KNOWLEDGE & NETWORKS

- A field study

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest" - Benjamin Franklin

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this thesis was to determine the influence of social networks on knowledge sharing and knowledge creation in a specific Capacity Development training programme.

Design/methodology/approach – A combination of social networks with knowledge sharing and creation was analysed through a qualitative study. We studied one of *SIDA's* Capacity Development training programmes, namely the *ITP1325*, which aims at empowering women in post-conflict environments. An abductive approach was used as we created the theoretical framework along with the analysis of empirical data.

Findings – Findings in this thesis revealed that when analysing a network, it is adequate to consider its structures. However, in order to reach a deeper understanding, one should examine the relationships within the network and acknowledge that there exist different types of relationships and different strengths. Further, we observed that the strength of social relationships, rather than the strength of professional relationships, contributed most to knowledge sharing. On the other hand, when considering knowledge creation, it was the strength of professional relationships that contributed the most. We also found that trust is an enabler for knowledge sharing. However, in the knowledge creation process, an initial mistrust is beneficial, which contradicts the fundamentals of previous research.

Practical implications – The results of this thesis may assist the organiser and the funder of the training programme in re-evaluating the value of the social network, created following the training programme. In fact, this study sheds lights on the potential of the network and a lack of networking opportunities. The involved stakeholders may invest in creating meaningful social networks for more knowledge sharing and knowledge creation opportunities, and thus achieve a wider impact of the *UNSCR 1325*.

Originality/value – This thesis makes a distinct contribution to the available body of research on how social networks in development settings contribute to knowledge sharing and knowledge creation. It addresses a number of questions that have not been answered in literature and provides fresh insights into trust's importance on knowledge creation in a post-conflict environment.

Keywords – Knowledge sharing, Knowledge creation, Social networks, Mistrust, Capacity Development training programme

Thank you,

Abbreviations of key terms

CD Capacity Development (*cf. definition in **Appendix 3***)

ITP International Training Programme

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

UN United Nations

UNSCR 1325 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (*cf. information in **Appendix 3***)

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

SIDA Swedish International Development cooperation Agency, (also called "*the funder*")

The thesis is written in English, not only because the Minor Field Study scholarship requires so, but also with regard to the English-speaking stakeholders who might find interest in our results.

Table of content

1. Introduction

This section presents the background of the thesis, a discussion regarding its theoretical and practical implications, as well as the research question.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Capacity development, a debated topic

SIDA (*Swedish International Development cooperation Agency*) invests MSEK 165 into Capacity Development[1] (CD) training programmes each year (PWC, 2011). This in spite of the ongoing debates regarding the true effectiveness of CDs. Are they producing intended outcomes? Could the money be invested more efficiently? Such questions have recently raised considerable attention and *SIDA* has thus turned to external advice in order to determine the effectiveness of their CD initiatives (PwC, 2011; Indevelop, 2011; SPM Consultants, 2013). Despite these questionings, one should acknowledge that CDs have recently become a focal point of international development. In fact, the aid sector has increased investments in local capacities (Langthaler, 2003; UNDP, 2008), instead of risking to create economic dependencies and to support corruption with other types of aid (Dambisa Moyo, 2009; Munk, 2013).

1.1.2 Capacity development programme of interest

SIDA currently funds 30 International Training Programmes *(ITP)*, which can be considered as CD-contributions. We chose to study the *ITP1325*, which is designed for individuals who hold influential positions in organisations and institutions[2] in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Liberia and South Sudan. The specific aim of *ITP1325* is to open access for women's influence in peace processes, in accordance with the UN resolution 1325 ("*UNSCR 1325*").

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[1] *Cf. CD definition in **Appendix 3***

[2] *Cf. Government and NGOs (civil society) in **Appendix 3***

[2] *Indevelop is a Stockholm-based consultancy company working for sustainable social development.*

The *ITP1325* is designed as a five-week-training programme (whereof three in Stockholm, Sweden), during which approximately five participants from each country develop a project and are given specific knowledge, new perspectives and tools to contribute to their organisations. The training services are arranged by *Indevelop*[3] and *Kvinna-till-Kvinna*[4]. However, *Indevelop* has the main responsibility over the program, and will be thus referred to as *"the organiser"*.

This thesis will look into the case of Colombia, which is particularly interesting since the country has reached a remarkable state in the peace process between the government and the FARC-ELN guerrillas. In fact, they recently initiated a fourth attempt to negotiate an end to the armed conflict. These negotiations have led to significant breakthroughs and the government has begun a process of assistance and rehabilitation of victims of the conflict. In such process, it is important to recognise the disproportionate impact of armed conflicts on women (*cf. UNSCR 1325*). In fact, women tend not to be given the specific attention needed and the *ITP1325* intends to counteract such phenomenon. Since its initiation in 2010, the *ITP1325* has trained individuals who have been readily involved in the process. To name a few examples, one person is currently engaged with the two newly-appointed women on the government's peace negotiating panel, one person has developed a tool to incorporate a gender perspective in all Colombian municipalities and some participants have been awarded the "*2015-Pax-Christi International-Peace-Award.*"

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[3] *Indevelop* is a Stockholm-based consultancy company working for sustainable social development.
[4] *Kvinna-till-Kvinna* is a Stockholm-based foundation empowering women in war and post-conflict situations.

1.2 Knowledge and social networks, the core of capacity development

1.2.1 Contribution to theory

In order to determine the effectiveness of CDs, we trust it is important to investigate the core of such programmes. *SIDA's* aims with the *ITP1325* are twofold; to *"train individuals who will act as change agents and transfer their knowledge and influence their societies"*, but also to *"facilitate networking and partnership between participants (…)"*. The *ITP1325* thus trains selected individuals, but has the vision of spreading and developing knowledge across entire societies. In other words, *knowledge sharing, knowledge creation* and *social networks* constitute the essence of such programmes.

It is a well-known fact that social networks offer the link and medium in which knowledge travels and transfers (Kang, 2007; Baum *et al.*, 2010). However, we know very little about why knowledge flows better in certain settings and what makes some interactions more creative than others (Sosa, 2011). What makes certain relationships special? Are certain network constellations more valuable than others?

Scholars have explicitly called for new research to pay attention to the effects of social tie content and structure on both knowledge transfer (Cross, Cummings, 2004) and knowledge creation (Sosa, 2011). We found it highly interesting to investigate these topics in a setting where social capital is essential to facilitate the creation and sharing of knowledge.

Moreover, research regarding social structures in the development sector, let alone a CD-training programmes in a post-conflict environment, is nearly inexistent. The conflict in Colombia has prolonged as a result of mistrust[5] and uncertainty towards the government (Rodriguez Torres, 2012). Cooperation between the civil society and the government is thus highly unlikely and one can wonder how such premises affect the knowledge sharing and knowledge creation processes in the country. In fact, Sankowska (2013) argues that in groups where trust is a scarce resource, there are high barriers for knowledge sharing and creation.

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[5] The concepts of *distrust* and *mistrust* are used interchangeably in this thesis, *cf.* explanations in ***Appendix 3***.

1.2.2 Contribution to practise

During the initial contacts with one of the organisers, networking was early mentioned to be a significant result of the programme. All interviewed participants, mentioned the created network to be the most valuable outcome of the training. However, we soon realised that few efforts were made to sustain this networks and the majority of the participants stated an unfulfilled desire of more networking events. To quote one of the participants:

> *"It is as if something is missing in the network (…) it is not sustained, while it has such potential!"//*(Havana,α_6)

This finding intrigued us and made the study of the networking even more interesting. Further, *SIDA* is considering reallocating its resources and eventually finish the *ITP1325* next year. The study was therefore right in time and topic.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

It is interesting to understand how social structures assist or impede CD training programmes. In particular, the way in which they affect knowledge creation and knowledge sharing in Colombia's post-conflict environment.

As opposed to conventional approaches determining the outcomes of CD training programmes, this study adopts a more contemporary and innovative theoretical perspective. In fact, it integrates three independent but interrelated streams of organisational research; social networks, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation and apply them to a development context.

This study intends to provide an understanding of an unnoticed research area as well as suggestions to future research. Further, the purpose of the study is to resolve the following research questions:

How do social network structures and content affect knowledge sharing and knowledge creation processes in capacity development training programmes
(*aiming at the transfer of both the understanding and application of the*
UN resolution 1325) ?

More specifically, we intend to determine;

- **Which types of structures (***closures or structural holes***), ties (***professional or social)* **and tie strengths (***weak or strong***) influence these processes the most?**

- **How does Colombia's post-conflict environment influence knowledge sharing and knowledge creation?**

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, we will analyse existing research approaches and social network categories. Thereafter, we will turn our attention to how literature regards knowledge, and how social network theories have been applied to knowledge sharing and knowledge creation.

2.1 Social network theory

Social network theory is different from *networking theory* in the sense that it focuses on both the structure and the relationships of the network while the later primarily focuses on the relationships (Gibson *et al.*, 2014). *Social network theory* is also different from *theory of network* as the later focuses on the process that determines why networks have the structures they do. We will analyse *Social network theory* in this thesis.

2.1.1 Definition of social network content

Social network theory focuses on both the structure and the relationships of the networks. Social networks can be explained in terms of *nodes* and *ties* (Downes, 2005). Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, whereas ties are the relationships between them. Between the nodes there can be many kinds of ties but to be described in the simplest form; a social network is a map of all the ties (and the lack of them) between the studied nodes (Brass *et al.*, 2004) – see illustration below.

Illustration of a social network
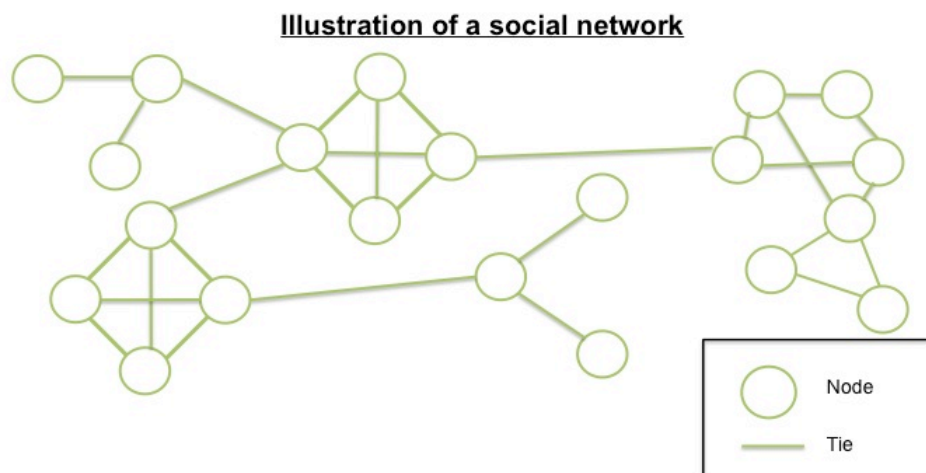
| Node |
| Tie |

This illustration shows 21 nodes, related in different ways by ties. Note that some nodes are more interrelated than others, and that there are absence of ties between some nodes.

2.1.2 Social network structures

The analysis of social network structures can be regarded as primary, as they influence the interactions within the network. One can differentiate two types of network structure dimensions. Firstly, closed networks (also called "closure"), in which all nodes are interconnected (Coleman, 1988). Secondly, structural holes, which are defined as the lack of connectivity among people in a network (Cross, Cummings, 2004; Burt, 2000). Note that closed networks tend to contain less structural holes than other networks. Further, the ties constituting the links between different networks are called "bridging ties".

These two dimensions of network structures might affect how knowledge is shared and created in different ways, which will be further elaborated in the following sections.

Illustration of closures, bridging ties and structural holes
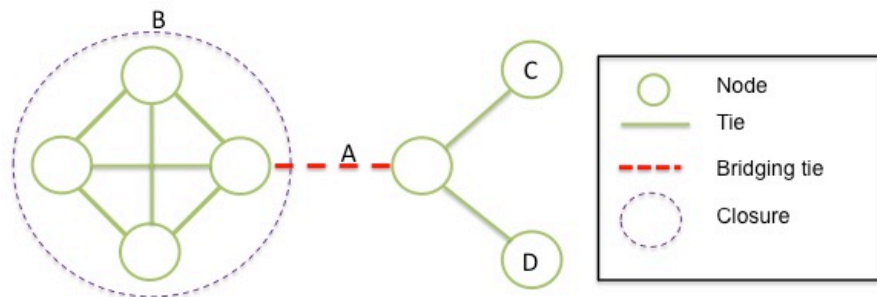
This illustration shows a closure (B), a bridging tie (A) and a structural hole between (C) and (D).
Inspired by Borgatti and Halgin (2011).

2.1.3 Social network ties

2.1.3.1 Nature of ties

Within social network theory, ties have been divided into many different categories depending on the context and field of study (Ibarra, 1993). Marouf (2007), for instance, uses the categories of business and social ties. She defines business ties as the linkages between two persons who

share "*common business tasks, mutual interests, and shared goals that benefit all the involved parties, whether they personally like each other or not*". Social ties, on the other hand, are defined as the linkages between persons who have common interests, "*emotional, non-instrumental relations, (…)* [and] *regard one another as friends*". Not only are these two tie categories different in terms of origin, purpose and emotions, but they have also been proved to generate different sorts of trust. In fact, Chua (2002) claimed that cognition- and affect-based trusts are positively correlated with business and social ties, respectively.

In the setting of CD training programmes, in which non-profit organisations are the main participants, creating business ties is not in focus. Utilising such categorisation could thus be misleading and we will therefore use the expression "*professional* ties", additionally to the "*social* tie"-category.

Nonetheless, note that ties are not exclusively belonging to one of the categories above (Marouf, 2007); as people may have both professional and social ties with the same individuals.

2.1.3.2 Strength of ties

Strength is another aspect that can further characterise the nature of social network ties, whereby ties are referred to as *weak* or *strong*. Granovetter (1973) introduced the concept of "tie strength" as "*the (probable linear) combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie*". Since then, network literature has given the concept of tie strength a great deal of attention (Marsden, Campbell, 1984), and several researchers (Marouf, 2007; Kang, 2007; Sosa, 2011; Ghoshal *et al.*, 1994; Hansen, 1999, 2002; Reagans, McEvily, 2003) have argued for the relevance of two dimensions in particular:

1. Frequency of interaction
2. Closeness of the relationship

Frequency of interactions is defined as how often people contact each other for various reasons. Closeness of the relationship is defined as the emotional intensity between two actors (Marsden,

Campbell, 1984). Note that when considering professional ties, we interpret the definition of closeness as the sharing of work-related tasks.

Furthermore, it has been noted that people have tendencies to be homophilous and thus hold stronger ties with people similar to themselves (McPherson *et al.*, 2001). Borgatti and Halgin (2011) argue that the traits of similarities can either come from the context in which ties are formed (people sharing the same experience) or they can be seen as the visible outcomes of social ties (people being influenced to hold the same views).

Combining two types of ties *(professional* and *social)* with two dimensions of tie strength (*frequency of interaction* and *closeness*) within a specific network structure provides a specific and comprehensive view of how social networks can affect knowledge sharing and knowledge creation processes. Furthermore, to our knowledge, this particular combination of social network features has never been applied to the context of capacity development training programmes.

2.2 Social networks and knowledge

2.2.1 Definition of knowledge, in the setting of CD training programmes

Knowledge is a complex concept, but to be described in the simplest form;

> *"Knowledge is a subset of information; it is linked to meaningful behaviour; it is subjective and it has tacit elements born of experience."* (Leonard, Sensiper, 1998)

This broad definition of knowledge is suitable in the context of CD training programmes as it illustrates the different dimensions involved. CDs have in fact, recourse to structural guidance, sharing of documents (*cf. "information"*), personal experiences (*cf. "tacit elements born of experience"*), values (*cf. "subjective"*) and they intend to impact individuals' actions (*cf. "meaningful behaviour"*) (Salazar, 2011).

In addition, this definition emphasises the situational specificity of knowledge, which is essential to acknowledge in CD contexts. As any other training programme, CDs aim to create new knowledge among participants, as well as incentives to further develop and spread this knowledge into the society. It then becomes interesting to consider how participants' *knowledge assets* develop. Knowledge assets are hereby defined as individual's predispositions to act, they are deeply rooted in individuals (or groups) and have value adding potential (Salazar, 2011). Note that the development of knowledge assets is highly dependent on access to novel information and the creation of new knowledge.

2.2.2 Distinction between knowledge sharing and knowledge creation

Knowledge sharing and knowledge creation are two interrelated concepts, often confused or used synonymously (Fang *et al.,* 2007). Having said that, we consider it to be essential to make a distinction between them, as they affect CD training programmes in different ways.

Knowledge sharing refers to the process when two parties (or more) provide each other with new knowledge. It implies a two-dimensional exchange (Ardichvill *et al.*, 2003), consistent of

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knowledge *donation* and knowledge *collection* (Van den Hooff, Van Weenen, 2004). Knowledge donation can be defined as an individual communicating his/her personal intellectual capital to another individual. While knowledge collection constitutes the process of consulting an individual to encourage him/her to share his/her intellectual capital. It thus implies an exchange, which gives novel information to one party.

Knowledge creation, on the other hand, refers to the process when two parties (or more) develop new knowledge together. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) argue it to be constituted of two key mechanisms; *combination* and *exchange*. C*ombination* involves either an incremental development from existing knowledge, or a radical change by developing new ways of combining elements (innovation). While e*xchange (*which can be used synonymously to *knowledge sharing*), involves the diffusion of knowledge between parties, and is thus a prerequisite for combination. Knowledge sharing and knowledge creation could be considered as interrelated, since creation involves sharing (Fang *et al.*, 2007). One should however note that knowledge creation is different in the sense that it leads to new knowledge to all the involved parties.

Our interpretation of how knowledge sharing and knowledge creation are differing, based on theoretical terminologies
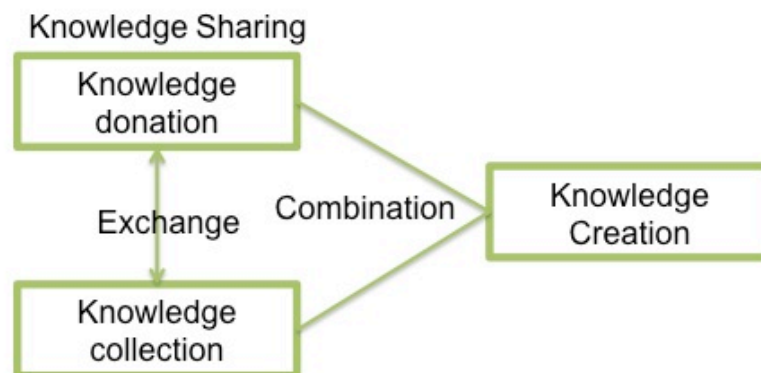
2.2.3 Combining knowledge with social networks

According to Chua (2002), it is widely accepted among scholars and practitioners that social processes heavily influence knowledge sharing and creation. Even though some researchers do not agree with this point of view, as they argue that individuals generate more creative ideas than do groups (Amabile, 1996), collaboration has shown to be central in several field studies. In fact, it is difficult for individuals working alone to generate interpretations of problematic situations or create novel insights (Schank, Abelson, 1997). This is further strengthened by Hargadon and Bechky (2006), as they argue that if individuals do not possess the necessary expertise, ability or motivation to generate creative solutions alone, they tend to find ways through collective efforts. To use their terminologies, a "help-seeker" searches a "help-giver" who could help him/her solve the problem. They further add that in collective efforts, individuals tend to use analogical reasoning in order to solve problems as they recognise similarities in the new situation to old problems (*ibid.*). It is therefore interesting to analyse knowledge creation, and thus knowledge sharing, processes through the lens of social networks.

2.2.4 Trust, an important factor of knowledge sharing and creation

When research combines social network with knowledge sharing and knowledge creation, a recurring important factor is *trust* (Levin, Cross, 2004; Lin, 2007; Putnam, 2000). It was pointed out by Abrams *et al.* (2003) that:

"Trust leads to increase overall knowledge exchange, makes knowledge exchanges less costly, and increases the likelihood that knowledge acquired from a colleague is sufficiently understood, absorbed, [and] *that a person can put it to use".*

Trust is believed to influence both the type and strength of ties, and is therefore interesting to take into account. According to Schoorman *et al.* (2007), trust leads people to engage in (sometimes) risk taking behaviors such as knowledge sharing. Several researchers agree that the relationship between trust and knowledge transfer is positive (Darvish, Nikbakshs, 2010; Holste,

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Fields, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2010). The research on knowledge creation and trust on the other hand, is minimal (Sankowska, 2013). However, Sankowska (2013) found trust *to "strongly foster knowledge creation".*

When groups have to work in conflicting environments, Bao *et al.* (2007) argue that building trust can enhance solving the conflict. Further, groups with low levels of trust will have less faith in their members and are thus more inclined to respond with professional courtesy rather than challenging others during decision-making (Lewicki *et al.*, 1998). A contradicting view is held by DeDreu and Weingart (2003) *and* Barling and Cooper (2008), as they argue that conflicts in work-groups result in effectiveness. In a conflict, people tend to speak their mind and therefore all point of views are heard. This has left some scholars questioning the potential benefits of conflict. To our knowledge, there is no existing theory combining trust and knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and conflicting environments.

The core of CD-programmes is the sharing and development of knowledge, which are two interrelated concepts. However, a distinction can be made between knowledge sharing and creation. Sharing is the process of "exchange" of knowledge, while creation is a "combination" of individuals' knowledge, following an "exchange". Moreover, trust is an important factor to take into account when analysing knowledge sharing and creation in social networks.

2.3 Knowledge sharing and social networks

2.3.1 Knowledge sharing and network structures

Burt (1992) argues that the key in knowledge sharing is networks rich in structural holes. In fact, in structural holes, one gets new ideas and diverse knowledge from different actors. Reagans and Zuckerman (2001) share this point of view, as their research showed that bridging structural holes increases productivity and performance, thanks to access to novel information. Burt (1992) further argues that the size of one's network and strength of one's ties are not as important as the diversity of one's contacts. Nevertheless, some researchers only partially agree upon the importance of diversity, since they state that a certain level of common knowledge background is necessary in order to exchange knowledge effectively (Reagans, McEvily, 2003).

Nerkar and Paruchuri (2005) argue that if an individual holds a central position in a network, it implies increased availability of information and it thus positively affects knowledge sharing. Centrality also provides a positive signal about that individual, which enhances the sharing (*ibid.*).

2.3.2 Knowledge sharing and network ties

Granovetter (1973), developed the *Strength of Weak Ties (SWT)* theory. It states that weak ties, which constitute bridges between different networks, are the most efficient in knowledge sharing. Since novel information is adding value to individual's asset bases, it is important to make sure this knowledge will be bridged through different networks. He also argues that strong ties counteract the sharing of new information since strong ties are comprised of nodes, with similar traits and knowledge asset bases. Therefore, homogeneous platforms do not provide any new information. This theory partially agrees with Burt's structural holes, to the difference that it emphasises that attention should be brought to tie strength. Granovetter defends his theory and the importance of analysing ties - rather than structures - by exemplifying that if two actors occupy equivalent positions in similar network configurations, but if their personal and emotional attachments to other network members differ, their actions are also likely to differ in

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important respects. Thus, considering network structures on its own is insufficient to his opinion.

Subsequent research has generally supported Granovetter's theory, however, it has further emphasised the benefits linked to strong ties. Strong ties were found to ease knowledge sharing (Uzzi, 1996; Hansen, 1999) and to be more likely to promote deep two-way communication, which facilitates the exchange of detailed information (Uzzi, 1996). Note that Granovetter partially revisited his *SWT* theory (1982), and then argued that strong ties make people more easily available and motivated to help each other. Hansen (1999) shares this point of view by emphasising that strong ties enhance trust and mutual identification, which enable knowledge to be shared and acted on. The benefits implied by strong ties, especially mutual identification, can be considered to refute the importance of diversity in knowledge sharing. Another controversy in theory can be acknowledged as social networks are linked with people with similar traits, background and believes, and thus result in homogeneous networks. In such networks, actors' perspectives, skills and knowledge are likely to be overlapping and redundant (Manev, Stevenson, 2001; Burt, 1992; Reagans, Zuckerman, 2001; McPherson *et al.*, 2001). On the other hand, social networks benefit from their stronger and more intimate links among actors (Marsden, Campbell, 1984).

To further develop these disagreements, one can note the different points of views, when researchers combine network structures and relationships. It has been argued that dense and closed networks facilitate trust, cooperation, reliable communication channels and strong relations (Coleman, 1988; Reagans, McEvily, 2003). Thus information and knowledge are more likely to flow in such settings. However, Borgatti and Halgin (2011) noted that closed networks tend constitute of nodes, which are similar to one another (*cf.* homophily in **6.1.3.2**) and may thus be disadvantaged for information pooling as they lack diversity.

Professional and social ties have their respective traits, impacting knowledge sharing in different ways. They contribute to knowledge sharing as the knowledge seeker will turn to different contacts depending on the situation and which type of knowledge he/she is looking for.

Cognitive and emotional trust are thus to be considered in each context. Zhou *et al.* (2010) claim that even if social ties are more likely to reflect trust it does not necessarily imply that the friendship that resides within social ties yields superior benefits in knowledge sharing. We can hereby denote another controversy in theory as some scholars argue for the benefits of social ties, while others for the superiority of professional ties. According to Uzzi (1996) and Gibbons (2004), stronger social ties load more trustworthiness and more frequent interactions than professional ties. On the contrary, professional ties consistent of a diverse network (different background, gender, culture) result in heterogeneous networks. This in turn will increase information non-redundancy and variety (Reagans, Zuckerman, 2001) and therefore result in the possibility to absorb diverse knowledge and novel information (Wong, 2008).

There are evident contradictions in current theory. Some researchers argue that knowledge sharing is most effective when nodes receive novel information, which usually arises between weak ties which bridge structural holes. Others claim that strong ties have properties which enhance knowledge sharing, i.e. trust and mutual identification. Further, researchers disagree regarding which of social or professional relationships benefit knowledge sharing the most.

2.4 Knowledge creation and social networks

2.4.1 Knowledge creation and network structures

Networks' structural dimensions influence knowledge creation as they determine the conditions of knowledge accessibility (Nahapiet, Ghoshal, 1998). Some argue individuals and groups who bridge structural holes are more likely to generate ideas (Burt, 2000; Obstfeld, 2005; Fleming *et al., 2007*), as they have access to novel information (Hargadon, Sutton, 1997). To refer to Hargadon and Becky (2006)'s idea of analogical reasoning, one can argue diversity benefits knowledge creation in the sense that the pool of experiences will be larger. In contrast, some researchers argue closed networks contain more collaborativity which will benefit knowledge creation to a larger extent, since they enhance trust and reciprocity among the network members, leading to willingness to share knowledge and start creation (Fleming *et al.*, 2007). In other words, it seems as if there exists a bandwidth-structural diversity trade-off: while social cohesion increases information and knowledge flow, it reduces structural holes.

2.4.2 Knowledge creation and network ties

Tie strength can contribute both to acquire new knowledge and to motivate the generation and realisation of novel and useful ideas (Marsden, Campbell, 1984). The research on network ties and knowledge creation has yielded conflicting results. Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003) suggest that weak ties especially favour creativity because they have structural properties facilitating access to diverse knowledge, reinforcing creative-related skills and encouraging autonomous thinking. However, Nonaka (2005) argue a critical input to the creation process is shared experience. By observing and interacting, sharing insights and resources, unique knowledge and perspectives with one another, individuals create shared experiences and mutual understanding. Note that Borgatti and Halgin (2011) argued shared experiences create similarities, which characterise strong ties. All these aspects in turn seem to facilitate the knowledge creation process and this argument therefore contradicts the importance of diversity and weak ties.

In addition, Obstfeld (2005), Uzzi and Spiro (2005) argue networks with strong ties are more readily involved in innovation tasks. This since they are easier to get a hold of and have a stronger will to help due to the emotional dimension (Krackhardt, 1998), which implies the benefit involved with social ties. Kramer *et al.* (1996) further prove this through their finding that identification with a group, meaning strong ties, enhances concerns for the collective processes and outcomes, and thus increase the opportunity and desire to provide help. The underlying reasons behind such behaviour could be emotional bonds and/or shared goals, and thus make the argument applicable to social and professional ties, respectively. Additionally, when groups have distinct and contradictory identities, meaning lower emotional ties (or even the lack of social ties), significant barriers to knowledge creation were found (Child, Rodrigues, 1996; Simon, Davis, 1996).

Finally, the strength and type of ties determine the source of help-seeking, since it depends on who the individual feels comfortable asking for help - who the individual trusts - and which type of source of knowledge he/she needs - *cf. "knowledge assets"*. The help-giver can thus be chosen between both one's professional and social ties. It depends on if the help seeker values cognition-based or affect-based trust the most.

Similarly to knowledge sharing, there are controversies in current theory regarding knowledge creation. Bridging structural holes and therefore accessing diverse sources of knowledge is perceived beneficial by some researchers. Others argue closed networks where trust and mutual understanding prosper to be advantageous. Additionally, there are disagreements regarding which types and strengths of ties influence the process the most.

2.5 Summary of theoretical framework and research gap

The theoretical framework of this thesis presents the constellations and categorisations within social networks we found most relevant, given the studied setting. We hereby suggest it is useful to consider two particular dimensions in networks; the structures and the relationships. Note that social relationships can in turn be analysed according to their types and strengths.

In order to fulfil the purpose of the thesis, we further advanced how social network theories have been applied to knowledge sharing and knowledge creation processes. These two processes can, to a certain extent, be regarded as two interrelated fields of study, especially when analysed in the setting of social networks. In fact, as knowledge sharing is part of the knowledge creation process, some researcher have merged and/or confused the concepts. However, we trust it is important to distinguish the two and analyse how social networks affect them respectively. Further, there are uncertainties and disagreements regarding which dimensions are the most important, and how they affect knowledge sharing and creation. For instance, some researchers argue for the importance of diversity in networks, while others state it is more important to focus on the types and strengths of the relationships. Some researchers claim weak ties promote the access to novel information, while others dispute the benefits linked to strong ties such as trust, mutual identification and incentives to contribute. In addition, we realised the existence of a research gap as no existing theory combines knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, trust and conflicting environments.

All in all, our intention is to clarify theoretical concepts in a highly interesting but - to our knowledge - unnoticed setting. In fact, our theoretical research revealed that there is little empirical research on how social structures assist or impede knowledge sharing and creation in a development setting - let alone CD training programmes in post-conflict environments. We therefore trust the relevance to apply the two fields of research mentioned above in such context, as they constitute the core of CD training programmes.

3. Methodology

This section introduces the methodological choices made when designing the study and analysing the data. These choices were taken with the aim to increase the overall quality of the study (i.e. trustworthiness and authenticity).

3.1 Methodological Fit

The theoretical review indicated the lack of insight into how social structures assist or impede knowledge in CD training programmes. In order to build theory in an unexplored area, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008) suggest a qualitative method, as it allows deeper understanding of a relatively abstract and complex subject. Qualitative methods are also reputed to be more open for new findings in comparison to quantitative, as they are *"concerned with the generation rather than the testing of theories"* (Bryman, Bell, 2011), which is in line with the study's aim to offer new knowledge.

3.2 Research design

Since the aim of this study was to understand a specific situation, we found a case study to be the best alternative. Case studies are frequently used within social science and business research (Bryman, Bell, 2011), when the purpose is to answer *why* or *how* questions (Yin, 2003). They also have the major advantage of being able to deal with a full variety of evidence, such as observations, documents, interviews and reports (Yin, 2003) - which were highly useful in order to get a full understanding of the case.

Our case study is delimited to knowledge creation and sharing processes following the training programme, between Colombian participants. In other words, we do not take into account the spread of knowledge into the participants' organisations, neither do we focus on specific exchanges taking place during the training or with other nationalities. In addition, this thesis only considers the creation and sharing of knowledge which is related to the content of the training programme. Finally, all participants have access to a Facebook-group for the *ITP1325*,

however, these virtual relationships will be excluded in the analysis as we consider them beyond our scope.

Finally, our research can be divided into three phases, as illustrated below.

The research design: three research phases

Pre-study
- Selection of CD training programme
- Participation in training course
- Interviews: SIDA and organiser
- General data collection (reports)
- Theoretical search: CD, training programmes, knowledge

Field study
- Thematic analysis
- Interviews: participants, Swedish Embassy
- Analysis of data
- Theoretical search: social networks, knowledge sharing and creation
- Development theoretical framework

Post-study
- Final data collection (Skype)
- Completion theoretical framework
- Completion analysis
- Completion thesis
- Presentation for SIDA's ITP group
- Presentation for the organisers
- Correspondence with participants

Capturing knowledge sharing and creation processes can be delicate given their complexity of expressing and specifying such mechanisms. It was therefore important (and *necessary*) to meet the participants in person, and fully understand individual cases. Since the information sharing taking place can be of sensitive character due to Colombia's post-conflict state, we saw a risk of participants being reluctant to share their impressions and experiences. Therefore we considered the personal meetings important, in order to establish trust between the interviewee and interviewer.

3.3 Methodological Approach

As inductions start from facts and deduction from theory, we can affirm that the overall method of the analysis was based on a combined stance of both deductive and inductive approaches - meaning an abductive one (Andersen, 1998).

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As a first step, we analysed the existing network structures, participant's relationships and how these affect knowledge sharing and knowledge creation. This analysis implied a thematic categorisation based on our intuition and understandings (*inductive* approach). Secondly, we turned to theory to see how networks have been studied previously and matched existing research with our findings. This was done deductively, but also inductively (*abductive* approach) since we let sub-categories and adaptations emerge when it was believed that the original categories were not able to fully represent our network. In a third step, we analysed how knowledge sharing and knowledge creation processes take place, with a social network perspective. In reviewing and refining these processes, and testing them against the framework and existing research, we challenged our analysis realising that we had to exclude some sub groups since they were not supported by enough data, or had to merge them as they were overlapping.

The different methodological approaches, along the study

Map the Network		Match Findings and Theory		Analyse the Network's impact on Knowledge Sharing and Creation
Inductively		Abductively		Abductively
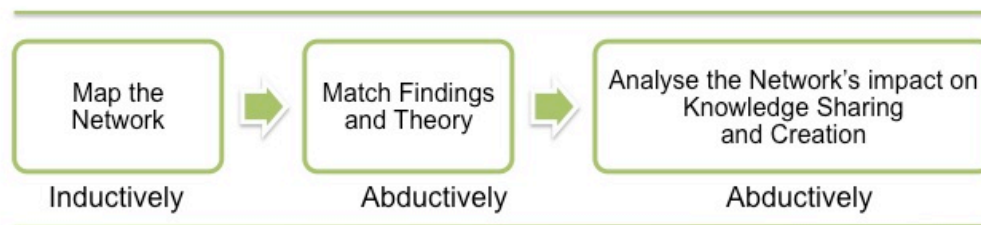
Our theoretical framework is thus a configuration of different researches. No specific model or existing framework was applied, instead we created a framework we found suitable and which could clarify and develop existing theories.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Qualitative Primary Data

The primary qualitative data is constituted of deep one-to-one interviews. This format enabled to reframe questions (if needed) or to ask follow-up questions if the related topic was of particular interest.

3.4.2 Interviews

This study had recourse to semi-structured interviews with open-ended and non-leading questions. In other words, the interviews started with a few broad questions and were followed by more specific ones related to the research topic (*cf. Interview Guide, **Appendix 2***). The open-ended questions enabled interviewees to give their own perspectives and develop their reasoning as desired. A deep and personal understanding of the subject was thus reached and the interviewees could partially lead the conversation to topics they considered of importance. As the interviewees were given anonymity, they could contribute with greater openness regarding their points of views and experiences.

3.4.3 Selection of interviewees

Considering the timeframe and scope of the study, we undertook 14 interviews with the main stakeholders of the *ITP1325*. One interview was with the *funder*, in order to receive an overall perspective and understand the underlying intentions behind the programme. Three interviews were with one of the *organisers*, as they follow the participants closely and have deep insights about the programme. One with the *Swedish Embassy* in Bogotá, as it holds a supportive role and is involved with the recruitment of participants, and was therefore considered to hold interesting perspectives.

We chose to deep-interview nine out of a total of 35 Colombian participants. In order to reach a representative sample, two main criteria led to the choice of interviewees; their year of enrolment in the programme and their professional background (governmental or civil society). We covered five cohorts out of seven, which enabled to study the sustainability of knowledge sharing and

creation, as well as how the networking had spread between training cohorts and professional sectors. We also chose participants whose colleagues had participated in the course, but during different cohorts, in order to explore if they would influence the knowledge sharing and creation differently. Due to Colombia's sensitive state and the influential positions held by some of the interviewed participants, information sharing can be a sensitive topic (professional confidentiality), and therefore anonymity was assured. In order to understand the network, only the most significant variables will be revealed (i.e. our two main criteria), as well as the fact if they are working for the same organisation (*cf. Appendix 1*).

3.4.4 Qualitative Secondary Data

The qualitative secondary data is constituted of consultancy reports belonging to *SIDA*, as well as internal reports written by *Indevelop*. Access was also given to some of the participants' internal work-documents. All these documents complemented the first-hand interviews and enabled a deeper understanding of the case. In addition, one of us attended one of the training occasions in Stockholm in order to be introduced to some participants and to observe their interactions.

3.5 Structuring and analysis of Empirics

All interviews were transcribed and resumed. Following each interview, we sat separately and analysed the collected data, as well as sorted it into sections accordingly. Thereafter thoughts were joined and discussed, in order to compare the findings and draw common conclusions. Whenever encountering uncertainties, the interviewee was contacted a second time (via phone or mail) in order to confirm the accuracy of the information.

3.6 Quality of research

Bryman and Bell (2011) propose, on the basis of Guba and Lincoln (1994), that reliability and validity of a qualitative research should be assessed according to its trustworthiness and authenticity.

3.6.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is made up by four criteria, which are: transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability.

Transferability, refers to the applicability of a study in other contexts. As our objective was to study an interesting phenomenon, rather than to generate generalisable results, our focus was to increase the study's credibility instead of fighting the lack of generalisability qualitative research strategies is criticised for (Bryman, Bell, 2011). Having said that, we consider the findings to be applicable to other contexts, such as other training programmes and networks in conflicting environments. We trust to have selected a representative sample of interviewees and to have reached strong and consistent results, given the comprehensive methodology. *Credibility,* refers to the confidence in the "truth" of the findings. It stresses how human perceptions can affect the interpretation of observations. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and notes were written immediately after each interview. The analysis was made by constantly returning to these transcripts, in order to ensure the compiled empirical evidence conformed to the conducted interviews. Furthermore, the interviewees were carefully selected with the aim of receiving representative and nuanced answers (different stakeholders, diversity in participants). *Dependability,* refers to the consistency of the findings and the fact that they could be repeated without alteration. Social settings cannot be "freezed", however, we did our best to neutralise the interview environment and choose locations where the interviewees should feel comfortable (i.e. cafés or closed meeting rooms). Further, the interviewees were given the choice regarding spoken language, and the majority of the interviews was held in a combination of English and Spanish. Even though our fluency in both languages, interviews were recorded to ensure no valuable information was missing and the stated facts had been correctly interpreted. *Confirmability* refers to the degree of neutrality of a study; whether the findings are shaped by the respondents' and the researchers' bias, motivation or interests. None of us had been in touch with the involved stakeholders before the study, and except a personal interest in development topics, there were no personal implication which could influence the interpretation of the findings. Moreover, both of us attended all interviews and the interpretation of the findings was reflected upon separately,

before being compared. Exact quotes were used in the empirics and we avoided biasing the interviewees by not mentioning the real purpose of the study, i.e. knowledge sharing and creation in the network but instead let the interviewees tell us about general outcomes from the programme, the created relationships and how they were sustained (*cf. Appendix 2*).

3.6.2 Authenticity

Authenticity emphasises the wider impacts of the research. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), there are five criteria associated with authenticity. The first one is *fairness* where the interviewee's perspectives should be represented adequately and their stories treated fairly. As the interviews were open discussions led by the interviewee, and exact quotes to be displayed, we reached this criterion. The second criterion, *ontological,* mean the extent to which participants have a raised level of awareness of how they influence the study. In order to reach such, all interviewees were informed their answers would be the material of our findings and the thesis would be published on the SSE's website. The third and fourth criteria are closely related to ethical concepts and will be discussed in the section **(6.2).**

4. Empirical results and analysis

Firstly, we will determine the structures and relationships in the social network sustained after the ITP1325, between Colombian participants. In the second and third part of the analysis (8.2 and 8.3), knowledge sharing and creation will be analysed using the lens of the identified network.

4.1 Social network perspective applied to the *ITP1325-network*

The studied network will be defined as the "*ITP1325-network*", and accordingly with the definition of social network content, *ITP*-participants are considered as *nodes* and their relationships as *ties*.

4.1.1 Social network structures

Since the *ITP1325-network* only includes participants from the *ITP*-course, it can be regarded as a *closed network*. This network has been created and facilitated by both the funder and the organisers, and gives participants common *knowledge assets*. Further, one can distinguish each training cohort to constitute *closures*; where all participants are related and have shared the same experience together.

Through interviews and the study of reports regarding the *ITP*, we could further determine the intended network structure. In fact, one responsible for the *ITPs* at *SIDA* mentioned the following:

> *"When choosing candidates, their organisation is of utmost importance. We try to connect people from both the government and the civil society, working on regional and national levels. (...) we want to reach a critical mass."//(SIDA)*

From a social network point of view, *SIDA's* actions could be interpreted as intentions to bridge *structural holes* (Burt, 1992). In fact, by strategically recruiting participants from different organisations in order to reach a "critical mass", they are linking nodes that would otherwise not had been related.

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Further, this strategic recruitment is not solely focused on professional backgrounds but also on knowledge diversity. As mentioned by one participant:

"(…) they recruit participants with different levels of knowledge in the field; I am for instance working with gender tasks on a daily basis while others were totally new to the topic."//(Azul,α_4)

We can thus affirm that the *ITP1325-network* is constituted of people with, what Salazar (2011) defines as, diverse knowledge assets.

Note that some participants have been recruited from the same organisations/institutions over the years. However, these have not attended the training programme simultaneously, i.e. the same training cohort. When analysing the network structure, we will thus denote two types of *bridging ties*;

- Bridging ties type I: the bridges linking the participants with each other's personal and professional networks

- Bridging ties type II: the bridges linking different training cohorts. These exist between participants who work for the same organisations, but attended the training programme during different occasions

Note that participants that have not been introduced to each other constitute *structural holes*.

Illustration of the structures within the *ITP1325-network*
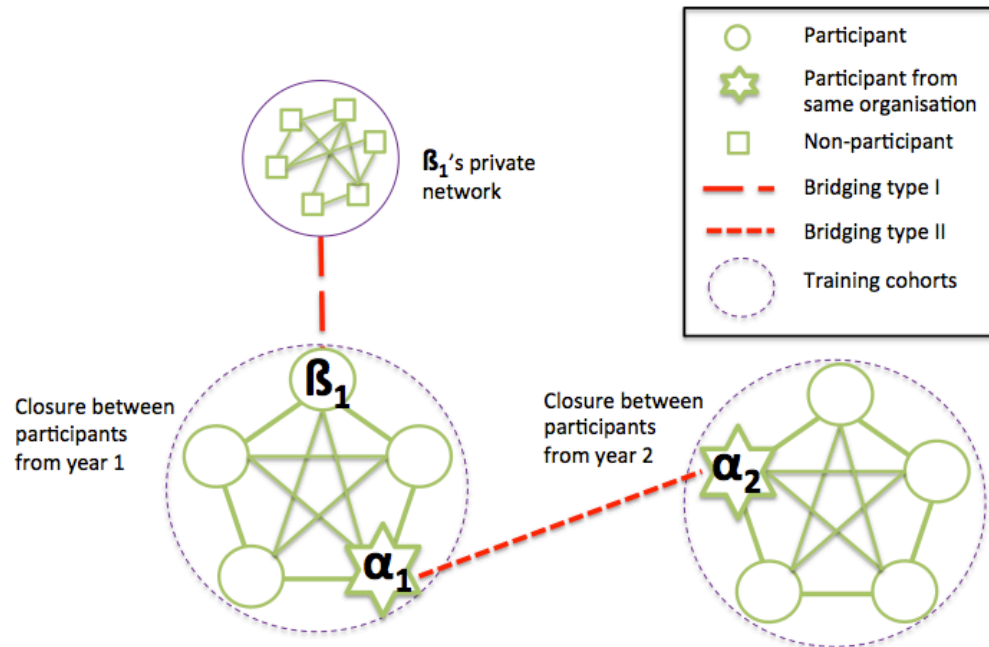
Participants **α₁** and **α₂** are working for the same organisation/institution (cf. same symbol), participants **α₂** and **ß₁** are constituting a structural hole, there are closures between each training cohorts and each participant holds a bridging tie type I with his/her private network (note that only **ß₁**'s private network has been represented in order to simplify the illustration).

4.1.2 Type of ties[6]

As the network structure has been determined, the analysis will be taken to a network content-level. Firstly, we will focus on type of ties, which can be determined by analysing how participants relate to each other.

All participants acknowledged to have created social ties during the training programme. In fact, *"(...) I gained friends"* was a recurring comment during the interviews (Costa,ß₃;Santana,α₇; Luz,α₂;Havana,α₆;Azul,α₄) and corresponds to the emotional bond criteria characterising social

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[6] *Structural holes, as defined above, are not considered to have any ties and are therefore not discussed in the sections discussing ties.*

ties (Marouf, 2007). In addition, professional ties are held by the participants who are recruited from the same organisations (*cf.* linked by *bridging ties type II)*, participants who have started projects together and those who are in touch regarding work-matters. Note that the participants who do not conform with these criteria's mentioned:

> *"I could just call one of the participants if I need help, information (...) or if I want to discuss an idea."//*(Santana,α_7)

In other words, the majority of the participants who are not directly working together mentioned the possibility of having future professional contacts. They will be considered to have created *potential* professional ties.

To sum up, it was observed that all participants have created both professional and social ties with each other. As argued by Marouf (2007), ties do not need to be exclusively of one type or the other; and in the studied case they have shown to be coexistent.

4.1.3 Strength of ties

Within both type of tie categories, the strength of the ties will now be analysed. Strength of the ties is assessed according to the dimensions of frequency of interaction and closeness of relationship.

The social ties are maintained through social gatherings (such as a dinners) and private on-going conversations via social medias (*Whatsapp* and *Facebook*).

> *"Everybody has a busy schedule so we can only meet up once in a while. (...) but we are constantly chatting in our Whatsapp-group."//(*Sol,ß_7)

The frequency of interactions can thus be considered relatively high.

With regard to the closeness of the relationships;

> *"Having attended a training in a foreign country creates special bonds (…) I have gained friends I can rely on, (...) with whom I share concerns about personal matters"//*(Azul,α_4)

As entailed by Azul,α$_4$'s quote, the fact that the participants have shared the same experience has created a sense of fellowship among them. The participants possess common knowledge and, as the interviewee mentioned, have taken the relationships to a private level. In other words, they can be considered to have built close social ties.

Given these results (*high closeness* and *high frequency*), we conclude the existence of strong social ties within each training cohort. This idea was further supported by several sources. In fact, the organiser mentioned that Colombian participants tend to become close teams who give each other more support than other participants do. In addition, when one of us attended an *ITP*-training session, the Colombian participants were different in the sense that they were considerably more eager to spend time together (during the course and their free time). These findings support McPherson *et al.* (2001)'s view of people being homophilous and thus having stronger ties with people similar to themselves (Borgatti, Halgin, 2011). However, we consider the traits of similarities to end there, as participants are different with regard to their diverse professional backgrounds.

With regard to professional ties, one can consider two groups. Firstly, the participants coming from the same organisations or having created joint-projects, are by definition frequently in touch and work closely together. These people have *strong* professional ties. Secondly, participants constituting the "*potential* professional ties" are neither having close nor frequent interactions (they contact each other for instance with regard to deadlines with projects). These people are considered to have *weak* professional ties. Note however, these participants are the ones who mostly commented the fact that they would highly appreciate *SIDA* to organise follow-up networking events and would like to get opportunities to meet previous participants. All in all, both *weak* and *strong* professional ties are created during the *ITP-programmes*.

Illustration of the *ITP1325-network*
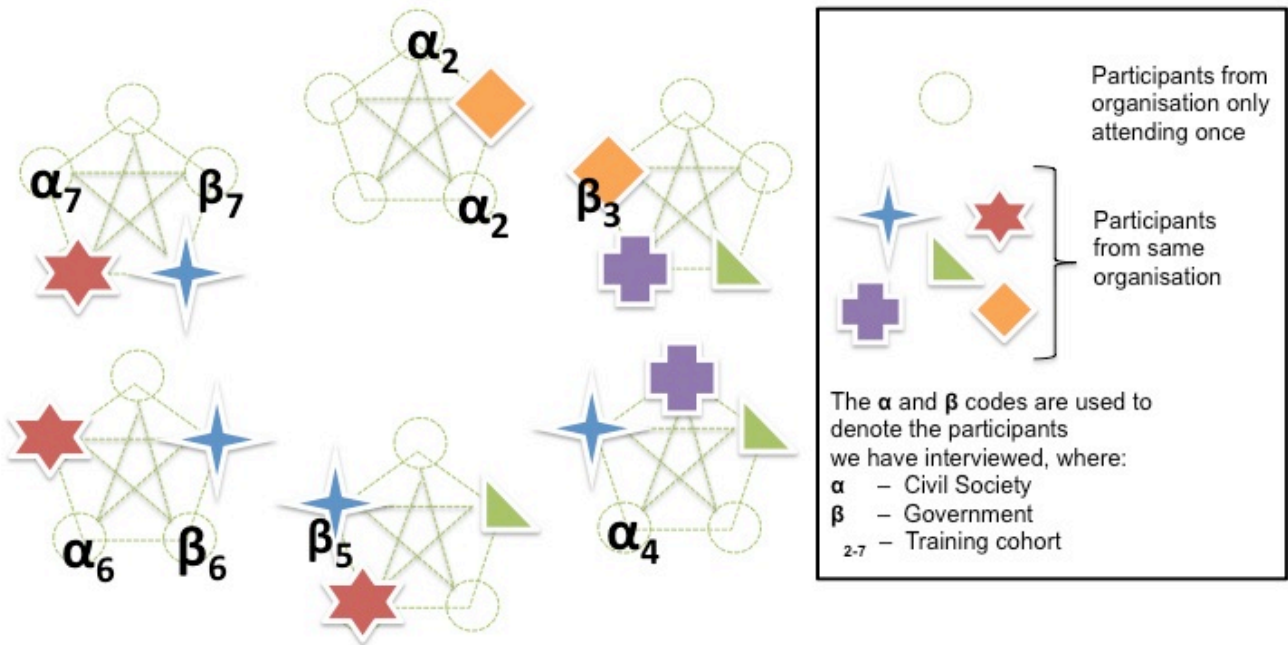
As shown several participants have been recruited from the same organisation/institution, which illustrates a strategic recruitment. Only training cohorts including interviewed participants have been represented (cohorts 2-7).

This thesis studies a closed network, the *ITP1325-network*, linking nodes with different backgrounds. Within this network prevail strong social ties, as well as both strong and weak professional ties. However, one should also note that this network is constituted by many structural holes.

4.2 Knowledge sharing and social networks

In this section we will analyse how the identified structures and relationships within the ITP1325-network affect knowledge sharing processes. The concept of "knowledge sharing" refers to when one participant shares his/her knowledge with another person and thus increases that person's knowledge assets without altering his/her own (Nahapiet, Ghoshal, 1998).

4.2.1 Knowledge sharing and network structures

Firstly, we will consider the effects of social network structures on knowledge sharing. As previously mentioned, the closed *ITP1325-network* contains two types of bridging ties. These two bridging ties are the main constellations to be distinguished in the network.

> *"I used to be prejudiced against the government and would never had believed we could cooperate in such way. (...) through X I received information that would had been very difficult to get a hold of otherwise"//*(Santana,α_7)

> *"It's amazing how we now can access information (...). It saves so much time!"//*(Azul,α_4)

Bridging ties type I proved to be of value for the knowledge sharing process since they provide the participants with access to novel information, as entitled by the quotes above. All participants hold a bridging tie to their respective organisation, which entails openings to diverse knowledge within the cohort. The access to this diversity proved to spare both time and effort, and decisions and actions could be taken more easily. This finding is in line with Burt's (1992) and Reagans and Zuckerman's (2001) research, which emphasise the importance of the diversity, prevailing in networks rich in structural holes.

One can also notice that Santana,α_7 's quote refers to existing preconceptions between the government and the civil society in Colombia. As in any post-conflict environment, these two professional sectors constitute two leagues which work separately, differently and sometimes against each other. This entails that diversity can constrain knowledge sharing, if taken to a too

large extent. This refutes Burt (1992) *and* Reagans and Zuckerman's (2001) argument that diversity is of primary importance.

T*ype II bridging ties* were also noticeable in the knowledge sharing process. These bridges are, per definition, connecting people already working together;

"I was recommended to apply to the course by my colleague, (…) we're still in touch, informing each other about the evolution of our work"//(Costa,ß₃)

"I think it is a good idea to recruit several members from the same organisation, as it keeps the momentum going and we therefore have more power to influence our organisations when coming back from the course"//(Azul,α₄)

According to our findings, participants from the same organisation shared knowledge as well. Similarities between the nodes are therefore not inhibiting knowledge sharing. However, one should note the knowledge shared between these participants is received from their respective cohorts, therefore it is the access to diverse sources that enables the exchanges between the similar nodes. This finding is in line with Hansen's (1999) argument of similarities' benefits on knowledge sharing, while it sheds lights on Burt's argument regarding the importance to bridge structural holes in order to reach novel information.

Finally, we observed that knowledge sharing mostly occurred between the training cohort closures; and thus the participants who had met each other.

4.2.2 Knowledge sharing and social network ties

In this section we will analyse how the relationships affect knowledge sharing. As demonstrated above, knowledge sharing took place between both the nodes who were linked to diverse and similar professional networks.

Firstly, we will consider the knowledge sharing taking place between the nodes coming from different organisations/institutions. As previously mentioned, the singularity behind these exchanges is the existing tensions between the government and civil society in Colombia.

"In the beginning, I was very scared to approach her, (...) it can be difficult to approach someone because you might think: 'Oh, she's a civil society leader, (...) she might not share the same ideas or perspectives that I have'."//(Costa,ß₃)

"One of the key things that I've learnt is that people have a lot of prejudgements of each other and you have to really meet other people to tackle prejudice."//(Jaime,α₂)

These two quotes show the prejudices between the two sectors, which used to inhibit or complicate the access of knowledge between them.

"Now that she's my friend (...) it's much easier to pick up the phone and ask for something (...) She trusts me and the fact that I wouldn't pass the information to the wrong hands or use it in the wrong forum"//(Azul,α₄)

This quote entitles two primary factors, which influence knowledge sharing in our setting.

Firstly, what seems to have changed the preconceptions and initiated the sharing processes is the fact that participants have developed informal relationships. Each side has "humanised" one another, as well as developed affection and understanding for each other. In fact, the majority of the participants referred to an emotional bond when discussing the reasons behind the knowledge sharing processes. This idea is further strengthened by the fact that, before the course, some participants knew about each other as they worked for the same cause but in different settings. However, they mentioned they did not feel comfortable approaching someone they did not know for information. This mostly occurred between participants from different sectors (government and civil society), therefore it could be interpreted as the conflict situation made them both unwilling and uncomfortable to engage with each other, which is in line with Lewicki *et al.*'s (1998) findings.

Secondly, the quote refers to trust and one can note that the interviewee points out the importance of being trustworthy as a person, over one's expertise. This statement was a recurring comment during the interviews, and sheds light on the importance of knowing the person *donating* or *collecting* knowledge - to use Van den Hooff and Van Weenen (2004)'s terminologies. This finding agrees with several researchers argument that trust is crucial in knowledge sharing (Darvish, Nikbakshs, 2010; Holste, Fields, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2010). In other words, the affect-based trustworthiness (Chua, 2002) seems to take over the cognition-based trustworthiness.

Putting the above findings together equals to say that social ties are essential in knowledge sharing processes.

Furthermore, the existence of a sincere desire to help each other and to set one's private time aside to share knowledge, were also taken up during several interviews.

"You need to look at the bigger picture, sharing information brings the process forward."//(Rivera,ß5)

"This course made me realise how similar goals we have (...)."//(Costa,ß3)

This quote demonstrates that having a shared vision of changing Colombia's situation and realising one's common drives, triggered knowledge sharing. In other words, just as noted by Hansen (1999), mutual identification is highly valuable for knowledge sharing. Hansen (1999) further stated mutual identification and trust to be key characteristics for strong ties. In accordance with our definition of tie strength, mutual identification can be linked to closeness and thus, one of the parameters proving the strength of a tie is validated. With regard to the frequency of interaction;

"Every time there are major news about the peace process in Colombia (...), we share it (...) we need to keep each other updated!"//(Luz,α2)

"During our dinners we (...) inform each other about our experiences and the news in our respective sectors"//(Havana,α6)

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The frequency of interactions is also enabling the knowledge sharing. In other words, both parameters constituting tie strength have proved to enhance knowledge sharing and therefore we can conclude strong ties are essential for knowledge sharing. This reasoning supports the one of Uzzi (1997) and Hansen (1999) who claim strong ties are superior in knowledge sharing, since people then more easily put time aside to help.

All in all, we found the social ties to be predominant, over the professional ones, in knowledge sharing processes. Further, the stronger the tie, the more these process are taking place - which to some extent is confirming Uzzi (1996) and Gibbons (2004)'s argument that stronger social ties load more trustworthiness and more frequent interactions than professional ties. Additionally, this contradicts Granovetter's (1973) SWT theory, stating that social ties hinder the access to diverse information. In fact, we have a case of strong social ties bridging structural holes, which are access to novel information which are optimal for knowledge sharing processes.

With regard to network structure, we found that both bridging structural holes and creating closures within networks are beneficial for knowledge sharing. In fact, they respectively entail access to novel information and the creation of strong relationships. We have thus proved the importance of strong ties, and further discovered the importance of social ties in knowledge sharing processes in post-conflict environments. Strong social ties facilitate trust, engagement and therefore enhance women's empowerment in the peace process.

4.3 Knowledge creation and social networks

In this section we will analyse how the identified relationships within the ITP1325-network affect knowledge creation processes. The concept of knowledge creation entails two people – the help-giver and the help-seeker – combining their existing knowledge in order to reframe a problem and find new solutions and meanings to issues.

4.3.1 Knowledge creation and network structures

First, we will consider the effects of social network structures on knowledge creation. As previously discussed, knowledge sharing constitutes the core of knowledge creation. We will hereby study the extent to which they differ.

Similar to knowledge sharing processes, *bridging ties type I* proved to be of value for knowledge creation;

"Last time I had a problem, I called the participant I knew possesses the knowledge. (...) it's great to have access to so many knowledgeable people (...) they are experts within their field"//(Havana,α_6)

"Discussing topics together and realising our different viewpoints is interesting and makes us develop different perspectives."//(Luz,α_2)

As entitled by the quotes, the participants valued the diversity in each other's professional networks. This diversity appeared to stimulate new solutions to problems, hence the creation of new knowledge, which is in line with Burt's (1992) research. In addition, we can hereby cite examples when, during the course, participants realised how they could reach a wider public if starting co-projects. One of the interviewees (Azul,α_4) is an example of such case as she merged her project with one representative of the civil society and one from the government.

"Unfortunately, we don't work together regarding topics related to the course (...)" //(Costa,β_3)

"Through my colleague, I got in touch with another person who had attended the course and could help me with the problem." //(Rivera,β_5)

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As we did not observe any particular knowledge creation initiatives between participants linked by the *bridging ties type II*, we interpret these bridges were not involved in knowledge creation. However, as entitled by the second quote, the *bridging ties type II* seemed to influence knowledge creation processes in a different way. In fact, the nodes linked by these ties held the role of intermediators between participants in need of help. For instance, Sol,ß7 was put in touch with Rivera,ß5, through one of her colleagues who had also participated in the course. In other words, the participants linked by the *bridging ties type II* did not actually participate in the knowledge creation process, but facilitated right people to come together. Their role of mediator could thus be argued to be of value to the process. This aspect can be linked to what Nerkar and Paruchuri (2005) call centrality, to the difference that in our case, centrality entailed a liaison and not a source of knowledge creation itself.

According to our findings, diversity in a network, together with a high level of connectivity, are essential in order to create knowledge for two parties.

4.3.2 Knowledge creation and social network ties

In this section we will analyse how the relationships themselves affect knowledge creation. As demonstrated above, knowledge creation only took place between the nodes who were linked to diverse professional networks.

"Not only is it important for us to get to know each other during this type of course, but it's crucial to be compatible and able to work together (...).”//((Rivera,ß5)

In contrast to knowledge sharing, as entitled by Rivera,ß5 's quote, the importance of the professional dimension in the relationship seemed to exceed the social one. Whenever relating to knowledge creation processes, the interviewees emphasised rigour and professionalism in their comments.

However, important to note is the presence of social ties in the creation process.

"We had fun, (...) she used to tease me, by referring to me as 'those oppressing people from the government', (...) we were thus very engaged during the workshops."//(Costa,ß₃)

Social ties facilitated the exchanges, created engagement and thus benefited knowledge combination. Further they were of importance since they facilitated introductions between participants. We noted they were especially significant for the participants holding weak professional ties.

"It's hard to approach a person you don't know (...) It's not in our culture (...) I wouldn't ask someone I don't know for help with a project just like that"//(Azul,α₄)

"It would be great to have more networking events, so we can meet more participants (...). They might have the same challenges, (...) we could brainstorm together."//(Havana,α₆)

As entitled by Havana,α₆ 's quote, being introduced and meeting one another are crucial to start knowledge combination processes. However, a contradiction was remarked (*cf.* Santana,α₇ 's quote in **(4.1.2)**); some participants mentioned the ease of approaching each other, nevertheless we realised it had not taken place without introductions. Social ties are thus of paramount importance. This illustrates Kramer *et al.*'s (1996) argument that identification with a group enhances concerns for collective processes, and therefore a desire to help arises. Moreover, Havana,α₆ 's quote can also be interpreted as emphasising the importance of a high frequency of interaction, meaning strong ties. This idea is further strengthened by the following quote:

"(...) the more opportunities to meet participants, the more inspiration we could get (...)"//(Havana,α₆)

After having been introduced and decided to work together, a constant referral to the help-giver's professional expertise and knowledge caught our attention.

"I contacted X when I encountered problems with the project because she's the best at what she does"//(Azul,α₄)

"I needed help with a project and X referred me to Y, since she had access to the resources and knowledge to solve the problem."//(Sol,β_7)

Even if the training course provided common knowledge assets to the participants, and several interviewees even mentioned to now be regarded as "experts in gender issues" by their organisations (Santana,α_7;Desi,β_6;Havana,α_6), the participants would not choose their knowledge creation partners based on emotional bonds. Instead, they would let the professional aspects lead the choice. This entitles that participants value cognition-based trust over affect-based trust when choosing their help-giver.

"First, I was a bit irritated that they thought I couldn't understand (...) but it actually motivated me to prove my point (...) we ended up doing a project together"//(Desi,β_6)

"I convinced X to let me be part of the project (...) by showing how I could influence and improve it"//(Sol,β_7)

*"It was funny sometimes when we had workshops, it was like we were "competing" but in the end we managed to come up with amazing things"//(*Santana,α_7)

We noticed an initial mistrust and prejudice regarding each other's professional qualifications had positive outcomes. As Desi,β_6 's quote shows, many participants felt they needed to prove themselves. In Sol,β_7's case, her persistence was needed to initiate a knowledge creation process. Certain mistrust and competition increased the quality of the knowledge created. These findings somehow contradict the importance of trust in knowledge creation, which is linked to the main argument of the benefits of strong ties (Hansen, 1999; Fleming *et al.*, 2007; Putnam, 2000) and the dare to engage in risk-taking behaviours (e.g. knowledge sharing) (Schoorman *et al.,* 2007). Further, we noted that participants had more difficulties engaging in knowledge creation processes, than in sharing. According to our observations, it seemed as if there was more at stake when engaging in a project together.

Further our findings refute Child and Rodrigues (1996) and Simon and Davis (1996) argument that groups who have distinct and contradictory identities hold significant barriers to knowledge creation. When applied to our setting, it could be translated as if the civil society and governmental institutions could not combine their knowledge. However, the contrary was proved in our study.

Similarly to knowledge sharing processes, we found that diversity in the network and access to different knowledge assets is essential in knowledge creation processes. Even though these processes were initiated through strong social ties, the strong professional relationships seemed to be of more importance. An interesting and novel finding, particular to the post-conflict context, was how initial mistrust had enhanced the creation processes. This finding contradicts the attention influential researchers have often brought to trust.

5. Conclusion

In the following section the summary of our findings is presented.

The overall purpose of this thesis was to explore and explain how networking structure influence knowledge creation and sharing in a capacity development context, in a post-conflict environment. By analysing *SIDA's ITP1325*, we identified the importance of networking as it allows participants to develop, spread and create knowledge. This study also revealed that certain network structures and relationships are especially beneficial for these processes. In accordance with previous research, bridging structural holes enhanced both the creation and sharing of knowledge. We hereby identified two types of bridging ties and their respective implications. Bridging the governmental sector and civil society was especially valuable since trust is a scarce resource in post-conflict environments, and it is therefore important to gradually develop such between the two. Further, they give each other different perspectives and sources of information, which is highly beneficial in the context. Another important factor to consider is the power of the bridges within the network. In fact, not only do they give participants' access to additional knowledge assets, but they also make them more easily available to one another.

In addition, it was identified that certain types of ties, and certain levels of strengths, were more beneficial to the processes than others. Strong social ties seemed to be highly significant in knowledge sharing, as they imply emotional bonds and motivation to put time aside to help. Given the context, affect-based trust seemed necessary for participants to share knowledge. With regard to knowledge creation, the professional dimension of the ties was more significant. In fact, participants mostly created knowledge with others, based on their professional qualifications. However, as knowledge sharing is central to knowledge creation, the importance of social ties should not be overlooked as they both complemented and initiated the professional relationships. One should emphasise the significance of being introduced, in order to start a knowledge creation process. Therefore, we conclude social ties were highly influential in the knowledge creation process as well.

Our findings contradict to the fundamental argument of the importance of trust within strong ties, in knowledge creation processes. In fact, we found that a certain level of initial mistrust was beneficial to the processes. The fact that the government and civil society are not used to work together led to an initial questioning of each other's professional qualifications, which in turn engendered participants feeling a need to prove themselves and make additional efforts. This in turn led to an increased quality of their work and thus an improvement of the knowledge creation processes. In other words, we found that a certain level of mistrust, which gradually turns into trust, enables successful knowledge sharing and knowledge creation in CD training programmes, in post-conflict environments.

To conclude, our findings revealed that when analysing a network, it is adequate to consider the structures. However, in order to reach a deeper understanding, one should examine the relationships within the network and acknowledge that there exist different types of relationships and different strengths.

6. Contribution

Following, we go beyond the frame of our findings and discuss our results. We also discuss the ethical implications of the study and the contributions to theory, as well as provide suggestions for future research.

6.1 Discussions

By bridging the civil society with the governmental sector, a united force is created which enhances the peace process. The uniqueness of the *ITP1325* is that two archenemies are put in the same room for five weeks and come to realise the great things they can accomplished together. By overcoming the "fear" of approaching each other, a long process of peace could be shortened. We found that creating social bonds is among the main factors needed to be taken into consideration in order to successfully create and share knowledge. Having said that, a certain level of initial mistrust was also beneficial, as it motivated participants to make extra efforts. Participants further mentioned how this mistrust had been overcome and the extent to which they had now established close emotional bonds. However, we question the fact that all mistrust, prejudices and fears of cooperation are overcome following a five-week training programme. This in turn leads to consider how close the social ties actually are; is there still mistrust which affects knowledge sharing processes? Did the participants try to embellish their answers? What could be the underlying reasons for such behaviour?

Further, both the organiser and the funder seemed to be well aware of the importance of the network. We therefore question why no major efforts are made to sustain it. Note also that, without any exception, all participants mentioned the need and the importance of more networking events. Why do they not take initiatives themselves? Moreover, we were given access to the participants through the organiser, who also advised us to contact certain participants (due to availabilities and interesting cases). Our selection of interviewees was made based on our own criteria (*cf.* **3.4.3**), however we might have been subconsciously influenced by their recommendations. Did they try to lead us towards successful cases in order to influence our findings? Was the list of participants correct?

6.2 Ethical implications

As we come from Sweden and observe a training programme financed by the Swedish government, we might be biased by our westernised views, and thus not fully understand the Latin American perspectives. Could these cultural clashes influence the confirmability (*cf.* **3.6.1**) of the study? Did the participants perceive us as "outsiders"? Were we successful in creating trust during the interviews? Will our findings harm the participants, as they have revealed how they share information (sometimes perceived as sensitive)? Moreover, we will present the findings to our funder, the organiser and the interested participants. Will we influence *SIDA's* decision whether or not to continue the programme? How will this affect the organisers, the participants and the Colombian society? Will we empower some participants to take action?

We did our best to considered these ethical implications during our study, however we realised most of them to be beyond our control.

6.3 Research contribution and implications

This study contributes to research in the sense that it sheds light on a singular case. This singularity can be perceived both through the analysis of a network with a specific and rather unique combination of social network dimensions, as well as the fact that, so far to our knowledge, no social network research has been made in the context of CD training programmes. The study challenges one of the core factors considered of importance for the knowledge creation process; trust. It was found that certain initial mistrust was of benefit for the knowledge creation process, which contradicts the main arguments for the benefits of strong ties in the creation process. The study further reaffirms and proves the validity of several existing theories, but it also clarifies certain confusions.

This study contributes to the stakeholders of the capacity development training programme as it demonstrates the importance and the potential of the created network. Even though it seems to be of common knowledge, the interviews (especially the ones with participants) showed that the

current network platforms could be improved and reinforced. The frequency of interactions needs to increase in order to create more (and stronger) social ties. Finally, the discussion regarding the benefits with the network's structure may be a good source of inspiration for future adequate recruitment.

6.4 Suggestion for future research

With regard to the nascent state of theory regarding networks in the development area, let alone CDs, we see a vast potential for future research to further investigate the outcomes of network and training programmes. First, one could study if social network structures and relationships affect the transfer and creation of different types of knowledge. Further, one could investigate how the knowledge acquired from the training programme has been transferred to the participant's organisation and if there are certain individual traits which particularly affect knowledge sharing and knowledge creation. One could also investigate if our findings are proper to Colombia/the Latin American culture; would the findings had been the same if interviewing participants from another country? Also, a gender perspective could be taken, are there any differences between how men and women network, share and create knowledge in this context? Finally, one could further analyse the development of the initial mistrust and its impacts on knowledge sharing and knowledge creation.

Considering the exploratory nature of our study, we hope to have created interest and inspiration for future research.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: List of interviewees

#	Name (given)*	Period	Location	Professional Background	Training Cohort	Code**
1	Indevelop	Pre-study	Sweden	Organiser		
2	SIDA	Pre-study	Sweden	Funder		
3	The Organiser	Pre-study	Sweden	Organiser		
4	Havana	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (NGO)	6	α_6
5	Santana	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (NGO)	7	α_7
6	Azul	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (NGO)	4	α_4
7	Luz	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (NGO)	2	α_2
8	Indevelop	Field Study	Colombia	Organiser		
9	Rivera	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (Government)	5	ß_5
10	Sol	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (Government)	7	ß_7
11	The Swedish Embassy	Field Study	Colombia	Swedish Embassy		
12	Desi	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (Government)	6	ß_6
13	Jaime	Field Study	Colombia	Participant (NGO)	2	α_2
14	Costa	Post Study	Skype	Participant (Government)	3	ß_3

* Each participant was given a gender-neutral name, in order to secure anonymity.

** α = NGO

ß = Government

2 – 7 = Represents the training cohort they attended (note that in order to secure anonymity, we have

interchanged the training cohort numbers. Moreover, since two cohort occasions differed in numbers of participants we have set all cohort to five participants).

Example: α_6 means a person working from an NGO, who attended the sixth training programme.

8.2 Appendix 2: Interview guide (only interviews with participants)

The interview guide shows the discussed topics during interviews with participants. All questions asked are not presented in the interview guide as they have been adjusted based on the interviewee's position and the attended training cohort. Further, the topics were not always discussed in the order described below, as the interviewee led the conversation with his/her answers.

Introduction

Introduction of ourselves

Information about anonymity and allowance to record the interview

Description of interviewee, his/her professional background and professional evolution since the training programme

ITP programme

General impressions about the programme

What were the most valuable outcomes?

Exemplification of learnt things from the programme

Reason for application to the training programme and recruitment process

Interests in the training programme (personal, professional, organisational)

Expectations and aims with the programme

Project

Description of project

Implementation of the project

Knowledge acquired from the programme

Reaction from colleagues

Colombia

Description of situation in Colombia

Level of readiness for this type of crossnormative issues

Network

Regional contacts following the programme

Contacts with participants from other training cohorts

Description of types of relationship with participants

Frequency of interactions with other participants

Closeness of relationship with other participants

Description of who/when/how meetings are arranged

Knowledge (sharing and creation)

Description of knowledge sharing processes started from the training programme

Description of knowledge creation processes started from the training programme

Type of exchanges within the network

Empirical examples were often asked for, in order to illustrate the situation.

8.3 Appendix 3: Definitions and additional information

Capacity Development

UNDP (2008) defines capacity development as: *"the process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time".*

Government and NGOs (also called "civil society")

In the governmental sector several different offices and ministries are involved in the peace process. Below we present those that have participated in the *ITP1325*-programme since its initiation in 2010.

- Police Inspeccion General Policia Nacional
- Colombia Military Forces
- National Police of Colombia
- Ministry of Interior
- High commissioner for peace
- High Presidential Council for the reintegration ACR
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Office of the Presidential Advisor for Women's Equity
- Presidencia de la Republica
- Presidential Program for Human Rights and IHL
- Office of the High Commissioner for Peace
- Victim Unit (Unidad Victimas)

In the civil society, we can find NGOs that work with supporting and strengthening women's rights in the peace process. Below we present those that have participated in the *ITP1325*-programme since its initiation in 2010.

- Fundacíon Social
- Red Nacional de Mujeres
- Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica –CIASE
- Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris
- The Unit for Comprehensive Attention and Reparations to Victims
- National Prosecuting Office- Fiscalia General de la Nación

- National Federation of Municipal Ombudspersons of Colombia
- WILPF
- Fundation for freedom of press (FLIP)
- Corporación Humanas
- Corporacion Sisma Mujer
- Asociación Colectivo Mujeres al Derecho
- National Movement for Human Rights for Afrocolombians (CIMARRON)

UNSCR 1325

In October 2000 the Security Council adopted the resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women to incorporate gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts. Special measurement to protect the women and girls in situation of armed conflict from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse is called upon. (UN website)

Distrust and mistrust

Distrust and mistrust are used interchangeably as we consider the two concepts to be applicable in the studied context. The concepts per definition different in the sense that distrust is often based on experience or reliable information, while mistrust is often a general sense of unease toward someone or something.