Norsk Tipping's loneliest stakeholder: Crisis, issues, and the stakeholder voice

Audra Diers-Lawson
Leeds Beckett University

Abstract:

In the last six decades, there has been a growing and diverse body of research on crises; however, the voice that is often forgotten in this body of research is that of the whistleblower. In part, this can be attributed to the primary focus of crisis communication research has focused on the organizational perspective – that is how an organization can best respond to a crisis in order to manage stakeholder perceptions of the crisis as well as the organization. However, in the Norsk Tipping case, we have the opportunity to explore whistleblowing as a crisis from the whistleblower's perspective. This rarely explored perspective affords us the opportunity to better understand the complexities of organizational politics, conflicts between personal and professional values, and challenges us to ask what it really means to be socially responsible in a modern organizational environment. The chapter uses the stakeholder relationship management model to explore the interactions between the whistleblower, organizations, and the issues connected to the crisis. Through this exploration, we discover that an organization's well-being is based on its ability to manage many voices, interests, and its obligations.

This is the accepted version to be included in L. Browning, J. Sornes, and P.J. Svenkerud (Eds). *Whistleblowing, Communication and Consequences: Lessons from the Norwegian National Lottery* , Routledge. (pp. 164-182)

> *'The company was suffering from my presence, given what had happened. 'You have done a very good job,' he [the CEO] said, 'but it's time to go too long. Your mission is accomplished.' ... I was puzzled. I was in shock. A month and a half earlier, he had said I was his greatest supporter… Now, I was a liability for the company – not just for him, but for the company. This followed a pattern that I had read about. If you do blow the whistle, you have truly become a liability, no matter what you do.'* Peer Jacob Svenkerud

Throughout this book, we have dipped in and out of Peer Jacob's experience as a whistleblower at Norsk Tipping, yet for me this passage was probably the most emotional. In it there is profound sadness and a clear indication of the utter loneliness of his experience as a whistleblower. In identifying and amplifying the Norsk Tipping's transgression, he triggered the crisis; he became the reason for change in the organization; and ironically he also become the embodiment of what was wrong in Norsk Tipping that led to the crisis, even though he was not at fault. His experience is profound, in part, because in crisis communication we typically hear narratives of recovery and renewal, we hear from internal and external stakeholders about their surprise and dismay at the situation, we hear about what the organization did well and could have done better, and we often hear about the external stakeholders affected by crisis. Yet, we seldom get a glimpse into the employee experience, their decisions to stay silent or blow the whistle, and what happens after the crisis emerges to them (Chen & Lai, 2014; Edwards, Lawrence, & Ashkanasy, 2016; Heide & Simonsson, 2015).

This underscores a point that Frandsen and Johansen (2016) made suggesting that crises are challenging because they represent the intersection of many stakeholder voices and perspectives on an organization and situation. Thus, this chapter's purpose is to explore whistleblowing from a crisis perspective and the whistleblower as a vital stakeholder whose duality of experience as an influencer of and being influenced by the crisis reveals new insights into our understanding of crisis and crisis communication. In short, Peer's experience provides a more complete understanding into the complexity of crises in general, as well as the unique components of crises when whistleblowing is involved. It helps us to better understand the relationships between crisis issues, stakeholders, and the organization are multi-layered and fluid. For example, in a case like this, the question of blame attribution is both easy and difficult to answer. It is easy because it is a transgression – a situation where the organization has clearly done something wrong (Diers-Lawson, 2017a). Yet, because it has also been triggered by the whistleblower, other stakeholders – both within and outside the company – may not view him as a hero; rather, they may view the whistleblower as a villain … or at least a problem. This makes blame attribution less of a question of the facts of a situation and more of a question of perception and competing interests. Thus, Peer's account of his experience as a whistleblower provides an invaluable example of competing stakeholder interests in the crisis context. To better understand the Norsk Tipping case and challenges of competing stakeholder interests in crises, I frame whistleblowing within the crisis context, discuss a stakeholder relationship management approach to understanding whistleblowing, and discuss Peer's experience throughout to help to unpack the difficulties in managing whistleblowing from a crisis perspective.

Whistleblowing in the Crisis Context

From the first formal study of crises and crisis communication in the mid-20th century to the turn of the 21st century, a crisis was generally thought of as a, "…low probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made quickly" (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 60). This definition of crisis was supported by the body of research that had emerged throughout the previous 40 years. Over time, both practitioners and academics also recognized that crises are also increasingly ill-structured and complex (Mitroff, Alpaslan, & Green, 2004), particularly in an increasingly global and connected world.

However, because of the greater volume of research, diversity of theoretical perspectives, and internationalization in crisis communication over the last 15 years or so, how we define a crisis has also evolved (Diers-Lawson, 2017a). Instead of thinking of crises and low probability and high impact events with ambiguous causes and outcomes, we now typically think of crises as, "untimely but predictable events that have actual or potential consequences for stakeholders' interests as well as the reputation of the organization" (Heath & Millar, 2004, p. 2). This means that while Pearson and Clair's (1998) definition of crisis describes some types of crisis, what we understand to be a crisis requires a more sophisticated understanding of the connection between risk, triggers, and stakeholder impact. As such, the precipitating events causing crises to emerge can range from circumstances entirely out of an organization's control to the careless mistakes of individuals within an organization, to systematic break-downs or inefficiencies, and many circumstances in between (Argenti, 2002; King, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Reilly, 1987). A modern understanding of crisis provides a strong conceptual underpinning for understanding the Norsk Tipping case helping us to understand that while many crises are predictable and avoidable, the evolution of those crises and their impact on different stakeholders remains damaging for both the organization and the stakeholders.

The Norsk Tipping case also helps to demonstrate three characteristics of crises that are consistent no matter precipitating events causing the crisis. *First, crises are inherently public in nature* (Moore, 2004). The Norsk Tipping case provides a prime illustration of the public nature of crises. As the material crisis connected to financial mismanagement began to emerge and then as information about the whistleblowing also emerged, it was played out in the Norwegian press, the local community, and the broader national community. Additionally, given the company's relative standing in its local community and the potential implications of it, there was little respite for the company or Peer.

Second, while crises happen to or because of an organization, its members do not exist in isolation. Crises affect people – people within the organization as well as the community, country, and region(s) in which it operates. This means that crisis management and crisis communication should always be focused on the people and groups with an interest in the organization and its activities – that is its stakeholders (Freeman, 1999). The Norsk Tipping crisis was emotional and challenging for Peer, Norsk Tipping, the local community, and certainly a network of organizations affected by the situation. In Peer's narrative, this is why we see the often times contradictory praise, condemnation, and questioning of his actions – each stakeholder involved was considering the crisis and his or her actions relative to their own interests.

Third, the core stake at risk in a crisis is the relationship between an organization and its stakeholder(s). If these relationships fail, the outcomes of that failure can range from reputational damage to the failure of the organization and/or its mission. Likewise, if the relationship is strengthened, then an organization can prosper despite the crisis – or perhaps even because of it. Herein lays one of the inherent contradictions of a whistleblowing crisis. Where Peer's work and sacrifice as a whistleblower was celebrated by many stakeholders – mostly externally, internally he became the troublemaking 'dark knight' but more importantly, he represented a liability for Norsk Tipping – not only out of the fear from colleagues that he was a troublemaker but also because from a representational standpoint. One could assume Norsk Tipping believed it would be more difficult for the company itself to move forward from the crisis so long as he remained an employee.

Yet, despite his often painful and emotional journey, Peer is also able to step outside of himself as a whistleblower to analyze the situation, the organizational challenges, and reflect on the decision-making process that saw him emerge as a whistleblower. In their analysis of the decision-making processes for whistleblowing, Chen and Lai (2014) found that the intention to blow the whistle represented a relatively rational ethical decision-making framework where the whistleblower balanced the moral intensity of the situation against the potential harms and social pressures that confronted them after signaling organizational transgressions. These findings are consistent with a number of studies examining the employee perspective on whistleblowing finding that organizational and contextual factors shape employee perceptions, emotion, and ultimately predict whistleblowing or silence in the face of transgressions (Edwards et al., 2016; Grimm, Choo, Horvath, & Nitta, 2016; Liu, Liao, & Wei, 2015; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). In Peer's story, we see the internal conflict play out between the categorical imperative he felt to be a socially responsible advocate and what it meant to be in the organization. His advocacy meant that his perception of being a good team member was not the same as how others in Norsk Tipping defined it and these conflicting value systems took their toll on his ability to manage his professional and interpersonal relationships within the organization.

This case also provides an important and often ignored narrative about transgressions in organizations – the emotional journey that employees take through the crisis, no matter whether they are whistleblowers or trying to make sense of the events as they unfold. In crisis communication, we often focus exclusively on external stakeholders ignoring the employee voices and perspectives, which are vital to managing issues and crises alike (Heide & Simonsson, 2015; Mazzei, Kim, & Dell'Oro, 2012; Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2014). As such, the question of how an organization could manage a crisis may be better understood in the context of whistleblowing as it affords an opportunity to evaluate the quality of relationships between organizations and many different kinds of stakeholders during and after a crisis emerges into the public view.

Whistleblowing and Stakeholder Relationship Management

If we are to talk about whistleblowing within a crisis and stakeholder framework, then it is important to better understand the complexity and nature of the voices and perspectives stakeholders can represent. At the simplest level, we should think of stakeholders as those groups and/or people who can affect or be affected by an organization (Freeman, 1994). As straight-forward as this seems, the degree to which stakeholder voices and perspectives are integrated with organizational objectives and behaviors will depend on the nature of the relationship between them. Much of the foundational work in stakeholder theory in organizational communication (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980; Frooman, 1999; Henriques & Sadorsky, 1999; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997; Rowley, 1997) identifies the *dimensions of interorganizational relationships* as characterized by five factors.

First, *relational valence* describes the positive to negative affect between an organization and the stakeholder (Atkins & Lowe, 1994). Unfortunately, for whistleblowers, the relationship can be very adversarial between their organization (including other employees) and themselves. For example, Peer's experience of being characterized as a 'dark knight', the disturbing efforts to not only root out the whistleblower – before he was outed – as well as the seemingly extended efforts to push him out of Norsk Tipping once the organization was in a post-crisis recovery mode all clearly demonstrate the negative valence whistleblowers can face as stakeholders.

Second, is the *history of interaction* between organizations and particular stakeholders that allows for structures and rituals of interaction to emerge (Harris, 1994; Jennings, Artz, Gillin, & Christodouloy, 2000; Scott & Lane, 2000; Trice & Beyer, 1993). As an illustration of the employee history in Norsk Tipping, Peer described the organizational culture as being subdued where those employees who asked too many questions 'could face consequences', citing the reason that his predecessor was removed was because he questioned the 'company's' approach too much.

The third factor focuses on an organization's assessment of a stakeholder group's *legitimacy* – that is its recognizability, reputation, and/or expertise relevant to the organization's core work (Haley, 1996; Suchman, 1995). For example, Norsk Tipping's go along, get along culture was supported by other stakeholders like unions where Peer described the unions as 'loyal soldiers' who did not challenge management suggests that dissenting views, voices, and interests in Norsk Tipping were delegitimized.

Fourth, the *power* that a stakeholder has to influence the organization or its success affects their relationship with the organization (Heath, 1994; Mitchell et al., 1997). In the Norsk Tipping case, Peer described his early days of acculturation in the organization where it became clear that even though he and a number of external stakeholders would have welcomed changes to the sponsorship programs as well as Norsk Tipping's approach to gaming that these stakeholders perspectives were not valued by the company. Therefore, their influence was limited and early opportunities to avoid the larger crises to follow were not taken.

The final factor that can change the nature of the relationship is the *urgency* of a stakeholder's interest in the organization. Urgency refers to the extent to which a stakeholder's interest or influence is time sensitive or critical to the organization's well-being at a particular time (Connolly, et al., 1980; Mitchell., et al., 1997; Scott & Lane, 2000). As the crisis unfolded and Peer was revealed to be the whistleblower, the Norsk Tipping's CEO's motivation to discuss the situation with the rest of the employees changed. Before Peer was revealed, he had to keep his identification as a whistleblower secret; once he was identified by the Norwegian financial newspaper as the whistleblower, the CEO had to engage the employees directly about it. Unfortunately, where the CEO had previously been supportive of Peer's role as a whistleblower, in Peer's mind, his actions were framed to the employees in terms of the 'complications' the whistleblowing would cause Norsk Tipping instead of as the opportunity to learn and improve. This important departure in the CEO's narrative and sensemaking about the crisis from Peer's point of view marked a change in the nature of their relationship based on the urgency of addressing Peer's role as both an employee and as the whistleblower.

Complexity within Organizational Environments

One of the vital lessons learned with Peer's experience is how complex, challenging, and changeable crises are once we begin to consider the environments in which organizations operate. Organizations and organizational actors are subject to a lot of pressures because they serve multiple stakeholders at any given time (Connolly, et al., 1980; Frooman, 1999). These stakeholders range vastly and can include groups like employees, customers or clients, regulators, competitors, and the like (see Figure 1 for examples).

Figure 1. Examples of some of Norse Tipping's stakeholders

But even these interactions between organizations and stakeholders do not happen in isolation; rather in a web of relationships (Rowley, 1997). In fact, Fombrun (1982) suggests that we should think of an organization's environment as a series of overlapping networks that help to explain why organizations act, do not act, and even how they perform. Furthermore, Heath (1994) argues that what an organization is and does is really just an outcome of all managing all of the interests of the stakeholders it values. Thus, the role and purpose of communication is to help an organization and its stakeholders enact and manage their relationships (Heath, 1994).

However, as Peer's experience demonstrates, stakeholders not only demand different forms of engagement but have vastly different expectations of the organization as well. So where Frandsen and Johansen (2016) describe crises as the intersection of different voices and perspectives, we should probably be thinking of crises as cases where organizations have failed to meet at least one important stakeholder's expectations of the organization. Sometimes these arise because of competitive stakeholder interests. In the case of Norsk Tipping, a core purpose of the company was to serve the public interest by funding and supporting charities, sport, and public works across Norway and beyond. The company's core value proposition was social responsibility. Yet, this could be at odds with some of the activities that it conducted. For example, gaming funded a lot of the good work that Norsk Tipping was trying to do. However, Peer flagged the challenge of managing gaming and the risks of gambling addiction, which is a good example of these potentially contradictory stakeholder interests – it was not enough to use the proceeds from gaming to support socially responsible ends, but Norsk Tipping also needed to be socially responsible in the process of earning those proceeds.

Stakeholder Relationship Management Model

If we think about the nature of crises, competing voices and interests, and the sometimes contradictory environment in which organizations operate, then the importance of stakeholder relationship management is an inherent part of what it means for organizations to be stewards of stakeholder interests. To help organizations manage their relationships, we can think about the interplay between organizations, their stakeholders, and issues relevant to them as a tricky ‘love triangle’ to build, maintain, or repair relationships with different stakeholders. Yet, unlike interpersonal relationships, stakeholder relationships are necessarily based on perceived vested interests between the organization and its stakeholder(s). Moreover, as Heath (2002) argues to be ethical, the relationship should be mutually beneficial. This provides a concrete basis for evaluating an organization’s actions relative to its social obligations – especially in the case of an organization whose value proposition centers on social value. Thus, the stakeholder relationship management model provides a heuristic for better understanding the intersection of voices connected to the emergence, management, and recovery from crises (Diers-Lawson, 2017b; Diers, 2012).

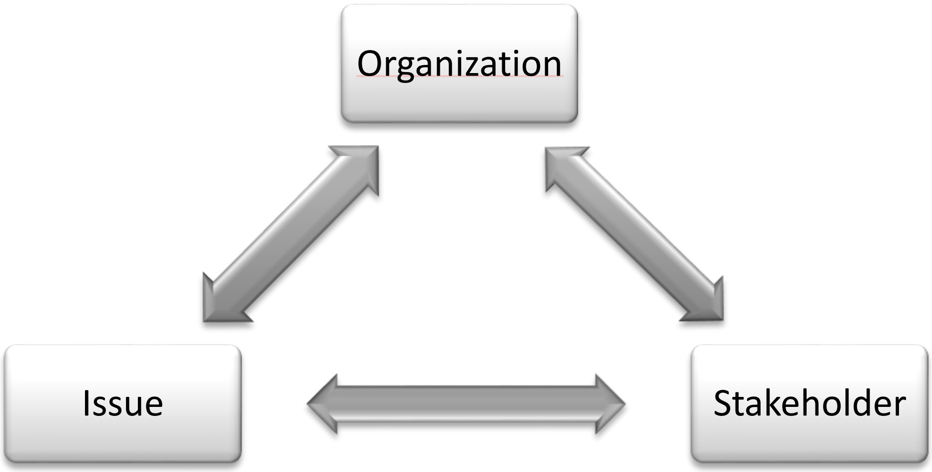

Figure 2. The Stakeholder Relationship Management Model

The stakeholder relationship model (SRM) provides a way to organize previous research establishing that attitudes (Claes, Rust, & Dekimpe, 2010), public pressure from interested stakeholders in the face of crises (Piotrowski & Guyette, 2010; Uccello, 2009), and engagement with stakeholders (Hong, Yang, & Rim, 2010) are all likely to influence evaluations and behavioural intentions towards organizations (Diers, 2012). For stakeholders, issues can connect to anything from the quality of the products or services that the organization offers to related topics the stakeholders care about like health care or the environment. Issues are a lot like the baggage that comes with any relationship. If we can imagine that issues represent risks as well as opportunities for organizations, then stakeholder judgments about organizations are not only about whether they like the organization’s products, services, policies, customer service and so on, but also about how stakeholders evaluate the organization's performance relative to issues and topics that also matter to the stakeholders. In Peer's case, no matter whether he was discussing the CEO's seemingly extravagant expenditures of Norsk Tipping's money on fishing junkets, the uneven distribution of resources to support the local community compared to the rest of Norway, or the ethics of responsible gaming the question about what the company stood for was directly connected to his understanding of social responsibility. Likewise, as he blew the whistle and involved external stakeholders in the case they came to the same kinds of conclusions. This meant that there was a disconnection between Norsk Tipping's behaviors and its stakeholders' expectations. We can more directly unpack the violations of expectations and relationship problems by examining the three core relationships threatened by the crisis.

Relationship between the organization and key issues. The first relationship focuses on that between the organization and issues. Stakeholders make judgments about the nature of the connection between the organization and issue(s) connected to the crisis. For example, one of the primary judgments is *blame or responsibility attribution* emerging from the research on attribution theory (Weiner, 1985, 2006). Blame attribution is an evaluation of the degree to which stakeholders believe that an organization has control over a particular issue. The more responsibility that a stakeholder attributes to the organization, the more likely they are to ascribe more definitive expectations on the organization with regards to the issue. Blame attribution is one of the most important predictors of stakeholder attitudes about an organization after a crisis and is a core concept in situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2004; Jeong, 2008; Schwarz, 2008) but is also applied in other related crisis communication research connecting to other factors like corporate social responsibility, crisis history, and ethics (Kim, 2013; Ping, Ishaq, & Li, 2015).

Yet, in the context of whistleblowing, blame attribution is complex. Certainly, there is a material crisis – in Norsk Tipping's case, the corruption and financial problems emerging from Peer's whistleblowing. However, throughout the interviews with Peer, even though there are clear organizational transgressions from the company, there was a considerable amount of attribution of blame directed away from Norsk Tipping itself. For example, there was clear blame attributed to the role of the whistleblower throughout the crisis both internally and externally. Early on, internally, a concern was that the whistleblower would make Norsk Tipping look 'foolish' if the situation was not handled in "very brute fashion" and then as the crisis emerged, the former CEO described the whistleblower externally as a "hidden enemy running after me with a rusty knife". However, even in the post-crisis recovery phase, it seemed Peer was viewed as having betrayed the members of his leadership team and ultimately a liability to the organization. Beyond the blame attribution connected to Peer as a whistleblower, his effectiveness as a communications director was also indicated as a reason that the crisis emerged – not only internally but also by the media, '…I was criticized by the media for not taking command in the communication of this [the situation]…The communication department at Norsk Tipping no longer had the faith of the Board to communicate…by themselves.'

Another challenge to the evaluation of the relationship between Norsk Tipping and the crisis involves potential missed opportunities to make changes that would have mitigated Peer's need to blow the whistle on the company. Though Norsk Tipping had enjoyed a very positive reputation for years, as the whistleblowing case emerged, external stakeholder judgments about the company's *positive intention, concern, and commitment* to social responsibility could begin to be questioned, which indicted the authenticity of its intention in serving the public interest (Huang, 2008). Positive intention is often connected with hygiene-motivation theory (Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, & Manolis, 2014), which suggests that if a stakeholder believes that an organization's intentions are positive when it comes to social responsibility then it benefits the organization's reputation. However, if stakeholders believe the organization's interest in an issue is inauthentic, then it does not matter how good the organization's behaves, it is unlikely to positively influence the organization's reputation. Peer discussed this concept throughout the interviews in terms of his own interest in social responsibility, missed opportunities to change stakeholder perceptions after the commissioned survey in Norway, the evolution of his outing as the whistleblower, and the former CEO's criticism of him.

Finally, *clear association* also matters in influencing stakeholder perceptions of the connection between the organization and issue(s) connected to the crisis. If stakeholders believe there is a logical connection between an issue and the organization's core business or mission, then the organization's interest in the issue is more compelling to the stakeholder and can thus change the stakeholder's judgement about the organization, particularly after a crisis emerges (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015; Coombs & Holladay, 2015; De Bruycker & Walgrave, 2014; Kernisky, 1997; Knight & Greenberg, 2002). And herein is where Peer's position at Norsk Tipping became a liability after the crisis in the eyes of his CEO. So long as he was associated with the organization, it seemed the CEO believed he would be a liability to the company overcoming the issue and moving beyond it. Internally, if Peer remained he would not only be the dark knight and a troublemaker, but his loyalty would be constantly questioned. Externally, the CEO seemed to believe that Peer would be a reminder of the problems where Norsk Tipping wanted to move on.

The relationship between the stakeholder and issues. From a risk or crisis management perspective, the more intensely stakeholders feel connected to issues, the more likely those issues are going to trigger the stakeholders to act. Yet, in crisis communication research, this relationship is only beginning to emerge as an important predictor. This is why Peer's experience and whistleblowing provides a more sophisticated understanding of how stakeholders are connected to the issues affecting them and the organization.

Initially, the stakeholder's *emotional involvement* with issues is vital to understand. At their heart, crises are incredibly emotional for internal and external stakeholders alike with a lot of emotionally charged communication, but regrettably a dearth of research examining the emotional experiences, trauma, and labor connected to crises (van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). Fortunately, there is an increasing recognition of the impact that emotion plays in the outcomes of crises. In Norsk Tipping's case, we are afforded an important view of the company's culture and the emotional journey that Peer took over the several years. Too often, we only consider the immediate public nature of crises without considering the events leading up to the public interest in a crisis or the fallout from the crisis for critical stakeholders. Through Peer's story, we can understand the culture of 'stability' in Norsk Tipping where he says that "turnover was virtually non-existing. People came and they stayed throughout their lives." In this kind of an organizational environment, as Peer started work and brought new ideas and criticisms of the status quo, he was already set up for ridicule and some element of social exclusion as being the 'man in black or Prince of Darkness'. However, despite some elements of social exclusion he also found support within the company and was encouraged to stay on and discusses the intersection of his own personal values, conflicts, and stress management. In this way, his emotional involvement as an employee and then as a whistleblower made his connection to the issues relevant to the crisis even more important.

For organizations, this is an important lesson – those stakeholders both internal and external – who feel stronger emotional connections with the issues are more likely to make sacrifices and less likely to be easily ‘managed’ with either accommodative or defensive responses to the crisis (Diers-Lawson, 2017b; Diers-Lawson & Pang, 2016). Yet, in the context of whistleblowing, the bullying, pressure, and loss of social support that Peer experienced suggests that the emotional connection between the whistleblower and the issues related to whistleblowing require a unique strength in order for the whistleblower to endure the external pressure.

To help understand Peer’s experience, his reactions to the situation were influenced judgments related to their *perceived susceptibility, severity of the issue, beliefs, demographics, and perceived efficacy regarding the issue* (Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988). These kinds of judgments influence stakeholder reactions to not only the situation but also the organization. In relating his narrative, Peer worried about ‘becoming a very unpopular person right away’ and described a building sense of fear and lack of efficacy early on that silenced him. In particular beliefs that his recommendations would be viewed negatively because of Norsk Tipping’s close connection and favorable support of the local community, the CEO’s approach to using Peer to solve problems, and his belief that he would lose his ability to be an advocate in the company if he lost favor with the CEO all influenced his relationship to the issues he was facing in the company. However, as Norsk Tipping’s financial issues began to emerge internally, Peer seemed to feel both an indirect pressure as well as empowerment to act because of a growing sense of dissatisfaction from his colleagues and ‘an increasing number of people’ who talked to him suggesting that ‘something’s got to happen’. It seemed like the mood Peer had changed that if action was not taken, the company would be placed at risk and the ‘CEO would be exposed’.

This feeling that he and his colleagues experienced, reflects the changeable nature of the relationships between stakeholders, issues, and the organization. From the internal perspective, the balance between the moral intensity to act and pragmatic concerns about support and social isolation that Peer initially felt began to give way as he received feedback from his colleagues and the concerns about inefficacy about the social responsibility of particular programs began to dim in comparison to the overall need to take action to preserve the organization’s mission is the kind of rational-ethical decision making that Chen and Lai (2014) discussed in prompting potential whistleblowers to take action. In this way, the value that Peer and his colleagues placed on the organization’s survival changed the perceived susceptibility, severity, and inefficacy of problems they all had known about for some time in order to activate Peer’s motivation to blow the whistle. In part, this was also in anticipation of how the relationship between the financial issues, Norsk Tipping, and other stakeholders would change if or when external stakeholders learned what was happening inside the company.

To this point, I have discussed the relationship between the stakeholders and issues primarily from an internal point of view, but this concern about how other stakeholders would react to the ‘realities’ Norsk Tipping was facing also reveals the importance of the many different voices *existing attitudes, social norms, and perceived situational control* as a predictor for action (Aizen, 2005). For any stakeholder – inside or outside an organization – the perceptions of uncertainty related to the issue and the organization’s actions regarding the issue not only affect stakeholders’ emotional reactions to crises but also their attitudes and actions towards the organization in crisis (Jin, Liu, Anagondahalli, & Austin, 2014; McDonald & Cokley, 2013; Mou & Lin, 2014). Peer’s narrative provides insight on a number of different stakeholder perceptions, concerns, and existing attitudes about Norsk Tipping and its social obligations. When Peer described the uneven distribution of resources between the community in which the company was embedded compared to those communities further away, the disparity of support for the local hockey team sponsorship compared with the agreement with the Norwegian Hockey Association, and the overall "loose operations everywhere...that detract from the money and efficiency of the organization and…its larger goals," it suggested that the existing reputation with other Norsk Tipping stakeholders was vulnerable.

In fact, despite the internal desire for stability and a dominant narrative emphasizing the company's strength, once different stakeholder perspectives were considered, there were a number of different stakeholder views on the issues that would ultimately trigger the crisis for Norsk Tipping. Had the company been more willing to listen to different viewpoints, they may have made different decisions before the crisis was finally triggered. For example, the research Peer contracted on gaming as well as the annual report that directly discussed the challenge of balancing the social risks of gaming with the social benefit of the money gaming produced provided early indicators that different stakeholders had divergent evaluations of Norsk Tipping's social performance. Yet, the sharp difference between the internal and external reception that Peer received for this annual report that revealed much about the company's vulnerabilities with different stakeholder attitudes towards the company and its approach to meeting its mission. From an issues management perspective each of these moments of reflection, research, or conversation revealed an opportunity for Norsk Tipping to change and to avoid the crisis. Yet, when we understand how the internal stakeholders like the CEO, other employees, and unions were resistant to action or change, we can begin to better understand that early warning signs and different stakeholder voices are often not recognized until crises are triggered. By examining the relationship between the stakeholder and the issue, we can also better appreciated how Peer's experiences provide a real-life example of the tensions that push a whistleblower to act, especially when they understand it will not be in their own personal interests, and is likely to come at some costs, to do so.

The relationship between organizations and stakeholders. Peer's experience also points out that after a crisis, stakeholders – especially whistleblowers – often find that the crisis intensifies changes in their attitudes about the organization and their relationship to it. In the context of crisis communication stakeholders' attitudes towards organizations, especially those in crisis, have been well-studied in crisis communication research (Diers, 2012). Often treated as an outcome of a crisis, these judgments have been assessed across multiple fields of study from communication and marketing to industry-specific studies in such different areas like health care and tourism. One of the critical concepts predicting the quality of the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders is the organization's reputation (Benoit, 1995; Carroll, 2009). Thus, there is considerable work in public relations and crisis communication more directly that explore topics like the impact of a favorable pre-crisis reputation in protecting an organization's reputation during and after a crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015), the role of the media and other external groups in influencing an organization's reputation during crises (Einwiller, Carroll, & Korn, 2010), and the growing influence of social media on an organization's reputation in the context of crises (Brown & Billings, 2013; Ott & Theunissen, 2015; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013) to name just a few ways that reputation is connected with stakeholder evaluations of organizations.

Yet, one of the reasons why the CEO and other board members and employees within Norsk Tipping were resistant to Peer's recommendations was because the company had long enjoyed an incredibly positive reputation for the work that it did and the environment that offered its employees. This case can demonstrate that an extended positive reputation can, itself, create the vulnerability of complacency for organizations where the decision-makers believe they can act with impunity. Certainly, as I have already discussed, these attitudes of complacency paired with transgressions on the part of the organization can lead to whistleblowing, but the strongly positive reputation can itself also create a risk to an organization. Coombs and Holladay (2015) explain that stakeholder expectations of organizations that are consistently viewed as 'socially responsible' are high so that if such an organization commits a transgression against stakeholders' trust, the violation of the company's core value proposition – that is socially responsible – can create even more risk to the company. As Peer explains – it is important for the company to practice what it preaches.

The SRM argues that one of the reasons for Norsk Tipping pay better attention to the social responsibility of its practices to earn money, not just distribute it was that the crisis itself can threaten the socially responsible value proposition for an organization by fundamentally changing stakeholders' *perceived knowledge* of the organization; in short, crises can call into question what stakeholders believe they know to be 'true' about an organization (Diers, 2012). Peer discusses the importance of social responsibility and ethical behavior extensively in his account of his experience with Norsk Tipping talking about multiple bottom lines for many organizations – that a good reputation increases an organization's value and this is what helps to guide stakeholder perceptions of whether the company is fundamentally trustworthy (Freberg & Palenchar, 2013).

In part, evaluations of the relationship between the organization and stakeholder are made based on stakeholder judgments about whether or not the organization's and stakeholders' values are congruent (Koerber, 2014). What became clear throughout Peer's experience was the disconnect between the values that most of Norsk Tipping's external stakeholders expected the company to embody and the internal value judgments guiding the organization's actions. For example, when the annual report came out discussing the need for Norsk Tipping to balance its different levels of obligations (e.g., with gaming promotion vs. gambling addiction), Peer reflected that "I got so much crap from the others in the CEO meeting…and, of course, the external feedback on the annual report was extremely good. I mean even the Minister (of cultural affairs within Norway) told me that…but it was not very well-received internally." But even as knowledge of the crisis broadened and his work as a whistleblower became more public, this disconnect between the broader community reaction to his actions compared with the local community and Norsk Tipping revealed a stark difference between the values of the internal and local stakeholders compared to Peer's values and seemingly those of the broader Norwegian community. This lack of value alignment belies the different self-interests of Norsk Tipping and many of its internal stakeholders, the local community that had disproportionately benefitted from the company's behaviors over the years compared with Peer's social responsibility focus, that of the government, and broadly that of the larger national community in which Norsk Tipping lived.

At its heart then, we can better understand what a crisis is for an organization – it is a discrepancy in the expectations of an organization's behaviors and those of its stakeholders who are able to most affect the organization. Moreover, it can be characterized as a change in the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. This is what makes the whistleblower a challenging and lonely stakeholder – they have the power to fundamentally affect an organization and even its surrounding community so long as their actions are aligned with a larger community's values. But what Peer's case at Norsk Tipping also suggests is that whistleblowing would not be so necessary if an organization viewed itself in relation to its stakeholders and the issues that affect both of them. This case demonstrates the tragedy of missed opportunities for organizations to manage their issues. The problems that Norsk Tipping faced were certainly precipitated by the CEO's financial mismanagement of the organization, but it was reinforced by a broader culture that rejected different voices, innovation, and risk assessment while valuing loyalty as the unquestioning acceptance of the CEO and Board's decision-making. These conditions make any organization, but most especially those who define themselves by the value proposition of social responsibility, ripe for crisis because they forget that the organization's well-being is based on its ability to manage many voices, interests, as well as its social obligations.

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