Universities and Globalisation: Critical Perspectives.* (pp.21-44). Newbury Park CA: SAGE.

Fairclough, Norman (2001) 'Discourse and power', in *Language and power*, Longman (2nd Edition), London, pp 37-61.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison.* (Trans. A. Sheridan) Harmondsworth: Peregrine.

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality: An introduction.* Vol. 1, (Trans. R. Hurley) Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1980a) Truth and power. In C. Gordon (Ed.) *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault.* (Trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper). (pp. 109-133). Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M. (1980b) Prison talk. In C. Gordon (Ed.) *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault.* (Trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper). (pp. 37-54). Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M. (1980c) Power and strategies. In C. Gordon (Ed.) *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-77 by Michel Foucault.* (Trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper). (pp. 134-145). Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M. (1982/1983) The subject and power. In H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, (pp.208-226). (2nd ed) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1983) The subject and power. In H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, (2nd ed.). (pp. 208-226). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1984) The order of discourse. In M.Shapiro (Ed.) *Language and Politics* (pp. 108-138) New York: New York University Press.

Foucault, M. (1988) Technologies of the self. In L.H. Martin, H. Gutman and P.H. Hutton (Eds.) *Technologies of the Self.* (pp.16-49). Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Fulop, L. and Linstead, S. (1999), Leading and managing, in Management: A critical text. Fulop, L. and Linstead, S. (Eds.). Macmillan Education Australia, Victoria. Pp.182-191.

Galliers, R. and Newell, S. (2001). Back to the future: from knowledge management to data management, *European Conference On Information Systems* ECIS 2001, Bled, 609-615

Grant, D. and Keenoy, T., (2001) Organisational discourse: Key contributions and challenges. *International Studies of Management and Organisation*, 31:3, 5-24.

Grant, D., Keenoy, T. and Oswick, C. (Eds) (1998) *Discourse and Organisation.* London: Sage.

Hardy, C. (2001) Researching organisational discourse. *International Studies of Management and Organisation*, 31:3, 25-47. White Plains, Fall.

Hardy, C. and Palmer, I. (1998). *Discourse as a Strategic Resource*, Working Paper in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations, The University of Melbourne. No. 12. December.

Lather, P. (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern.* New York and London: Routledge.

Lee, A. (1996) *Gender, Literacy, Curriculum: Rewriting School geography.* London: Taylor and Francis.

Marginson, S. and Considine, M. (2000) The Enterprise university: Power, governance and reinvention in Australia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McNay, L. (1992) *Foucault and Feminism: Power, gender and the self.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Morgan, W. (1997) *Head Work, Field Work, Text Work* (kit) A textshop in new feminist research. Kelvin Grove: Centre for Policy and Leadership Studies, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

Robey, D. and Boudreau, M-C. (1999) 'Accounting for the contradictory organisational consequences of information technology: theoretical directions and methodological implications' in *Information Systems Research* 10, 2, June 1999 pp.167-185.

Schultze, U. and R. Boland (2000). Knowledge Management Technology and the Reproduction of Work Practices. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 9, 193-212.

Sproull, L. and Kiesler, S. (Eds.) (1991) *Connections: New Ways of Working in the Network*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Ma.

Storey, J. and E. Barnett (2000) Knowledge management initiatives: Learning from failure. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 4, 145-156.

Swan, J., Newell, S., Scarborough, H. and D. Hislop (1999). Knowledge Management and Innovation: networks and networking. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 3, 262-275.

Treleaven, L., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., and Moodie, D. (1999) Generating a Consultative Discourse: a decade of communication change, *the Australian Journal of Communication*, 26, 3, pp. 67-82.

Van Maanen, J. (1988) *Tales of the Field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Willis, E. (1988) Comment. In L. Grossberg and C. Nelson (Eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* (pp. 117-119). London: Macmillan.