

Social media and new work practices:  
A grounded theory of a non-profit network of practice

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**Abstract**

This paper examines how work practices change with the use of social media in a network of practice (NoP), that is, among people who share work practices without working with one another or even working for the same organization. Based on the in-depth qualitative case study of the use of social media among non-profit professionals, the paper develops a grounded theorization of changes in practice that underscores the at first exogenous then endogenous sources of changes in practices and the trend toward changes in gradually more central practices in the NoP with social media. The grounded theorization acknowledges the importance of the changes in the social media applications and their popularity and recognizes the organizational-level implications of these changes in practices. This grounded theorization holds implications for IS research on IT implementation and use as well as for the understanding of dynamics taking place in NoPs in organizations. This paper contributes the understanding and conceptualization of exciting new dynamics of practices as social media and other web-based applications will continue to become more prevalent in work environments.

**Key words**

Practices, grounded theory, case study, learning, practice transfer, community of practice, web 2.0

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## Introduction

End-user driven technologies, and, in particular, social media, have recently become pervasive in organizations (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010; Leidner et al., 2010; Murugesan, 2007). They have generated new dynamics that contrast with more traditional Information Technology (IT) implementation and use in organizations (Armbrust et al., 2010; Shirky, 2009). The use of social media holds the potential for substantial organizational and inter-organizational consequences in terms of information management, communications and collaboration with stakeholders, etc. (Culnan et al., 2010; Di Gangi et al., 2010; Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010; Gillin, 2009; Piskorki & McCall, 2010). Work practices can especially be affected by the increasing use of social media in professional contexts. Due to the recent character of the professional adoption of social media, as well as their high rate of change, little is however still known about *how* such changes may happen with the adoption and use of social media.

What is striking about social media adoption and use in professional contexts is that the organizational level of analysis loses some of its relevance. Decisions to adopt can be made individually or locally, often without managerial involvement. These technologies allow for informal bottom up implementation and adoption (Harrison & Barthel, 2009). IT professionals and organizational decision makers therefore do not have to be much involved upfront in end-users adopting these technologies. Moreover, there can be contagion effects in adoption and uses beyond the boundaries of the firm. In particular, some relevant dynamics of adoption and use are likely to take place throughout networks of practice (NoPs). NoPs correspond to loose groupings whose members share occupational practices but do not necessarily work with or even know one another

because of geographical and / or organizational distance (Brown & Duguid, 2001; McLure Wasko & Faraj, 2005; Vaast & Walsham, 2009). Social media may develop beyond the control of traditional hierarchy or authority systems and can affect the work practices of NoP members. Social media uses may therefore condition the transformation of work practices in NoPs rather than merely in organizations. How this transformation happens is the focus of this paper. This paper aims at advancing the understanding of the transformation of work practices in an NoP with social media by examining the following research question:

*How do work practices in a network of practice change with the use of social media?*

Doing so, this paper contributes to the theorization of social media uses as well as to the understanding of changes in work practices in NoPs. The research question is of relevance to Information Systems (IS) and organization scholars because social media have disrupted the traditional sequence of IT implementation and use. Existing theorizations therefore do not fully explain these new phenomena. Given how fast and deeply social media have been incorporated into daily personal and work lives, understanding better the processes through which practices change with social media is of paramount importance. Moreover, there has not yet been much research on the processes of changes in work practices with social media at the level of NoPs rather than of single organizations. Focusing on NoPs seems especially promising because of the viral nature of social media adoption and abandonment.

To build these contributions, the remainder of this paper first provides some information on social media and networks of practice. Then, the methods section details the qualitative investigations that helped understand the dynamics of use of social media in

the case of a specific NoP, that of New York-based nonprofit NoP. The findings section analyzes how social media became used and how work practices changed over time in this NoP. The case study provides a foundation for the elaboration of a grounded theory of work practices changes with social media. Implications of this research for IS research on Information Technology (IT) implementation and use, for the conceptualization of organizations and NoPs and for practitioners are then proposed, along with promising areas for future research.

### **Social media and networks of practice**

This section provides some background on social media and justifies the investigation of their uses at the level of an NoP.

#### **Social media**

Social media correspond to applications of the “web 2.0” generation that provide scalable services by social and individual entities to help them interact in various ways with stakeholders over the Internet (Murugesan, 2007; O'Reilly, 2007). Examples of social media include blogging, social networking applications or video sharing applications (Davidson & Vaast, 2009; Glass, 2007). Compared with previous web generations, social media are open, dynamic, interactive, and focused on a double push-pull approach to content (Murugesan, 2007).

Because these applications are usually cloud-based and openly accessible, their implementation does not require much initial technical infrastructural investment. Moreover, social media are usually user-friendly and pose limited barriers to use in terms of computer competencies. A consequence of these characteristics is that IT departments and managerial hierarchies have usually not had to be involved in social media

implementation and use. In fact, IT personnel and management have more often than not had to react to their innovative and largely informal uses by employees (Kaganer & Vaast, 2010).

Also, and related, social media are by design meant to generate and support ad hoc communities and networks that span locales and organizational boundaries (Bonabeau, 2009; Culnan et al., 2010; Di Gangi et al., 2010). Given such characteristics, the organization may not be the most relevant level to understand the dynamics of adoption and use of social media. Instead, the NoP level may be more appropriate to understand the transformation of work practices that may come with the adoption and use of social media in professional contexts.

### **Networks of practice**

NoPs correspond to a *meso* level of analysis, between the organization and the industry. In a sense, research that takes in consideration the use of technologies such as social media at the level of an NoP responds in part to (Chiasson & Davidson, 2005) call to “take industry seriously”, i.e. to take more directly in consideration the institutional, economic, organizational, etc. specifics of industry in IS research. When investigating the dynamics of an NoP, one examines the specifics of occupational practices within or across industries. For instance, lawyers working in law firms are part of an NoP where the boundaries between the legal industry and the legal NoP coincide mostly. However, not all employed by law firms are part of the legal NoP. IT professionals, facility managers, etc., all have occupational practices that are to some extent conditioned by the industry in which they work (the legal industry) but that are mostly determined by the specifics of their occupation (e.g. knowledge of the law is only tangentially related to the

daily practices of an office manager). Similarly, lawyers employed by pharmaceutical companies are still part of a legal NoP but their employed position makes them members of the pharmaceutical industry as well.

This research's focus is on an NoP of professionals working in non-profit organizations in the New York area. The professionals in consideration are local knowledge workers at the heart of the non-profit industry. Their practices involve fundraising, public relations, public awareness initiatives, relations with donors, etc.

Examining the adoption and use of social media among members of an NoP implies taking in consideration some specifics of the industry in which they work in that they inform, constrain, and shape, to a certain extent, the practices of the NoP. Moreover, taking in consideration NoPs involves placing a special emphasis on actual practices, on what people actually do with IT at work (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Levina & Vaast, 2005; Orlikowski, 2000, 2002).

Locally, some members of an NoP interact frequently with one another, work with each other and can learn directly from each other from frequent interactions. They form a "community of practice" (CoP) (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Members of a CoP are aware of one another, interact with one another frequently and, generally, share more or less close working relationships, and are likely to have a relatively high degree of similarity in their work practices in consequence (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). By contrast, members of an NoP are not all aware of one another and may lack occasions for interactions, but share a certain degree of similarity in their practices (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Vaast & Walsham, 2009). An NoP can thus be seen as constituted of a set of more or less loosely connected CoPs.

Members of the same NoP may be employed by different organizations. Members of an NoP are enabled and constrained by the conditions of work in their organizations. At the same time, though, if afforded the possibility, members of an NoP might be able to communicate and exchange on the basis of the commonality of their practices within and beyond the boundaries of their respective organization, though. Brown and Duguid (2001) in particular posited that practices and knowledge can flow in NoPs because of the degree of similarity in practices of their members and the potential links among them. Yet, research has much not yet shown how these flows actually unfold in inter-organizational NoPs. As social media have recently and fast become adopted in many professional contexts, the processes of their adoption and use seems especially likely to be related to such changes in work practices in (inter-organizational) NoPs. Given the relative lack of conceptual insights on these dynamics, this paper turns to a case study of social media adoption and use in a nonprofit NoP to build a grounded theory of how work practices change in an NoP with the use of social media.

## **Methods**

This section presents some key characteristics of the nonprofit NoP investigated for this research and provides information about its data collection and analysis.

### **Background on New-York based nonprofit organizations**

The case focused on an NoP of non-profit professionals whose offices were located in New York City. The work of members of this urban nonprofit NoP aimed at advancing the cause advocated by their organization (e.g. public health improvement, increase in literacy rate, development of leadership abilities). They did so, on a day-to-day basis, by creating campaigns to promote awareness in the cause at hand, by organizing and

managing events that encouraged social activism and by raising funds to sustain the organization and achieve progress on its cause.

A few characteristics of this nonprofit NoP are worth noting. For one, non-profit professionals usually worked in small, local offices with a limited number of co-workers (less than 20 usually). These local offices enjoyed relative autonomy from the central headquarters of their organization in order to carry out their general mission and to translate it into specific local initiatives.

Moreover, the human resources of nonprofit organizations were complex as different types of participants were involved in various ways in their activities. Some members of nonprofit organizations were salaried employees, others interns, and others yet volunteers who dedicated more or less of their time and other resources to the nonprofit organization. Beyond the diversity of their engagement with nonprofit organizations, all of these members participated in the practices of the nonprofit NoP. There was also high turnover in nonprofit organizations. Employees and volunteers often switched organizations, generating cross-pollination among nonprofit organizations and creating de facto links among nonprofit professionals. Some nonprofit professionals were also involved, in different competences, in several organizations. For instance, a salaried employee of nonprofit organization A could also volunteer for organizations B and C. A consequence of these characteristics was that many members of the New York nonprofit NoP were more or less loosely connected to one another and had some understanding of the inner workings and strategies of several nonprofit organizations.

Non-profit organizations have traditionally had limited resources to carry out their mission. They often rely upon donations coming from extensive fundraising efforts to



carry out their operations. In this context, IT investments have often been seen as secondary to their main mission. Therefore, nonprofit organizations have rarely invested heavily in the latest IT (Burt & Taylor, 2000; Finn et al., 2006; Morgan, 1995; Schneider, 2003). The IT infrastructure of nonprofit organization was usually dated and non-profit professionals in the New York area hardly ever had access to the latest technology. Moreover, local CoPs did not have much access to onsite IT resources in terms of personnel or hardware and software. However, recent surveys have shown that the diffusion of social media among nonprofit organizations is recent but widespread (Curtis et al., 2010; Waters et al., 2009). For instance, as of April 2009, three quarters of surveyed nonprofit organizations had developed a presence on Facebook (Nten, 2009).

### **Data collection and analysis**

In order to get a sense of the use of social media in the nonprofit NoP and its relationships with changes in work practices, data were collected from several nonprofit organizations and took place in two stages, in Winter 2008 and Fall – Winter 2009. The decision to investigate several organizations stemmed from the NoP level of analysis. Examining how and to what effect social media had been used in different nonprofit organizational contexts could help the author gain an understanding of local (taking place in CoPs) and of global (taking place throughout the NoP) dynamics related to the use of social media. The nonprofit organizations under scrutiny were selected from theoretical sampling, as is usual in qualitative case study research, to provide interesting and original insights of the phenomena under study (Yin, 1989, 1993). The investigated organizations (anonymized in this research) had all adopted social media, but neither at the same time nor in identical ways. All in all, new organizations were added until saturation was

reached, i.e. until the addition of a new organization to the sample stopped providing much new information.

Moreover, data collection took place in two stages (in Winter 2008 – Spring 2009 and in Winter 2009 – Spring 2010) so as to acknowledge and assess the temporal dimension of the impact of the diffusion of social media in the nonprofit NoP. This diachronic aspect of the data collection was especially important because the technical affordances as well as the rate of diffusion and the type of use of social media have drastically changed over time. The adoption of two temporal standpoints helped evaluate transformations over time of practices in the NoP.

Data for this research mostly consisted in semi-directed interviews with respondents chosen for their involvement with the use of social media in their organization. About 3 to 4 respondents per organization were interviewed during each stage of the data collection. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours, were recorded and transcribed and took place face-to-face or over the phone. The interview guide included broad questions about: 1- descriptive elements about the non-profit organizations and the respondent's position in it; 2- information about the origin of the initiative of social media in the investigated case; 3- the types of practices affected by and related to social media; 4- the estimated impact of these social media practices for the respondents, the organization in general, and the pursuit of its mission; 5- the relationships between the respondent and other NoP members, and their links with social media organization and use; and 6- any additional element and / or anecdote regarding social media that the respondent wished to bring about. During the second stage of investigations, to the extent that this was possible, the same respondents who had originally been met were

interviewed a second time. Table 1 presents the organizational affiliation of the interviewees.

-- Insert table 1 around here --

Between the two stages of investigations, in order to follow up on changes in the practices related to social media, some respondents and informal informants were regularly contacted.

In addition to these interviews and informal contacts, other data for this research included the contents of social media produced by the non-profits as well as internal and external documentation on these organizations and their use of IT.

To analyze and interpret these data, this research used grounded theory-inspired methods (Gasson, Forthcoming; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In line with the spirit of these methods, the conceptual framework of this research emerged gradually from frequent back-and-forth between literature review, data collection and analysis. In this sense, the conceptual framework presented supra gradually emerged in conjunction with the data analysis (as in, for instance, (Barrett & Walsham, 1999). Moreover, as recommended for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Feldman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994), data analyses took place in several, overlapping stages. At first, interview transcripts helped create summary reports, each report representing how, in nonprofit organizations, local CoPs had adopted and used social media. These summaries were then compared with one another to identify similarities and differences in the diffusion and appropriation processes. These similarities and differences then helped deepen the interpretation of the observations. The summary reports were then contrasted to analyze the data diachronically, i.e. to get a sense of the transformation over time of

social media use and work practices across the NoP. The observed transformations in practices were then gradually interpreted in the terms of the emerging grounded theorizing. Informal informants who had expressed interest in the findings of the study offered feedback of the analyses in-progress and led to further refinement of the analyses. The recursive interpretive process stopped when the grounded theorizing provided a plausible and original answer to the research question and when there was no more major gap in the analysis, i.e. when all intriguing observations could be understood in relation with the grounded theory and with one another.

### **Social media uses in the New York nonprofit NoP**

The case distinguishes three phases in the adoption and use of social media in the New York nonprofit NoP: early adoption, maturation, and professionalization. These phases reveal how the use of social media affected different aspects of nonprofit practices and how these effects changed over time. The case also details how the inspiration for new uses of social media in different aspects of nonprofit practices changed over time from being exogenous to the NoP to being endogenous to it. Table 2 summarizes key insights from the case study.

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#### **Early adoption of social media in the nonprofit NoP**

In New York-based nonprofit organizations, the earliest implementations of social media started in late 2007 and early 2008. MySpace as well as Facebook were usually the first social media platforms used by nonprofit professionals. The first people to advocate for and to initiate the use of social media for nonprofit practices were often peripheral to their local CoPs. Early adopters were usually volunteers, interns or new employees who

had been hired recently in low-level positions by nonprofit organizations and for whom this was the first salaried full-time job. They often got their inspiration from their hobbies and other leisurely practices. A respondent for instance explained how she thought of using social media in her budding professional life from her college experience:

I will take credit for us even having a presence on Web 2.0. I was just out of college when I started here and when I was in college, Facebook and MySpace were just coming out. So I was one of the very first people to be on Facebook and I was one of the very first people to be on MySpace and so it has affected how I communicate with my friends and family members and I saw it as an opportunity for us to reach out to young professionals. [Health 2; 1-3]

The initiators of social media use in the nonprofit NoP therefore usually did not hold a formal position of authority but had already experienced social media from another practice domain than that of work.

These grassroots initiatives rarely originated from managerial involvement or even, initially, awareness. Even when management was aware of these initiatives, the early implementation of social media happened with no clear initial sense of what the new applications could do for the non-profit organizations. A manager recalled:

The first Facebook venture that we had actually had an intern [who] took it upon herself to create a Facebook group. That was really before it was getting popular. I just said “Oh, Ok if you want to do that, that’s fine. You can create your little group and have that as a project.” [Human Services 1; 2-2]

Most high-level employees and managers of nonprofit organizations did not know much about social media at the time. What is more, members of the nonprofit NoP who used social media and promoted their use in their host organizations (e.g. interns, volunteers or newly-hired, usually low-level employees) did not have yet a clear idea of the purpose social media could fulfill for nonprofit organizations, beyond a general sense that social media could help them reach audiences in a new way, at little to no cost. There was no

specific expectation regarding the impact of social media for nonprofit practices. This was especially so since the initiators of the use of social media in the NoP were themselves relatively peripheral members of the NoP and of their local CoP.

The initial uses of social media applications often reflected their import from the leisure activities practice domain of their initiators. Just as individual users mostly used social media to manage the network of their friends, so did the early adopter nonprofit organizations usually start using social media in order to reach a community of people interested in the cause they promoted. These connections were originally personalized on Facebook, in the sense that a person representing the organization had to personally “friend” or “be friended” by the cause supporter. Over time, however, the application evolved and became better suited to the needs of organizational rather than merely individual promotions. People on Facebook could become “fans” of the organization rather than “friends” of one of its representatives.

Another early use of social media was of online invitations management. “E-vites” were sent via social media and replies were also managed electronically. Nonprofit professionals appreciated the electronic management of invitations because it saved money from the traditional, paper-based or e-mail-based invitations and seemed to improve participants’ response rate:

We do eVites for our events. For Facebook, I would say we have approximately a 50% response rate, which is pretty great compared to our other means of communication. When we have events people respond quickly and the majority of them respond, which is pretty amazing. [Human Services 2; 1-3]

Managing connections and events invitations via social media participated in the management of the awareness for the cause of the various nonprofit organizations. Two observations were however noteworthy at this stage. The first is that, at this early stage,

the use of social media was but only one, relatively minor, way, among many others, for nonprofit professionals to manage the awareness to their cause. The second is that participants did not initially reflect much onto how social media could be used specifically by and for nonprofit practices. The knowledge and understanding of the new applications remained relatively generic. A respondent commented, for instance:

Social media is great for organizations and anyone promoting something whether it's themselves, a business or company, that's new and I think that it's a really great marketing tool. [Human services 1; 1-1]

### **Maturation of social media use in the nonprofit NoP**

By mid to late 2008, the majority of nonprofit organizations had developed a social media presence. This period saw shifts in the social media in use. In particular, MySpace, a social network that was very popular early on, became increasingly deserted. Twitter, a newer application, was fast becoming used by in the nonprofit NoP to convey short communications via micro-blogging to networks of stakeholders (“followers”). A respondent described the shift in her priorities regarding social media during this period:

We have definitely pulled back from Myspace almost entirely because that is not getting any traction... I mean, the shift right now seems turning toward Facebook and Twitter. We are also using YouTube as we have continuously. [Health 2; 2-3]

Nonprofit organizations that just started using social media during that time did not develop a presence on MySpace but concentrated their efforts onto newly popular platforms. Moreover, their initial uses of social media reflected the maturing uses that pioneering nonprofit CoPs and organizations had developed over time.

While the early adopters in the nonprofit NoP had been inspired by their use of social media in the leisure practice domain, over time, another source of inspiration emerged, that of political organizations and campaigns, heretofore the political NoP. During this

period that coincided with the 2008 U.S. Presidential election, the role of social media to mobilize supporters and raise funds in politics became more evident. Some members of the nonprofit NoP became aware of the growing role of social media in political campaigning, as illustrated in the following quote:

I think all nonprofits should take note of how [presidential candidates] used Facebook and social networking because [they] created a worldwide campaign that was really out of the ordinary and exceptional and how they used Facebook and many people that reached out to. [International Affairs; 2-3]

It is noteworthy that many members of the nonprofit NoP were connected to the political NoP in some fashion. For instance, employees of nonprofit organizations at times helped political campaigns, and volunteers for nonprofit causes could also be active in political campaigns and candidates. Therefore, some members of the nonprofit NoP were especially abreast of the use of social media in the political NoP. Inspired by the examples they witnessed in the political NoP, they started to advocate using social media in more practices of the nonprofit NoP, including to strengthen the community of interest in the cause and to mobilize supporters for specific events.

Moreover, inspired by the examples of the political NoP and increasingly familiar with social media, some nonprofit professionals started to think about the specific opportunities that social media offered their organizations. They in particular reflected upon how these applications provided inexpensive ways to develop new marketing campaigns:

Social media are even more important now especially as commercials and advertising are slowly going away, it's a great grassroots vehicle that people are constantly on and constantly trying to gather more information. [Health 1; 2-1]

More generally, the use of social media in nonprofit practices expanded. The early uses (e.g. for connections and invitations management) continued but were supplemented. Social media for instance became increasingly used in order to manage young



professionals, a key constituent of volunteers for some nonprofit organizations. For nonprofit organizations in a dense urban area such as New York City, young professionals often made up a very active part of their volunteer base. Nonprofit organizations took advantage of the fluency of many young professionals with social media in order to engage them more with the cause they supported:

Social media [provide] a good reach for people that we are targeting, 25-40 years old, young professionals. They are constantly online and on email, and [social media] happen to be one of the great ways to communicate with them. [Health 1; 2-4]

More generally, over time, participants in nonprofit organizations more actively and explicitly used social media in ways that took advantage of the community dimension of social media applications.

There are so many ways they [supporters] can become involved with your organization. Social media give them different ways to support like if you “friend” them or they become a “fan” and once people see that they’re friends with them it can pass on to their friends and their friends and it’s a great way to get our name out there and for people to feel connected with us. [Human Services 2; 2-3]

This maturing phase was also characterized by the multiplication of local initiatives relying upon social media. Taking advantage of the flexibility and affordable character of the applications, many local CoPs used social media to publicize their events and happenings and to raise awareness onto their cause:

Social media use has become more in line with our mission to keep a community of people together through information. We are able to build awareness [onto our cause] and to build a much better society when it comes to addressing issues of homelessness and housing. That is where social networking is most powerful. [Human Services 2; 2-1]

With this maturation of social media initiatives and uses, managers became increasingly aware of the current uses and potential impacts of social media for their organizations. They also started to recognize the new roles and competences of peripheral members of local CoPs, i.e. often new low-level employees, interns or volunteers who had so far

taken the initiative for the use of social media. The CEO of a nonprofit organization noted:

Joey is a smart guy, he's in his twenties, so he knows this stuff [social media] really well. The key to a successful presentation with a strong social network is to have young people deal with it. [Health 3; 1-1]

This recognition usually meant that the early promoters of social media started to gain a more central position in their CoP (regardless of whether they were formally promoted). Moreover, during this maturation phase, more and more members of the nonprofit NoP started to use social media.

Nonprofit professionals however also started to become aware that, even though social media were “free” to use, the development of social media-centric initiatives required that resources be dedicated to them to be successful in terms of time and human resources, in particular. A manager commented:

[Social media] can be a very useful tool. But this is also one that requires resources to be monitoring and to be paying attention to. Because non-profit is cause-related, you can motivate groups. Social networks are an opportunity to reach out to a broader group of people, organically, to people who are naturally interested in [our cause] in a way that would not have happened otherwise. (...) It creates a unique opportunity to spread the word organically to people who would be a natural audience to be interested in your cause. [Human Services 2; 2-3]

Moreover, more and more practices of the nonprofit NoP started to change with the increasingly pervasive use of social media. This was especially visible as developers and lead users of social media in the nonprofit NoP realized they needed to adapt their overall communication style to the new, web-based media. They had to find the “voice” that would be appropriate to convey messages over the new platform. This new style of communication involved a learning process that was not without trials and errors, as revealed in the following anecdote:

At first, I was posting in a voice that was kind of more like what I would write... I have stopped posting like that and I am now posting a little bit more like I do on my personal Facebook page, trying to make it a little bit funny and irreverent but to try to move traffic in our direction. I guess that [came from] realizing that our [voice] was a little bit archaic. It was not very contemporary. We were writing sort of like if my mom was posting on Facebook. [Education; 2-3]

### **Appropriation and professionalization of social media**

By mid to the end of 2009, most nonprofit organizations in the New York area had developed a social media presence. The social media landscape for the nonprofit NoP was becoming increasingly complex and was characterized by, simultaneously, a growing number of bottom-up, local initiatives and the multiplication of the social media applications jointly used (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Blogs, YouTube, Ning).

With the appropriation of social media by most nonprofit organizations, the inspiration for new, innovative uses started to come from within the nonprofit NoP. Within the New York City area, nonprofit professionals often knew each other. Moreover, the technological affordances of social media made it possible for them to know about their peers' social media practices. It was fast, easy, and inexpensive for nonprofit professionals to get to know what other nonprofit CoPs and organizations were doing, simply by becoming parts of the social networks of these organizations. Some nonprofit professionals had established an informal intelligence system on social media platforms, as illustrated by the following quote:

Among the followers [that I have on Twitter] there are a lot of other non-profits. (...) I think non-profits keep an eye on each other, on what the others are doing. Maybe other organizations or non-profits are looking to start a Twitter group and maybe they are looking to see how others like them are doing it too. [Health 1; 2-4]

This informal intelligence helped innovative social media practices travel within the nonprofit NoP. Some nonprofit professionals also started to use social media in ways that

encouraged and generated informal collaborative initiatives among CoPs and organizations. A respondent explained:

We have a partner organization (...) and they liked our Flickr page and albums. They just celebrated their 10 year anniversary so they created a new website and we gave them guidance on developing their own 10-year anniversary Flickr page. [International Affairs; 2-3]

Relying upon social media, nonprofit professionals of different organizations piggybacked on each other's messages, relayed their missions and sometimes even shared initiatives. The use of social media therefore encouraged informal collaboration within the nonprofit NoP.

Social media became increasingly integrated into the daily practices of nonprofit organizations. Volunteers' management illustrates this situation. Originally, among volunteers, young professionals were the most directly targeted by social media. Over time, nonprofit professionals developed volunteer-based operations that relied heavily on social media and that targeted all volunteers.

There was this volunteer effort that we did. There was a college fair in Harlem that we were volunteering for. I used Twitter and Facebook to ask for volunteers and we ended up getting around 20 volunteers with a lot more people who emailed me, or the person in charge of the event, offering to volunteer. They had never been a part of the organization before or never volunteered with us. They were brand new people that saw the request. I would say that that was pretty impressive because most people wouldn't just offer to volunteer for no reason. It is not like there was a party or something. It actually that you had to do some work. [Human Services 1; 2-2]

The professionalization of the use of social media also increasingly affected practices that were strategic to generate funds for the nonprofit NoP. For instance, nonprofit organizations traditionally relied on direct mailings in order to reach supporters for their cause and to develop relationships with existing or new donors. Social media affected this established practice on two almost contradictory grounds. On the one hand, social media

became used at times as a way to replace direct mail. Nonprofit professionals recognized the savings associated with the use of social media and noted its potential effectiveness especially for target populations that were already heavily involved in social media (e.g. young demographics). Hence, the use of social media contributed to making direct mailing practices obsolete. On the other hand, though, the outcome of this replacement relied upon the at least partial transfer of existing direct mailing competences onto the use of social media. The following comment illustrate this trend:

All “snail mail” is going to die out sooner or later because everyone is online now. Social media is the number one way to fundraise and advertise and get your name out there and I think it will completely replace direct mail. There are a lot of skills you learn in direct mail that are easily transferable. They can look at the data of people we have as fans on Facebook and they can see what age group they fit into, and what characteristics they hold so they know who to send which e-mail campaigns to and which e-mail campaigns not to send. And the designers of all of our direct mail can now design emails instead of actual letters. [Environment, Animals; 2-2]

Another example of the growing integration of social media into important, traditional nonprofit practices had to do with events’ management. While social media had been used for some time to manage invitations online, over time, they also became used in most aspects of events’ organization, planning and communication. Social media were used in preparation for the events (e.g. guest list management and event promotion). They also increasingly became used during events, as they offered nonprofit professionals new platforms to give live feedback about the events:

We had our benefit party in November (...). We decided that we wanted to be doing Twitter and Facebook updates throughout the night. So, I carried my cell phone around in my pocket and updated every 15 minutes or 30 minutes. (...) We had never gotten so many responses. I have never had so many people interact on Facebook with us. I said: ‘There is a dance floor on this place. Can’t wait to dance with you guys’ and then everybody did the liking and the passing around to their friends. It was just creating that kind of buzz that was really interesting. [Education; 2-4]

The integration of the use of social media during events relied upon the highly interactive and flexible characteristics of the new technologies to transform the relationship and communication process between nonprofit organizations and their supporters.

Another example of the increasing reliance upon social media and of the innovative practices that their use triggered had to do with the development of new campaigns that took advantage of the viral nature of social media. Some nonprofit organizations launched innovative operations to support their mission and relied on the engagement of their supporters to relay their messages over several social media platforms. Nonprofit professionals took advantage of the complementarity of these platforms (e.g. by “tweeting” on short messages, publishing Facebook updates on current events, encouraging the relay of messages in supporters’ own networks). They also worked toward integrating the innovative uses of these social media and toward redirecting the volunteers reached by these means toward more traditional channels of communication such as the organization’s website:

At the end of last spring, we had a big campaign because the city was trying to cut 26 million dollars of funding for our budget. So we had a big campaign, which we called the “keep your library open” campaign. It involved a lot of online tools. That was very successful. I think we had tens of thousands of people joining our mailing lists and sending letters to their senators and congress people asking for help. (...) A lot of what we were trying to do with Facebook and Twitter and all those other resources was to drive people to our website and to let them know about things that we were trying to accomplish.  
[Education; 2-3]

As social media were being more prominently used in social media practices in nonprofit organizations, social media initiatives were also becoming more formalized. In large nonprofit organizations, central managers created positions (e.g. director of digital media) and teams charged with managing social media. This formalization

signaled that high management had taken notice and interest in the multiple local initiatives related to social media and was trying to spearhead these initiatives. High management's increasing involvement led to more financial and human resources dedicated to social media initiatives. It also generated more reflections upon how local initiatives could be part of the larger, global communications policies of the nonprofit organizations. At the same time, though, it also started to make it more difficult for local CoPs to develop social media initiatives as the latter increasingly had to be formally authorized. As a result, at the end of the observation period, the most innovative social media practices originated from CoPs from the smaller organizations in the sample, that is, from the organizations that had not much formalized yet their social media initiatives.

This section focused on the uses of social media in the New York-centered nonprofit NoP. It detailed how the uses of social media and work practices in the nonprofit NoP changed over time as social media became more prevalent.

### **Grounded theorizing: Changes in work practices with social media in a nonprofit NoP**

Findings from the case study serve as a foundation for a grounded theorization of how changes in work practices unfolded as social media became used in the context of the nonprofit NoP. Changes in work practices with social media involved interrelated processes that were exogenous and endogenous to the nonprofit NoP. Figure 1 depicts some key elements of this conceptualization and what follows provides a narrative of it.

--- Insert figure 1 around here ---

The initially prevalent process entailed changes in work practices originating from a transfer of social media uses from a non-work-related practice domain to the nonprofit

NoP. In the investigated case, the initial uses of social media in the nonprofit NoP came from the import of the budding uses of social media in the leisure practice domain.

This import of practices from leisure to a work environment had several distinctive characteristics. For one, members of the NoP who introduced the social media practices occupied relatively peripheral positions in the NoP and their organizations (e.g. young graduates or volunteers) but were simultaneously already highly engaged in using social media in the other practice domain. As a consequence of their relatively peripheral position, though, the practices of social media in the nonprofit NoP were at first not essential to the NoP. In other words, work practices in the NoP did not change much with the introduction of social media in the NoP. Moreover, and related, the use of social media in the nonprofit NoP reflected the practice domain that inspired them. The first social media uses in the nonprofit NoP therefore mostly reflected the transfer of non-work related practices into a work environment. Social media uses were not initially tailored to the needs of the practices of the nonprofit NoP. This was partly a result of the limitations of the applications available at the time, and partly of the situation of the NoP members who introduced social media in the NoP, as they were not yet fully acquainted with the practices of the NoP. Finally, also because of their peripheral situation in the NoP, those who introduced the use of social media usually had relatively few social connections in the NoP. Accordingly, the use of social media remained at first isolated to specific, localized CoPs and did not spread throughout the NoP.

A second process begun as changes in work practices in the nonprofit NoP became inspired by changes in practices in another NoP, the political NoP. This second process



coincided with new, innovative practices (e.g. of supporters mobilization and fundraising) that originated from the political NoP.

Members of the nonprofit NoP who were also simultaneously engaged in some manner in the political NoP (e.g. as volunteers) introduced these innovative uses of social media in the nonprofit NoP. The changes concerned practices that held a high degree of similarity between the two NoPs. These practices were becoming more essential to the nonprofit NoP and the use of social media also started to affect a larger number of participants in the NoP. Moreover, as more people started to use social media in the context of their daily practices in the nonprofit NoP, two related dynamics unfolded. The first was that the work practices of the nonprofit NoP were adapting to the social media applications that supported them (e.g. the tone and content of communications with external stakeholders started to change). The second was that these applications were in turn changing and becoming more accommodating to the needs of the practices of the nonprofit NoP (e.g. availability of fundraising feature on Facebook).

Moreover, as social media were becoming increasingly integrated into the practices of the nonprofit NoP, managers of nonprofit organizations began to take notice. Social media initiatives were originally highly informal and spontaneously emerged from the bottom up. Over time, however, social media became used to deal with increasingly central aspects of nonprofit practices. This trend led to management's growing awareness and willingness to both capitalize upon and rein in these multiple informal initiatives in organizations. Another characteristic of this second process was that individuals and local CoPs who just started using social media at that time benefited from the learning that had previously taken place and had involved other individuals and CoPs. Therefore, they right

away used social media in relatively central aspects of the nonprofit NoP, revealing a transfer of accumulated experiences with social media in the nonprofit NoP.

A third process began as changes in work practices with social media became endogenous to the nonprofit NoP. In other words, over time, the inspiration for nonprofit NoP members to use social media in new and innovative ways came from within the nonprofit NoP itself. Social media use was becoming increasingly pervasive in many aspects of the work practices of the nonprofit NoP. Moreover, during this stage, the use of social media had widely diffused throughout the nonprofit NoP as more and more individual participants and local CoPs had started to rely upon social media in various aspects of their work.

Furthermore, the new uses of social media were relatively visible to many in the nonprofit NoP. This visibility came partly from existing social relationships among members of the nonprofit NoP. However, members of the nonprofit NoP also increasingly relied upon social media in order to get to know more about other members' innovative use of social media. Social media applications offered members of the nonprofit NoP a built-in window onto what others did with the new applications. They therefore facilitated the sharing of innovative uses of social media in the practices of the nonprofit NoP.

As more work practices started to rely upon the use of social media, the competences that NoP members needed to acquire to work evolved as well. The changes in competences did not translate into an obsolescence of existing competences, but rather in a combination of existing nonprofit practices competences with the new, social media-

related, competences (e.g. transformation of the practices of direct mailing in the nonprofit NoP).

As more work practices in the nonprofit NoP relied upon, and were transformed by, the use of social media, however, most social media initiatives were becoming more formalized in nonprofit organizations. Management had acknowledged of the increasingly extensive reliance on social media use and became more directly involved in initiatives at the organizational level. This had the consequence of giving local CoPs less leeway to innovate with social media in their work practices, as they now often had to report to the central headquarters of their organizations. This trend toward the formalization of the use of social media in nonprofit organizations started to slow down the sharing of innovative uses of social media in the nonprofit NoP.

These three processes of changes in practices of the NoP were also highly influenced by transformations of the social media and, more specifically, by two interrelated aspects of these transformations: innovations in available applications (e.g. introduction of new features, new platforms) and waves of popularity of their platforms (e.g. abandonment of MySpace, growth of Facebook or Twitter). Members of the nonprofit NoP exerted little to no control over these transformations of social media. However, over time, they learned to react to them by being more aware of the frequent innovations in social media and by trying to anticipate the sudden reversals of their popularity. Moreover, as members of the nonprofit NoP became more familiar with social media, they learned to transfer some of the new competences they had acquired in their use of specific applications onto new applications.

## **Discussion and implications**

Social media and, more generally, end-user driven IT, challenge existing theories of IT implementation and use (Majchrzak, 2009). They require that IS researchers adapt their conceptualizations to the original dynamics triggered by these new applications. The case study and grounded theory of this research provide insights that can be incorporated into this new theorizing. After acknowledging the limitations of this research, this section details its implications for the conceptualization of social media uses as well as of the dynamics of NoPs and organizations. It also promotes the extension of the reach of IS research. For each of these aspects, this section suggests promising areas for future research. Finally, it proposes practical implications of this research.

### **Limitations**

By focusing on a single case study, this research did not ambition to generate empirically generalizable findings but, rather, theoretically generalizable ones (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). Specifics of the case study have to be acknowledged in this regard, as they have deeply informed the proposed grounded theorizing. In particular, this research offered a relatively narrow empirical focus on an NoP that was particular because of the geographical proximity of its members. This closeness facilitated familiarity and exchanges among members of the NoP, which might not be the case in larger and looser NoPs. It would therefore be useful for future research to investigate processes of changes in work practices in such NoPs.

Moreover, empirical investigations for this research ended in Spring 2010 even though changes in work practices related to social media uses are still ongoing. Further research is thus needed to extend the investigation period and assess whether the findings of this

research hold in more current contexts and to identify possible new processes of changes in practices.

### **Conceptualizing social media uses**

This research revealed that, with social media, the relationships between top-down and bottom-up implementation of IS have shifted. IS research already successfully demonstrated how traditional IS can rely upon bottom-up as well as top-down implementation processes and how local appropriations of IT may diverge from central management's expectations (Boudreau & Robey, 2005; Ciborra, 2000; Rolland & Monteiro, 2002). What this research discovered was that, with social media, bottom-up initiatives can flourish throughout the organization while at the same time not involving management. Moreover, this research provided evidence that the dynamics of implementation and use get combined with social media and that the respective roles of end-users and IT professionals also get transformed. With social media, end-users have become more active in the implementation process, which implies that IT professionals need to adapt to this new situation. In particular, this new situation challenges the roles of knowledge brokering traditionally held by IT professionals (Pawlowski & Robey, 2004). With social media, end-users seem to be the ones who carry on this knowledge brokering, especially in the dealings of the organization with its environment. In this context, the role of IT professionals changes: rather than acting as knowledge brokers among different parts of the organization, IT professionals become gatekeepers for the organization. They need to ensure that a certain level of coherence is maintained with end-user driven social media implementation and uses. Moreover, in the context of social media, some end-users can initially have a higher knowledge and understanding of the new applications

than IT professionals. The latter therefore have to update their knowledge base to match the fast-changing landscape of social media. They also have to make sure that social media competences get distributed throughout the organization rather than restricted to pockets of highly innovative but isolated uses.

Another insight of this research is related to the importance of adopting a dynamic perspective when investigating social media. Indeed, the obsolescence of social media applications comes fast as new applications replace older ones and as waves of popularity go from one application to the next. A conceptualization of social media uses therefore has to account for the sense of ineluctability yet transient nature of social media. The notion of IT fashions and bandwagons is not new to the IS and management disciplines (see, for instance, (Abrahamson, 1996; Wang, 2010)). However, what is specific with social media is the pace with which these fashions unfold. This faster pace comes from the fact that the implementation of social media does not involve many organizational resources, especially compared to applications such as ERPs that rely upon heavy investments and highly complex implementation processes. By contrast, social media implementation and use can take place very fast. This situation also generates new dilemmas for IT professionals in that they have to learn to distinguish among available applications those that will be discarded early from those whose use will become mainstream and enduring. Moreover, this ineluctability and transient nature of social media leads IT professionals to need to decouple their competences of social media from specific applications, although these competences might have originally emerged from dealing with specific applications.

## **Dynamics of NoPs and organizations with social media**

This research also carried implications for research on NoPs and on organizations.

First, with regard to NoPs, in their seminal article, Brown and Duguid (2001) posited that knowledge and practices flowed in NoPs. They also stated that these dynamics of practice and knowledge flows are intrinsically extra-organizational since they are based on the sharing of work practices rather than on organizational proximity. Yet, there has so far been little dedicated research on these flows of knowledge and practices in NoPs encompassing multiple organizations. Research has so far mostly focused on less complex dynamics taking place intra-organizational NoPs (e.g. Agterberg et al., 2010; Vaast & Walsham, 2009). This paper's investigation of dynamics related to social media contributes to this stream of literature on several, interrelated, grounds. For one, it showed that social media make the transfer of practices relatively transparent in NoPs that encompass multiple organizations, because the use of social media is largely visible on the Internet. Therefore, members of an NoP can more or less easily access what other members of the NoP, regardless of their organizational affiliation, have done with social media. Moreover, social media also makes it easier to share knowledge and practices in an NoP, beyond the boundaries of an organization, for two complementary reasons. The first is that the implementation and use of social media require few of the institutional resources that organizations usually provide professionals. The second is that social media can actually make it more convenient for members of an NoP to connect, communicate and share experiences and initiatives.

Furthermore, the grounded theorizing based on this research provided evidence of specific processes through which work practices change in an NoP with social media. In

particular, it revealed a process through which changes in practices were at first exogenous then became more endogenous and through which social media uses were initially related to peripheral and gradually became related to more central aspects of the practices of the NoP. These processes seemed deeply dependent upon the specifics of social media because of the low cost of implementation and because their original uses were usually for leisure purposes, rather than for work. Future research could examine if other NoPs experience similar processes of changes in work practices with social media.

Second, this research posited that the organizational level of analysis was losing some of its relevance when investigating social media uses and their implications on practices. It therefore proposed that the NoP level was especially relevant to understand dynamics related to changes in work practices with social media uses. The case study supported this assertion but it also revealed that the dynamics of work practices in NoPs with social media have substantial consequences within organizations. In particular, this research holds implications for the understanding of processes of IT adoption and use within organizations. This research unearthed the need for a more nuanced distinction between the periphery and center of the organization when it comes to social media innovation. The case study showed that, in the context of social media, those initially at the forefront of innovations have tended to be relatively peripheral organizational members. The context of the nonprofit NoP has made it especially receptive of these innovations from the periphery since nonprofit organizations have long relied upon interns, young graduates and volunteers as part of their work force. In other words, the “periphery” of nonprofit organizations is relatively wide and recognized by nonprofit managers. By contrast, for-profit organizations, especially large ones, are likely to be less open to



innovation from the periphery (Yanow, 2004). This is a pity since social media require that the organization become attuned to possibly sudden changes in popularity of specific platforms and open to learn from exemplars from other organizations.

In this regard, this research also revealed the need to revise our conceptualization of the dynamic relationships between an organization and its environment. Indeed, with social media, a greater number and variety of stakeholders can engage with organizations. To a certain extent, this consequence of the use of social media could be interpreted as an extension of predictions of organizational change and of increased porosity of the organizational boundaries with IT dating from the mid-1990's (see, for instance, (Fulk & Desanctis, 1995; Hinds & Kiesler, 1995; Lea et al., 1995). However, the organizational consequences of social media use differ from these claims related to previous generations of IT and web applications. With social media, many of the managerial levers of controls of the organizational image can become obsolete. Indeed, since these new applications are virtually free, not only do more stakeholders interact with the organization, but also more organizational members act as de facto representatives of the organization as a whole.

Moreover, the use of social media can lead to new dilemmas for managers with regard to their employees and their NoPs. Indeed, as illustrated in the case study of this paper, members of an NoP who are employed by various organizations can exchange more with social media. To a certain extent, this is beneficial to organizations. For one, best practices are likely to travel through the NoP. Also, NoP members can have access to more knowledge and practices that can help them in their work. At the same time, though, these increased flows in the NoP can also lead to leaks in proprietary knowledge and

practices, making it more difficult for organizations to hold on to their distinctive advantage (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Szulanski, 1996). This situation was especially perceptible in the case of the nonprofit organizations investigated in this research. Even though nonprofit organizations are not directly engaged in competition for customers, they do vie for funds and public attention. In the case study, the growing reliance on social media by members of the nonprofit NoP contributed to the increased “coopetition” (Dowling et al., 1996; Tsai, 2002) among nonprofit organizations, whereby these organizations shared practices and communicated frequently with one another, but also competed more directly. It would be interesting for future research to examine further the consequences of this increased coopetition among organizations as a result of social media uses among members of an NoP, especially in the context of for-profit organizations where competition is more direct.

### **Extending the reach of IS research**

This paper also supports the idea of extending the reach of IS research to include the investigation of IS implementation and use in broader types of organizations and the study of the dynamics of implementation of new applications such as social media.

The IS discipline has periodically engaged in collective reflections regarding its object and boundaries. It has been shown to being susceptible to fashions as well (Baskerville & Myers, 2009). Yet, most IS research has investigated processes taking place in private, for-profit organizations or governmental organizations. It therefore seems important to extend IS research to underexplored territories such as nonprofit organizations. A contribution of this research in this regard has been to take in consideration some of the key specific challenges nonprofit organizations encountered with regard to social media.

This is not a negligible contribution given the importance of the “third sector” (De'eni & Young, 2004; Taylor, 2010; Wether & Berman, 2001; Zhang et al., 2009). Indeed, 1.5 million nonprofit organizations were registered with the Internal Revenue Services and nonprofit organizations accounted for 8.1% of all wages and salaries paid in the U.S. in 2009 (Wing et al., 2010). Moreover, 26.8% of adults reported volunteering some time in nonprofit organizations (Wing et al., 2010). This statistic is interesting in that one can speculate that what happens in nonprofit organizations can have ripple effects far beyond this type of organizations and that, conversely, volunteers can also bring in nonprofit organizations insights from their places of paid employment. Future research could usefully investigate how people who volunteer in nonprofit organizations and work in other types of organizations shape the implementation and use of social media.

Moreover, social media have invaded all types of organizations and contexts and lead to transformation in many fields of social life, not only in the nonprofit sector as seen in this paper, but also, for instance, in the political field (Wattal et al., 2010) or in the academic research and publication process (Kane & Fichman, 2009; Majchrzak, 2009). In this regard, findings from this research revealed that social media force IS researchers to rethink and go beyond traditional distinctions such as between work and play, between online and offline relationships, or between competition and cooperation. This is especially relevant for the IS discipline as these blurred and changing distinctions become more prevalent in and among organizations as younger generations join the workforce (Leidner et al., 2010).

## **Practical implications**

Findings from this research held practical implications, some of which have already been suggested in this section. More specifically, this research showed the need and difficulty for managers to identify and support end-users who play the role of innovators with regard to social media. These innovators might not be ex ante recognized in the organizational chart as likely source of IT innovation. This leads to a delicate tension for management between nurturing exciting social media initiatives with adequate resources and making sure that multiple, local social media initiatives coalesce into a coherent whole. Another dilemma for managers concerns how to stimulate and to rein social media initiatives in the organization in a context in which traditional managerial resources (e.g. budget) become less compelling. Finally, managers should be aware of the benefits and risks associated with social media uses throughout an NoP. These uses can help organizations access useful new practices, but they can also lead to leaks in distinctive knowledge, at a potential loss for competitive advantage.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examined how work practices change with the use of social media in an NoP by investigating the case study of a nonprofit NoP. It developed a grounded theorization of changes in practices that underscored the at first exogenous then endogenous sources of changes in practices and the trend toward changes in gradually more central practices in the NoP with social media. The grounded theorization acknowledged the importance of the changes in the social media applications and their popularity and recognized the organizational-level implications of these changes in practices. This grounded theorization held implications for IS research on IT

implementation and use as well as for the understanding of dynamics taking place in NoPs in organizations. Overall, this research constituted a step toward the understanding and conceptualization of exciting new dynamics of practices as social media and other web-based applications will continue to become more prevalent in work and personal environments.

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## Tables and figures

**Table 1: Interviews performed for this research**

Organizations	Mission	NYC CoPs	Interviews	
			Winter 08 Spring 09	Winter 09 Spring 10
<b>Health 1</b>	Reduce death caused by cardiovascular	local chapters of national organization	5	4

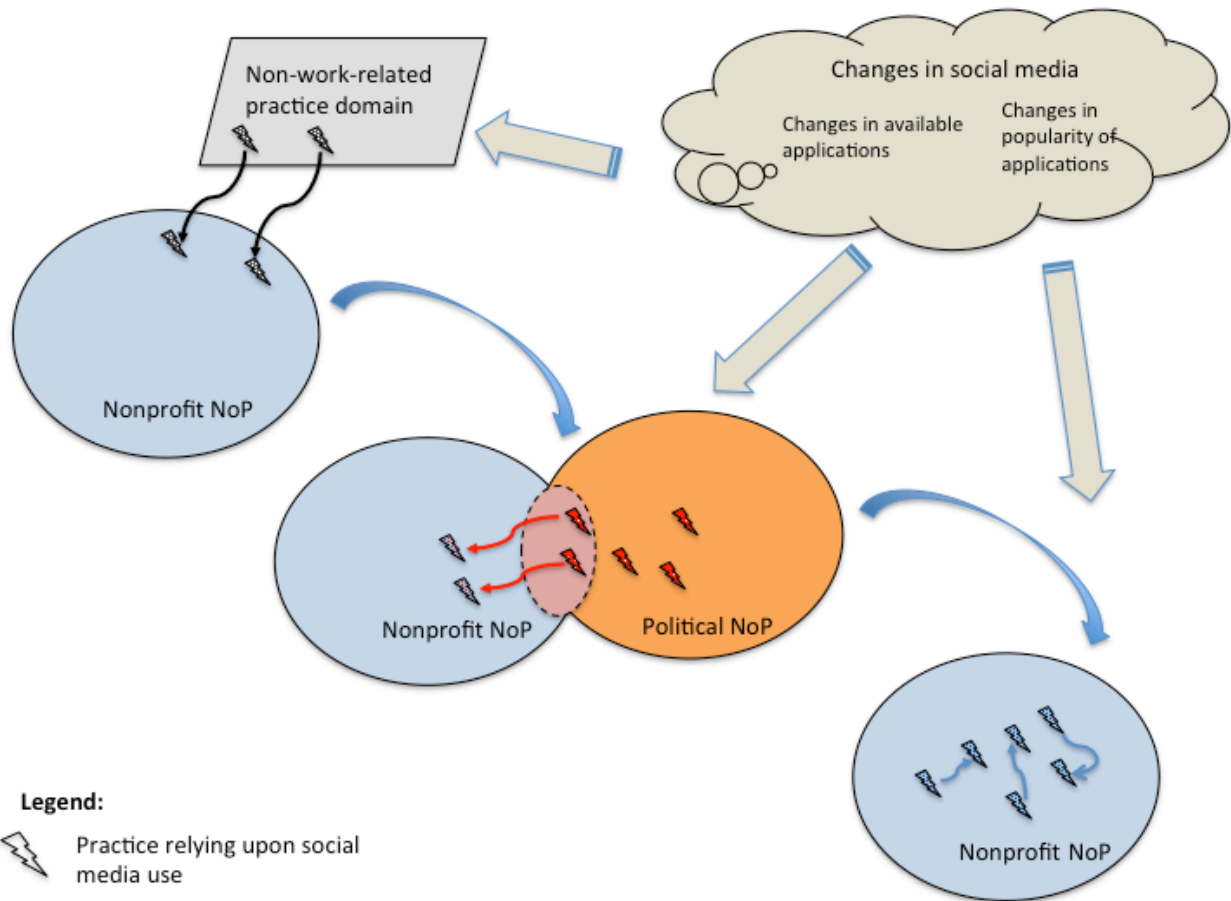


<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Mission</b>	<b>NYC CoPs</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	
			<b>Winter 08 Spring 09</b>	<b>Winter 09 Spring 10</b>
	disease			
<b>Health 2</b>	Support communities affected by Lupus	local chapters of national organization	3	3
<b>Health 3</b>	inform and support arthritis sufferers	local organization, single office	2	2
<b>Human services 1</b>	Help disadvantaged New-Yorkers gain access to equal opportunity	local organization, multiple offices	3	3
<b>Human Services 2</b>	Building affordable housing for people in need	local chapter of international organization	3	3
<b>Education</b>	Inspire lifelong learning in local communities	local organization, multiple offices	4	4
<b>International Affairs</b>	Promotes the development of accessible HIV vaccine throughout the world	local chapter of international organization	3	4
<b>Environment, Animals</b>	Fight cruelty against animals	local chapters of national organization		3
<b>Total</b>			23	26

**Table 2: Key findings from the case study**

	<b>Early adoption and use</b>	<b>Maturation</b>	<b>Appropriation and professionalization</b>
<b>Approx. timeline</b>	2007 – 2008	2008-2009	Mid 2009-
<b>Main social media platforms in use</b>	- MySpace - Facebook	- Facebook - Twitter - YouTube	- Facebook - Twitter - YouTube - LinkedIn - Blogs - Flickr - ...

	<b>Early adoption and use</b>	<b>Maturation</b>	<b>Appropriation and professionalization</b>
<b>Technical affordances in use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connections</li> <li>- Website</li> <li>- E-vites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connections</li> <li>- Website</li> <li>- E-vites</li> <li>- Wall, bulletin board</li> <li>- Fundraising abilities</li> <li>- Interconnections among social media platforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connections</li> <li>- Website</li> <li>- E-vites</li> <li>- Wall, bulletin board</li> <li>- Fundraising abilities</li> <li>- Interconnections among social media platforms</li> <li>- Instant communications</li> </ul>
<b>Nonprofit practices relying upon social media:</b>	<p>Isolated practices rely upon social media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness management (one of many media)</li> <li>- Events invitations</li> </ul>	<p>More nonprofit practices rely upon the use of social media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness management (one of many media)</li> <li>- Event organization and mobilization</li> <li>- Strengthening cause community</li> <li>- Young professionals management</li> </ul>	<p>Use of social media becomes increasingly integrated into core nonprofit practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness management (one of the most prevalent media)</li> <li>- Event organization and mobilization</li> <li>- Strengthening cause community by near-constant interactions with cause supporters</li> <li>- Fundraising</li> <li>- Volunteers' management</li> </ul>
<b>Source of inspiration for social media use</b>	Exogenous: Another practice domain: leisure domain	Exogenous: Another NoP: political campaigns NoP	Endogenous: nonprofit NoP
<b>Source initiating new social media uses in the NoP</b>	Peripheral members of their local CoP (interns, volunteers, newly hired graduates)	Peripheral and more central members of the NoP and their local CoP related to the political campaign NoP	Relatively central members of the NoP and their local CoP with connections in the nonprofit NoP



**Figure 1: Grounded theory of changes in work practices with social media in a nonprofit NoP**