Cultivating Creativity

Implications of transformational changes on creative process engagement

By

Antonia Davin & Sara Ericsson

May 2019

MSc Managing People, Knowledge and Change

Lund University School of Economics and Management

Supervisor

Stephan Schaefer

Examiner

Roland Paulsen

Abstract

The study aims to develop a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect employees' creative process engagement. By conducting a single case study at a technology organization that has been undergoing several transformational changes over the last decade, we have tried to reach our aim. Adopting an interpretive approach, we have investigated our research problem by conducting semi-structured interviews with 17 employees at our case organization. These interviews have let us capture the employees' perception and experience of their situation. Our findings suggest that the change has led to a perceived psychological contract breach, that has decreased some employees' engagement, while others still engage in creative processes. Challenging the theory, we suggest two explanations for why employees are still inclined to engage. Firstly, the creative process engagement seems to lie outside of their psychological contract with the organization, thus their engagement is not affected when the focal contract is breached. Secondly, employees' who still engage seem to have a high level of creative self-efficacy, indicating that when creative self-efficacy is high, it is more influential on creative process engagement than a psychological contract breach. The suggested explanations both challenge and add to current theory on creative process engagement. We end by suggesting relevant further research on the subject of creative process engagement.

Key words: creative process engagement, transformational change, psychological contract breach, creative self-efficacy

Acknowledgments

Firstly, we would like to thank our supervisor, Stephan Schaefer, for all the support and guidance that you have provided us in the work with this thesis. Your expertise within the field has been invaluable for our progress and your dedication and engagement in helping us throughout the process is truly appreciated.

Secondly, we want to thank our contact persons at TechAB who enabled us to conduct this study. We are very thankful for the opportunity to deepen our knowledge within the field of creativity and innovation together with you. Especially, thank you for giving us full access to the organization and all the fantastic events that you organize, it has truly helped us in the process of getting to know TechAB as an organization. Additionally, the generosity and support that you have provided us with during this process was beyond our imagination and made these last couple of months a true pleasure.

Thirdly, we would like to thank all of the employees at TechAB who agreed to participate in our interviews and share their experiences with us. Without you, this thesis would not have been possible, and we are very grateful for your engagement.

Lastly, we want to thank all of our friends and family members, who have cheered us on during this process and provided us with support.

Antonia Davin & Sara Ericsson

Lund, May 2019

1. Introduction

Headlines like "*How to kill creativity*" (Amabile, 1998), "*Ten ways organizations kill innovation*" (Ashkenas, 2013) and "*How companies kill creativity*" (Fisher, 2013) have been present in the press for several years and yet, there still does not seem to exist a clear solution to the problem of killing creativity. With the growing importance of creativity and innovation for organizational survival (Storey and Salaman, 2005; Puccio, 2017), scholars increasingly argue that organizations' competitive advantage today, is their employees (Jena and Memon, 2018; Amabile, 1998). The growing dynamic and global environment for businesses entail rapid changes in technology and increased competition for products and services, which demand organizations to be innovative in order to stay competitive in their markets (Agars, Kaufmann, Deane & Smith, 2012). This issue further demands that organizations are structured and designed to facilitate creative thinking amongst their employees (Storey and Salaman, 2005), as individual creativity is, by many authors, seen as a first step towards innovation (Amabile, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Thus, having an engaged and creative workforce who can generate new ideas can, therefore, be argued to be of crucial value for organizations in today's environment in order to ensure viability and growth (Liao & Chun, 2016). Thus, an understanding of how to facilitate employees' engagement in creative processes is of the greatest importance for organizations that aim to survive in the increasingly competitive and changing environment.

The field of research on creativity and innovation is extensive and broad. However, only a small segment of it is focused on the management of creativity and innovation and on how organizations can work to understand creative behavior (Storey & Salaman, 2005). The meanings of creativity and innovation are multifaceted within the literature which entails the need to define the concepts, in order to ensure a shared understanding of the terms. We will adopt the definition of creativity as the production of novel and useful ideas by individuals or small groups, and the definition of innovation as the implementation of creative ideas (Amabile, 1988; George, 2007; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). These definitions further perceive idea generation on an individual level as a precondition to organizational innovation. To stay innovative, organizations, therefore, need to understand employees' reasons for getting involved in creativity processes. The involvement in creativity is referred to as *creative process engagement* and includes the stages of (1) problem identification, (2) information searching and encoding and (3) idea and alternative generation (Zhang and Bartol, 2010).

Individual creative process engagement and organizational innovation have been stated in the literature to have a strong connection, where individual creativity is presented as crucial for organizational innovation (Amabile, 1988; Ford, 1996). When faced with external threats, such as increased market competition, organizations need innovation in order to stay competitive (Agars et al., 2012). In addition, they need to make an effort to conserve resources through cost-cutting measures and reach higher efficiency (Staw, Sandelands & Dutton, 1981). Such measures could be necessary for organizations to get through hard times and doubtful changes. The loss of market shares and deterioration of profitability incite according to Cascio (1993) the need for organizations to downsize. As the global competition only intensifies and many traditional jobs are challenged by the automation of work, downsizing has become a default response by organizations to such challenges (Sucher & Gupta, 2018). Changes in the macro environment forces organizations such as Microsoft, Oracle, Walmart and IKEA to rethink their strategic position and future ventures, which often results in redundancies (Flannery, 2018; Dahlin & Lindstam, 2018). According to Cascio (1993), "*downsizing refers to the planned elimination of positions or jobs*" (p.96) and occurs by reducing or eliminating the work, functions, hierarchy levels or units from an organization.

The survivors of a downsizing usually end up becoming more narrow-minded, self-absorbed and risk averse in their daily work, while struggling with handling an increased workload (Cascio, 1993). These factors are not compliant with an organizational environment that fosters employee creativity and innovation (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Thus, a choice to downsize can be viewed as a change of the organizational environment that has a negative effect on employees' creativity (Amabile & Conti, 1999). The employee uncertainty that follows an organizational change will destructively affect the employee's attitude and work performance (Cullen, Edwards, Casper & Gue, 2014). Additionally, survivors of a downsize commonly experience a decrease of trust in management and the organization (Cascio, 1993). Trust in the top management is further necessary for fostering engagement and innovation in organizations (Sucher & Gupta, 2018), while low organizational trust causes the employees to doubt the management's intentions and the organization's development (Jena & Memon, 2018). Further, Amabile (1988) argues that the organization as a whole need to be oriented toward innovation in order to increase the employees' motivation to engage in creative processes.

Zhang and Bartol (2010) suggest that much research has been done to investigate how to enhance creative outcomes in organizations. However, they argue that the process that precedes the act of being creative is a promising direction for creativity research. This is further supported by Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2007), who states that *"one of the key questions in creativity research relates to the motivation of individuals to become and remain creatively engaged at work"* (p.36). Current research on why employees engage themselves in creative processes is fragmented, presenting somewhat diverse results in what encourages or discourages creative process engagement (e.g. see Anderson, Potočnik & Zhou, 2014 for review). Hence, our research will focus on engagement in creative processes, where we will limit the study to investigate how changes like restructuring and downsizing can affect the engagement. The choice of focusing on restructuring and downsizing, in particular, is due to that such changes are evidently a great challenge for many organizations today (Flannery, 2018; Dahlin & Lindstam, 2018), and usually generates an environment that is not compliant with creativity and innovation (Amabile & Conti, 1999). Hereafter, such changes will be referred to as "transformational changes" in line with Sørensen, Hasle and Pejtersen's (2011) definition.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

As organizations increasingly need to foster creativity and innovation in order to stay competitive and survive, it is interesting to study the process of how transformational changes may affect employees' creative process engagement. Thus, this study will contribute to the knowledge of how to best enhance creative engagement during changes that usually are seen to inhibit creative behavior. Henceforth, the aim of our study is to gain a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect creative process engagement within an organization, by analyzing how employees experience the consequences of the changes. In order to reach this aim, the following research questions have been formulated:

- *How do employees perceive the consequences of transformational changes?*

- *How do the perceived consequences of transformational changes affect employees' inclination to engage in creative processes?*

In order to answer our research questions and, subsequently, fulfill our purpose, we will investigate how the employees at our case organization, TechAB, have experienced and responded to the changes the organization has gone through the past decade. TechAB further has a clear structure and developed process for how they work with creativity and innovation internally. This makes them an interesting organization to research since it facilitates the separation of creative engagement and innovative work in line with our definitions on the concepts. By exploring the employees' perception of the consequences of the changes at TechAB and its effects on their creative engagement, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect employees' creative process engagement.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Initially, we guided the reader through our introduction of the research problem as well as presented the aim and research questions that will guide our study. Secondly, Chapter 2 will provide the theoretical context for our study. More concrete, we will discuss theories on uncertainty as a natural consequence of organizational changes and how such uncertainties affect employees' trust in the organization before we address the concept of creative process engagement. Thirdly, Chapter 3 will outline our methodological approach and research design by elaborating on our paradigmatic belief, a description of the focal case and explain how we have collected and analyzed the empirical data. We end the chapter by critically reflecting upon the quality, credibility, and reflexivity of our study. In Chapter 4 we present our interpretation of the empirical data with support from excerpts from our conducted interviews. The chapter is divided into three sections where we start by illustrating the current situation at our focal organization, followed by our analysis of the two main themes identified in the empirical data. Chapter 5 further elaborates on this analysis by discussing the proposed findings in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. Lastly, we connect the discussion back to our proposed aim and research questions in Chapter 6, in addition to suggesting future research.

2. Theoretical Background

This chapter presents the theoretical background of this study. It is divided into three main areas which are "Uncertainty during Organizational Changes", "Trust in times of Uncertainty" and "Creative Process Engagement in Organizations". The chapter starts with an outline of how uncertainty is a common consequence of organizational changes. The following section explains how uncertainty can affect the level of trust between the organization and its employees, where trust, in turn, is discussed to be a vital concept for creativity. In this part of the chapter, we further present theories on the concept of psychological contracts, which is inherently based upon trust between employees and the organization. In the last section, we will once more define our view on creativity, innovation and creative process engagement. Thereafter we go on to present theories on what could affect creative process engagement, where the concept of creative self-efficacy is argued to be one of the more influential factors that affect such engagement.

2.1 Uncertainty during Organizational Changes

In the prevailing competitive global economy, an organization is dependent on shareholders' satisfaction. Thus, organizations need to initiate changes to improve organizational profitability (Palmer et al., 2017). Transformational changes are perceived as necessary for organizations to survive in an extremely competitive business environment (Kim, Song & Lee, 2013), as these changes are designed to "*build capacity to respond to, and to shape, external pressures and demands*" (Palmer et al., 2017, p. 62). Additionally, when enforcing such changes, organizations need to make sure to sustain an engaged and creative workforce in order to ensure viability and growth (Liao & Chun, 2016). However, regardless of how organizational changes are initiated with an ambition to secure the organization's survival, most employees perceive an organizational change as a negative event (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998). This is due to the uncertainty that organizational changes bring (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish & DiFonzo, 2004; Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018).

According to Milliken (1987), uncertainty is defined as *"the individual's perceived inability to predict something accurately"* (p.136). The feeling of uncertainty is commonly recognized by individuals who are experiencing a transformational change (Bordia, Hunt et al., 2004;

Ashford, 1988; Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois & Callan, 2004) and results according to DiFonzo & Bordia (1998) in doubts about the future. Uncertainty about the organizational environment facilitates a sense of crisis and urgency amongst the organizational members, which in turn enhances the need for innovation (Kim, Song & Lee, 2013; Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011). Thus, the feeling of uncertainty has the power to mobilize employees, increase organizational commitment (Kim, et al., 2013) and result in greater responsiveness for innovative behavior (Jung, Wu & Chow, 2008). Further, Jung et al., (2008) propose that employees are more likely to accept creativity initiatives and be more inclined to participate in such efforts, in times of uncertainty and increased competitiveness. However, uncertainty during transformational changes also affects employees in a negative sense by increasing stress (Pollard, 2001; Hui & Lee, 2000; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991) and decreasing organizational commitment and trust in the organization (Hui & Lee, 2000; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). In addition, the perceived personal impact of the change, as well as potential previous changes, will influence the employee's attitude toward the change (Akthar & Long, 2015).

As discussed above, transformational changes will create an element of uncertainty (Sørensen et al., 2011), which will cause employees to feel particularly vulnerable (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018). In turn, this increase in uncertainty and vulnerability affect whether employees perceive management as trustworthy in this new situation (Sørensen et al., 2011). As the employees' trust is violated if the managers proclaimed support does not correlate with managerial action (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998), managers must understand that employees interpret their actions symbolically and ascribe meaning to potential gaps or uncertainties (Palmer et al., 2017). Further studies have shown that top management's and the CEO's actions affect employees' perception of whether the organization supports creative behavior (Wu, 2005; Jung, Wu & Chow, 2008). Damanpour and Schneiderw (2006) state that top executives may have the greatest influence on creativity in an organization and that when their actions are perceived as non-supportive, that will affect the employees' attitude toward innovation and change. During transformational changes, employees' perceived trust in management is challenged, due to that the uncertainty that follows the change is introduced by top management. The increased employee vulnerability due to the lack of trust and support from management increases employees' inclination to scrutinize management's actions during a change, which in turn causes an increase of negative interpretations of the managerial actions (Sørensen et al., 2011; Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018). Sørensen et al. (2011) conceptualize this process of negatively

interpreting almost any management action as an "*active negative expectations of the other party*", regardless of the party's intentions. This process further decreases trust between the employee and the organization (Sørensen et al., 2011).

2.2 Trust in Times of Uncertainty

In times of restructurings and downsizes, employee trust is a vital element for managers in order to manage the change and avoid unnecessary negative consequences (Robinson, 1996). Sørensen et al., (2011, p. 406) frame it as *"the greater the uncertainty and vulnerability, the more trust is needed and the harder it is to retain or develop trust"*. Mayer, Davis and Shoorman (1995) define trust as a willingness of a trustor (e.g employee) to be vulnerable to the actions of the trustee (e.g organization). According to Robinson (1996), trust evolves based on reciprocity between two parties. Further, the author argues that trust creates trust, meaning that when one party (e.g the employee) trust another (e.g the organization), that trust will be manifested through a trusting behavior, which in turn will increase the level of trust between the two parties. Moreover, the behavior of the trustee (e.g the organization) will generate trust if the trustor (e.g the employee) perceives the behavior as trustworthy. Hence, the level of trust is dependent on one party's interpretation of the other's behavior. The higher the level of perceived trustworthiness of the trustee (e.g the organization), the more likely the trustor (e.g the employee) is to trust the trustee (Rodrigues and de Oliveira Marques Veloso, 2013). When the relationship between the two parties is based on mutual respect, sharing of credit, openness and frankness there is a perception of trust being present (Isaksen, Lauer, Ekwall and Brit, 2001).

According to the framework by Mayer et al. (1995), the level of trustworthiness is further based on perceived ability (i.e competencies and skills one has), benevolence (i.e perception of kindness and good intentions of one's actions) and integrity (i.e one's adherence to principles). Despite that the original theory focused on interpersonal trust, the framework can be applied to trust at an organizational level as well (Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 2007). Thus, when these three factors are perceived to be high by employees, it results in increased trustworthiness for the organization. In contrast, a feeling of suspicion (i.e. when one perceives another person's motives or genuineness to be rival) strongly influences distrust between parties (Kramer 1999), where the suspicion can be caused by earlier violated expectations, social cues that suggest the

other person has an ulterior motive or when the trustor has a forewarning that the other party could be insincere (Fein, 1996). In situations when the trustor feels violated or let down by the trustee, it will evoke a reassessment of the three factors ability, benevolence and integrity, causing them the become lower and, subsequently, the level of trust decreases. Studies show that when there is a high level of communication between management and employees (Becerra and Gupta, 2003), and when employees perceive management as authentic and honest and that they practice what they preach (Costigan, Iiter and Berman, 1998), the level of trustworthiness increases.

When employees fail to receive something from the organization that they had expected to receive, the trustworthiness of the organization is compromised (Robinson, 1996) and employee cynicism, in the form of increased attitudes of frustration and disillusionment, is more likely to evolve (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). Such expectations of organizational reciprocity toward employees, in exchange for their engagement, are what constitute a psychological contract (Rosseau, 1989). The psychological contract theory, which derives from the social exchange theory, is interesting to research since there is a strong connection between psychological contracts and the concept of organizational trust (Robinson, 1996). Rosseau (1989, p.123) defines psychological contracts as *"an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party"*. In organizational research, the contract is constructed between the employee and the organization in which this employee works and is a subjective perception made up by the employee (Rousseau, 1898). What constitutes the contract is the individual employee's belief that the organization has an obligation of reciprocity towards the employee, as a return for the employee's commitment and contribution to the organization (Rousseau, 1989).

According to Sims (1994), the traditional psychological contract was based upon long-term job security in return for hard work and loyalty, this type of contract might however no longer be valid in the modern business environment. Robinson (1996) argues that psychological contracts play an increasingly important role in contemporary employment relationships. The demanding and competitive organizational climate increases the number of transformational changes (i.e. relocations, restructurings and downsizings), which in turn could influence the employees' perception of the viability of the contract. This is due to that the terms of the contract and the basis of the employment relationship might have changed. Thus, demanding a re-assessment

of the psychological contract between employee and employer (Sims, 1994; Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018; Akthar & Long, 2015).

Fulfillment of the psychological contract by the organization will likely unfold in a deeper trust by the employee (Rousseau, 1989), an inclination to engage in discretionary or voluntary behaviors (Ramamoorthy, Flood, Slattery & Sardessai, 2005) and, furthermore, in a greater acceptance of change (Rousseau, 1998). However, when there is a perceived failure of fulfilling the obligations expected by the employee in a psychological contract, conceptualized as psychological contract breach, this can reduce the employee's contributions, performance (Robinson, 1996), commitment and trust to the organization (Rousseau, 1989). A breach can originate due to the employees' perception of an inconsistency between management's words and actions (Robinson, 1996), transformational changes (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018), poor communication, lack of employee involvement, role ambiguity and work overload (Andersson, 1996). Considering that the psychological contract is inherently perceptual, a breach is a subjective experience by the employee. Regardless of there being an actual breach of contract by the organization, the employee's behavior and attitude will be affected since it is her belief of there being a breach that matters. Thus, organizations need to understand the psychological contracts constructed by their employees, in order to ensure the fulfillment of these (Robinson, 1996). When a psychological contract is not fulfilled in the eyes of the employees, it can negatively affect employees' behavior. For example, a breach can increase employee neglect (Ng, Feldman & Lam, 2010), decrease the underlying feeling of organizational trust (Rousseau, 1989; Sims 1994) and compromise employment relationships (Robinson, 1996). According to Rousseau (1989) and Sims (1994), when such a relationship is damaged, it is not easy for the organization to restore. Further, a perceived breach of the psychological contract can affect creative behavior, like the engagement in creative processes (Niesen, Van Hootegem, Vander Elst, Battistelli & De Witte, 2018).

2.3 Creative Process Engagement in Organizations

The terms creativity and innovation have multiple meanings and usages in the wide field of research that can be found on the subject (Van de Ven, 1986; Amabile, 1988; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Ford (1996) states that there are both scholars who argue that the terms are the same phenomenon and that they could be used interchangeably and scholars who argue that creativity

is only important as a prerequisite to the following innovation process. What many seem to reach consensus about, however, is that creativity is represented by something that is both novel and useful (Amabile 1988, Woodman et al., 1993; Ford, 1996). As mentioned above, we will adopt the definition of creativity as the production of novel and useful ideas by individuals or small groups, and the definition of innovation as the implementation of creative ideas (Amabile, 1988; George, 2007; Woodman et al. 1993). These definitions perceive idea generation on an individual level as a precondition to organizational innovation. To stay innovative, organizations, therefore, need to learn how to best encourage their employees to get involved in creativity processes. The involvement in creativity is referred to as *creative process engagement* and includes the stages of (1) problem identification, (2) information searching and encoding and (3) idea and alternative generation (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). The participation in creative process engagement will be equated with the term extra-role behavior, which we perceive as when employees engage in tasks or actions that are outside of their regular or given work tasks.

In her componential model of creativity and innovation, Amabile (1988) presents factors influencing creativity and innovation in organizations. She supports that individual creativity is the most vital element in the process of innovation, even though it is not by itself sufficient for innovation. Amabile (1988) argues that managers who are enthusiastic, protect the team from outside distraction and communicate clear goals without leading to tightly are found to be a promoting factor to creativity engagement. On the contrary, a decrease in creative engagement will happen when communication is bad, control is too tight, there are no clear goals, and distractions and fragmentations are allowed into the project team. In addition, the greater access to resources like funds, people and information that employees have, the more supported they feel to engage in creative processes (Amabile, 1988).

Moreover, when employees have a high degree of commitment to the organization, they will be more inclined to take on additional responsibility as well as engage in extra-role behaviors (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). On the other hand, when the commitment by the employees is low, they tend to avoid taking on more responsibility than necessary (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), and, thus, feel less inclined to engage in creative processes (Vinarski-Peretz, Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010). Another element that has been discussed to influence creative process engagement is trust between the organization and the employees, which Barsh, Capozzi and

Davidson (2008) view as a central component for this engagement. Research by both George and Zhou (2007) and Jena and Memon (2018) argue that when trust is high, employees are more likely to engage in creativity compared to when they experience a low level of trust. The level of trust is, in turn, influenced by how trustworthy employees perceive management to be (Rodrigues and de Oliveira Marques Veloso, 2013). The more trustworthy employees perceive management to be, the more willing they will be to explore creative behaviors, such as engaging in creativity processes. On the other hand, if the trustworthiness of management decreases, so will employees' willingness to engage in creative processes (Ogbeibu, Senadjki & Luen Peng, 2018). Since trust is based on reciprocity between two parties (Robinson, 1996), the relationship between these two is implied to be important for the development of trust. Furthermore, Chen (2016) suggests that the relationship between the organization and the employees greatly influences the employees' creative process engagement. Therefore, one can suggest that in the event of the relationship being compromised, it will have a negative influence on employees' creative process engagement.

The relationship between the employees and the organization is further important for employees' creative process engagement since it is vital for their creative self-efficacy (Chen, 2016). Tierney and Farmer (2002, p.1138) define creative self-efficacy as the *"belief one has the ability to produce creative outcomes"*. Furthermore, Chen (2016) states that managerial support for creative behavior and engagement will increase the employees' level of creative self-efficacy, and the higher one's level of creative self-efficacy, the more willing the employee will be to engage in creative processes. Further, employees' creative self-efficacy is dependent on how they interpret the managers' actions and whether these actions are perceived as encouraging and accepting of creative behavior and engagement (Tierney & Farmer, 2011). Zhang & Bartol (2010) suggest that by highlighting the significance of the work, providing participation in decision making and providing the right resources to the employees, managers could increase employees' creative self-efficacy. Additionally, in the process of convincing employees about their capability to be creative, managers should support employees by verbally expressing their trust and praise (Bandura, 1982), while also signaling respect and liking (Waterwall, Fuller & Budden, 2017).

2.4 Chapter Summary

In the foregoing chapter, we have presented the theoretical grounding for this thesis based upon our purpose and research questions. We begun by guiding the reader through the concept of uncertainty that can follow transformational changes, which is relevant to this study as such changes are an underlying dimension to the thesis. In addition, we introduced how the concept of trust between the organization and its employees is affected by the discussed uncertainty that can permeate organizations during processes of change. We went on to present earlier studies on factors that can both increase and decrease the mentioned trust relationship between the employee and the organization. Thereafter, we introduced that psychological contract is related to trust, as it is based on the focal concept and, moreover, effects the employees' trust towards the organization. Within the concept of psychological contract, we discussed how a breach of the contract can lower the employees' willingness to engage in creative processes. The last section concerned a deeper exploration of different factors that have been found to affect employees' creative process engagement, which all are connected to the level of uncertainty and trust in some way. For example, we presented factors such as communication, involvement in decision making, commitment and creative self-efficacy. In this section, we further elaborated on how the relationship between the organization and the employees is vital for the employees' level of creative self-efficacy. Since the relationship is based upon trust, trust can in turn influence the employees' level of creative self-efficacy, which makes both concepts crucial for creative process engagement.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, we elaborate on the methodological approach we have followed throughout our study and we hope that we can clarify the research process and how we have reached our conclusions. To achieve this transparency, we initially outline the chosen research approach that has been guiding our work with the thesis. Following, we describe our research design by elaborating on how we have collected the empirical data and conducted the analysis. Lastly, we critically reflect upon the quality, credibility, and reflexivity of our study.

3.1 Research Approach

The aim of our study is to gain a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect creative process engagement within an organization, by analyzing how employees experience the consequences of the changes. To answer this aim we have adopted an exploratory approach to gain an understanding of the relationship between the consequences of transformational changes and creative process engagement. We have chosen to conduct a qualitative case study in order to answer our questions, as Merriam (1994) defines it as a suitable choice of method to investigate the outcome of changes. Since our study aims to develop a greater understanding of individuals' perception of the consequences of transformational changes and how these perceptions affect their behavior, the paradigmatic belief that influenced our study is an interpretive one. Within the interpretive tradition, there is no objective social reality, instead the reality is seen as socially constructed and as an entity that cannot be measured, but rather needs to be interpreted (Prasad, 2018; Merriam, 1994). Thus, we recognize that knowledge is subjective and that there is no single truth that will answer our research questions. Therefore, we do not intend to generalize through our interpretation of how the employees' experience and make sense of the changes.

The qualitative stance of our research enabled us to gain insight into how the interplay between different parts create a coherent understanding (Prasad, 2018). Thus, we are more interested in the process and the meanings it entails, than a single explanation to our research questions (Merriam, 1994). In line with elements of the hermeneutic circle, the organizational context of our study facilitated our interpretation of the interviews and observations that were conducted (i.e the parts), while these empirical gatherings contributed to our understanding of the context that they relate to (i.e the whole) (Prasad, 2018). Prasad's (2018) research further suggest that

this movement between the parts and the whole results in a more meaningful understanding of how the perceived consequences of transformational changes can affect creative process engagement within an organization.

In this study, we have an abductive approach, which combines the characteristics of inductive and deductive approaches by continuously adjusting the theoretical framework as the empirical data develops (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Initially, the theoretical framework served as a source of inspiration for the discovery of patterns in the collection of empirical data. When our assemblage of empirical material progressed, the alternation between theory and empery advanced and resulted in a re-evaluation of chosen theories in the light of the empery. Thus, we have been moving between our pre-understanding and understanding during the interpretive process, with inspiration from the hermeneutic tradition (Prasad, 2018). In addition, this has led to a development of our research focus. Initially, we were interested in finding what employees' found to be the greatest inhibitors to creative process engagement. However, due to the complexity of the organizational context and the interesting nuances that were revealed in the collection of the empery, we felt inclined to alternate our focus toward investigating how the employees' interpretation of the consequences of transformational changes have affected their creative process engagement. This reformulation of the original problem as our knowledge about the case and theoretical field advanced further ensured a responsible approach to conducting this research (Stasik & Gendźwiłł, 2017).

3.2 Research Design

The development mentioned above led us to the formulated aim to gain a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect creative process engagement within an organization, by analyzing how employees experience the consequences of the changes. To answer this aim we have chosen to conduct a holistic case study focusing on the organization TechAB. Next, we describe the focal organization, with a focus on the changes that they have experienced over the last decade and how they organize creative processes.

3.2.1 Case of TechAB

In order to answer our research questions, we have chosen to conduct a single case study. By studying a single case we will be able to search for explanations of a certain phenomenon or experience (Merriam, 1994). Further, Merriam (1994) suggests that a single case study allows the researcher to highlight the correlation between important factors that characterize a phenomenon. With this chosen case we hope to gain a deep understanding of how changes at TechAB affect creative process engagement within the organization, by analyzing how employees experience the consequences of the changes. The case will allow us to gain rich data about the real-world context in which our study is conducted (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The case of TechAB is an interesting context to study particularly due to the transformational change that is occurring during the time of the study, as well as the number of changes that the organization has gone through over the last decade.

TechAB is a big technology organization that has operations all over the world, where the site in Sweden is seen as a key location that currently holds around 800 employees. The main operation of the organizational site in Sweden and other sites around the world is controlled by the International Headquarters. The organization was founded as Tech & Data AB and was up to a decade a merger between the two companies TechAB and Data. But after eleven years, TechAB bought the shares from Data and reorganized into what today is known as TechAB. Simultaneously, most of the responsibility was moved from the headquarters in Sweden to the new International Headquarters. Due to the increasingly intense competition within the technology industry, TechAB has been facing many challenges over the last decade. This has resulted in a loss of market shares and a greater demand for efficiency and creative process engagement. Thus, the organization has suffered multiple changes in the form of downsizing and restructuring over the last couple of years, where the most recent downsize was initiated in February 2019. Hence, the recent occurrences and the multitude of changes make this a highly interesting case to study.

Over the last couple of years, TechAB has developed a defined structure for how to develop innovations and new business within the organization. The innovation process consists of four stages: "Ideation", "Incubation", "Marketing" and "Expansion", with the aim to develop employees' business ideas into full grown startups. In this thesis, we are focusing on what effects transformational changes can have on employees' decision to take part in such creative

processes and have, therefore, chosen to only consider the activities that are being offered during the first step of the creative process (ideation). The attendance at these activities are the precursors for moving on to the next step of the process. Thus, a high level of engagement in the activities that are being offered during the "ideation" step is a necessity for lasting engagement and, in turn, innovation. Examples of activities that are being offered during the ideation stage are inspirational lectures, ideation sessions, and business canvas workshops. In addition, these activities align with the activities that Zhang and Bartol (2010) define as stages of creative process engagement (see section 1). Thus, the concept of 'creative process engagement' will be used in the study as a representation of the activities that are being offered in the "ideation" phase at TechAB. The engagement in such activities at TechAB is open for all employees, and the ambition with the program is to encourage all employees to contribute with ideas on how TechAB can develop new business. This structured approach to innovation within the organization makes TechAB an appropriate case to study, as their approach enables us to easily separate creative engagement from work with innovation, which is well aligned with our definition of the two concepts (see section 1). The nature of the changes that occur in the organization now, and that has taken place in the past, makes this case especially interesting for us to study.

3.2.2 Collection of Empirical Data

For the collection of empery, our primary source of data has been semi-structured interviews conducted with employees at TechAB. The choice to conduct semi-structured interviews was based on their strong correlation with qualitative research and their consideration of the both the what's and how's as well as the why (Saunders et al., 2012). As we were concerned to understand how the employees at TechAB ascribe meaning to the consequences of the transformational changes and how that affects their engagement in creative processes, the choice of semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the interviewees to explain and build on their responses. Thus, by facilitating a discussion with the interviewees that helped us address our research questions in relation to areas that we previously had not considered, it allowed us to explore the complexity of the topic and case situation. Additionally, it encouraged the interviewee to think out loud and elaborate on certain concerns. In turn, this resulted in a rich and detailed set of data (Saunders et al., 2012).

Saunders et al., (2012) argue that it is beneficial to gain some previous knowledge about the organizational and situational context in which the interviews take place before conducting them in order to increase credibility in the eyes of the interviewee. This could then be used to encourage interviewees to elaborate on certain issues during the discussion. Thus, in order to gain this credibility we conducted two pilot interviews with Stina at TechAB (who is in charge of organizing creative activities in the organization), where we learned about the organizational situation of today and the history of the organization, whilst also testing some of the questions from the interview guide that was used in the following interviews. In addition to that, we spent time in the organization with the aim to observe behaviors and absorb the organizational culture before initiating the interview process. Before beginning each interview, the interviewee was informed about that the purpose of the interview was *"to look into creativity and innovation at TechAB"*, and given a chance to once again agree to their participation. We were careful to not share too much information about our aim of the study as we wanted to reduce the risk of response bias. In order to increase the interviewees' trustworthiness and further reduce the risk of response bias, we explained that the interviewees' answers and the focal organization will be anonymized (Saunders et al., 2012). This anonymization has been done by changing the name of the organization and all the participants. In addition, by explaining the research as well as ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, we increased the likeliness of gaining the interviewees' confidence and fostering a positive relationship between us and the interviewee according to Saunders et al. (2012).

A total of 18 interviews with 17 respondents (n=16+1, see table 4.1) were conducted during a period of three weeks, where each interview lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. During the interviews, we followed a constructed interview guide in line with Saunders et al's. (2012) recommendation. The guide was based on certain themes derived from literature, theories, as well as common sense, and aimed to ensure that all interviews were conducted in a similar manner. Throughout the interview period, these questions were continuously evaluated and adjusted when found to be necessary in order to clarify the meaning and improve the flow of the interview. All of the interviews conducted were audio recorded and transcribed in order to ensure the production of reliable data for the analysis (Merriam, 1994). To complement the recording and transcription, one of us took notes about the interviewees' facial expression and other non-verbal cues to collect all nuances of the interviewees' answers (Saunders et al., 2012). Additionally, we noted the setting of the interview, background about the interviewee based on

questions about their role in the organization, extra interesting responses, as well as the immediate impression of how well the interview went. These notes were kept in a separate document from the transcripts to ensure anonymity and were linked to the transcription document by the use of a code number. The act of taking notes during the interview also conveyed that the interviewees' responses were important to us to the participant (Saunders et al., 2012). The interviews were followed up by allowing the interviewees to review the transcription to make sure that our understanding and interpretation of the interview was adequate and correct. This process also gave the interviewees a chance to add any further point of relevance that might have occurred to them (Saunders et al., 2012). A risk with sending a copy to the interviewee could be that they want to correct their grammar and use of language, however, as transcriptions are supposed to mirror what the interviewees have said in detail, these kind of adjustments were not taken into consideration.

The respondents were sampled purposefully in order to gain insights about the perception of the transformational changes from both employees who often engage in the creative activities at TechAB, and employees who engage more seldom. Further, as we are working with a relatively small sample (n=16+1) in a qualitative case study, the choice of purposive sampling is preferred (Saunders et al., 2012; Merriam, 1994). As we initially were interested in finding what employees' found to be the greatest inhibitors to creative process engagement, the number of interviewees in the sample group of individuals who seldom engage in such processes are greater than in the group of often engagers. Further, the interviewees in each group were selected by the help of our contact person at TechAB, as she had great insight into the various employees' level of engagement in their creative process activities. By interviewing employees from both sample groups, we gained insight into the multiple realities that can exist within the organization, which is in line with our interpretive approach. However, we are aware of the potential issue with interviewing a greater number of people who seldom engage, as this might have distorted the interpreted findings from the interviews. Additionally, the sample includes employees from different departments, with divergent roles and responsibilities in order to assure that the findings are as representative of the organization as possible with the limitations of our study. A complete list of the interviewees and which sample group they belong to will be found in table 3.1 *"List of interviewees and their level of engagement"*.

Table 3.1: List of interviewees and their level of engagement

Interview	Level of engagement	Interview	Level of engagement
1. Stina, part 1	Responsible for creative processes	2. Stina, part 2	Responsible for creative processes
3. Tina	Often engage (OE)	4. Philip	Often engage (OE)
5. Ida	Often engage (OE)	6. Therese	Often engage (OE)
7. Jonas	Often engage (OE)	8. Linnéa	Often engage (OE)
9. Freja	Often engage (OE)	10. Mari	Seldom engage (SE)
11. Sten	Seldom engage (SE)	12. Peter	Seldom engage (SE)
13. Ulf	Seldom engage (SE)	14. Jessica	Seldom engage (SE)
15. Carl	Seldom engage (SE)	16. Oskar	Seldom engage (SE)
17. Jens	Seldom engage (SE)	18. Evelina	Seldom engage (SE)

In order to get more comprehensive and insightful results about the situation at TechAB, the interviews were supplemented with participant observations (Merriam, 1994). During the three months of this thesis project, we spent much time working on the project at TechAB's office in Sweden, thus providing us with insights about the culture, the situational context and social interactions between employees. Furthermore, we participated in some of the creative processes that were offered to the employees at the site. Thus, the observations helped to increase our holistic understanding of how and when employees could engage in creative processes, how these opportunities were communicated from the management to the employees, as well as the organizational culture at TechAB. During the observations, field notes helped record the occurrences and actions that took place.

3.2.3 Analysis of Data

Following the data collection, one needs to start preparing for the data analysis, as this is an important step towards understanding the empirical material (Saunders et al., 2012). There are different procedures that have helped us in the process of analyzing the data. Since the data in this research is qualitative, it implies that it is also extensive, non-standardised and of a complex nature (Saunders et al., 2012). Due to the extensive amount of complex data collected and the time frame of this thesis, we were not able to analyze all the empirical material (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Thus, there was a need to reduce the material to a manageable set of data.

According to Saunders et al. (2012), there are several different ways and approaches to handling qualitative data analysis. We initiated the analyzing process when we begun interviewing our participants. To begin preparing our data for the more extensive part of the analysis we transcribed the audio-recordings from the conducted interviews. To reduce our set of data, the first step we took after transcribing was to go through the transcriptions once more, in order to look for recurring answers from the participants. The first step in starting to understand the collected empirical material was to summarize what we interpreted the participants to have said section by section. By reading through the transcriptions once again and, meanwhile, commenting on each paragraph with a sentence of our interpretation of the paragraph, we started to develop an understanding of what might be recurring themes from our interviews. The second step in reducing our data, in line with Saunders et al.'s (2012) arguments, we started to categorize the summaries of our interpretations into different *labels*. The *labels* were created by using both the actual expressed terms by the interviewees and terms derived from our comments. This process enabled us to create a structured framework from where we could pursue the continued analysis (Saunders et al., 2012). This framework was created in a web-based program called 'Trello' that let us horizontally order our *labels* at a pinboard, which we then filled with different 'chunks' of our data, such as words, sentences or longer excerpts, from the different interviews. This process is called *unitising* the data by Saunders et al. (2012), and the process let us reduce and rearrange our data in order to reach a more manageable and comprehensive form of data to analyze. The next step in our analysis of the collected empirical material was to reduce our material even further. To do that, we extracted the labels that had the most 'chunks of material' and created a new pinboard with less number of *labels*, which assisted us in identifying which of those that were most recurring and thus, helped us identify key themes from our material. Subsequently, by looking for overlaps

between the themes, connections to earlier literature and deviations from earlier literature we managed to identify the overall themes for this study (Merriam, 1994).

As we adopt an interpretive approach, it implies that our data analysis strategy is to comprehend the meaning of texts and actions (Saunders et al., 2012), thus, the analysis is based on our subjective interpretations of our interviewees' answers. In order to assure that we conducted a credible interpretive study, we challenged each other to think reflexively about the data and how we interpreted it continuously throughout the process of analyzing (Alvesson, 2003). We did this by questioning each other when we did not agree on our interpretations, being open towards expanding our frame of mind and by having repeated discussions about our findings. To further ensure that we conducted a credible analysis, we were careful to keep in mind that our interviewees all had different backgrounds, such as nationality, education, title and experience in the organization. Thus, we tried to not take what they said for granted to be reflecting the truth, but rather try to understand why they had emphasized different things in their interviews and what reasons they could have for that, considering their background. Following this, we continued to have discussions about our material and our interpretations of it.

Finally, we chose to present our analysis in the form of using excerpt commentary units. This method has enabled us to both claim the existence of identified phenomenons in our empirical material and our interpretation of these phenomenons (Rennstam and Wästerfors, 2018). In accordance with the authors' argumentation, this method helped us illustrate what we wanted to say and fill it with meaning in relation to relevant theories in the field and to our purpose.

3.3 Critical Reflection

As qualitative studies are based upon the researchers subjective understanding of the collected data, it is of importance for the researcher to adopt a reflexive mindset when conducting this type of research. All researchers bring with them some kind of pre-understandings and mindsets when conducting research, which in turn means that these pre-understandings will influence how the data is interpreted (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Subsequently, this implies that our own pre-understandings and knowledge will have affected our way of interpreting and making sense of the empirical material in this study. Neither one of us had

ever been in contact with TechAB before we reached out to the organization, which can be argued to be positive in the sense that none of us had any prior subjective experience of the organization before the study started. In turn, this could have made it easier for us to distance our own thoughts and understandings from the material. However, since TechAB is quite a known organization in Sweden, we had both heard of them before and might have started the study with some assumptions regarding their recent restructurings and current position on the market. In order to decrease the risk of being influenced by our pre-understandings in the process of collecting, analyzing and presenting this material, we have taken steps in order to be reflexive in our approach. Since we have been subjective in our interpretation of our collected material, as all researchers are in qualitative studies, the need for reflexivity is high (Alvesson, 2003), therefore we have taken three specific actions during our process of this thesis work.

Firstly, we have taken into consideration the fact that this research has been conducted by us in pairs. Since we are two different persons, our pre-understandings, as well as our interpretation and way of making sense to our data, have parted during this study. By stating early on in the process that we would challenge each other when needed, we have stayed reflexive during the research period. For example, in cases where we did not interpret the empirical material in the same way, a discussion was held where we challenged each other's thinking and perceptions which, in turn, let us expand our understandings and reach consensus about the meaning of the material. This process has subsequently decreased the risk for us to misunderstand the interviewees' answers. Secondly, in order to further decrease the risk of misunderstanding the interviewees' answers, we have both been active in the interviews and tried to ask follow-up questions in order to receive clearer answers. This process can be argued to have decreased the space for us to interpret the answers based on our own assumptions. Thirdly, we have been bearing in mind how we might have been affected by our main contact person and her knowledge, experience, and opinions about the organization before we started our participant interviews. Since we had two interviews with her before the interviews started, and continuous contact with her during our time at TechAB, we might have been affected by her. By taking a step back from our material regularly during the process of writing this thesis, we have tried to ensure that we have looked at and interpreted the collected material based on what it actually said, and not based on our pre-assumptions of what it should say. A process

like the one described is important when analyzing qualitative data, as the analysis is based on our interpretations of the data which inherently is a subjective interpretation (Alvesson, 2003)

In order to ensure that the research conducted has credibility and quality, the concepts of generalizability, reliability and validity are, moreover, important to consider. Since we have conducted a single case study in this research it is not possible to generalize our findings into a theory applicable to other organizations in the same or other industries. This is supported by Eisenhardt's (1989) argument about how a case study of at least four organizations is necessary in order to generate theory and build general constructs, which implies that a single case study is not enough to produce generalizable results. There are, however, contradicting claims that when researching more than one case, there is a risk of not being able to gain deeper insights into the several case studies (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). Our hope with this research is to give the reader an overview of the situation at TechAB and its context, and further to challenge existing theory on the subject with our findings and its implications at TechAB.

Furthermore, by clearly describing how we have worked in our process of conducting the research, collecting the material, analyzing the material and, subsequently, arriving at a conclusion we have tried to achieve a reliable and valid study. Reliability in the sense of replicability is quite difficult to achieve when the research is based upon semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2006), therefore we can not expect to achieve this to a full. However, by being transparent with our process we hope to reach some level of replicability. This can then be helpful for other researchers who wish to re-analyze our results in other contexts, which is why reliability is of importance to consider (Saunders et al., 2012).

In order to increase the validity of this study, we have taken several steps in line with what Yin (2015) recommends. Firstly, we have tried to be present in the environment at TechAB during the whole process and we have collected rich data in the sense that the participants have been very diverse. We have further tried to decrease the risk of misunderstandings by asking for feedback on the transcriptions from the participants. By comparing the results from the diverse participants we have also tried to find interesting discrepancies between the groups, which we then have tested by putting different answers derived from the empirical material against each other in order to understand the deviations.

Finally, we have tried to be critical toward our source of data, our interviewees. Since the participants in this study all come from different background, this subsequently means that they also have different assumptions and understandings about the situation they are in. According to Schaefer and Alvesson (2017), source critique is a key element in research and refers to "*a careful evaluation, reflection, questioning, rejection, and probing of interview accounts*" (p.1) which is something we have tried to engage in. By continuously reminding ourselves to see the answers from different perspectives, we have tried to be aware of how identified differences could be colored from past experiences or emotions. Since the organizational changes further can have a personal and emotional effect on people who are part of it, we have tried to take this into consideration as well in our analysis of the material.

In conclusion, we argue to have increased the quality of this thesis and its findings by being reflexive in our mindset throughout the process and by taking above mentioned steps to increase the reliability and validity of this research. As this is a qualitative study, we have not hoped to find one true answer to our questions or to create generalizable theories. However, we have tried taking the steps necessary to gain a level of credibility and quality that have enabled our findings to be as strong as possible.

4. Analysis of Empirical Data

The following chapter has been guided by the aim of this thesis, as well as our research questions and interpretive approach. The empirical material is presented below by being divided into three main sections; *"The situation at TechAB"*, *"The consequences of Attitude at TechAB"* and *"The consequences of Governance at TechAB"*. When referring to our interviewees, we label them as either often engagers (OE) or seldom engagers (SE) to illustrate which of the two groups they belong to. The first section, *"The situation at TechAB",* gives an overview of how the employees have experienced the changes the last decade at TechAB. The second section, *"The consequences of Attitude at TechAB"*, is further divided into two parts. Here we present how the employees perceive the management to be risk-averse, the employees' need for a purpose with engaging and how this purpose subsequently affects the employees' faith in the future for TechAB. The last section, *"The consequences of Governance at TechAB"*, is divided into three parts. In these parts, we present what the employees perceive to be the consequences of not having responsibility anymore, top management's dominant decision making and the level of managerial support for creativity. Both the second and third section ends with a summary in order for the reader to more easily grasp the identified consequences.

4.1 The Situation at TechAB

Derived from our empirical data collection has been an understanding of what situation TechAB's employees believe the organization is in. Initially, multiple employees such as Tina (OE), Philip (OE) and Jens (SE) describe the culture at TechAB as very hierarchical and with a lot of processes, which they, in turn, perceive as sad. Further, many of the employees have expressed a perception of the organization as having changed a lot due to the restructurings and downsizings that have been going on the last 10 years. A shared understanding by most of the employees is that the organizational culture has changed from being very appreciated, driven and innovative to become lazy, tired and slow. This can be identified in when Ulf (SE) elaborates on how he has experienced the last couple of years in the organization:

> *"Then it became Tech & Data AB [...] Everyone working here was sort of proud*
> *of working here. It was a good employer, it was a lot of fun. [...] There was a lot of*
> *drive and ambition and there were some years that were really good [...]*

Financially, very sound years. And then there were some rough years and well that goes without saying that it becomes more of an issue. And then, Tech bought the Data part from Tech & Data AB after 10 years. It became TechAB and that is I think in Sweden where it became... Sweden has always been like sort of a headquarter, even if it wasn't the headquarter. A lot of decision makers were here, a lot of the actual work and competence came out of here and it quickly became more of an internationally controlled company, with the whole senior management replaced by an international management team, and I think most decision making was moved from here. What it left this whole site with was this feeling of not being able to contribute or [...] participate in the success of the company [...] and now with all the layoffs, I mean, [...] it's not what it used to be. So, there's a lot of fires that have gone out in people who are still here in terms of commitment and belief and pride and things like that." (Ulf - SE)

The quote above is in line with what many of the other employees have expressed as well. The downsizings and restructurings have taken their toll on the organization and affected the employees negatively. As Ulf (SE) mentions, it seems like it has become an organization where the employees do not feel driven anymore, compared to the culture before the changes. Peter (SE) elaborates on this by describing the culture as lazy, where people avoid challenging each other because of the fear of being challenged back. Moreover, Ulf's (SE) quote also insinuates that the movement of decision makers from the site in Sweden to the new headquarter has resulted in a feeling of unfairness. Continuously identified in many of our interviews is also the comparison to the past as before the changes started, where they express a negative development of the organization. Tina expresses her experience with this:

[E]verybody's been here for like 10-15 years. I still have to say like: 'Okay, I haven't been here 10 years, I have just been here a couple of years' and they would be like: 'Oh, you're really new'. 'Yeah, [I] might be new in your eyes but let's not measure it that way'. So, we have this old mindset of how it used to be. [I]f somebody tells me one more time that 'you should have been here when we were Tech and Data AB, you should have been here during the golden days.'" (Tina - OE)

Her quote gives indications of a general attitude amongst the employees about how the organization was better before the changes, as they refer to that time as the 'golden age'. The

reference to the old days as the "golden" ones implies that people are not as happy in the organization as they used to be. This signals a feeling of dissatisfaction among the employees of their current situation. Since she still seems to be perceived as a new employee after been working there a few years, it implies that most employees have worked in the organization for many years.

What has been further identified in the interviews is a feeling of an organization that is on the verge of becoming nothing. The situation for the organization has been described as decreasing as they sell less and less of their core product and their brand is turning weaker. The plan from top management was that other parts of the organization would step in and take over some of the processes and products in order to increase the sales again according to some of the interviewees. This seems to have affected the employees' perception of their place in the organization. These feelings can be exemplified in what Stina says:

> *"The idea was that other TechAB organizations would come in and take over,*
> *almost like butchering, to be honest." (Stina)*

This quote illustrates how the organization is currently fighting in order to survive in their industry and that the site in Sweden feel like they are not able to live up to the expectations of the headquarters. Stina's usage of the word 'butchering' indicates feelings of being small and weak and in the hands of headquarters decision making. As has been discussed above, TechAB is perceived to have past their "golden days" and employees are currently not satisfied with the result of the latest changes within the organization. This seems to have evoked feelings of dissatisfaction and a perception that the organization is deteriorating. Thus, this is perceived to create a sense of uncertainty amongst the employees, which will be further elaborated on in the following section.

4.2 The Consequences of Attitude

The following section is the second part of our an analysis of the collected empirical material. Here we will explore identified consequences like risk-aversion and the loss of purpose and faith, and, subsequently, the employees' perception and experience of these.

4.2.1 Aversion to Risk at TechAB

Expressed in different ways in our interviews, employees have elaborated on how they have experienced the recent changes and what they believe are the implications on creative engagement within TechAB. Philip (OE) mentions that due to the downsizings over the last ten years he experiences a difficulty for management to say yes to new projects. The reasons for this, he argues, is that there are fewer people available to assign to those projects, which further is supported in our interview with Oskar (SE). Furthermore, Peter (SE) highlights in his interview that since he does not know what will happen with his team next year, their engagement and inclination to put extra effort into their work has declined, because they do not believe that their ideas will survive in the end. Jonas (OE) expresses the same concern:

> *"The organizational changes have really impacted the resources that are available. So now, resources are more limited, because there are less [people]…*
> *If I have an idea, if I want attention from these resources, I have to really fight for attentions [...] There might be a manager who feels like their project has constraints, time limits for them to perform, and therefore that resource that they have, needs to be dedicated there and maybe they won't want that person to participate in my idea due to that [...] So the organizational changes... I've seen the real life impacts in that sense." (Jonas - OE)*

The quotes and the above expressions highlight how the employees perceive the impacts of the downsizings over the last couple of years. They all express that due to the decrease in the number of people in the organization, the environment is not as supportive of creativity as it was before the changes. The quote above implies that projects are not accepted to the same extent because managers do not dare to let go of their employees, due to that resources have declined. Further, the uncertainty about future organizational changes is indicated to affect the employees' inclination to take the risk of putting extra effort into their work. It is, moreover, implied that there is a competition in the organization for these resources, which results in that

employees who want to engage in creative processes have to fight for it. This situation insinuates that creative engagement at TechAB calls for a fightmode in the employees and a high level of motivation since it can easily become exhausting fighting for something you probably will not win.

Several employees further give examples of how they believe the organizational culture has affected the work environment to become less creative, compared to before. Tina (OE) believes that the engagement has been lost because top management never dare to take big risks and always choose the projects with the least risk connected to it. Linnéa agrees, expressing a concern that they in Sweden are working in a locked environment, where the International Headquarters are taking all decisions. She further implies that the headquarters are very careful in their decision making, never daring to take risks. This perception can also be exemplified when Linnéa (OE) says:

> *"It's not a bold and brave organization now, we're too careful, it has become a lazy kind of organization. People don't act, they wait, which differs a lot [...] from the organization I had before." (Linnéa - OE)*

Philip (OE) is sharing the same perception:

> *"There is, like, a kind of an aversion from risk. So, if there's some risk to be taken, or something that you know depends on the situation, sometimes people will back off from that." (Philip - OE)*

Highlighted in these quotes is the perception of a headquarter and, thus, a top management who are afraid of taking on or accepting projects that might involve risk. This behavior is implied to affect the organizational culture in general, since employees then interpret this as the correct behavior, resulting in an organizational culture that is lazy, anxious and tired. We can identify annoyance from some of the employees who have been engaged in creative processes when they talk about the headquarters and, in turn, their risk aversion. This indicates that they perceive top management's behavior as putting obstacles in the way for the employees' own creative engagement due to their fear of making a mistake.

4.2.2 Absence of Faith at TechAB

During our interviews, the employees at TechAB uttered concerns about the future of the organization and of how their efforts will benefit the organization in the end. Several of our interviewees express that they need to see how their engagement will result in a change and something that will be useful for the organization, in order to be creative. Tina (OE) describes it as she needs a purpose with her engagement in order to be creative. This is further supported by Sten (SE) who argue that *"it is fun to create something where there is actually a need for a solution"*, whereas Freja (OE) describes the feeling as being proud when she gets the opportunity to find a creative solution to a problem as she feels that it *"is something that is meaningful and hopefully will make a change".* In addition to this, many expressed a desire to have a clear purpose in engaging in creative processes. More concrete, the employees revealed that the lack of purpose was a hinder to creativity as it created an organizational climate that was unsupportive of creative work:

> *But if you stand in a situation where you don't have a purpose, you don't have a goal, you don't work against something, that will make you lazy and with that, you won't be as creative as you would if you had been working to achieve something [...] there is a lack of inspiration and energy definitely. (Linnéa - OE)*

Linnéa (OE) refers to an organizational climate that lacks energy and inspiration due to a lack of bigger purpose and goal. Thus, the employees do not feel inclined to engage in creative processes. Ulf (SE) elaborates on this by describing how a greater purpose motivates the employees and benefits the organization:

> *"If you understand the bigger picture of what you're doing [...] like if the people believe in it, they do it. You know, if it means working over two nights then they do that, and you don't have to ask them or push them, they do it because they have committed themselves to it" (Ulf- SE)*

Based on the quotes above, we can deduce that the employees at TechAB feel that the organization does not support their creative engagement as they are not informed about the greater value or point of their engagement in creative processes. Further, Ulf's (SE) quote illustrates how commitment to the task or organization is beneficial for creative process engagement. Thus, implying that the lack of commitment that they are currently feeling, hinder

the creative engagement. Linnéa (OE) explains how the movement of responsibility to the International Headquarters took the greater purpose away from the site in Sweden, by resembling their current work environment to a factory:

> *"Then you are in an eight to four job, [it] is like click in, click out, with the time stamp clock, and then you have to deliver, produce. If you're in a production line or in a factory then you don't give room for much, and that will conflict with creativity and innovation and [with] people thinking outside the box or their regular task. [E]ven improving the way of working with that task will not come to them naturally because they're clocked, and they need to work like in a factory."*
> *(Linnéa - OE)*

This perception of the organization indicates that the employees do not believe that there is any greater value in engaging in creative processes, that they are stuck in working with their main tasks without being allowed to find ways of improvement. Thus, creating a feeling of unappreciation amongst the employees. This is further supported by Tina (OE) who describes how a part of the organization perceive themselves as redundant and without greater value:

> *"They call themselves the box lifters, like they move a box from here to here, they buy the box from the headquarters, already created, [and] they don't do anything to change it. They change the language on the box, and then they distribute it in their markets. So, they are, they call themselves the box lifters, it's really easy. They do nothing." (Tina - OE)*

These two examples of how the employees perceive their work and work environment illustrate the lack of energy and inspiration mentioned above, and how those feelings could be related to the feelings of being controlled and neglected in their daily work. Sten (SE) elaborates on this by stating that:

> *"Yes [the level of freedom] affects us very much, it does, and I mean [...] One could say that the ones who leave us are the ones who really don't get to carry through their ideas" (Sten - SE)*

The quotes above suggest how the current situation makes employees unsatisfied with their work and implies that people do not feel that they can affect the environment that they work

within. As a consequence, they choose to rather leave the organization than challenge the status quo. Hence, the changes seem to have a direct influence on how the employees perceive the organization's overall attitude toward creativity and innovation. In addition, Peter (SE) states that the effects of the downsize are apparent in the organization. He describes that there are uncertainties about the future and how this, in turn, affect the employees' motivation to tackle challenging tasks:

> *"[...] because they are a bit skeptical, because 'it won't happen, we're in the situation'... I think people are just accepting the situation... a bit too much maybe. [...] People are more concerned about the future than trying to change what's happening because I don't think people feel that they can affect it... We are just small bricks in this big, big game." (Peter - SE)*

Peter argues that the employees at TechAB are not inclined to take initiatives and urge changes. There is an alleged uncertainty about the future of the organization, which, in combination with the feeling of incapacity of change, cause the employees to give up. Thus, based on this quote we can read how the changes at TechAB has resulted in a low degree of hope and energy in the organization. In turn, making the employees feel concerned and powerless. In addition, we suggest that this might create a less favorable organizational environment for creativity and innovation as the quote express that people do not feel inclined to address the issue of uncertainty, but rather accept the situation as it is. Jonas (OE) expresses how the changes are resulting in a shift in the employees' attitude:

> *"But when it happens, dramatic stuff, like people around you get laid off, then, of course, it makes the whole team, getting down." (Jonas - OE)*

Specifically, the word "down" is used to describe the culture at the office by other employees as well:

> *"The culture is a bit down at the moment. There are many people leaving us now, many leave even if they weren't laid off, so the culture here now... [...] But, even though, I know that top management promotes that: 'One TechAB, be innovative', and all of those catchphrases that they spurt out" (Oskar - SE)*

What is interesting with the quote above is not just Oskar's description of the shift in the organizational culture due to the changes, but also his way of describing the top management's outspoken belief in innovation in this context. We can deduce a sense of cynicism toward these catchphrases, implying that Oskar (SE) does not believe that these words correspond with the way that top management is leading the organization. That there is not really "one TechAB" who works to fight the uncertainties with innovative solutions. Subsequently, we suggest that these promises of an innovative approach to the business whilst enforcing a de-energizing, "factory"-environment, create even more uncertainty amongst the employees, as it most likely results in an increased feeling of ambiguity. This has, in turn, led to a disbelief in the future of the organization, which was expressed by multiple employees. A few examples of such statements from the interviews are: *"the faith in the future is low [in the organization]" (Oskar - SE)* and that *"it's very clear that this company has seen its best years" (Ulf - SE).* These employees clearly argue for the organization's position as troublesome and with a lot of uncertainty of both where to go from here, as well as of what the consequences of this lack of faith will be. Nonetheless, parts of our empirical data show signs of how there is some creativity left in the organization, even if it is perceived to be somewhat negative. Peter (SE) elaborates on how the current climate at TechAB affects his perception and experience of creativity:

> *"[F]ocus has been a lot on 'how can we cut off that, how can we take that out' and you don't, of course, there are some creative solutions, but you don't feel the creativity in that sense. It's in a way a negative creativity." (Peter - SE)*

Thus, the focus on surviving and addressing the most urgent issues affect the employees' attitude toward creativity and finding creative solutions. Sten (SE) compares the situation to a "sickness", where the result of the movement of responsibility from the site in Sweden to the headquarters have changed the employees' focus and inclination to engage in other processes than the necessary ones. He argues that when one is healthy, one has the motivation and desire to take on additional tasks and try new things, while if one is sick, one will only focus on getting better. Thus, creating a very narrow focus of attention amongst the employees at TechAB and a hinder for creative process engagement. Oskar (SE) describes the situation in a similar manner:

> *"They say that in the time of crisis, that's when the ideas come. I think it's the other way around, I think many here loses momentum during a crisis. We've*

steadily been decreasing and people disappear, and it's hard to lose your co-
workers. It's almost no one left of the people that I've worked with over all these
years. Now four more will leave these next couple of months. So it destroys the
soul, it does." (Oskar - SE)

Here we can deduce a feeling of sadness and apathy over the situation at TechAB. We can also read from the quote that the employees at TechAB do not mobilize to find a creative solution to the "sickness" that Sten (SE) described above, which he believes usually occurs in times of crisis. Rather, Oskar (SE) suggests that the employees at TechAB have lost momentum due to the extension of the changes over the last couple of years and now do not react to the crisis in the way expected. Their inclination to find a cure from the sickness has decreased and, we believe that the level of hope within the organization has dropped as a result. Oskar (SE) elaborates on how the situation, in turn, affects the creativity:

"I think just the fact that you lose so much speed, we've had redundancies 2015,
2017 and basically every other year since TechAB took over [from Tech & Data
AB]. So I think that brings down the speed. We're sinking, and it takes a while to
get back from that, a willingness and desire… I would probably call it the desire
to be creative" (Oskar - SE)

Above, Oskar (SE) states that the changes, and the downsizing in particular, has a direct influence on the desire to be creative within the organization. Following in the interview he explains that he has had ideas of his own that he has chosen not to share with the management due to the lack of speed and the fact that he perceives the organization as "sinking". This view is shared by Linnéa (OE), who describes the current situation as following:

"We've been sitting locked into this big Titanic or ship, we were like 7000
employees here at the most. It was like an own world and everybody was talking
about the same things, this product and only this product, and we were like all in
the same area, working towards the same goals" (Linnéa - OE)

The comparison of the current situation to the cruise ship Titanic, known for how it sank during its virgin voyage across the Atlantic after a collision with an iceberg, further supports the employees' perception that the organization has seen its best days and now is sinking fast.

Linnéa also implies that the organization does not take the measures necessary to overcome this situation, but rather locks itself inwards, focusing on the same targets as it always has. Referring back to Sten's (SE) metaphor of a sick organization, this quote supports his suggestion of how the organization only focuses on trying to get better by enforcing the practices that they know best.

4.2.3 Section summary

The two sections above (4.2.1 + 4.2.2) illustrate how the changes in the organization have affected the employees. More concrete, as a consequence of the changes the employees seem to perceive there to be a lack of necessary resources of human capital in order for creative processes to happen. There are furthermore indications that top management's perceived risk-aversion has affected the organizational culture after the changes, resulting in an increasingly lazy, anxious and tired culture. Further, the employees expressed that the prevailing feelings of being controlled and neglected are two of the most substantial hinders to their engagement in creative processes. With such consequences in mind, the transformational changes have been compared to a "sickness", that, in turn, has lead to that employees do not have any faith in the future of the organization or their own capacity to enforce any improvements. This has, in turn, caused the organization to deteriorate. Thus, we can compare the situation at TechAB with a defective ship that is at risk of sinking if the captains cannot learn how to patch the leaking holes.

4.3 The Consequences of Governance

The following section is the third part of our an analysis of the collected empirical material. Here we will explore the perceptions of consequences such as the movement of responsibility from the site in Sweden to the International Headquarters, how decisions are currently being taken and the level of managerial approval at TechAB.

4.3.1 Movement of Responsibility at TechAB

In our empirical data, it became apparent that a great number of people within TechAB in Sweden perceived the international top management as controlling, unilateral and excluding. Linnéa (OE) expresses her concerns about how the movement of responsibility and core

business from the site in Sweden to the International Headquarters have left the site in Sweden neglectant of organizational goals. Further, she describes that the culture has become lazy, where people no longer have as much independence and authority as before the changes. Another interviewee, Jens (SE), describes this movement as a "hi-jack", where the international management came in and took over the operations of the core business, making the already hierarchical structure at the site in Sweden even more strict. Thus, we believe that this movement of responsibility where the employees in Sweden no longer have the freedom to take their own decisions have affected their performance negatively. This is again illustrated by Peter (SE):

> *"They will do it their way… So I think people have given up on trying to do it the way we have done in the past, now we feel top management's decisions are changing the way of working, and not in the way that we would prefer." (Peter - SE)*

This quote illustrates this lack of energy that Linnéa (OE) mentioned above, and how this affects the employees' inclination to take own initiatives. There is an inherent belief that one's decisions will not mean anything in the end, as the top management's way of working always will be the principal way of doing business. Thus, implying a lack of respect and reciprocity from top management to the employees. Peter (SE) further elaborates on this:

> *"It means that, maybe, you need to drive [...] things that you maybe don't always agree upon yourself. So, you become a messenger of someone else's decisions and directions. Sometimes that can be convenient, but in most cases, a bit frustrating [...] They are running the company now, so we have to follow." (Peter- SE)*

The two quotes above illustrate that this lack of decision making power fosters a sense of hopelessness and frustration within the organization regarding how one as an employee can take part and contribute to the organization's development. Throughout our empirical material, we can deduce an overall feeling amongst the employees that they are instructed to mainly focus on their core tasks and not worry about the bigger issues, that the International Headquarters will make the important decisions necessary. Thus, adding to this sense of hopelessness at the Swedish office, Ulf (SE) describes that he experiences a loss of speed,

efficiency, and passion at the office. He does not believe that anyone is still proud of working here anymore, after the changes that have been made. Ulf (SE) continues by explaining that:

> *"At least to me, it's the general feeling of not being invited to the table to try and, you know, fix the problems that need fixing. It's more of, it's decided by the headquarters [...] I'm not bad mouthing the headquarters here, I'm just saying that it's very different from what we're used to. So, the information flow and the transparency in decisions, etc. It's not there. And then it's difficult to believe and understand what's going on, there's a lot of that going on."* *(Ulf - SE)*

This lack of transparency regarding decisions that are being made that Ulf (SE) mentions above further supports the perception that top management does not find it necessary to communicate why they have acted in the way that they have when making decisions that affect the site in Sweden. Ulf's (SE) argument demonstrates his view of how top management does not see the value of informing the employees' in Sweden about why certain strategic decisions are being made and that they rather just inform the employees of how they are expected to adapt to those decisions. Based on this quote, we argue that the employees at the site in Sweden feel like there is not enough openness in the culture and that they are marionettes to the headquarter's larger vision, rather than active members that are being invited to take their own decisions and take part in steering the organization in, what they believe to be, the right direction. Ulf (SE) further elaborates:

> *"[T]here weren't really always space to make decisions that you feel are necessary. So, it's obvious, to me it's not that much fun."* *(Ulf - SE)*

This is also supported by Jens (SE), who argues that no-one from top management truly ever pushes the employees to take initiatives or be creative. Rather, he argues that they are encouraged to keep to themselves and their assigned tasks, while others work on finding the new ways of working:

> *"You are a little bit like Harry Potter there, 'don't go three and a half floor up, because we have employed people that do the smart ideas, and don't disturb them'.*
> *" (Jens - SE)*

By using the metaphor of the literary character Harry Potter, Jens (SE) suggests that the Swedish site could be compared to the young boy who lived in the cupboard under the stairs and who were not allowed to make his own decision, but rather forced to bend to rules of his neglecting and smug stepparents. Thus, this perception of the organizational structure and top management's unwillingness to delegate decision making-power and encourage creative behavior implies that the employees' do not feel an eagerness to be creative and take own initiatives. This is supported by Tina (OE), who has experienced that whenever she is trying to be creative, the suggested improvement is always disregarded or shut down in the end, and the organization will keep on doing things the same way as always. We can deduce a tone of frustration as she further states that this aversion to risk and trying new procedures or ideas *"really kills my motivation" (Tina - OE)* and that this is an issue that is central to the organization and is correlated with the lack of communication from the headquarters. When describing an example of when she was involved in a creative process that was shut down, Tina (OE) highlights how this frustration emerges due to the lack of communication from top management:

> *"Yeah, and go so far and then, in the end, they are like: 'Oh, and by the way, we*
> *don't want to do that' and then they cancel it on that day. Where was the heads*
> *up? where was the guiding? [...] but it's not really communicated down" (Tina -*
> *OE)*

This issue of communication and how the lack of it affects the employees' motivation and creativity is also addressed by Therese (OE):

> *"[H]igher executives are not sharing all of the information that is needed for us*
> *to be able to do our jobs. [....] Then, of course, that's going to lead to that I'm not*
> *feeling creative in my work, because I'm just sort of being told to do something,*
> *without really understanding the reasons why I'm doing it, or what it is leading*
> *to." (Therese - OE)*

Thus, top management's disregard for transparent and straightforward communication about the future of the organization and how the employees in Sweden fit into that vision appears to create a feeling of being worthless as well as distrust in top management. The employees in Sweden seem to only be small pieces of a bigger puzzle, and cannot see how their efforts to be

creative will lead to an improvement when they are not informed about where top management wants to position TechAB. Hence, Therese (OE) suggests that in order to improve the creative engagement within the organization, and at the site in Sweden, it would require a change of mindset at the headquarters. This view was, however, opposed by Jonas (OE), who argued that one cannot blame everything on top management and that it is up to the individual to take some responsibility as well:

> *"But you also have to take your steps [...] you have to be active, you can't always blame the company or your manager or you know, you have to be active. You cannot say: 'Yeah, I wanted to be creative, but you didn't let me', no."* *(Jonas - OE)*

Another employee who believes that many employees at the site tend to blame the top management for everything bad that is happening within the organization since the movement of responsibility to the International Headquarters is Evelina (SE):

> *"Because everything that's bad that happens, 'everything that has been bad is coming from a decision from the headquarters'. Then, people tend to blame it on them all the time. It's not like that, and we never fought about that when it was the old company, when it was the other way [around], when this site had the power." (Evelina - SE)*

These two quotes do not only exemplify how the top management can not be blamed for everything that does not go well in the organization, but also that there is a prevailing force of resistance against the top management and a lack of belief in their true intentions. In addition to Jens' (SE) earlier description of the organization as "hi-jacked", Evelina's (SE) statement, that it was different before the changes, indicates that employees in Sweden feel deprived of their independence and decision making-power since the movement of responsibility. Further, Evelina (SE) implied that there is a tendency of jumping to conclusions of who to blame for the organization's misfortune. This could, in turn, indicate that the top management is commonly used as a scapegoat for all of the organization's misfortunes amongst the employees, causing them to perceive this movement of responsibility as a great disadvantage for the organization and as an unfortunate decision for the future viability of the organization.

4.3.2 Decision Making at TechAB

Something that has been apparent throughout our empirical findings has been the perception from employees of top management's inability to take decisions. According to several of our interviewees, they often experience that decisions about projects' termination are being communicated too late from top management. Carl (SE) mentions how there often are people working thoroughly and for a long time on projects that later are shut down by top management, which evokes a feeling of disappointment. Evelina (SE) further highlights and supports this:

> *"You kill yourself for six months and then, in the end, the project was killed? I think that was the most frustrating" (Evelina - SE)*

This quote highlights the challenge for top management to deal with decision making regarding projects survival or not, and the communication to employees regarding this decision. The negative feelings of putting lots of energy and time into a project that later is shut down have further been mentioned to affect the belief of future projects for some employees. In an interview with Sten (SE), he mentions that top management demand lots of information regarding the returns of investing before the project even has begun. He summarizes the effect of this as:

> *"Then I might have lost faith in that all these initiatives will generate something in the end" (Sten - SE)*

Top management's behavior of demanding lots of information from the projects beforehand, combined with often delivering decisions of terminating projects late in the process, have resulted in employees' not having faith in that their generation of new ideas or hard work will be valuable. Tina (OE), an employee of TechAB since a couple of years, expresses that there is also an ambiguity among employees due to late or non-existing decisions from top management:

> *"So that is like, it feels like a failure because we have been working on it for so long and we just, it gets no decisions and it's so [...] who do we belong to? Who are we doing it on behalf of? Do we work for everybody? Yeah, yeah... So it's a shame within this big company, because we have so many good ideas, but we're really, really, bad in taking the decisions" (Tina - OE)*

The above quote illustrates how these late decisions result in employees feeling that they have failed, even though that might not be the case. It further emphasizes how top management's behavior decreases the generation of new ideas within the organization which is a great problem for an organization that wants to initiate innovation. Employee ambiguity regarding who their leaders really are is further highlighted in the quote. Tina (OE) continues in the interview to talk about how late decisions affect the employees, and that it has happened several times. Tina (OE) tells us about a project that was allowed to go on for too long before being shut down, even though it was not aligned with the organization's line of business from the beginning. The project team succeeded in fully developing the product during their time working on it since top management had allowed them to go on until the very last minute:

> *"[T]hey got partnership with [a big German medical] company and it was just*
> *on the day when they were going to sign the partnership where top management*
> *absolutely shit themselves and just flew to Germany and canceled everything, and*
> *the project was canceled the day after." (Tina - OE)*

Again, it is clearly highlighted how top management do not take decisions until they absolutely need to in the organization. The quotes above further illustrate how top management are perceived as cowards by the employees, burying their heads in the sand until it is almost too late. This behavior seems to provoke irritation and feelings of being deceived by top management in the employees. It is further expressed by Sten (SE) that there is sometimes confusion about who is responsible for taking decisions regarding projects' survival or not:

> *"It is difficult to stop projects [...] and they are allowed to continue until the end*
> *because a decision has already been taken [in the beginning] and they [top*
> *management] have invested so much in it already and then they feel that it is*
> *hard to pull the breaks on it. You don't really know who should pull the breaks,*
> *even though you know in some way that it is top management [...] but it is really*
> *hard to pull the breaks and stop projects." (Sten - SE)*

Confusion can be identified in Sten's quote, and also the difficulty to stop projects yourself since the responsibility appears to lie on top management. The quote moreover shows how deep the feelings of ambiguity around these decisions are from the employees, indicating that

they are annoyed with top management for not doing their job. Top management's inability to take decisions is something Tina (OE) also gives us an example of when talking about a project that had been going on for two years:

> *"We have such a weak management in that way because they don't want to take a decision. Either say go or no go, they just don't do anything [...] I actually had a manager in software going to head of TechAB, saying: 'Okay, this is my project, please cancel it, or decide to go on [with] it. I can't continue with this go, no go, go, no go. Just take a decision. I don't care what it is'." (Tina - OE)*

The quote highlights desperation from employees for faster and clearer directions from above. The manager in the quote actively approaching top management and demanding a decision, no matter if it is a positive or negative one, further indicates feelings of hopelessness and despair as s/he does not experience having control. Moreover, a feeling of annoyance with top management's inability to decide can be identified in the quote as the manager on his own accord approached top management, instead of waiting for a decision. The description of management as being weak, again, indicates a perception of a cowardly top management who are afraid of taking decisions. The quote emphasizes the employees' acceptance of negative decisions, as long as they are taken at an early stage in the process so they can move on to something else, which could explain why they feel frustrated when they do not receive any decisions at all. In our interview with Philip (OE), he further elaborated on top management's behavior:

> *"Top management have a different way of working where… once they take the decision, they want to stick to the decision" (Philip - OE)*

This quote illustrates the perception of a rigid leadership that does not allow for flexibility, which is not appreciated by the employees at the site in Sweden as they are used to a more flexible decision making from above. The quote also indicates that top management stick to decisions regardless of them being the correct one or not, which implies a stubbornness at the top level of the organization.

4.3.3 Managerial Approval at TechAB

Contrasting from above, there are also indications from the empirical data that creative engagement can be something the employees at TechAB see as positive. Philip, who often engages in creative processes, describes his experience like this:

> *"Innovation is really cool in that respect. Because you can talk to other people, you can think differently." (Philip - OE)*

This quote illustrates how Philip appreciate his engagement in creativity processes. Linnéa (OE) also explains to us how she felt as if she was lifted out of her daily bubble when engaging in the creative processes, and said that she felt it was inspiring, motivating and energizing. This is further supported by Freja (OE) who expresses similar feelings:

> *"So, I felt that I almost [had] to be in that one, I didn't have time to put away two days but I thought I needed to put this time into this, because I think it's so important and then it was so fun, so, [in the end] I was really energized." (Freja - OE)*

The above quotes and expressions indicate that the employees' experience of creative engagement at TechAB can elicit positive emotions when they have been challenged in their way of thinking, but also because it has been a well needed break from the regular work tasks that Linnéa (OE) insinuates are isolated. The personal value of engaging is further implied in the quote immediately above, meaning that when Freja (OE) feels that the creative engagement generate value for herself, it is very energizing and fun. The factors of energy and fun work have earlier been perceived as missing in the current situation at TechAB, which this data implies that creative engagement could help restore. When discussing what is rewarding with creativity, Sten (SE) communicated that when projects are approved by top management, this is *"damn fun [...] that's when I feel really creative"*. He explains how getting his project accepted and then presented as part of a strategy plan felt really good. Experiencing happiness from the acceptance and investment by top management implies that this made him feel appreciated and seen by TechAB's leaders, and further that receiving recognition and credit evoke positive feelings. This indicates that when projects actually get accepted, in contrast to being unexpectedly terminated, it results in positive feelings in the employees about their own creative effort. This is further supported by Ulf (SE) who says:

" You have an idea [...] and then you see it develop and you see that it actually
makes sense and it works. That's a lot of fun." (Ulf - SE)

This statement suggests that when employees at TechAB have faith in their projects and are allowed to develop their ideas into something real and valuable, they experience positive emotions. Feelings of being valued are moreover supported to increase engagement by Ida (OE) who says:

"My [closest] manager is very understanding and open minded to these [creative
activities] and he sees the value of [...] me getting involved in these areas [...] I
think that's important that he sees the value because that encourages me to want
to participate [in creative activities] more." (Ida - OE)

Her comment indicates that she needs to feel that her engagement is approved by her leader in order to participate, which implies that managers at all levels at TechAB have great importance in the level of engagement from the employees. It further suggests that TechAB's employees need to feel valued and supported in order to engage in creative activities. Sten's (SE) interview reinforces this suggestion when he mentions that *"I believe you need that driving spirit from a true enthusiast"* (Sten - SE) when describing how they once succeeded with inventing a product they did not believe was possible from the beginning, thanks to the encouragement from their top management. We can, however, identify some lack of encouragement from leaders at TechAB. One of the employees expresses that *"Nobody pushes us. Nobody asks"* (Jens - SE) and when asked about encouragement, Mari (SE) said, *"It's just coming from myself, I think"* (Mari - SE). It is implied in the empirical data that the employees at TechAB are more motivated to engage in creative processes when feeling encouraged and supported, which is further mentioned by Jessica (SE) saying:

"Yeah, maybe someone needs to come and tap on my shoulder when there's
something that's interesting for me." - (Jessica - SE)

The encouragement from leaders seems to be lacking at TechAB, which is implied by the employees to affect their engagement in creativity and feelings of value and acceptance in general. As their answers indicate that acceptance and support from managers increase

engagement, we believe it is indicated that this lack of support is a challenge for TechAB's top management, and thus, needs to be improved in order to initiate creative engagement in the organization.

4.3.4 Section Summary

In the three sections above (4.3.1 + 4.3.2 + 4.3.3) we have presented and discussed how employees seem to perceive some of the consequences of the changes at TechAB. The empirical material indicate that the movement of responsibility from the site in Sweden to the International Headquarters seem to have resulted in an organizational climate that lacks energy, speed, and passion due to the decrease of power, openness, and recognition that the changes brought on. This decrease has generated emotions of worthlessness and frustration amongst the employees in Sweden, as they feel that they no longer understand top management's decisions, are not invited to participate in the development of the organization and that their engagement in creative processes appears to not be of top management's interest. Thus, the employees can be perceived as top management's marionettes rather than empowered individuals. Further, there appears to be a perception that engagement in creative processes is not worth the effort, as the employees' attempt only will be "neglected by their smug stepparents". Moreover, the consequences of top management's way of taking decisions are that the employees perceive them as insincere, weak and risk-avert. This perception is suggested to evoke feelings of ambiguity, frustration, failure, and disappointment for the employees. Finally, the chapter also shows indications that when employees experience that management encourage and approve of their creative engagement, they feel more inclined to engage. However, the overall empirical data indicates that this kind of support is lacking at TechAB.

5. Discussion

This chapter is based upon the analysis of our empirical findings presented above, where we present indications of how employees' have perceived the consequences of the transformational changes at TechAB and further illustrate how these consequences are indicated to have affected the employees' feelings in general. We have been able to delve into the empirical data in the above analysis. Following, this chapter will integrate the analysis with

our theoretical background in order to fulfill our aim of gaining a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect employee creative process engagement.

5.1 Signs of a Psychological Contract at TechAB

At TechAB it is evident that the organizational changes appear to have affected the employees' attitudes toward, and behaviors within, the organization. The restructuring that was initiated by top management as a result of the recent downsizing has brought on uncertainty and ambiguity amongst the employees. Thus, potentially enhancing the employees' feeling of vulnerability toward top management's decisions according to Sverdrup & Stensaker's (2018) theory. The analysis indicates that the employees perceive the organization as a "sinking ship" due to the low culture at the Swedish site, the perceived uncertainty about the organization's future and the feelings of incapacity to initiate and drive improvements. An example of this is when top management decided to terminate a project that was just about to enter a partnership with an external actor on the market. Thus, leading to feelings of irritation and being deceived amongst the employees. The perceived insincerity of top management's action could potentially be explained by Sørensen et al.'s (2011) suggestion of how employees' increase their scrutiny of management actions during substantial organizational changes.

Sørensen et al., (2011) further argue that transformational changes challenge the employees' perceived trust in top management, as top management are the ones who introduce the changes. In the empirical material, we can read how the employees' perception of the top management's aversion to risks is a recurring point of view. Several employees communicate a feeling of frustration, worthlessness, and disappointment regarding the discrepancy between top management's praise of creativity and innovation, and their risk-avert behavior. For example when they highlight how they perceive top management to pretend they are supportive of creativity engagement, while simultaneously being too risk-avert to support many of the creativity processes at TechAB. Thus, we believe these feelings are signs of employee cynicism in line with Cartwright & Holmes' (2006) study, which further would indicate distrust toward the organization and top management. Sørensen et al. (2011) argue that the greater the uncertainty, the more trust between employees and management is needed to address this issue. As many employees at TechAB express high concerns regarding the transformational changes and its consequences by comparing the organization to a sinking ship and the changes to a

sickness, this implies great uncertainty amongst the employees. Further, we suggest that this uncertainty has led to a decrease of trust in top management. Thus, according to Sørensen et al.'s (2011) theory, we can presume that the situation at TechAB calls for a development of higher trust in order to minimize the potential damage that the changes can bring.

Other signs of low trust can be identified in the analysis via the perceived perception that top management is weak, non-transparent and disencouraging of creative process engagement. Furthermore, top management's communication efforts are seen as unreliable and contradicting as well as that employees do not feel they have the power to take decisions. Thus, we suggest that the employees seem to have a perception of top management as malevolent, which according to Mayer et al. (1995) decreases the level of trustworthiness towards the organization. Moreover, Mayer et al.'s (1995) theory suggests that when some of the employees express how they need to follow orders they do not adhere to, this can be a sign of how employees' perceive top management at TechAB to have low integrity. We believe this indicates that the perceived trustworthiness towards top management is even further compromised. The recurrence of transformational changes and the perception of management having ulterior motives, could according to Fein's (1996) research enhance a feeling of suspicion toward managerial actions. The author further states that such a feeling causes increased distrust between the two parties. Hence, we suggest that the employees at TechAB are suspicious toward top management and, therefore, questions their true intentions. Moreover, Isaksen et al. (2001) argue that trust is based on the perception of mutual respect, sharing of credit, openness, and frankness between two parties (e.g the employee and the organization). In the case of TechAB, there are signs of how these factors are not present in the relationship between top management and the employees, for example when employees perceive top management to be malevolent, have ulterior motives and do not communicate the reasons for their decisions. Therefore, we can see indications of distrust between the two parties.

We believe the signs of employee distrust are evident in the case of TechAB, due to that the employees appear to perceive the current level of reciprocity from top management as insufficient. This indicates that there earlier have been trust present in this relationship and, in line with Rousseau's (1989) theory, a psychological contract between the two parties. Furthermore, we argue that the increased feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity, and suspicion

suggest a need for re-assessing the psychological contract, as the terms of the contract and the basis of the employment relationship, appear to have changed.

5.2 Signs of a Psychological Contract Breach at TechAB

The negative feelings of frustration and disappointment, discussed above, implies that there is a perceived lack of reciprocity from the organization in return for the employees' engagement. When top management's level of reciprocity is perceived as insufficient by employees at TechAB, Rousseau's (1989) and Robinson's (1996) theories suggest that there is a perceived breach of the psychological contract between the employees and the organization. We can see signs of a breach in the empirical material when the employees express how they believe there is discrepancy between top management's actions and communication. An example of this could be the employees' perception of how top management says to promote creative process engagement, whilst continuously terminating such processes without prior notice. Thus, creating a sense of confusion and ambiguity about the management's true intentions and benevolence toward the employees.

Alternative indications of a psychological contract breach can be identified in the empirical material. Firstly, many employees express that there is a lack of communication from top management at TechAB. Examples of this could be when employees express that they do not receive enough information from top management regarding goals, strategies, and purpose with the tasks they are given. Further, they argue that they are not allowed to be involved in decision making processes, such as when top management decide to terminate projects. This could according to Andersson's (1996) theory result in a perceived psychological contract breach. Secondly, a transformational change in itself could also elicit a perception of a breach (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018). As been discussed throughout this study, TechAB has been suffering from continuous organizational changes in the form of downsizings and restructurings. During our interviews, the employees elaborated on how they perceived these changes as a phenomenon that destroys the soul, energy, and passion within the organization. Thus, implying that the changes are truly transformational and, in turn, violates the psychological contract. Lastly, based on Sverdrup & Stensaker's (2018) view on changes and psychological contract, we assume that the extensive number of changes that have occurred the last decade have had an influence on the employees' psychological contract to the organization.

Moreover, the potential earlier breaches of the psychological contract due to the changes, further increase the possible perception of an ongoing psychological contract breach according to Robinson's (1996) theory. Further, this supports the previous suggestion that the employees at TechAB have low trust in their top management.

The strong indications of a psychological contract breach at TechAB, in turn, indicates that the relationship between the employees and the organization could have been jeopardized, according to Rousseau (1989) and Sims (1994) research. Signs of a damaged relationship between the employees at TechAB and top management could be when employees have expressed feelings of failure and unappreciation as a consequence of top management's behavior. We suggest that these feelings could, in turn, negatively affect their creative process engagement, as the relationship between management and employees is seen as essential for employees' creative process engagement (Chen 2016; Damanpour & Schneiderw; 2006; Wu 2005; Jung et al., 2008).

5.3 Consequences of a Psychological Contract Breach at TechAB

The damaged relationship discussed above can be connected to the lack of trust in top management that has been suggested earlier (see 5.1). When employees' perceive that the relationship between them and management is damaged, they are probably less likely to trust the management, as trust evolves when there is reciprocity and is based on that the behavior of one party (e.g top management) is perceived as trustworthy by the other party (e.g the employees) (Robinson, 1996). As the employees do not feel reciprocated by management, which has been discussed above, we suggest this implies that the employment relationship has been compromised, which, in turn, entails that employees' trust in management is violated. This perceived violation of trust could, therefore, be a consequence of the employees' impression of psychological contract breach.

In addition, there are other consequences from a psychological contract breach that can be identified in the case of TechAB. The analysis entails that employees feel let down by top management. An example of this is the employees' expressed feelings of not being able to affect any decisions made by top management, that top management's decisions are the only truth and that they have to adjust accordingly. It appears that such feelings, in turn, lead to a

level of employee neglect at TechAB. This further illustrates one of the possible consequences of a psychological contract breach, which is supported by Ng et al. (2010). Another implied consequence of the psychological contract breach is reduced contributions to the organization by the employees (Robinson, 1996). Signs of reduced contributions at TechAB can be identified in our analysis of the data as several of the employees have communicated that they do not get enough recognition from top management for their engagement in creative processes. Further, many employees have expressed that the lack of space for extra-role behavior, such as when they compare the organization to a factory, evokes feelings of not being appreciated for their contributions to the organization. Subsequently, we can see indications of how this leads them to be less inclined to contribute to the organization's further development since they do not feel that they receive any reciprocation for their effort, which is in line with Amabile's (1988) theory. Therefore, the empirical evidence discussed in the analysis supports Robinson's (1996) argument that a psychological contract breach can reduce employee contributions.

What is further indicated in the empirical findings is how the culture at TechAB is lazy and careful where employees explicitly state that the "energy in the culture is down". The employees argue that this is due to the lack of human capital in the organization, which in turn affects the available resources for both assigned tasks and extra-role behavior. Thus, the lack of resources seems to increase the cost of engaging in creative processes, and in turn, causes many employees to give up. This conclusion can be supported by the employees' statement that there is a need to fight for the resources available, which gets exhausting and, in turn, leads them to accept the situation as it is and back away from creative process engagement. The empirical examples from TechAB above indicate that the employees' commitment to the organization has decreased since they appear to have given up on their believed capacity to affect the current situation at TechAB. These findings support Rousseau's (1989) argument that a psychological contract breach can decrease employees' commitment to the organization. Based on the perception of management's violation of employee trust, and the reduction of employee contribution and commitment that appears to have evolved in the aftermath of the transformational changes, we suggest that the umbrella term for the consequences of the changes is the perceived psychological contract breach.

5.4 Implications on Creative Process Engagement at TechAB

As trust is one of the most vital components for creative process engagement (Barsh et al., 2008), the violation of trust in the case of TechAB indicates that the employees' creative process engagement will decrease as a result of the psychological contract breach. Further, employees need creative self-efficacy to increase their inclination to engage in creative processes (Chen, 2016), which in turn demands managerial support, praise (Waterwall et al., 2017) and verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1982). As shown in our analysis, the employees at TechAB have expressed a desire of more managerial support, praise, and verbal persuasion in order to increase their creative process engagement. Thus, employees' perception of inadequate managerial behavior could potentially hinder their development of creative self-efficacy. Additionally, several employees at TechAB have continually addressed how the lack of purpose with their work and creative engagement, their absence in decision making processes and the lack of resources have affected their belief in their own capacity to deliver value with their creative process engagement. Thus, implying that their level of creative self-efficacy is low according to Zhang and Bartol's (2010) theory. The decrease of employees' creative self-efficacy at TechAB due to the inadequate managerial behavior in the aftermath of the transformational changes could, in turn, negatively affect their creative process engagement.

Moreover, Amabile's (1988) research suggests that employees' creative process engagement is dependent on good communication, autonomy, clear goals and sufficient resources, which the discussion above has indicated that TechAB does not have. Amabile's (1988) theories suggest that these contextual factors are objective entities that occur in the organizational environment. On the contrary, the argument in this thesis suggests that the world is more complicated than such, and that these factors only can subjectively exist in the minds of the employees, and that the employees' interpretation of bad communication, too tight control, a lack of clear goals and insufficient resources is enough to affect their inclination to engage in creative processes. Therefore, one cannot state whether these inhibiting managerial actions and behaviors exist at TechAB. However, we see indications in the empirical material of how employees perceive top management's actions and behaviors in a negative way. This leads us to believe that this perception can have affected the employees' inclination to engage in creative processes.

The discussion above indicates how the consequences of the psychological contract breach at TechAB decrease the employees' creative process engagement. This aligns with Ramamoorthy et al.'s (2005) contrasting theory, that a fulfillment of the psychological contract results in a greater inclination to engage in voluntary behavior, such as creative processes. Due to the high number of interviewed employees that, in a nuanced way, have expressed negative perceptions of the concerns discussed above, the psychological contract breach that seems to have evolved in the aftermath of the organizational changes at TechAB appears to be substantial. According to the perceived findings, employees' inclination to engage in creative processes seem to be significantly hampered due to this substantial breach of the psychological contract between employees and the management at TechAB. Interestingly, there appears that some of the employees' that have been interviewed at TechAB choose to engage in creative processes even though they seem to agree on that the psychological contract has been substantially violated. This phenomenon is not only deviating from more common occurrences, but also contradicts most theories discussed in this thesis and that has been found on the subject of study.

5.5 Deviating Behavior at TechAB

Since most theories suggest that a psychological contract breach negatively influences employees' creative process engagement, which in many ways is perceived to be supported in the case at TechAB, we found the deviating behavior of engaging to be an interesting phenomenon. When employees decide to engage in creative processes at TechAB, this implies that there is something influencing them to a greater extent than the above discussed consequences of the psychological contract breach. This is an intriguing discovery and calls for further reasoning. Recalling Amabile's (1988) theories regarding employee' engagement in creative processes, one could discuss how factors at TechAB like communication, autonomy, clear goals and sufficient resources influence the employees. Since these factors are argued to increase creative process engagement, this theory would suggest that the employees at TechAB perceive these factors as present. However, as have been discussed in the analysis, the employees at TechAB, even the ones who often engages, perceive there to be a lack of communication, too much control, lack of purpose and insufficient resources in the organization. Thus, our findings cannot be explained with Amabile's (1988) theory on creative process engagement, but rather challenge the suggested theory.

What the analysis further reveals is that employees who often engage in creative processes express that they do this because of the personal value that the engagement will bring them and because they perceive the engagement as an appreciated break from their ordinary tasks. Hence, we suggest that these employees have found a purpose in engaging in creative processes, even though this purpose is not necessarily related to the organization. When the purpose of engaging is not related to the organization, the expectation of reciprocity from the organization could be argued to possibly be lower than if the purpose of engaging was to contribute to the organization. This identified purpose could, according to Zhang and Bartol's (2010) theory, also increase the level of creative self-efficacy, which subsequently implies that these employees have a greater level of creative self-efficacy than the ones who more seldom have engaged in creative processes at TechAB.

Based on this, we will elaborate on two potential explanations for why some employees' behavior deviates from what the previous research suggest. Firstly, we discuss the signs of how the creative process engagement is not a part of the employees' psychological contract. Thus, the perceived psychological contract breach appear to not have affected employees creative process engagement as much as theory suggests. Secondly, we suggest that the employees' level of creative self-efficacy can potentially influence the employees' creative process engagement more than the perceived psychological contract breach. As both of these explanations challenges most existing theories within the field, they are particularly interesting to discuss further.

In this first explanation, we propose that what the employees gain from their engagement in creative processes is mostly related to other fulfillments than perceived obligations toward the development of the organization and, is thus, outside of the psychological contract that exists between the organization and the employee. This further implies that the psychological contract breach at TechAB has not affected these employees' creative process engagement, because these employees did not initially perceive the engagement as part of the psychological contract. Hence, one can suggest that even though reciprocity regarding their creative process engagement seems to be appreciated by these employees, it does not appear to be a crucial factor for their inclination to engage in creative processes. Thus, implying that the psychological contract these employees have with the organization does not contain an expectancy of reciprocity in return for creative engagement.

However, we argue that organizations should want their employees to include creative process engagement in their perceived psychological contract, in order to maximize the output for the benefit of the organization. Based on our findings, we believe that if employees' engage solely on the premise of personal gain, there is a greater risk that the output will not be as beneficial for the organization as it could have been if the goal with the engagement was to develop the organization. This could possibly be explained by the idea that employees will be content when their engagement has led to a sufficient level of personal satisfaction if engaging for solely personal gain. If the organization does not address this issue, we suggest that there is a greater risk that the distance increases between the organizational benefits of creative process engagement and the basis for employees' engagement. Further, based on the findings and theories discussed above we imply that top management could influence whether the employees' perceive that creative process engagement is included in the employees' psychological contract or not, by increasing the employee's' level of trust and decreasing their level of uncertainty. However, if proceeding with such an attempt, management need to be aware of the consequences of influencing employees' perception of the psychological contract. As the theory by Rousseau (1989) and Robinson (1996) suggest, an extension of the psychological contract would entail a greater demand of reciprocity from the organization in return for employees' creative process engagement. In order to succeed with this, we suggest that the renegotiation of the terms of the contract needs to be perceived as an iterative process by top management. It is only when the terms of the psychological contract are continuously recognized as fluid, the organization will be able to influence whether or not the creative process engagement is perceived as a part of the psychological contract by the employees.

Furthermore, if deciding to not address the employees' perceived lack of trust and a high level of uncertainty, the organization is choosing the comfortable path toward engaging employees in creative processes. Even though this explanation suggests that creative process engagement can exist in the organization outside of the psychological contract, we also propose that when including creative process engagement in the psychological contract there is a greater chance that the employees' engage on the premise of contributing to the organization's development, rather than their own personal gain. Thus, implying that the outputs of employees' creative engagement would more likely target the organization's true need for development.

Even though the above discussion implies that the employees' creative process engagement lies outside of their psychological contract, we can not assume this to be an absolute truth. To further discuss other indications, we suggest in this second explanation that the high level of creative self-efficacy that employees' at TechAB appear to have, could have a greater influence over their creative process engagement than the perceived psychological contract breach. This indicates to us that, when employees have a high level of creative self-efficacy, their inclination for creative process engagement does not necessarily need to be hampered by a perceived psychological contract breach. This indication further implies that organizations should work to increase their employees' creative self-efficacy in times of uncertainty. One way for TechAB to increase their employees' creative self-efficacy could, in line with Chen's (2016) theory, be to work on the relationship with their employees by trying to increase employee trust. In line with what both Tierney and Farmer's (2011) and Chen's (2016) theories suggest, TechAB could furthermore try to increase the managerial support and understand how the managers' actions are interpreted by the employees since when these actions convey support for creativity, employees' creative self-efficacy increases. In the event that these actions would increase the employees' creative self-efficacy, it could result in that a breach of the psychological contract does not affect these employees' inclination for creative process engagement to the same extent as theories suggest.

Psychological contract breach is common in times of changes, due to that the terms of the contract alter as a result of the changes, which can be difficult for organizations to adapt to (Sims, 1994; Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018; Akthat & Long, 2018). Combining this assumption with the above discussion about the influence of creative self-efficacy, we subsequently suggest that organizations might not need to consider the changes of the psychological contract terms during transformational changes. Furthermore, the implication that creative self-efficacy greatly influences creative process engagement also suggests that the psychological contract might not have as much of an influence on the relationship between the employee and organization as theories suggest. If creative self-efficacy can be regarded as more influential than a psychological contract breach, the contract itself might not have as much power over the employees' creative process engagement as previous research claims. However, we can not argue that the psychological contract does not affect the employees in any way. Since there are employees at TechAB who do not engage in the creative processes, or seldom does, it implies that the psychological contract breach has had some effect on these employees' creative process

engagement. Nonetheless, based on the discussion above, we suggest that organizations possibly can lessen a negative impact on their employees' inclination to engage in creative processes in times of transformational changes, by taking actions that could improve their employees' creative self-efficacy.

6. Conclusion

The aim of our study was to gain a deeper understanding of how transformational changes affects creative process engagement within an organization, by analyzing how employees experience the consequences of the changes. We have attempted to answer this aim by addressing the following two questions "*How do employees perceive the consequences of transformational changes?*" and "*How do the perceived consequences affect their inclination to engage in creative processes?*" in the context of a single case study at the organization TechAB. Since the research aims to understand employees' perception of the changes, we have been influenced by the interpretive tradition when trying to answer these questions.

Through our analysis of the situation at TechAB, we have identified what was perceived as the most important consequences of the changes by the employees. First, the result of the changes is perceived to have made the organization more risk-avert and hierarchical where the employees at the site in Sweden feel that they have lost responsibility to the International Headquarters. Secondly, this risk-aversion has caused the employees to lose faith in both the future of the organization and their own capacity to enforce any improvements. Thirdly, the movement of responsibility has in turn, made the employees feel worthless to the organization as they are not allowed to participate in decision making processes. Following, top management's approach toward taking decisions has led to that the employees perceive them as insincere. Lastly, the employees perceive that the communication across hierarchical levels has become less transparent, which subsequently has resulted in a lack of purpose in their work. In turn, these perceived consequences of the transformational changes have led to a perception amongst the employees of the changes as a fatal sickness. As a result, there are indications that employees' trust in TechAB has decreased, simultaneously as their level of uncertainty regarding TechAB's future has increased. On account of this perception, we have seen indications of how the consequences of the transformational changes have negatively affected most employees' inclination to engage in creative processes, due to that the changes initiated a psychological contract breach by TechAB. Interestingly, some employees at TechAB were still

inclined to engage in creative processes, thus, requesting another possible explanation to their behavior than what current theory has suggested.

We proposed two reasons that could possibly explain this deviating behavior. Firstly, we suggest that these employees' inclination to engage in creative processes is not affected by the psychological contract breach because they perceive such engagement to not be a part of the psychological contract. This explanations challenges what previous research implies. Our second suggested explanation claims that a psychological contract breach might not be as influential as earlier research argues for, as we suggest that a high level of creative self-efficacy can have a greater influence on their inclination to engage in creative processes. Thus, both our explanations challenge current theory in the field of creative process engagement. In our case at TechAB, we succeeded in identifying a number of perceived consequences of the transformational changes and how these consequences affected the employees' inclination to engage in creative processes. To conclude, we have foremost contributed to the field of study with our findings of a deviating behavior that challenges the current theory, where the suggested explanations add to the previous research within the field of creative process engagement.

6.1 Future research

With this study, we have succeeded in presenting a deeper understanding of how transformational changes can affect employees' inclination to engage in creative processes. However, there are much more to be discovered within the field of creative process engagement. Since we only scratch on the surface of the situation studied in this thesis, both due to the time frame and the fact that it is a qualitative single case study, we suggest that further research should be done on a similar situation but in other organizational contexts. Studying similar situations in a multiple case study, or by taking a quantitative stance instead, future researchers could perhaps add more generalizable theories on the subject.

Another suggestion would be to add to our conclusion in this thesis and research further on possible effects when creative process engagement is not perceived to be included in the psychological contract between employees and organizations. This would especially be interesting to study in other industries and in a multiple case study, in order to both get an in depth understanding as well as increase the possibility of generalizing our findings into theory.

In order to more deeply understand our second finding, we suggest that further research should be conducted on this phenomenon. One suggestion would be to qualitatively study the relationship between creative self-efficacy, psychological contract breach and creative process engagement. This type of research could add to the understanding of what elements that can affect employees' creative process engagement the most. Since this engagement is crucial for organizations today, a deeper understanding of this would be beneficial for organizations. Studying the relationship between creative self-efficacy, psychological contract breach and creative process engagement by conducting a quantitative study could add to the field of creative process engagement by possibly creating more generalizable theories.

Lastly, we want to suggest to further research on how the consequences of transformational changes affect creative process engagement in a longitudinal study, as it is impossible for us to state whether our findings are constant or could change over time.

References

Agars, M. D., Kaufman, J. C., Deane, A., & Smith, B. (2012). Fostering individual creativity through organizational context: A review of recent research and recommendations for organizational leaders. In Mumford, M (Ed.) *Handbook of organizational creativity* (pp. 271-291). Harlow: Financial Times/Prentice Hall

Akhtar, M. N., & Long, L. (2015). Organizational change determinants and employees behavior: a psychological contract perspective. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, *11*(1), 189-199.

Alvesson, M. (2003). Beyond neopositivists, romantics, and localists: A reflexive approach to interviews in organizational research. *Academy of management review*, *28*(1), 13-33.

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Amabile, T. M. (1988). A model of creativity and innovation in organizations. *Research in organizational behavior*, *10*(1), 123-167.

Amabile, T. M. (1998). *How to kill creativity* (Vol. 87). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Amabile, T. M., & Conti, R. (1999). Changes in the work environment for creativity during downsizing. *Academy of Management Journal*, *42*(6), 630-640.

Anderson, N., Potočnik, K., & Zhou, J. (2014). Innovation and creativity in organizations: A state-of-the-science review, prospective commentary, and guiding framework. *Journal of management*, *40*(5), 1297-1333.

Andersson, L. M. (1996). Employee cynicism: An examination using a contract violation framework. *Human Relations*, *49* (11), 1395-1417

Ashford, S. J. (1988). Individual strategies for coping with stress during organizational transitions. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *24*(1), 19-36.

Ashkenas, R. (2013, June 3). *Ten Ways Organizations Kill Innovation*. Available Online: https://www.forbes.com/sites/ronashkenas/2013/06/03/ten-ways-that-organizations-kill-innovation/ [Accessed 2 May 2019].

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American psychologist*, *37*(2), 122.

Barsh, J., Capozzi, M. M., & Davidson, J. (2008). Leadership and innovation. *McKinsey Quarterly*, *1*, 36.

Becerra, M., & Gupta, A. K. (2003). Perceived trustworthiness within the organization: The moderating impact of communication frequency on trustor and trustee effects. *Organization science*, *14*(1), 32-44.

Bordia, P., Hobman, E., Jones, E., Gallois, C., & Callan, V. J. (2004). Uncertainty during organizational change: Types, consequences, and management strategies. *Journal of business and psychology*, *18*(4), 507-532.

Bordia, P., Hunt, E., Paulsen, N., Tourish, D., & DiFonzo, N. (2004). Uncertainty during organizational change: is it all about control?. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, *13*(3), 345-365.

Carmeli, A., & Schaubroeck, J. (2007). The influence of leaders' and other referents' normative expectations on individual involvement in creative work. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *18*(1), 35-48.

Cartwright, S., & Holmes, N. (2006). The meaning of work: The challenge of regaining employee engagement and reducing cynicism. *Human resource management review*, *16*(2), 199-208.

Cascio, W. F. (1993). Downsizing: What do we know? What have we learned?. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *7*(1), 95-104.

Costigan, R. D., Iiter, S. S., & Berman, J. J. (1998). A multi-dimensional study of trust in organizations. *Journal of managerial issues*, *10* (3), 303-317.

Cullen, K. L., Edwards, B. D., Casper, W. C., & Gue, K. R. (2014). Employees' adaptability and perceptions of change-related uncertainty: Implications for perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *29*(2), 269-280.

Dahlin, P. & Lindstam, M. (2018, November 21). *Ikea Möblerar Om – 7 500 Jobb Försvinner.* Available Online: https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/7-500-jobb-forsvinner-fran-ikea [Accessed 2 May 2019].

DiFonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (1998). A tale of two corporations: Managing uncertainty during organizational change. *Human Resource Management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management*, *37*(3-4), 295-303.

Dyer Jr, W. G., & Wilkins, A. L. (1991). Better stories, not better constructs, to generate better theory: A rejoinder to Eisenhardt. *Academy of management review*, *16*(3), 613-619.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of management review*, *14*(4), 532-550.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of management journal*, *50*(1), 25-32.

Fein, S. (1996). Effects of suspicion on attributional thinking and the correspondence bias. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *70*(6), 1164.

Flannery, R. (2018, February 19). *Microsoft And Walmart Are Doing It: What If You Have To Downsize?* Available Online:

https://www.forbes.com/sites/russellflannery/2018/02/19/microsoft-and-walmart-are-doing-it-what-if-you-have-to-downsize/ [Accessed 2 May 2019].

George, J. M. (2007). 9 Creativity in organizations. *The academy of management annals*, *1*(1), 439-477.

George, J. M., & Zhou, J. (2007). Dual tuning in a supportive context: Joint contributions of positive mood, negative mood, and supervisory behaviors to employee creativity. *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*(3), 605-622.

Hui, C., & Lee, C. (2000). Moderating effects of organization-based self-esteem on organizational uncertainty: Employee response relationships. *Journal of Management*, *26*(2), 215-232.

Jiménez-Jiménez, D., & Sanz-Valle, R. (2011). Innovation, organizational learning, and performance. *Journal of business research*, *64*(4), 408-417.

Jung, D. D., Wu, A., & Chow, C. W. (2008). Towards understanding the direct and indirect effects of CEOs' transformational leadership on firm innovation. *The leadership quarterly*, *19*(5), 582-594.

Jena, L. K., & Memon, N. Z. (2018). Does workplace flexibility usher innovation? A moderated mediation model on the enablers of innovative workplace behavior. *Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management*, *19*(1), 5-17.

Kim, J., Song, E., & Lee, S. (2013). Organizational Change and Employee Organizational Identification: Mediation of Perceived Uncertainty. *Social Behavior & Personality: an international journal*, *41*(6).

Kramer, R. M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual review of psychology*, *50*(1), 569-598.

Liao, E. Y., & Chun, H. (2016). Supervisor monitoring and subordinate innovation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *37*(2), 168-192.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of management review*, *20*(3), 709-734.

Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. *Human resource management review*, *11*(3), 299-326.

Milliken, F. J. (1987). Three types of perceived uncertainty about the environment: State, effect, and response uncertainty. *Academy of Management review*, *12*(1), 133-143.

Ng, T. W., Feldman, D. C., & Lam, S. S. (2010). Psychological contract breaches, organizational commitment, and innovation-related behaviors: a latent growth modeling approach. *Journal of applied Psychology*, *95*(4), 744.

Niesen, W., Van Hootegem, A., Vander Elst, T., Battistelli, A., & De Witte, H. (2018). Job insecurity and innovative work behaviour: A psychological contract perspective. *Psychologica Belgica*, *57*(4), 174-189.

Ogbeibu, S., Senadjki, A., & Luen Peng, T. (2018). An organisational culture and trustworthiness multidimensional model to engender employee creativity. *American Journal of Business, 33*(4), 179-202.

Palmer, I., Dunford, R. & Buchanan, D. A. (2017). *Managing Organizational Change : A Multiple Perspectives Approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Pollard, T. M. (2001). Changes in mental well-being, blood pressure and total cholesterol levels during workplace reorganization: The impact of uncertainty. *Work & Stress*, *15*(1), 14-28.

Prasad, P. (2018). *Crafting Qualitative Research: Beyond Positivist Traditions.* New York: Routledge.

Puccio, G. J. (2017). From the dawn of humanity to the 21st century: Creativity as an enduring survival skill. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, *51*(4), 330-334.

Ramamoorthy, N., Flood, P. C., Slattery, T., & Sardessai, R. (2005). Determinants of innovative work behaviour: Development and test of an integrated model. *Creativity and innovation management*, *14*(2), 142-150.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2006). *Research Methods for Business Students* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited

Schaefer, S. M., & Alvesson, M. (2017). Epistemic attitudes and source critique in qualitative research. *Journal of Management,* 1-13

Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present, and future. *The Academy of Management Review, 32* (2), 344-354.

Schweiger, D. M., & Denisi, A. S. (1991). Communication with employees following a merger: A longitudinal field experiment. *Academy of management journal*, *34*(1), 110-135.

Shalley, C. E., & Gilson, L. L. (2004). What leaders need to know: A review of social and contextual factors that can foster or hinder creativity. *The leadership quarterly*, *15*(1), 33-53.

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. London: Sage.

Sørensen, O. H., Hasle, P., & Pejtersen, J. H. (2011). Trust relations in management of change. *Scandinavian Journal of Management, 27*(4), 405-417.,

Staw, B. M., Sandelands, L. E., & Dutton, J. E. (1981). Threat rigidity effects in organizational behavior: A multilevel analysis. *Administrative science quarterly*, *26*(4), 501-524.

Storey, J., & Salaman, G. (2009). *Managers of innovation: insights into making innovation happen*. London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd..

Sucher, S. J. & Gupta, S. (2018, May-June). Layoffs That Don't Break Your Company. *Harvard Business Review* Available Online: https://hbr.org/2018/05/layoffs-that-dont-break-your-company [Accessed 2 May 2019].

Sverdrup, T. E., & Stensaker, I. G. (2018). Restoring trust in the context of strategic change. *Strategic Organization,* 16(4), 401-428.

Tierney, P., & Farmer, S. M. (2002). Creative self-efficacy: Its potential antecedents and relationship to creative performance. *Academy of Management journal*, *45*(6), 1137-1148.

Van de Ven, A. H. (1986). Central problems in the management of innovation. *Management science*, *32*(5), 590-607.

Vinarski-Peretz, H., Binyamin, G., & Carmeli, A. (2011). Subjective relational experiences and employee innovative behaviors in the workplace. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 78*(2), 290-304.

Waterwall, B., Fuller, B., & Budden, H. (2017). Understanding the Inner Muse: Integrating the Creative Self-Efficacy Literature 1. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, *29*(2), 189-120.

Woodman, R. W., Sawyer, J. E., & Griffin, R. W. (1993). Toward a theory of organizational creativity. *Academy of management review*, *18*(2), 293-321.

Yin, R. K. (2015). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford Publications.

Zhang, X., & Bartol, K. M. (2010). The influence of creative process engagement on employee creative performance and overall job performance: A curvilinear assessment. *Journal of Applied psychology, 95*(5), 862-873