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Abstract:

Today, the innovation arena is open to a wider range of participants than previously acknowledged. One specifically neglected group of innovators in traditional innovation studies is non-R&D and non-managerial employees, also referred to as 'ordinary' employees by the existing body of literature on employee-driven innovation (EDI). These employees have no formal innovation function, meaning that they work outside R&D and innovation-specific departments, but still represent significant and valuable creative assets for their employers. They are claimed to possess in-depth and context-dependent knowledge that is highly valuable in innovative work. The underlying assumption of the EDI concept is that all employees are able to contribute to innovation in spite of their level of education, background or current position in the organization. Thus, the EDI process has been highlighted in terms of a democratization of innovation as all employees are encouraged and invited to engage in innovative activities that go beyond their day-to-day tasks. However, what this democratization implies in practice when employees are expected to generate, develop, and implement ideas in a top-down management structure is less clear from a theoretical point of view.

This thesis focuses on a management-initiated employee innovation process at a global IT firm's Swedish operations, and its purpose is to explore the interaction between employees and managers in order to contribute to an increased understanding of the consequences of that interplay. This has been done in order to theoretically extend the conceptual typology created by Høyrup (2012; Høyrup et al., 2018), which is commonly referred to in the EDI field. In this way, both employees' and managers' roles are included in the theorization, which contributes to a dual emphasis in contrast to existing EDI literature that tends to focus on managerial structures, tools, and implications.

By applying critical discourse analysis (CDA), this thesis demonstrates inclusiveness when it comes to the top-level management's production and distribution of the employee innovation discourse in the initial phases of the innovation process. However, the analysis simultaneously discloses significant excluding elements in the ordinary employees' consumption of this discourse in the latter phases of the innovation process where new roles, and expectations, of employees are enacted. Additionally, the results reveal that the production of the innovation discourse by the top-level management, which accentuates client satisfaction rather than employee engagement, restricts the employees' utilization of the digital tool that distributes the discourse. However, middle-level managers were found to play a critical role for stimulating employee involvement since they act as co-distributors of the joint digital innovation platform that is utilized for collecting, monitoring, and evaluating employee ideas. Thus, this thesis contributes to EDI literature by exploring the interaction between top-level management's formulation and arrangement of EDI activities and employees' perceptions of, and response to, this structure. Hence, this thesis adds to our understanding of EDI in terms of the power relations involved in this interaction through which the democratization of the innovation process is highlighted. Thereby, this thesis sheds light on how the roles of employees and managers are discursively shaped**,** and how expectations of employees shift when the top-level management adopts an EDI approach.

Key words: Critical discourse analysis, Digitalization, Employee-driven innovation, Innovation management, Power relations, Roles, Web-based tools

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Old ways won't open new doors

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Paper II

Bäckström, I. and Lindberg, M. (2018), "Behavioral implications of employee-driven innovation- a critical discourse analysis", *International Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol. 22 No. 7, pp. 1-18.

Paper III

Bäckström, I. and Lindberg, M. (2019), "Varying involvement in digitally enhanced employee-driven innovation", *European Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 524-540.

Paper IV

Title: Enacted roles in digital employee-driven innovation: Insights for research and management.

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Related papers and publications

Bäckström, I. and Ahlgren, K. (2018), "Rigorous and relevant- introducing a critical discourse analysis to the relevance debate", *European Business Review*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 202-215.

Acknowledgements

Phew! This extensive PhD journey is finally coming to an end. To say the least, patience is not my strongest point and it never has been. However, this research endeavour has taught me how to practise it, although it is still going to be a lifelong challenge. But here I am, with a finalized thesis. Perhaps that lack of patience has its upside. Because it is also a quality that I value about myself in getting things done in the end.

By embarking on this journey, various doors have opened for me on both personal and professional levels. This would not have been possible without the smashing and amazing people that I am lucky to be surrounded by. In this context, I would like to refer to a Zulu expression that has stuck to me like glue. At a research conference in Pretoria, South Africa, I crossed paths with Dr Sibongiseni Tunzelana Thotsejane and she generously shared this Zulu expression with me: *Ubuntu.* I am, because you are, therefore we are. It highlights that humans do not exist in isolation; rather we are all interconnected. With this connotation, the expression relates to my research journey in two main ways.

First of all, it highlights that I would not be where I am today without the very important and generous fellow human beings that have been by my side. For my three loved ones (mother, father and brother), I owe the world. I cannot describe my love and gratitude in words, it is ineffable. Without your support I would never ever have been able to keep up my resilience and complete these five years. Thank you for always being there for me no matter what.

Secondly, *Ubuntu* resonates with the research approach I have undertaken on my journey. After going out in the field, I quickly understood that my initial standpoint of exploring individual employees and their efforts to engage in innovation was only part of the picture. At this point, I realized that it is actually the interaction between the employees and the frameworks in which they operate that allowed me to draw the contours, meaning an inclusion of top-level management in the social context under scrutiny. This interconnectedness led me to challenge my preconceived notions and expectations, and directed me to completely new methodological and theoretical terrains.

Cheers to remaining open-minded while opening new doors.

Izabelle

Abstract

Today, the innovation arena is open to a wider range of participants than previously acknowledged. One specifically neglected group of innovators in traditional innovation studies is non-R&D and non-managerial employees, also referred to as 'ordinary' employees by the existing body of literature on employee-driven innovation (EDI). These employees have no formal innovation function, meaning that they work outside R&D and innovation-specific departments, but still represent significant and valuable creative assets for their employers. They are claimed to possess in-depth and context-dependent knowledge that is highly valuable in innovative work. The underlying assumption of the EDI concept is that all employees are able to contribute to innovation in spite of their level of education, background or current position in the organization. Thus, the EDI process has been highlighted in terms of a democratization of innovation as all employees are encouraged and invited to engage in innovative activities that go beyond their day-to-day tasks. However, what this democratization implies in practice when employees are expected to generate, develop, and implement ideas in a top-down management structure is less clear from a theoretical point of view.

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thesis contributes to EDI literature by exploring the interaction between top-level management's formulation and arrangement of EDI activities and employees' perceptions of, and response to, this structure. Hence, this thesis adds to our understanding of EDI in terms of the power relations involved in this interaction through which the democratization of the innovation process is highlighted. Thereby, this thesis sheds light on how the roles of employees and managers are discursively shaped, and how expectations of employees shift when the top-level management adopts an EDI approach.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Innovation är ett hett ämne som just nu florerar vilt i diverse sammanhang. Inte minst är det en egenskap som många av oss vill omfamna och utveckla - för vem vill inte vara (och betraktas som) en kreatör, och i förlängningen en innovatör? I synnerhet är det en strategisk förmåga som uppmärksammas allt oftare i näringslivet och i offentlig sektor då företag och organisationer tvingas vara innovativa för att särskilja sig från mängden och för att kunna överleva på konkurrensutsatta marknader. I detta innovativa arbete är medarbetare nyckelfigurer med sin expertkunskap om produkter, service, organisatoriska processer och kunder, vilket representerar en operativ expertis som chefer många gånger saknar. Frågan är hur medarbetarnas kreativitet tas omhand för att befrämja nytänkande och innovation? Och på vilka sätt medarbetarna får utrymme att delta i innovationsprocessen som många gånger är centralt "top-down-organiserad"?

Innovation är ett omtalat samtalsämne i såväl akademin som populär media. Hur definierar vi en kreatör och i förlängningen en innovatör? Detta är en central aspekt i mitt avhandlingsarbete där jag undersöker hur organisationer behandlar medarbetares kreativa idéer, och huruvida medarbetaren får utrymme till att vidareutforska sina kreativa tankar för att kunna konkretisera idéer och föda innovation. Medarbetarledd innovation kan organiseras på flera sätt. Beroende på sammanhang, i termer av organisationskultur och struktur, finns olika lösningar på hur medarbetarna samlas kring innovationsarbete, och avgörande för arbetets framgång tycks vara chefers stöd i form av kreativt utrymme och en integration av idéarbetet i dagliga sysslor och rutiner. Medarbetarledd innovation sägs öka medarbetarens övergripande deltagande i organisationens dagliga processer i syfte att skapa ett bredare engagemang som berikar både medarbetarens arbetsliv samtidigt som det sår viktiga innovationsfrön. Förhoppningsvis kan dessa idéer i sinom tid skördas och implementeras internt i organisationen, eller externt mot kunder, beroende på organisationssammanhang. Men i vilken utsträckning genomsyras medearbetarledd innovation av ett inkluderande förhållningssätt, och hur demokratisk är denna process i praktiken?

I min avhandling utforskar jag i vilken utsträckning medarbetare inkluderas i innovationsarbetet, och vilka beteendemässiga implikationer som uppstår vid organiseringen av medarbetardriven innovation. Jag studerar hur ett globalt IT-företags svenska verksamhet organiserar sin medarbetarorienterade innovationsplattform, i

vilken samtliga medarbetare bjuds in att lämna idéer som baseras på angelägna teman som definieras av ledningen. De tre empiriska studierna som utgör avhandlingen visar att innovationsaktiviteten är inkluderande i bemärkelsen att samtliga medarbetare uppmuntras att lämna in kreativa idéer till det digitala idéhanteringssystemet. Denna idéprocess är transparent för medarbetare och chefer, i vilken det är fritt att betygsätta, bedöma och kommentera kollegors idéer under en begränsad tidsperiod. Alla medarbetare, oavsett yrkesroll och dagliga arbetsuppgifter, uppmanas på så vis att aktivt medverka i innovationsarbetet. Dock är detta arbete inte helt utan utmaningar och komplikationer. Det kommer ett senare steg i processen där experter väljer vilka idéer som är relevanta att gå vidare med i innovationsprocessen. Detta steg introducerar ett exkluderande element där ledningen visar vilken typ av idé som likställs med innovationspotential, samt vilka egenskaper som krävs hos medarbetaren ifråga för att en idé ska kunna lyftas fram, ett arbete som många gånger kräver att individen själv lägger värdefull fritid till att vidareutveckla idén på bästa sätt. Ansvaret vilar således på medarbetaren, något som kräver att individen axlar rollen entreprenör för att lyckas konkretisera idén till ett färdigt koncept som är redo att implementeras.

Det är inte enbart idéselekteringen som är exkluderande i innovationsprocessen, utan även hur ledningen och chefer pratar om innovation. Det är alltså flera faktorer som påverkar hur det kreativa samtalet fortskrider i organisationen - och följaktligen hur den typiska innovatören speglas. Detta är en exkluderande implikation som med fördel bör belysas för att öka medvetenheten om hur vi pratar om innovation. Hur speglas en innovatör och vilka egenskaper tillskrivs denna person? Att befästa en bild av innovatören baserat på myten om det kreativa geniet, vars skaparglöd och drivkraft är en förmåga få förunnad, är en spegelbild som kan vara svår för alla medarbetare att identifiera sig med. Utmaningen med att forma aktiva och engagerade kreatörer, och i förlängningen innovatörer, tycks vara att skapa en mångfaldig spegelbild som flertalet individer kan identifiera sig med. Här spelar den framgångsrika intraprenören, som driver interna projekt framåt oavsett förutsättningar, en stor roll. Men minst lika stor roll spelar kollektivet runt intraprenören. Utifrån ett bredare och inkluderande perspektiv handlar kreativitet om individers obegränsade möjligheter att skapa. För att förlösa denna kreativa innovationspotential är kollektivet viktigt att belysa, där vissa medarbetare innehar entreprenörsegenskaperna medan andra är analytiska bollplank som är minst lika viktiga för att den kreativa idén ska ta konkret form. Risken med att diktera exkluderande villkor för innovation, medvetet eller omedvetet, är att medarbetare tar avstånd från kreativt värdeskapande. Istället för att organiseringen av medarbetarorienterade innovationsprogram bidrar till ökad energi och skaparglöd kan det leda till motsatt effekt. Här krävs att rätt förutsättningar ges, i form av tid och utrymme, till att arbeta vidare med en idé. Annars finns ytterligare en risk att

innovationsarbetet uppfattas som fönsterskyltning från medarbetarnas sida. Därför gäller det att leva som man lär och kontinuerligt reflektera över den spegelbild som illustrerar innovation.

Oavsett om en organisation tillämpar ett digitalt idégenereringssytem eller den klassiska förslagslådan, bör spegelbilden bejakas. Kanske är det inte verktyget i sig som spelar störst roll, utan hur denna aktivitet målas upp och med vilka ord innovation och innovatörer etiketteras med. Detta är också en indikation på att medarbetarinnovation, som ofta påstås vara ett "bottom-up-perspektiv", är svårt att helt separera från ett "top-down-perspektiv" eftersom innovationsaktivteterna kräver någon form av organisering och förankring högre upp i organisationen. I mitt avhandlingsarbete har jag därför antagit ett interaktionsperspektiv där jag fokuserar på relationen mellan medarbetare och ledning, i synnerhet hur innovationsprogram och aktiviteter organiseras och distribueras samt hur arbetet tolkas och upplevs av medarbetarna. Mina forskningsresultat vittnar således om att samspelet mellan medarbetare, chefer och organisationsledning är viktigt att bejaka för att få en medarbetaridé att gro så att den senare kan komma att skördas.

Introduction

I embarked on this research journey for one main reason: my curiosity about people and human interactions. Before starting the PhD program, I knew very little about the phenomenon of innovation, and I knew even less about what doing research implies. This was a good thing though, because if I had known I would most likely have rejected the opportunity of such an intense intellectual challenge. Anyhow, here I am, proud, happy and ready to demonstrate the final result of five years of dedicated work. Below I will begin with the background to the research topic and the points of departure on my journey of exploring the phenomenon of employee innovation. Next, the problematization is shown, followed by an elaboration on the research purpose. Thereafter, the research questions are presented, accompanied by a brief description of the appended papers and how they each relate to the research questions stated. Lastly, I will provide an outline for the continuation of my thesis.

Background

With rapid developments in the knowledge economy, combined with continuous improvements in technology, organizations face challenging times. Intense competitive pressures and the increasing uncertainty of dynamic environments require the constant acquisition of sufficient human knowledge to ensure survival in the long term. In this ever-changing landscape, innovation is commonly referred to as the *lifeblood* of organizations, thus implying that innovation is a strategic capability that enables organizations to thrive and survive. Although this capability is depicted as a critical source of competitive advantage (cf. Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Gressgård et al., 2014; Mone et al., 1998; Zahra and Covin, 1994), it has previously mainly been linked to technology in industrial and manufacturing settings, particularly to the dominant role of the technological expert as a means of achieving innovation (cf. Brundenius et

al., 2016; Lindberg, 2017; 2014; Pansera and Owen, 2018; Rønning and Knutagård, 2015). However, more recent academic discourse on the topic provides a broader and more nuanced view on what participants may contribute to innovative activities.

Today, the innovation arena is open to a wider range of participants than previously acknowledged. In the academic sphere, this trend has been referred to as inclusive innovation. Not only does the concept of inclusive innovation contribute to a broader scrutiny of who is able, allowed or invited to participate in innovation, but it also highlights where and why new solutions to perceived needs are developed (cf. Lindberg, 2018; 2014). Whereas previous research mainly emphasized tech-oriented innovation in industrial settings, inclusive innovation promotes a fuller spectrum of perspectives, contexts, participants and constellations to be able to address and capture complex societal and organizational challenges in order to better respond to people's needs (cf. Ionescu, 2015, Lindberg, 2018; Lindberg and Berg Jansson, 2016). In this thesis, inclusive innovation refers to "the involvement of various stakeholders and user groups in the development of new goods, services and other types of solutions" (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018, p. 3) as portrayed in Paper II.

On a societal level, development studies address inclusive innovation as a way to combat the challenges of high unemployment levels, increasing social divides, global migration, and demographic changes by including a multitude of industries, actors and innovations that were previously marginalized in theory, practice and policy (cf. Levidow and Papaioannou, 2018; Lindberg, 2014; Sengupta, 2016). Hence, the concept of inclusive innovation departs from an assumption that "inclusive involvement and its outcomes enhance the development of more apt, effectual, and sustainable solutions to perceived needs" (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018, p. 3). The notion of inclusiveness thus encompasses participation by all (Sengupta, 2016). A local example of a Malmö-based project that embraces inclusiveness on a societal level is *Yallatrappan*, a community that offers work opportunities to women from foreign countries, currently excluded from the ordinary job market, by using their expert knowledge of food and sewing services (Yallatrappan, 2019).

Similarly, on an organizational level, there has recently been an intensified focus on the inclusive organization. For example, the main theme of the Academy of Management conference in 2019 was *Understanding the Inclusive Organization* with an emphasis on "the heterogeneity of workforces […] and challenges around people's sense of belonging and their ability to fully participate in organizations" (aom.org, 2019). In addition, as noted by Quinetta Roberson, the Vice President and Program Chair of the 79th annual meeting of the Academy of Management, the inclusive organization implies that "all individuals and groups are valued […] regardless of any group membership or status" (Roberson, 2019). Roberson further highlights that the development of

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inclusive business approaches is key to the achievement of goals regarding sustainable economic growth, which is driven by global organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Group of Twenty (G20). Although both the private and public sectors are calling for increased attention on policies and practices that "drive the empowerment and contribution of all" (Roberson, 2019), there is still a lack of research on such attempts and approaches.

By the same token, in the sphere of innovation management, there are ongoing and lively discussions on multiple perspectives to apply in the literature in order to advance business strategies and unlock competitive advantage. Design-driven innovation (cf. Verganti, 2008; Battistella et al., 2012), open innovation (cf. Chesbrough, 2003; Chesbrough et al., 2006), customer-based innovation (cf. Ulwick, 2002; Desouza et al., 2008), and end-user innovation (cf. von Hippel 1988, 2005; Franke and Shah, 2003) can all be regarded as examples of inclusive forms of innovation that extend the prior traditional focus on technological experts in industrial contexts as the primary foundation for innovation. However, this thesis has been limited to focus on yet another group of innovators that has previously been neglected in traditional innovation management literature, namely non-R&D and non-managerial employees (cf. Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019; Høyrup, 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). Also referred to as 'ordinary' employees by the existing literature, they are argued to possess in-depth and context-dependent knowledge that is highly valuable in innovation (cf. Buhl, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012).

After starting my research project on employee innovation in late 2015, I came across a call for papers in a special issue of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management* that aimed to further advance knowledge of the role of ordinary employees. This body of literature was referred to as employee-driven innovation (hereafter EDI) and was argued to be "a relatively underdeveloped source and form of innovation" (Høyrup et al., 2015). Although a number of management theories cover the role of employees in business development processes, the editors suggested that the field of EDI still lacked theorization, particularly for being a "new mode of innovation". Similar to the notion of high-involvement innovation and non-R&D innovation, EDI "focuses on innovative practices contributed by any employee at all levels of the organisation" (Høyrup et al., 2015). Since the initiative of this special issue on EDI, various publications on the topic have appeared in different outlets, among them Papers I, II and III (Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019; Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018; 2019). In addition, the growing interest in web-based tools in EDI-oriented work seems to have spurred the development of the field (cf. Bäckström and Lindberg, 2019; Gressgård et al., 2014; Zejnilovic et al., 2012). The integration of

ICT-tools in firms' innovation processes represents an interesting research avenue for future EDI studies, especially in the context of digital employee suggestion systems (cf. El-Ella et al., 2013; Fairbank and Williams, 2001) as reported in Paper I.

Taken together, the common denominator of papers on EDI is the assumption that ordinary employees have exclusive expertise about various processes, products and organizational practices at their workplaces. Despite their valuable knowledge, they still represent an underutilized source of innovation in the sphere of innovation management (Buhl, 2018; Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019). In light of the idea of inclusive innovation, the underlying assumption of the EDI concept is that all employees are able to contribute to innovation in spite of their level of education, background or current position in the organization. Thereby, the EDI process has been highlighted in terms that describe a democratization of innovation as employees are encouraged and invited to engage in innovative activities that go beyond their day-to-day tasks (cf. Laviolette et al., 2016).

Problematization

Although the notion of the democratization of innovation has been applied to the EDI process, few studies explicitly scrutinize and discuss the implications that may arise from organizing EDI-oriented activities. The studied empirical context in this thesis involves a joint digital innovation platform (please see Chapter 3 for details) and the implications relates to structural and behavioural dimensions of integrating a web-based tool for collecting, evaluating and selecting employee ideas (Gressgård et al., 2014) as portrayed in Paper II and III (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018; 2019). Structural implications refer to an increased access to internal knowledge as a result of adopting digital EDI strategies (Gressgård et al., 2014). Behavioural implications refer to the interaction between people and the processes of sharing information with the help of the digital tool. Depending on how this information is shared and understood by the people involved in that interaction innovation may be supported or hampered (ibid).

In the EDI field, a commonly referred to conceptualization of the EDI process is Høyrup's (2012) typology. It consists of three generic orders that marks the arrangement of EDI processes. First-order EDI denotes a bottom-up innovation process that is initiated, refined, and developed by employees. This process might remain hidden and invisible for the management for some time and can thus be argued to resemble the body of literature on skunk work (cf. Høyrup et al., 2018). Akin to the first order, second-order EDI denotes a process in which the employee initiates an idea that later becomes supported and coordinated by the management in order to be

introduced to the organization as a whole. Lastly, third-order EDI describes an innovation process that is initiated by the management and then introduced to employees, inviting them to participate further by developing and refining an idea or a project. Høyrup et al. (2018, p. 318) describe this process as the management paving "the way for participation of employees in the innovation process". In this thesis, there is an emphasis on the third-order EDI process, since the investigated empirical case comprises a joint digital innovation programme in which the top-level management formally invited employees to participate in an innovation activity that was broadly defined by a main theme (please see Chapter 3 for more details on the empirical context of the completed research studies).

There is a wide array of interdisciplinary perspectives in the emerging field of EDI, ranging from radical innovation in terms of changing business models (cf. Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010) to incremental innovation involving everyday practices of employees (cf. Høyrup, 2012, Høyrup et al., 2018). However, fewer studies highlight the interaction between employees and managers with an emphasis on the implications for both actors. Existing EDI studies tend to put the main emphasis on managerial structures, tools and interventions rather than on employees' interpretations of, and responses to, such activities (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014). As a result, few studies have reflected the power structures and relations involved in that interaction. Although Høyrup et al. (2018, p. 318) portray the EDI field as "a research that extend[s] our knowledge of how to explore, exploit and further cultivate new innovative potentials among *employees* and firms" [italics added], I have not yet found any study in the field that discusses the implications for employees alongside the implications for management. This demonstrates the importance of analyzing how we, in our position as researchers, shape the academic discourse in favour of managerial perspectives. This topic is further elaborated on in Paper IV, and it points to nuances in the power dynamics involved in the interaction between top-down initiatives and bottom-up reactions. All in all, in this thesis I define interaction as the interplay between top-level management's way of arranging the EDI process and the bottom-up response of employees to this specific set-up. By addressing the agency of both employees and managers in that interaction, I am able to explore power relations as an outcome of that interaction.

Moreover, there appears to be an assumption that the EDI process is democratic because conceptually it includes all employees, regardless of their background, levels of education or current position in the organization (cf. Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2010; Laviolette et al., 2016). However, how this ambition to democratize is manifested in the EDI process is less clear from a theoretical point of view. From my point of view, merely assuming that the EDI process is democratic because it invites

employees from all levels in the organization to participate and contribute to innovation appears to be a simplification that incorporates taken-for-granted conjectures about how the innovation process unfolds in practice. For example, the mechanisms of top-level management granting employees an opportunity to participate in innovation suggests the influence of power in the interaction between the top-down organization of EDI activities and the bottom-up efforts that are currently overlooked by the literature in the field (cf. Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). While the body of literature on employee innovation continues to grow steadily (cf. Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019), the implications of giving employees the mandate to participate and engage in innovation in the context of EDI remain unclear.

On a broader theoretical level, this discussion connects with the shortcomings identified in the field of innovation studies in which there exists an underlying assumption that innovation is always good (Gripenberg et al., 2012). This finding is referred to as the 'pro-innovation bias' and illuminates the bias towards exploring the successful outcomes of innovation rather than the unintended and unanticipated aspects, outcomes and consequences of innovation. To me, innovation by nature seems to be pervaded by success since an innovation is designated as an innovation if, and only if, it has been implemented in practice (cf. Axtell et al., 2000; Foss et al., 2013; Glynn, 1996; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Shalley et al., 2004). As a result, "the study of consequences thus seems to be marginalized across all main areas of the rapidly emerging scientific field of innovation" (Gripenberg et al., 2012, p. 1). This draws attention to how innovation is discursively constructed and shaped by researchers, and sheds light on the ways in which the academic sphere continuously reinforces the bias. That is the main reason why Bengtsson and I (Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019) emphasize the process-oriented perspective in our definition of employee innovation in Paper I. Although it stresses the implementation of ideas, it also provides scope for a critical stance in relation to failed ideas on the employee innovation journey. This allows for significant insights on the implications of the process to be included, since these are aspects that are as significant as the successful consequences of this process.

By the same token, the concept of EDI seems to enjoy the perks of being regarded as something positive. Whereas some scholars emphasize EDI in terms of the efforts made by "single strong employees" (Hasu et al., 2014, p. 314), there are also examples of researchers that conceptualize EDI from the angle of interaction between managers and employees (cf. Evans and Waite, 2010; Heinonen and Toivonen, 2008; Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016; Høyrup et al., 2018; Kristensen, 2018; Miettinen, 2013). However, what these studies fail to address is the level of participation of employees and the roles they adopt as the innovation process unfolds, and the implications arising from this type of invitation to participate in innovation processes. This is particularly significant

in respect of second- and third-order EDI, where the role of the management is greater compared to first-order EDI (cf. Høyrup, 2012, Høyrup et al., 2018). Returning to this point of departure in the body of literature on inclusive innovation, Sengupta (2016, p. 12) argues that the main objective of inclusively oriented innovation practices "must be to enable and empower people at the periphery through awareness, accessibility and democratic deliberations rather than solely aiming at economic outcomes". He further argues that, for innovation to be pervaded by inclusiveness, it must include three Es, namely *enabling, empowering* and *entitling*. Sengupta (2016, p. 13) also emphasizes the importance of exercising caution when using the term *inclusion* "because it does not necessarily connote being included with equal dignity and respect". This echoes the shortcomings in the EDI literature that I have identified in this thesis, namely a lack of critical stances in scrutiny of EDI processes. The quotation above further suggests the significance of power-related mechanisms and relations, since the three Es are granted by, in this case, top-level management in the organization of EDI activities. This standpoint poses further questions concerning the management of EDI practices and whether new managerial doors need to be opened to avoid the old ways of controlling and managing employees in the innovation process. As new roles are formed in the social context, i.e. in the workplace, by giving employees autonomy in collaborative processes and by shifting managerial expectations of them, the question is how this managerial practice resonates with the empowering and supportive elements. One way to approach this issue is by studying how top-level managers talk about the EDI-oriented practices while simultaneously observing what is happening in practice. A key vantage point of this thesis is therefore the interaction between employees and managers in EDI work.

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the interaction between employees and managers in management-initiated EDI work in order to contribute to an increased understanding of the consequences of that interplay. In this way, both employees' and managers' roles are included in the theorization, which provides a dual emphasis, as opposed to existing EDI literature which tends to focus on managerial structures, tools, and their implications (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014). My intention is thereby to examine what a management-initiated invitation to employees imply in an intra-organizational employee innovation process. In turn, this objective enables me to critically and reflexively investigate the taken-for-granted assumption in EDI literature that participation by all is equivalent to a democratization of the innovation

process. The critical and reflexive stance (cf. Weber, 2003) is also crucial in order to clarify my role as a researcher in studying the given phenomenon, in an attempt to reflect on how my research endeavour shapes the research conversation about EDI.

To address the purpose of the thesis, two overarching research questions have been formulated:

> RQ1 *How are employees invited to participate in the employee innovation process?*
>
> RQ2 *What are the structural and behavioural implications of an invitation to participate in the employee innovation process?*

These two questions enabled me to address the issue of participation in terms of the interaction between top-down formulations of the formal employee innovation invitation and the bottom-up perceptions and responses of employees. Hence, the management-initiated invitation relates to *processes, intentions* and *structures,* and the four appended papers contribute in the following ways: Paper I provides an analysis of the existing literature on the topic of employee innovation and demonstrates shortcomings in relation to the management tools that are applied in the employee innovation *process*. It is therefore suggested that future research should focus on management tools and the context in which they are applied, meaning how the tools are supported by management practices in terms of routines, structures and incentives. Paper II addresses inclusive *intentions* formally set by the top-level management, and how these intentions manifest in practice when employees are encouraged to participate in innovation. It probes a research question about the behavioural implications of this top-down way of organizing the EDI process. Paper III further builds on inclusive *intentions* but extends the focus by studying the ideation *process*, which probes the question as to why some employees are more likely than others to participate in a centrally organized digital innovation programme. Lastly, Paper IV additionally brings the *structural* aspect to the table by studying how the roles of employees and managers are discursively formed as the innovation process unfolds and what impact the given employee innovation structure has on the perceived participation of employees.

Thesis outline

This thesis is composed of a collection of papers and consists of four appended papers. The papers are presented in chronological order, thus reflecting my research journey from the start to end points. While Paper I presents a review of the existing literature on the phenomenon of employee innovation, the remaining three papers are based on

the empirical case of a joint digital innovation programme at a global IT firm's Swedish operations. The remainder of this thesis unfolds as follows: Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background in terms of existing innovation definitions and the origins of innovation studies, followed by a section zooming in on the field of employee-driven innovation (EDI). Next, Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodological vantage points. This includes the methodological and theoretical lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which allows an exploration of the interaction between top-down formulations of the innovation invitation and the interpretation of this by employees. Chapter 3 elaborates further on the process of data analysis, provides an overview of the four studies, and ends with reflections and methodological considerations. Thereafter, Chapter 4 provides a summary of the four appended papers. Chapter 5 then describes the contributions of my research and provides a discussion of its findings, followed by Chapter 6 which elaborates on the implications of my research and provides suggestions for future research. Lastly, Chapter 7 presents concluding remarks.

Theoretical background

This chapter presents the literature that is of significance to the studied research phenomenon. To begin with, the term innovation is contextualised, and this is followed by a review of the field of innovation studies and its origins. Thereafter, I shed light on the theoretical developments in the field of employee-driven innovation, in which I give an account of the current limitations of the existing literature in order to clarify the potential for new contributions.

What does the concept of innovation imply?

Few terms appear more frequently in contemporary public discourse than the trope of 'innovation'. Innovations, and innovativeness, are topics highlighted by dedicated researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who actively try to explore different viewpoints and methods in order to reveal innovative potential in various contexts. Given the cross-disciplinary nature of innovation studies (cf. Baregheh et al., 2009; Damanpour and Schneider, 2006; Fagerberg et al., 2012), innovation can take on multiple meanings depending on one's point(s) of departure. Several scholars point out the lack of a unified definition of innovation across scholarly disciplines (cf. Baregheh et al., 2009; Ravichandran, 2000). However, attempts have been made to define innovation irrespective of its disciplinary and organizational context. Baregheh et al. (2009, p. 1334), for example, propose the following definition: "Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organizations transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace". This definition is close to the one proposed by the OECD (2005, p. 46) which is used frequently in the field of innovation studies: "An innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations". Innovation is therefore

not only restricted to a corporate context, but applies to other organizational contexts as well. However, this thesis focuses on the context of a firm.

The latter definition by the OECD suggests that the actual implementation of an idea is an integral part of innovation. According to traditional innovation management scholars, the delicate distinction between invention and innovation is key in characterising innovation. While invention refers to the *idea* of a product or process, the actual innovation is when this specific idea is put into use, i.e. when the idea is embodied in a product, service or process (Fagerberg, 2003). This suggests that the term innovation per se embraces the at least somewhat successful journey of an idea, in which it is assumed that the invention is refined and developed with a successful outcome (cf. Axtell et al., 2000; Foss et al., 2013; Glynn, 1996; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). What about ideas that fail along the journey of development and promotion, and how can we learn from the implications of such an ideation process? By the same token, by the time I entered the field and began the actual fieldwork, I was looking for the successful outcomes of innovation, i.e. how many ideas had been submitted by employees to the firm's joint digital innovation platform which had been launched within the organization. However, as time passed by, I was introduced to a different empirical landscape, namely ideas that failed somewhere along that journey. Most importantly, I was told the personal stories of the individuals behind these ideas, and how they perceived the process of generating and submitting ideas, and the subsequent journey of selection or rejection by the top-level management. This opened my eyes to the implications of the ideation process. At this point, my research gaze turned from successful bottom-up employee-innovation processes to the actual interaction between ordinary employees and top-level management in order to scrutinize the structural and behavioural implications of the employee innovation process.

Accordingly, this chapter will provide an account of my own personal journey of discovering the term innovation and my theoretical vantage point for addressing the ambiguity of success and failure in the context of a management-initiated ideation process. This starting point appears relevant for theoretical and practical reasons because, as Gripenberg et al. (2012, p. 1) highlight, the innovation field is dominated by an assumption that "'innovation is always good'". As a result, academic studies on the unintended and undesirable aspects and outcomes of the innovation process are rare. According to the authors, this shortcoming in the literature is referred to as the 'pro-innovation bias' which "limits the ability of decision makers and change agents to anticipate unintended and undesirable consequences" of innovative activities (p. 2). Despite the fact that the discussion of the one-sidedness of innovation studies has been on the agenda since the 1970s, the innovation field is still pervaded by the view that innovation resonates with positive results (Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016; Sveiby et

al., 2012). In order to be able to illuminate the implications of the innovation process to highlight undesired and unintended innovation aspects and outcomes, let us start with exploring the origins of the field of innovation studies.

The origins of innovation studies

Although innovation is a fashionable and flourishing term today, it has not always been a popular topic on the academic agenda (Fagerberg et al., 2012). It was not until the mid-1960s that the field of innovation began to gain traction when cross-disciplinary research centres were established (ibid). In this movement, disciplines such as economics, management, and sociology led the way with their initial contributions to innovation studies. Fagerberg et al. (2012, p.1132) defined innovation studies as "the scholarly study of how innovation takes place and what the important explanatory factors and economic and social consequences are". Parts of this definition date back to the early work of Schumpeter (1934), which has emerged as the standard characterization of the innovation phenomenon in the field (Fagerberg et al., 2012; Fagerberg, 2003; Fagerberg et al., 2004). Because innovation studies emanate from various academic disciplines, researchers tend to conceptualize innovation in different ways (cf. Gressgård et al., 2014; Read, 2000), and thereby 'innovation' can take on multiple meanings. Innovation studies do, to a large extent, rely on Schumpeter's emphasis on novelty (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Fagerberg et al., 2012). According to the Schumpeterian definition, innovation relates to novel outputs in terms of new products, processes, organizational methods, or markets (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010). This definition is positioned within the firm domain and outlines the differences between invention and innovation, the difference between product, process and organizational innovation forms, and the extent to which an innovation has a radical or incremental impact. Schumpeter's work also became a cornerstone in entrepreneurship literature because of his emphasis on the significant role of committed entrepreneurs to bring about innovation (Fagerberg et al., 2012; Landström et al., 2012). The connection between entrepreneurship and innovation literature is still prominent, as both relate to the processes of the identification, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities and novelties. However, Crossan and Apaydin (2010) point out that innovation studies would be well served by drawing on the findings of entrepreneurship literature to a greater extent in order to further advance knowledge of the individuals who become the sources of opportunities and facilitate processes of evaluation and exploitation.

In recent innovation studies, the Schumpeterian (1934; 1978) focus on "novelty that creates economic value" (cited in Voxted, 2018, p. 473) has shifted in an all-encompassing direction that promotes a wider and more diverse perspective on innovation. How a firm innovates can be versatile. In more up-to-date innovation studies, innovation entails the development of a new product or service, a new operation procedure, a new production technology or a new management strategy (cf. Damanpour, 1991; Liao et al., 2008). There is a wide variety of definitions of innovation, and Baregheh et al. (2009) identify 60 different definitions in their literature review. The common denominator, however, is the notion of 'new'. The newness may for instance relate to products, methods of production, organizational procedures, sources of supply, and exploiting new markets (Baggen et al., 2015). Instead of focusing on the dichotomous characterization of incremental and radical outputs of innovation, other theoretical perspectives have emerged that emphasise a "deeper and finer examination [that] highlights the multifaceted nature of innovations" (Haapasaari et al., 2018, p. 207). One example of such a nuanced view that has lately gained traction in academic innovation circles is the concept of inclusive innovation (cf. Levidow and Papaioannou, 2018; Lindberg, 2018; 2014; Lindberg and Berg Jansson, 2016; Sengupta, 2016). This concept is helpful here to clarify the ongoing need for, and interest in, a wider range of innovation sources, drivers, contexts and forms. Inclusive innovation has lately received increased attention from both researchers and practitioners as a way to find novel and enhanced solutions to complex organizational and societal issues (Lindberg, 2014). This concept assumes that these complex challenges are appropriately addressed when innovation involves a variety of forms, constellations and contexts. In broad terms, inclusive innovation refers to the involvement of currently marginalized groups in some aspect of innovation (Foster and Heeks, 2013). In particular, it promotes a wider range of participants and perspectives when scrutinizing who contributes to innovation, and how this process unfolds in terms of why and where novel solutions to existing needs are developed and implemented (Heeks et al., 2014; Lindberg, 2018). Thereby, the inclusiveness relates to both the processes and outcomes of innovation (Brundenius et al., 2016; George et al., 2012). Sengupta et al. (2012, p. 12) further point out that inclusiveness relates to democratization through its ability "to enable and empower people at the periphery through awareness, accessibility and democratic deliberations".

Employee-driven innovation (EDI)

Background to the EDI concept

In the past, the emphasis on employees in innovation studies has mainly been associated with R&D units and innovation-specific functions of the firm as the primary empirical context for exploring and investigating innovation constructs (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016). However, such traditional concepts are claimed to lack generalizability for different organizational forms and purposes (cf. Adams et al., 2006). To address this shortcoming in the literature, the field of employee-driven innovation (EDI) has emerged as a way to investigate a variety of sources and drivers of innovation (cf. Høyrup, 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Expressed in inclusive innovation terms, the EDI concept departs from a democratic view of who is able to contribute to innovation in the organizational setting. EDI was coined by Høyrup (2012) and denotes "the generation and the implementation of new ideas, products, and processes - including the everyday remaking of jobs and organisational practices, originating from interaction of employees, who are not assigned to this task" (Høyrup el al., 2018, p. 318). Another aspect that distinguishes EDI studies from traditional innovation literature is that the concept combines and interconnects the creative phases of idea generation with the later stages of idea development, promotion and implementation (cf. Deslée and Dahan, 2018; Høyrup; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Shalley et al. (2004, p. 934) demonstrate the importance of differentiating creativity from innovation. While creativity entails a process whereby employees share novel and useful ideas with each other and the management, it is not until an idea has been "*successfully* implemented" [italics added] that it is considered to be an innovation (cf. Axtell et al., 2000; Foss et al., 2013; Glynn, 1996; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). In addition, returning to the Schumpeterian dichotomous characterization of innovation as radical or incremental, the EDI field seems pervaded by both perspectives in its inclusive approach. While radical innovation implies fundamental changes in behaviour and organizational activities (Meyer and Allen, 1991), incremental innovation is associated with an extension of the current utilization of knowledge and resources when organizing and maintaining innovative activities (Davila et al., 2005). Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) and Smith et al. (2012) restrict EDI to radical innovation in terms of changing business models, while Høyrup (2012) instead emphasises its incremental features in terms of continuous individual and collective learning. The latter perspective thereby highlights changes in the everyday practices of employees, which redirects scholarly attention from the technological endeavour of innovation to the organizational processes embodying the phenomenon. Wihlman et al. (2014, p. 162) further stress that the limitation to

radical innovation is unnecessary "as incremental EDI can be useful and may also lead to radical innovation".

The concept of EDI hence demonstrates a systematic inclusion of employees without formal innovation roles (e.g. non-R&D and non-managerial employees) in innovation processes, also referred to as 'ordinary' employees by the existing literature (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Many EDI scholars consider the topic to belong to the wider perspective of non-technical, non-R&D and high-involvement innovation (cf. Aaltonen and Hytti, 2014; Deslée and Dahan, 2018; Høyrup et al., 2015). The spirit of EDI is "the generation and implementation of significant new ideas, products, and processes originating from a single employee or the joint efforts of two or more employees who are not assigned to this task" (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010, p. 66). Møller (2010, cited in Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2010) did another study that has spurred the discussion around what types of employees are included in the conceptualization of innovation. Møller studied European innovation policy from 2005-2009 and concluded that EU documents mainly focused on innovation professionals and researchers and thereby excluded the role of other types of employees.

The role of 'ordinary' employees and management support

Admittedly, traditional innovation literature has largely downplayed the role of ordinary employees (i.e. employees without a formal innovation role) in innovative activities at the expense of a focus on technological experts, innovation specialists, and R&D employees (cf. Høyrup 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018; Lindberg 2014; 2018). However, in the EDI field, ordinary employees are assumed to have hidden and significant innovation potential that can be exploited and made visible in order for the management to provide fertile ground for innovation (Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016). Amundsen et al. (2014) further categorize existing EDI literature according to two distinct streams, namely the implications of EDI and the conditions for EDI. The former focuses on outcome-oriented research in terms of the effects of EDI practices in organizations, for instance in relation to product quality and productivity. The latter strand of literature, on the other hand, explores the conditions and pre-requisites for successful EDI work. This relates to organizational arrangements and contexts in which the role of management support is highlighted as a main condition. In fact, a majority of papers in the EDI field suggest that this factor is crucial in employee innovation activities based on the results of empirical and conceptual studies carried out (cf. Amundsen et al., 2014; Buhl, 2018; Deslée and Dahan, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Voxted, 2018). However, how this management support is enacted as EDI practices are adopted is less clear from a theoretical point of view. In particular, the role of management in the interaction with employees in the social context under scrutiny

seems to be an understudied phenomenon, with all attention being focused on management structures while ignoring employees' participation in it (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014). If employees are "suitably managed, they will be committed to finding the appropriate solutions" (Klapalová, 2018, p. 492) is one example of how management support is assumed to be vital, yet it seems understudied in terms of how this interaction between employees and managers is enacted as part of a social context, i.e. the workplace. However, Deslée and Dahan (2018) and Kristensen (2018) suggest that the role of middle managers is crucial for management support being enacted.

Interactive components of EDI

The concept of EDI is portrayed as a participatory endeavour involving both managers and employees (Høyrup, 2012; Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2010). In contrast to the Schumpeterian entrepreneur and the tendency to analyze innovation processes "as an entrepreneurial activity guided by single strong individuals" (Hasu et al., 2014, p. 314), the innovative employee is highly dependent on the employing organization for enabling ideas to be developed, promoted and implemented (cf. Aaltonen and Hytti, 2014; Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016). Therefore, employee participation in EDI is commonly portrayed as a relational, contextual and dynamic phenomenon (Hasu et al., 2014). Building further on this interaction, Høyrup (2012) presents a typology of EDI that describes the concept as multilevel in nature, expressed as three orders. *First-order* EDI is an entirely bottom-up process where the initiative is introduced, developed and promoted by employees. *Second-order* EDI comprises a combination of bottom-up and top-down efforts in the innovation process, in which the employee may initiate a project that is later collaboratively developed with top-management's support and coordination. By contrast *third-order* EDI denotes an innovation process that is initiated by the management. Here, the employee is invited to contribute to an innovative activity, theme or challenge, which is defined and organized top-down. Taken together, this conceptual typology suggests that the interaction between employees and management can take different forms and it therefore seems important to understand the level of participation by both actors in order to generate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of employee innovation. However, the current state of the EDI literature is pervaded by an emphasis on managerial structures, tools and interventions, and this tends to overshadow how employees perceive and respond to that interaction (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014). The empirical context of this thesis (which will be explained in detail in the next chapter) resembles a third-order EDI structure in which the firm initiated and introduced an overall theme that formed the basis for the digital employee innovation process.

Although the EDI literature departs from an assumption that every employee has the potential to contribute to innovation, regardless of their professional role or educational background (cf. Aaltonen and Hytti, 2014; Amundsen et al., 2014; Deslée and Dahan, 2018; Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2010), it is rather unclear to what extent employees are able to participate in such processes and what this act of participation ultimately implies. Aaltonen and Hytti (2014, p. 160) argue that EDI research commonly "takes a positive view of the availability and willingness of employees to engage in innovative work" by examining mechanisms that allow this to happen. Given that EDI is commonly portrayed as a bottom-up activity that typically occurs outside formal job and role requirements, and consumes time in addition to that for which employees are officially paid (cf. Birkinshaw and Duke, 2013; Buhl, 2018; Chou and Walker-Price, 2018; Klapalová, 2018; Wihlman et al. 2014), it seems interesting to know more about how employees perceive and respond to EDI activities that are arranged in a top-down manner, previously referred to as third-order EDI (Høyrup, 2012). Foss et al. (2013, p. 299) demonstrate that "today's knowledge-based companies are characterized by autonomous employees with strong expertise" which gives employees a distinct role in the generation and realisation of new ideas. However, with new roles emerging, new expectations are also formed. Deslée and Dahan (2018, p. 327) pinpoint that "EDI is a policy by which companies expect to capture innovation from employees". This expectation is interesting from a theoretical point of view since few existing studies actually capture this new relational and power-oriented landscape that is established with the inclusion of new roles, expectations and knowledge at the workplace (Deslée and Dahan, 2018).

Power-related components of EDI

Akin to the study by Deslée and Dahan (2018), there are some other indications of power-oriented components of the EDI debate. Voxted (2018) reinforces the issue of employees being encouraged to generate ideas but without being "allowed to implement their ideas" (p. 474). However, the discussion about power dynamics in the paper remains on a superficial level where the author concludes that: "if the employer refuses to apply the employees' new skills, there will be a risk that employees lose trust and commitment" (p.480). Hence, this gives no deeper understanding of the interaction between the management and the employees, and the power dynamics involved. Similarly, Haapasaari et al. (2018) suggest that power relations are a significant focus since they shed light on factors that promote and prevent an employee initiative from being implemented. Although commonly overlooked in the field, Haapasaari et al. (2018) suggest that there are power relations involved in the interaction between the phases of idea generation and idea implementation. These two innovation phases are often separated, which prevents scholars from exploring and

understanding what factors influence the success, or failure, of employee initiatives. Also, Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) shed light on a potential "*power game*" (p. 78) [italics in original] when an EDI approach is adopted by organizations. According to the authors, EDI activities may be regarded as a loss of managers' power which can be perceived as "an attack on management's authority" (ibid). They therefore suggest that the EDI discussion would benefit from highlighting whether employees are "regarded as mere inferiors or as partners whose opinion is respected" (ibid). In light of these power dynamics, Sorensen et al. (2018) further conclude that the general attitudes of management need to be acknowledged in terms of how they perceive employee ideas – as a valuable contribution or as a loss of power.

Management tools in EDI

Taken together, not only is there an existing knowledge gap with respect to how the interaction between top management and ordinary employees is enacted in management-initiated employee innovation activities, as pointed out in Paper I (Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019), the employee innovation phenomenon is seldom scrutinized in terms of management tools for promoting and enabling such activities, particularly with regard to how such digital arrangements are combined with management practices such as supportive routines, structures and incentives. An exception in the field of EDI is the study carried out by Gressgård et al. (2014) which examined how organizations that adopt EDI strategies use information and technology (ICT) tools to enable employee innovation activities. Theorized from a knowledge management perspective, the authors conclude that the ICT-based tools need to be aligned with existing organizational structures and professional role conduct in order to be supportive in the processes of requisitioning, disseminating and exploiting employees' knowledge. "Failing to emphasize the organizational and social context in which ICT-based tools are applied reduces opportunities to exploit the advantages that the tools represent" (p. 645) shows the significance of taking the social context into account and thus not separating employee innovation activities from the context in which they are embedded. For this reason, the methodological and theoretical lens of critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) has been adopted in this thesis to enable an interconnected analysis of employee innovation discourse practices and the social context in which they are produced, distributed and consumed. This will be presented next.

Research design and methodology

This chapter highlights the methodological choices I have made on my research journey. To begin with, the methodological and theoretical lens of CDA is accounted for in terms of the value it adds to our understanding of how employee innovation is enacted in a management-initiated ideation process. The chapter then continues with a description of the overall research approach, including the basic assumptions I have departed from. Lastly, it demonstrates an overview of the four studies, followed by final reflections and methodological considerations.

Critical discourse analysis

In an editorial note derived from the conference proceedings of the Academy of Management in 2018, qualitative research was highlighted as a methodology that offers critical tools that encourage researchers to see things differently (Bansal et al., 2018). "By building theory inductively, research based on qualitative data offers insights that challenge taken-for-granted theories and expose new theoretical directions" (p. 1189). However, as the editors point out, there is a need for "more methodological diversity" (p. 1189) that goes beyond systematically coded data in case-based positivist research. With an aspiration and desire to encourage new ways of looking at management phenomena, the editors describe a variety of genres within qualitative research that scholars could embrace to a greater degree in order to advance theory that can unpack the complex societal and organizational challenges of today.

One of the genres suggested by the editors is discourse studies. There are many ways of conducting discourse studies and these can be understood as subgenres (Bansal et al., 2018). Examples of analysing organizational data with a discursive approach include conversation analysis, content analysis, narrative studies and critical discourse analysis (cf. Bansal et al., 2018; Phillips and Oswick, 2012; Vaara et al., 2016). The approach taken in this thesis is the latter, namely critical discourse analysis (CDA). To begin

with, this research endeavour mainly incorporated CDA as a methodological lens as portrayed in Papers I, II and III. However, in the later stages of my research journey, the CDA perspective transformed to become part of the theoretical framework explored in Paper IV with its analysis of how the roles of employees and managers are discursively formed, hence demonstrating the agency of ordinary employees as well as top-level managers. In the prior two empirical papers (II and III), the individual agency of employees was overshadowed by the role of managers as active producers of the discourse while employees became passive in their consumption of the same. This was the main rationale for designing the last study with a focus on bottom-up roles.

Moreover, CDA departs from the assumption that reality is socially constructed and this lens primarily aims to deconstruct and uncover meanings rather than to understand and explain causal connections (cf. Bansal et al., 2018; Fairclough, 2003). CDA offers a way of scrutinizing organizational and managerial phenomena through discursive practices. According to van Dijk (1993), the CDA lens highlights how text, talk and other types of verbal interaction form strategies and structures that shape power relations. CDA scholars investigate the rhetoric and meaning of texts in terms of how they are shaped by the power elite and their "discursive strategies for the maintenance of inequality" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). The CDA perspective is hence about the relationship between texts and the social context in which they are embedded, which is highlighted in Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework depicted below.
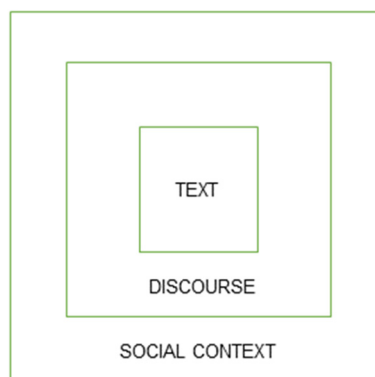

Figure 1.
Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA (Phillips et al., 2008)

CDA has multiple roots and emanates from the disciplines of literary studies, philosophy, text linguistics, social psychology, rhetoric and anthropology (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Hence, CDA departs from a broad scholarly background which

incorporates a diverse set of methods and phenomena for investigation. The term CDA is commonly applied interchangeably with Critical Linguistics (CL). In contrast to CL, CDA does not primarily draw attention to the literary unit of analysis. On the contrary, CDA emphasizes "*social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach*" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 2) [italics in original]. One of the main concepts that make CDA distinctive is the overall theme of power and ways of de-mystifying it by systematically exploring and examining written, spoken and/or visual empirical data. Wodak and Meyer (2009, p. 9) demonstrate that the Weberian definition of power represents the lowest common denominator for all CDA researchers: "power as the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others".

In this thesis, I draw on a definition of CDA that is based on Fairclough's (1995) framework depicted in Figure 1. It implies that language is regarded as a social practice through which the social context in which the language is used becomes significant for the studied discourse. Fairclough and Wodak (1997, cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009, pp. 5-6) summarize the essence of CDA in terms of a:

> dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power […]

CDA is thus based on the assumption that language, when seen as a social practice, is shaped by social structures while simultaneously changing and stabilizing it. Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework provides a means of exploring the imbrications between language and socio-institutional practices within broader social and political structures. It hence connects a micro perspective to a macro view. The framework allows an analysis of how practices are discursively accomplished, and particularly in this thesis how the roles of employees and managers are discursively formed, in order to clarify the methods and purposes of the firm in organizing the employee-oriented innovation programme. Fairclough (1995, p. 1-2) refers to power as "asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (…) in particular sociocultural contexts". According to van Dijk (1993), CDA particularly focuses on power abuse, which refers to activities in discursive practices that breach the rules and

principles of democracy and equality. Power and dominance are "more or less consciously or explicitly exercised or experienced" (p. 255), and many forms of dominance may appear natural until they have been challenged by counter perspectives. Fairclough's (1995) framework specifically emphasizes three levels of analysis, namely the analysis of texts (spoken or written), the analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption), and the analysis of how the discursive events are embedded in the social context (cf. Phillips et al., 2008).

Regarding the first dimension of text, it refers to how available discourses are combined and drawn upon in texts. In linguistic terms, the level of a text is analyzed by examining its texture, meaning the relationship between its form and content. It includes an examination of thematization, backgrounding and contrasts as ways to explore what is taken as given and presented as common sense for the audience of the text. Fairclough (1995, p. 6) explains that texts are "social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction". Based on Foucault (1972), Fairclough (1995, p. 6) pinpoints that texts "constitute systems of knowledge and belief (…) and in their interpersonal functioning they constitute social subjects (or in different terminologies, identities, forms of self) and social relations between (categories of) subjects". Concerning the second dimension of discourse, Fairclough (1995, p. 7) defines it as "the use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how text work within sociocultural practice". This dimension involves an analysis of processes of text production, distribution and consumption. The main point here is that texts should not be isolated from the discursive practices within which texts are embedded. Lastly, the third dimension of social context refers to the societal or institutional frame in which the texts are enclosed (cf. Phillips et al., 2008).

CDA in management-oriented research

The use of CDA is far from common in the field of innovation management. However, two CDA-oriented studies that I have been inspired by in this PhD project derive from the broader field of strategy and organization management. The first one is a conceptual study by Phillips et al. (2008) in which the authors apply a CDA lens to strategic management research. They argue that the production of texts is a "fundamental part of the construction of organizational reality" (p. 771) and hence suggest that CDA contributes to an increased understanding of meaning-making processes when language is used to formulate strategy and implement it. Their study departs from an assumption that social phenomena, like organizations, depend on a discursive construction of

diversified sets of concepts. When organizational members apply these concepts, they simultaneously make sense of their experiences within their institutional frame. Therefore, when the discourses that make up concepts are modified, the experiences of members may also change. This shows that the intermediate level of discourse, as seen in Figure 1, entails political acts when texts are produced and disseminated in the organization.

The authors further argue that the Foucauldian approach to discourse is helpful when analyzing and discussing the links between the dynamics of social systems and discourse. However, this viewpoint fails to address "the everyday processes of language use and meaning making" (p.771). Therefore, they suggest that Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework, depicted in Figure 1, allows an analysis of "the micro scale of everyday language use and the macro scale of social structure" (p. 771). By studying how texts are produced, distributed and consumed in a given social context under scrutiny, the authors argue that strategy formulation and strategy implementation can be concurrently combined. Thereby, returning to Figure 1, discourse provides the critical connection between the creation of texts and the effects of this act in the social context where the texts are embedded. In this way, the impacts of discourse at the level of social context can be explored.

Lastly, the authors point out that CDA is not by any means a straightforward methodological and theoretical lens that can be applied in disciplines outside linguistically dominated scholarly circles. To date, there are few standard models available for management researchers to follow in the CDA terrain. The authors thus underline that an application of the CDA lens to an organizational context is a skill that is mainly trained through the process of learning by doing. "Developing innovative data analysis techniques […] remains a final challenge facing researchers" (p. 787) is a statement that I truly agree with. I have been confused at times, but after applying my understanding of the CDA lens in each paper that was eventually accepted for publication (except Paper IV) has helped me to confirm that I am on the right track of discovering more about this intriguing lens.

The second conceptual study that I have been inspired by was written by Burns and Carson (2005). They wrote their piece of work for a chapter in a book that takes its starting point from a new agenda for CDA that highlights CDA's interdisciplinary nature. Burns and Carson combine institutional theory with discourse analysis and cognitive science in an interdisciplinary manner. Their vantage point is the organization, which is defined as a "complex of relationships, roles, and norms, which constitute and regulate recurring interaction processes among participants in socially defined settings or domains" (p. 284). Akin to Phillips et al.'s (2008) use of concepts in their CDA study, Burns and Carson highlight a rule regime that represents the rules

of the game, incorporating social relationships, roles and norms. This system determines "who may or should participate, who is excluded, who may or should do what, when, where and how it should be done, and in relation to whom" (p. 285). This indicates the establishment and maintenance of political structures and hence power that influences actors' rights and obligations, including their access to human and material resources. In this way, the rule regime gives organizational members a compass by which to orient to one another and provides a basis for them to organize and modify their interactions in order to frame and to respond to prevailing discourses in the organizational setting. Thereby, organizational members use their institutional knowledge of roles, relationships, norms, and procedures to guide their actions, perceptions and interactions.

Burns and Carson's focus of analysis is three subcomplexes that are referred to as components that together make up the institutional rule regime. Firstly, the *organizing* subcomplex consists of "the rules that define roles, relations, norms, and procedures" (p. 285). Secondly, the *discursive* subcomplex consists of the expressions and forms of institutional discourses that shape the organization and its performances. Thirdly, the *policy-paradigm* subcomplex is described as a cognitive-normative framework that belongs to an institution, used by actors in their interactions and judgements to identify problems and to define problem-solving solutions and strategies. This paradigm hence encompasses a set of beliefs, normative ideas, and classification schemes that are utilized when judging institutional processes and situations. Since the beliefs are based on a set of fundamental assumptions about reality that is shared by organizational members, the judgements that follow function as a justification and legitimization of actions.

If we briefly return to Phillips et al.'s (2008) conceptualization of Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework, Burns and Carson's policy paradigm seems related to the overall social context, which incorporates the "expressive sphere of culture to establish intersubjective meaning" (Phillips et al., 2008, p.782). Just as the social context shapes, and is shaped by, the discursive practices in Fairclough's framework, an institutional paradigm is communicated through discourse and manifested in social actions and interactions. "It is the framework through which they [organizational members] perceive and judge the world, and organize, understand, and regulate their activities in the institutional domain (Burns and Carson, 2005, p. 290). Burns and Carson refer to discourses as "written rule and laws, and basic socio-cognitive principles that define the location and characteristics of authority, and set(s) of institutional strategies and practices for dealing with specific types of problems and issues" (p. 290). This highlights that discourses express and articulate the policy-paradigm subcomplex. Most importantly, it raises the question of authority to shape discourse, meaning who is empowered to pass judgement or initiate necessary action on behalf of the organization.

From Burns and Carson's perspective, this is rooted in the social roles and norms within the organization. This process appears to be similar to Fairclough's (1995) dimension of discursive practices, in which the production, distribution and consumption of discourse reveal political structures and thus power relations. Combining Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, as conveyed in Phillips et al.'s study, with Burns and Carson's conceptual study, sheds light on the importance of studying underlying values, or operating assumptions as described in the latter study, when analyzing discourses in an organizational context.

Overall research approach

> Qualitative studies "*advances critical thinking and scholarship*" (Bansal et al., 2018, p. 1190) [italics added]

Qualitative studies

Bansal et al., (2018) describe qualitative research in terms of inductive theorizing. As opposed to quantitative studies that rely heavily on logical reasoning and numerical data that can be transformed into data displays that expand our understanding of existing and adjacent knowledge disciplines, qualitative studies represent another point of departure. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative research deduces new knowledge that can introduce new theory or guide existing theory in new directions. Bansal et al. (2018, p. 1190) further note that "inductive theorizing based on qualitative data are particularly appropriate in new or understudied empirical contexts where there is relatively little prior work".

One of the main arguments put forward by EDI scholars is that non-R&D and non-managerial employees still represent an underutilized source of knowledge in both innovation practice and theory (cf. Buhl, 2018; Høyrup et al. 2018; 2015). For the three empirical studies that comprise this thesis, a qualitative approach was chosen. With the overall research purpose of exploring and the interaction between employees and managers, a qualitative vantage point was preferred due to the lack of pre-established determinants of the interaction between organizational members at different hierarchical levels in EDI-oriented work. Qualitative inquiry allows an exploration of contextually grounded meaning-making processes in which the attitudes, desires, experiences and behaviours of informants can be accounted for (Mischler, 1986; Patton, 2015). The collected empirical material contains both written and spoken texts. Regarding the spoken text, 50 semi-structured and in-depth interviews have been carried out at the global IT firm's Swedish unit. Five interviews were

conducted with top-level managers, seven with middle-level managers, and the remainder with employees without any managerial or innovation responsibilities in their job descriptions. Except for the 20 face-to-face interviews carried out in the second empirical study (Paper III), the remaining interviews were conducted either on Skype or over the phone due to employees being geographically situated all over Sweden. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour depending on the availability of participants. Further demographic details about the informants will not be given here as anonymity has been granted.

Spoken and written text

Kvale (1983) suggests that interviews reflect interviewees' perceptions of the world by which individuals' actions can be made sense of. A purposeful sampling method was adopted as informants were selected based on the premise that they had been involved in either the organizing of the innovation platform or been participating by submitting ideas to it. By including employees with both winning and non-winning submissions (except in Paper IV in which the emphasis is on implemented ideas), information-rich cases were obtained (cf. Patton, 2015) where both successful and failed ideas were noted on my research agenda. This research design directed me to apply a critical gaze to the top-down organization and formulation of innovation in relation to the bottom-up participation and interpretation of the same. This empirical path then guided me to the CDA perspective, which allowed me to explore the interactions further. Thus, the insights that emerged while doing my fieldwork and collecting empirical data led me to re-think and modify the theoretical perspective as the research process unfolded. CDA was not on my theoretical agenda before entering the field. In fact, I had never even heard about the CDA approach before attending a course in qualitative studies. However, as I have learnt during this research endeavour, this is not an uncommon feature of qualitative inquiry which often requires a high level of flexibility throughout the entire research project. This was also one of the main challenges that I encountered on my research journey. Because I felt I had insufficient prior familiarity with different genres and theoretical approaches to be able to associate my empirical findings and place them in a theoretical context, it became an internal struggle to purposefully make decisions that aligned my research questions, empirical findings and analytical methods. However, after discovering CDA as a methodological approach, and thereafter as a theoretical approach, I experienced a relief that enabled me to dig deeper into the interactions between managers and employees in a more joyous manner.

Admittedly, interviews are seen as a key methodology to acquire knowledge of individuals, groups and organizations (Alvesson, 2003). Nevertheless, there are also reported shortcomings with interviews as the main source of empirical data. Silverman

(2007) highlights the risks of steering the informants in a desired direction with the choice of discussion topics during the conversation, and as a result the interviewee might only provide the information that s/he thinks is expected of her/him. To overcome this significant and potential hurdle, open questions were posed where participants in the three empirical studies could speak freely about their views on innovation, idea submissions, daily work routines, and ongoing projects. In this way, their own storylines defined the frames of the conversation, rather than being asked directly to define the formal innovation process and its key components. In each conversation, the interviewee had the opportunity to define their understanding of innovation according to their own personal views by giving examples of innovative and/or creative projects taking place both inside and outside their daily work environment.

Furthermore, Silverman (1993) points out that interviews generally provide more information about how informants think and talk about a particular subject rather than providing information about what is done in practice. The collected spoken data was therefore triangulated with written texts and observations. Please note that observations were only carried out in the study reported in Paper III as this comparative study took place at two Swedish offices of the global IT firm. The written texts that were collected for the three empirical studies were mainly derived from the firm's intranet where the innovation platform is found. The texts deal mostly with idea submissions, descriptions of idea details, comments from peers and superiors, evaluations, and idea ratings. This was the starting point of exploring how the management formulated idea invitations along with the background and content that the employee is required and expected to provide in order to be able to communicate an idea formally. I have also analyzed strategy documents, an internal podcast, and other texts that comprise inspirational material (both video material and written texts) that the innovation manager generously shared with me to explain the background to the employee innovation platform that started in 2014. I also arranged a workshop in February 2018 at one of the main offices of the firm where the innovation manager is based. This was a way for me to validate the findings reported in Papers II and III in order to prepare the ground for further discussions with employees and managers (cf. Torrance, 2012), which guided me to explore roles and expectations in Paper IV. Further validation was done by offering interviewees the opportunity to read the transcribed interviews to confirm their content. As well, continuous discussions were held with the innovation manager, especially concerning articles that were about to be submitted to journal outlets, to validate the findings and receive further feedback. This was also aligned with the NDA that I had signed before entering the field.

Process of data analysis

For the three empirical studies included in this thesis (Papers II, III, and IV)[1] the process of analysing the empirical material departed from Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) three modes of analysis: coding, condensation and interpretation. The coding process consisted of two parallel processes. The codes that emerged from the collected empirical material (in-vivo codes) were compared to themes identified in the existing literature (a priori categories). Here, the initial mapping study of the existing literature on the topic of employee innovation, presented in Paper I, served as a building block for the a priori categories formed. These included: innovation as a process versus innovation as an outcome, the role of ICT tools, idea generation versus idea implementation, ordinary employee innovation activities versus superior decision-making activities, autonomy versus authority, top-down versus bottom-up, interactions, selecting and developing ideas, hierarchical roles, and leadership.

As for the remaining three studies, a number of dichotomous in-vivo codes were identified in relation to the interaction between managers and employees when promoting innovation activities and participating in them. These dichotomous codes include success/failure, inclusion/exclusion, individual/collectivistic, client focus/employee focus, short-term/long-term, profitability/engagement, hidden innovation/visible innovation, separation/togetherness, resistance/acceptance, formal assignments/innovation, identity/activity, being/doing, culture/structure.

In order to compare and contrast a priori categories with in-vivo codes to enable pattern discernment and insights, the CDA lens was applied. This enabled a structured reading of the empirical findings in light of the interaction between managers and employees in terms of three specific categories, namely production, distribution and consumption/interpretation of the EDI discourse. The second phase of condensing the data encompassed activities involving structured readings, re-readings and writing of the thematically structured data in order to emphasize the tensions that were emerging from the analysis of the interaction between the top-down organization of employee innovation activities and the bottom-up response to these activities. Hence, this analytical process consisted of iterative steps of coding, data reduction and analysis where I constantly revisited interviewees' perceptions and interpretations of the innovation process organized by the firm to enable a modification of empirical conceptualizations without getting caught in the political nature of CDA that

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[1] Please note that the nature of Paper I is a mapping study and hence includes specific steps for analyzing existing employee innovation literature. For additional details, please see Bäckström and Bengtsson (2019).

commonly assumes inequality to be present in each situation. The CDA lens hence allowed a comparison of how top-level managers centrally organized the employee innovation activities, including the intentions behind and promotion of it, with employees' perceptions of and reactions to this process. Lastly, in the third phase, the condensed data was interpreted in the light of present EDI literature to allow me to position the findings and make a solid contribution to the field.

Overview of studies

After the initial study (Paper I) that enabled an overview of the existing literature on the topic of employee innovation, the following three empirical studies reported in Papers II, III and IV were all based on the same empirical setting. I explored and investigated a global IT firm's Swedish operations for three years, beginning in late 2016 and ending in mid-2019 when I completed the last interviews. The IT firm's Swedish unit introduced a joint digital innovation platform in 2014. The platform is an idea management system (IMS) which aims to invite employees to submit creative and valuable ideas. By submitting an idea, the employee makes it visible and available for all peers and superiors in the organization to rate and comment on. This joint digital innovation platform hence functions as a way for the top-level management to collect employee ideas based on certain themes that are considered key areas for current and future success, such as sustainability, health care, and digitalization. Each employee idea reaches a certain level of activity based on its ratings, comments, responses and self-assessment. After that, a team of experts, which is selected by the innovation manager, evaluates and assesses the idea. The formal employee innovation process is illustrated in Figure 2 below. Of all ideas (normally around 30 in total for every innovation invite), typically two or three "winners" are selected, with their ideas being announced and promoted at the top of the webpage on the intranet. Whether the winning employee ideas receive funding or not is determined by clients' willingness to fund parts of the formulated project, and whether the board of directors approves of the funding proposal. Additionally, all winning ideas have the opportunity to prove their global reach by presenting them to the global board for further evaluation and feedback.
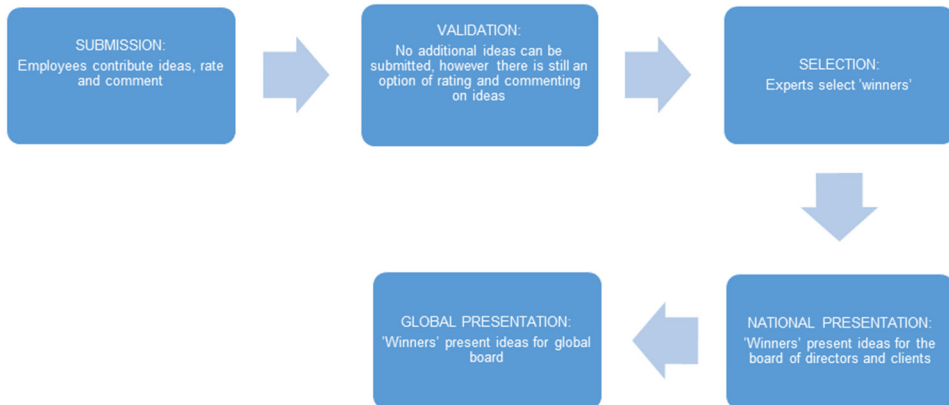
Figure 2
Components of the formal employee innovation process at the global IT firm's Swedish units.

In order to provide an overview of the structure and content of each paper, a summary is given in Table 1 below. The table is confined to the overall purpose and a brief description of the methodology adopted, including the number of interviews for each empirical study. The following chapter provides more details on the background to each study, and each study's findings and contributions.

Table 1
Overview of studies

Paper	I Mapping study	II Empirical study	III Empirical study	IV Empirical study
Overall purpose	Provides an overview and analysis of the existing literature on employee innovation. Proposes that future employee innovation research could shed light on successful as well as failed employee ideas to enable the inclusion of undesired and unanticipated mechanisms in the process. A question is also posed on how the use of ICT tools enable or disable this process when combined with management support or lack thereof.	The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which ordinary employees are included in the ongoing digital innovation programme at the global IT firm's Swedish unit. The employee innovation process is examined by analyzing how the top-level management organizes the generation and promotion of employee ideas and what the behavioural implications of this process are.	Based on fieldwork at two separate offices of the IT firm's Swedish operations, this comparative study analyses why some employees are more likely than others to participate in a centrally organized digital innovation programme. Thus, it includes the role of top-level management as well as middle-level managers, ordinary employees and the ICT tool in the interaction.	The purpose of this study is to examine EDI in terms of the roles manifested by employees and managers as the innovation process unfolds. Unlike the prior two empirical studies that have a slight overemphasis on the managerial production of the discourse and its implications, this study puts more emphasis on employees' consumption (i.e. interpretation) of the discourse and the roles formed when the top-level management's expectations of their employees are analyzed.
Methodology	Following explicit methodological criteria for systematic mapping studies (cf. Petersen et al. 2008; 2015)	20 semi-structured interviews with employees. Interview data is triangulated with an analysis of written texts including texts accessed from the firm's intranet and strategy documents.	20 in-depth and face-to-face interviews that were triangulated with observations at the two offices and an analysis of text material consisting of texts derived from the intranet, internal podcasts, and strategy documents.	16 semi-structured interviews of which four interviews are derived from Study II and two interviews from Study III. Interview data is triangulated with written texts consisting of intranet publications and strategy documents.
My contribution	Study design, data collection, methodological framing (CDA), and analysis.	Study design, data collection, methodological framing (CDA), theoretical framing (EDI), and analysis.	Study design, data collection, methodological framing (CDA), theoretical framing (ideation literature and EDI), and analysis.	Single authorship.
Co-author's contribution	Theoretical framing (dynamic capability framework) and analysis.	Theoretical framing (inclusive innovation) and analysis.	Analysis	No co-author.

Reflections and methodological considerations

As shown thus far in this thesis, CDA concerns the relationship between language and the formulation and implementation of the EDI practice. It is crucial to note that I mainly used CDA as a methodological lens in order to categorize the collected empirical material in order to be able to capture the interaction between the top-down formulation and arrangement of the EDI process and the bottom-up perception of, and response to, the same. However, there is much more to CDA than methods of data collection and analysis. "CDA is a mode of critical inquiry where theory and methodology are inherently linked to one another" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2010). Hence, this lens also provides a theoretical framework for exploring and explaining organizational reality in which the theme of power is central (cf. Phillips et al., 2008). Here, I want to point out that power was never the vantage point when I designed and conducted my studies. Rather, I see power as a consequence of the interaction that I am studying, which is evident in the three empirical studies carried out (Paper II, III, and IV). However, in Paper IV my intention was to emphasize CDA as a theoretical lens to be able to address how the roles of employees and managers are discursively shaped. For me, it was natural to use CDA as a methodological lens at the outset of the studies. My impression is that CDA researchers often enter the field with the notions of inequality and abuse of power in mind, which is an approach that I fail to identify with as a researcher. I entered the field with less judgement and more curiosity concerning the mechanisms involved in the interaction between employees and managers in the management-initiated innovation process. Therefore, I needed a lens that provided tools for exploring this interaction further, in order to be able to make a solid contribution to the EDI field. I chose CDA because it offered a way to explore the interaction in terms of how the innovation discourse was produced, distributed, and consumed via the joint digital innovation platform at the IT firm.

Another important reflection based on what has been described in this chapter is that Fairclough (1995) treats language as a form of social practice by which he links micro-scale language use with the macro scale of social structure (Phillips et al., 2008). Unlike traditional CDA scholars who tend to focus on discourse in relation to macro-sociological forces (cf. Green Jr and Li, 2011), I have focused on the context of the firm and the intra-organizational employee innovation process as my macro dimension. Thus, I have not moved beyond this boundary to explore the EDI discourse in relation to the macro-sociological perspective. This means that I have not focused on the subject positions and the processes of legitimation in and through the EDI discourse from a societal perspective in order to explain the ideological underpinnings of the EDI discourse as a body of knowledge and praxis. Thus, my intention with this thesis and

its vantage point is not to scrutinize the EDI discourse in terms of how it is being operationalized in new workplace genres (ways of communicatively interacting) and styles (discursive facets of the identities of EDI workers). Rather, my point of departure was the fieldwork where I observed and noted an interaction between top-level management and employees that I wanted to explain in terms of how the EDI process was formulated top-down and experienced bottom-up, including the consequences of that interplay.

Furthermore, it is important to point out that the management practice of EDI that I am exploring is manifested in written texts such as strategy documents. However, in the spoken data (interviews), I am not accessing the management practice per se, but the informants' experiences of it. This calls for a clarification of the concepts of text, discourse and practice that underpin this thesis. As pointed out by Vaara (2010), access to written text in the form of strategy documents provides empirical data for exploring the practice. Apart from the strategy documents, I have also accessed written texts on the IT firm's innovation platform where employees and managers digitally interact by submitting, rating and evaluating employee ideas. Contrary to the written text, the spoken text in terms of the interview material reflects the practice and gave me access to informants' experiences of participating in the employee innovation process. The role of the researcher thereby becomes central as I am interpreting informants' experiences and co-producing the interview data through the choice of topics and questions. Finally, yet importantly, the dimension of EDI discourse represents my analysis of the employee innovation process in which I produce a scholarly discourse that is shared with my scholar peers through journal publications and other scholarly outlets.

Lastly, since I am a co-producer of text in the interview setting, and a producer of knowledge when I analyze and communicate the findings of my studies, a reflexive stance is important. This is especially important when applying the lens of CDA since this school of thought is pervaded by a de-mystification of power through systematic analysis of texts (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2010; Phillips et al., 2008; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). This calls for a transparency regarding my own position while remaining self-reflective in the research process (cf. Wodak and Meyer, 2009). In this context, I refer to reflexivity as the process of reflecting on, and understanding, assumptions, perspectives, and biases that underlie one's research (Weber, 2003). One example from the studies carried out in this thesis is that Paper II and Paper III have an emphasis on the agency of managers, as they are portrayed as the primary producers and distributors of text. Agency is a significant issue in CDA because it illuminates the actors who are successful and skilled at producing convincing texts (Green Jr and Li, 2011). Hence, there are agents that actively and strategically deploy language to shape

discourse. This is the rationale behind the study design of Paper IV, namely, to avoid treating employees as passive consumers of the EDI discourse and instead illuminate the ways in which they try to challenge the top-down produced innovation discourse and its consequences in terms of enacted roles as the innovation process unfolds. Another interesting reflection is the notion of 'ordinary' employees, which is how the EDI literature tends to denote employees who are not assigned to innovation tasks but participate in innovation by generating, developing, promoting and implementing ideas. In my vocabulary, I would prefer to call them 'extraordinary' due to their engagement outside the formal job descriptions. In my world and head, this label shapes a discourse of the EDI worker as the new 'normal', meaning that generating and developing ideas is expected of you. This is an example of how important it is that scholars choose their words wisely and with less judgement in order to produce scholarly texts that are understandable for their audiences. This also raises the question as to why the field and concept is labelled employee-driven innovation instead of employee innovation. Bengtson and I have marked this distinction in Paper I, in which we map and define the phenomenon of employee innovation. Just like Høyrup's (2012) typology suggests, employee ideas are "driven" in various ways depending on where the idea originates. Whether this label insinuates that employees are expected to drive, in terms of developing, promoting and implementing, idea projects on their own, or in collaboration with the management, is not always easy to understand from reading EDI-labelled papers.

Summary of appended papers

This chapter comprises a summary of the four appended papers that build the foundation of my thesis. The title of each paper is stated, along with a brief background to the study and its main findings and contributions. The papers are presented in chronological order to reflect my research journey and to account for the progress made.

Paper I

Title: A mapping study of employee innovation: proposing a research agenda

Discussion about employee participation in innovation is prevalent in various scholarly fields such as psychology, human resource management, strategy, technology management, economics, and marketing. While previous scholarly literature favours a focus on employees with innovation-specific roles, such as R&D positions, more recent studies suggest that non-managerial and non-R&D workers play a significant role as sources and drivers of innovation. However, to date, limited attention has been given to 'ordinary' employees in the scholarly sphere of innovation management. To be able to explore the phenomenon of employee innovation across several scholarly fields in order to propose a relevant research agenda for future studies, a mapping study was performed. This enabled an exploration of how the employee innovation phenomenon is portrayed in the existing scholarly literature, including current shortcomings in its conceptualization.

The findings reported on in Paper I describe five main themes that shape the employee innovation discourse: employee innovative work behaviour, firm innovation performance, employee innovation processes, frontline service employees, and management tools for employee innovation. Based on the theoretical lens of dynamic capability, the analysis reveals, for instance, that a majority of the studies take on either an individual or organizational level of analysis, but with fewer examples of studies that connect the interaction between the two. In addition, while a large proportion of the mapped studies focus on exploiting the idea generation phase and the collection of employee ideas, they have a scattered view of the later stages of the innovation process.

Therefore, the main contribution of the study is to propose a definition of employee innovation. It highlights the stages beyond idea capture, which reinforce the activities of selection, development, and value capture of innovative ideas:

> Employee innovation is the process connected to the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, marketing method, or organizational method in business practices, workplace organization, or external relations, involving non-managerial and non-R&D employees in a management-supported, interactive, and/or spontaneous process.

By contributing this definition along with a proposed research agenda for future studies, we acknowledge that the stage of implementation is central for an innovation to be considered a successful outcome. Simultaneously, innovation as a process is highlighted and thereby also the implications that may arise as the idea journey unfolds. Since innovation is a trial-and-error activity, some ideas will not reach the later stage of implementation. Hence, failed and unsuccessful ideas that lead to unintended and undesired outcomes can provide equally important insights regarding the implications of the innovation process, particularly concerning the use of ICT tools when combined with management support or lack thereof.

Paper II

Title: Behavioural implications of employee-driven innovation - A critical discourse analysis

Innovation is widely acknowledged as a critical engine of growth and is argued to be the lifeblood of firms' survival (Zahra and Covin, 1994). The traditional focus on the role of R&D as a model for innovation in knowledge-intensive organizational contexts has shifted in recent years. The underlying approach to innovation today includes a wider range of sources and drivers in the innovation process. Design-driven innovation (cf. Verganti, 2008; Battistella et al., 2012), open innovation (cf. Chesbrough, 2003; Chesbrough et al., 2006), customer-based innovation (cf. Ulwick, 2002; Desouza et al., 2008), and end-user innovation (cf. von Hippel 1988, 2005; Franke and Shah, 2003) are some examples of perspectives that shed light on the different foci of and variations in innovation. This shift in scholarly gaze is also emphasized in the body of literature on inclusive innovation. In this scholarly sphere, a diverse set of innovators and innovations are recognized in the development of new solutions to perceived needs. One group of innovators that has been overshadowed in the past by the traditional focus on technological experts in a firm's context is ordinary employees, meaning employees without an innovation-specific or managerial function. This phenomenon is hence referred to as employee-driven innovation (EDI) and is recognized as belonging to the broader scholarly streams of non-R&D innovation and high-involvement

innovation (Høyrup et al., 2015; Tidd et al., 2005). In this study, a digital employee-oriented innovation programme at a global IT firm was examined. The vantage point is the notion of the democratization of innovation in the exploration of the extent to which ordinary employees are included in the employee innovation process. To fulfil this objective, a CDA lens was applied to enable an investigation of the interaction between the top-down organization of the EDI processes and the behavioural implications of this innovation set-up.

By interviewing managers as well as employees with both selected and rejected ideas (along with examining archival data), the findings demonstrate the top-level management's production of an innovation discourse that incorporates a rhetoric mantra of "we are all innovators". This inclusive mantra however takes shape along with the "single winning entrepreneur" discourse, which has an excluding element such that the single employee is responsible for promoting her/his idea in a successful direction. By applying a CDA perspective, this paper contributes to existing EDI literature by using an interactive approach to scrutinize how top-level management produces and distributes the employee innovation discourse, and simultaneously how this organization of the EDI process is perceived by the employees. Thus, behavioural implications are explored, since both winning and non-winning employees tend to show a declining willingness to submit additional ideas. In this way, power structures are manifested since the employees lack the ability to reshape the entrepreneurially influenced discourse.

Paper III

Title: Varying involvement in digitally enhanced employee-driven innovation

Since the turn of the millennium, the pervasive adoption of digital technologies has dramatically transformed the way firms perform innovative activities. Within this context, digital innovation management has been defined as "practices, processes, and principles that underlie the effective orchestration of digital innovation" (Nambisan et al., 2017, p. 224). The innovation process itself is further portrayed as uncertain, iterative, context-specific and interactive (cf. Franklin et al., 2013, Hüsig and Kohn, 2009). In the organizational realm, the use of ICT tools is described as an invention technology in organizational processes that, together with its management, represent significant managerial challenges (cf. Koutroumpis et al., 2017; Agostini et al., 2018). While the existing literature on the digitalization of the innovation process tends to focus on the social, geographical, organizational and technical thresholds relating to the innovation process and outcomes, few studies provide an in-depth explanation of "how and why digital technologies can be used by companies to improve or manage the innovation process" (Agostini et al., 2018, p. 1). In this paper, ICT tool specifically

refs to a web-enabled tool for collecting and selecting employee ideas. The purpose of the study is to advance knowledge about the mechanisms behind, and the implications of, varying levels of employee involvement in digitally enhanced EDI by studying how the IT firm integrates the web-based tool in the organization of its EDI processes. A CDA perspective was applied to a comparative analysis of one high-performing and one low-performing office of the global IT firm.

This study contributes to the EDI literature by adding a CDA perspective that sheds light on how the difference in the number of submitted employee ideas from the two investigated offices relates to the interaction between the top-down production of the EDI discourse and how this is distributed and consumed locally by managers and employees. By doing so, structural and behavioural implications related to the employee innovation process are highlighted. At the low-performing office, the structural implications involve middle-level managers' separation of EDI activities from daily work, which restricts employees' utilization of the web-based tool. The behavioural implication of this finding is accordingly that employees feel hampered by the given structures, which then reduces the number of submitted ideas to the centrally organized innovation platform. By contrast, at the high-performing office, the middle-level managers act as co-distributors of the digital tool in a way that reshapes the innovation discourse and makes it accessible to employees who are supported by the given structures rather than being constrained by them. Hence, this study contributes to an understanding of how middle-level managers can be a threshold for achieving a democratized employee innovation process where employee participation is stimulated. In this, the CDA lens allows an exploration of the interactions between top-level managers, middle-level managers, and employees, which sheds light on the power structures that shape the structural and behavioural implications.

Paper IV

Title: Enacted roles in digital employee-driven innovation: Insights for research and management

The existing literature on EDI departs from the assumption that all employees, regardless of their assigned role, education or background, have the ability to contribute in-depth expertise about workplace matters. According to Aasen et al., (2012), this assumption is deeply rooted in Scandinavian working life traditions, where the inclusion of ordinary employees in various development activities has been considered a significant source of knowledge. The effort to mobilize employee participation is also marked by the adoption of ICT tools which invite employees to share and submit ideas concerning their workplace. Physical suggestion boxes have now been replaced with

digital ideation tools that encourage more members of the organization to participate in innovation (cf. El-Ella et al., 2013; Poetz and Schreier, 2012).

Unlike prior EDI studies that tended to emphasize managerial structures and their implications (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014), this study explores how the roles of employees and managers are discursively shaped by managerial structures. In addition, the implications for employees (as opposed to the implications for management) are highlighted in the context of EDI. By applying a CDA as a methodological and theoretical lens, the interaction between employees and managers is the unit of analysis by which the perceptions and responses of employees are demonstrated, since their roles are shaped by the expectations formed in this managerial and social context of adopting EDI practices. Thereby, this study shines new light on the power-related implications of the organization of EDI activities and highlights discrepancies with regard to how the top-level management promotes innovation activities and the employee roles that are formed as a result of these structures. This tension results in power struggles at both the collective and individual levels as the employee innovation process unfolds. Hence, this study contributes to the EDI literature by adding a CDA perspective to the analysis and discussion of employee participation and agency in innovation. This methodological and theoretical lens also reinforces the role of the researcher and her/his individual awareness of how s/he shapes the employee innovation discourse in scholarly spheres. This is the reason why I have highlighted the research proposition of adding the implications for employees to the managerial perspective to further enhance and balance the power mechanisms in the context of EDI.

Contributions and discussion

In this chapter, I shed light on the doors that I have opened with the four studies performed in this research project by referring to the knowledge that I have acquired and how this contributes to the existing body of literature on employee-driven innovation. By returning to the research questions, I provide an account of how the four studies contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the employee innovation phenomenon and why this is of significance in relation to the existing literature on the topic.

Revisiting the research questions

As been mentioned earlier in this thesis, one of the main shortcomings in the existing EDI literature is the emphasis on managerial structures, tools and interventions. The analysis of its implications for management tends to overshadow the other side of the coin, namely employees' perceptions of and responses to the given EDI structures that frame their ability to participate in the innovation process (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014). In order to allow an analysis of the interaction of the top-level management's formulation and organization of EDI activities and employees' interpretations of and responses to this structure, a CDA lens was applied. A CDA perspective adds a new perspective to understanding the interaction between employees and managers in third-order EDI (cf. Høyrup 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018). It extends the existing conceptual typology by offering a way to theorize the interaction between employees and managers. As been noted in the introductory chapter, I define interaction as the interplay between top-level management's way of arranging the EDI process and the bottom-up response of employees to this specific set-up. By addressing the agency of both employees and managers in that interaction, I am able to explore power relations as an outcome of that interaction. Thus, the following two research questions have guided this thesis:

RQ1 How are employees invited to participate in the employee innovation process?

RQ2 What are the structural and behavioural implications of an invitation to participate in the employee innovation process?

How are employees invited to participate in the employee innovation process?

The EDI approach entails the ambition to democratize innovation (cf. Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2010; Laviolette et al., 2016). This assumption builds on the expansion of the numbers of potential innovators in theory and practice, by inviting employees without formal innovation roles and responsibilities to contribute ideas and be in charge of the development, promotion and implementation of these ideas throughout the ideation process. All employees are therefore encouraged to contribute irrespective of their level of education, background or current position in the organization. Although ordinary employees (i.e. non-R&D and non-managerial) are invited to engage in innovation beyond their day-to-day tasks, it is less clear from a theoretical point of view what this participation means in practice. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) explain employee participation in terms of a license that is granted by the management, which "allows employees to step out of their defined role" (p. 75) to devote time to an idea or project. Here, managers are depicted as partly decision-makers who are in a position to grant such a license, partly as mentors to support employees to succeed with their innovative projects.

Along with this role description of managers, Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) also highlight employee participation in terms of a "*power game*" (p. 78) [italics in original]. The authors question whether employees are "regarded as mere inferiors or as partners whose opinion is respected" (ibid). This discussion is centred around the loss of managers' power and prestige while employees' initiatives are gaining ground, and the risk of this structure being perceived as "an attack on management's authority" (ibid) since employees' ideas may question current practices in the organization. Therefore, Kesting and Ulhøi pose the question as to why management acts in a certain way, in particular whether this is done to genuinely engage employees in innovation or to safeguard their own interests in order to shore up their existing positions.

The assumption that the EDI process entails democratic deliberations for employees is questioned in Papers II, III and IV. This calls for a closer look at what employee participation really means in practice. In the studied case of the global IT firm's Swedish

operations, Paper II (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018) shows that the initial submission phase of the employee innovation programme shapes the discourse in an inclusive manner. The top-level management invites all employees to come up with ideas that are based on a certain theme, which is defined top-down. Strategy documents reveal that this EDI programme is an "employee engagement practice" and a way for the firm to collect "valuable ideas originating from employees". Another internal document states that the innovation programme is motivated by the intention to "capture valuable business ideas by an internal collaboration in which all areas of the business align together and actively participate". One additional example of a strategic document that reinforces the collective and inclusive elements of the employee innovation process is:

> The tool is designed to expose ideas to the "wisdom of the crowd". As an idea is evaluated by a diverse group of people, their support for it (or lack thereof) helps us decide whether to further develop the idea or not. This type of community feedback is invaluable in making wise investment decisions (Strategy document)

However, in the later phases of the innovation programme, new roles begin to emerge. With these new roles, additional expectations are delineated as demonstrated in Papers II and IV. Once the innovation programme reaches the stage of idea selection, the excluding elements of the process come to light. The structure of the programme only allows for a few "winners" who are announced at the top of the firm's intranet page for innovation activities. Innovation is hence not only produced in an excluding manner but also distributed to employees in a similar manner. An example of the distribution of the excluding discourse via the innovation programme is that only the winners receive further feedback on their ideas. The other employees, denoted 'non-winners' in Paper II, receive no feedback at all. One employee comments:

> I did not receive any feedback […] I would like to know why [my idea was rejected] Then I mean… not just an automatic email saying 'Thank you for your idea, but unfortunately it was not selected for further screening', I want to have an explanation why (Employee)

Withholding feedback from non-winner employees can be seen as a manifestation of top-management's power to disregard one group of participants. This manifestation of power can also be seen in an internal document that provides a guide for all employees who take part in an innovation invitation:

> Your role in the […] community determines which activities you can perform and the value of your participation. For instance, an expert comment on an idea is valued more highly than the comment of a "regular" member (Internal document)

This quotation reinforces power structures as there is an apparent hierarchy of value that is clearly not in favour of the employees for whom it is argued that the programme is designed for. This strongly contradicts the innovation manager's definition of the purpose of the community, namely to engage employees and encourage participation by all. Paradoxically, the voices of ordinary employees seem to be valued less than experts', which emphasizes the rule regime in the organization (cf. Burns and Carson, 2005). Additionally, in the same internal document, the roles of employees and experts are presented and described. The role of the employee is characterized by the "basic community role with the following privileges". Thereafter a bullet list follows:

-Read and post ideas and comments

-Rate or comment on an idea

-Participate in general discussions about one or more ideas

(Internal document)

The expert, on the other hand, enjoys "all the privileges […] plus the rights to evaluate ideas" (Internal document). Referring to "privileges", how the EDI discourse is shaped top-down is pertinent to the discussion in terms of the democracy of innovation and its inclusiveness (cf. Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018; Laviolette et al., 2016). On the one hand, the management invites all employees to post ideas on the platform as well as rate each other's ideas. On the other hand, this participation does not seem to include any specific rights in practice to make their voices heard unless they adhere to yet another rule: clients' needs and wants. The dichotomy of clients versus employees, which I referred to in the methodology chapter, is a central building block of the management's production of EDI discourse. In order for employee ideas to be considered as "valuable business ideas" by experts, they need to be aligned with the firm's business model. When posting ideas on the innovation platform, employees are directed by certain guidelines. These guidelines include a description of how a specific idea would add value to the firm and how it would generate value for the firm's client(s). This means that a submitted idea "must show, in theory or in practice, that it has the potential to give clients economic, social or environmental results" (Internal document). This means that an employee idea needs to adhere to clients' needs and wants in order for the employee to be able to access resources for further refinement and development of that idea, which is yet another example of an excluding element that can be contrasted to the inclusive discourse that the top-level management conveys in written and spoken text. However, in practice the discourse forms a social context in

which employees' mandate to act by posting ideas is based on a rigid rule regime derived from potential economic value:

> The most important thing is that we focus on our clients' needs and challenges (Internal podcast)

> We should generate ideas that generate significant value for our clients (Internal podcast)

> share ideas and develop solutions with clients' operations in mind (Strategy document)

The former two quotations above are derived from an internal podcast with the aim of informing employees about the innovation platform. They show how the top-level management puts its main emphasis on clients rather than employees in the innovative activities pursued. The social context is therefore pervaded by economic values rather than employee satisfaction. This is a paradox since the EDI approach embraces employees as the starting point of innovation (cf. Buhl, 2018; Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016; Høyrup 2012; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Laviolette et al., 2016). As highlighted in Paper III, in practice there seems to be an exclusive emphasis on clients' perceptions and priorities. This finding is paired with the dichotomies short term/long term and profitability/engagement. Two employee comments are given below:

> [...] the frames of [innovation] are always expressed in monetary terms [...] they want the money not today or tomorrow but rather yesterday (Employee)

> if we have a top-level management that really thinks that it's important to nurture our ideas [...] then they must also try to practice what they preach in everyday practices (Employee)

These two quotations are examples of how employees consume, i.e. interpret, the EDI discourse. It reinforces that the short-term profitability perspective is prioritized in practice, which stands in contrast to the long-term employee engagement focus that top-level management seem to want to convey in many of their written and spoken texts.

However, Paper III (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2019) shows that the extent to which employees are included in the innovation process depends on how middle-level managers reshapes the EDI discourse. The comparison between the high-performing and low-performing offices reveals that the middle-level managers at the latter site discourage their employees from utilizing the web-based innovation platform because they primarily prioritize current client projects. By so doing, they adhere to the short-term profit perspective upon which their results are measured and evaluated. Contrary

to the low-performing office, the middle-level managers at the high-performing office consume the employee innovation discourse in a different light. Instead of being restricted by the generation of short-term profits, the middle-level managers at this site act as co-distributors of the digital tool by integrating innovation activities in daily work. They actively promote, encourage and exhibit mutual trust when they genuinely invite employees to participate in both digital as well as physical meetings where employees are able to air ideas and receive feedback before taking the next step of submitting the idea on the innovation platform. One middle-level manager explains:

> […] Step one is about active listening and Step two implies trying it [the employee idea] out […] if you're ready to test it then you're also risking failure […] we have tested many ideas that have not been successfully implemented […] but we've also tried some ideas that have proved to be the start of a really successful innovation journey (Middle-level manager)

This quotation demonstrates the recurring failure/success dichotomy that reminds us that innovation is much more than a successful result and outcome (cf. Hiltunen and Henttonen, 2016; Sveiby et al., 2012). Returning to the pro-innovation bias (Gripenberg et al., 2012), the discussion of how employees are included as participants in the employee innovation process benefits from an interactionist point of departure where the efforts of both top-level management and middle-level management are taken into account (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018; 2019; Paper IV). Thus, one of the main contributions of Paper I (Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019) is the following definition of employee innovation:

> Employee innovation is the process connected to the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, marketing method, or organizational method in business practices, workplace organization, or external relations, involving non-managerial and non-R&D employees in a management-supported, interactive and/or spontaneous process

Although this definition stresses the implementation of an idea, it nevertheless puts emphasis on the process leading up to the later stages of the innovation process. This allows an examination of the implications arising from this process, which aligns with Høyrup's (2012) theorization of EDI based on individual and collective learnings from the employee innovation process itself. This is important because it demonstrates potential shortcomings, including unanticipated and unintended aspects and consequences of the innovation process, which bring valuable theoretical insights. Next, the implications of the studied employee innovation process will be highlighted with the adoption of the CDA lens. Employing this specific lens allows for an emphasis on

both management's production and distribution of discourse and employees' consumption of the same. Therefore, an application of the CDA lens sheds light on employees' interpretations of, and responses to, management's organization of EDI activities, which is currently missing in the existing EDI literature at the expense of management structures and interventions (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014). This contribution will be accounted for next.

What are the structural and behavioural implications of an invitation to participate in the employee innovation process?

Similar to Kesting and Ulhøi's (2010) power game debate, Sengupta (2016, p.13) highlights the importance of analyzing inclusion carefully as it "does not necessarily connote being included with equal dignity and respect". He further argues that inclusiveness must encompass three Es: enabling, empowering and entitling. In the EDI approach, inclusiveness incorporates the rights of employees to generate, develop, refine and implement ideas as the innovation process unfolds. From Kesting and Ulhøi's (2010) role description of managers, they are in a position to enable, empower and entitle employees since they act as mentors with the authority to make final decisions. The role as *enabler* includes the allocation of resources in terms of space, time and money, as well as giving mentorship advice throughout the innovation process to employees (cf. Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). Smith et al. (2012, p. 227) additionally highlight that "the leader must ensure that employees have access to the resources needed". *Empowerment* further incorporates yet another key antecedent of EDI, namely autonomy (Smith et al., 2012). Smith et al. (p. 228) define autonomy as "the extent to which employees are given the freedom to make decisions and to carry out tasks without excessive supervision". The authors point out that autonomy in the EDI context does not relate to "employees day-to-day work, but to activities beyond their [formal] 'job description'" (p. 231). Lastly, *entitlement* incorporates recognizing employees as partners of innovation (cf. Banerjee, 2013; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). Smith et al. (2012, p. 232) argue that the EDI process involves the acknowledgement by management that employees are "partners, or internal key stakeholders, whose opinion is respected" and that their initiatives and suggestions should not be perceived as "an attack on formal authority" (ibid). The lingua applied here, in terms of "attack on", once again reveals the power relations involved in the interaction between these actors.

The role description of employees in the existing EDI literature suggests that ordinary employees are idea generators, idea promotors, idea developers and idea implementers – roles that go beyond their day-to-day formal assignments and tasks. Hence, they are depicted as "active" participants in the innovation process (cf. Kristensen, 2018, p. 513) while the management "should not determine every detail, but should focus on the frame for the innovative change" (Sorensen et al., 2018, p. 430). Here, both Sorensen et al. (2018) and Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) argue that "employees are responsible for completing this frame with operational innovation-related decisions" (Sorensen et al., 2018, p. 430). The role of employees as entrepreneurs is portrayed and analyzed in both Paper II (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018) and Paper IV, although the latter paper emphasizes the informal roles that are formed as a result of the new expectations on employees that arise from managers as the EDI approach is adopted in the studied organization. Strategy documents portray the role of a successful entrepreneur who operates according to clients' needs:

> Innovation is about […] the intrapreneur's personal ways of creating value for clients (Strategy document)

In the studied case, the consequence of highlighting winning entrepreneurs while neglecting non-winners in the distribution of the employee innovation discourse reinforces the dichotomous including-excluding discursive umbrella. Under this umbrella, the "single winning entrepreneur" (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018) is highlighted as a driver of innovation. This parallel discourse is shaped and distributed by the top-level management in strategy documents, as in the example above, and in the way the innovation platform is organized and utilized. While the initial stages of the innovation invite are shaped by inclusion and a democratization of the process by inviting all employees to participate, the later stages of the innovation invitation form the entrepreneurial repertoire, particularly concerning the selection of employee ideas. To become a winner, the innovation manager encourages employees to bring out their "entrepreneurial driving spirit". The entrepreneurial discourse embodies an identity of the everlasting enthusiasts who "no matter what find the time to complete the innovative side projects" (Innovation manager). The innovation manager continuously emphasizes the entrepreneurial attitude, and even articles found on social media via the firm's platform reflect this entrepreneurial message:

> some people are born more creative than others (Social media article)

This mantra thus highlights an individual focus rather than collectiveness, which is yet another dichotomous dimension of the analysis. It reflects that some individuals are more capable of driving innovation than others, hence highlighting excluding elements

of the employee innovation discourse as a whole. As a result, the EDI process becomes an elitist activity rather than it embracing the inclusion of all employees, which is the main point of the EDI concept (cf. Høyrup 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018; Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2010; Laviolette et al., 2016). An important field observation that highlights the behavioural implications of the entrepreneurial repertoire is that a majority of the non-winning employees who were approached for interviews told me that they "are not the right person to ask" (Employee) concerning innovation (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018). Instead, they directed me to the winning employees because they seemed uncertain about what they could contribute in a conversation on the topic of innovation. One of the employees declined to participate in the study because s/he insinuated that "I'm not the right person to talk to…my idea was not selected beyond the first round [idea was not selected by experts for further screening]". In sharp contrast to the production of an inclusive employee innovation discourse that forms a social context pervaded by democratic rights to participate in innovation activities, this finding suggests that the discourse evokes an experience of exclusion among employees. This consumption of discourse indicates that some employees fail to identify with the role of a successful entrepreneur portrayed by the management. Here, power structures become evident since employees lack the ability to reshape the discourse in an inclusive direction in the later stages of the ideation process because experts are in charge of the selection of ideas.

In addition, the lack of explicitly defined roles in the later stages of the innovation process seems to be confusing for employees. A previous winner of an innovation invite comments on the failure of an idea project:

> I won an innovation invite once before, I had a good idea but no clue of who could implement it, what should be done in concrete terms and how… who could actually help me to realize my vision? (Employee)

As reported in Paper IV, the lack of defined roles for employees in the innovation process stresses the importance of the employee knowing her/his internal network to be able to refine the idea in the development phase. The greater the internal (colleagues) and external (clients) networks, the greater chance that the employee will be able to form a team around her/his idea. This reveals power structures as well, since the employee with the most connections is more likely to succeed with a project. Top-level management also stresses the responsibility of employees to form this network in order to succeed with their idea projects. Two top-level managers comment on important features of the employee innovation invites as follows:

> Individual responsibility and openness [...] The employee is responsible for his/her idea and this requires an openness to share it [the idea] (Top-level manager)

> not only do we let them [the employees] be creative, we demand it (Top-level manager)

Individual responsibility is a recurrent theme that is closely paired with the employee's role as promoter and idea owner. One middle-level manager explains that "it's all about being the owner of your idea and convincing top-level management about it". As an "idea owner" (Internal document, Employee), you are ultimately responsible for your idea and its progress and you are expected to treat your idea as "a "living" document" (Internal document) that you "check in on regularly" (ibid) on the innovation platform. Thus, this organization of EDI activities demonstrates a rule regime in which employees, on the surface, are enabled and entitled to adopt the role of the successful entrepreneur. In this process, individual responsibility is the main component that reflects top-level management's expectation on employees to carry out their idea projects outside their formal job tasks. Yet, in practice, the license to innovate is limited for employees when the allocation of resources is taken into account. Their mandate to act is thus dependent on their internal networks. Thus, the expectations of top-level management seem unaligned with the tools available for employees to fulfil the projected entrepreneurial role. In this way, the employee innovation programme can be seen as a form of window-dressing, since although autonomy and democracy are granted, it is without the allocation of adequate resources to fully empower the employee in the idea development phase. The window-dressing also reconnects with the dichotomous dimensions of client satisfaction/employee focus, short term/long term, and profitability/engagement by which the main aim of the employee innovation platform seems to be to promote innovation to clients:

> to just have a new idea is not in itself important…we have to find a client that is willing to pay for the project […] it is always about these two things in combination [ideas and a client's willingness to fund the project] (Middle-level manager)

> Our clients expect us to be innovative […] but it is equally important to stimulate it [innovation] on an internal level, not only to let employees participate but to demand from them to be innovative and proactive in everything we do (Top-level manager)

> [It] is an opinion expressed by our clients that we're not innovative enough […] they think that we should be more innovative (Top-level manager)

In light of the three quotations above, it becomes clear that the production and distribution of the employee innovation discourse emphasizes clients as the main target for the employee innovation platform, and not the employees themselves. The

structural implication of this finding raises a question about the essence of innovation, and as one of the employees states: "for whom do we innovate?" (Employee). Kesting and Ulhøi (2010, p. 68) defines innovation as "leaving familiar ground (existing routines) and breaking new paths". In order to make this happen, the employee's context-dependent and in-depth knowledge of workplace practices is crucial, which seems not to be as highly valued as short-term profits and the clients' views on innovation.

Moreover, as shown in Paper III, structural implications relate to the use of the web-based innovation platform. Gressgård et al.'s (2014) study demonstrates that the adoption of ICT-tools in EDI-oriented work needs to be well integrated into daily work routines and tasks in order to ensure employee involvement in practice. The findings reported on in Paper III align with this conclusion since the low number of submitted employee ideas at the low-performing office seems to stem from the middle-level managers' (denoted local managers in the paper) interpretation of the centrally arranged digital platform. To the middle-level managers at this site, the digital innovation platform is disconnected from ongoing client projects and hence daily work priorities. The separation of EDI activities from daily work routines thus constrains employees' utilization of the web-based tool, which results in a low number of submitted ideas. In this context, the structural implications are closely tied to the behavioural implications of a declining willingness of middle-level managers to promote the innovation platform, which then makes employees feel hampered by the given structures. This reflects the challenges of handling employee ideas which have been identified in the literature on web-based ideation management (cf. Beretta et al., 2017; Gressgård et al., 2014). Unless managers actively attempt to make sense of employees' idea initiatives and fit them in where appropriate in the organizational context, innovation is impeded (cf. Beretta et al., 2017; Birkinshaw et al., 2011; Fairbank et al., 2003; Soukhoroukova et al., 2012). This discussion further supports the findings reported on in Paper I, namely that there is a need for more research on the use of management tools in employee innovation, particularly in combination with other types of management support mechanisms (routines, structures and incentives).

Contrary to the low-performing office, the middle-level managers at the high-performing office act as co-distributors of the digital tool. This indicates that they reshape the EDI discourse by demonstrating the supportive structures to their employees, meaning that they promote the web-enabled tool and show how employees can benefit from digitally communicating their ideas to a wider public within the organization. The managers at this site have taken a long-term view of the employee innovation process in which trial-and-error activities are central. Physical meetings where employee ideas are aired and discussed are combined with the digital generation,

refinement and development of ideas. Rather than exclusively emphasizing client projects, the middle-level managers at this office help employees to find an appropriate organizational context in which to apply their ideas in order to generate value. Thereby, it becomes easier for the employees to promote their ideas on the joint digital platform. This further demonstrates how EDI-oriented work practices are formed in order to introduce the digital tool into the daily work agenda. It also reflects power structures in the sense that middle-level managers reshape the EDI discourse by embedding it in the local context. In doing so, the managers give employees room to manoeuvre by granting them the mandate to incorporate ongoing ideas into client projects and thus allowing employee involvement to be stimulated.

Lastly, an important note is also that the low-performing office showed tendencies towards hidden employee innovation, which illuminates the dichotomy of hidden/visible innovation that I mentioned in the methodology chapter. Findings in Paper III suggest that these hidden employee ideas were not given any attention because they did not fit the given frames of client-focused design that the digital innovation platform requires in order to submit a winning idea. Hidden employee innovations may indicate that these ideas are not understood by the management and hence not made visible on the joint digital platform.

The contribution of applying a CDA lens

The CDA lens applied in this thesis (cf. Burns and Carson, 2005; Fairclough, 1995; Phillips et al., 2008) sheds light on the interaction between the management's organization of EDI activities and employees' participation in the same. This lens thereby allows an examination of how the top-level management produces and distributes the employee innovation discourse and consequently how employees consume (i.e. interpret) the same. An analysis of the interaction reveals how the roles of employees and managers are discursively formed, which depends partly on the production and distribution of texts and partly on the social context in which these texts are embedded. In the three empirical studies, this duality embraces a social context pervaded by commercial interests and clients' willingness to fund employee innovation projects. Similarly, the texts produced and distributed top-down are thematized according to a short-term profitability focus rather than long-term employee engagement, which is one of the main points of the EDI approach (cf. Høyrup, 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018; Laviolette et al., 2016). This shows that texts (written and spoken) not only say things, but are designed to do things, and this supports the importance of shedding light on the reciprocal relationship between the management's organizing of

the employee innovation programme and the employees' interpretations of it. Therefore, the application of a CDA lens contributes an increased understanding of the interaction between managers and employees in EDI-oriented work, which extends Høyrup's (2012; Høyrup et al., 2018) conceptual third-order EDI typology. Most intriguingly, the theoretical lens of CDA contributes a power-related analysis as an outcome of the interaction, which illuminates the agency of both actors. This is a significant contribution since the existing body of EDI literature tends to downplay employees' interpretations of, and responses to, EDI activities in favour of a focus on management structures, tools and interventions (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014).

Implications and future research

This chapter gives an account of the implications and limitations of this research, followed by its practical implications. In addition, I propose suggestions for future research based on the findings and contributions of the research presented in this thesis.

Research implications and limitations

This thesis is based on one single case of a global IT firm's Swedish operations which limits the generalizability of the research findings. However, given the qualitative research approach undertaken, the aim is not primarily to elicit generalizable results. Rather, qualitative researchers commonly refer to the concept of transferability, which implies that research findings are transferred to other sociocultural settings (cf. Kuper et al., 2008). A multiple case study across different types of organizations in the private, public and civil society sectors could therefore provide further empirical comparisons and validations of the results obtained in this research project. Another identified limitation concerns the collection of empirical data. Initially, the innovation manager gave me access to interviewees, which made it difficult for me to guarantee anonymity in the study at the same time as it limited my scope for exploration. Therefore, I used the names of employees that I found on the innovation platform to build my own list of potential participants who had previously submitted ideas to the innovation platform. Additionally, in the study for Paper III, I visited two offices of the global IT firm's Swedish operations, and at that point I ensured that I did unstructured interviews with employees over lunch and by the coffee machine to validate the findings from the pre-booked, face-to-face interviews.

Practical implications

As the title of this thesis indicates, along with the main findings and contributions, it is important for the top-level management to reflect on how they mirror the innovation process in their texts and talk, and in particular, how this mirror reflects the typical

innovator, including the demands and expectations on this role. In your position as a top-level or middle-level manager, is the successful innovator portrayed as the individual creative genius, or do you emphasize collective efforts and additional team-based roles that lead to innovation?

Another practical implication is the use of web-based (ICT) tools for collecting employee ideas. In this context, it seems significant to look beyond the top-level management's portrayal of innovation and instead shift the focus to middle-level managers' active involvement in the innovation process (cf. Bäckström and Lindberg, 2019; Kristensen, 2018). For example, to investigate how middle-level managers actively promote the digital tools and its structures in order to ensure employee involvement in innovation.

Besides reflecting on *how* the employee innovation process is written and talked about, it may also be crucial for top-level management to reflect on *why* such activities take place. Is the main purpose to increase profitability in the short term by promoting the innovative potential of employees to clients? Or do employee innovation activities serve the purpose of engaging employees in a way that boosts their well-being at work (cf. Buhl, 2018; Honkaniemi et al., 2015) which, in the long term perspective, can align with strategies of sustainable human capital? (cf. Banerjee, 2013).

Future doors to open

As described in Paper I, there is a wide array of options for future studies of the phenomenon of employee innovation. The path that I pursued in this thesis, on which Papers II, III and III are based, is an exploration of the employee innovation process itself and its implications for the interaction between employees, middle-level managers and top-level managers. More specifically, as pointed out in Paper I as a suggestion for future research avenues, are the implications related to the application of ICT tools in innovation activities, and how are these combined with managerial support (or lack thereof) for the generation, development and implementation of employee ideas? This brought me to the empirical investigation of how employee involvement in a management-initiated innovation process is manifested in written and spoken text, hence directing my research gaze on the contrast between what top-level management claim the employee innovation is, and what is actually manifested in practice. In applying a CDA lens, the interaction between the management and employees became the unit of analysis. Further studies could potentially use a CDA lens in other EDI related contexts, for example when exploring and investigating first-order EDI and second-order EDI (cf. Høyrup 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018).

Another research suggestion is to explore other organizational contexts such as public sector and civil society contexts. Further studies might also explore the interaction between employees and managers by adopting methodological lenses other than CDA in order to increase our understanding of the implications of the EDI process for employees and management. In particular, theories on ambidextrous leadership (cf. Martini et al., 2015; Rosing et al., 2011) and management's transformational leadership (cf. Zuraik and Kelley, 2018) would be an interesting avenue to pursue. Also, other theoretical lenses that enable a discussion of the power-related mechanisms and relations would be most welcome to the field as a way to further problematize the assumptions of a democratic innovation process and the assumption that innovation is always good (please see the pro-innovation bias for more details).

Concluding remarks

Lastly, this chapter recapitulates the main contributions and implications of my research endeavor and thereby concludes a five year explorative research journey.

What door(s) have I opened in this thesis?

As I have highlighted in the previous chapter, the existing EDI literature tends to take it for granted that employee participation is pervaded by democracy and inclusion. In this research conversation, employees are included as idea generators, idea developers, idea promoters and idea implementers. However, this thesis demonstrates the importance of closely examining the interaction between employees and managers to be able to scrutinize how an organization of intra-organizational and management-initiated EDI activities reflect the level of inclusion in terms of rights to access resources, gaining support from top-level and middle-level managers, and being recognized as innovation partners. By applying a CDA lens, this thesis illuminates discrepancies in regard to how the employee innovation discourse is produced and distributed from the top-down, and how this discourse is consumed (i.e. interpreted) by employees in the three empirical studies. In this way, my thesis demonstrates that the meaning of participation is a significant issue to examine, in order to be able to see whether participation signifies a mutual exchange between managers and employees, or if the employee innovation discourse is produced and distributed in favour of any of the organizational actors. How you textually (in written and spoken words) frame participation will direct attention in a certain way and as a result the roles and expectations of employees, middle-level managers and top-level managers in EDI activities can be revealed.

Thereby, the CDA lens adds a new perspective on understanding third-order EDI (cf. Høyrup 2012; Høyrup et al., 2018) in which it extends the existing conceptual typology by offering a way to theorize the interaction between employees and managers. In particular, this lens allows an examination of the consequences of the interaction in

terms of the power dynamics involved. The power dynamics further shed light on the structural and behavioural implications that arise from organizing EDI activities. In particular, this thesis contributes a focus on the employee's interpretations of, and responses to, the managerial structures of the EDI process. This bottom-up perspective is currently overshadowed in the existing EDI literature, which tends to put the main emphasis on managerial interventions and implications rather than focusing on the employee's reactions to and reciprocation of it (cf. Lempiälä et al., 2018; Wihlman et al., 2014).

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Appendix

Interview guide: Paper II and IV

Background information: current role, level of education, age, ongoing projects

- Can you tell me more about the idea that you submitted to the innovation invite?

- What kind of idea is it?

- From where or what did you get inspiration for that idea?

- In what way does (or does not) this idea relate to your daily work tasks/your current position?

- How did you get to know about the innovation platform and innovation invites?

- Can you tell me more about the ideation process? What happened after you submitted your idea?

- How active are you on the innovation platform as a submitter of ideas and a peer reviewer of colleagues' ideas? Do you rate other people's ideas?

- What is your opinion about the gamified structure of the ideation process?

- What does innovation mean to you?

- What is in it for you to contribute ideas?

- What do you think about making your idea accessible to all?

- How do you communicate with your manager about submitting ideas in the innovation invite?

- Do you collaborate with any of your colleagues before, during and after submitting an idea to the innovation platform?

- How did you work on your idea? Did you receive feedback that allowed you to improve the idea? From whom did you receive feedback? When during the ideation process did you receive this feedback?

- What did you learn from participating in the innovation invite?

- How closely did you follow the idea journey?

- How does it feel to have your idea rated/rejected/selected?

- What kind of feedback did you receive from experts?

- How was your idea evaluated and by whom?

- What happened to your idea?

- Have you submitted more ideas?

- Are there any other platforms on which you collaborate and discuss ideas with peers? Inside or outside the firm?

- Do you have other ideas that you have submitted elsewhere?

- Do you have an idea right now that you are working on?

- Have your peers and superiors recognized and/or rewarded your participation in the innovation invite?

- Have you been granted any resources to be able to implement your idea?

- Do you have any comments or reflections to add regarding the innovation invite that I forgot to ask about?

Interview guide: Paper III

Background information: current role, level of education, age, ongoing projects

- For how long have you been working here?

- Can you tell me about that idea that came from one of your colleagues that was implemented? (high-performing office)

- Do you know of any ideas that have been submitted from this office to the central innovation platform? (low-performing office)

- What does 'innovation' mean to you?

- Do you think that 'innovation' relates to your daily work tasks? If so, how?

- Have you submitted any idea to the innovation platform?

- How do you work with ideas at this office?

- Have you participated in promoting any idea, either your own or your colleagues?

- Have you coached any employee/colleague with an idea that was submitted to the innovation platform? If so, tell me more about that ideation process?

- What is your key take-away from either submitting your own idea or helping out to promote someone else's idea?

- How do you encourage your employees to generate and submit ideas?/How are you encouraged by your manager to generate and submit ideas?

- To what extent are you active on the innovation platform? In what way?

- Do you have any activities at your office that relate to creativity and idea generation/development?

- Are there specific employees in charge of arranging creative meetings?

- Where does this creativity come from? (high-performing office)

- Why do you think that innovation is not the main priority? (low-performing office)

- In your opinion, is there any difference in how you handle fresh and mature ideas?

- Is innovation an activity that gets priority on the managerial/employee agenda?

- How do ideas spread in the organization?

- Are ideas promoted by single employees or in collaboration with others?

- What happens after ideas have been promoted?

- Do you have any examples of ideas from this office that were submitted to the innovation platform and were later implemented?

- What motivates you to participate in innovation activities?

- How do you feel that your ideas are treated?

- Do you have any rules or frames regarding innovation at this office? When and how are ideas generated, and why do they receive attention?

- Are you offered any support when you have an idea that you would like to develop further? Who supports you?

- What makes this office distinctive in its approach to innovation?

- Do you get together to discuss each other's ideas? If so, how are ideas selected for further screening and development?

- What do you believe are important components of a creative climate in the workplace?

- When do you have time/how do you make time to work with ideas and developing them further?

Interview guide: Top-level managers

Background information: current role, level of education, age, ongoing projects

- For how long have you held your position as manager?

- What does innovation mean to you?

- According to you, what is the role of employees in innovation?

- How do you view your own role in the innovation process?

- Have you participated in any innovation invite, either as an organizer of a theme, an expert, or submitter of an idea?

- Who is responsible for recognizing employee efforts in innovation? Are there any rewards for submitting a winning idea?

- How do you communicate with local managers and middle-level managers specifically?

- Have you ever coached any employee with an idea?

- How do employees communicate ideas to you, and can you give an example of your response?

- What motivates you to engage in innovation?

- How do you feel about your own ideas? Are they appreciated or taken for granted? Do you have any examples of situations to share?

- Who would you share an idea with if your intention was to further develop and refine it?

- What do you believe are important components of a creative climate in the workplace?

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Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the innovator after all?

During my yoga teacher training a few years back, my mentor and guru told me: *People can only meet you as deeply as they have met themselves.* Little did I know then that this saying would impact my upcoming research journey. A similar idea can be found in scholarly leadership and innovation circles, where research highlights that a leader must know how to manage and lead herself before being able to manage other people. This requires a level of awareness of your own values, beliefs, and behavior, and a willingness to explore, and perhaps challenge, how your own thinking and behavioral patterns influence the social context in which you operate as a leader, colleague or friend. Given that innovation is about breaking new ground, this might mean that you have to break new ground on a personal level too in order to bring about innovation at a collective organizational level. This means that processes of reflection are central to increasing awareness of how individuals help to stimulate, or in the worst case hamper, innovation.

This thesis sheds light on the interaction between employees and managers in an intra-organizational employee innovation process. It contributes to the existing literature by increasing our understanding of that interaction and its consequences in terms of the power relations involved.

This doctoral thesis has fulfilled the requirements for Izabelle Bäckström to be awarded a PhD in Industrial Engineering and Management.

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