Being Creative With and Within Frames

A Case Study of How Organisational Structure Influences Creativity in a Non-Managerial Consultancy Firm

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Abstract

Title: Being Creative With and Within Frames

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Keywords: 'Creativity', 'Organisational Structure','Adhocracy', 'Non-Managerial'

Purpose: The aim of this research study is to gain a deeper understanding of how organisational structure influences creativity within a presumed non-managerial organisation.

Methodology: This qualitative research study applies an abductive approach. The predominantly research method applied to gather our empirical data are interviews.

Theoretical Perspective: Our theoretical framework outlines previous research on creativity as well as organisation structure, particularly the concept of adhocracy, in relation to each other.

Empirical Support: The empirical material gathered in this study was conducted through ten in-depth semi-structured interviews including two partners, three team leads and five consultants with different length of experience. Supporting empirical material was further generated through initial notes we took during a questlecture with the case company in a lecture of our course BUSN47 Leadership.

Contribution: This research contributes to the literature with a unique explanation of how organisational structure influences creativity within a presumed non-managerial organization. In particular by illustrating various tensions within these structural characteristics of Transformers Consulting

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Close your eyes and envision an artist painting a work of art. She stands in his studio, looking at a blank canvas and sees how different ideas come alive through simple yet delicate movements using her brushes. Soft music is playing in the background, and small rays of the morning sun are carefully peeking through the window; creating an explosive set of colours throughout the room. The subtle aroma of paint can be smelt as the pigmented liquid is applied into a solid yet sticky coating on the canvas, and the artist takes a step back as she simultaneously puts her brush down and forms a big smile staring at the now colourful canvas that was just a moment ago merely an invisible image of her own ideas. She laughs to herself, takes a sip of the now almost cold coffee and looks out of the window, forming yet another idea that is to be eternalised by being put on paper. She takes a moment to reminisce about the last thirty-five years of her life that she spent working as a professional painter for the largely successful and locally based carpentry organisation. At times she did enjoy it, but she often found herself frustrated with the limitations that she was given from the clients and her employer when in reality all she wanted to do was to paint pictures without being restricted by the wishes of others. In fact, she just painted, day in and day out, filling one canvas after the other following the instruction of others.

The story presented in the previous paragraph is an insight into our thoughts of what influences creativity, and we connect these with the profession of an artist and a professional painter. The former is using his imagination, previous experiences, social interactions, and cognitive perceptions to create something new that has perhaps not been thought about before. Accordingly, the artist has the freedom to choose whatever colours and method he would like to use whilst painting. On the other hand, as the story continues, we experience how the artist looks back to her previous profession as a painter, where her work has been a lot more restricted by her employer and her customers. The idea behind this part is to illustrate that creativity at work is a lot more constrained than one might think. Mostly, you have to adapt your way of working to the internal and external setting of the organisation and other influential factors such as time, budget

and customer requirements. As illustrated, the artist was given many instructions during her time as a painter, and she believed that this restricted his creativity.

The differences between the artist and the painter raise complex yet interesting questions regarding creativity in organisations. The importance of creativity in organisations has been a well-researched topic amongst various scholars over the years, where many of them argue that creativity is a vital skill most businesses must master in order to secure long-term survival on a market characterised by increased competition (Amabile, 1988; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). Additionally, Ahmed (1998, p. 30) states that "all companies talk about innovation and the importance of 'doing' innovation" however "only a few actually succeed in doing it". This puts an increasing demand on managers to have the vital skills to manage creativity, as "an innovative idea without a champion gets nowhere" (Van De Ven, 1986, p. 592). Now, imagine an organisation without bosses - how do these organisations approach this challenge if they do not have formal managers? For this reason, it is our intention to explore how different organisational structures influence creativity in a non-managerial setting. In addition, we aim to provide valuable awareness of the notion of creativity as a whole. Based on this, we problematise in the following subchapters our chosen area of research and further outline the contribution of our study.

1.1 Problem Statement

The topic of understanding creativity has grown in popularity over the years (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004), with various researchers emphasising the importance of managing creativity in order to survive in an innovation-driven economy (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Dougherty & Hardy, 1996; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange, 2002; Nystrom, 1990; Reckhenrich, Kupp & Anderson, 2009). This has led to a significant amount of studies in which researchers have tried to explore factors that might influence creativity on an individual, group and organisational level (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Amabile, 1998; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993), such as organisational structure (Ahmed, 1998; Arad, Hanson & Schneider, 1997; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Shalley & Gilson, 2004), freedom and autonomy (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Zhou, 1998), group interactions (Haragdon & Bechky, 2006; Weick and

Roberts, 1993), sufficient resources (Amabile, 1998), challenging work (Ohly & Fritz, 2009), leadership (Mumford et al. 2002; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004) and climate (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, 2007; Thomke, 2020). However, we identified a significant deficiency in creativity research from the lens of a non-managerial perspective, as the influential factors listed above are studied in more traditional structured organisations.

Furthermore, there is a voluminous amount of research on the influence management has on multiple elements within an organisation, yet only a few on how the absence of management influences certain organisational aspects. Literature about managerless organisations mainly focuses on topics related to efficiency and cost reduction (Hamel, 2011; Olsson & Bosch, 2015) rather than studying the absence of formal managers in relation to phenomena in an organisation such as creativity. However, nowadays, we observe a fashionable trend towards flat hierarchies in organisations as digital technologies facilitate work in a distributed way (Kastelle, 2013). Hierarchy, or more specifically formal authority, has been seen for decades as a solution for distributing work among the workforce, holding them accountable to accomplish their work as well as measuring their productivity (Jaques, 1990). In this day and age, the environment is changing rapidly, which in turn leads to innovation as the primary differentiation for organisations (Kastelle, 2013). Companies organised in autonomous teams are seen as much more agile than large hierarchical firms which further facilitates to respond to change (Kastelle, 2013). Accordingly, there is a standard view that organisations with a flat structure tend to be much more innovative (Kastelle, 2013; Mintzberg, 1979), while a vertical hierarchy hinders initiative and consequently creativity (Jaques, 1990).

Now, imagine an organisation that claims to have no bosses and a flat hierarchy; how does this structure influence creativity? During a guest lecture in our Master's Program, we connected with an organisation that claims to have such a structure, as they state themselves to be a network-based organisation without bosses. Throughout our thesis, we define this as 'non-managerial' and 'bossless'. As the topics of organisational structure and creativity seem to be intertwined, the non-managerial organisational structure of our case company can be seen as a

part of a fashionable trend towards fading hierarchies and the emergence of new forms of organisations (Billinger & Workiewick, 2019), thus serving as an intriguing research area for studying creativity.

1.2. Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this research is to increase the understanding of how creativity is influenced by organisational structures within a non-managerial environment. We intend to complement the existing literature about creativity by offering empirical findings on organisational factors that affect creativity from the lens of a non-managerial context. This means that we are not only contributing to the research area of creativity as a whole, but we are additionally highlighting a theoretical shortfall in which creativity is overlooked from a non-managerial perspective. By increasing the understanding of how organisational structure influences creativity, this study provides valuable insights at both a theoretical and practical level.

For scholars, our study highlights the insufficient theoretical background of creativity in a non-managerial context, and thus underlines a need for further investigation within this research area. Therefore, the purpose of our research is to give further insights into how structural characteristics influence creativity within a non-managerial professional consultancy firm. Based on the research interest stated above, we formulate our research question as follows:

How does organisational structure influence creativity within a presumed non-managerial organisation?

1.3. Personal Interest in the Research Field

Our personal interest in the research area has its origin in the overall fascination for the consultant profession and the challenging and complexing work it entails. Experiencing the organisational life of a successful Swedish consultancy firm, which complements the expressions we gained already in previous work experiences in the same sector but different countries is an additional reason for our shared interest in the research topic. Furthermore, we are part of a group of potential future applicants for consultant positions with particular expectations towards

the role but also towards the organisational life of potential future employers. We decided to conduct our research at Transformers Consulting[1] due to its unique organisational structure highlighted during the guest lecture we mentioned earlier on in the introduction. This thesis allows us to further deepen our understanding of the notion of creativity in relation to organisational structure, thus supplementing the knowledge we gained throughout our last year in our Master's programme.

1.4. Chapter Summary and Disposition

This chapter aimed to give the reader an overview of our research objectives as well as our personal interest in the research field. From the second chapter onwards, we present our theoretical framework, which is divided into two main themes: organisational creativity and organisational structure. We explored connections between these topics and used the richness of combining the theory in order to analyse our empirical material. Chapter three introduces the methodology our thesis is based on, which refers to the philosophical grounding, the qualitative approach, the process itself, its limitations as well as our role as researchers. Chapter four is a small collation of the empirical data we gathered, sorted and analysed based on the topics of organisational structure and creativity. Here, the reader can dive deep into the most central aspects of Transformers Consulting's organisational structure and its influence on creativity within the organisation. Chapter five unites our empirical findings with the literature review discussed in chapter two. In addition, a new metaphor building upon the story presented in the introduction aims to clarify the novel insights through our discussion. Finally, chapter six concludes our thesis and summarises our key findings, outlines our theoretical contribution, provides implications for practitioners, reflects upon the limitations of our research and lastly offers recommendations for future research.

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[1] Transformers Consulting is a fictitious name used to maintain the anonymity of the organisation and its employees.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will introduce the theoretical framework (see Table 1) that is later in the discussion applied to the empirical data presented in the analysis (see chapter 5). We will start this chapter by introducing the notion of creativity with the aim to deepen our understanding of what it is, as well as common ways of how one can manage it. After taking on the complex task of defining creativity, we will focus on discussing the connection to organisational structure and how that can either hinder or facilitate it. Lastly, we attempt to further explore structural factors individually to further deepen and enhance our understanding of their effect on creativity.

Table 1. Overview of the literature review.

2.1 Organisational Creativity

Creativity has become an increasingly important matter for organisations who wish to uphold their competitive position on the market (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Heunks, 1998; Delbecq & Mills, 1985). It is therefore not a surprise that creativity is an essential organisational skill one must master (Amabile, 1998), as it is a crucial source of organisational effectiveness (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). Moreover, numerous researchers also underline creativity as an influential ingredient for long-term survival (Amabile, 1988; Dougherty & Hardy, 1996; Reckhenrich, Kupp & Anderson, 2009) as according to Cook (1998, p. 179) "creativity is no

longer 'a nice to have' quality" but rather a case of "business survival" as according to Cook (1998, p. 179) "creativity is no longer 'a nice to have' quality" but rather a case of "business survival". In turn, this has inspired a large amount of research aiming to clarify different factors as to why some organisations are more creative than others (Amabile, 1988; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). This paragraph has reviewed the literature that touches upon why understanding and studying creativity is of utmost importance. The following paragraph moves on to the rather complex yet essential task of defining creativity.

In order to understand and further define the concept of creativity as an organisational phenomenon, we need to understand how one can study creativity in practical terms. We will do this by touching upon the ideas of Fortwengel, Schüßler and Sydow (2017) who differentiate between two different perspectives: (i) the becoming perspective and (ii) the practice perspective. The authors argue that the former perspective is based on a flat ontology where reality is characterised by fluidity; meaning that creativity is merely momentarily ideas in a continuous process of 'becoming'. Moreover, the becoming perspective views creativity as a resource for the organisation where one wishes to understand by what means creativity is created. On the contrary, the practice perspective "takes the stabilising role of organisational routines and practices into account, thereby accentuating both the being and the becoming" (Fortwengel, Schüßler and Sydow, 2017, p. 9). More importantly, "the practice perspective is particularly promising" as it allows one to explore "the possibilities and limitations to purposefully organise (for) creativity" (Fortwengel, Schüßler and Sydow, 2017, p. 6). In difference from viewing creativity as a resource for the organisation, the practice perspective wishes to study resources for creativity; wanting to increase the understanding of "the rules and resources for organising" it (Fortwengel, Schüßler and Sydow, 2017, p. 12). Similarly, Giddens (1984) argues that social structures are formed by action, meaning that structures are not fixed but instead enacted upon by individuals. Therefore, for the sake of this thesis, we will adopt the practice perspective; studying different forms of structural characteristics that influence creativity.

The previous section explained our standpoint on how we study creativity, namely from the practice perspective explained by Fortwengel, Schüßler and Sydow (2017). This section introduces two different ways of how to devise ideas, where it can be either viewed as an individual or collective process. Ward (2004, p. 176) analyses the level of individual creativity, and argues "that one cannot produce something from nothing", and that it "must be crafted from the person's existing knowledge". He goes on to explain that one way of doing this is through conceptual combination - a concept in which one views idea generation as an individual process where one mentally merges ideas that have once been independent units. However, in difference from Ward (2004), Thompson (2018, p. 237) views creativity as a collective process where one's primary and secondary imagination creates new images of something "that is not currently present". He goes on to explain that when this image is combined with another individual's, a creative outcome is produced based on a collective process.

Taking on the task of defining creativity is a complex challenge, and an additional step is deepening our knowledge in regards to *what* creativity is. Our final stage of defining creativity aims to further strengthen our understanding of the distinction between creativity and innovation. On the one hand, Arad, Hanson and Schneider (1997) state that the two terms are often used by researchers synonymously. On the contrary, Amabile (1988, p. 126) argues that rather than being interchangeable, the two terms are different to each other where "creativity is the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or small group of individuals working together", whilst "innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation". Similarly, Westwood and Low (2003, p. 236) states that "innovations are the practical application of creative ideas" and that "creativity is part of the innovation process". Based on this, we are aware that there is a complex yet interesting debate regarding if creativity and innovation are interchangeable to each other. However, throughout this thesis we will take on the definition made by Amabile (1988), thus viewing creativity as the process of idea generation by either an individual or small group, and innovation as the successful implementation of ideas.

2.2. Managing Creativity

As stated previously, creativity is one of the most critical assets for an organisation to fuel economic growth (Florida & Goodnight, 2005). Furthermore, creativity is generally seen as "a key skill for leaders and organisations, not only in order to adapt to change, but also to proactively shape industries and markets" (Reckhenrich, Kupp & Anderson, 2009, p. 69). In addition, Van De Ven (1986) argues that the answer on how one can manage creativity lies in having significant insights into the creative process and understanding the components that are part of idea generation. It is therefore of importance to acknowledge that creativity can only add value to the organisation if managers "understand the principles of creativity as well as develop the mindset, attitude and knowledge of where, when and how creativity will emerge" (Reckhenrich, Kupp & Anderson, 2009, p. 69). Moreover, according to Reckhenrich, Kupp and Anderson (2009, p. 72), one way managers can increase creativity is through the "active shaping of a situation by adding more structure or chaos". By doing this, the process of coming up with ideas becomes creative in itself. However, the authors do underline that when the complex process of idea generation becomes too chaotic, one needs to shape the process further by adding more structure while simultaneously avoiding the risk of ultimately terminating it.

The foregoing paragraph touched upon ways in which one can manage creativity, however, the following paragraph underlines the complexity of this task. Managing creativity is not a straightforward process, and further requires support from the organisation. Additionally, Sutton (2001, p. 100) argues that if managers want to facilitate creativity within the organisation, one needs to "encourage people to ignore and defy superiors and peers". He states that people who challenge their managers might put pressure on the organisation to try new ideas that otherwise would have been overlooked or dismissed. More importantly, managers should praise both triumphs and flops (Sutton, 2001; Amabile, 1998) as it is difficult for them to evaluate and identify the successful ideas amongst an ocean of solutions. In particular, many organisations use what Sutton (2001) describe as 'gates' to improve the chances of developing successful ideas and thus early on identify which ideas will not flourish. However, in reality, "there is little evidence that such practices actually reduce the proportion of flops" (Sutton, 2001, p. 102). Nonetheless, it

is essential to note that the task of managing creativity is not easy, as can be explained with the following statement by Schaefer (2019, p. 1391): Managers "talk about their views on innovation and creativity and then more or less openly contradict them in practice".

To conclude this section, the literature identifies different ways in which one can manage creativity. However, none of this is possible if there is not an organisational structure that "make[s] [...] clear that creative efforts are a top priority" as creativity is only "truly enhanced when the entire organisation supports it" (Amabile, 1998, p. 84). As a result, the organisational structure has a significant effect on either facilitating or hindering creativity within organisations (Martins & Terblanche, 2003), and is therefore of high relevance when studying factors that influence creativity. In the chapter that follows, we present different structures that may make up the characteristics of a non-managerial organisation including the factors that could influence the creativity that these factors facilitate.

2.3 Organisational Structure

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the organisational structure plays a significant part as either a facilitator or hinderer of creativity. However, there are many different types of organisational structure that have been studied throughout the years. In this thesis it is merely necessary to clarify exactly what is meant by a non-managerial organisation through the theory of adhocracy, as this is the setting of the case company where our research is executed.

The most common presumptions towards organisational structures are that they have clear divisions of labour, well-defined tasks and an apparent hierarchy (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). However, these types of organisations are not built to innovate and solve problems, as it means to "break away from established patterns" where an organisation who wishes to be creative and innovative "cannot rely on any form of standardisation for coordination" (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 254). Phrased alternatively, Mintzberg (1983, p. 254) argues that incorporating elements of bureaucracy that includes strict "divisions of labour, extensive unit differentiation, highly formalised behaviours, and an emphasis on planning and control systems" are not beneficial for

idea generation. Bureaucracy is thus generally not linked to creativity, as according to Thompson (1965, p. 1), bureaucracies are more often than not "characterised by high productive efficiency but low innovation capacity". Hall (1963, p. 33) further underlines dimensions such as a clear division of labour, authority and systems that involve formalised instructions, all contributing to "the ideal-type bureaucracy". Moreover, emphasising the role of hierarchy is essential when studying bureaucratic organisations as according to Weber (1946, p. 197) "the principle of hierarchical office authority is found in all bureaucratic structures". Ahmed (1998, p. 36) has a similar line of argumentation, stating that "innovation is enhanced by organic structures rather than mechanistic"; meaning that the adhocratic organisation is more likely to facilitate creativity rather than to hinder it. In fact, Thompson (1965, p. 13) states that for an organisation to be innovative, there needs to be "structural looseness" - something that the formalised bureaucracy organisation does not have. Instead, he argues that the organic structure of adhocracy with little to no control over the employees behaviour and selective decentralisation offers the flexibility it needs to facilitate creativity. That being said, the next paragraph introduces further characteristics of an adhocracy structure and connects these with regards to how they influence creativity.

One of the main characteristics of an adhocracy, is that it shows "the least reverence for the classical principles of management" (Mintzberg, 1980, p. 337) due to "decentralisation without a single concentration of power" (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 459). Instead, this type of structure is "blurring the line-staff distinction", meaning that the employees are given informal power when conducting their work; thus minimising the distinction between managers and employees (Mintzberg, 1980). In fact, Mintzberg (1979, p. 433) argues that the employees need to do what is necessary to encourage innovation, even if it "means overriding the chain of authority". Furthermore, he underlines the importance of mutual adjustment within the adhocracy, as instead of traditionally managing their teams, managers spend most of their time connecting the employees to what they need within the organisation and between the teams. In other words, one can say that the managers establish a network within the organisation, as they instead act as a type of liaison personnel by creating links between the employees within the organisation (Mintzberg, 1979). Moreover, low levels of management leave room for greater amounts of

freedom and autonomy throughout the organisation, as "decision processes flow flexibly and informally" (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 255). This shows an important and interesting link to Amabile (1988), who claims that freedom is one of the main organisational characteristics that facilitate creativity. One can connect this to the ideas of Weick (1998), who links the idea of improvising as a way to deal with the unforeseen. Here, improvising means being creative. However, the ability to improvise might be weaker in organisations where routines are "sufficient and expected and where surprise is unwelcomed" (Weick, 1998, p. 546). The formalisation of job processes that occurs within the bureaucratic organisation reduces, according to Adler and Borys (1996, p. 63), the motivation for employees to participate and "contribute to the complex nonroutine tasks that constitute innovation".

In sum, this section has touched upon the role of organisational structure when studying factors that either hinder or facilitate creativity. Adhocracy has proven to be of particular interest, as this aligns well with the description of the presumed non-managerial structure of our case company Transformers Consultancy. In the following subchapters, the typical characteristics of an adhocracy will be reflected upon more in-depth by connecting it to the notion of creativity.

2.3.1. Freedom and Autonomy Through Power Decentralisation

As stated previously, freedom and autonomy are one of the main characteristics of the adhocracy, which can be illustrated in the following statement by Mintzberg (1983, p. 257): "Decision-making power is distributed among managers and nonmanagers at all the levels of the hierarchy, according to the nature of the different decisions to be made". In addition, "the adhocracy must hire and give power to experts" (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 257) where the experts are trusted in different levels depending on the degree of information needed to solve the task (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). Interestingly, there are numerous researchers underlining the importance of task autonomy and freedom as factors that could either hinder or facilitate creativity (Zhou, 1998; Amabile, 1998; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Similarly, Amabile and Griskiewicz (1989) state that freedom as to how one can perform tasks is essential in order to enhance workers' engagement in creative activities. That being said, we take on Zhou's (1998, p.

264) definition who argues that "task autonomy refers to the extent to which an individual has control over how to carry out a task". The author also differs between low and high levels of task autonomy, where the latter involves less freedom for the employee and thus provides the manager with a higher degree of control over the work process. Instead, Amabile (1998, p. 81) argues that if the manager wishes to facilitate creativity within the organisation, he or she must allow "freedom as in *how* to climb a particular mountain" rather than the freedom to "choose *which* mountain to climb". Additionally, the author argues that through freedom, the employee is given more space to apply their skills and experience, which in turn increases the motivation to explore new ideas. In order to increase creativity, Shalley and Gilson (2004, p. 38) follow a similar line of argumentation, stating that "employees need to feel that they have some autonomy over either how their time is allocated or in the determination of how their work is to be done". However, Amabile (1998) does underline that managers more often than not fail to promote and establish this type of freedom within the organisation and instead install a form of 'fake freedom'. This means that employees feel welcomed to explore different solutions and processes, but that in reality these are not appreciated by the management; making the employees creative "at their own risk" (Amabile, 1998, p. 82). That being said, freedom requires further resources given by the organisation which are elaborated in the following subchapter.

2.3.2. Adequate Resources

As mentioned in the previous chapters, adhocracy is an organisational structure that encourages creativity (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) where resources play a significant role in this (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Amabile, 1998). In line with Schepers and Van Den Berg (2007), this is, therefore, an excellent environment for creativity, as it accordingly allows further learning, risk-taking and experimentation. In fact, Delbecq and Mills (1985, p. 25) argue that resources are necessary when trying to understand "the process of innovation". One of these is time, as according to Shalley and Gilson (2004, p. 39), "creativity takes time, a great deal of hard work, and strenuous mental energy". Correspondingly, Amabile (1998, p. 82) claims that time is a key factor for enhancing creativity, where the manager must carefully distribute it as it "is a sophisticated judgement call that can either support or kill creativity". Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby and

Herron (1996) emphasise that viewing time as a resource involves some inconsistency, as some studies show that time pressure has a positive influence on creativity and others see it as a factor that hinders it.

Additionally, Delbecq and Mills (1985) argue that organisations that have low levels of innovation do not allow risk taking to the same extent as organisations with higher levels of innovation. They go on to explain that in these low innovation organisations, the person who comes up with an idea is more often than not the sole supporter of developing it, and "must often accept under-resourcing, since permission and support depend on the patronage of managers who may see the request 'outside' normal budgets or even as a nuisance" (Delbecq & Mills, 1985, p. 27). On the other hand, in the high innovation organisations there are "special funds [...] set aside specifically to support innovation" where the immediate superior is not the one deciding which innovations are worth investing in (Delbecq & Mills, 1985, p. 28). Instead, Delbecq and Mills (1985) argue that there is a specific board who frequently consider ideas proposed by the members of the organisation; evaluating them by benchmarking the ideas against the current demand on the market. Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin (1993, p. 303) argue similarly that establishing an "arena in which members can use others as resources to augment their own knowledge" is of utmost importance when striving for creativity. These 'arenas' can be seen as a place where members of the organisation can meet and discuss their ideas, thus correlating to the ideas of Shalley and Gilson (2004, p. 39) who state that "people are also an important resource" of information that in turn increases the possibility of facilitating creativity within the organisation. Consequently, we further reflect upon the role of the collective on influencing creativity in the following subchapter.

2.3.3. Work Team Support

According to Mintzberg (1979, p. 435), adhocracies are organised in such a way that it forms different groups of specialists that work together "around a specific project of innovation". In line, different studies support the idea that work group encouragement exerts a positive influence on organisational creativity (Amabile & Griskiewicz, 1989; de Alencar, 2012). Here, Ambile

(1996) highlights the importance of communication, openness towards new ideas, constructive feedback, work-related commitment, trust and support in order to embrace creativity. In addition, De Alencar (2012) emphasise that interpersonal relationships between members of a work group consequently develop new ideas. In a similar vein, Weick and Roberts (1993) underline the essential role of the mindful engagement of individuals in social interactions within the organisation. They point out that the energy and attention the individual put towards interacting with group members essentially leads to participation; connecting different ideas that result in idea generation. However, it is essential to note that while a collaborative environment facilitates collective creativity, a competition between teams or employees encourages a defensive attitude and thus inhibits organisational creativity (De Alencar, 2012).

An additional framework is presented by Hargadon and Bechky (2006), who introduce four sets of connecting activities that are essential for triggering moments of collective creativity. The first two activities are *help seeking* and *help giving*; where the former is about people proactively reaching out for help, and the latter describes the contrary and thus "the willing devotion of time and attention to assisting with the work of others" (Haragdon & Bechky, 2006, p. 489). Moreover, the third activity is called *reflective reframing,* an act of supporting mindfully, developing ideas based on comments from others. Finally, activities of *reinforcing* are defined to support individuals' engagement in help seeking, help giving, and reflective reframing (Hargadon and Bechky, 2006). In particular, the authors claim that encouraging and rewarding individuals based on those collective behaviors have a reinforcing effect. The influence of reward systems on work team support which might consequently lead to collective creativity will be discussed in the subsequent paragraph in more detail.

The influence of reward systems on creativity is a hot topic of discussion (Amabile 1996; Eisenberger & Armeli 1997; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). One argues that "if creative behaviour is rewarded, it will become the general, dominant way of behaving" (Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p. 71). Hence, Amabile (1996) states that creativity can be either reinforced by monetary or non-monetary rewards. The latter involves praise and recognition, whereas the former refers to

rewards in terms of the bonus. In the same vein, the author points out that if the only reason for engaging in an activity is the receipt of a bonus agreed on by contract, then the reward system might inhibit creativity. In particular, Amabile (1998) suggests intrinsic, non-monetary rewards to confirm one's skills and competence, rather relying on extrinsic rewards. A more differentiated view is provided by Eisenberger and Armeli (1997) who contend that in order not to inhibit creativity through rewards, two crucial elements have to be considered. Thus, they argue, one has to reflect not only which behaviour is being rewarded but also how they are distributed within an organisation. In line with Shalley and Gibson (2004), it is essential to consider transparency within the reward system and use rewards in order to encourage knowledge sharing between employees. Moreover, rewards should be seen as an acknowledgment of one's competence, active engagement in creativity as well as their creative work itself. Consequently, if rewards are distributed in such transparent ways, it can have a positive influence on the creativity of employees.

2.4. Chapter Summary

We started off by studying *why* creativity is essential to master for organisations and found that it is a 'must-have' capability if one wishes to survive in today's competitive market. Moreover, we went on to reflect upon relevant definitions of the topic and studied the difference as well as the correlation between individual and collective creativity. This enabled us to gain a more holistic understanding of the concept. Additionally, we reflected upon different perspectives on creativity and decided to take on the practice perspective. This perspective allows us to examine different factors that either hinder or facilitate creativity within an organisation. We then decided to study the notion of creativity through the lens of organisational structure. Therefore, we examined the link between organisational creativity and structure by applying the concept of adhocracies presented by Mintzberg (1979; 1980). We used this concept to understand the organisational setting of our case study, Transformers Consulting, who claim to be a non-managerial organisation. By applying the notion of adhocracy, we could then identify three different factors, namely power decentralisation, work team support and adequate resources, that we in the following chapter use to analyse how these influence creativity within a non-managerial context.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In order to execute effective research, we consider different methodological aspects for the design of our study. These are reflected in the following chapter, including the philosophical grounding we became inspired by, the model of explanation applied, an overview of how we conducted and analysed our empirical material and lastly, our role as researchers throughout the process as well as a reflection on the limitations of our thesis.

3.1. Philosophical Grounding

Our aim is to study how different organisational structural characteristics influence creativity within a presumed non-managerial context. Therefore, we follow the ontological position of constructionism, which views organisations as socially-constructed phenomena as they are constructed by the actions and understandings of human beings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Studying organisations is associated with an interpretive tradition, filtering out emotions, perceptions and interpretations of its natives (Prasad, 2018). Accordingly, "reality [does not exist] in some tangible, identifiable outside world but in human consciousness itself" (Prasad, 2018, p.13). Under the assumption that our world is "an experienced world [...] that is always related to a conscious subject" (Sandberg & Targama, 2007, p. 30), reality is created through human interpretation (Prasad, 2018). Equally, this aligns with the assumption that our reality is socially constructed, which from an interpretive perspective means that "our understanding of reality is created by ourselves and others on the basis of our experiences and through communication and interaction with other people" (Sandberg & Targama, 2007, p. 33). Consequently, we are interested in the consultants' perception of creativity and the social context influencing it by focusing on the individuals, which attempts through roles and self-images to make sense of the social situation they are placed in (Prasad, 2018). Referring to our research, this concept is highly interesting since we are looking at the social structures within Transformers Consulting and thereby at the individual's position within these.

3.2 Qualitative Research

In this chapter, we do not want to enter the armchair debate of qualitative/quantitative dichotomy, but rather give an answer on the following question: Which method works best for our research project? Our thesis is based on qualitative methodology since we study a social phenomena to grasp its meaning and the social interactions in the context it takes place. Moreover, this also includes examining tensions and contradictions within and around the phenomena (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). According to Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018), most topics in social science can not be investigated through the explanation of numbers. Instead, one makes sense out of a phenomena related to human interaction through qualitative methods such as interviews (Alvesson, 2010).

Similarly, Silverman (2010) suggests that the research method should be tailored to the research question. Additionally, for a better understanding of human experience, we believe that the question of *how* answers our interests. Considering both arguments, we attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena by asking *how* structural characteristics influence organisational creativity within a presumed non-managerial firm. Just as everyday life itself, qualitative research can be complex and thoroughly chaotic, which is why we are taking the role of reflexive researchers (see chapter 3.6).

3.3. Model of Explanation: Abduction

Our study follows an abductive approach as it allows us to make logical reasonings and to build theories around the organisational phenomena of creativity (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018) define this method as a hermeneutic process characterised by the alternation between theory and empirical 'facts' whereby both are continuously reinterpreted in consideration of the other. In contrast to the explanatory models of induction and deduction, this approach allows us to concentrate on the proposed overarching pattern and our understanding of those (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). With regards to our thesis, this means to focus on studying our research area from a non-managerial perspective. Therefore, we use existing literature that

touches upon organisational structures and thus use adhocracy as a lens to discover patterns that help us analyse our empirical findings.

Taking this into account, we started our research with the empirical data we gained through a first informal interview with one of the employees of Transformers Consulting. The purpose was to get a first impression of the organisational structure and their day-to-day work. Furthermore, this inspired us to develop and elaborate the theory by alternating between our empirical data and theoretical preconceptions, a process which is defined by several researchers as 'dialectical shuttling' (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Thus, our interpretation and understanding of the topic were strengthened with each interview. In line with Alvesson & Kärreman (2007), we do not intend to use the dialogue between our pre-understandings and our data to confirm our pre-assumptions, but rather as something essential to stay open to possible surprises that may arise from the empirical data. Moreover, starting our data collection and analysis early on in the project was of great advantage, as it allowed us to reconsider the direction in which our research was heading (Silverman, 2010).

3.4. Data Collection

As mentioned in the previous chapter, our research is conducted by a qualitative analysis, where our primary source of data is semi-structured interviews. After a guest lecture with Transformers Consulting, we had the chance to talk with one of the founders and a consultant of the company. Getting in contact with them presented us with the opportunity to conduct the research for our master's project within the organisation. The coordination of interviewees was conducted by one of the consultants we met at the guest lecture. She carefully selected our interviewees by assembling a heterogeneous group of employees, taking into account the length of company affiliation, job position, age and gender. Overall, we interviewed ten organisational members of Transformers Consulting; seven consultants varying in experience from graduates, two team leads and one expert in the field innovation and strategy. Additionally, we spoke to two partners; one of them is additionally a co-founder of the organisation. By this means, we aimed to gain a bigger picture of the organisational structure, which in turn helped us to understand the intention

behind the structure and its influence on creativity. In retrospect, the decision of having a conversation with two partners was essential as it gave us critical insights, considering that we were able to disclose discrepancies between the perception of the employees regarding the self-proclaimed 'bossless' hierarchy in the company.

The interviews were supposed to be conducted at Transformers Consulting's headquarters in Stockholm and complemented by observations, as this would give us insights about their work environment and work practices; which is essential for studying creativity. Unfortunately, due to external higher powers, the COVID-19 virus, we could not do the interviews in person and had to forgo observation. Grateful for technology and the digital age we adopted our setting correspondingly by conducting the interviews online via Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams. The conversations were depending on the interviewees' preference, either held via face-to-face video or a standard audio call. Further sources included in our analysis are impressions from the guest lecture as well as our data gained through a preparatory interview for our research proposal with our contact person at Transformers Consulting.

As we aimed to gain organic rather than scripted answers from our interviewees, we did not send out any communications containing a pre-questionnaire before the interview. Instead, we only informed our participants about our names, the purpose of our study and that the interview would touch upon topics related to organisational structure and creativity. As stated by Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill (2019), this reduces the risk of response bias. In line with the researchers, we further guaranteed our participants anonymity and confidentiality in order to enhance a trusting relationship between us. The purpose of the interviews is to obtain "qualitative descriptions of the life world of the subject with respect to interpretation of their meaning" (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Therefore, we used semi-structured interviews which include a sequence of topics to be covered and implies questions while simultaneously an openness to adapt these in order to follow up the answers given and stories told by the interviewee (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). However, that does not imply that we gave our interviewee complete control over the conversation, but rather that we retained thoughtful interventions from our side.

In order to get the most out of our interviews, we decided that both of us need to take part in them. Additionally, we split the tasks between the two of us where one was leading the interview and listening carefully, and the other one was taking notes, comparing answers given with those from previous interviews and based on that preparing further questions. Although we both have significant previous experience in interviewing others due to our previous professional experience as a recruiter and customer relations manager, we can not title ourselves as professional qualitative researchers. During the analysis, we identified a continuous improvement regarding the formulation of the questions, as well as our reflexivity and reactivity which in turn means, the more interviews conducted, the better our performance as qualitative researchers and interviewers.

3.5. Data Analysis

The conduction of interviews provided us with a large amount of empirical material. For that reason, we needed first to find ways to navigate through the data as "qualitative material never arrives at the analyst's desk already sorted" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p. 69). The analysis of our qualitative data already started during and after conducting our interviews. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we used the notes that we made during each interview, and adopted our questions for the following interview according to the former.

In line with Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018), we followed three activities when conducting analytical work: *sorting, reducing* and *arguing*. Since "qualitative material is characterised by a certain amount of disorder" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p. 71), we started our analysis by *sorting* it. Therefore, we tried to declutter our empirical material to see *what* and *how* themes and topics were spoken about (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). This allowed us to identify common denominators as well as interesting themes. We did this with an open mind as this helped us to "identify the things that stand out and surprise us" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p. 77) and to question dominant perceptions (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). In order to make optimal use of our empirical data, we engaged in this process more than once by viewing the material from different angles.

During the second phase, *reducing*, we dealt with "the problem of representation" by removing material that we would not use for our analysis (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p. 107). This was done by choosing the most essential and reoccurring themes of interest for our research question. This also included choosing categories that, at first sight, appeared to be clashing with our theoretical assumptions (Alvesson & Kärremann 2007). We excluded a specific set of categories while engaging in a manageable quantity of particular excerpts. However, we still allowed ourselves to zoom in and out on the data we did not know if we were going to use (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). The most challenging part here was to recognise and accept that we could not use everything, and finally had to decide what empirical 'darlings' to eliminate.

After sorting and reducing our empirical material, we arrived at probably the most critical phase of *arguing*, namely the process of conducting "a dialogue with our data" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p. 189) and theorised our findings. We did this by using so-called excerpt-commentary units, a transparent model by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011). We applied this approach guided by four elements: we formulated first an analytical point (e.g. Engaging in networking already enhances creativity while building up relationships), followed by an orientation to introduce the statement (e.g. This is exemplified by a consultant as follows), the empirical excerpt itself (e.g. "I think that enhances creativity as well since people need to push their limits in order to be top of mind") and finally, stating an analytical comment which developed the analytical point (e.g. This statement shows that one has to be creative for remaining in the back of others' heads) (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018).

In line with Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018), we pointed out the existence of a particular phenomenon as well as a specific interpretation of it. Thereby, we were faced with two main challenges. Firstly, we were confronted with the "problem of authority" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.10), since it was difficult to assert ourselves in relation to established researchers and theorists while at the same time not belittling our findings. Secondly, with the risk of biasing our research according to our preferences (Styhre, 2013). Therefore, we tried to

avoid over-interpreting specific excerpts and getting trapped in the sense that our data, in the end, becomes what we hoped to find in the beginning. Overall it was beneficial to continuously challenge our language on self-assertive and self-righteous vocabulary by replacing them with general and rather critical and reflexive statements. Not only in terms of language but throughout the overall process, we tried to take on the role of reflexive researchers, which is explained in the following subsequent chapter.

3.6. Our role as researchers: Being reflexive

When writing our thesis, we became inspired by two prominent researchers, namely Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018). Their approach, when conducting reflective research, is to view interpretation as a core element of research work, which consists of two main characteristics, careful interpretation and reflection. The former implies that all references related to empirical material are "results of interpretation" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p.11). The latter includes the critical exploration of one's interpretations of the empirical data, which is why it is also defined as the "interpretation of interpretation" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p.11).

Consequently, our role as researchers is defined by what Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018, cited in Alvesson, Blom & Sveningsson, 2017, p. 25) call reflexivity, which they state to be "the ambition to carefully and systematically take a critical view of one's assumptions, ideas and favoured vocabulary and to consider if alternative one makes sense". Therefore, we tried to avoid institutionalised cultural conventions and instead adopted a "playful frame of mind" (Ibarra, 2015, p. 57). This allowed us to challenge our assumptions while switching positions and viewing these from different angles (Alvesson, Blom & Sveningsson, 2017). Similarly, Riach (2009, p. 359) claims that reflexivity "requires a fundamental requestioning of what is knowable in a given context". For example, we have to keep in mind that only because Transformers Consulting claims to be non-managerial, it does not mean it is. To fulfil this role, we attempt to bear in mind the concept of functional stupidity by Alvesson & Spicer (2016), which describes why we, despite our capacity and opportunity, deliberately refrain from reflection. This helps us

to be aware that we might subconsciously strive away from reflection since there is the possibility of getting biased by pre-assumptions as well as newly gained understanding.

3.7. Limitations and Source Criticism

To ensure credibility, different limitations have to be considered. One of these limitations is that we have decided to only study one specific organisation, which further makes generalisation impossible and consequently invites criticism (Silverman, 2010). Although we can not generalise our case, it provides us, according to Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 223), with the basis for "concrete, context-dependent knowledge". Therefore, we concentrate on the unique nature of our case and "develop a deep understanding of its complexity" (Bell, Bryman, Harley, 2019, p. 65). Known as the "problem of anecdotalism", we ask ourselves how to prove that our findings genuinely rely on a critical investigation of all our empirical data and not only on some well-chosen examples (Silverman, 2010, p. 276). Furthermore, we do not intend to discuss the demands of validity and reliability (Hammersley, 1992) in more depth, but rather attempt to gain increased credibility, in us as researchers as well as our work, by showing "methodological awareness" (Silverman, 2010, p. 276) and reflexivity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018).

For the evaluation and interpretation of our data and thus the quality of our work, we refer to a technique presented by Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018) as *source criticism*. This method is especially relevant for qualitative research studies with interviewing techniques such as ours and mainly involves the question of "distortion of information" (p. 135). According to the authors, this comes from a tripartite relationship between reality, source and researcher, which consists of the fact that a researcher perceives reality through some medium rather than observing the reality itself. This entails the possibility to lose information which is why increased reflexivity from us as (self)critical researchers is required. In line with social constructionists, source criticism is a hermeneutic way to "not only [...] interpret differently [...], but also to interpret better" (Uggla, 2007, p. 221). To substantiate our findings, we reflect in the following on the quality of our work upon four different source-critical issues related to authenticity, bias, distance and dependence (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). These guidelines are only valuable under the *ceteris paribus*

condition (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p.142) and will consequently be approached by us with *"Fingerspitzengefühl"* (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 142).

The c*riticism of authenticity* attempts to find an answer to the question, whereas the observation is genuine and thus, whether or not the source is a source (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Although we are aware of the fact that our findings are the result of interpretations and for that reason may not reveal any 'truth', we do assume that our interviewees did not consciously intend to manipulate our research. However, we tried to extract authentic subjective experiences by conducting in-depth semi-structured and open-ended interviews (Alvesson, 2010). By that means, we can declare our sources as genuine.

Secondly, the *criticism of bias* examines which (possible) bias can have distorted the researcher's interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Therefore, we ask ourselves: Who is speaking and for what purpose? Even though we assume that our interviewees did not consciously intend to misinform us, the interview may still be influenced by other contextual factors (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020) such as satisfying our perceived interests, pushing their ones (Alvesson, 2010) and organisational and social norms (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). For that reason, the information is complemented by representing the opposite bias or with information from fairly neutral sources such as employees not interested in whitewashing or blackening the image of the organisation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). To gain a whole picture, we obtain different partial perspectives of employees with various positions and length of experience within Transformers Consulting. Furthermore, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity helps to counteract this bias.

The last two criteria are the *criticism of distance* and the *criticism of dependence*. The former relates to how long after the experience was made, it was recorded (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). We argue that our research work is of low distance because the consultants are asked questions about their everyday work and life. Accordingly, they tell of experiences that are at the forefront of their memories. The latter belongs to "the number of hands the information has passed through from the source in question" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 141). The

interviews with our informants are directly conducted by us, which allows us to safely state the low dependence of our report.

3.8. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explained how we approached our thesis from a methodological perspective. We became inspired by an interpretivist research tradition, associating our realities as socially constructed and therefore acknowledging the individual's perception of creativity. More specifically, our research is based on qualitative methodology for a better understanding of the consultants' experience. We further follow an abductive approach which allows us to make logical reasonings and to build theories around the phenomena through 'dialectic shuttling'. We gathered our data by conducting semi-structured interviews with management consultants from our case company Transformers Consulting. Afterwards, the material was analysed as we followed the three activities of sorting, reducing and arguing. Throughout the process, we took over the role of reflexive researchers placing reflection and careful interpretation at the centre of our research work. This implies that we also had to be reflective on the limitations of our study to ensure credibility by discussing different source-critical issues related to authenticity, bias, distance, and dependence.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

In the following chapter we will present our empirical material. We do this by firstly introducing the core characteristics of our case company, Transformers Consulting, in order to gain an overall picture. Afterward, we examine the empirical material through the lens of different organisational structural characteristics whilst connecting these to creativity to further deepen our understanding of how creativity is influenced by organisational structure.

4.1. The Case Company: Transformers Consulting

By focusing on one specific organisation, our study can be according to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019, p. 65) classified as a single case study that allows us "to concentrate on the uniqueness of the case and to develop a deep understanding of its complexity". Transformers Consulting is a management consulting firm from Sweden, with around 300 employees operating in different cities and countries. It is a limited company without a Chief Executive Officer and instead active shareholders. Our interest in Transformers Consulting arose when they told during the guest lecture about their non-traditional way of managing the organisation, having no formal managers and encouraging a high level of freedom amongst the employees. Furthermore, they stated that their self-management and distributed leadership approach entails that no co-worker has the authority to give an order to another co-worker, that no co-worker has the power to decide which project to choose and that all coworkers have the right to act freely within the common playing field. Moreover, one of their core values that is of significant interest for this study is entrepreneurship, which refers to the desire and ability to develop good ideas as well as the need of continuous development, innovation and new ways of thinking. Referring to the research area we are interested in, these characteristics make the company an interesting and relevant case which is analysed in the upcoming chapters.

4.2. Introduction: The Work Environment

Overall, it became evident that the work climate plays a crucial role for the employees at Transformers Consulting. It is generally described in positive terms and this is portrayed in the following statements:

It is very open and has a family theme to it. [...] I think this is quite unique, that we have a super friendly atmosphere in such a relatively large company. (Liam)

I would describe the culture to be very open and social. I think you feel at home and I think that the culture is the most important thing. It is the key of Transformers Consulting, so the culture is very important. [...] It is very open, you can talk to and ask anyone for help, which is really nice. (Maja)

I am really considered as a person in the organisation. [...] I really feel like I am an individual and I have space to express who I am and what I want. (Sandra)

For us, this seems to be an adequate foundation for facilitating creativity as the interviewees describe the environment within the organisation to be open-minded, friendly and as one in which the individual is prioritised. In addition, most of the employees describe a learning climate driven by curiosity, as the comment below illustrates:

I would say it is very open minded and driven by curiosity. There is always a strong will of learning new things. [...] Everybody wants to learn more all the time and move on to the next thing [...] It is driven and it is characterized by joy and by always moving forward and always wanting to learn new things. (Johan)

The consultant expresses the desire to learn new things and to develop his skills continuously, something that points towards a creative climate since this may not only entail the wish to develop the individual but also the organisation itself.

Interestingly, a common view amongst the interviews is that the work environment at Transformers Consulting influences creativity due to the high degree of freedom that they are given. For example, one interviewee says:

We are very creative. We have a lot of creativity since people are free. You can only be creative if you want to do the things you do. If you are told to

do something, it is very hard to be creative. Unless you have an area of freedom to be creative within. But since we have such a lot of freedom there is a lot of creativity. […] In our way of working each and every individual can use their creativity. (Carl)

The statement indicates that there is a positive correlation between high levels of freedom and high degrees of creativity within the organisation. Furthermore, it signals that their way of working has an encouraging impact on the creativity of employees.

Additionally, participants speak about the flat structure of Transformers Consulting as a facilitator for creativity. As illustrated by Per:

We are quite a flat organisation. Since people are very courageous and take a lot of responsibility, I think that feeds creativity in projects, but also internal initiatives are blooming. (Per)

This quote implies a link between the flat hierarchy and creativity within the organisation as employees get a lot of responsibility due to the structure. Consequently, creativity is insinuated to take place in their actual work as well as in internal projects within the company.

One of these initiatives are the social groupings initiated by the employees themselves. The majority of the participants highlight these in the same breath in which they speak about creativity within Transformers Consulting. How these social groupings enhance creativity, is exemplified by a consultant as follows:

I feel like we have a very specific, really rich company life with a plant club and our own choir for example. [...] That really allows for interdepartmental meetings and creating new relations that in the end might enhance creativity. [...] It is kind of a way to get your mind away from work and it is a way of building social bonds. (Sandra)

The consultant describes how internal social gatherings encourage and build relationships cross-functional throughout the organisation. Thus, by meeting new people within the organisation one assumes that this may enhance their creativity. Moreover, this statement indicates that creativity is primarily experienced on the collective level.

Taken together, the foregoing analysis implies that a flat hierarchy, social activities, freedom and autonomy are all structural factors of Transformers Consulting that are connected to creativity. The next chapters of the analysis, therefore, move on to discover how different structural characteristics influence creativity within the firm.

4.3. Structural Characteristics

In the following subchapters we introduce which key characteristics of the structure at Transformers Consulting we identified during our analysis process (see Table 2). Moreover, we examine how those influences creativity within the organisation and in particular, we analyse which elements foster and hinder organisational creativity.
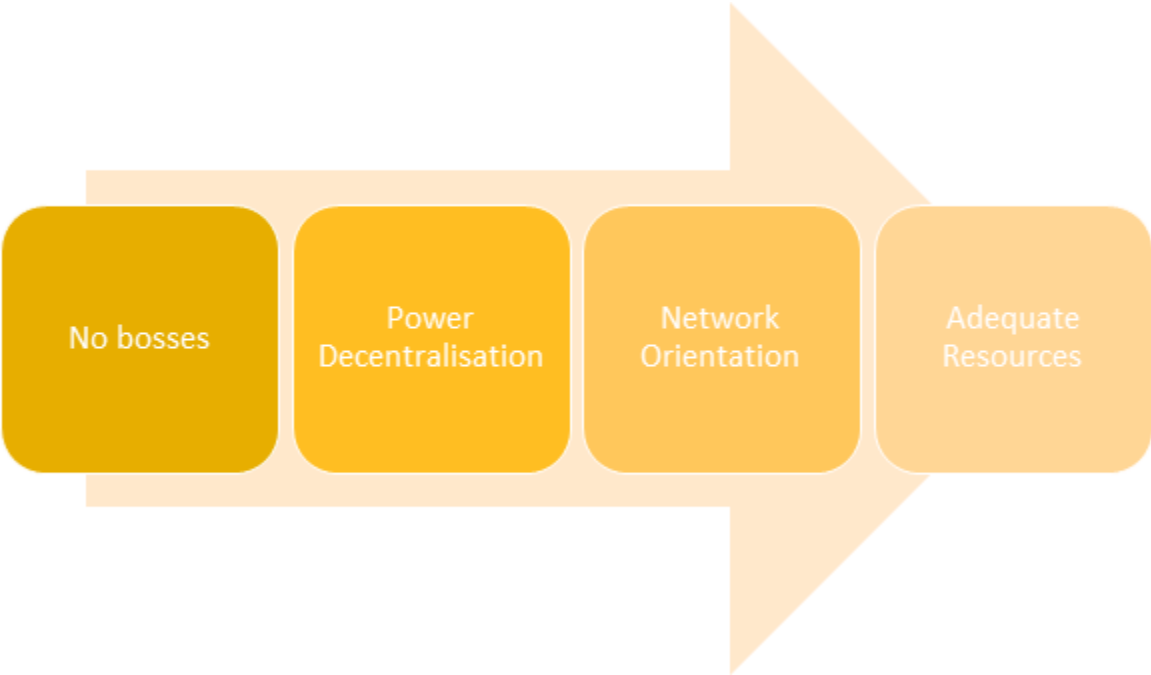

Table 2. Overview of the Key Structural Characteristics of Transformers Consulting

4.3.1. No Bosses

When reviewing our empirical data, one of the most immediate themes that surfaced from our interviews is the absence of bosses. Rather than having formal managers, Transformers ConsultingTransformers Consulting claims to have a medarbetaransvarig (employee responsible), as illustrated in the following:

> I do not have a boss. I have a medarbetaransvarig which I would translate to 'employee responsible'. [...] So I have a person who employed me and who makes sure that I am alright and I am feeling okay and everything. But he never tells me what to do. We discuss things. I can come to him for advice, but he will never point to me and tell me what to do. (Ida)

The role of an 'employee responsible' is described through actions such as supporting and guiding rather than controlling, considering that the employee responsible not only cares about their well-being but also consistently including their coworkers in important discussions. Besides that, the medarbetaransvarig does not have any formal power over the consultants which indicates higher levels of freedom and autonomy amongst the employees and could thus influence creativity positively.

Many of the employees stress that not having bosses allows them to choose their own projects, as highlighted in the following:

> I can never tell or force another colleague to start an assignment. [...] In a normal company you would have a manager or a boss that would tell the employee 'here is your next assignment'. That is not how it works on our side. We will always make sure that the employee wants to do it and it is their own choice. (Liam)

Freedom is much more expressed by the fact that you can really say which projects you want to be in. [...] I have never been imposed, like forced upon a project. (Sandra)

In contrast to traditional bureaucratic consultancy firms where consultants are forcely staffed on different projects, Transformers Consulting allows its consultants to choose projects themselves and thus ensure that their choice is in line with their wishes. This indicates a shift of control towards the individual which is further exemplified as follows:

It is not about using control, it is more of giving control to the individual, but you have to kind of support them and push them in the right direction. So, I would say that you put more focus on talking to people, convincing people and having a dialogue than if you are a more hierarchical organisation. [...] I think in our way of managing, to recommend, we try to get people to understand why they should do things and then we believe that people are much more motivated and creative than if you forced them. (Felicia)

For us, this signals that even if employees are free to work in a certain way, their 'employee responsible' is planting ideas through recommendations. Consequently, those strong suggestions might influence the creativity of their employees. This indicates that the advice given by the medarbetaransvarig could make consultants feel indirectly forced to take on projects they do not want to carry out - something that might inhibit creativity.

Overall, we perceive Transformers Consulting as a flat organisation which means employees meet on an equal level regardless of their position and experience. This is exemplified in the following excerpt where the young professional Ida told us how a client partner reached out to her after she had the idea of a candidate forum about sharing mistakes and failures at a conference. She describes the situation as following:

He reached out to me after the conference, and was like 'hey, this was an interesting idea. Maybe we can take a meeting and discuss it? Maybe we can

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work on it together and try it out?'. I think that speaks for the non-hierarchical organisation that we are, but also how we kind of encourage new ideas and creativity within the organisation. He is one of our senior partners, and he did not hesitate to have a meeting with me who has only been there for a month, learning about my perspective and my idea, and then supporting me and trying that idea out in the organisation. (Ida)

This example shows that curiosity and working on an equal eye-level may result in creative idea generation that might lead to an innovation proven beneficial for the organisation. The interest that the client partner shows for a younger consultant's idea, can be interpreted as a sign of appreciation which in turn could have a positive impact on her motivation and engagement in creative activities.

In general, we recognise that the impact of a non-managerial structure differs from employee to employee. Some feel their creativity is encouraged by the freedom the bossless structure entails whilst others consider that they need more instructions in order to be creative which means that for some the absence of bosses hinders creativity. For example, one interviewee says:

I think there are some people who really love our bossless structure because they are the kind of people that never need someone to tell them what to do. They just always have some ideas coming out that they want to try. And then there are people who will always need to be told what to do because they have no initiative themselves. (Liam)

Here, one can differentiate between two kinds of employees; those who are able to work autonomously and take the initiative to come up with new ideas by themselves and those who need clear instructions as they would otherwise not engage in creativity themselves. One might wonder how those, who need more instructions in order to come up with ideas, are able to be creative if that is not in line with the non-managerial structure of the company.

In sum, the analysis above shows that Transformers Consultancy operates without formal bosses, which leads to higher levels of freedom and autonomy towards the employees. Accordingly, power seems to be decentralized which is reflected upon in the following subchapter.

4.3.2. Power Decentralisation

An additional key characteristic of Transformers Consultancy that resurfaced when studying the empirical data is the implication of high levels of power decentralisation. In difference to a more bureaucratic organisation, the managers delegate the decision-making as close to the clients as possible, as demonstrated in the following statement:

> We always try to aim to put responsibility as close to where the action actually is happening as possible. We are, as you know, a non-hierarchical company, which means that we try to push every decision as far out to the people who are most involved with the client or who has the most information to make the best decision based on the current information. (Johan)

This statement indicates that many decisions are made by employees who are trusted to possess the required knowledge. One may assume that this can be a motivating factor for the employees, as they are trusted to be knowledgeable in order to make the right decision.

Furthermore, we found that Transformers Consulting aims in the first place to make decisions through discussions rather than executed instructions. One interviewee comments:

> We do it together, we discuss it and try to get on a common basis and decide together. [...] Sometimes there needs to be a decision made, but it can be anybody basically, there is no process of how these decisions are made and we do not have one level where we will make certain decisions and then the next level and the next level. We try to make the decisions as close to where the actions happen as possible. (Per)

Here, the structural factor of decentralisation is highlighted as there is no formal way or level of to how and where decisions are made. Instead, decisions are implied to be made through a common consensus and pushed as close to the clients as possible.

Interestingly, some of the employees at Transformers Consulting present us with an opposing reality towards power decentralization as they explain that there is always one person with the final responsibility for the client. As one participant put it:

> "The one who is responsible for the client will have the last say. And I think that is important that we always have one ultimate responsible person for each situation. But what is also very important is that we do not use that person unless we need to, or it could be that this person is just interested in a dialogue. So, of course, we use each other when we need or want to" (Elin)

Instead of distributing the full responsibility to the individual working closest to the client, there is always another employee who has the greater responsibility. This implies that autonomy in decision making is limited.

If we now turn towards our actual research question, we analyse during the next excerpts how power decentralization affects creativity. Overall, the employees of Transformers Consulting implies to have a lot of responsibility when conducting projects, something that according to many encourages them to experiment and to be more creative. One consultant in charge of a project describes it as follows:

> Now, as I am in charge of the whole process, I get to decide everything. I have the responsibility of everything around it. It really makes me motivated. [...] I feel I have the ownership to make decisions on my own. [...] Since I do not have someone looking over my shoulder in everything I do, I dare to challenge myself more and I dare to be more creative. (Ida)

This excerpt indicates that being in charge of an entire process goes in line with taking the ownership in decision-making. Moreover, not getting controlled by anybody feels motivating and

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consequently facilitates her to be more creative. However, one might wonder if in contrast lower degrees of responsibility equals less freedom and autonomy. This assumption is confirmed by some of the employees as further exemplified:

> I try to work in a very cooperative way. Sometimes employees think that they have power themselves and then sometimes we have to tell people that 'Well, I am actually in charge of this client engagement. We can not do it this way, we must do it my way'. (Mattias)

Here, the interviewee emphasises that he is trying to work in a cooperative way whilst in the next sentence describes that he occasionally uses the power in his role to underline the power his position entails. Additionally, his claim suggests that he has the control of how things should be done. Thus, we assume that the creativity of consultants staffed on a project is restricted due to the fact that there is always someone who decides the way the project needs to be carried out.

However, another common theme that occurs from the interviews, is that consultants' creativity during projects is not only influenced by the decisions made close to the client, but also directly by the clients themselves. The following excerpts provides a illustrative metaphor about how their creativity is limited:

> Imagine a line, and below the line is everything that you cannot compromise on, it is everything that we need to be professional about in our delivery and we have to live up to certain standards in order to be the type of consultant that we want to be. That is something that we cannot compromise on. Above this line is where we can stretch the box and where we can be creative and innovative and find solutions. So, I think you need to learn how to balance between that. So you're not too innovative in the part below the line. But rather, seeing opportunities above the line where you can kind of like stretch ourselves or find new or innovative solutions that could enhance your clients business or way of working. (Ida)

This example indicates that creativity is often restricted by different frames that are beyond anyone's control. One can therefore assume that creativity within the organisation is related to some sort of creative dance, where you need to balance between 'stretching the box' and adapting to external factors that are beyond the control of the individual.

Part of being a consultant is to act upon professionalism, which according to many of the interviewees is characterised by delivering what the client expects. We found this to be one of the most influential aspects when studying creativity within the consultancy firm. This is highlighted through:

> Being a consultant is very often to be a dependable brick in the big play or dependable part of it all. It is about being micro creative in terms of developing relations in new ways when you are at a client or how you do things in a smart way. Being creative holistically is very important for a consultant but not large scale creativity like creating a new business is very important. Creativity in detail is very important. (Mattias)

> It is not a creative project if you have a specific task and you know what to do when and probably also how to do it. [...] If we have to step back and overview the situation to see what the real problem is and we find that and present that to the client in a way that it doesn't make them feel like idiots [...]. That is the creative part of consulting. (Liam)

What is interesting here, is that the work of a consultant could be creative in terms of *how* you work rather than related to *what* the outcome of it is. In particular, it seems to encourage creativity in terms of how you build relationships and how you interact with clients. Correspondingly, creativity is not only required to build up external relationships but it also plays a crucial role in building up relationships internally. Accordingly, the next section therefore examines the network structure within the organisation.

4.3.3. Network Orientation

The third structural characteristic we identified through the interviews is a strong network orientation within Transformers Consulting. This entails knowledge sharing person-to-person rather than through databases. As one interviewee says:

> There are two main knowledge management ways for consultancy companies. One of them is having a structured database about experiences and one is the people to people. We are more the people to people company. (Mattias)

This statement indicates that the network is a central part of the organisation as it can be seen as a prerequisite for knowledge sharing. Storing knowledge in people rather than in documents might further imply that people have a certain amount of power through the information they possess.

In all cases, the interviewees emphasize the importance of a network, as the comment below illustrates:

> We talk a lot about the network organisation and the networks are rather strong. They of course depend on a lot of relationships and some people have worked with each other for over twenty years. They rely on each other and know each other and so on. [...] It is really important when you start in an organisation like this that you get to know as many people as possible and that you are open. (Felicia)

Building up relationships and thus a strong network is stressed as highly relevant, which also underlines the collaborative character described previously. Furthermore, we assume that engaging in networking could lead to collective creativity. One might wonder how it affects creativity if one did not build up a strong network. Similarly, several interviewees experience another backside of a network organisation. In particular some of the young professionals highlight the challenge they face within a network structure. For example, one participant states:

First year or maybe even second year you are fine, but eventually you gain more and more responsibility. It is almost like leaving home a little bit, because you know… No one is really helping you anymore if you have not built up a network on your own, since it is a lot of networking. (Per)

The consultant reflects how Transformers Consulting only provides support to navigate through the organisation during the first two years but afterwards one is left to themselves. Considering the recurring emphasis many of the interviewees put towards viewing Transformers Consulting as a collaborative environment, one may doubt if it is really as collaborative. This indicates a challenge in the process of problem solving if one does not have a strong network which consequently might hinder creativity.

In general, the network is perceived as a helpful tool for problem solving within Transformers Consulting. Particularly, it is used to reach out for help which is illustrated in the following excerpts:

You could always reach out to a colleague to get help. [...] So in my situation I reached out to different colleagues of different business units to get input on what I need to solve, to get different angles of things. (Per)

The culture is very encouraging, people are sending an email around 'Who wants to join me in this…' and then you can just do that. [...] I try to talk to other people, talk to colleagues how they have done it before and then we had a meeting and they are like 'you could do this' and then I did that and now we are done. So, I guess you just have to use your network, there is always a good solution. (Maja)

Both excerpts highlight the importance of the network. The first quote describes that colleagues are easily approachable and seek help in order to get a diverse view on the case they have to solve. This points out that idea generation is a collective rather than an individual process. Interestingly, the use of possessive pronouns in the second statement indicate that one has to build its network first as it is nothing that already exists from the beginning. Moreover, utilizing

one's network seems to equal a more straightforward and efficient process of idea generation. However, in order to come up with a solution it requires people to be willing to give help in the first place, which in turn suggests that there needs to be some kind of incentives that encourage people to participate in help giving in the first place. If not, this further implies that it could hinder creativity.

In line with that assumption and in difference to the previous findings, we identify a backside of the environment that is not as collaborative as the foregoing statements imply. Some people express that there is knowledge hoarding within the organisation, as reflected upon by two participants:

> The official culture is to share everything, but sometimes people feel that they sell off but do not get anything back. [...] I do not know what to call that really, but it is kind of a tightness of sharing without getting anything in return. (Mattias)

> It is a very cooperative culture, so it is not okay to openly reject cooperation and so on. On the other hand, people are migrating away from cooperating in silence or in the dark because of new assignments or priorities. [...] Some people think that we are not cooperating as much as we should, and that is probably true. [...] There have been situations where you have felt that perhaps people have not said everything or given you all the information they should have. (Johan)

Both statements imply that the environment is not as collaborative as it is supposed to be. We sense some kind of internal competition that prevents this from happening as some people seem reluctant to share what they know if it is not beneficial for themselves. Hence, we assume that the network structure at Transformers Consulting might be hindering collective creativity.

Particularly, some of the consultants state that the network at Transformers Consulting entails a certain amount of power. For example, one interviewee states the following:

> You have to be kind of communicative and you have to have a network to get things going. When you do have a network, you have a lot of power in that. (Felicia)

Firstly, it becomes clear that the process of idea generation is not an individual task. Secondly, it implies that having a network not only is a must have for coming up with ideas but also a prerequisite for developing ideas.

As stated previously, it is implied that an organisational that functions as a network further facilitates collective creativity. However, before the network can work as a facilitator for creativity, one must establish it. Additionally, this suggests that one has to practice creativity to come up with ways to build it up. This is exemplified by one of the consultants as follows:

> I think that kind of structure of taking ownership and autonomy and that you need to have a network in order to get projects and everything, I think that enhances creativity as well since people need to push their limits in order to be top of mind. (Ida)

Interestingly, this statement indicates a connection between different organisational characteristics that impact another and consequently influence creativity. Accordingly, due to high levels of responsibility and autonomy attributed to the employees, it shows that they are highly dependent on their network, which is why it is crucial to be creative so that they remain 'on top of people's minds'.

In line with our last finding, several participants claim that engaging in networking is a creative process itself, as one interviewee states:

> There is not one Transformers Consulting way of doing things. It is more what people you corporate with [...]. We are very flexible. Being creative is

all about being well connected internally and asking the right people for

advice. (Mattias)

Noteworthy, this statement indicates that to utilize the network in a thoughtful way and to have strong relationships equals creativity. Once again, this excerpt highlights how influential the network is for creativity within the organisation and can thus be seen as a facilitator as well as inhibitor for creativity.

4.3.4. Adequate Resources

In general we identified throughout the interviews that one of the core values at Transformers Consulting is Entrepreneurship, which stands for creativity and continuous generation of new ideas within the organisation. This is exemplified as follows:

Entrepreneurship for us is creativity to a large extent. We have a lot of

creativity in all the individuals. It reflects our desire and ability to develop

good ideas. We always need to improve, have new ideas and be creative to

think in new ways, to come up with new solutions. (Per)

This statement shows that creativity plays a central role within Transformers Consulting, where the consultants are implied to continuously wanting to participate in creative activities such as idea generation and development. Moreover, a common view amongst the employees is that creativity is omnipresent within the company. For example, one interviewee says:

Here is a lot of spontaneous creative stuff going on. It can be a bunch of

people talking in the launch area [...] and then you basically see a light bulb

going up over their head and they have got an idea of some sort. [...] That is

sort of common, really. (Liam)

The statement indicates that creativity often emerges spontaneously in open spaces in interaction with others. Here, we therefore find an intriguing implication that suggests that creativity is interrelated in terms of collectivity and network, where one is dependent on each other.

In the same breath, it becomes evident that there is no specific timeframe given by Transformers Consulting in which employees have to be creative. As two interviewees state:

> We do not have anything like meeting every Friday afternoon where you are working on other stuff. [...] I can not think of any outspoken dedicated time or activity for creativity. It is more sporadic. (Elin)

> I think that almost always works. I think that if you feel pressured and you are by yourself , that can be really really hard (Felicia)

Since Transformers Consulting does not incorporate specific time slots for creativity, it implies that they try to not force creativity through structure upon individuals.

Similarly, it becomes obvious that the process of idea generation within Transformers Consulting is characterized by chaos. One describes the process as follows:

> "What we are talking about is the creative dance. You think a problem solving process is a structured process but it is not. We have the creative dance which means we do not work in a linear way. It is sometimes a little bit chaotic but you come up with ideas. (Carl)

This quote could imply that coming up with ideas is never a straightforward process. This might in turn explain why they do not set certain time frames to specifically engage in creativity, as they might view the creative process to be too chaotic for structure.

Instead, Transformers Consulting created a space for idea generation, called the nursery, where employees can voluntarily go and get support in order to develop their ideas further. One of the interviewees introduces the nursery to us in the following way:

> One of these initiatives is called the nursery, which is pretty much a nursery for ideas. [...]. You have an idea, you come to us and we help you to develop the idea and look through our current client portfolio to see if we could find a fit for that idea. [...] It is a very outspoken thing. People come with ideas

all the time, with things they want to do and want to be seen and heard.

(Elin)

The nursery thus provides an environment in which employees can get support and develop one's ideas, which again suggests that developing ideas is a collaborative process rather than an individual one. However, what is interesting to take note of is that she describes how the nursery helps you to develop an idea as long as it fits with the clients portfolios. This further implies that the employees are restricted in their creativity by external factors beyond their control.

Moreover, we identify numerous tensions within the process of idea generation at Transformers Consulting. These tensions are related to factors that might increase the limitations which in turn could hinder creativity. These factors are reflected upon in the following statements, such as:

> Some people are very creative but some creativity is not leading to business and kind of fading away, some people are giving up a bit because it doesn't pay off. [...] What we mean with entrepreneurship, which is close to creativity, is delivering value to clients in new ways. [...] It is very much up to people themselves to decide how they want to come up with these ideas. You get as much space as you are trying to take as long as you have good ideas. (Mattias)

Similar to the statement before, this again indicates that creativity is limited to the saleability of one's idea. Connecting creativity to business indicates that creativity might only be welcomed if it results in ideas that are leading to profit. Moreover, it implies that you are only given space to develop your ideas as long as they are considered to be good and of value for the organisation. However, considering ideas are developing and improving over time, they might not be sellable at the beginning of the process. One may assume that people might get discouraged to be creative as they might feel pressured to deliver a good idea already from the start and they always have the profitability aspect of ideas in the back of their mind.

However, this is not the only limitation as many employees claim that they have to invest a lot of their own resources such as time, money and energy in order to develop their ideas further. This

is reflected upon by one participant as follows:

> We have a very strong baseline that you cannot expect others to invest in you so much. You need to invest a lot of your own comfort time and maybe money if you want to make big changes. [...] If you want to do something really new and unfunded inside Transformers Consulting, you are welcome to do it, but you need to invest a lot of your own energy in it. (Mattias)

This statement indicates that Transformers Consulting supports its employees in terms of giving them the space and freedom to engage in creativity. However, it must be noted that it seems to be very much a personal investment to implement a real business idea. Although it sounds as a hindrance to engage in that process, it may be a motivation for others knowing that it could result in an idea worth the investment.

To conclude, one might have assumed in the beginning of the analysis that due to the freedom and autonomy the non-managerial structure includes, organisational creativity is facilitated. However, throughout the analysis it became obvious that there are tensions within the structure that we will further discuss in the next chapter by applying it to our theoretical framework.

4.4. Chapter Summary

In our analysis, we collected our empirical material by clustering it into four main parts following the key characteristics of Transformers Consulting structure. Accordingly, we can derive the following four main findings from this: Firstly, consultants do not have bosses but instead an 'employee responsible' which leads to a shift of control from the manager towards the employee. Consequently, this leads to a positive influence in creativity. Secondly, power is decentralized at Transformers Consulting, which means that decisions are made as close to the client as possible, which further influences the creativity of the consultants. Thirdly, the absence of a formal structural database results in high reliance towards the network within the organisation. It not only facilitates collective but also individual creativity. Fourthly, the nursery for ideas provides the employees with the space to develop and evaluate their ideas which

facilitates the process of idea generation. In addition, we identified several tensions within these structural characteristics of Transformers Consulting which could also hinder creativity. Due to the relevance for our study, these deserve specific attention, wherefore we discuss them further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In our analysis, we connected the empirical material to our research question by exploring key characteristics within their structure that might have an effect on creativity. With respect to the aim of our study, which aims to understand how different factors within a non-managerial organisation influences creativity, the following sections apply our theoretical framework to our empirical material discovered in the analysis.

5.1. Hierarchy and No Bosses

As mentioned in the literature review, an adhocracy is an organisational structure in which the traditional lines between management and employees are blurred, and where the decentralised power encourages a flat hierarchy (Mintzberg, 1979). By applying this definition to our empirical data to gain a deeper understanding of the organisational structure of Transformers Consulting, we can see great links between Mintzberg's (1979) ideas regarding the adhocracy and the non-managerial organisation that our company claims to have.

Firstly, many of the consultants emphasised numerous characteristics that imply the existence of an adhocracy, such as having a lot of responsibility not being micromanaged along with feeling like it is all right to disagree with one's superior. A large number of our interviewees underlined that the flat hierarchy is a crucial factor that encouraged them to engage more in creativity and thus the process of idea generation. An example of this is when Ida, one of the young professionals, was approached by one of the client partners to develop an idea she presented and together they reflected upon her idea in order to implement it within Transformers Consulting. Due to the flat hierarchy in the company, communication is at eye level and leads to employees engaging more in creativity as ideas are appreciated regardless of one's experience and position. This finding is consistent with Amabile (1996), who argues that praise and recognition can enhance creativity. Additionally, our material shows that the majority of interviewees share experiences that align with the ideas of Mintzberg's work (1979; 1980), who highlights the importance of organisational structure concerning its effect on creativity as he argues that a flat structure facilitates creativity whereas strict labour division and authority inhibits creativity.

Additionally, Thompson (1965) has similar findings, stating that bureaucracies are more about efficiency rather than innovation. Consistent with the literature, it can, therefore, be assumed that creativity is triggered by the proclaimed non-managerial structure of Transformers Consulting. Hence, it is likely that an organisational structure with a flat hierarchy is an essential factor when one wishes to facilitate creativity within the organisation.

Secondly, an important effect of having a flat and horizontal organisational structure, is the influence this has on the role of the managers. Our empirical data demonstrated that the general perception within Transformers Consulting is that there are no formal forms of managers and bosses. Instead, the consultants describe the role of the 'employee responsible' as their main soundboard that they use in order to reflect upon ideas or to ask for advice and guidance. More importantly, our data shows that there is a collective agreement between the participants that their person responsible would never directly tell them what to do. This is exemplified by the free choice consultants have in choosing their own projects, as the lack of formal management encourages dialogue rather than being forcibly staffed on a project. In support of this, Mintzberg (1980) states that adhocracies tend to 'blur the line-staff distinction' by giving informal power to the individual, thus minimising the differences between the managers and employees. Consequently, our empirical material, therefore, corroborates the findings of Mintzberg (1979; 1980). Additionally, by giving this type of informal power to the employees, one could assume that this encourages increased creativity within the organisation.

On the other hand, there are aspects of Sutton's (2001) findings regarding factors that facilitate creativity that are unable to be proven by our empirical data. When claiming that one must primarily manage people by not interfering in their work (Sutton, 2001), one might assume that this applies to Transformers Consulting, considering that they claim to be a non-managerial organisation. However, this does not appear to be the case. Our empirical data revealed that even if the consultants have a vast amount of freedom conducting their work (see chapter 5.2) due to the absence of formal managers, the 'employee responsible' still has an influential role. Although employees do not perceive that their 'employee responsible' is exercising explicit control over

them, they are still giving recommendations, 'pushing them in the right direction' and trying to convince their employees. However, to what extent does strongly recommending differ from telling people what to do? We perceive this activity as exercising implicit control, arguing that it is given to the individual but at the same time trying to convince them to follow their suggestions. Surprisingly, the nature of how the 'employee responsible' supervise the consultants does not seem to harm their creativity. Instead, consultants still feel encouraged to make decisions regarding their idea development on their own. They experience this to be motivating as well as a factor that encourages them to be more creative. This was for us a surprising finding, as Thompson (1965) argues that no control over the employees facilitate creativity, which implies that all forms of control should hinder it. A possible explanation to this unanticipated finding as to *why* the consultants still feel like this is encouraging their creativity, is because of that the consultant does not view the 'employee responsible' as a figure of authority. Instead, the consultants view themselves to be equals to the 'employee responsible' which in turn can be explained by the ideas of Mintzberg (1979, p. 3) who describes that the adhocracy usually contains levels of mutual adjustment, meaning that the "control of the work rests in the hands of the doers".

5.2. Freedom and Autonomy: Power Decentralisation

Our second and rather remarkable finding that arises from our analysis is the frequency in which freedom and autonomy are mentioned in relation to power decentralisation by our participants. Previous studies, outlined in the literature review, have evaluated the influence freedom and autonomy has on creativity, consistently highlighting the importance of task autonomy and decentralising power of making decisions when considering to increase the creativity within the organisation (Mintzberg, 1979; Amabile & Gryskiewicz). Mintzberg (1979) argues that one of the key characteristics of an adhocracy is the decentralisation of decision-making processes, where the power to make decisions is spread amongst both those in management and non-management positions. In particular, Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1989) find a strong relationship between freedom and autonomy as to how one can choose to execute their work and how this encourages employees' engagement in creative activities. The majority of our

consultants experience this type of structure as they underline that Transformers Consulting aims to put the responsibility 'as close to the action as possible' since this person has the most information about the situation. Some of the consultants express that this motivates them to be more creative as this encourages them to challenge themselves and their ideas. This can be further reflected upon by drawing on the ideas of Shalley and Gilson (2004), who argues that creativity is facilitated by allowing the employees greater freedom and autonomy of how they are conducting their work. Our empirical data, therefore, accords with earlier observations made by Shalley and Gilson (2004), implying that freedom and autonomy in regards to power decentralisation is an essential factor facilitating creativity within the organisation.

To further expand on the notion of freedom and autonomy in relation to creativity, we wish to highlight a tension with the ideas of Mintzberg (1979; 1980). Mintzberg, according to your idea of an adhocracy, it is of great importance to distribute the power to make decisions throughout the organisation, as any standardisation might be harmful for the organisational innovation. Contrary to your view, our empirical data discloses that some of the employees have more power than we first assumed when they claimed to be a non-managerial organisation. Notably, our interviewees thoroughly describe that instead of entirely distributing responsibility throughout the organisation, there is always one individual with the last say. This is exemplified by Mattias, one of the client partners, who clarifies that the consultants do, indeed, have a lot of power but that in the end, he is the one who decides how things should be done; meaning that they must do it 'his way'. Therefore we carefully disagree with you as an organisational structure in a non-managerial context does not necessarily need to decentralise all of the power since the consultants did not express that the control executed by the client partners was an issue hindering their creativity.

We found through our data that the idea of freedom and autonomy, generating creativity is a much more complex topic than one might think. By reviewing the literature, nor Shalley and Gilson (1989), Amabile (1998) or Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1989) highlighted external factors that may limit the amount of freedom and autonomy the workers have that in turn could facilitate

or hinder their creativity. Instead, when reflecting upon factors that either hinder or facilitate creativity Amabile (1998) merely elaborates on the role of the manager, and so does Shalley and Gilson (2001, p. 37-38) when stating that "employees need to feel that they have some autonomy over either how their time is allocated or in the determination of how their work is to be done" and that "managers are sometimes wary of giving employees too much autonomy". What we found out through our empirical data during the analysis is that it is not necessarily the manager who hinders creativity, but rather the external parties. This is expressed continuously by the consultants that we interviewed, who explained that a lot of their work is about delivering upon expectations made by the clients rather than their employee responsible or client partner. This outcome is therefore contrary to that of Amabile (1998) and Shalley and Gilson (2001), as the amount of freedom and autonomy one has is to a certain extent limited by factors that one cannot control. This is because clients always have, as illustrated by Ida, certain standards that one 'can not compromise on'. This suggests that external factors may limit what someone can do in their work, and as a consequence, also hinder their creativity.

5.3. Network

Another argument made by Mintzberg (1979; 1980) that allows us to increase our understanding of the structure of our case company and consequently its influence on creativity, is that adhocracies rely on mutual adjustment for coordination by the process of informal communication. In other words, the task of making different individuals and departments work together comes through talking to others within the organisation. When studying our empirical material, this informal communication equals the 'network' within Transformers Consulting, something that shows significant similarities to the structural description of an adhocracy made by Mintzberg (1979; 1980). It became evident that by talking to other coworkers within the organisation, the consultants experience connecting activities that trigger collective creativity. These can be explained by the model of Hargadon and Bechky (2006), as by reaching out and proactively seeking for help eventually leads to further developing one's ideas by the help of others. A majority of our interviewees underline the importance of the network they have within the organisation, as it allows them to obtain different angles on a problem they need to solve.

Instead of trying to solve issues by themselves, the consultants turn problem-solving into a collective process by talking to other colleagues; something they stated encouraged their creativity. These results are, therefore, in agreement with Hargadon and Becky (2006) findings of factors that support collective creativity.

An additional intriguing finding within the network structure at Transformers Consulting is that it is related to the freedom and autonomy given to the employees. Since they are expected to work autonomously, we can assume that they are highly dependent on their network when they are approaching a problem or developing their ideas. In line with Weick and Roberts (1993), this requires the mindful engagement of employees in social interactions within the organisation. We can see through our empirical data, that spending time building relationships is an activity especially important for the younger consultants as they need first to establish contacts within the organisation. Some of the consultants expressed that this is a stressful task, although, during their first two years, their 'employee responsible' supports them. Here, applying the ideas of Mintzberg and McHugh (1985) is of high relevance, as the 'employee responsible' can be seen as what the authors call 'liaison personnel' as the 'employee responsible' supports newcomers by acting as a link between them and the rest of the workforce.

On the contrary, we have identified an additional tension within the structural characteristics of our case company. Mintzberg (1979; 1980) argues, as stated in the first paragraph of this section, that the adhocracy encourages innovation through mutual adjustment. He goes on to describe that a strict division between departments, which characterise a bureaucracy, might focus more on efficiency rather than innovating. Even if we agree with you to a certain extent, Mintzberg (1979; 1980), our empirical data does not entirely support your idea of informal communication as a facilitator for creativity. Instead, many of the younger employees describe that they have difficulties in establishing strong relationships within the organisation as you need to build the network up first. For example, one consultant experiences that after the first two years, it feels almost like 'leaving home a little bit'. This implies that struggling to create a network hinders creativity, particularly collective creativity, as you lack the colleagues to reach out to solve

problems and to develop your ideas. An additional issue that arises from our empirical data is that employees sometimes withheld information for their benefit. This implies that the network is underlined by a certain degree of power. Therefore, the potential struggle to establish a network might hinder creativity. Surprisingly, when reviewing your literature, Mintzberg (1979; 1980), you seem to neglect these internal organisational tensions which could negatively influence the creative nature of an adhocracy. Consequently, we argue that your point of view, Mintzberg (1979; 1980), is not as straightforward as you suggest when arguing that mutual adjustment through informal communication increases creativity. Thus, we believe that our findings add more complexity to your ideas, as we adopt a more holistic and reflexive approach considering other internal factors that might hinder this networking.

In sum, we discovered that the network-oriented structure within the organisation seems both facilitating and inhibiting creativity. It encourages collective creativity by means that using the network supports the process of problem-solving as well as idea generation but also encourages people to mindfully engage in social interactions and thus supports individual creativity while engaging in networking. However, a network structure in a non-managerial organisation might also hinder creativity in two ways. Firstly, in the sense that the network is not already set up from the beginning wherefore, it needs to be built up first before one can engage in activities that enhance creativity. Secondly, it presupposes that employees are willing to engage in activities within the network.

5.4. Adequate Resources for Creativity

Regarding the literature, prior studies have noted the importance of time as a resource for creativity (Amabile, 1998; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Amabile et al. 1996). Amabile (1998, p. 82) states that "managers who do not allow time for exploration or do not schedule in incubation periods are unwittingly standing in the way of the creative process". Similarly, Shalley and Gilson (2004) argue that employees must be given enough time to be creative. At Transformers Consulting, we found an interesting tension within this argument. Our empirical material demonstrates that there is no official time frame given by the organisation in which consultants

have to engage in creative activities. Instead, they engage in creativity spontaneously. Instead of a given time frame, employees in our case company are provided with the support to evaluate and develop their ideas which we elaborate on in the following paragraph.

Furthermore, when analysing the empirical material, we figured out that Transformers Consultancy offers a space for creativity through what they name 'the nursery', a platform used by the employees to evaluate new ideas or respectively developing the ones that seem as a fruitful resource for future projects. To elaborate on this, Delbecq and Mills (1985) state that organisations that produce high levels of innovation, usually arrange specific funds to endorse it. Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin (1993) have similar ideas and claim that setting up 'arenas' within the organisation where members can exchange knowledge is a resource that affects creativity positively. Arguably, the nursery within Transformers Consulting can be interpreted to be one of these arenas, thus influencing the creativity of the employees engaging in this resource. Additionally, one could assume that these arenas provide a safe space for risk-taking, something that Delbecq and Mills (1985) argue to be of utmost importance when striving for creativity and innovation; daring the organisational members to explore their ideas further. Organisational members of Transformers Consulting support this by claiming that going to the nursery helps them to develop their ideas and thus facilitate their creativity. However, a majority of the consultants emphasised that even if they could find support for their ideas through the nursery, it does not necessarily mean that these will be developed. One employee exemplifies this by describing how ideas must lead to business for them to be considered. Moreover, the interviews show that the time employees spend in evaluating their ideas through the nursery is not provided by the organisation but rather a personal investment they have to make themselves.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In the first part of the conclusion, we provide an answer to our research question and further, show the relevance and contribution of our study. Subsequently, we outline implications for practitioners, summarise the limitations of our work and finally suggest possibilities for further research.

6.1. Empirical Findings

Our first finding shows that our case company Transformers Consulting provides freedom towards their employees through a flat hierarchy and by the absence of formal managers. Instead of bosses, each employee has their own so-called 'employees responsible'. On the one hand, the relationship between them is characterised by a shift of control towards the individual, which provides the employees with the necessary freedom and responsibility, which in turn facilitate creativity and enhance the process of idea generation. On the other hand, within this relation we identified an interesting tension as employees are still influenced by the recommendations and advice given by their 'employee responsible', which can be seen as execution of implicit control and further might influence their creativity and generation of new ideas. However, we could not identify that this is perceived as a direct hindrance for creativity, as the employees of Transformers Consulting still view the absence of formal bosses as something positive, motivating and consequently encouraging creativity.

With our second finding, we identify that, in line with an adhocracy structure, power is decentralised at Transformers Consulting. As summarised in the previous paragraph, our case company offers its employees freedom and autonomy in terms of how they can execute their work, which further seems to encourage them to be creative. Therefore, Transformers Consulting decentralises responsibility as close to where the actual work is carried out, which in their case, is as close to the client as possible. Nevertheless, this approach is limited in the sense that there is always someone with the final responsibility and thus, somebody with the last say and absolute power. Overall, our participants have expressed continuously that the people ultimately

responsible attempt not to make use of this power as they intend to work in a collaborative way which means finding agreements through dialogue rather than by forcing decisions upon others. As a consequence, we found that the decentralisation of power is experienced as encouraging creativity as people dare to try something new and to challenge themselves more. Besides, they continuously state that they are more limited in their creativity due to the client itself rather than the internal person responsible for the client.

Our third finding, the network orientation within our case company Transformers Consulting, can be overall understood as a substitute for a structured database by approaching a person-to-person knowledge sharing approach. Firstly, the majority of our interviewees explain that they use their network to view the problem from different angles and to learn from the experience of their colleagues. Therefore, in general, the network can be seen as a facilitator for collective creativity as employees engage in it through the activities of help-giving and help-seeking. However, this requires that people are willing to mindfully engage in interaction with others and to share knowledge which seems not always to be the case. Secondly, we identified that, due to the high levels of freedom and autonomy given towards the employees, the network at Transformers Consulting is connected to power since the lack of control and fixed structures within the organisation increases the dependency of employees on the network. As a downside of that, one has to consider that this network has to be built up in the first place. In that sense, the network structure not only encourages creativity on a collective level but also on an individual one since we get the overall impression that employees have to be creative for being well connected internally and for building strong relationships within the organisation.

Our fourth and last finding demonstrates shows, which points towards an adhocracy structure that Transformers Consulting aims to encourage creativity by setting up a nursery for ideas. Here, employees are free to engage in the development of their ideas as this arena seeks to provide the necessary evaluation and support needed. We disclosed intriguing tensions at the nursery as the freedom within this arena is limited due to various factors. Firstly, the ideas have to suit the client portfolio and thus must lead to profitability. Secondly, part of the process is to

sell the idea internally, which means to use the network to find colleagues that want to co-develop the idea. Finally, employees have to invest their personal resources to engage in the process of idea generation since Transformers Consulting does not provide its employees with a fixed amount of time allocated to creativity.

Overall, regarding our findings, we state that we were successful in providing an answer to our research question by gaining a deeper understanding of *how* different structural characteristics in a non-managerial organisation influence creativity. Looking back to the introduction, we first imagined that the artist is creative as she is free in everything she does due to a lack of limitations. In turn, we assumed that the painter is confronted with several restrictions, which lead to our assumption that the artist is automatically more creative than the painter. Now, applying this analogy to our case company Transformers Consulting, we identify several organisational characteristics within the non-managerial context that shows similarities to the adhocracy presented by Mintzberg (1979; 1980). These characteristics, thus, influence creativity within the organisation. Moreover, we discovered certain forms of structure within these, which did not necessarily hinder creativity as one might assume when thinking about the painter. Therefore, we argue that the painter, or as in the case of Transformers Consulting, consultants, can be creative within organisations as long as one frames the 'frame' right. Our empirical findings contribute to the research areas of organisational structure and creativity, and consequently to a better understanding of both are outlined in the following subchapter.

6.2. Theoretical Contribution

At the beginning of our thesis, we outlined the problematisation we attempt to contribute to. There has been a substantial amount of research trying to explain which factors in organisations are influential for creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Amabile, 1998; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin), particularly in an innovation-driven economy where creativity is an essential component for long-term survival (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Doughtery & Hardy, 1996; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange, 2002; Nystrom, 1990; Reckhenrich, Kupp & Anderson, 2009). Therefore, an extensive amount of research has focused on influencing factors such as organisational structure

(Ahmed, 1998; Arad, Hanson & Schneider, 1997; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Shalley & Gilson, 2004), freedom and autonomy (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Zhou, 1998), resources (Amabile, 1998) and leadership (Mumford et al. 2002; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Nevertheless, these studies are not conducted from the lens of a non-managerial perspective. Although there is a common view that organisations with a flat structure tend to be much more innovative (Kastelle, 2013; Mintzberg, 1979), where hierarchy is supposed to hinder initiative and consequently creativity (Jaques, 1990), one can not safely say that this also applies for an organisational context without a formal structure with managers. Additionally, as part of a fashionable trend towards fading hierarchies and the emergence of new forms of organisations (Billinger & Workiewick, 2019) research as up until now merely focused on how the absence of management influences efficiency and cost reduction (Hamel, 2011; Olsson & Bosch, 2015); rather than studying the absence of formal managers concerning phenomena in an organisation such as creativity.

Hence, we have done this by investigating a case company that claims to have no managers and, therefore, states of being more creative. By offering deep insights into Transformers Consulting, our study strengthens existing creativity research, which is indicating that organisational structures can influence organisational creativity. Thus, we are adding to the literature by investigating in a different organisational context where the connection between structure and creativity has not been studied before. Moreover, with our thesis, we contribute to previous literature by demonstrating that structural characteristics in an organisation within a non-managerial context have an inconsistent effect on creativity and results in diverse understandings and enhanced complexity towards common views. Furthermore, we applied the concept of an adhocracy structure by Mintzberg (1979; 1980) and thus, illustrated that a flat hierarchy and power decentralisation enhances creativity also in an organisation without formal managers. Additionally, we are contributing to the literature by emphasising how Transformers Consulting sets up unobvious structures within their structureless organisation to influence creativity.

6.3. Practical Implications

In the following section, we take into account our discussion as well as our empirical findings to further provide practical implications that emerged during our research study. Our thesis indicates that the overall working context, as well as the profession itself, play a crucial role, as some professions stimulate creativity more than others. Thus, we propose practitioners to consider the working context as a whole to align structures in an organisation stimulating creativity accordingly. Therefore, we suggest acknowledging the assets and drawbacks of different structural characteristics to understand their interplay and possible tensions that might arise between them. In particular, it is vital to provide the necessary freedom for creativity within a suitable, transparent frame. Nevertheless, and to conclude this chapter, we believe that organisations should further try to avoid establishing a kind of 'fake freedom' within their structure. This would prevent employees from losing the motivation to engage in creativity, and consequently risk creating an environment that is characterised by anything other than freedom for experimentation, risk-taking and creativity for the generation and development of new ideas.

6.4. Limitations

While conducting our research, it became evident that our case company Transformers Consulting can be seen as a unique case due to the absence of managers. As already implied previously (see chapter 3.7.), it provides us with the research gap necessary, taking into account the limited research available. In another way, it leads to the fact that our findings can neither be generalised across other organisations nor different industries. Nevertheless, we assume that the tensions identified within different structural characteristics influencing creativity, in a non-managerial context, can be considered a universal challenge nowadays for organisations throughout diverse industries. In particular, in companies where innovation plays a crucial role strategically.

Secondly, in our qualitative research we did not use observation methods due to the current pandemic Covid-19. Thus, it was not possible for us to gain a deeper understanding of how creativity processes work in action and consequently, how the environment at Transformers

Consulting influences creativity in the organisation. We need to consider that if we had observed everyday working life, it might have resulted in a more intriguing and holistic outcome, being able to take other aspects into account.

Lastly, Covid-19 interfered with our plans a second time as we could solely carry out ten interviews (see chapter 3.4. Data Collection). We need to acknowledge that a higher amount of participants might have resulted in further, deeper insights as every experience and perception is individual and thus differs from interviewee to interviewee. Still, we believe that our empirical material is credible and genuine as reflected upon the criticism of authenticity outlined in chapter 3.7. Consequently, in reference to our empirical findings and our limitations discussed previously, the last subchapter provides suggestions for future research to investigate upon the foundation of our study.

6.5. Future Research

With this thesis, we have managed to present a deeper understanding of how structural characteristics within a non-managerial organisational context affects creativity within an organisation. Nevertheless, besides the fading of hierarchies and managers, there are more new forms of organisations arising. Due to the time frame and the limitations outlined in the previous chapter, we suggest that further research could be done in different organisations and across other industries. A multiple case study might lead to more comparability and generalisation regarding the theory on the phenomena of organisational creativity.

A second suggestion might be to investigate further research by using observation as a qualitative research method. This allows us to focus not only more on understanding behaviour and social interactions in real-time, but it might also help to examine how the interplay between a non-managerial organisational structure and culture influences the process of idea generation.

Thirdly, we believe that it would be interesting for future research to analyse the relationship between employees and the organisation in a non-managerial context by investigating creativity

on a more individual level. For example, how a non-managerial structure influences creative behaviour and the motivation of employees to engage in such. As creativity is a survival skill for organisations nowadays, a deeper understanding of this topic would be beneficial for organisations to align their structure strategically.

Finally, we think it would be fruitful to undertake further research of how the interrelation of different organisational structures influence creativity within an organisation and mainly, how different tensions arose in the interplay of those. Our empirical material implies that there are several tensions within diverse structural aspects, wherefore we further suggest to conduct a long term study that examines the consequences in the long run.

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