



# SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

Master Program: Managing People, Knowledge, and Change

May 2024

## **The Power to be Creative: Unveiling the Influence of Power on Creativity Within Open Innovation Environments**

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Word count: 22779

## **Abstract**

Title: The Power to be Creative - Unveiling the Influence of Power on Creativity Within Open Innovation Environments

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Purpose: This thesis aimed to explore the impact of power on creativity within an open innovation environment.

Methodology: We employed a qualitative study utilizing the interpretivist tradition while using an abductive approach, incorporating the Kalaudioscope Project as the single case for our study. We collected our data through twelve interviews over Zoom with Kalaudioscope members over March and April 2024 as the basis of our analysis.

Theoretical Framework: Our definition of creativity is based on Barron and Harrington's (1981) definition, in which creativity is seen as the generation of novel and useful ideas. We focused on uncovering what factors enabled creativity to flourish within an open innovation environment, and our research evolved into the topic of power. We studied power by using the definition of power as *power to*, which is based on the works of Flemming and Spicer (2007), Hardy (1996), and Clegg (2009). We were able to analyze how power impacts creativity within open innovation environments, specifically focusing on power via resources to achieve creative outcomes.

Conclusion: We sought to explore which aspects allowed creativity to flourish within open innovation environments and found power to have a critical influence on creative individuals or groups within open innovation environments. Our study found that, specifically, the power to achieve an outcome through resources, defined as the power via resources (mandates, money, expertise, or relations), was critical in the enablement of creativity when present but could hinder creativity when power was too limited.

Key Words: Creativity, Power, Power via Resources, Open Innovation Environments, Living Labs

## **Acknowledgments**

From both of us: We want to thank all our family, friends, and educators at Lund University for their support and advice during these past few months. It has been an incredibly defining process for us and we could not have reached this point without their support. We would also like to thank our supervisor, John Murray, who took us on at the last minute following an unplanned supervisor change and offered his advice. John patiently worked through our questions and concerns and offered feedback that was clear and truly helpful. Thank you sincerely.

### From Arianna Ragonese:

First and foremost, I want to thank my mother for not only supporting my education throughout my whole life but in this instance coming and staying with me to help me with my two small kids so that I had the time and energy to start my master's and complete my master's. I simply would not have made it this far without your support. Forever grateful to you. Secondly, I would like to thank my grandmother for her support during this time and for reminding me constantly that women can do everything they set their minds to. I am deeply thankful for these two strong women who offer me the most sincere love.

Third, thank you to my dear husband Fabian for his patience with me during this very stressful time and for constantly encouraging me whenever I felt exhausted and stressed. Thank you for all the dinners you cooked, the daycare pick-ups you handled, and the hugs you offered when I was feeling the pressure of exams and thesis writing. I would also like to thank my two daughters. Simply put, my motivation to continue with my higher education was and is so closely connected with my mission to show my daughters the importance of education for women and that we can be dynamic in all we want to achieve in this life. Thank you for your smiling faces every day, reminding me my purpose is much greater than myself.

Finally, I would like to say some words of thanks to my thesis partner Savana. Savana, we are both very different in our backgrounds, but yet came together to work on this thesis and complemented each other's strengths and weaknesses very well. From the beginning, we promised to speak openly to one another, be considerate of one another's perspectives, and commit to achieving the best grade we possibly could. Now that our thesis has come to an end, I feel we have succeeded in those promises and I am deeply proud of the work we produced. Thank you and best of luck to you going forward.

### From Savana A Pires:

Without the special help and all the love I always get from these amazing people, I could not have done this master's program (and many other things in my life): Vicente, Maezinha, Quinho, Painho, Alex, Mati, Ceça, Cesar e Beta, Deza, Mercia, Tati (301 e trelosas), Pri, Natha (e as coxetes), Mon e Fabi, Tinha, Ana Clara (Odebrechers) e muitos outros amigos especiais. You are

my world; I am only who I am because you exist. Thanks for supporting my craziest dreams, coping with my mood fluctuations, and believing in me and my capacities to become a better person – even when I doubt myself. Thanks for loving me so much. Today and always, I love you!

Without the academic support of Patrick Elf and Stephan Schaefer, this thesis would be empty of meaning and would lack a rigorous foundation. People like you inspire me to become a better professional, who fights for a better world. Keep on inspiring people!

Arianna, I thank you for being there for me and with me. It was not an easy process, but we made it and became better versions of ourselves. I am very so proud of the work we did together!

I wish the world could see and learn something from me: I'm finishing a master's at 41, full of energy and dreaming of making the world a better place to live. I especially thank God (life) for blessing me and allowing me to reach this far... I feel there is so much more to come.

Onwards I go!

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## **1 Introduction**

*In the heart of Malmö, Charlie, the former CEO of Malmö Live Concert Hall, harbors a dream to revolutionize how audiences experience classical music. He is no stranger to innovation and pushing the boundaries of creativity. His dream is slowly becoming a strong vision: the Kalaudioscope project.*

*The project is truly special to Charlie, who strongly desires to revolutionize how listeners worldwide experience classical music, regardless of background or privilege. But Charlie knows that creative dreams alone cannot bring his vision to life. He needs a team—a collective of individuals with diverse talents and resources—to breathe life into the Kalaudioscope project.*

*Charlie sets out to gather the perfect ensemble of minds, turning to Lund University, renowned for its ambitious development initiatives and scholarly pursuits. Drawing upon the university's resources and the qualifications of its scholars, Charlie begins assembling the foundation of this team, while reaching out to inspiring companies that themselves believe in the power of collective creativity.*

*Now, together as a team, each member brings unique talents and perspectives to the project, enriching it with their diverse expertise and passion for innovation and creativity. As the team fuses, they witness the transformative power of collaboration and collective effort. It all relies on the meanings the team is collectively creating.*

*Ideas spark, creativity flourishes, and the once abstract concept of Kalaudioscope begins to take shape. Amidst the whirlwind of activity, the team notices something remarkable unfolding—a subtle dance of power, not of dominance or control but of influence and resourcefulness. It is the power of resources, wielded not as a tool of coercion but as a catalyst for creativity.*

*The Kalaudioscope team is now experiencing how collective creative ideas are unfolding before them as they embark on a journey fueled by the meanings of creativity, collaboration, and unwavering determination...*



## **1.1 Background**

The need for innovation in a constantly changing business environment has led to a rise in scholarly interest in the study of creativity in recent decades (Chesbrough, 2003; Schaefer, 2023). To stay competitive, organizations must remain flexible and sensitive to new challenges, keeping innovation an essential aspect of their development (Anderson et al., 2014). Many academics credit creativity as innovation's primary driver since it is difficult to envision innovation's development without including multiple creative breakthroughs (e.g., Amabile, 1988; Ford, 1996; Hargadon & Bechky, 2006). Many factors may contribute to a company's ability to be innovative, and creativity is one of the most relevant ones.

Creativity tends to exist where innovation thrives within organizations, as environments that foster creativity often give way to an environment set up to support innovation within organizational contexts. Common perception suggests that creative acts are the defining moments that distinguish innovations from more routine endeavors (Ford, 1996). Creativity and innovation are so closely intertwined in the public consciousness that some individuals use the terms synonymously. Others view them as symbiotic phenomena essential for emerging new systems, products, and technologies (Ford, 1996). Even though there are many definitions of 'creativity' in academic articles, we draw on Schaefer's (2023) and Barron and Harrington's (1981) definitions. Schaefer refers to creativity as involving idea generation, development, and evaluation, emphasizing recurrent patterns of practice activities. Barron and Harrington (1981) define creativity as generating novel and useful ideas.

For many years, creativity research has emphasized interaction, with creativity and innovation being described as an information-creation process arising from social interaction (Trott & Hartmann, 2009). Schaefer (2023) asserted that context influences creativity but does not alone determine it because people influence the context. The ability to act individually in specific contexts is called agency, though the term has been widely used across different disciplines with varying meanings (Schaefer, 2023). Crucially, creativity extends beyond individual attributes alone and can manifest as a collective characteristic and process within groups, teams, networks, and systems (Bilton, 2007).

Scholars have argued that people's interaction with others may facilitate creativity, especially in social entities such as organizations (Schaefer, 2023). As such, in organizations, people's relationships with other individuals or groups may foster the ability to build upon different perspectives for idea generation, especially in brainstorming processes. Organizations are then considered to provide structure within the creative process (Nonaka and Kenney, 1991). The interactions that happen within and among organizations can provide the opportunity for thoughts, potential ideas, and views to be shared and exchanged. Indeed, interaction processes are common and important facets of meaningful work exchange within organizations. However, for interaction processes to be effective, there are factors, such as contexts, that influence their results.

Research in psychology and sociology has delved into the importance of context for creativity (e.g., Ford, 1996; Perry-Smith, 2006; Chesbrough & Appleyard, 2007). Taken as contexts, environments characterized by trust, open information-sharing, and positive affect—conditions more likely to emerge in collaborative networks with balanced power structures—can foster creative expression (Milliken et al., 2003). Fleming & Waguespack (2007) argued that open innovation ecosystems could develop human and social capital theories in a novel context that lacks pecuniary incentives, hierarchical authority, and formal structure. Open innovation environments are considered to offer unique social interactions that go a step further than the common social interactions found within the traditional organizational context (Chesbrough, 2003). Open innovation environments tend to attract individuals from different backgrounds, industries, and skill sets to work collectively on ideas toward a shared end goal (Fleming & Waguespack, 2007).

Individuals who are part of an open innovation community are not all employed by the same organization, which usually has predetermined goals established and delineated by individuals occupying higher-ranking positions in the organizational hierarchy. In contrast, individuals in open innovation environments are usually voluntarily brought in and are there to come up with ideas and goals together. Often, open innovation environments are not hierarchical. They are usually based on principles that have implications on several levels regarding how people organize for innovation, manage knowledge and skills, source and explore ideas, and administer the innovation processes (Olilla & Ystrom, 2015). Although there is no hierarchal relationship in open innovation

environments, power relations may still exist. At least, this is what we found and will present in this study. Power, as we encountered when analyzing our empirical material, was used as means to do and achieve creative results, particularly when people were drawn to different manifestations of power that could be utilized to one's advantage to ensure creative outcomes.

Surprisingly, we also identified that the study of power has recently emerged strongly in creative literature. Authors like Hardy (1996), Fleming and Spicer (2007), and Clegg (2009) argue that the definition of power has evolved beyond the simplistic, functionalist view of power as the ability to force others to comply. Power is now understood as a more complex, multidimensional phenomenon deeply rooted in social, political, and organizational contexts, and it goes beyond control or coercion and should not be viewed as an element to be weaponized for enforcing one's will over others (Clegg, 2009). Additionally, the research by Fleming et al. (2007) offers a nuanced perspective on the relationship between power and creativity. Rather than viewing power solely in terms of overt control and dominance, as in the traditional "functionalist" definition by Hardy (1996), their work suggests a more complex, multidimensional understanding of power. Fleming et al. (2007) also argue that power in organizations is not just about the actions of powerful individuals but is embedded in broader social, political, and cultural contexts. The authors highlighted how power can manifest through both direct and indirect means, shaping behaviors and the very subjectivities of organizational actors (Fleming et al., 2007).

Embarking on the research of creativity for this thesis sparked a profound interest among the authors, motivating us to investigate the intricate relationship between power and creativity. Given the complex nature of creativity and its numerous influencing factors, we were driven to understand how power dynamics shape and influence creative processes. We wanted to understand the mechanisms of creativity in the context of open innovation in great detail. Thus, we decided to concentrate on the Kalaudioscope Project because it showcases an ongoing collective endeavor involving individuals—like Charlie from our opening story—and organizations—like Lund University—coming together to envision the future with a collaborative and innovative approach. The Kalaudioscope Project served as a compelling case study for exploring power dynamics and their influence on creativity in a collaborative, visionary, and open-innovating setting.

## **1.2 Research Question and Purpose of this Thesis**

One of the main premises of open innovation environments is that they suggest a departure from traditional power dynamics and hierarchical structures, aiming to cultivate collaboration. Nevertheless, power dynamics often manifest alongside creativity, even within open innovation settings such as the Kalaudioscope Project (KP). By investigating creativity in the KP, we aimed to answer the Research Question:

*How does power influence creativity in open innovation environments?*

Our research focused on a specific strand of creativity inquiry—power dynamics and their impact on creativity within open innovation ecosystems. We perceived that power, when wielded constructively, could be instrumental in achieving impactful outcomes and driving tangible change.

To address our research question, we conducted a single case study utilizing symbolic interactionism (Prasad, 2018) and an abductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Through thematic analysis of transcripts from nine interviewees, we identified recurring patterns indicative of the relationship between power and creativity. We paid particular attention to the contextual nuances and interviewees' roles within the KP, aligning with interpretive traditions and qualitative study methodologies (Prasad, 2018). Our qualitative approach to studying power's influence on creativity makes a valuable contribution and expands existing understandings of creative processes within open innovation ecosystems. We do so by exploring the creative capacities of individuals and groups in such environments, aiming to inspire further research in this area.

The case study focused on the Kalaudioscope Project (KP) in Malmö, Sweden—an intermediate-scale open innovation initiative involving Lund University and various organizations. The KP represents a unique living lab, centered around the development of a future concert hall. Key stakeholders include Malmö Live Concert Hall, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, AXIS, Amazon, CINFO, Capgemini, and Future by Lund. Malmö Live Concert Hall serves as the experimental stage, where interactions and experiments drive the project's collaborative endeavors.

### **1.3 Thesis Outline**

This thesis comprises six chapters that aim to answer the research question, *How does power influence creativity in open innovation environments?* The second chapter gives a more detailed insight into the current literature and the different views on creativity. Following, there is an exploration of the definition of power and its influence on creativity, and we present the concept of open innovation ecosystems and living labs. In the third chapter, we elaborate on the methodological approach used in this thesis. Specifically, the philosophical and theoretical grounding of our thesis, the research design, and the research process are highlighted. We also address data collection and analysis. In the fourth chapter, we present and interpret our empirical findings by applying the methods outlined in Chapter 3. In the fifth chapter, we discuss how our findings about the relationship between creativity and power show a pattern connected with the previously presented literature. The discussion is designed to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the patterns in our findings, as we also discuss what we expected to find and did not. In the sixth and final chapter, we offer a conclusion comprising a summary of the process that led to establishing our findings and their relationship with previous literature. Lastly, the limitations of our study and recommendations for future research are provided.

## **2 Literature Review**

The primary aim of this literature review is to explore the relationship between creativity and power within an open innovation ecosystem involving individuals from diverse organizations seeking innovative solutions. This chapter introduces previous research on the topics of creativity, power, power influencing creativity, and open innovation ecosystems, presenting the key theoretical concepts used to address the research question. Even though the main concepts explored in this literature review are related to creativity and power, it was relevant to also dive into the main traits of open innovation ecosystems and one specific type of ecosystem, the living lab. This chapter begins with a definition of creativity and its connections to social and collective traits, power, and open innovation environments. Subsequently, we explore and untangle the link between power and its impact on creativity, underscoring their central role in this study. Furthermore, we explore how power dynamics can either facilitate or hinder creative processes

within collaborative settings. By examining the interplay between creativity and power, we aim to provide valuable insights about the individuals participating in open innovation initiatives.

## **2.1 Creativity**

Historically, the study of creativity has been the purview of psychologists, but scholars from sociological and economic disciplines have increasingly contributed to the discourse (e.g., Ford, 1996; Perry-Smith, 2006; Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Fleming et al., 2007; Chesbrough & Appleyard, 2007). Schaefer (2023) attributes the growth of creativity research to democratic and humanistic values, which are consistent with Maslow's (1950) depiction of creativity as a coping mechanism against societal alienation (cited in Schaefer, 2023).

Here, we want to highlight the relevance of understanding the many aspects and definitions of creativity, how it affects the dynamics of both individuals and groups and how it differs from innovation. Notably, whereas several theories and definitions of creativity exist, for our study, we limited the literature review to studies that connect creativity theories with power in collaborative contexts. They are complemented by literature that has long served as a benchmark for the conceptualization and understanding of the individual characteristics of creativity. Other authors were highlighted because they brought to light the discussion about the collective traits of creativity and how, for instance, different contexts and collaborations affect how creativity flourishes. Still, other authors have argued for the difference between creativity and innovation; therefore, we chose to showcase them as, for our study, it is relevant to separate those two concepts. Below is the discussion on the three approaches to creativity mentioned.

To start, defining creativity is challenging due to its multifaceted meanings and contextual nuances, leading to varied interpretations. As Amabile (1998) pointed out, the concept of creativity eludes a simple definition, reflecting its intricate nature across diverse domains. It also became clear that creativity does not happen magically but is a rather complex process (Amabile, 1988b; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Schaefer (2023) and Bilton (2007) underscore the importance of considering context, practice, and process in understanding creativity, echoing earlier insights by Ford (1996). Schaefer (2023) suggests that creativity encompasses the processes of idea generation, development, and evaluation, emphasizing recurrent patterns of practice for creativity. Bilton (2007) adds depth to this understanding by portraying creativity as a demanding process

that necessitates both rational and irrational thinking to transcend boundaries and reconcile contradictory impulses.

Furthermore, one of the main debates in the held discourses is whether creativity emerges through individual or collective processes. Authors such as Barron and Harrington (1981) and McCrae (1987) consider creativity to be a question of personality traits, which, in turn, mirrors the notion of the lone creative genius as initiators and facilitators of creativity (Schaefer, 2023). Equally, Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003), Amabile (1998b), and Ford (1996), up to an extent, also view it as an individual-level construct, leading to novel ideas or solutions at the individual level. For instance, Barron & Harrington (1981) argue that creativity is the ability to produce novel and appropriate responses, whether products or ideas, to various situations or problems. The authors emphasize that creativity involves individuals generating original and effective solutions or expressions that are both new and relevant to the context in which they arise (Barron & Harrington, 1981).

In contrast, other scholars position creativity as a collective endeavor (e.g., Amabile, 1988b; Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Perry-Smith, 2006; Harvey, 2014; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2015; Fleming et al., 2007), emphasizing the importance of social contexts and interactions in fostering creativity. For instance, Amabile (1988b) built upon Csikszentmihalyi's (1988, 1990) systems view of creativity by further arguing that it emerges from the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment rather than being solely an attribute of the individual. Plus, according to Bilton (2007), creativity may be considered beyond individual attributes, manifesting as a collective characteristic within groups, teams, networks, and systems.

Exploring the relevance of social contexts, Fleming et al. (2007) stress the growing recognition of collaborations in and across social structures. Also, Harvey (2014) emphasizes the positive sides of collaboration, positing creative collaborations stem from dialectic negotiation and the integration of stakeholder opinions. According to Harvey (2014), creative synthesis merges group member perspectives into a unique, collective understanding, enhancing problem-solving effectiveness. Harvey (2014) also advocates combining resources through creative synthesis to boost group breakthrough potential. She highlights the importance of a supportive environment

with equal power distribution among members, acknowledging how power dynamics influence creative synthesis (Harvey, 2014).

Regarding interactions, Perry-Smith and Mannucci (2015) emphasize the value of interpersonal relations for creativity, arguing that dialogues have an essential role in idea generation. Ideas, especially creative ideas, primarily emerge because people naturally need to interact by hearing, comprehending, and responding to other individuals who bring together various perspectives (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2015). Such dialogues may inspire people to come up with new ideas or provide feedback needed for the development of the final implemented version (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2015).

Additionally, Hargadon and Bechky (2006) stress the role of mindful interactions in establishing collective mechanisms for generating solutions and enhancing creativity-related skills for individuals. Collective creativity, for the authors, encompasses moments when diverse perspectives converge, enabling collective problem-solving beyond individual capacities (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006). Drawing on Weick and Roberts (1993), Hargadon and Bechky (2006) introduce the concept of the collective mind, emphasizing the simultaneous focus on individuals and the collective while recognizing that contributions to a collective mind originate from individuals. Yet, the collective mind manifests in the interrelated activities among many people. The authors also posit that collective ownership of ideas arises from their joint evolution, rendering it challenging to ascertain a singular originator of the concept (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006). Finally, other scholars have argued that people's interaction with others holds the potential to facilitate creativity, especially in social entities such as organizations (Schaefer, 2023), which can be considered to provide structure within the creative process (Nonaka and Kenney, 1991).

Lastly, another notable insight lies in the crucial distinction between creativity and innovation, extensively explored in academic literature (e.g., Anderson et al., 2014). At the beginning of our research, trying to distinguish between those two concepts was of the utmost relevance. We understood that even though creativity and innovation are closely related concepts and often interdependent, they represent distinct phases within the broader innovation process, which can be very complex. Creativity is commonly defined as the generation of novel and useful ideas (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Amabile, 1988a), while innovation refers to the implementation of these ideas



to produce tangible outputs—services or products (Bassett-Jones, 2005). Creativity represents the initial phase of the innovation process, with innovation focusing on idea implementation (Bassett-Jones, 2005; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). A key characteristic of creativity is novelty, indicating that the conception must significantly differ from what has been done or imagined before, which might include combinations of existing knowledge or solutions in a novice way (Bassett-Jones, 2005).

In this first part of the literature review, we focused on the difficulties of defining creativity. We highlighted the work by Amabile (1988a, 1988b) and Amabile and Pratt (2016), as they identify creativity as a complex process. Second, we delved into the debate of individual and collective traits of creativity. We showcased this debate by citing relevant authors like Barron and Harrington (1981) and McCrae (1987) as defendants of the individual traits, and Hargadon and Bechky (2006), Perry-Smith (2006), and Harvey (2014), who have argued in favor of the collective aspects of creativity. Third, we explained that we take creativity and innovation as independent and complementary concepts in this study. We cited the work of Barron and Harrington (1981), Amabile (1988a), and Bassett-Jones (2005) to showcase the difference between creativity and innovation applied in our study.

In the next two sections of this literature review, we continue to discuss creativity, but concerning two new concepts. First, we explore how power is related to creativity, and then we focus on open innovation ecosystems where people actively interact with each other.

## **2.2 Power**

We start this part of the literature review by naming some of the authors and researchers who have had a significant influence on the latest debates on power in organizations, such as the works of Ibarra (1993), Hardy (1996), Clegg (2009), and Fleming and Spicer (2014). Notably, the seminal work of earlier researchers had a significant influence on the aforementioned authors. For example, French and Raven's (1959) work on social power is a foundation for how social power is framed nowadays. Emerson's (1962) power-dependence relations theory also stresses how power is relational and resource-based. Lukes' (1974) three-dimensional view of power includes how managing resources can indirectly affect people's choices and preferences. Salancik and Pfeffer's (1977) resource dependence theory stresses how power comes from controlling important

resources. However, when discussing power, one cannot overlook the influence of Michel Foucault (1979; 1980; 1982), whose studies on the dynamics of power and knowledge have profoundly shaped contemporary understandings of power in organizations. Foucault's (1979; 1980; 1982) different approaches to analyzing power as diffuse, pervasive, and operating through disciplinary mechanisms have provided many authors with valuable insights into the complexities of power relations within organizational contexts.

According to Clegg (2009), the primary approaches used in organization theory have been relatively limited in their appreciation of power, as it is regarded as a negative and often misused force. Specifically, one of the biggest problems with discussing how power influences creativity concerns its negative connotation (Hardy, 1996). When perceived as coercive or manipulative, power can be viewed as unethical or inappropriate, particularly when one individual seeks to influence another to act against their inclinations (Clegg, 2009).

While power may typically be manifested as episodic force or action directed towards securing outcomes, a neutral perspective frames power as the capacity to act, particularly in concert with others, to achieve shared goals (Clegg, 2009; Hardy, 1996). In this more neutral perspective, power can be framed as the '*power to*' do something through something else and as a force that affects outcomes—different from the power in politics that may be seen as power in action (Hardy 1996). Viewing power as '*power to*' situates it as a facilitator of creative endeavors that provide the energy necessary for individual creativity to flourish. A perspective on power that is relational and resource-based highlights the complexity and diversity of power in social and organizational situations. (Sligte et al., 2011).

Building on the work of Mintzberg (1983) and Salancik and Pfeffer (1977), Ibarra (1993) presents the difference between potential power, defined as bases or sources of power, and the use of power, defined as the ability to affect outcomes and measured in terms of individuals' roles in innovation processes. Ibarra (1993) draws on Mechanic's (1962) argument to define power as "any force that results in behavior that would not have occurred if the force had not been present" (Mechanic, 1962: 351; cited in Ibarra, 1993). The author also distinguishes between potential power, rooted in

individual attributes or positions, and enacted power, which reflects the successful utilization of this potential within innovation processes (Ibarra, 1993).

Conversely, according to Hardy (1996), individuals use their power to influence outcomes and encourage desired behaviors using crucial resources like knowledge, skills, political connections, credibility, stature, prestige, access to senior individuals in the organization, and financial control. French and Raven's (1959) work on social power served as the foundation for Hardy's (1996) conceptualization of power as the capacity to influence decisions, actions, and outcomes by deploying crucial resources. The explicit articulation of the different types of resources that can be leveraged to exercise power emphasizes power as a relational phenomenon rooted in resource dependencies.

Finally, we want to bring attention to the seminal work of Fleming and Spicer (2014). The authors marked out the conceptual terrain of power by following Arendt (1958; 1970), Lukes (1974), and Fleming and Spicer (2007). They advocate for a more nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to understanding power dynamics, drawing on insights from sociology, political science, and critical theory (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). The authors also underlined the significance of understanding power as a contested and relational phenomenon that functions through practices, discourses, and interactions (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Even though the authors do not relate power directly to creativity, in this study, we use their understanding of power as one of the central arguments, which will be further explored when we link it to our findings in Chapter 5.

In this part of the literature review, we explored some arguments that place power as a neutral force, which enables individuals to achieve desired outcomes through influence and control over crucial resources. We refer to this power as the *power to*. We also explored how power can be defined as the control over scarce resources that are rare and central to organizations. In the next section, we show how some authors argue that power plays a fundamental role in shaping creative processes within organizational and social contexts. This understanding sets the stage for exploring the intricate interplay between power dynamics and creativity within the context of this study.

### **2.3 Power and Creativity**

In this section, we highlight the work of two authors who directly relate power to creativity (Ibarra, 1993; Sligte et al., 2011), as they argued that possessing power in and by itself fundamentally influences individuals' information-processing and behavioral tendencies, especially regarding their creative capabilities.

Sligte et al. (2011) argue that besides power referring to the ability to influence others, it derives from a variety of bases, such as someone's position in the hierarchy within a group or organization or the possession of valuable resources, such as knowledge and expertise. The authors argue that by promoting cognitive flexibility and abstract thinking, individuals holding power are usually more creative than their powerless counterparts (Sligte et al., 2011). Also, Sligte et al. (2011) show how mixed findings about power's influence on creativity emerged for creative performance, with some studies demonstrating that power leads to higher creativity (Galinsky et al., 2008; Smith & Trope, 2006; cited in Sligte et al., 2011), while others point to opposite outlooks (Kuhl & Kazen, 2008; cited in Sligte et al., 2011).

Ibarra (1993) adds that several key factors influence individual power in the context of creativity. These factors might be, for instance, individuals in higher formal positions within the organizational hierarchy, including high or low seniority; the centrality of an individual within informal networks; one's education, experience, and professional activity; access to diverse sources of information, either through professional activities or boundary-spanning positions (Ibarra, 1993). According to Ibarra (1993), these factors might indicate systemic legitimacy and knowledge of navigating political dynamics, enhancing an individual's power in creative processes. These factors shape an individual's power and influence in driving creativity and creative outcomes (Ibarra, 1993). The basis of power, in this case, may also be based on the resources an individual has access to. Such resources may stem either from boundary-spanning positions or from positions at the core of an organization's work (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984; cited in Ibarra, 1993).

We explored here how both authors (Ibarra, 1993; Sligte et al., 2011) emphasize the influence of power on creativity. Such arguments will be applied to our empirical findings and further discussed

in Chapter 5. Next, we explore open innovation ecosystems and living labs since our research question focuses on power influencing creativity in an open innovation ecosystem.

## **2.4 Open Innovation Ecosystems**

According to Chesbrough (2003), open innovation is a paradigm that assumes that firms can and should use external ideas, internal ideas, and internal and external paths to market as they look to advance their technology. Chesbrough (2003, 2006) further argues that open innovation entails purposeful knowledge exchange to accelerate internal innovation and expand external market use, fostering problem-solving collaborations for organizational survival. Chesbrough (2006) also claims that the traditional internally focused Research and Development (R&D) strategy is no longer tenable considering readily available knowledge. Instead, he advocates for a shift to open innovation ecosystems that combine external collaboration with internal R&D efforts. Such a transition offers opportunities for value addition and leveraging the broader innovation landscape (Chesbrough, 2003, 2006).

In addition, Gascó (2017) stresses the importance of constant knowledge sharing and learning by doing in open innovation environments. Intermediaries in innovation ecosystems and outside organizations that control outside knowledge and regulate innovation networks are responsible for making this possible. Harvey (2014) claims that environments devoid of evaluative pressure facilitate individual and group creativity by encouraging idea expression without fear of criticism or exclusion (e.g., Amabile et al., 1990; cited in Harvey, 2014). Harvey's (2014) creative synthesis model highlighted the pivotal role of the environment in providing feedback that drives the synthesis process forward, fostering constructive conflict while facilitating creative progress. Also, open innovation communities allow the development of human and social capital theories in a novel context that lacks pecuniary incentives, hierarchical authority, and formal structure (Fleming & Waguespack, 2007). However, openness can include several different practices and should not automatically be assumed to reflect an innovation process that is open to everyone (Olilla & Ystrom, 2015).

### 2.4.1 Living Lab

Within the open innovation arena, the Living Lab concept was introduced in the EU in 2006 to foster innovation through public-private partnerships (DGISM, 2009; cited in Nesti, 2018). According to Gascó (2017), an ever-growing stream of research contributions (e.g., Bergvall-Kåreborn et al., 2009; Schuurman & Tönurist, 2017; cited in Gascó, 2017) on living labs has emerged recently because living labs are argued to provide ample innovation benefits to a variety of stakeholders.

Despite the lack of a shared and coherent definition, living labs can be described “as settings or environments for open innovation that offer a collaborative platform for research, development, and experimentation in real-life contexts, based on specific methodologies and tools, and implemented through specific innovation projects and community-building activities” (Schaffers & Turkama, 2012; cited in Gascó, 2017:91).

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, we explored the relevant literature relevant to our research. We started by delineating that creativity is intricate, as it embraces different diverse domains, as pointed out by Amabile (1998). We showcased how individual creativity, as based on Barron and Harrington’s (1981) argument, is the individual ability to produce novel and appropriate responses, whether products or ideas, to various situations or problems. We showed how collective creativity emphasized the positive sides of collaboration, positing that creative collaborations stem from dialectic negotiation and the integration of stakeholder opinions (Harvey, 2014). Then, we differentiated creativity, which represents the idea generation of the process, from innovation, which focuses on idea implementation (Bassett-Jones, 2005).

Later, we took a leap into the discussion of power and delineated the significance of understanding power as a contested and relational phenomenon that functions through practices, discourses, and interactions (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). Now, we would like to establish that we use power throughout this study as the power to do something through something else and as a force that affects outcomes (Hardy, 1996). Also, that power is the employment of a set of resources to get

things done through other people or other resources to achieve certain goals that may be shared or contested (Fleming & Spicer, 2014).

Lastly, we delved into the open innovation and living lab paradigms. We explored Chesbrough's (2019) argument that open innovation is a purposeful knowledge exchange endeavor to accelerate internal innovation and expand external market use, fostering problem-solving collaborations for organizational survival. Living labs "as settings or environments for open innovation that offer a collaborative platform for research, development, and experimentation in real-life contexts, based on specific methodologies and tools, and implemented through specific innovation projects and community-building activities" (Schaffers & Turkama, 2012; cited in Gascó, 2017:91).

### **3 Methods**

We first introduce our overall research approach and philosophical grounding to facilitate the understanding of our findings in the next chapter. We then summarize the research context (an open innovation ecosystem) and describe how we collected data (interviews) and analyzed our data (thematic analysis and coding). Ultimately, we discuss matters related to the limitations of our research.

#### **3.1. Research Approach**

To explore the relationship between power and creativity within open innovation environments, we conducted a qualitative study utilizing interpretivism, symbolic interactionism (Prasad, 2018), and an abductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), qualitative research enables researchers to explore and understand specific phenomena at their origin and broaden this meaning to more general terms. A qualitative approach lends itself to answering questions of 'why' and 'how', and in our case, to uncovering the existing understanding of people's creative experiences, allowing us to achieve deeper insights into the phenomenon than quantitative research would have allowed us (Bell et al., 2022). The latter is more appropriate for establishing if-then relationships between variables (Styhre, 2013). Rather than if-then relationships, in this study, we were keen to understand the phenomenon of creative processes from the actor's perspective.

Qualitative research was deemed more suitable for this type of study we set out to conduct (Styhre, 2013). We aimed to understand the interviewees' actions, sensemaking, and interpretations of their reality, needs, and behaviors toward creativity in a specific open innovation setting. By adopting interpretivism and focusing on the context in which our interviewee's statements were made and the role of the interviewee, for instance, we acknowledged that there was no singular truth in our respondent's answers and meaning-making but rather multiple understandings of creativity and power, enabling us to understand the phenomenon more deeply.

Within the interpretivist traditions, we categorize our study as Symbolic Interactionism (SI) (e.g., Blumer, 1986). Blumer (1986) states that symbolic interactionism relies on three premises: that human beings act toward things based on the meanings things have for them; that the meaning of such things derives from the social interaction one has with one's fellows; and that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process. Our main aim was to understand how stakeholders made sense of creativity within a specific multi-organizational project—an open innovation ecosystem. SI was chosen because it emphasizes how individuals create meaning in social settings and how they make sense of reality (Blumer, 1986). According to Prasad (2018), SI suggests that objects and events do not possess an inherent meaning but that individuals assign meaning to them through social interactions. The author also argued that words, events, objects, and actions convey the different meanings individuals use to understand their social reality (Prasad, 2018). For instance, a candle can be a light source for one person, while it might symbolize creativity and new ideas for another. Like the candle, creativity might have a different meaning for each of our interviewees, which results in different individual creative processes.

Besides, in qualitative research, one can distinguish between three major approaches: inductive, deductive, and abductive (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Bell et al., 2022). Dubois and Gadde (2002) contrast abductive reasoning with deduction and induction. On the one hand, in deductive reasoning, one starts from a general principle and predicts a specific outcome. On the other hand, inductive reasoning starts from specific observations and infers a general principle (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Bell et al. (2022) describe how induction takes research as a point of departure, resulting in new theories and concepts. The authors contrast it with deduction, which uses existing literature to create hypotheses that are either supported or disproven by conducting studies (Bell



et al., 2022). As the SI tradition requires posing broad research questions and refraining from introducing too many theoretical propositions at the start of the study (Prasad, 2018), structuring our study to be abductive was crucial to us as researchers. In taking an abductive approach, we combined both induction and deduction when conducting our study.

Additionally, in abductive research, one starts with specific observations and tries to infer the most likely explanation or cause of those observations (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Therefore, we used such motivation to conduct our research while, simultaneously, being open to unexpected outcomes that allowed us to shed light on the influence of power in creativity from a different perspective. Such a critical and iterative dialogue between existing literature and empiricism allowed us to grasp a greater understanding and carry out a re-interpretation of our existing assumptions about the topics explored (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007).

During the research process, we acknowledged that people had different constructions of reality and phenomena. People lived, felt, and explained creativity in unexpected ways, as proved to be the case with our data. Indeed, we grasped from our interviewees the ongoing "endless meaning negotiations (implicit and explicit)" (Prasad, 2018:22) when interviewees discussed their constructions of reality. According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), people construct social reality together and reach negotiated orders of understanding by interacting and exchanging their realities and meanings. Accordingly, we found some patterns representing some negotiated orders among the responses when transcribing, analyzing, and consolidating the answers from the interviews.

It is relevant to recognize that we initially encountered difficulties in appropriately interpreting and defining the themes and sub-themes from the data we collected. We first reflected and combined our findings with some general understanding of creativity and concepts relating to power that allowed us to build up our understanding through the abductive approach, which offered a powerful tool to interact with our data set. We also employed abduction to reach themes and sub-themes to further understand the data. We deemed this approach appropriate as we focused on what terms and phrases meant within the context of our study, not on absolute truths or exact definitions from the literature. We were not introducing any pre-figured definitions; instead, we

were obtaining the meanings and reality constructions by interacting with and interpreting the data collected from the interviews carried out for this study.

### **3.2 Research Design and Process**

We gathered the empirical data collection for this study from a single case study by interacting with the Kalaudioscope Project (KP). This open innovation initiative is explained in the next section. As Stake (1995) observes, case study research concerns the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (cited in Bell et al., 2022). A single-case analysis allows for real-life experiences that lead to a rich understanding of phenomena while enabling researchers to explore them more than comparing different organizations or situations (Stake, 1995; cited in Bell et al., 2022).

While still in the first semester of the master's program, we heard about the KP, its particularities, and innovative goals as Professor Stephan Schaefer invited a group of students to join a meeting to learn more about an innovation initiative in a concert hall in Malmö, Sweden. We attended the meeting without much expectation but full of curiosity. We had some previous knowledge about the main concepts behind open innovation projects and were interested in the newness and groundbreaking ambiance they offer. We decided that the KP provided a fascinating environment for our investigation and study when we attended the meeting organized by Jesper Larsson, the project's initiator and most enthusiastic member, at the end of October 2023. Eventually, the project allowed us to investigate creativity and power through social interactions and sense-making in an open innovation ecosystem with bold aims.

#### 3.2.1 Case Context

KP offered the research team a unique opportunity to explore an open innovation environment—a living lab for developing the future concert hall. KP is a collaborative effort involving Lund University, Malmö Live Concert Hall, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, AXIS, Amazon, CINFO, Capgemini, and Future by Lund, among others. See Figure 3.1 for more details on participating organizations.

The project originated at Lund University. It aligns with the university's strategic objectives, emphasizing interdisciplinary engagement and outreach to diverse stakeholders while seeking to

bridge academic research with societal needs and fostering a symbiotic relationship between the university and various sectors. From Lund University, collaborating faculties involve the School of Fine and Performing Arts, Engineering, Economics and Management, Law, Humanities and Theology, and Social Sciences, with expansion plans to involve other faculties.

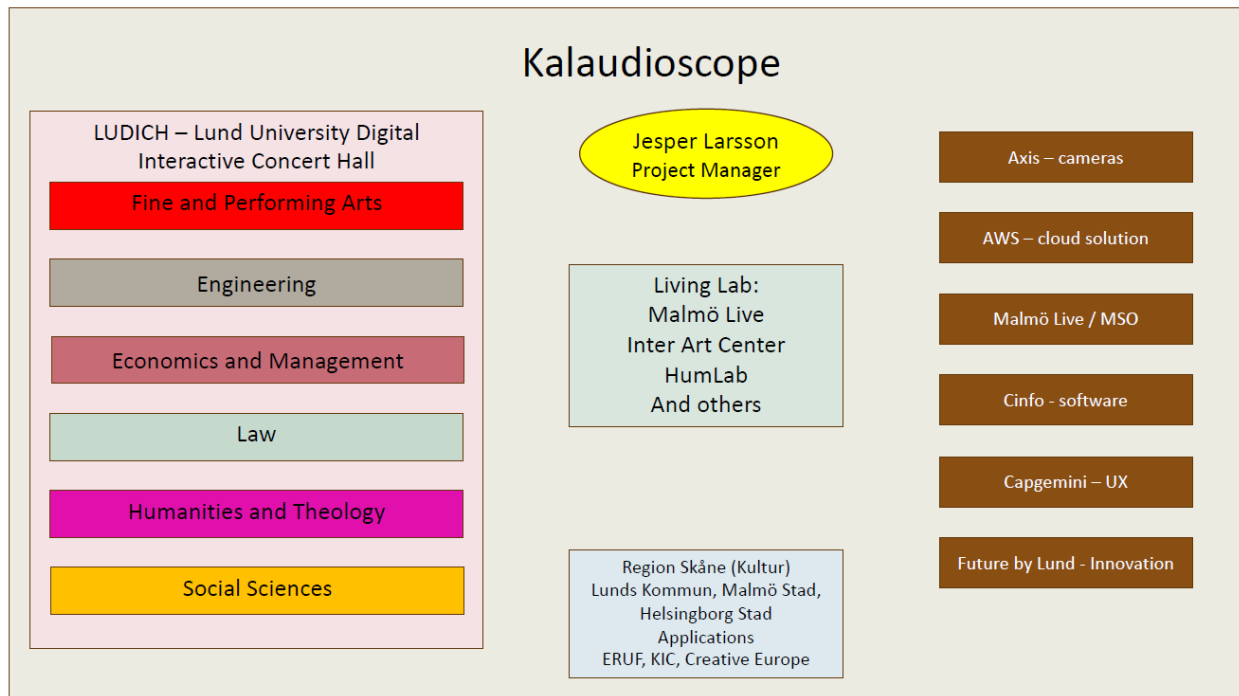


Figure 3.1: KP members - provided by the KP management team

KP aims to enhance overall cultural accessibility and citizen participation, recognizing culture's pivotal role in societal well-being and democracy (KP Management Team). Leveraging Lund University's interdisciplinary expertise, the project endeavors to revolutionize digital cultural experiences, capitalizing on digitalization's transformative potential in cultural production and dissemination. The project utilizes Malmö Live's concert hall as a real-world experimental setting, a living lab, to digitally replicate the unique live experience, offering customizable viewing and listening options. Integrating facial recognition technology and interactive features, the initiative promotes audience engagement and community interaction, extending beyond traditional concert formats. Technical, copyright, privacy, and business model challenges underscore the endeavor's complexity, necessitating comprehensive solutions.

Jesper Larsson provided all the details about the project, including its stakeholders, organizations, strategies, and desire for further development, in an early interview. Additionally, access was granted to some pertinent documents used in the project's initial funding application as well as the project-related data on the Lund University website. For more relevant and updated information, check the KP website (see reference list). It is important to state that, since the meeting in October 2023, KP's management team has been supporting Lund University students in their thesis processes, which was a great starting point for us as researchers. For this reason, we were able to obtain the support necessary to conduct our research in such a short period. We noticed since the beginning the openness and transparency of the different processes that were going on in the project.

Finally, as researchers, we want to emphasize the reasons why we were so engaged with this open innovation project and are happy that we decided to take on the challenge of using the KP as the single case for our study. Firstly, we sensed from the start that creativity was one of the project's pillars, which turned out to be the management of creative processes in and among organizations, which had already captivated us in Professor Stephan Schaefer's Creativity Management course. We took this course as a previous part of the Managing People, Knowledge, and Change Master Program. Dedicating ourselves to exploring an organization or project and conducting 'business as usual' was not of our interest. We were eager for out-of-the-box initiatives with high disruptive aims, just like the KP. Second, we were enthusiastic about exploring novel forms of collaboration between various organizations, which seems key to achieving groundbreaking innovations at this stage of organizational development. Our goal was to understand whether and how the interaction among professionals from diverse backgrounds and expertise levels led to the emergence of creative outcomes and mindsets. We wanted to make sense of the different layers of interactions and how they allowed or hindered creativity, and we can state that the KP provided a great environment for our research.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### 3.3.1 Sampling

We recognize that the pool of interviewees we accessed through the KP was limited in size. However, the KP gave us a unique opportunity to access individuals from different organizations, which permitted diverse insights from an equally diverse group of people. We designed our research to include a sample of one to three individuals from most of the organizations involved in the KP.

Initially, we imagined that it could be an issue to find individuals interested in talking about creativity and its different aspects, which included power. We feared people would not want to show they did not feel creative, for instance. However, the opposite turned out to be true. Leveraging our connection with KP project management, we identified key stakeholders suitable to interact with us according to their involvement in the project, the relevance of their organization to the project, and their availability. We were interested in the diversity of mindsets and organizational cultures from different organizations, and the sampling of interviewees resembled this diversity.

Within a few weeks, we were able to secure the interest of nine interviewees and conduct twelve interviews in total, as we interviewed some of the individuals more than once. Yet, we used only nine interviews in the thematic analysis, explained in a subsequent section. The reason we only used nine of the total twelve interviews for the thematic analysis was that the initial three interviews were conducted to help us understand the project, including its conception, timeline, funding process, main goals, and other administrative and (classified by us) non-relevant information for this study. Notably, the three initial interviews were important for our understanding of the KP and later grasping some of the meanings and concepts used by individuals. That way, we optimized the interviewees' scarce time by focusing on the themes relevant to our study, not on understanding the project, as explained before. In sum, we were able to conduct twelve interviews with nine interviewees between March and April 2024, but we only used nine interviews for the thematic analysis and coding process.

### 3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Given the interpretive perspective of our study, we set out to conduct in-depth, individual, semi-structured interviews to capture diverse perspectives of creativity, as qualitative interviews focus heavily on the interviewee's point of view (Bell et al., 2022). In the interpretative tradition, conducting in-depth interviews and observations is perceived as an eminently valuable method of collecting data to understand and re-interpret existing assumptions (Prasad, 2018). Through conversations, the interviewer can gather information about the interviewee's experiences, emotions, and ways of understanding reality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Following guidelines outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), our interviews featured introducing, follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, indirect, structuring, and interpreting questions to elicit rich qualitative data. We emphasized active listening and minimal intervention to allow interviewees' narratives to unfold naturally.

As non-native Swedish speakers, we conducted interviews in English to ensure standardized communication, acknowledging potential challenges in self-expression and translation (Winchatz, 2006). English was the only shared language between the interviewees and interviewers. Interviews lasted 45 to 70 minutes, were conducted online, and were recorded with the interviewees' consent for later analysis between March and April 2024. Despite that we were aware that face-to-face interactions could improve our ability to understand emotions and spontaneous (non-verbal) reactions, as well as foster trust in sharing experiences (Vogl, 2013), we chose to conduct interviews online due to the participants' busy schedules and limited availability. Hence, the individual online interviews allowed us to observe and react to facial expressions and gestures, creating a situation similar to face-to-face interviews (Bell et al., 2022).

Recording the interviews allowed us to explore interpretations or affirmations and to send follow-up questions if needed. Our team was composed of two students, and we had different roles during the interview, with one of us focusing on conducting the process and the other focusing on observing the interviews to grasp the details. Nevertheless, whenever we experienced instability with the internet connection, the other interviewer took over and continued with the interactions and recording, which allowed us to overcome the difficulties of online interviews. Below, we

fictitiously named the KP participants interviewed for our study, yet we kept the names of the organizations real.

<b>KP members</b> (non-exclusive)	Anna	Future by Lund
	Billy	Cinfo
	Charlie	Lund University
	Debora	Axis
	Eddie	Axis
	Hunter	Axis
	Kent	Sound Designer
	Jimmy	Sound Designer
	Manny	Ericson

*Table 3.2: Interviewees by organizations - own illustration.*

In conducting interviews, we established protocols to foster rapport and encourage open dialogue (Mason, 2002). We introduced ourselves and our research’s main aims, minimizing bias by withholding specific literature findings or expected outcomes from the interview. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity reassured participants and facilitated candid discussion (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Obtaining consent to record interviews aided transcription and allowed undivided attention (Bryman, 2016). We structured interviews around the predefined questions, allowing flexibility for participant inquiries and interests to flourish (Bryman, 2016). Dividing interviewer responsibilities enhanced our data capture, with one interviewer focusing on verbal responses when conducting the interview and the other on non-verbal cues (Bryman, 2016). This method facilitated a comprehensive exploration of themes and social dynamics during the interviews.

We chose the semi-structured approach for our interviews because it provided a particular structure and guidelines. Still, it allows the interviewer to ask additional questions according to the interviewee’s answer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Hence, the interaction could evolve, and each interview varied (Bryman, 2016). We developed an interview guideline containing eighteen main questions, categorized into five overarching themes related to our research question. See the interview guide in the appendix with the data disclaimer information. The semi-structured approach enabled us to learn from interview to interview and to re-formulate questions that were more difficult to grasp. In subsequent interviews, we used the insights from previous interviews to

focus on themes that surprised us the most and explore the unexpected outcomes. By adapting and adding new follow-up questions, we gained various perspectives on unexpected themes. Here, we used the metaphor of the interviewer as a traveler with a map who was open to following the findings rather than just mining common perceptions or hypotheses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Such a metaphor was in line with our interpretive research approach.

Finally, to avoid bias from predetermined answer options during the interview, we asked open-ended questions to allow interviewees to express what they believed to be pertinent and their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). We mainly applied ‘how’ and ‘in-what-ways-questions’ and asked for specific examples to gain a more holistic understanding. Thereby, we encouraged an open dialogue and ensured that we were not steering the interview in the direction of our assumptions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

Realizing the need to extract meaningful insights from the vast data gathered, we opted to work with thematic analysis, a typical qualitative data analysis technique commonly used to analyze interview transcripts, which involves discovering and defining topics within transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thematic analysis was chosen for our study to understand and interpret the factors that impact creativity in an open innovation setting. Adopting thematic analysis allowed us to explore and define topics within the interview transcripts systematically. Following Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) approach, we sought to elucidate relationships, metaphors, analogies, categories, and linguistic connectors within the data, guiding our understanding. Additionally, we considered what was absent in the data, which is crucial in formulating main and sub-themes (Bell et al., 2022). Employing open coding, as advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1998; cited in Styhre, 2013), also facilitated the process of fracturing, conceptualizing, and integrating data to develop theoretical insights. After doing the thematic analysis and open coding of the data, we reached the most critical stage of the analysis process, which Rennstam and Wästerfors called the “dialogue with our data” (2018:189).



We coded the collected data and identified *power* as the main theme in the form of *resources*. It became clear that the identified theme (power) was too broad and should be categorized as an umbrella theme, which could then be broken down into more specific sub-themes. We returned to the analytical phase to find specific sub-themes from the dataset and assess the appropriateness of the initial umbrella theme. This iterative process ensured a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the data, allowing for the identification of more refined thematic elements within the interviews. We summarize our findings in the table below, showcasing the umbrella theme and sub-themes.

Main theme	Sub-themes	Definitions (own words)	Meanings related to each sub-theme (from analysis)
<b>Power via Resources</b>	<b>Mandates</b>	Individual's scope of decision-making ability within their organization	Have or Give Permission to   Ability to   Job Title (scope of control)   Hierarchy   Decision-making authority
	<b>Money</b>	Monetary means to realize a goal, a plan, or desire	Financial Means   Business Case   Time is Money   Market Demand   Grants   Budget   Salary   Income   Being Paid
	<b>Expertise</b>	Prior work experience, explicit and tacit knowledge within a specific field and industry relevant to the project	Education   Work Experience   Technical Knowledge   Ideas, Skills or Talent developed through prior experiences   Background
	<b>Relations</b>	Past or present interpersonal relationships made in professional settings. It may also refer to business partnerships on a company-to-company basis.	Connections (Personal or Professional)   Group Work   Ties   Partnerships   Brainstorming   Commercial Deals   Prior Joint Projects

*Table 3.3: Power of resources by sub-themes and concepts related to them - own illustration*

We also exemplify each sub-theme by using the words and/or phrases used by our interviewees to convey their understanding of creativity. The table is representative of the thematic analysis process we followed to analyze our data. In the next chapter, we will detail the context in which those words/phrases were used and how we arrived at the theme and sub-themes. It is relevant to clarify that the relationship between the established power form (power via resources) and its related sub-themes is based on our interpretation and analysis of the data we gathered during the interviews. Once we analyzed and interpreted the answers, we noticed a trend and a few concepts that were being mentioned repeatedly. For instance, in answering the questions on the topics or follow-up questions around creativity, we noticed that some interviewees made statements that used concepts like ‘being able to, mandates, need to be paid, lack of funding, need for a business

case, time limitations, my background experience, my ideas, connection, collective experiences, brainstorming together, group work, technically possible, permission, weigh against, hierarchy, partnerships, and market demand’.

When breaking down the individual phrases and concepts, we realized that one aspect that they had in common was that some terms and meanings were somehow associated with either enabling or hindering an outcome. So, we began to understand and interpret how the phrases and terms used showed a pattern linked to power and its different manifestations. We later established how such a concept of power aligns with Flemming and Spicer’s (2014) concepts of power as ‘a resource to get things done’ (Flemming et al., 2014).

As an example, we got the word ‘expertise’ from the data when the interviewee Billy, a company founder and CEO, stated that, through his education and professional background, he could convey what was technically possible as far as the next steps within the KP are concerned. We understood from the context that Billy was referring to his skills developed through his professional experience and his educational background, which have put him in a position of power to veto ideas for their technical impracticability.

We also analyzed the data by examining the roles of the individuals interviewed to see if their statements were relevant to their positions. We noticed a pattern. Individuals in positions of power, such as business owners, senior executives, or experts essential for the KP, utilized language related to their expertise, ideas, connections, and background to enhance creativity within the KP. The same interviewee, Billy, demonstrated his technical expertise and independence by using language that showed how he did not require approval from others. Billy used the phrase ‘I guide the group towards what is technically feasible’ to mean he was able to be creative. His language showcased both his technical expertise and his ability to share creative ideas with the broader KP group. His language also showed how he could confidently reject ideas linked to technical capabilities from others. His speech focused less on seeking permission or seeking funding.

In contrast, we observed a trend that interviewees with limited power, such as individual contributors, go-betweens for decision-makers, or those in financially vulnerable situations (like those who started businesses while juggling non-work responsibilities), used specific phrases and

terminology. These included ‘need for permission, feeling constrained by time, discomfort with the financial implications of spontaneity in projects, reliance on senior approval, and requiring additional funds for project execution’. These individuals often felt a lack of autonomy and control over their work due to their circumstances. These interviewees also frequently mentioned the challenges of navigating hierarchies and financial constraints to pursue their goals of being creative. For example, Debora, who serves as a go-between for decision-makers at her workplace, reflected on her own lack of available budget and authority to approve or reject ideas. Debora stated that she needed to “match what is discussed in the KP [...] against projects internally at her company” to ensure that they align with the company's goals and resources.

After establishing the pattern between the individual's position of power and their choice of words, concepts, and terms used that led us to the concept of power, we started categorizing, labeling, interpreting, and associating the data collected. It was clear that although we recognized power in the interviewees' responses and word usage, there were still different manifestations of power. We grouped words with similar meanings or that meant the same idea. For example, we created the sub-theme ‘mandates’ by combining similar words that were related to mandates, e.g., ‘permission, able to, asking a manager’, and some job titles. Also, when we saw data referring to money through terms or phrases, e.g., ‘funding, money, business case, market, budget, or grants’, we understood that as belonging to the overall sub-theme of money. In addition, we established the sub-theme ‘expertise’ through phrases or words associated with ‘experience, education, work experience, know-how, job title, technical capability’, for instance.

We had already established the three sub-themes—mandates, money, and expertise—that focused on tangible assets that an individual or group can utilize to enable an outcome. Later, we recognized a final fourth sub-theme: ‘relations’. Relations focus on intangible resources that are people-centered. For example, connections, partnership hierarchies, and group work could be seen as people-centered assets that rely on non-tangible relationships and acquaintanceships to achieve an outcome. We classified these people-centered and intangible assets as relational resources.

Moreover, we delineated ‘power via resources’ as the main umbrella category for acting on the creative potential through meticulous analysis and re-analysis, as this category sheds light on the nuanced dynamics shaping creativity and power in our context. Re-assessing the data underscored

the importance of continuous scrutiny and re-analysis to capture the full spectrum of insights (Bell et al., 2022). We used our data sets to tell us the themes and subthemes we had to work with. When we further analyzed our datasets, we could understand what the appropriate definitions were for our themes and sub-themes in the context of the quotes we used to generate a theme or sub-theme.

Although it did not turn out that ties' strength had a direct impact on creativity, it was obvious that ties—whether weak or strong (Granovetter, 1973)—were crucial for enlisting people in the open innovation environment where our study took place. However, the degree of creative agency in this situation depended primarily on people's ability to access resources like mandates, money, expertise, or relations. We also established a connection amongst the different power manifestations, where an individual could sometimes have high levels of one type of power manifestation and still lack the others. Conversely, they could have all but one of the power manifestations and still be highly successful at achieving an outcome.

Conducting thematic analysis and open coding proved highly important and instrumental in distilling and understanding the essence of our data, revealing the pivotal role of power dynamics in shaping creativity within an open innovation ecosystem. Through our aforementioned thematic analysis, we understood that our research would focus on power influencing creativity, specifically the power to achieve an outcome. From our data, we were also able to establish how the power to achieve an outcome could be facilitated by resources. We established four critical manifestations of power via resources: mandates, money, expertise, and relations. We were able to perceive that by having access to power by resources, an individual or group could achieve or impulsively create creative outcomes, as access to a resource enabled an individual or group to act on an idea and bring it closer to life. From our data, we recognized how having access to resources allowed individuals or groups to turn their thoughts into reality, bringing creative ideas closer to life.

### **3.5 The use of Generative AI**

In the process of conducting this study, we employed generative artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool to assist in the writing phase of our research. The utilization of generative AI technologies (e.g., ChatGPT, ChatPDF, Grammarly, and QuillBot), facilitated the generation of structured and coherent text, aiding in the drafting and refinement of some sections of this thesis. Specifically, we leveraged AI-powered language models to generate paragraph lengths, refine the language we

were employing, and help set the academic style. We believe that the use of generative AI enhanced the overall readability of our manuscript. This approach allowed for efficient iteration and revision, enabling us to focus more on the comprehension and interpretation of the research findings while streamlining the writing process. The integration of generative AI technologies within this framework highlights its usefulness as a novel application and poses new challenges to scholarly writing endeavors.

We used some different prompts when interacting with the different AI. Below we show some examples:

- Can you summarize this pdf? What is the main finding? Which research styles can you identify? Which reference is most used? On which page we can find the interpretation of power (or creativity or resources)? Can you find other articles by the same authors?
- Revise this text and make it more academically relevant. Keep it with the same number of words or paragraphs. Or make it smaller. Paraphrase this text, emphasizing the importance and maintaining the credibility of the authors.
- Please, run the plagiarism check.

It is important to note that, following the suggestions received from AI based on the above prompts, we reworked the advised suggestions and sentences into our own words to make sure the meanings we intended were kept intact and to ensure the authenticity of our text.

### **3.6 Reflexivity and Methodological Limitations**

According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2018), the need for researchers' reflexivity results from carefully interpreting the data and the researcher's reflection, which we did throughout the data analysis phase. We assumed that the findings did not represent everything outside the research context. This consideration is an essential component of interpretivist traditions, and we know our findings are not unrestrictedly transferable to other contexts. Therefore, we do not intend to generalize our findings. Instead, we can state that we addressed the research question by investigating how power influenced creativity within this specific open innovation initiative in its context.

Furthermore, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2018) emphasize that working in a pair facilitates such reflexivity. So, we continuously challenged each other's interpretations, including long talks and confabulations about our research and findings. Working in a pair made us aware of our blind spots, which we probably would not have uncovered if we had worked individually. A trusting relationship made it easier for us to be open and honest. Also, since we did not grow up in the same country, have different cultural backgrounds, and there is a fifteen-year age gap between us, we recognize that we were able to use different mindsets and perspectives in our analysis. Besides our best efforts, we cannot guarantee that our blind spots were all uncovered. We were also subject to the disadvantages and benefits of our relationship, which could have impacted our friendship, collaboration, and creativity.

Schaefer and Alvesson (2020) request careful intra-source critique, which is especially crucial when working with one source, as in our study. Before and during our interviews and in the thematic analysis and open coding process, we reflected on each interviewee's specific background (e.g., job, mandates, expertise, role, and experience in the KP). Such careful reflection enabled us to critically consider whether the participant might have hidden motives that made them engage in 'corporate talk' (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020).

We conducted the interviews sequentially, combining insightful questions and observations (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020), which allowed us to learn throughout the research project. Consequently, we included two of Schaefer and Alvesson's (2020) demands regarding intra-source critique. However, due to the interviewees' limited time frame and availability, we could not conduct repeated interviews in different contexts, which the authors cited as the third component of intra-source critique to check for time and space consistency.

Additionally, we want to draw attention to another limitation regarding our possible pre-understandings of the topic. According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2018), previous knowledge of researchers can influence the interpretation of the data. Prior knowledge of a particular topic or organization can affect the point of view and how the researchers make sense of the data (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018). As we are neither musicians nor well-involved in the classical music world nor we possess work experience in any open innovation ecosystem, we could distance ourselves

and stay reflexive during the data collection, processing, and analysis. As we conducted every interview together, we tried to question our interpretations and ensured that we challenged our opinions and did not let our existing knowledge influence our analysis.

Lastly, it is essential to recall that our study considered empirical material from only twelve interviews in total. This study lasted a few months, so time can be considered another limitation. Qualitative studies require time, which could have affected the results of our research questions. A more extended period could have allowed us to dive deeper into the existing literature, conduct more interviews, and add surprising findings and insights that could have emerged if time had allowed.

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, we elaborated on why we chose qualitative research with its accompanying interpretivist view, which proposes that reality is socially constructed. Such a research approach allowed us to interpret our findings and understand how power was influencing the creative processes within the KP.

Drawing from symbolic interactionism, as researchers, we believe individuals continuously assign meaning to objects, actions, and events and negotiate their personal interpretations through social interactions. We could observe such a meaning-making process in the interviews. By employing an abductive approach, we considered existing theories and frameworks while challenging them with our empirical findings. We did not find the definitions of creativity and power in the literature and tried to delimit the data found within those definitions. We let the data take us to the definitions by employing qualitative data analysis processes that we explained in this chapter.

We presented our single case study by introducing the KP as an open innovation environment, a living lab. The KP provided us the multi-organizational interactions we were seeking to explore creativity in. Additionally, we described our thematic analysis and coding processes and how we reduced the data, leading to a focus on the theme of power influencing the creativity process. We also explained how the main theme of power was divided into sub-themes: mandate, money, expertise, and relations. Lastly, we highlighted our methodological limitations, underscoring the

importance of maintaining reflexivity throughout our thesis and how we tried to accomplish such reflexivity.

## **4 Findings**

Now that we have outlined the methods we used for our study—including research approach, data collection, and data analysis—we are ready to present our findings. The following sections are organized to guide the reader through our findings in the order we recognized them. We start by establishing the finding that there is a relationship between power and creativity, highlighting the recurring trend in how we identified that power influences creativity in the KP. The subsequent sections are divided into specific sub-themes of power that emerged from our thematic analysis, presented in the order in which we identified and grouped them. These sub-themes—mandates, money, expertise, and relations—demonstrate recurring trends that led us to establish a bigger pattern that shows that different types of power, by resources, significantly impact creativity in open innovation environments.

We want to address our readers regarding the quotes showcased in the upcoming pages. We have altered some of the words and phrases in the quotes from their original form to protect our interviewee's privacy as well as to correct transcription errors. To ensure that the quotes make sense to the reader and the validity of our study, we made sure to maintain the integrity of the content, and we only made the minimal changes required. The original transcripts, quotes, and recorded interviews can be made available upon request.

### **4.1 The Relationship of Power and Creativity**

Our analysis showed that there is a relationship between power and creativity, especially that power influences creativity processes within open innovation environments. Initially, we were not expecting such a finding, but it made us intrigued, and we decided that we needed to explore this relationship. We realized this relationship when, during the interviews, we asked our interviewees what creativity meant to them. We incentivized people to make use of their own words and/or definitions to explain what the concept of creativity meant for them. As a result, the interviewees



gave us their own meanings and definitions related to creativity. Please see the table below for references to the main definitions we gathered of words or concepts relating to creativity.

<b>Creativity in the words of our Interviewees</b>	"Curiosity, exploration, excitement"
	"Problem-solving, thinking in new ways, imagination"
	"Ability to take what you have and turn it into something new"
	"Accumulation of many ideas and hardwork"
	"Expression of making something"

*Table 4.1: Definitions from our interviewees' responses when describing creativity - own illustration*

The definitions above started to reveal to us a recurring trend in how individuals perceived and defined creativity, which could have the same meaning to other individuals or not. The trend started to represent a pattern suggesting that creativity was related to achieving something different or making something new happen by employing the power people had at their disposal. Indeed, it started to show how creativity could start with a single idea or a collection and combination of different ideas. But it also started to mean that being creative was pushing other people to go beyond their boundaries, especially as our study focused on the specific open innovation ecosystem context in which the interaction among people is relevant. As our research focused on subjective interpretations and meaning-making, we made sense of creativity based on the interviewees' understanding and the context in which they expressed their thoughts, considering their subjective experiences. We went back to the empirical evidence and gathered the following quotes that showcased to us, to some degree, how a creative process was nurtured:

*"I am both the initiator of the Kalaudioscope and its project manager. I must trigger the creativity within people so they will start imagining. I need to push and pull people [...]. I am the one asking questions and pushing people to connect with them [...] by saying you need to talk to x to see how to further develop this idea [...]."*

and

*“[...] I see my role in the steering group as just to move forward; if there is any obstacle, I can remove it, you know, by providing resources or material resources [...]. [...] If we, for example, need to provide material because what we were testing is not the one, we want to try, we can provide another one, right? If the people need more deep discussion on one particular synchronization between different technologies or systems from other companies, we can provide resources to do that. So, it's about removing the obstacles to make sure that the project progresses to the next phase.”*

From the quotes, we recognized individual creativity as the ability to be creative by acting in a different way or by inspiring actions in others. When we heard the relationship between creativity and an individual removing an obstacle to enabling an outcome, bringing ideas to a group, or connecting the necessary people so they can combine ideas to bring them closer to executing, we understood the relationship and relevance of power to creativity. We also understood how these concepts expressed by the interviewees aligned with the definition of creativity as “idea generation, development, and evaluation, emphasizing recurrent patterns of practice activities” (Schaefer, 2023). However, as we started to observe this trend, we noticed that whenever one of our interviewees mentioned creativity, it was associated with the ability to do or achieve something or push someone else to do so by making use of or relying on certain resources. We quickly recognized this relationship between being creative and using some resources as the ‘power to’ do something via the utilization of resources, as explored in Chapter 2.

We also understood from our interviewees that, for an idea to be pushed forward, the utilization of some resources was crucial, as it granted individuals or groups access to necessary means for idea generation, implementation, and exploration of different practices. Both taking personal action and inspiring others to act required a lot of power, which different resources could provide. For example, we noticed that for an individual to come up with an idea and take action to execute that idea, they need the power of resources through finances, expertise, permissions (mandates), or relations as the means for them to do so. Similarly, the ability to push others towards creative actions required reducing the obstacles by making use of the power of resources through financial means, expertise, or mandates. Power via relations through connections, collaborative efforts, and business alliances also played a vital role in facilitating an individual's capacity to generate and act on ideas in an open innovation environment.

When we set out to explore creativity within our study, we imagined we might find creativity linked to words or phrases like ‘artistry, beauty, or pure talent’. However, what we found instead was that whenever we asked participants to define creativity, their answers were more connected to action, idea generation, collaboration, exploration, and the expansion of boundaries. Not one single interviewee mentioned being creative only as being artistic, having an eye for art, or just having a talent for it. We imagined that when we would ask participants about creativity, they would talk about specific skills and more high-minded ideas of creativity that one could automatically think of. However, our findings showed that creativity tended to have more to do with exploring useful ideas, solving problems, bringing ideas closer to fruition, collaborating with other individuals who can have different perspectives, and executing ideas by employing resources.

We understand that the context in which people answered the questions made it less about artistic work and more about the power to do something by using, applying, or pushing resources to achieve something else. All the expressions of creativity within an open innovation environment require power to take part in them, to achieve certain goals or visions, or even to access certain spaces where creativity could be nurtured and flourish. In the following sections, we explore the ‘power to’ more deeply, as it was the main finding of our research about creative processes within open innovation environments.

## **4.2 The Influence of Different Power Manifestations on Creativity**

As mentioned, for creative processes to happen within open innovation environments, people revealed to us that they needed to be able to employ certain resources. Interviewees did not categorize these resources as we are presenting them here. We grouped the power via resources in four sections, as they are the result of our interpretation of how people were making sense of their ability to act creatively or how the creative processes happened at the KP.

### **4.2.1 Power via Resources**

We identified the ability to be creative in the KP by employing resources from the interviewees as their ability to achieve an outcome through their access to and use of specific resources. This specific power (power of resources) became our main finding and was established as the umbrella

theme of the collected empirical data and its analysis. Such an understanding of power is based on Hardy’s (1996) definition of power as ‘the power to do something through something else’ as a force that affects outcomes.

The KP, the open innovation environment explored for our study, brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds to collaborate toward a collective outcome. Each member of the KP had a unique background and held different employment arrangements related to the project, contributing to their varying levels of power. Some members held positions that automatically gave them the power to be creative within the KP due to their expertise, decision-making over finances, or influence over decision-makers, while others faced limitations or disempowerment due to the lack of or restricted access to similar resources. The determining factor impacting an individual's empowerment within the KP was their access to specific powers of resources—grouped here as the powers of mandates, money, expertise, and relations. We collected insights into the meanings of these power resources from our interviewees, and these groups are clarified below in Table 4 as we used their different meanings in our grouping of the different resources.

Main theme	Sub-themes	Definitions (own words)	Meanings related to each sub-theme (from analysis)
<b>Power via Resources</b>	<b>Mandates</b>	Individual's scope of decision-making ability within their organization	Have or Give Permission to   Ability to   Job Title (scope of control)   Hierarchy   Decision-making authority
	<b>Money</b>	Monetary means to realize a goal, a plan, or desire	Financial Means   Business Case   Time is Money   Market Demand   Grants   Budget   Salary   Income   Being Paid
	<b>Expertise</b>	Prior work experience, explicit and tacit knowledge within a specific field and industry relevant to the project	Education   Work Experience   Technical Knowledge   Ideas, Skills or Talent developed through prior experiences   Background
	<b>Relations</b>	Past or present interpersonal relationships made in professional settings. It may also refer to business partnerships on a company-to-company basis.	Connections (Personal or Professional)   Group Work   Ties   Partnerships   Brainstorming   Commercial Deals   Prior Joint Projects

Table 4.2: Power of resources by sub-themes and concepts related to them - own illustration

#### **4.2.1.a Mandates**

We define power via mandates as ‘an individual's scope of decision-making ability within their organization’. This definition emerged from our data analysis, in which we interpreted interview responses within their relative contexts, as detailed in the methods chapter. We understood that mandates represent a distinct power resource, focusing on the permissions granted within one's role or as a free agent without higher authority dictating their actions and possibilities to be creative. It is relevant to differentiate mandates from other power resources like money, which pertains to financial access either personally or through work budget allocations; expertise, which relates to the skills or knowledge one possesses and can contribute to a project; and relations, which specifically involve personal or professional connections and partnerships that can be leveraged to achieve certain outcomes. These distinctions clarify the unique aspects of each power resource found within our analysis.

To reach the power via resources, we took into consideration the context of the question to which the individual was responding as well as the job role of the individual being interviewed. By analyzing and coding direct quotes, we recognized a pattern between power via mandates and its effect on one's ability to think and act creatively within the KP. For instance, when asked about how creativity impacted the other actors' ability to bring and act upon their ideas in the KP, Charlie, who was the project initiator and still the person responsible for the KP's vision in his role as Project Manager (PM), stated the following:

*"some people want to be more creative than their roles allow them to be."*

He further stated,

*"For example, Debora and Eddie at Company A have a very limited position to make decisions because they are dependent on all different departments and people responsible for other areas. [...] Debora and Eddie are not mandated to say yes or no to things, as they need to go and ask someone else."*

The first quote illustrates a trend within the data on how the power of mandates influences one's ability to take creative action. We heard the phrase ‘their roles allow them to be’ when Charlie was speaking about people's creative abilities. Allowing someone to do something implies that they

are, in some way, subject to the will of another person, who may or may not help them achieve their goal. We recognize this as power—the power to enable an outcome through resources (in this case, mandates).

In this instance, the resources needed are permissions from people who possess executive power to give another individual permission to make decisions and draw on other resources up to a given extent. Similar reasoning applies to the second quote, which describes how Debora and Eddie's roles prevented them from acting freely to pursue ideas or use other resources necessary to achieve a goal. Both quotes exemplify Charlie's interpretation of the social reality and meanings behind what happens when he is working with individuals with different professional tenures. From Charlie's perspective, we saw how the limited mandates (manifestation of power via mandates) allowed by organizational positions had a significant impact on Debora and Eddie's creativity potential within the open innovation environment we studied.

Additionally, we later recognized how Charlie viewed the positions of other individuals with significant mandates that enabled their creative potential. For example, when referring to Billy, Charlie stated that Billy had relatively unlimited power, as Billy held a very senior position in his own business. For Charlie, it meant that Billy was able to act more creatively as he could use the power of his mandate as a senior executive to make decisions and allocate resources to the KP. Charlie's sense of other's mandates as an influence on their creative abilities is further exemplified in the quote below:

*“When you have the possibility to talk to people with very large mandates, it's a lot easier for them to be creative in this project.”*

We also noticed the power of mandates when we interviewed the same actor referred to above, Billy. He replied to our question about how he came up with ideas for the KP and how free he felt to voice them to the group:

*“I'm trying to guide the group to something that is technically feasible.”*

We noticed how Billy's power is manifested through his role within his own company, where he felt he had the jurisdiction to guide others as a leader within his own organization and within the KP; this also empowers him to veto ideas in different scenarios. Such power enabled him to

influence outcomes in the group as he could act as a guide or leader during the idea generation phase of creativity. Moreover, as there was no one senior to Billy to dictate his mandates, he took on the responsibility of establishing mandates for others in his business, and this power via mandates increased his capacity to exercise high creativity within the KP.

Relating back to Charlie and how he sensed his creative role in the KP, in another moment during the same interview, Charlie stated, regarding his role:

*“If I don’t do anything, it will stop.”*

and

*“I am both the initiator and the project person, and I am asking questions and pushing them (other people) to connect ideas and themselves.”*

Here, we grasped how Charlie, with the freedom and resources to operate within the project, felt empowered to pose relevant questions and steer others in directions he deemed fit for the project, given that he is the initiator and the project leader. By default, Charlie had no one dictating what he could or could not do within the KP, which allowed him virtually unlimited mandates to act and to push ideas forward.

Also, such freedom allowed Charlie to guide others, pushing them to go a step further. For example, Charlie mentioned how he had an idea and went directly to the conductor of the concert hall to ask her to test out the idea. Charlie stated:

*“I go and talk to the conductor and talk to her about it and ask her, Would you be happy to do it? So that’s a way of how my creativity works. I ask her: How can you do this? Can you push it further? Can you do something else for the project?”.*

Since Charlie is essentially acting as the leader of the KP, he used his mandate to act and to push any creative ideas forward. He was able to think of an idea and simply connect others to act on it, showcasing the power to act achieved through resource mandates, since in Charlie’s case he had, by default, a very large mandate as the leader of the KP, and he could act creatively by pushing others to do so.

#### **4.2.1.b Money**

As mentioned above, resources also refer to financial means that facilitate an individual's ability to act creatively. We have defined money as 'monetary means to realize a goal or desire.' We recognized these financial means in the interviews as tools for helping people act creatively in a myriad of ways. For example, having financial resources led to quick approval of funds for an individual if they had large budgets from the organization. Alternatively, financial means represented an individual's financial security, enabling them to take risks or dedicate time from paid work to engage in unpaid endeavors for creative pursuits. We want to highlight that money is not to be confused with mandates, which refer to permissions or freedom within a role an individual may have; expertise, which refers to knowledge or skill an individual can call on to achieve an outcome; or relations, which refer to personal or professional connections an individual can leverage to achieve an outcome.

Given the nature of the KP as an open innovation environment drawing individuals from different backgrounds and organizations, individuals came to the project with varying degrees of power via money. For some interviewees, their financial security was a clear benefit that allowed them flexibility to try ideas and to participate in KP's group activities; it also made people feel they had the time to think creatively. For other interviewees, it was a limiting factor that put them at a disadvantage compared to other members and limited their ability to act as creatively as they would have liked.

For example, some interviewees mentioned challenges related to the spontaneity and casual nature of meetings regarding the KP. Kent, who is an independent sound designer, stated:

*"I wanna be involved, and I wanna do everything.[...] There would be questions about 'Oh, can you come and check out this concert on this day?', and I felt really bored because I was kind of like there was a difference in our situations that made it practically quite challenging. So for me, it's like, [...] It's like a work thing, right? [...] I have to be talking to my partner, saying, Can you take a day off work? And then she loses a bit of salary for that. And so I have to get paid for that time."*



This quote demonstrates how we identified a pattern between the lack of resources, in this case, the lack of finances to take time off whenever one wants, and Kent's ability to act as creatively as he would like to within the project. We interpreted how his limited resources effectively limited Kent's creativity in this situation, which also impacted the whole creative process in the KP as an open innovation initiative. Such a lack of resources occasionally caused Kent to forgo certain opportunities and limited his ability to contribute creatively to the project as much as he wanted. If Kent was not to be paid for the work and the effort he was expected to put into the project, he could not participate to the same degree as other group members. There was a cost of missed opportunities whenever Kent took time away from his home responsibilities, and his partner would need to pay that cost by forgoing their paid workday.

Kent further stated:

*"I wanted to show I wanted to be part of this project, and I want to try stuff, and I wanna go check out the hall and come up with ideas, but it's like I have to be very pragmatic about it. It can make it very hard to be creative and collaborate in a group at times because we're not all economically able to do the same."*

Kent is referring to his economic inability as what we have come to find as power via resources (via money). These financial resources are real examples of limitations, showing how money directly impacts one's ability to act and be creative within a group.

Specifically, within a group such as an open innovation environment, individuals from different backgrounds and degrees of power work together towards a common goal. Given its nature, this finding is specifically relevant for open innovation environments because individuals can use their varying degrees of power differently when interacting within the group and acting upon ideas, enabling some individuals to act more creatively than others. Each individual had their personal financial circumstances that impacted how freely they could act within the KP, but, in addition, some individuals had links to their respective organizations, which either enabled them to have budgets or not. Different relationships with money and different access levels to funds either limited or strengthened the individual's power within the KP through their ability to act freely, to take part in all aspects of the project, and to act upon ideas without needing to ask someone for the funds to do so.

Moreover, money did not solely refer to an individual's financial standing. We considered it to be too limiting to only consider an individual's economy when categorizing money for this study. We noticed how the financial resources an organization provided were another vital component impacting an individual's ability to act creatively. Without a budget from the organization, interviewees showed a limited ability to use financial resources inside their organization. As we discovered during the interviews, individuals would then be unable to creatively function in their intended role. Suppose this individual was working in an open innovation environment where other members depend highly on one another for resources and to act upon each other's ideas. This person's limited access to financial resources or mandate could limit other group members' creative abilities. For example, when we spoke to one participant within the project who works for an organization that is involved through the technology it can bring to the project, the participant stated the following:

*"I need to match that with what we discussed internally with what we discuss in the Kalaudioscope project as I don't have a budget from my company only for this project. So there has to be a connection with internal initiatives. Of course, we can provide some things. That is what we have already provided, but that is more like a gift. We haven't really been deeply engaged in any development project within the Kalaudioscope project."*

They further stated:

*"For us, when we decide what to do and what to invest in when it comes to innovation and development, we look at business opportunities; we look at where's the market and where we can we generate money. To expand that, make bigger investments, and provide a lot of resources, there would need to be a proper business case. Then you need to compete with other things and you need to go to the manager and say look, this is a large business opportunity"*

It was noticeable to us how the power of resources through access to an organization's finances impacted the creativity of the individual, which also affected the group. Certain materials and finances were necessary for an individual or a group to execute a creative idea. Suppose the company that an individual or a group depends on for support could not provide these materials.

The idea would just remain an idea, and the person is hindered from acting creatively by the lack of resources (money).

Alternatively, if this person was able to provide a strategic plan, including a business case, to the company that showed that if it were to provide specific resources (material, expertise, and money), in turn, more resources (financial gains) would be offered back to the company in the long term. This relationship between the provision of a business case and the enablement of a person's access to resources needed showcases a mutual dependence between acting creatively and the power via resources (money). Not only does one need resources to act creatively, but in some cases, one must also provide a plan where creative action will bring resources to whoever that person's benefactor is. This situation can exemplify how widespread authority over money can impact how much a person can use the financial means available to execute an idea.

#### **4.2.1c Expertise**

When analyzing the data, we recognized expertise as referring to an individual's skills or knowledge set that could contribute to creativity in the KP or as the knowledge that could be utilized to achieve or provoke an outcome. Expertise was meant as the skills and knowledge gathered through the interviewee's work, educational background, or a certain talent they had developed. The different members of the KP had different backgrounds to draw upon and therefore could offer different expertise to the group. For some interviewees, they had such expertise that empowered them to play a relevant role in the project. Through our analysis of the interviewee's answers, we noticed how expertise was a powerful resource that could be utilized towards creative outcomes. For instance, analyzing further our interviewee Kent's answers to our questions, we noticed how, despite money limiting his ability to act creatively, he still managed to play a creative role within the project as his group members called on him for his expertise and extensive industry knowledge. We have defined expertise as 'experience within a specific field or industry relevant to the KP'. Kent stated:

*“What I can bring to this project with my experience and what I have seen that has worked before.”*

Kent's power manifested itself through his expertise and industry knowledge that he could contribute to the project. Kent's financial situation did not prevent him from acting creatively because his knowledge allowed him to offer valuable suggestions and earn the respect of other KP members. Kent is not the only member of the KP who benefits from the power via resources through expertise.

When analyzing the interview of another KP member, Anna, we recognized that even though her work on the project was not what one would necessarily define as a creative role in itself, she was able to act creatively and push creativity forward through confident decision-making and idea generation regarding aspects related to applying for external funding for the project. Anna stated:

*"I have expertise in fundraising from public sources, which has helped the project get access to funding."*

And:

*"I'm also quite used to coordinating people, getting very different types of people working together, and sort of seeing the project management done."*

From the quotes above, we made sense of two aspects. First, through Anna's expertise, she accessed power via resources that allowed her to take responsibility and think dynamically regarding a particular aspect of the project (applying for funding). Second, we concluded that, through her background experience in coordination on similar types of projects, Anna could exercise her knowledge and play an essential role as a support to the project manager. This impacted her influence on the project and precisely how ideas were thought and executed.

Although she might not have been the main person coming up with the ideas in certain situations, through her power of resources, she could be a barrier to some creative directions if her background knowledge led her to disagree or not be able to support a creative direction through funding. Anna could say if an idea or a creative direction was or was not eligible for EU grants, for instance. Again, we noticed how Anna's power was manifested through her background knowledge, which we have classified as expertise. When analyzing Anna's quotes, we first looked at her job role, in this instance, as a project coordinator for the KP, whose main responsibility was to secure EU grants and other funds. From looking at Anna's job role within the KP, we also grasped how power

was manifested through her knowledge of fundraising, which was why she had been placed in that role for the KP.

Moreover, we looked at the context in which Anna stated her quotes. Her quotes were in response to questions surrounding why she is a part of the KP, what creative contributions she was making to the project, and why she landed this role in the KP. From the context within which she was expressing her statements, we understood that her role, her creative scope, and her need for the project were based on her expertise. We noticed a recurring trend in her interview that her expertise was related to her previous work experience in fundraising and grant applications. Therefore, her power manifested itself through expertise, which in turn enabled her to push creative ideas and outcomes forward within the KP.

Additionally, from the interview with another KP member, Hunter, we saw how he described himself indirectly as an expert in his field and how he can be asked to provide specific additional resources to remove obstacles hindering progress for the group. For example, he stated:

*"Because of my role in product management, I interacted with X company before I knew about this project, and then they thought, Ok, why don't you join us? [...] Again, I support the project whenever it's needed. [...] Based on my background as an engineer, I would say it's more about solving a problem in a way that nobody has done before."*

This text extract shows how Hunter's prior work experience, which has given him expertise in technical product management, helped him take on a steering role within the KP. In Hunter's instance, his power manifested itself through expertise. This expertise enabled Hunter to achieve outcomes within this project and to be a critical resource for his colleagues within the KP. Furthermore, his engineering expertise enabled him to think differently and come up with solutions from a different perspective than his colleagues could; this, in turn, impacted the group's creativity by offering a resource for colleagues to draw upon when brainstorming and problem-solving.

Since Hunter's expertise was in areas other than audio engineering, which was a crucial component of the KP, his scope was somehow restricted. Therefore, when Hunter's colleagues needed support or to access resources regarding audio, Hunter's power became limited, and he was obliged to

consult with the product manager responsible for audio within his organization before he could provide any support or ideas. For instance, Hunter stated:

*"Audio resources are out of my scope here, and to access them, I need to ask the CTO. And he agreed to provide it."*

And:

*"The only time we checked with the CTO, which is again, you know, my manager's manager, was when they wanted extra resources for audio. Audio is a very scarce resource here in our company. [...] But our CTO said, "Okay, we can provide the audio resource for you to use on the project."*

Applying interpretivist tradition through symbolic interactionism, we observed and grasped how Hunter's lack of expertise and decision-making about audio engineering impacted his ability to allocate resources within the KP. However, due to his network within the company and his senior role, Hunter was able to collaborate with other experts in his organization who held that expertise. So, we noticed how, thanks to this connection to someone with expertise in audio resources, Hunter successfully obtained the audio resource for his KP colleagues. The example above illustrated to us that lacking specific expertise in certain areas could limit creative contributions. Utilizing connections and relationships could also positively influence individual or group creativity, which leads the reader to the final manifestation of power (relations) that will be explored in the following section.

#### **4.2.1d Relations**

Finally, we identified the power of relations as an important resource that an individual or group could use to achieve an outcome in the KP. We saw a recurring trend emerge that individuals within the KP could leverage their personal and professional connections to achieve an outcome or push ideas forward, as well as draw on group work to enable more creative ideas. For this study, relations refer to 'interpersonal relationships between people made in a professional setting, past or present'. Relations also include business partnerships on a company-to-company basis. Relations was a sub-theme we drew from a collection of even smaller topics relating to connections, previous relationships, ties, partnerships, group work, and commercial deals.

Relations do not focus on measurable resources like mandates, money, or expertise but rather on aspects that are harder to measure in terms of the degree to which they exist. Relations, in our analysis, focused more on a connection or acknowledgment of working together with another person(s). Within the KP, many members had previous connections from their work or education that they could draw upon to bring to the project or test ideas with. Some members found relations as a manifestation of power to be creative when they started working in mini brainstorm groups within the KP. Previous relationships with individuals were identified as a key factor influencing one's capacity to generate new creative concepts. For clarification, we want to explain that previous work experience together was defined as 'if individuals within the group have, on separate prior occasions, worked together.' Also, we defined ties here as a resource based on Granovetter's (1973) definition of ties. So, ties in the KP context could provide 'access to a wide network, group, or individual who may be able to assist someone else towards a goal.'

Although we did not find any correlation between the strength of ties—either weak or strong (Granovetter, 1973)—impacting an individual or a group's creativity ability, as we already mentioned we were expecting, we did find a relationship between ties and one's ability to access opportunities to be creative. Therefore, we concluded that relations (ties) are a subcategory of power through connections. We observed that there was no difference between how strong or weak the ties were between individuals; simply, the fact that they existed seemed to be an essential factor in an individual's ability to access creative opportunities. For example, Charlie stated that when thinking of a new idea he would like to group to test or add on, he must check the comfortability of the orchestra conductor, with whom he has a connection from their previous work. For instance, he stated:

*"I go and talk to the conductor and talk to her about it and ask her, Would you be happy to do it? So that's a way of how my creativity works. How can you do this? Can you push it further? Can you do something else for the project?"*

The orchestra conductor and Charlie knew each other from previous working experiences; therefore, when they discussed the possibility of trying new methods, he felt she was most likely to accept, as he believed they knew and trusted each other. In this case, we noticed how Charlie connected two types of power via relations: ties and prior work experience. We also understood

how, for Charlie, his connections directly impacted his ability to try new ideas and explore their effects in the KP, which he interpreted as a form of creativity. Through Charlie leveraging a personal relationship, he increased his scope of power to achieve an outcome through another person, in this instance, the conductor. Charlie's relationship with the conductor was part of the network he could draw upon when working on ideas for the KP. Having this network allowed Charlie to enhance his capability to achieve goals, especially when he had ideas to pursue but lacked certain skills. The ability to draw upon a network made him powerful, which could enable him to achieve creative outcomes.

Nevertheless, only having prior acquaintances was not a prerequisite for individuals to foster creativity in the KP. When we interviewed one of the sound designers, Jimmy, he mentioned how working with musicians and technicians that he met in the KP was extremely rewarding and helped him work on his creativity. We understood his contentment about this from his ability to combine his expertise (a resource) with someone's expertise, which the collaborative work environment of the KP allowed. Through this new relationship, Jimmy could build upon people with similar and different backgrounds to develop creative ideas and act upon them within a group setting. Group work also became relevant to Jimmy, as we noticed how the KP, for him, involved collaborating with individuals with diverse backgrounds who were able to contribute with ideas, inspiration, and skills to him.

For example, Jimmy stated:

*“Since we have different backgrounds, we all bring forth different ideas. So we have maybe like five or six different solutions that we came up with, [...] and we didn't dismiss any of them because of what we were creating. [...] We want to try them all.”*

We recognized how the members of the KP were able to draw upon each of their different backgrounds to generate ideas, test ideas, and ultimately choose a creative direction to pursue or to keep all of them as options to be tried out. Having access to someone who held a valuable skill set in either a similar field as oneself or in a different field was a powerful resource to leverage to achieve an outcome through group work. We were able to link this type of power with Flemming and Spicers' (2007) definition of power as ‘the ability to achieve an outcome through resources (including other people). We saw how Jimmy could draw upon his colleagues' backgrounds to



better his work and take new creative directions accordingly. This was a power that Jimmy and the others in the group were accessing to achieve their creative goals.

In our interpretation, Jimmy's statement demonstrated how power can be exercised through group dynamics, specifically group work. When individuals convene together, the power of relationships becomes important. Members within that group must collectively evaluate ideas based on their diverse backgrounds and collectively decide on the next course of action before anyone can act creatively. For us, Jimmy's statements exemplified that he saw himself as powerful in his ability to access other members of the KP to work on group ideas. Jimmy's perceived power of resources via relations enabled him to take creative action, building upon his resource power via relations and speaking with the necessary people on the KP to help turn ideas into reality.

It is important to note that the above interpretation represents just one interpretation of the connection between power and creativity that we could draw upon. Jimmy never used the word power or powerful, but this is how we, the researchers, interpreted his statements and actions according to what and how he explained creativity and his actions. This interpretation is also in line with the interpretive tradition, as we agreed that there are multiple understandings of what we have collected as empirical evidence (Prasad, 2018).

Moreover, relations also include partnership hierarchies, either past or present. Partnership hierarchies involve businesses that serve as official economic partners or collaborators of a company. Many of the companies participating in this project have previous connections with one another on a company level. Some companies have partnered together in the past on commercial projects, and some companies work as ongoing partners, combining their services for a mutual client base. For example, Charlie stated, when referring to how one company came to be a part of the KP:

*“They are a partner company and came in via another partner company because of the fact they are partners. Many of these big enterprises have ties together with different things, and so they call themselves partners.”*

Another participant, Billy, stated when asked why some of the companies decided to get involved and contribute resources to the KP:

*“They participate in this project because I don't know what high- there is—level connection, perhaps somebody within a partner company— and they feel compromised”*

We understood that company partnerships were crucial elements under the KP through both Billy and Charlie's statements. These business relationships were sometimes the primary reason certain partners were involved in any project, and their involvement impacted the direction the project could take. On the flip side, these partnerships could also hinder creativity if, for example, the companies that decided to join KP have to block specific ideas due to their own or their partners' business initiatives being at risk. These company partnership structures could also impact how companies yield power and their capacity to access and distribute resources. These resources could include intellectual property, funding, or human resources. Legal barriers could sometimes prevent companies from prioritizing specific ideas due to the potential implications of critical partnerships.

On a positive note, these company relationships could enable the contribution of financial resources, individuals with high levels of expertise, or technological resources to the KP. These contributions could impact power distribution, directly impacting how creative individuals within those organizations can be. This distribution of power also impacted how creative individuals who rely on the individuals working within those organizations could be. Through these relations, it was clear to us how company partnerships do not solely refer to relationships between the parties involved. Those relations also had a real impact on the outcomes of the KP, enabling access to powerful resources like funding, expertise, technology, and human resources.

### **4.3 Theoretical Considerations Regarding the Analysis**

For our study, we researched creativity to understand how creativity was defined, what previous researchers argued about creativity, and, most importantly, to establish what creativity could mean in our study, including its context. However, following the interpretivist tradition, we recognized that creativity is a highly subjective phenomenon (Prasad, 2018) and that it is a hard task to arrive at a singular definition. We also recognize that, in attempting to study creativity, it is important to consider an individual's perspectives and the factors that impact an individual's ability to be creative. We made sense of our findings by employing the definition of creativity by Schaefer, who defined creativity as “involves idea generation, development, and evaluation, emphasizing

recurrent patterns of practice activities” (2023:18). We also connected this definition to the seminal work of Barron and Harrington (1981), who defined creativity as “generating novel and useful ideas.”

Initially, during the interview process, we tried to identify how the interviewee’s individual sensemaking and reality construction reflected their tie strengths and creativity within the KP. After completing the interviews, we conducted the thematic analysis methodology to analyze the transcripts, searching for tie strengths in the interviewees’ sensemaking of their roles and actions within the KP. However, surprisingly, we could not identify tie strengths or their sole relevance to creativity in people’s sensemaking or social construction from our collected data. Additionally, as mentioned before, we based our interpretation of power on the ability to influence decisions, actions, and outcomes by deploying essential resources—*power to* (Hardy, 1996).

For us, in this study, power was understood as the ability of actors to influence decisions, actions, and outcomes by leveraging essential resources that others depend on or that are necessary for creativity to flow. These resources can include information and expertise; political access and connections; credibility, stature, and prestige; access to higher-level organizational members; control over money, rewards, and sanctions; connections with individuals or groups; and business partnerships (Hardy, 1996; based on French & Raven, 1959). Conceptualizing power under these terms emphasized its relational and resource-based nature, as power could be exercised by strategically mobilizing resources others require or value.

In other words, from our findings, power is not about direct coercion or formal authority but about the ability to influence and control through the selective distribution and management of critical resources (Hardy, 1996; based on French & Raven, 1959). Such power allows actors to indirectly shape decisions, actions, and outcomes in ways that align with their shared interests and preferences. The explicit articulation of the different types of resources that can be leveraged to exercise power emphasizes power as a relational phenomenon rooted in resource dependencies (Hardy, 1996; based on French & Raven, 1959). However, we acknowledge that power can be weaponized depending on the scenario in which it is applied and to which ends, but we found that, within an open innovation environment, power can be used as a force for good. The power we

refer to here is the ‘power to do something through something else’ as a force that affects outcomes (Hardy, 1996).

By this point, the reader has gathered an understanding of the why behind our research, which previous research our study is based upon, how we conducted our research, and the findings we discovered through the analysis of our data. The following chapter bridges our findings to the research of previous scholars.

## **5.0 Discussion**

In our research, we set out to answer the research question: *How does power influence creativity in open innovation environments?* In the following, we seek to develop a deeper understanding of the empirical material we examined in our work. We do so by contrasting it with the existing literature and discussing our results in this chapter within the frame of our research question.

Throughout the discussion, we follow Alvesson and Kärreman’s (2007) suggestion that to ensure the research’s trustworthiness, the researchers need to stay reflexive and consider generalizations, credibility, and limitations.

### **5.1 Creativity and Power**

First, we found that the exploration of participants’ perceptions of creativity revealed a multifaceted understanding of the concept. When responding to the same question of what creativity was for them, some individuals used simple words like ‘play or excitement’. Other individuals demonstrated more complex understandings of creativity, ‘combining things in a new way and finding combinations that they had not seen before’. These different meanings and interpretations of creativity demonstrate the challenges in defining creativity due to its varied interpretations across different domains and align with Amabile’s (1998b) argument that the concept of creativity eludes a simple definition, reflecting its intricate nature across diverse domains (see also Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

Through the qualitative analysis, we uncovered that individuals within the KP held their subjective interpretation of what creativity meant, as well as how collective processes of creativity started.

These individual interpretations ranged from individual ideation to collaborative efforts in the KP. The individual interpretations reflected points of view that can be observed in existing research from different scholars (e.g., Barron and Harrington, 1981; McCrae, 1987), who argue that creativity can be seen as an individual trait and the notion of the lone creative genius (Schaefer, 2023). Additionally, the interviewee's responses demonstrated creativity as a socially shaped group activity that reflected other authors' work (e.g., Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Perry-Smith, 2006; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2015). For instance, on the individual side, creativity was defined as curiosity, exploration, and excitement by the same individual (Table 4.1), which aligned specifically with Barron and Harrington's (1981) definitions of individual creativity traits. The authors suggested that it was legitimate to understand creativity as achievement, ability, disposition, or attitude (Barron and Harrington, 1981).

On the collective side, some interviewees stated that creativity was the accumulation of ideas (Table 4.1) that was a product of a combination of other people's ideas and their interactions. Such a finding reflected Harvey's (2014) emphasis on the positive sides of collaboration stressing the potential role of creative collaborations that stem from and nurture dialectic negotiation and the integration of stakeholders' opinions. Consequently, it is possible to understand the brainstorming sessions held by the KP members as an integration of stakeholder opinions and dialectic negotiations. Many participants voiced how they brought their ideas to their designated group within the KP to discuss their viability and see what other members had to say about proceeding with the idea. It was also relevant to notice how the lack of a hierarchal relation also influenced how the participants viewed creativity and pushed ideas forward in the KP. The discussion of whether to pursue an idea resembles dialectic negotiation, where bringing the idea to other members who can also voice their ideas and reflections to see how they can align, can be seen as stakeholder integration. We posit this as an example in support of Harvey's (2014) research on dialectic negotiation and stakeholder integration as a core part of creativity.

By comparing our findings to Hargadon and Bechky's (2006) discussion regarding collective creativity, we learned that it includes times when different points of view come together, allowing everyone to work together to solve problems that go beyond individual abilities and rigid power structures. For instance, we grasped some words and phrases about creativity that emerged when

an individual removes an obstacle to enable an outcome, brings ideas to a group, or connects the necessary people so they can combine ideas to bring them closer to executing the ideas. It became clear to us that the actions of some individuals resembled collective creativity (Harvey, 2014) when they removed obstacles or linked people to open the path for creativity to happen.

However, it is noteworthy that certain findings deviated from our initial expectations after the initial research of the literature on the theme of creativity. We believe the reason for such a deviation was that we, as researchers, held our expectations of concepts of creativity in art or talent; as mentioned, we expected those concepts to strongly appear in the interviewees' words. However, within the open innovation environment we studied, we recognized creative processes as being established and dependent on access to resources rather than on artistry or talent, among other individual-focused aspects. We found our interviewee's definition of creativity to resemble a more *collaborative* process involving the joint exploration of ideas, bringing ideas to fruition, and working hard on an idea. This is in line with Harvey's (2014) advocacy of combining resources through creative synthesis to boost group breakthrough potential.

Another instance of the deviation of meanings expected and found was when, for instance, we asked interviewees about the difference between creativity and innovation. We did not recognize a clear distinction between the meaning of these concepts, which would have emphasized creativity as the generation of novel and useful ideas and innovation as the implementation of those ideas to produce tangible benefits. Such a finding would have aligned with the literature's delineation of creativity as the initial phase of the innovation process (Fleming et al., 2007; Anderson et al., 2014). However, our data showed no mention of the understanding that creativity and innovation are two sides of the same process.

Our findings resonate with several key themes from the literature review on creativity presented in Chapter 2. Our findings are in line with Amabile's (1988) research on the complex nature of creativity. Moreover, Barron and Harrington's (1981) emphasis on individual creativity traits mirrors our discussion of creativity as both an individual-level construct and a collective endeavor. Hargadon and Bechky's (2006) and Harvey's (2014) investigations of group creativity are consistent with our findings, which emphasize how social contexts and interactions shape creativity as a collective phenomenon. The concept of creative synthesis (Harvey, 2014) and

emphasis on supportive environments align well with our findings, underscoring the positive role of collaborations and the significance of supportive environments in fostering creativity within open innovation ecosystems.

Notably, we, as researchers, did not start this study believing that people would define creativity in the same manner. Indeed, we do not understand creativity in the same way and acknowledge how it may mean different concepts for people in different fields. However, again, we were not expecting to encounter the vast (often differing) range of definitions and conceptualizations within a group of people who are already working together on a project. Instead, we expected to find a more homogenous, shared meaning of creativity and that those shared meanings were guiding their discussions and solutions within the KP.

Hence, one of the findings of this study was that, even though people might be working together as a group to develop creative ideas, there might be completely diverse views of an, arguably, basic concept such as creativity. Establishing a common (homogenous) understanding could potentially help groups accomplish even more creative ideas and outcomes together, as most of the creative processes in the KP relied on collective creativity flows. On the other hand, we recognize that overly homogeneous understandings of creativity might cause a lack of diverse thought and hamper creative outputs that could have a novel (disruptive?) potential.

## **5.2 Power via Resources**

Unexpectedly, our investigation into participants' perceptions of creativity revealed the significant influence of power dynamics on creative processes. Such findings led us to explore power and creativity more deeply. In this section, we discuss our findings about creativity via the power of resources, contrasting the existing literature relevant to our study.

We start by drawing out significant similarities between our findings about what individuals meant by power and existing literature (e.g., Ibarra, 1993; Hardy, 1996; Clegg, 2009; Sligte et al., 2011; Fleming & Spicer, 2014) that discuss power dynamics and creativity. Some of our findings add nuance to the arguments of those authors; especially in that power was found to be used in the KP as a neutral force that served as a facilitator of creativity instead of being used as force. For instance, Charlie, the de facto leader and initiator of KP, said, when asked about how he sees

himself within the KP as a leader, that he views himself as a source of guidance and someone who follows the group to herd them and support the members to the best of his abilities. His use of power is a neutral or subtle force because he does not seek to tell people what to do but to enhance their collective creative progress.

Further, specifically, our findings resembled Ibarra's (1993) conceptualization of potential power versus enacted power in open innovation environments, which aligns with our finding that power was the capacity to act and influence outcomes, shedding light on the nuanced nature of power dynamics. As an example, in our analysis, we identified power via resources as a predominant manifestation of power or the possibility of manifesting power to enhance creativity. Some interviewees made statements that showcased how present economic factors such as budget or salary were necessary elements for people to be able to pursue a creative direction. We noticed financial relevance through either budget allotment (or lack of budget), access to funding to support the development of ideas, an individual's financial circumstances (salary), and the need for formalized business cases that must prove the market potential of the idea to be approved. According to one interviewee, because she had background experience in coordination on similar types of projects, she could exercise her knowledge (potential power) and play an essential role (enacted power), providing funding support to the project manager. This expertise made her powerful, and creative and impacted her influence on the project—precisely how ideas were financially supported with EU grants. This understanding helped us grasp how complex power relationships are in open innovation environments.

In summary, building upon Hardy's (1996) conceptualization of power as the power to do something through something else, we delineated the various forms of resources through which power operates in the KP creative processes. These encompass mandates, money, expertise, and relations, each facilitating the attainment of desired outcomes through creativity. In the words of one of our interviewees, we recognized that they meant that power was the ability to achieve an outcome through the access and use of someone's mandate. Such a scope of power was meant as an individual's scope of decision-making and influence. If someone was up in the hierarchy, owned their own company, or was allowed to make decisions regarding the KP without having to look for permission, this individual was powerful enough to be creative. We noticed how the limited or



large mandates allowed by organizational positions had a significant impact on some individuals' creative potential, as explained in Section 4.2.1a. Harvey (2014) highlight the importance of a supportive environment with equal power distribution among members, acknowledging how power dynamics might influence creative synthesis, which we noticed in the KP as relevant.

Exemplifying what we did *not* find through the qualitative analysis of interview responses, we can say that we discovered that our initial idea to explore tie strengths (Granovetter, 1973) was not relevant in the context we were exploring. We did not find any links between the strength of ties—either weak or strong—impacting an individual or group's creativity ability in the KP. However, we did find a relationship between ties and one's ability to access opportunities to be creative; so, we concluded that relations (ties) are a subcategory of power through connections. Throughout our research, it became clear to us how power factors such as mandates, money, expertise, and relations shaped an individual's power and influence in driving creativity and creative outcomes within an open innovation ecosystem. We did not anticipate encountering such a finding, but power via resource influencing creativity within open innovation ecosystems was our main finding. We further explore the discussion of the intersection of creativity and power in innovation ecosystems in the next section.

### **5.3 The Intersection of Creativity and Power in Open Innovation Ecosystems**

The intersection of power and creativity emerged as a focal point of our analysis, reflecting the intricate relationship between these two constructs in social contexts, which consist of individuals with links. As highlighted in Chapter 2 when we showcased some authors' main arguments, the centrality of power via resources underscored its significance in shaping individual agency and collective action within organizational contexts, which was also reflected in the open innovation environment we studied. Our findings suggest that power in the form of resources played a pivotal role in shaping creative endeavors within this researcher's context (an open innovation ecosystem). Specifically, among other possibilities, we noticed how some of the arguments of Ibarra (1993) and Sligte et al. (2011) could be empirically verified in our study. Those authors, to some extent, explored the influence of power on creativity, highlighting how individuals holding power tend to exhibit greater cognitive flexibility, abstract thinking, and creative capabilities within open innovation ecosystems (Ibarra, 1993; Sligte et al., 2011).

Sligte et al. (2011) argued that individuals with power in open innovation ecosystems are more likely to demonstrate cognitive flexibility and creative capabilities. This aligns with the notion that power dynamics within collaborative environments can influence individuals' ability to engage in abstract thinking and generate novel ideas that we noticed from our interviewees' responses. For instance, in Hunter's instance shown in Chapter 2 regarding power via expertise, his power manifested itself by enabling him to come up with flexible ideas that became critical resources for his colleagues within the KP. His engineering expertise enabled him to think differently, bringing his abstract thinking and flexibility forward to come up with solutions from a different perspective than his colleagues could, as they lacked his expertise and the power yielded by this expertise. His power, via his expertise, in turn, impacted the group's creativity by offering a resource for colleagues to draw upon when brainstorming and problem-solving.

Furthermore, Chesbrough (2003; 2006) emphasizes the role of open innovation ecosystems in facilitating individual creativity by leveraging external ideas, internal capabilities, and diverse pathways to market. This emphasis suggests that individuals operating within open innovation ecosystems have access to a broad range of resources and perspectives, which can stimulate creative thinking and idea generation. We noticed those dependencies when one of our interviewees explained that they could accomplish, with the help of other individuals, solutions that he could not have done only with the resources of their organization. Combining resources and the power that came along with them in the KP proved to be of utmost relevance to the possibilities for creativity to flow. For the organizations that decided to engage in the KP to imagine and create together the future concert hall, opening to collaboration empowered their individuals and allowed the positive effects of collaborations to potentially flow back to each organization. We emphasize here that power is the employment of a set of resources to get things done through other people or other resources to achieve certain goals that may be shared (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Organizations can build upon, leverage, and enhance creativity from the learnings accomplished in open innovation ecosystems.

Our findings also align with the existing literature exploring open innovation as a paradigm that encourages purposeful knowledge exchange to accelerate internal innovation and foster problem-solving collaborations. When some of the interviewees emphasized that sharing knowledge was

an important aspect of the KP, we better understood how living labs can be places for creativity to flow where people from different backgrounds work together in a real-life setting to co-create and come up with new ideas. This corresponds to the literature's exploration of living labs as platforms for research, development, and experimentation in real-life settings. For instance, Gascó's (2017) emphasis on the role of living labs in promoting unintentional collisions of thought aligns with our findings on the importance of collaboration and supportive environments in fostering creativity.

Within open innovation ecosystems, individuals with power not only facilitate intentional collaborations but also create conditions conducive to serendipitous encounters and innovative thinking, as the interviewees' interpretation of their roles on the KP showed us. As a result, concerning Gascó's (2017) arguments, our findings highlighted the collaborative and experimental nature of open innovation ecosystems and offered insights into living labs. By recognizing the role of living labs as catalysts for creativity, we can discuss how organizations can leverage these environments to harness the creative potential of individuals and drive innovation forward.

By analyzing our data, we gained a better understanding of how power dynamics within open innovation ecosystems intersect with creativity. We understood the significance of framing power as a relational phenomenon that functions through practices, discourses, and interactions (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Power, especially power via resources—mandates, money, expertise, and relations—was used as a neutral force to wield positive and collaborative interactions. Such use of power was shown to facilitate creativity by providing resources, influence, and conducive environments for idea generation, experimentation, and synthesis.

We did not recognize in the KP any power dynamics that characterized coercion or misuse of power to stifle creativity or hinder the free flow of ideas and knowledge exchange. Therefore, we highlight that a nuanced understanding of power's role in shaping creative processes is essential for fostering creativity within open innovation ecosystems. Those involved in such a collaborative environment, such as the KP, must be aware of the use of power to yield and incentivize creative processes.

## **5.4 Chapter Summary**

By comparing the insights, we obtained throughout our study with the literature we explored for this study, we could better understand how power dynamics within open innovation ecosystems intersect with creativity. We focused on the discussion of creativity in terms of power, how they interact, and how exploration of power via resources matters in terms of understanding creative processes within open innovation environments. We showcased in this section how power, when wielded positively and collaboratively, was shown to facilitate creativity by providing resources, influence, and conducive environments for idea generation, experimentation, and synthesis. We discussed how a nuanced understanding of power's role in shaping creative processes is essential for fostering creativity within open innovation ecosystems.

## **6 Conclusion**

To respond to the research question, *How does power influence creativity in open innovation ecosystems?*, we designed a study that focused on a specific project that involves the exploration and establishment of the future concert hall. We drew on data collected from interviews conducted as part of the Kalaudioscope Project, the result of a collaborative endeavor involving Lund University, Malmö Live Concert Hall, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, AXIS, Amazon, CINFO, Capgemini, and Future by Lund, among other organizations. In this project, Malmö Live Concert Hall is the stage, the living lab, where the experiments and interactions happen.

The style of qualitative research on power's influence on creativity is relevant as it expands on current understandings of power and creativity processes in open innovation ecosystems. This study was designed to explore the creative capabilities of individuals and groups within open innovation ecosystems and to stimulate the growth of similar studies.

### **6.1 Research Contributions**

Our study highlighted the complex interplay between power and creativity within open innovation ecosystems, underscoring the importance of considering organizational dynamics in fostering innovation. By addressing power differentials and promoting a supportive and inclusive

environment, we believe that organizations can harness the creative potential of all members to drive innovation forward collaboratively and through the distribution of power.

We can highlight how individuals holding power tend to exhibit greater cognitive flexibility, abstract thinking, and creative capabilities within open innovation ecosystems. We found that individuals with greater power are more likely to demonstrate enhanced creativity, potentially due to their ability to leverage resources, access diverse information, and navigate organizational hierarchies effectively. Factors such as hierarchical positions, centrality within networks, education, experience, and access to diverse information sources have a strong influence on an individual's power and influence in driving creativity and creative outcomes within open innovation ecosystems (Ibarra, 1993). The findings echo previous research by Ibarra (1993) and Sligte et al. (2011), who also explored the influence of power on creativity in organizational contexts. Additionally, we noticed how the emphasis on open innovation ecosystems provided a unique perspective, highlighting the specific dynamics and factors at play in these collaborative environments.

One of the main contributions of our research lies in the nuanced understanding and enactment of power to ensure the respective shared goals are achieved within the environment of a living lab. Thus, by acknowledging and understanding the relationship between power and creativity in open innovation ecosystems, organizations can focus on organizational practices and interventions that aim at fostering creativity by power. We believe that, practically, all organizations can consider promoting inclusivity and equal access to resources to enhance creativity among all members - regardless of their hierarchical positions.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Study**

We acknowledge some methodological constraints in our study. Despite adhering closely to Prasad's interpretivist traditions, following appropriate research method guidelines from Bell et al. (2022), and conducting our research ethically and transparently, there are unavoidable limitations.

Given the compressed timeframe, we interviewed fewer participants than desired; ideally, we aimed for 12 interviews and ended up with three exploratory ones and nine used for the thematic

analysis. To mitigate this limitation in future studies, researchers could initiate participant engagement prior to the research methods course and consider iterative cycles of data collection and analysis to identify emerging patterns without waiting for all data to be collected in a single cycle. Also, the data predominantly comprised individuals within the KP who were readily available and encouraged by the project's leader to participate. Engaging with every KP member was impractical within the timeframe and due to varying levels of availability among participants. Consequently, the dataset represents only a small proportion of total active KP members. To address similar challenges, future studies should focus on specific job roles (mandates) within the KP, such as sound engineers, allowing for more comprehensive coverage within a manageable scope.

Regarding biases, they may have influenced participants' expressions of their KP experiences. All participants were very involved in the KP, potentially affecting the objectivity of their feedback. Additionally, participants often represented companies integral to the KP, potentially limiting their ability to express non-conforming opinions. Regarding researcher bias, our study initially emphasized creativity dynamics over tie strengths, not power. The unexpected findings of power dynamics could have been better explored if we had this topic in mind, as we could have structured interviews with a neutral stance at the outset. Such exploration of power could have enhanced the flexibility and objectivity of data collection, allowing researchers to explore emergent phenomena more objectively.

We are also aware of the limitations of our study regarding the claims it is attempting to make. We cannot claim that the KP possesses the same qualities attributed to other open innovation environments. So, it is difficult to claim that our findings hold for all open innovation environments. Further, our study was based in Sweden, focusing on a group of people who are largely accustomed to Swedish work values and forms of communication. Swedish work culture tends to lean towards non-hierarchical systems, fostering open collaboration where employees do not tend to fear voicing their opinions. On the other hand, Swedes tend to be non-confrontational and not as comfortable openly criticizing one another when things go wrong (Gelfand et al., 2011). These factors combined may have led to our participants not feeling comfortable voicing their opinions to the most transparent degree and may have made our interviewees somewhat unaware of the unique factors that open innovation environments offer, as traditional Swedish work

environments within organizations tend to be generally non-hierarchical as well. Finally, while acknowledging these limitations, our study offers valuable insights into power dynamics and creativity within open innovation ecosystems.

### **6.3 Future Research**

Moving forward, further researchers could explore additional dynamic factors influencing the relationship between power and creativity in open innovation ecosystems, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and communication patterns. Future research endeavors should also further explore these dynamic factors to enrich our understanding of innovation processes and power dynamics in collaborative settings and how they can contribute to single organizations. Ultimately, understanding and leveraging power dynamics in collaborative settings can contribute to more effective and sustainable innovation practices, benefiting both organizations and society.

### **6.4 Afterword**

*As the Kalaudioscope project progresses, the interplay between power and creativity within the team becomes increasingly evident. Charlie's vision, once a singular dream, developed into a collaborative endeavor that transcends traditional power dynamics.*

*Each member of the KP brings unique talents and perspectives, enriching the project with diverse expertise and a shared passion for innovation. This collective synergy transforms the project into a platform where creative ideas thrive and evolve.*

*Within this dynamic environment, power takes on a new meaning—not as a tool for dominance, but as a force for enabling creativity. The power of resources becomes instrumental in facilitating the realization of creative concepts. As the team navigates challenges and explores possibilities, the collaborative spirit is fueled by creativity and determination that propels them forward.*

*Kalaudioscope project journey exemplifies the transformative potential of collective creativity harnessed through collaborative efforts. It underscores the importance of fostering an environment where diverse talents are empowered to contribute, and where*

*the dynamics of power are channeled toward nurturing creativity and achieving shared goals...*

*... creatively imagining what comes next!*



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## **Appendix**

Interviewers: Arianna Ragonese and Savana A Pires

Date: xx.xx.xxxx

Disclaimer & Data Handling

*By agreeing to this meeting (interview), the interviewee understands and is aware that the meeting is recorded. The researchers, in this instance, Arianna Ragonese and Savana Pires, will analyze the verbal and non-verbal communications of the interviewee recorded from the interview as a part of their Master's thesis. The researchers will include direct quotes and other observations of the interviewee in their research and written work.*

*The interviewee is aware that their full name, professional role, and self-described role in the project will be openly stated within the thesis in connection to any communication cited within the thesis text. Lund University owns the completed thesis and will publish the thesis.*

*They can voice questions to the researchers if the interviewee has questions before, during, or after. **If the interviewee objects to the above information and does not wish for identifiers to be used when quoting their words in the thesis, please voice them now, and we can anonymize the interviewee.** We want to ensure the interview is a comfortable and rewarding experience for all participating parties.*

*Below is a list of the questions we will ask in the interview. Please note the interview structure is classified as semi-structured, meaning that although we will ask the questions outlined below, we may also ask follow-up questions that deviate from the list. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes to an hour.*

*Thank you for your time and participation!*

### **Guiding Questions/Topics**

#### **\*\*Individual\*\***

- What specific responsibilities do you have within the KP?
  - What is your role?
- How would you define your contribution to the KP's objectives?
- Can you summarize your role in the KP in 3 words?

#### **\*\*Creativity\*\***

How do you personally define creativity?

- Provide 3 words that encapsulate your understanding of creativity.
- Is creativity a significant aspect of your role in the KP?
  - Why or why not?
- Do you actively engage in discussions about creativity within the KP?

#### **\*\*Group Dynamics\*\***

- Do you perceive yourselves as a cohesive group in the KP?

- How often does the group convene, and what methods are used for communication?
  - Include details on communication modes, tools, and frequency of meetings.
- Are all group members uniform in their roles and responsibilities?
- Do all members understand and acknowledge their designated roles and responsibilities?

**\*\*Idea Generation and Decision-Making\*\***

- How does the group generate, evaluate, and link ideas?
- How do you stay informed about the ongoing work of other individuals and companies?
- Is there a set timeline for making decisions or acting within the group?
- What preparations are being made for the upcoming Take 3 event?

**\*\*Group Connectivity\*\***

- Is there a designated individual who acts as a bridge between group members?
- Who is responsible for making decisions regarding events or project milestones?
- Do all members actively contribute ideas within the group?
- In your view, who contributes most to generating "new ideas" within the group?

**\*\*Ties\*\***

- Who do you consider close to you within the project, and how do you define this closeness?
  - Elaborate on what it means to be closer to specific individuals than others.
- What criteria determine this closeness?
  - Is it based on meeting frequency or receptiveness to feedback?
- How do varying degrees of closeness impact your creative process within the group?

**\*\*Idea Approval and Feedback\*\***

- Do you seek validation for your ideas before presenting them to the larger group?
- Have you noticed others seeking your feedback before sharing their ideas with the group?

**\*\*Open Innovation Environment\*\***

- Define an Open Innovation Environment from your perspective using five descriptive words.
- Which elements of Open Innovation can be observed within the KP's operations?

**\*\*Idea Benchmarking and Research\*\***

- Does the group compare ideas with other projects in the KP? If so, which projects serve as sources of inspiration?
- Is there a specific person assigned to research activities, or is it a collaborative effort among members?