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Idea management
unravelling creative processes in
three professional organizations

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De inhoud van dit proefschrift is op taal gecorrigeerd door: Kathleen Sheridan, erkend vertaalster.

IDEA MANAGEMENT

UNRAVELLING CREATIVE PROCESSES IN
THREE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

HAN BAKKER
For my grandmother Cecile Marinette Smid-Verlinden (†)
and my mother Julia Anna Bakker-Smid (†)
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Preface

It has been almost twenty years since Leen Emmerzael (the man that I was working for at that time) posed me a question. Because we were operating as a small firm and wanted to expand, he wanted to know more about my interests and he asked me, ‘What can I wake you up for in the middle of the night, except for you-know-what …?’ I was intrigued about this question and it took me three months before I could reply. I had studied cultural anthropology in Leiden and I had visited the Academy of Arts in Rotterdam and studied business administration. All very well, but where was the underlying principle? After a while, I found the answer: in creativity. In anthropology, there is creativity in the many ways societies give shape to their attitudes about justice, human relationships, raising children, and so on. In art, there is creativity in finding new ways to express what cannot be communicated in words. In business administration, there is creativity in the never-ending stream of innovations and adaptations to the ever-changing environment.

When this ‘red thread’ became clear, I started to read everything about creativity that I could lay my hands on. And I started to follow courses, first at van Leer Consult. I also visited the Center for Creative Problem Solving in Buffalo, New York. One day I phoned them and spoke to the Programme Director, Scott Isaksen. He told me that I could visit the Center and he showed me around. Because I had little money those days, he arranged a place for me to stay at Brian Dorval’s house, who also worked at the Center for Creative Problem Solving. My stay there was very inspiring, and once I was back in the Netherlands, I wanted to thank them in some way. I had made a large woodcut, of which I was very proud, and I decided to send it to them. It was difficult to put it in the cylinder and after I had sent it I was afraid it might be damaged when it was opened. I never heard anything about it, and soon I was taken up by other events. Thirteen years later, in Mainz, Germany, I was sitting at a table at the Conference for Creativity and Innovation and a man, who was sitting at another table, looked at me and said, ‘Hey, I know you.’ It was Scott! The woodcut had arrived, undamaged. And he told me he looked at it at times when he had to solve something. When I asked Scott later if he could help me with my research, he said, ‘Yes, if you are going to make art after that research.’ Now that’s a promise, and thank you, Scott, and Brian too, for the interesting discussions about creativity and imagery.

After reading and following more courses about creativity, I became a teacher of creative thinking at the Hogeschool Rotterdam (University for Applied Science) exploring the essentials and limits of this domain with Guido Favié. In 1996 I had the opportunity to
organize a conference on the subject of creativity. I gave it a title with a Rotterdam touch: ‘Imagination Works’. The findings on creativity that resulted from the lessons and the conference were published in my book, ‘Creatief Denken’ (Creative Thinking). When I joined the Department of Culture, Organization and Management (COM) at the Free University of Amsterdam, in 2001, I became infected again with the research virus. I wanted my research to be about creativity in organizations, and the subject developed through ‘management of creativity’ into ‘idea management’.

My motivation is in looking at the seemingly unlimited possibilities of the human mind. The study of symbols, the translation of thought, the depth of studies on topics like the Pygmalion effect, the open creativity of Reggio Emilia, the perspective of Vygotsky—they cast their shadows forward, indicating a promise that is yet to come. As far as human creativity is concerned, it seems like we still live in the Dark Ages, the way it is used nowadays in relation to its potential. If one looks at young children and sees what they can do—especially what they have the potential to do—there is the promise for our future.

This book represents something that is becoming increasingly scarce these days: time. Time is scarce; things have to move quickly, as if the devil were at our heels. So we eat young meat, young fish, and young vegetables; we idealize youth from any perspective. Time is represented in this book in the form of long years of reflection and more years of incubation and hard work.

The main story of this research is a common one: the initial ambitions were way too big and had to be reconsidered. These periods of reconsideration were alternated with periods of concentration and deeper probing into the research material.

Acknowledgements
This research would not have been possible without the help of many people. It would be impossible to name everyone who has contributed to this book, but I would like to mention a few.

First, I would like to thank Heidi Dahles, who helped me out when I was looking around for supervision. I would like to thank Marcel Veenswijk for his supervision of my research and his positive attitude towards my thousand distractions. Supervising research and researchers can be challenging because advice can be confrontational at times. I think we both remember very well the ‘Leiden sessions’. But it is exactly through these processes that one can make progress. The euphemism we developed along the way was, ‘He needs to go to the
beach.’ That was meant for me, because I often received so much feedback that I did not want to hear, that I had to go to the beach to calm down. I would like to thank Kees Boersma, with whom working on the Corus article was very stimulating and productive. In the course of this process Kees took up the role of co-promotor and his feedback was always very useful.

I would like to thank Francoise Companjen for introducing me at COM and for the many discussions we had; Harry Wels, for his thorough introduction on the concept of reciprocity; Saskia Stehouwer, for her stimulating use of the English language; my colleagues at COM, for the enjoyable time and the many stimulating conversations I had with them. I would also like to thank the students at COM who wrote their Master’s theses with me in the field of management of creativity and idea management: Sytse Oreel, Sarah Strien, Eleanne Plaizier, Bianca Wijers, Kristien van den Oever, Milena Kriek, and Franka van Alphen.

I would like to thank Jeff Gaspersz and Carel Roessingh for patiently listening to me when my plans were at a very early stage. In addition, Carel stimulated me as an ‘experience expert’ to be a ‘working-promovendus’. And I would like to thank Leen Emmerzael for posing me the right question at the right time, as well as Scott Isaksen and Brian Dorval for their warm introduction to their points of view.

For the chapter on idea management, I would like to thank Hans van Rij, who helped me in his enthusiastic way. I would also like to thank Guido Favié, who has been a great inspiration and support over many years in exploring the terrain of creative thinking, in developing the book about ‘Creatief Denken’, and in discussing the evolution of this research. We have explored the terrain together and had great fun while doing so (the concept of ‘philosophical jamming’ will never be the same).

For the Pentascope chapter, my thanks go to Engbert Breuker for his stimulating vision and to Edita Hasovic for introducing me at Pentascope and for critically reading through the final draught of the chapter. Also, I would like to thank Susanne Hietbrink and Sarah Strien.

For the Ter Weel chapter, I would like to thank Marlize Laport for introducing me and organizing the interviews; the director, Pim Hurkens, for his support; and the members of the Management Team and the team leaders for their time and help.

For the Corus chapter, thanks go to Kees Boersma, Sytse Oreel, and Bert van Haastrecht. I would also like to thank Marjo de Theije and Andrea Damacena for inviting me to hold the first presentation of my results for the Paolo Freire Programme, and Scott Isaksen, for his comments on my presentation about the Corus case at the European Conference of Creativity and Innovation in Łódź, Poland, in 2005. Furthermore, I would like to thank Carel
Kleemans, René Duursma, Dick Hamels, Andrew Norman, Jurgen van de Langkruis, Alastair Wise, Johan Wullink, Frenk van den Berg, Paul van Beurden, and Niels Gutter.

I would like to thank Makary Stasiak for his warm welcome on my visit to his school, the WSHE in Łódź, Poland, in December 2008, and for his stimulating perspective on the concept of creativity and the way in which he has shown how creativity can be turned successfully into practice. Also, I would like to thank the participants from the Center for Creativity and Entrepreneurship with whom I discussed my findings on the Ter Weel case.

I would like to acknowledge the KreaNet network and, especially, Sander Mulder. It has also been a pleasure to have been able to supervise Milena Kriek’s Master’s thesis on creativity and commitment in KreaNet’s Creative Network.

Also, I would like to thank Jan van Haaren from Nelissen Publishers, who truly contributed to the process of writing the book on creative thinking. And I would like to mention Ronald Walpot, who passed away too soon, and who was always an inspiration.

I would like to acknowledge the Buitenhus, a stimulating environment in The Hague, especially Jur Kosterbok and Herman Meines, with whom I had many inspiring discussions on innovation and creativity.

I would like to thank Frido Smulders from the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering in Delft. We wrote two articles together, which were both interesting processes, as was the presentation in Copenhagen, Denmark. And I would like to thank Bengt Olsson from the Department of Innovation, Design and Technology at Mälardalen University in Eskilstuna, Sweden, with whom I am working on an article right now.

I would like to thank my employer, the Department of ISO/CMV, from the Hogeschool Rotterdam, especially Peter Canrinnus and Rob Elgershuizen, who supported me by facilitating the language editing of this research. I would like to thank Kathleen Sheridan for her thorough redaction and language editing of my work. And I would like to thank my colleagues with whom I had the opportunity to spar about my ideas. I would like to thank especially Marianne Lindhout whose feedback has always been very useful and inspiring. Working with the students in the field of creativity (since the beginning of the ‘90’s!) has always been inspiring and often surprising. And right now there is Odin de Bruijn who is doing research on idea management at the Ministry of VROM.¹

¹ Ministry of VROM. In Dutch ‘VROM’ stands for ‘Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu’. In English this can be understood as ‘Housing, Public Space, and Environment’.
Finally, I would like to thank my friends, who listened to my research stories, even when they had heard them before, especially Claire, José, Katharina, and Erwin. I would like to thank Henna and Norbert for also having the patience to listen to me about my research during these years. And I would like to thank Birgit for her personal support.

During the time of the research there has been the presentation of the Innovation Platform and innovation has become a topic that has got its own legitimation, both at the corporate level as on the governmental level. The concept of creativity has become a little bit more integrated in the lines of thinking and talking of organizations in many countries and in the educational systems, although there is still a world that can be won. My aim with this research is to contribute to these developments.

Han Bakker
‘s Gravenhage, 2010
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AcTI-nl</td>
<td>Netherlands Academy of Technology and Innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AST</td>
<td>Adaptive Structuration Theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiNet</td>
<td>Continuous Innovation Network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Creative Problem Solving model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Ceramics Research Centre of Corus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECCI</td>
<td>European Conference on Creativity and Innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO level</td>
<td>In Dutch it stands for: Hoger Beroeps Onderwijs. Internationally, the title of Bachelor may be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communications technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEYS</td>
<td>Model for Creative Climate by Amabile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIK</td>
<td>Kreativitäts- und Innovationsfreundliches Klima [creative and innovative climate, translation HB].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOA issue</td>
<td>(The problem of the) level of analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBO</td>
<td>In Dutch it stands for: Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs. The MBO diploma is awarded after four years of secondary vocational education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>In Dutch it stands for ‘Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen’, which can be translated as ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSMO</td>
<td>The word OSMO is a Dutch acronym for ‘Onverwacht, Slagvaardig, Mensgericht Ondernemen’ which can be translated as ‘Unexpected, alert and people-oriented entrepreneurship’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the four Ps</td>
<td>Person, process, product and place. Often presented as the four basic elements of creativity models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDL</td>
<td>Passivities of daily living, it is an approach to passiveness, comprising a mixture of skills, strategies and provisions that aims to give optimal support, attendance and nursing care to patients who are unable to care for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RD&amp;T</td>
<td>Research, Development and Technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOQ</td>
<td>Situational Outlook Questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIR</td>
<td>Programme at Corus which is aimed to stimulate innovative ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIR-NL</td>
<td>The Dutch part of STIR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNO</td>
<td>Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIZ</td>
<td>Refers to Althuller’s heuristic for solving problems. Russian acronym for solving problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VROM</td>
<td>In Dutch VROM stands for 'Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu’. This is a ministry; in English this name can be understood as ‘Housing, Public Space, and Environment’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWS</td>
<td>In Dutch it stands for ‘Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport’. This is a ministry; the name can be translated as ‘Health, Welfare, and Sport’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSHE</td>
<td>Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna, a university in Łódź, Poland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I pose the basic questions about idea management in organizations. In the first section, we look at the question of why creativity in organizations is important and why it matters at this special moment in time. In the second section, the definitions of creativity are presented and discussed. The current debates about creativity are examined in the third section, along with the main streams of thought on this subject. Finally, I clarify the direction of my research and present the research questions.

Creativity is not an easy concept to define. It is easy to say that Picasso was a creative genius, but who would have recognized this talent when he was still in kindergarten? Bill Gates once said that no one would ever need more than four megabytes of computer memory, yet for years he was considered the most successful and visionary head of the world’s leading computer firm. And who would like to have been Dick Rowe, the Decca manager who refused the Beatles a contract in 1962? In fact all the big record labels refused a contract with the Beatles. It was only the inexperienced George Martin who did it, and he admitted that he had done so because of their enthusiasm and not because he thought much of their music or thought it would be saleable (Lewisohn 1992). One could make endless lists of what were, in retrospect, absolutely stupid forecasts.

When I was young and lived in Zeeland, the Netherlands, near the sea, the Delta Plan was released. Because there had been massive floods in 1953, when many people had drowned, the government had devised an immense plan, called the Delta Plan, in order to hold back the sea and make the land safe for its citizens. The technical quality of the Delta Plan was outstanding; there were no arguments about that, but still people did not want it. Under huge public pressure, the government had to change the plan. They came up with an alternative for the Oosterschelde dam, retaining the salty character of the estuary. This area is now a beautiful natural preserve, and the economic interests of the oyster farmers have been maintained. This example shows that ideas might be good from a technical or professional point of view, but can still be problematic.

Nowadays companies and organizations need to innovate and to reorganize. Knowledge plays a more important role than ever before and competition is severe. Professional
organizations—organizations that are based on the labour of professional workers—have been able to let creative ideas come in as they may—in their unpredictable way. But when the role of knowledge becomes more important, consumers get more demanding, and competition gets more intense, ideas become more and more of a crucial resource. It is not efficient to depend on chance or sheer luck, and it is also not a good idea to be dependent on creative ‘mad geniuses’.

1.1 Why is creativity in organizations important?

Since the 1990s, there has been increasing interest in the concept of creativity, with a dramatic increase in the numbers of books on the subject, training programmes, and internet sites. While it would be impossible to track down one single factor that is the cause for this, there are several contributing factors that we can examine (Florida 2002).

Five factors, or clusters of factors, seem to have played an important role in the increased interest in creativity. First, the process of globalization and, in its wake, the processes of innovation have played a part. Linked to the processes of globalization and innovation, there has been a shifting role of knowledge that calls for a different approach towards creativity. These processes of globalization and innovation have not been planned changes with predictable outcomes; rather, they have unleashed unpredictable events, thereby creating a more dynamic or less predictable environment, which in turn, has increased the need for adaptive action. Finally, in this mix of changing events, there is also the role of the individual.

With regard to the process of globalization that has taken place—and still is taking place today—one can note a considerable increase in competition and diverging views (Fairbank and Williams 2001, Isaksen and Lauer 2002, Nemiro 2002). The world, or our own Western world, seems to have become increasingly complex. Chains of production have become longer and more interrelated, making more and more people dependant on them. There also seems to have been an increase in speed, both in time and space (Scratchley and Hakstian 2001). The internet makes it possible to work around the clock, and companies have become ‘kingdoms where the sun never sets’. In this way, competition has led to an enlargement in the scale of companies. These changes have had their effects on the workforce as well. In order to cope with these changes, a company’s structures and procedures have to be adapted, leading to a cascade of reorganization on all sorts of levels. Change management and learning have become established disciplines.

Innovation and technology have a dynamic of their own and have played a very important role in these processes of globalization and competition (Kwaśniewska and Nęcka
2004). An innovator can have an enormous advantage in terms of market share and profit. And a latecomer can end up with serious problems of survival. The rise and fall of the Nasdaq Index (let’s say), from 1998–2004, has shown where this can lead in terms of an organization’s survival.

These processes of globalization and innovation go along with the changing role of knowledge in society. There had already been a shift towards more knowledge intensity on the work place, but this was greatly expanded by the advent of the computer and internet. Florida has noted the dramatic increase in the number of people in society for whom knowledge plays an important role in their work (Florida 2002). This changes the way work is done: there are more choices to be made. It also influences the styles of managing, which has consequences for the format of organizations and networks, the processes of management and decision making, and the role of technology. It transforms the world into a global market of competing knowledge workers. New issues, like the knowledge economy or the knowledge society, have arisen and, hence, initiatives on knowledge sharing and knowledge management have come up (Florida 2002).

The third factor is that it seems that, while creativity is the source of variation and improvement and change, it also evokes reactions. By changing the definition of the situation or the environment of others, organizations feel the need for a reaction as well. As Schein (1992) mentioned in his definition of organizational culture, external adaptation and internal integration are at stake, so reactions must not be delayed. Czarniawska and Joerges (in Czarniawska and Sevon 1996: 19) use the term a瓦lanches. Ideas, in their opinion, can start chain reactions of consequences not only unplanned, but even undesired. Six (2004: 2) puts it as follows: ‘The degree of ambiguity and uncertainty is said to be increasing, thus increasing the need for change, innovation, learning and risk-taking’. In addition Misra, Srivastava, and Misra (2006: 421) claim that: ‘creativity challenges tradition, questions the status quo, and brings in change and innovation’.

Creativity and the need for it seem to form a loop, a cycle of actions and reactions, where creativity leads to changing environments and, hence, to more creativity, as depicted in figure 1.1.1. Changes are initially the result of creativity in actions. But changes at one place will evoke adaptations from others in other places, hence initiating reaction chains and thus an overall increase in changes. When confronted with changes, individuals and organizations are forced to adapt to these changing environments. Hence, change seems to be a self-enhancing process, with what might be small changes causing more and more changes. These patterns of
change emerge on the individual level as well as on the organizational level. The recurrent chain of events resulting from creativity and asking for more is depicted in the figure below:

![Creativity Loop Diagram](image)

*Figure 1.1.1: The creativity loop*

On the individual level, the process of individualization—which has had an influence on work pressure and responsibility, as well as individual expression and uniqueness—has continued. In addition, one could argue that while the number and intensity of changes in society have increased, life expectancy has also increased. Hence, the number of changes that people experience in their lifetime increases exponentially. This too increases the demand for creativity and is reinforced by the fact that Western countries have become multi-cultural or pluralistic states, where diverse ethnic groups live and work close together. Cultural and individual factors play a greater role, leading to broader and more intense discussions about the role of cultures, values, and different perspectives in society. The repercussions from the assassinations in the Netherlands of the politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, the teacher Hans van Wieren in 2003, and the film-maker Theo van Gogh in 2004 prove this point dramatically.

Finally, in addition to the points mentioned above (namely, globalization, the role of knowledge, an increasing emphasis on change, and developments surrounding the role of the individual), the issue of creativity has also been part of the development of organizational culture. Since the 1980s, there had already been an increase in attention to the concept of culture in organizations. Since the work of Peters and Waterman on management, a whole range of literature has emerged from the field of business and organizational culture. Initially encouraged by the success of the Japanese, and later inspired by the far greater difficulties
arising from mergers and reorganization, the concept of organizational culture has found acceptance. It is no longer studied by idealistic, ‘soft’ anthropologists, but now by well-dressed, ‘hard’ management consultants. During the same period, there was a rise in so-called ‘cultural studies’ around art and ‘low culture’, using vague, post-modernist terminology. There was (very briefly) an idea that the void of empty churches could be filled. But the ‘meaning-seeking’ individuals who could fill it turned out to be dividing their time between overwork, problems with relationships, and traffic congestion. Now, the concept of creativity can be regarded as an element of the concept of culture that is getting attention for its own sake. It is linked to some of the elements that have come out of this struggle, such as culture, innovation, change management, and learning organizations. It is linked to the notion of novelty as well as to the promise of survival and prosperity in an ever more-rapidly changing and insecure environment. It is linked to the relationships between companies and employees, because while these changes are taking place, knowledge is changing more rapidly, situations are becoming more complex, and the employee is becoming more important—that is, if he or she provides creativity. Unlike other types of work, creativity is hard to Taylorize and therefore calls for specific kinds of conditions (Florida 2002).

1.2 Definition of creativity

Creativity is regarded as a complex phenomenon. Rhodes (1961), Isaksen and Pucicio (1993) divided the domains of creativity into four categories, a distinction that has become widely used as the four Ps of creativity: person, process, product, and place or press (environment). He noted that creativity involves the simultaneous interaction of aspects of all these four Ps. Simonton (1988) proposed redefining the last P as ‘persuasion’ instead of ‘press’, emphasizing the interpersonal and social character of creativity. Although there are some good arguments for this, this redefinition has not become widespread. In her overview of definitions of creativity, Amabile (1983) pointed out that in formal discourse, product definitions are generally considered as, ultimately, the most useful for research on creativity. In her book ‘The Social Psychology of Creativity’, she gives a consensual or operational definition of creativity (Amabile 1983: 31):

A product or response is creative to the extent that appropriate observers independently agree it is creative. Appropriate observers are those familiar with the domain in which the product was created or the response articulated. Thus, creativity can be regarded as the quality of products or responses judged to be creative by appropriate observers, and it can also be regarded as the process by which something so judged is produced.
Because this operational definition is not suitable for a theory of creativity, she came up with a conceptual definition (Amabile 1983: 33):

A product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic.

Novelty and appropriateness form the two hallmarks of creativity. Amabile (1983) also added that the task should be heuristic—that is, that there are no clearly defined solutions or goals—in contrast to algorithmic tasks, for which a clear and straightforward solution exists. In fact, she includes problem discovery as an important part of creative action.

So, defining the concept of creativity seems like a rather difficult thing to do, but in the literature on creativity, there appears to be a clear consensus on its meaning, centred around the concepts of novelty and usefulness (Amabile 1996, Drazin, Glynn and Kazanjian 1999, Prichard 2002). Although Amabile’s definition contains more than these two ‘hallmark characteristics’, creative contributions, in short, are about novel and appropriate ideas. In the words of Mumford (2003: 110): ‘We [creativity researchers, HB] seem to have reached a general agreement that creativity involves the production of novel, useful products’. It may be somewhat surprising that there is so much agreement about the definition of a term as complex and ambiguous as creativity. Throughout the literature, this seems to be the case, although there is some criticism of this.

At first, it is striking that there is quite an evolution in definitions of creativity. As mentioned above, within a wide range of definitional possibilities, Amabile (1983) concluded that a product orientation is the most useful for research on creativity, and this orientation has become widely accepted. However, her definition seems quite elaborate when compared to Mumford’s, who captures Amabile’s definition with a few words: namely, the production of novel, useful products, turning the broad concept of creativity into a much simpler one. The whole dimension of problem discovery, for example, has been left out.

Secondly, a close look at the definition reveals that the two hallmark characteristics of creativity—novelty and appropriateness—stand out. Smith (2005) points out that there is a wide distinction between the cognitive sphere (which includes unfettered freedom of thought), on the one hand, and external, evaluative, utilitarian expectations, on the other. With regard to the concept of creativity, Prichard (2002), following a Foucauldian discourse analysis, remarks that, by emphasizing usefulness and appropriateness, other aspects of creativity—
such as existential questions, bizarre solutions, the unconventional and destructive character of creativity, and its challenge to authority—are denied. The concept of creativity is tamed, as it were, thereby opening the way for the extended play of managerial prescriptions.

But who is labelling solutions as bizarre and unconventional or appropriate and useful? The question remains: who is to judge? Smith directs us to the issues of inner and outer censorship. Amabile speaks of ‘appropriate observers’, but what is appropriate? The decision on whether a contribution is novel quite depends on who is making that decision—an independent expert or a manager who feels that his authority is being challenged. With regard to this, two more comments can be made. Creativity is often assessed by tests in a laboratory-like situation—an approach that has been questioned in Russian psychology. Ozhiganova (as cited by Stepanossova and Grigorenko 2006) concluded that a regulated environment inhibits children’s creativity and is an inadequate tool for assessing children’s creative potential. And according to Bogoyavleneskaya (as cited by Stepanossova and Grigorenko 2006), creativity can only start beyond the solution of predetermined problems, so she, too, concluded that creativity is unrelated to traditional measures such as the Torrance and Guilford’s tests.

Finally, if one looks at the definition of creativity and compares it to Rhodes’ four Ps, the concept of press or environment has been lost along the way. But people do not act in a vacuum, so this part of the process should be accounted for when creativity in organizations is studied (Amabile 1996). The theory of structuration provides a good framework for this because it offers a model with a dynamic relationship between actors and their environment. This makes room for both internal and external determinants, but more than that, it provides an opportunity to focus on the dynamic interchange or interrelationships between these two sorts of determinants.

In this research, the focus will be on the interactions of people who express ideas in the context of organizations. These ideas are not evaluated in terms of novelty and appropriateness; rather, they are the focus of attention from the participants themselves. This avoids the difficulty of operationalizing these terms and keeps open the possibility of focusing on the participants’ perceptions of these terms.

1.3 The descriptive-analytic debate and the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate

In this section, we argue that two perspectives shape our thinking about the concept of creativity. There is a debate in which the concept of creativity is described and analyzed, which will be called the ‘descriptive-analytic debate’. The other debate places more emphasis
on the instrumental application of creativity, introducing a value-driven, prescriptive orientation. This will be called the ‘instrumentalist-prescriptive debate’. In the descriptive-analytic debate, the emphasis is on describing and analyzing the phenomenon of creativity in persons, processes, products, and environments. In the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate, other questions—which have to do with the techniques that can be used, procedures that should be followed, and finally, realizable human potential—are posed. It must be noted here that there exists a vast commercial market around creative activities, which influences instrumental practices of creativity (Sternberg 2006).

The descriptive-analytic versus instrumentalist-prescriptive debate was preceded by a debate about the status of creativity, that is, about whether creativity was a divine or a human trait. For a long time in Christianity, creativity was reserved for God alone. The world was His ‘Creation’ and therefore only God could be creative. There was no place for humans in the creative process. God’s creation was seen as good and what humans could add to it could only be of lesser quality.

It was only in the late 18th century that a discussion of the role of creativity in art arose (Harskamp 1984: 9). Laharpe (as cited by Harskamp 1984) tried to keep the term ‘creativity’ dedicated to God and distinguished between genius and inventiveness. Genius is ‘renewing’ and, therefore, inventiveness is the most remarkable quality of the artistic genius. In this sense, the ‘Bousingos’, who were a group of romantic poets in the first half of the 19th century, equalled God with the artist. From the metaphor of the world as a masterpiece, God was presented as an artist and the artist was equal to God, Himself. An important Dutch poet, Willem Kloos, said (Kloos 1894): ‘Ik ben een God in ’t diepst van mijn gedachten ... [I am a God in the deepest of my thoughts ... ’ (Translation HB).

In the United Kingdom, the term ‘creativity’ was used to describe the spectacular industrial activity that was taking place. The faith in progress communicated the idea of ‘newness’ as better, quite contrary to the old Christian belief. Referring to the use of the term ‘creativity’ in relation to commerce and industry, it was Goethe who warned of ‘creativity without taste’ (Harskamp 1984).

After this shift in applying the concept of genius to people, along with the concept of evolution, research could now be done on the genius of humanity. In his Hereditary Genius, Galton (1869), Darwin’s cousin, reformulated creativity as a hereditary talent. He interviewed outstanding scientists and reported their distinguishing features, such as their energy, health, goal-orientedness, independence of thought, associativeness, and lively imagination.
Now that the concept of creativity had been defined as a human trait, it was studied (and one could possibly say that it was monopolized) by psychologists. At the end of the 19th century, psychology was dominated by psychoanalysts, who held a rather negative view about people and their talents. Later, the Gestaltists emphasized the creative process and the concept of insight. In the 1920s and ’30s, a more practical approach to creative studies was developed, mostly among business people, who emphasized creativity and creative thinking because they found it useful for business (Crawford 1984). This has emerged as a different genre only loosely related to the discipline of psychology. Here lies the origin of the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate. Other interesting authors in this respect are Osborn (1953), Parnes (1967), Altshuller (1996) and de Bono (1969, 1970, 1992).

The study of art and design has also resulted in a discourse on creativity. But here is an intermingling of professionals. It is rare for artists themselves to philosophize about creativity. What they excel at lies outside the realm of words. An interesting exception to this is Kandinsky (1962), who wrote a very special book Über das geistliche in der Kunst, where he describes what he thinks art should be and how artists should operate. Of course, a great deal has been written about artists and their lives, but that has not resulted in much theory on creativity, although some people have tried to reflect on these writings in order to distil more general phenomena (Arnheim 1969, Polet 1993). There has emerged a theory of forms that one could call ‘form creativity’ (Beljon 2005), from which has developed a kind of ‘experimental aesthetics’ (Berlyne 1971a). There is also a body of literature that has evolved around questions about the role of the artist, the role of the public, and the role of the work of art (Collingwood 1938, Tolstoj 1898).

An important development from the Second World War was the influence of the so-called Humanistic approach, in which a creative person was understood to be an individual who was able to fully actualize his potential and to contribute to the actualization of the potential of others through creativity, which can be in the form of scientific or artistic contributions or through social concern, love, or doing one’s best at work. Important authors from this perspective were Maslow (1943, 1970), Moustakas (1967), and Rogers (1961).

From the 1990s onwards, interest in the concept of creativity has broadened. More emphasis has been placed on the ‘environment’—the ‘place’ of creativity. In addition, a different field has emerged. Companies have started to realize the value of the concept of creativity, but they were not satisfied with only creative thinking techniques and wanted to expand the impact (Florida 2002). The central issue has become more ‘how can creative people be managed?’ or ‘how can people be managed in order to stimulate their creativity?’
and ‘how can an organization be made to be creative?’ An old-fashioned manifestation of the management of creativity is the so-called ‘idea box’. Although this idea seems very dusty nowadays, it has been revitalized by the emergence of the computer. In light of these developments, the idea box has evolved into so-called ‘idea-management systems’—computer-based environments through which people can send in their ideas.

The concept of creativity is a complex one and, recently, confluence models have been developed that take this complexity into account. In the International Handbook of Creativity, Baer and Kaufman (2006) describe different confluence models, which can be divided according to their scope: whether they are oriented around the individual, around knowledge, or around a broader perspective. The most interesting things about this research are the confluence models that take a broader perspective. There are three that are worth examining in more detail.

First, there is the confluence theory by Gruber and Davis (1988), who looked at how ideas, goals, and affects develop and interact over time, and how revolutionary ideas, like Darwin’s theory of evolution, can be traced back to these long, complex chains of interactions. Giddens (1984) noted how individuals (‘agents’ in Giddens’s terminology) create their own specific structures through their actions and that at least part of their environment is due to their own actions.

Knowledge and environment also play a part in Sternberg and Lubart’s (1996) investment theory of creativity. In this model, six interrelated factors are considered to be essential to the creative process, namely, intellectual abilities, styles of thinking, personality, motivation, knowledge, and environment. The creative person is understood as a kind of entrepreneur who, if successful, buys ideas low and sells them high. What is interesting about this model is the combination of personal factors, knowledge, and environment.

In Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988) system perspective, creativity is regarded as interplay between an individual, the system or field, and the culture or domain (Baer and Kaufman 2006). According to him, it is not possible to study creativity by isolating individuals from their social and historic environment. He views creativity as ‘something in the head of a creator that comes out and is judged by others’, focusing on judgmentability, which was not discussed much before. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), this judgmentability is determined by the system of notation. The more precise a notation system is, the better new work can be judged. In addition, any work is always considered part of an occupational structure (or a field and its dynamic ‘living world’, which Csikszentmihalyi called the ‘social world’), which determines whether, at a certain moment, a new work will be judged to be
creative. Csikszentmihalyi observes that new works can appear as ‘impressive’ or ‘interesting’ but rarely as creative. Here, the experts come in; when they evaluate a work as creative, it becomes much clearer. But where do they get the information? Csikszentmihalyi concludes that the decision that determines that an object (or anything else) is ‘creative’ is based on consensus. But this consensus is far from stable. He illustrates this with so-called ‘rediscovered’ artists, like Rembrandt, who were forgotten and have been rediscovered after, sometimes, very long periods.

Furthermore, he points out the fact that great contributions can be developed outside established institutions, using Freud’s development of psychoanalysis as an example. Time also plays a role: it takes time to get the ideas in the right place, it takes time for experts to interpret and evaluate, and in the meantime, there can be all kinds of developments. Here, Csikszentmihalyi points at Mendel’s work in the field of genetics, in which people only became interested after the formulation of a theory of variation and selection. Rembrandt, Freud, and Mendel pose problems to an all too-simplified view of creativity. Csikszentmihalyi states his view in evolutionary terms, where individuals create variation, social systems select, and the cultural system takes care of transmission. Gardner (1994) too, emphasizes the importance of the Zeitgeist. When the notion of engagement became important after the Second World War, it became clear that it would be an important element in regard to creativity, as in the work of Sartre and Camus. Therefore, creativity gives form to the scheme of one’s own time. This makes it clear that in idea management, the evaluation of ideas is not an easy task; the value of ideas can shift according to external developments. Csikszentmihalyi’s perspective on creativity is interesting here because it differentiates between the individual and the system, and can easily be combined with Giddens’s (1984) structuration perspective. In this structuration perspective, a distinction is also made between individuals – actors – and systems, hence providing the possibility to step out of the dilemma between voluntarism and determinism.

In psychology, as far as scientific approaches are taken into account, contributions are within the realm of the descriptive-analytic debate. In the last nearly 150 years, there has been a great deal of work, and the contemporary confluence theories by Amabile (1996), Gruber and Davis (1988), Sternberg and Lubart (1996), and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), mentioned above, which regard creativity as a multifaceted phenomenon, add to our understanding of the concept.

Within the genre of ‘creative thinking’, the contributions lie much more in the instrumental debate. The development of creative-thinking techniques, with all sorts of tools
and procedures, has made creativity easier to handle. As important contributors to this area, Crawford (1984), Osborn (1953), Parnes (1967), Gordon (1961), Altshuller (1996), and de Bono (1969, 1970, 1992) can be mentioned. The dominant characteristic of this field is the development of tools and heuristics for creative processes. Some authors integrate creative thinking in a more comprehensive innovation and intervention approach (Buijs 1984).

An important debate in this creative thinking is about how the creative process can best be modelled. Based on the work of Osborn (1953) Parnes (1967) introduced the model of Creative Problem Solving (CPS model) which was a linear five stage approach consisting of fact finding, problem finding, idea finding, solution finding and acceptance finding. This linear model was replaced by a circular model, which was called the Ecological Creative Problem Solving Model (Isaksen and Dorval 1994) and which contained four components: understanding the problem, generating ideas, planning for action and task appraisal. The discussion about the best model for creative processes is still very lively. In 2009 a more realistic creative problem solving approach was presented in which the authors aim to emphasize that the various components enroll in a parallel way, influence each other and are interdependent. They place their components content finding, acceptance finding and information finding in relation to the process of project management (Buijs, Smulders, Van der Meer 2009).

Within the genre of humanism, there is a strong tendency to approach creativity in a value-oriented way. In other words, it brings in a prescriptive way of looking at human agency. It has stimulated the popularity of the concept of creativity mainly within the instrumental-prescriptive debate. Important authors in this genre are Maslow (1943, 1970), Rogers (1961), and Moustakas (1967). The dominant characteristic is the focus on the realization of the individual’s potential.

Aspects of both debates can be found within the artistic realm. Much of the work that has been done is about how stylistic means should be used and how creative processes should be carried out, which can be regarded as a part of the instrumental debate. But there are also descriptive and analytic approaches in which a more neutral stand is taken and experiences of experts or the public are taken into account. The work of Tolstoj (1898), Collingwood (1938), Kandinsky (1962), Berlyne (1971b), Beljon (2005), and Polet (1993) can be mentioned in this regard. Understanding how formal elements like colour, form, and material ‘work’ in visual communication are followed by theories about the role of the artist and the role of the art viewer.
Above, we labelled the area of management of creativity as eclectic; in this genre, insights from other genres have been collected and reworked in an effort to stimulate creativity within organizations. As important contributors to this field, Ekvall (1971, 1996, 1999), Rickards (1990), Gaspersz (2002), Florida (2002), and Mauzy and Harriman (2003) can be mentioned. These genres with their orientation and their dominant characteristics have been summarized in table 1.3.1.

**Table 1.3.1: The Genres about Creativity and Their Orientation and Dominant Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Dominant characteristics</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology, confluence theories</td>
<td>The study of creative people, processes, products and places</td>
<td>Describing and analyzing characteristics about creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>In language, instrumental, product—and services development, creative thinking techniques</td>
<td>Developing tools and heuristics for creative processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic ideal</td>
<td>Actualizing one’s ultimate potential</td>
<td>Contributing to the realization of the individual’s potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and design</td>
<td>Outside language, in form and colour</td>
<td>Understanding how works of art ‘work’, the role of the artist and the role of the art viewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of creativity (including idea management)</td>
<td>Basic question: How can organizations be made (more) creative?</td>
<td>Eclectic approach, borrows from other genres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The genres and their place within the debate have been summarized in table 1.3.2. When a genre forms part of a debate, it is marked with an ‘X’.

**Table 1.3.2: The Debates about Creativity and the Connection with the Different Genres**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Descriptive-analytic debate</th>
<th>Instrumental – prescriptive debate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology, confluence theories</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic ideal</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and design</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of creativity (including idea management)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13
One could say, in summary, that the concept of creativity was once the prerogative of the gods. In the Industrial Revolution, it was reluctantly ascribed to humans, first only to those who had produced great achievements. Once it was identified as a human trait, it could be studied by psychologists. Then the concept of creativity attracted attention from the business side of society, where at first the focus was laid on techniques of creative thinking. After the Second World War, the Humanists succeeded in ‘democratizing’ the concept of creativity in such a way that it is now generally believed that creativity is a trait that everyone has. During the 1990s, the emphasis also shifted towards contextual or environmental factors around creativity and the management of creativity. At the same time, there seems to have been a shift from regarding creativity as the moment or flash of insight to an approach that focuses on what happens before and after these moments, which has led to looking at different, interrelated phases and conditional and contextual factors.

1.4 Research questions

The general goal of this study is to contribute to insights in managing creative processes on the interactive level. Management of creativity is understood here as the efforts that are made to enhance creativity in organizations and that can be divided into the creative climate, creative thinking, and idea management (Gaspersz 2002). As pointed out earlier, creativity studies have long been monopolized by psychologists; the context of the creative process was more or less black boxed as the fourth P (place) – the other three being Person, Process and Product. From Arieti’s (1976) ‘creativogenic society’, from Amabile’s (1983) ‘contextual factors’, from Simonton’s (1988) ‘persuasion’, and from the systems perspective of Csikszentmihalyi (1988), the focus can be laid more explicitly on this ‘place’ factor in the sense of the dynamic relationships between the minds of people, the social system, and the culture. The way these factors come together is in their interactions with one another, allowing us to elaborate in more detail on existing notions about the contextual factors involved in creative processes.

This research involved ‘professional organizations’, defined as organizations that are centred around the labour of their employees for whom this labour is their profession. These organizations create their own structures and cultures, which can be regarded as organizational conditions that both limit and enhance the actions of employees and which are especially interesting with regard to creative processes in organizations. Examples of
organizational conditions include bureaucratic procedures, job descriptions, strategic changes, or management styles.

Our attention to the organizational context is based on the important role organizations have taken in the Western world, which makes the issue of creativity in organizations all the more important (Florida 2002)—especially because organizations have a tendency to be efficient and to standardize behaviour. And both efficiency and standardization tend to inhibit the development of creativity. These processes of ‘Taylorization’ conflict with the notion of educated professional workers who make their own decisions about their work routines. The tensions between the roles of organizations in society and their struggle for survival, on the one hand, and the need for creativity in an organizational context, on the other, form an interesting and demanding context for research on creativity.

With regard to the perspective of structuration, two sides must be taken into account in forming the research questions: namely, the actor’s and that of the structure. The research questions focus on the behaviour of the individual within specific organizational environments or contexts, which limit or constrain behaviour as well as enable it. The focus was on creativity—specifically, how people interact with each other: their ideas, how ideas are expressed in interactions, and how interaction variables influence these processes. More specifically, this involved interpersonal, face-to-face interactions in organizations with regard to ideas, with the focus on creativity that is funnelled down to idea management. The general research question is as follows:

**How do actors make sense of creative processes in professional organizations and in what ways do organizational conditions enable and constrain these processes?**

In our theoretical framework, this question is based upon what is known about managing creative processes in organizations. The focus of ‘management of creativity’ was chosen because this is broader than merely the activities around ideas or idea management and therefore helps to shed more light on these processes. The term ‘management of creativity’ has only recently emerged in the literature on this topic (since the 1990s), which is especially interesting because in the term ‘management’, the two perspectives of Giddens come into play: the perspectives of the actor and of the structure (Giddens 1984). The term, ‘management of creativity’, with its paradoxical ambiguity, has been divided into different areas: namely, conditional factors; characteristics that would enhance creative processes in
organizations (labelled as the ‘creative climate’); the creative processes, themselves; and finally, the activities that are related to the question, ‘What happens with ideas in organizations once they are expressed?’ (which is called ‘idea management’) (Gaspersz 1999, 2002). The theoretical research question is as follows:

**How is the concept of management of creativity conceptualized in the literature on creativity?**

The research then continues empirically with a question that can be formulated as:

**How do actors construct and manage their ideas in different professional organizations and how do organizational conditions enable and constrain them?**

The questions related to the empirical research are worked out below, in the context of the number of cases and the selection of specific cases. Finally, when the data from the cases are analyzed, an analytical question is posed:

**How can the observed processes of interaction with regard to creativity be analyzed and interpreted in terms of the theoretical framework?**

The theory of structuration has been used in this research to provide a basis for understanding the efforts of individuals with regard to their ideas. This theory offers a dynamic model for looking at actors and their environments, which has an advantage over a perspective of external determinants, *per se*, because it allows the environment to be understood as permanent and constituting instead of emphasizing its role as a last variable.

### 1.5 Reader’s guide

The theoretical research question about how management of creativity is conceptualized in the literature is developed in chapter two. In the third chapter, the sensitizing concepts for the intersubjective approach are introduced and discussed. Methodological issues are presented and discussed in chapter four. In the next chapters (five, six, and seven) the cases are presented: the case of Pentascope, an organization for management consultancy, in chapter five; the case of the Care institution for the elderly (Ter Weel) in chapter six; and the case of
Corus, a large multinational corporation, in chapter seven. The analysis is discussed in chapter eight, and the answers to the empirical research questions and the analytical research question are given in chapter nine.

1.6 Summary
In the first section of this introduction, we looked at the question of why creativity is important in organizations, and the notion of the creativity loop was introduced to illustrate how changes provoke other changes, leading to an increasingly complex and unstable environment.

We also presented and discussed the definition of creativity, examining the principal arguments in which the concept of creativity has been debated. Two debates were introduced: the instrumental-prescriptive debate and the descriptive-analytic debate. In addition, five genres or fields were presented: ‘art and design’ (or form creativity), psychology, creative thinking, ‘the humanistic approach’, and ‘management of creativity’. The relationship between these genres and the debates was discussed, indicating that these debates run through the different genres. Finally, in the last section the research questions were presented.
CHAPTER 2
MANAGING CREATIVE PROCESSES IN ORGANIZATIONS

In the first chapter, we looked at the approach of this research. In this chapter, we consider the notion of managing creative processes in organizations. In order to highlight the ideas about this concept, we look first at the theories of structuration and adaptive structuration. After this, we examine three areas: the creative climate, processes of interaction and acceptance, and idea management. Finally, these issues are compared and critically discussed.

In the previous chapter, we noted that the environmental or contextual aspects of creative processes had received less attention than they deserved. Leaving the environment outside the analysis of creative processes leads to three different areas: first, a conditional organizational factor—the creative climate—is missing; second, the processes of interaction and the acceptance of ideas become unclear (how is it possible, for example, for ideas to become accepted years after they were formulated?); and third, there will be no information on the ways in which—or procedures through which—ideas are received or accepted. It should also be noted that in this research, I have taken an intersubjective view of creativity: creative processes are understood as social behaviour requiring the exchange of ideas. In other words, in order to be successful, ideas have to be communicated, expressed, understood, and accepted.

The study of creativity in organizations brings one immediately to the question of the relationship between individual processes (such as actions and thoughts) and structural or environmental processes (such as organizational strategies and demands). Creativity is usually regarded as a personal trait or characteristic, and creative processes are usually regarded as internal, individual actions. Individuals make discoveries or inventions; individuals have creative traits. How can these be understood from an organizational point of view? Getting these different perspectives and levels of analysis—the individual and the organization—together in one coherent model is a challenge. To provide a dynamic view of these relationships (one that is neither deterministic nor voluntaristic), I have used the Giddens’ theory of structuration as a framework to bridge the gap between individual processes and those that are external to the individual.
2.1 **Structuration theory: creativity between actor and system**

The British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, developed a model in which individuals, or ‘agents’, in his terms, deploy actions that are both enabled and restrained by the surrounding structure. Giddens (1984) considers human beings as knowledgeable agents whose conduct is bounded by the unconscious, on the one hand, and by unacknowledged or unintended actions on the other. Giddens called this human action ‘agency’. He formulated his theory on structuration as an attempt to dynamically integrate theories at the micro-level with theories at the macro-level. A quote from Marx lies behind this (Marx\(^2\) in Giddens 1984: xxix):

> Die Menschen machen ihre eigene Geschichte, aber sie machen sie nicht aus freien Stücken, nicht unter selbstgewählten, sondern unter unmittelbar vorgefundenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umständen. [People make their own history, but they don’t do it voluntarily, not under self-chosen, but rather under existing, delivered and handed down circumstances (Translation HB)\(^3\)].

This quote quite clearly demonstrates the difference between human actions (the micro-level) and the environment (the macro-level). Structuration is then posited as a social process that involves the reciprocal interaction of human actors and the structural features of organizations (Orlikowski 1992). The theory of structuration recognizes the fact that structures both constrain and enable human action and that these structures are the result of previous actions.

A central premise in the theory of structuration is the recognition that actors are knowledgeable and reflexive. Giddens considers human beings as knowledgeable agents whose conduct is bounded by the unconscious, on the one hand, and by unacknowledged or unintended actions, on the other (Giddens 1984). With the term ‘knowledgeability’, Giddens refers to the things actors know or believe about the circumstances of their actions and those of others, including tacit and discursively available knowledge (Giddens 1984). ‘Tacit knowledge’ refers to knowledge that can be used but not articulated in words by the actors. ‘Discursively available knowledge’ refers to knowledge that actors are able to articulate. When certain actions are carried out repeatedly, patterns are formed and processes of standardization or institutionalization occur. These structures are then taken into account in subsequent actions. Giddens calls this the duality of structure: structure as both the medium and the outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes (Giddens 1984). He distinguishes three dimensions of the duality of structure, which are interdependent and, in fact, not separable, but for analytical

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\(^3\) For this translation I want to thank Birgit Fleischer.
purposes, they are treated as distinct (Orlikowski 1992). The first dimension is about communication and involves interpretative schemes and signification: a theory of coding, symbolic orders, or modes of discourse, such as shared knowledge. The second dimension is about power and involves facilities and domination: theories of authority, control, and resource allocation, dealing with political and economic institutions. The third dimension is about sanctions and involves norms and legitimation: legal institutions. This dimension is about the moral order, which can be observed through norms, values, traditions, and rituals.

The theory of structuration is useful for the study of creative processes because it provides a dynamic framework between actors and structures. It provides a way out from approaches that are either too voluntaristic (related to inventors, artists, or employees as acting in free space) or too deterministic (claiming that processes evolve according to their own dynamics, without any impact from individuals). In the literature on creativity, a common distinction is made between the four Ps: a person is acting through a process, which results in a product (or idea—any output), and which happens within a context or place. This environment or place factor is usually black-boxed, but the structuration theory provides an interesting and dynamic framework to analyze creative persons, processes, and products in their interrelationship with a constraining or enabling structure, providing a foundation in which different levels of analysis are intertwined in a dynamic way.

This problem has also been raised by Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999), who addressed it as the ‘LOA issue’ (the problem of the level of analysis). Following Weick (1995), Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian make a distinction between an intrasubjective level, an intersubjective level, and a collective level. The intersubjective level may be regarded as the cutting edge between actors and structure and is therefore an important focus of this research. It forms the link between the intrasubjective and the collective levels, forming the platform where creativity comes into being in the social field. In addition, while the importance of creativity at the intersubjective level is paramount, it is rarely studied.

**Adaptive structuration theory**

The Giddens theory is abstract and hard to use as a tool for gathering empirical evidence. To overcome this problem, I have used the Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST), which was developed within the field of information and communications technology (ICT), mainly to help to analyze why the same IC technology might lead to different forms of adaptation in different settings (DeSanctis and Poole 1994). AST is based on the theory of structuration and is used as an approach for studying advanced information technologies in organization change.
(Giddens 1984). It can be helpful in stepping down from the abstract level of Giddens’s theory of structuration to the empirical world of organizations and the role of creativity therein. In line with the character of structuration theory, this is a dynamic approach, based on the technologies and structures on the structural side, which emerge from human actions (DeSanctis and Poole 1994). In adaptive structuration theory, an attempt is made to provide detailed accounts of the structure (or ICT environment) as well as the unfolding of interactions in the use of ICT (DeSanctis and Poole 1994).

Following this approach, DeSanctis and Poole (1994) developed a model of interaction in organizations that consists of seven variables. In their view, interactions are influenced by given structures (which they define as the structure of ICT, along with other structures, such as tasks, the organizational environment, and the group’s internal system). The interactions themselves can then be regarded as forms of appropriation and decision making that result in decisions and new, emerging structures. From this perspective, it is possible to describe how appropriations evolve on different levels.

This adaptive structuration approach seems promising with regard to the tensions between the concepts of ‘management’ and ‘creativity’. Focusing on interactions themselves is interesting because they form the interface between existing and emerging structures, which seems better than having to choose either the logic of the ‘rational manager’ or the ‘creative person’ with the new idea.

It must be noted, however, that the model of AST does not account for personal characteristics or traits, so the analysis is based only on existing structures and interacting actors—not from their individual qualities, which is quite the opposite from traditional creativity theory.

**Introduction of research areas**

Having ideas can be regarded as a part of the human condition. In his theory of structuration Giddens (1984) used the stratification model of the agent (Giddens 1984: 5). In this stratification model Giddens used the processes of motivation of action, rationalization of action and reflexive monitoring of action. In other words, a person has a motivation, a rationalization and a reflexive monitoring of his action. This triplet is bordered on two sides. On the one side there are unacknowledged conditions of action, those conditions of which the actor is not aware of. On the other hand there are the unintended consequences of action, those consequences that were not intended, and this can of course be both for the actor himself or for other actors involved (Giddens 1984: 5-7).
In this research the concept of area is used as an attempt to deal with the abstract nature of the theory of structuration. The concept of area was chosen as a way of defining recognizable aspects of creative processes. From Giddens’ perspective the dynamic relation between actors and structures, actions of actors can always be understood as being preceded by an enabling and constraining environment as well as creating or reproducing structures that will become enabling and constraining environments. On the basis of this interaction between agency and structure (Giddens 1984: 162) three areas were distinguished as related to the creative process, namely the conditions of the creative processes, the process of idea forming itself – agency – and the attempts to realize the ideas- emergent structure-, both from the perspective of the actor as from the organization. In this way the concept of structure is brought forward as the medium and the outcome of conduct (Giddens 1984: 374).

With regard to ideas, it can be understood that ideas come up in the head of individual actors, who are positioned in specific contexts. Structural conditions can be acknowledged by the actor or remain unacknowledged. According to Giddens (1984) there is a limit to the ability to acknowledge conditions. In theories on creativity these organizational conditions that enable creative processes are called the creative climate (Amabile 1998, Ekvall, Isaksen and Lauer (2002), Gaspersz 2002). From a structuration point of view these creative climates should not be considered as a given, but must be seen in their perspective of enabling and constraining qualities (Giddens 1984: 174 – 179).

Out of these constraining and enabling conditions actions and interactions can emerge. Giddens emphasizes rationalization of action and makes a distinction between practical consciousness and discursive consciousness (1984: 5-7). The interactions and their qualities are introduced in this research as area two. The focus will be on formal qualities of interaction, which will be introduced in the third chapter, and how these influence processes of creativity.

Human agency results in various forms of action and through knowledgeability of actors, the ability to reflect upon actions, new ideas can arise. The question is how organizations deal with these new propositions and how these decision processes of selection and evaluation are being modelled. In creativity theory this part of the process is called idea management and it can be understood as actions that organizations undertake in order to signal, evaluate, and reward ideas and to bring them further into the organization (Gaspersz 2002: 77 [translation HB]). In this research idea management is introduced as the third area.

In short, the three areas that are presented here are the creative climate (which deals with the conditional factors in which ideas emerge), interaction and communication (which
deals with the presentation and acceptance of ideas), and idea management (which deals with the issue of what organizations do with the ideas).

### 2.2 Area 1: Creative climate

In the classical division of the creative process in the four *Ps* (person, process, product, and place), the last has received the least attention. The first area to look at in studying environmental or contextual factors is the ways in which organizational factors enhance—or limit—creative processes; in other words, the influence of the creative climate.

In the 1970s, Arieti (1976) tried to formulate a society in which creativity would thrive. He called this the ‘creativogenic society’ and formulated the relationships between individual processes and society as follows (Arieti 1976: 312):

> . . . although the creative process is an intra-psychic phenomenon, it is part of an open system. The magic synthesis does not occur without input from the external world, and it is greatly facilitated by a proper climate or milieu.

Simonton (1988: 386–387) makes the same point (of focusing on the environmental context of creativity) but in a different way:

> . . . we can view creativity as an act of persuasion; that is, individuals become ‘creative’ only insofar as they impress others with their creativity. From this viewpoint, creativity becomes an interpersonal or social phenomenon.

Csikszentmihalyi (1988) elaborates this idea further in his ‘systems approach’ in which he identifies a relationship between the creative individual, the social world, and the culture around her.

The fact that creative processes can be influenced by the organizational climate has been acknowledged by a number of authors (Amabile 1983, 1996, Isaksen and Lauer 2002, Isaksen et al. 2001). Isaksen et al. (2001) define ‘organizational climate’ as the recurrent patterns of behaviour, attitudes, and feelings that characterize life in the organization. They distinguish between climate and culture in the sense that the *climate* is more directly observable within the organization, whereas *culture* refers to the deeper and more enduring values, norms, and beliefs within the organization.

According to Martin (2002) the relation between organization culture and organizational climate is more complex. She distinguishes between those who argue that organizational culture and climate have much in common, and that feel comfortable about
viewing these concepts as closely related on the one hand, and others who claim that culture and climate are conceptually different. These researchers are focused on definitions and operationalizations of culture that allows for inconsistencies and would feel more comfortable with a differentiation or fragmentation perspective. In this research the notions of Amabile and Isaksen et al. on creative climate will be presented according to their own perspectives. From the point of view of Martin they can best described as following an integration perspective.

Amabile’s (1998) notion of creative climate is based on her earlier work. In her book ‘The Social Psychology of Creativity’ (Amabile 1983), she concluded that there are three factors that are key for creative processes. The first is motivation, which can be distinguished as extrinsic motivation (such as money and rewards) and intrinsic motivation (where the motivation lies within the act itself). The second is domain-relevant skills, such as knowledge and expertise. The third is creativity-relevant skills, like imagination, working style, and creative thinking techniques. These three factors influence each other and form the skeleton of the creative process. Amabile called this the ‘componental framework’.

In her later work, Amabile (1998) extended this notion to organizational practices and came up with six variables that form the links between work environment and creativity. These variables are challenge (which focuses on the relation between people and their jobs: combining the right person with the right job. Preferences and values are also important here); freedom (which is linked to intrinsic motivation—goals, continuity, and the way work is done); resources (the basic resources required for creativity are time and money. Time is especially important in creative processes because ideas cannot be forced to come); work group features (meaning diversity in backgrounds and perspectives so that ideas can be combined in new ways); supervisory encouragement (Amabile emphasized that both successful and unsuccessful efforts need to be praised. People need to feel that their efforts are important; their passion should be sustained. Hence, a certain tolerance for mistakes is necessary) and organizational support (where the organization creates opportunities, like systems and procedures, to enhance organizational creativity). Idea management systems are a tool for this. In her model, called ‘KEYS’, she also names two organizational obstacles to creativity: work impediments and workload pressure). These variables are listed in Table 2.2.1 below.
Table 2.2.1: KEYS, Model for Creative Climate According to Amabile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the KEYS model</th>
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<tr>
<td>challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work group features</td>
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<tr>
<td>supervisory encouragement</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizational support</td>
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Elaborating on Ekvall, Isaksen and Lauer (2002) defined nine dimensions in the climate that enhances creativity, which together form the ‘Situational Outlook Questionnaire’ (SOQ). These dimensions contain challenge (emotional involvement and commitment); freedom (the freedom to decide about how to do one’s job); idea time (the time available before action has to be undertaken); idea support (the resources to give a new idea a try); trust and openness (how safe people feel to communicate their point of view); playfulness and humour (how the work place is experienced; can it fun be there?); conflict (to what degree people engage in personal conflict); debate (to what degree people engage in lively debates about the issue, which might also be related to ‘challenge’ and ‘conflict’) and risk-taking (the counterpart of tolerance for failure).

In a study on the perceptions of the best and worst climates for creativity, Isaksen et al. (2001) claim to be able to show the upper and lower levels for the nine different factors of their SOQ, indicating that they can identify and evaluate an organizational climate with regard to its creativity-enhancing effects. While the SOQ provides an interesting, empirically tested way to look at organizational processes, there are several issues that need to be discussed. The variables of the SOQ model are listed in Table 2.2.2 below.

Table 2.2.2: SOQ, Model for Creative Climate According to Isaksen et al.

<table>
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<th>Variables in the SOQ model</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>challenge</td>
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<td>freedom</td>
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<td>idea time</td>
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<tr>
<td>idea support</td>
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<tr>
<td>trust and openness</td>
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<tr>
<td>playfulness and humour</td>
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<tr>
<td>conflicts (inverse relation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>debates</td>
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<tr>
<td>risk-taking</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
There are various similarities and dissimilarities between these two models. In the first place, the authors agree on the complexity of the creative climate and use multiple variables in their models. Second, with regard to the variables themselves, there seems to be some general consensus on most of them. Third, the authors present models that breathe a kind of universal applicability, regardless of individual and organizational variations, although this seems to be particularly weak from the perspective of structuration theory.

With regard to the differences between the two models, Amabile mentions two obstacles but Isaksen et al. do not mention any, although the variable ‘conflict’ in the SOQ correlates negatively with ‘creative climate’. This could be interpreted as an obstacle.

Besides similarities and dissimilarities between the models that were mentioned above, points of critique have been made about the role of conflict, issues of gender and status, universality, and personal relations.

Kurtzberg and Amabile (2001) have addressed the role of conflict in teams. They distinguish between task-based conflict, relationship-based conflict, and process-based conflict. Although they lack empirical evidence, they propose that creativity in teams is aided by moderate levels of task-related conflict. On the other hand, they found no evidence for any enhancing effects from relationship-based or process-based conflict.

In Germany, at the University of Frankfurt, researchers have looked at environmental influences in organizations. Called ‘KIK’ (Kreativitäts- und Innovationsfreundliches Klima [creative and innovative climate, translation HB]), this consisted of four aspects: activation means, goal-oriented motivation, trust, and personal freedom (Preiser 2006). It seems that most of this research has been carried out in the educational field, and it is interesting to note the relationship they imply between environment, personality traits, the teacher’s personality traits, and age. The results illustrate the interrelatedness between the environment and the personal traits of those involved.

Questions have also been raised about the effect of the creative climate with regard to gender or status. Kwaśniewska and Nęcka (2004) investigated the role of gender and status in the organizational hierarchy in relation to the climate for creativity in organizations in Poland. They concluded that managers experience the climate as much more creativity enhancing than regular employees, but they did not find any evidence that gender played an important role in how one experiences the creative climate.

Although all three models of creative climate seem to be universally applicable, one must consider the fact that words can mean different things in other languages or can be interpreted in a different way because of differences in culture or values. There is also the idea
of ‘local knowledge’ about creativity, which can be seen when non-Western researchers study creativity from their local cultural perspective. Hong, Hwang, and Lin (2003) studied organizational creativity in three Taiwanese computer firms from the concept of ‘Chi’. They feel that promoting the flow of ‘Chi’ is the key to ensuring effective knowledge sharing and successful knowledge creation in organizations.

Finally, a very different approach comes from Prince (2003), who regards ‘climate’ as a given and proposes another term: the (interpersonal) field. This would enlarge the concept to include the changeable effects of emotions. Prince refers to the Hawthorne effect and other examples where employees were empowered by the mere fact that they were given attention. In the words of Prince: their ‘fields’ had been changed (2003: 240-243). Prince videotaped many brainstorming sessions in order to be able to study these processes later, and he gives an example of such a session where a man jumped to his feet and expressed his idea, but another participant, a woman, directly reacted that ‘it would be too expensive’. Reviewing the tape revealed that 10 minutes before this incident, the man had proposed that this woman, the only woman in the group, should take the notes for the group. She had perceived this as denigrating (a ‘discount’ in Prince’s terms); hence, the revenge, which came as a surprise even to herself. According to Prince, this shows that attention has to be given to what he calls the discount/revenge syndrome, which is a dynamic, process-oriented perspective on creative climate. This incident can certainly be interpreted in terms of conflict within the creative climate (Isaksen et al. 2001).

Prince’s approach has been presented here because it opens up another dimension of the creative climate. In fact, what happened to the woman in his illustration is that she perceived the discounting man as a non-rewarding interactant. In a reciprocal relationship, you need to trust that the other person will reward your actions. A person who fulfils that trust is called a ‘rewarding interactant’, whereas a person who does not do so can be regarded as a ‘non-rewarding interactant’ (Alexander 1987). The essence of reciprocity is that persons must feel equal, so if there is a behaviour that is perceived as discounting, an action from the discounted person must follow to counter the balance. This is what happened in Prince’s example, which gives us a clear example of the influence of reciprocity in a creative process, and thus points at the importance of interaction variables.

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4 The Hawthorne effect was described by Mayo (1933), who is thought of as the first industrial sociologist. His book, *The human problems of an industrial civilization* (New York: MacMilan) was also an important book for the Human Relations movement.
2.3 Area 2: Acceptance processes: interaction and communication

The second area that emerges when the context of creative processes is being studied is the process of interaction and acceptance of ideas. In the Creative Problem-Solving (CPS) model, there is the idea of acceptance-finding behaviour (Parnes 1967). Csikszentmihalyi gave further impetus to this by changing the common question ‘What is creativity’ to ‘Where is creativity?’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 325). He answered this question by saying that it is ‘in the head’ or ‘in the product’ and, at the same time, concluded that therefore it would be impossible to regard creativity as isolated from the historical and social milieu. According to Csikszentmihalyi, it is impossible to tell whether or not an object or idea is creative by simply looking at it (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Csikszentmihalyi is not alone in shifting attention to environmental factors. For example, Simonton, who opts for a leadership-based perspective, remarks that (Simonton 1988: 321):

Creativity cannot be properly understood in isolation from the social context, for creativity is a special form of personal influence: The effective creator profoundly alters the thinking habits of other human beings by making a contribution to their quest for enhanced self-organization.

And he adds the following (Simonton 1988: 386): ‘A creator must have appreciators or admirers to be legitimized’. Csikszentmihalyi continues then by asking the question how one can tell creativity from non-creativity if it is not possible by simply looking at it (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 327): ‘Where does the information that gives us the ability to make sophisticated judgments [about creativity HB] come from’? Csikszentmihalyi concludes that attributions of creativity must be relative and grounded in social agreements and that the interpretations of critics are constitutive parts of creativity. From this perspective, he develops a systems view of creativity where individuals are regarded as coming up with variations. These variations are then evaluated by others, mostly by people working in the same area of expertise or ‘field’, as he called it. The ‘person’ will produce a variation, and the ‘field’, which is made up of a network of interlocking roles, selects promising variations and incorporates them into the domain (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 330). Csikszentmihalyi gives examples of fields as American art, nuclear physics, botany, or genetics. The easiest way to define a field is to say that it includes all those persons who can affect the structure of a domain (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 330). He goes on to say (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 331),
It goes without saying that fields will differ in the stringency of their selective mechanisms, the sensitivity of their gatekeepers, and the dynamics of their inner organization.

The selected variations are then transmitted and will be preserved in the ‘domain’ (the body of knowledge and beliefs of this particular ‘field’). This ‘domain’ is where other individuals can gather information in order to develop new insights. According to Csikszentmihalyi, it is therefore unimportant where one starts analyzing as the three constituent parts—a set of social institutions or field (selection), a cultural domain (preservation and transmission), and the individual (variation)—form a whole or a system. The ‘field’ is part of a larger society and the ‘domain’ is part of a larger culture. Csikszentmihalyi’s model is depicted below, in Figure 3.3.1.

![Diagram of Csikszentmihalyi's model]

*Source: Csikszentmihalyi (1988).*

*Figure 2.3.1: The locus of creativity*

The positive aspects of this model are obvious: it provides for a more comprehensive context and frees the concept of creativity from the person-oriented approach to include a much wider array of societal and cultural processes; hence, increasing the dynamics of the concept (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 336):
... we need to abandon the Ptolemaic view of creativity, in which the person is at the center of everything, for a more Copernican model in which the person is part of a system of mutual influences and information.

This systems view emphasizes other aspects of the concept of creativity. For example, it emphasizes the role of selection processes: how, on what basis, are ideas evaluated and selected? What kind of influence does the structure of a field have for attracting neophytes?

And it points to the quality of the ‘domain’. In the eyes of Csikszentmihalyi a clear notational system, as in music, helps make selective decisions. By having a clear notational system, everyone involved can easily evaluate the creative value of new variations (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 330): ‘The more precise the notation system, the easier it is to detect change and hence to evaluate whether or not the person has made an original contribution’. Whereas, on the other hand (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 331):

It also follows that a field with fuzzy selection criteria, or one with gatekeepers who are not highly respected, will have great difficulty in establishing the creativity of a new idea.

This systems perspective is practical and valuable, although there is some room for criticism. Csikszentmihalyi comes up with one himself by observing that occasionally great creative reformulations appear to take place outside of all constituted fields (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 331). His model does provide a solution, however, because other important people may take up the idea and give it its place in the field of their choice.

Two critical points can be made from the theory of structuration: first, distinguishing between field and domain, or between structure and culture, is artificial and not without problems. According to Bate, a distinction between culture and structure is impossible because a structure is a culture (Bate 1994). This would mean that a distinction between a field and a domain is not useful and that the two need to be taken together. On the other hand, it could be useful to make a distinction between various levels of environment, such as the micro-environment (or teams) and the macro-environment (like organizations or society at large). In addition, the persons who come up with ideas must find a place to deliver their ideas and thereby automatically become part of a field.

Second, although there are interactions among the elements of the model, no attention is given to the factual interactions that take place. It does not seem logical to distinguish individuals from society and their ‘field’. The individual is a member of society and, most probably, of his or her ‘field’. Individuals interact with other members and ideas are discussed
and accepted or rejected. Also, the relationships between the fields and the larger context of society are formed by interactions, which are the basic elements of the processes of variation, selection, and transmission—processes that are identified as social. Interactions take place at all levels of Csikszentmihalyi’s model except, perhaps, the first level, the individual level. Because part of the notion about creativity is that it is ‘inside someone’s head’, as an individual cognitive process, there can be a place where no interaction occurs. That is to say, no social interaction; it would be defendable from a Meadian perspective that internal interactions take place (Mead 1934). But at the other levels, interactions—both between the variables and within the variables—are the mechanism for the variation, selection, and transmission of ideas.

Acceptance: communication and interaction

Csikszentmihalyi (1988) described his model as a ‘systemic view’, and in his model, individuals create variations that are then selected and transmitted by a ‘field’ to a ‘domain’, which retains these selected variations. Expanding the concept of creativity and incorporating its context means that intrasubjective processes turn into social processes. Ideas that were created in people’s heads have to be communicated to others who accept, reject, or modify them. According to Csikszentmihalyi’s model, these others are people from the same ‘field’, but later on, they will also be other people from the broader society (when, for example, wider legitimation for the idea is needed). In organizations, the most likely persons to whom ideas will be communicated are colleagues and managers. In inter-organizational contacts, the most likely persons to whom ideas will be communicated will probably be people who do the same kind of work or people who were educated in the same field.

Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999) made a distinction between an intrasubjective level, an intersubjective level, and a collective level. With regard to Csikszentmihalyi’s model, the intrasubjective level relates to the level of the Person, the actor that comes up with an idea. Within acceptation processes, a distinction can be made between the intersubjective and the collective level. The collective level is described as processes and results that are part of collective behaviour (the organization, for example). The intersubjective level relates to communication or interactions between individuals and forms the link between the intrasubjective and the collective level.

From the perspective of structuration theory, it should be noted that the behaviour of actors is both enabled and limited by structures. In other words, ideas do not come up in a vacuum, but are influenced by structures, procedures, job descriptions, time limits, and so on. And ideas, in their turn, can change these existing structures, whether this is desired or
intended or not. Csikszentmihalyi’s model is still very much influenced by the idea that ideas come only from creative persons. In addition, in Csikszentmihalyi’s model, it appears that useful ideas are retained, but no attention is given to the ways that the implementation of these ideas change the environment. People’s lives, organizational structures, procedures, the division of power and resources—all can be influenced by the retention of ideas, but in Csikszentmihalyi’s model, this retention process seems to be understood as the passive incorporation of new knowledge into the existing corpus.

Although Csikszentmihalyi emphasizes the point of interaction between the diverse elements in his model (individual, social structure, and domain), no attention is given to the concept of interaction itself. Ideas, however, have to be communicated to others in order to become accepted, rejected, or modified, and interactions form the vehicle for these processes. Also, collective processes unfold through interactions, be it face-to-face or through media like the telephone and internet or magazines and newspapers. Therefore, in the next section, we will look at the concepts of communication and interaction.

**Communication**

In communication theory, four paradigms are distinguished: the transmission model, the expression model, the attention model, and communication as the attribution of meaning (Scholten 1996). The issues raised in these four paradigms are important to understand the processes of acceptance of ideas.

The first paradigm, communication as the transmission of information (also referred to as the process school), is based on the work of Shannon and Weaver (1949), who made a distinction between the sender, the channel, the receiver, and the effect. Information has to be sent, so it must be encoded in a sign system, which can be language, sound, image, and so on. The receiver then has to decode the information. A later addition by Fiske (1990) is the acknowledgement of ‘noise’ in the communication process. ‘Noise’ is understood as anything added to the signal between its transmission and reception that is not intended by the source. This ‘noise’ can be technical (like a television sending only ‘snow’) or it can be semantic (whether the sign system adequately represents what was intended to be sent). With regard to the communication of ideas, this notion of semantic noise is important because new ideas, especially when they are still raw or unfinished, are very hard to communicate clearly. As critical points of this approach, Scholten (1996) mentions that this theory is too simple, too linear, too one-directional and instrumental.
The second paradigm of communication theory accentuates ritual or expressive communication, which depends on shared understandings and emotions. It builds on culturally embedded symbols and accentuates the effect on emotions and feelings. In this way, it seems to be a reaction to the model of Shannon and Weaver that is directed towards information. Feelings and emotions may play a role in the processes of accepting ideas that are new and often raw or unfinished.

The economical aspects of communication are highlighted in the third paradigm where the focus is on attention-seeking and attention-giving behaviour. This model is also called the publicity model. Giving and receiving attention for ideas is important. Attention is needed in order for the processes of acceptance to start; attention might also indicate the value of the idea. In contrast to this, secrecy also plays an important role in the development of new products and services. In fact, an entire legal industry of patents and licenses has been built around the development of new products.

In the fourth paradigm, communication is understood as the attribution of meaning; this is also called the reception model. This model is based on semiology and discourse research: the attribution of meaning is an important aspect of acceptance. Scholten (1996) concludes that there is no best model to study communication and that the choice of model depends on the goals that are set for the research.

Rebel (2000) introduces a model of communicative interaction that is based on Shannon and Weaver but incorporates critical comments. In this model, the sender and receiver take turns in that sender one becomes receiver two and receiver one becomes the second sender, with both the sender and receiver able to have inner realizations. There is also attention to the medium, the encoding and decoding, the content and form of the messages, and mutual understanding.

In addition to the models, there are three issues that should be mentioned here, which are important in all four paradigms: the effects of communication, predispositions, and the issue of cognitive dissonance. At first, with regard to the effects of communication, Scholten (1996) considers four kinds of effects. One is the level of effect—are there micro-, meso-, or macro-effects? He also looks at effects that develop through the communication process, whether it is about knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour. The third kind of effect is formed by the time frame that the effect has, whether the communication has a short-, middle-, or long-term effect. The fourth has to do with the intentions of the sender, whether the effects were intended or unintended. This division into different kinds of effects is an interesting addition to Csikszentmihalyi’s distinction between selection, rejection, or modification of ideas.
Scholten also raises the issue of predispositions, which is about intervening variables, and which can explain why the same message can evoke different reactions in different people. This question is also addressed in adaptive structuration theory, where a distinction is made between communication-dependent variables and communication-independent variables. Communication-dependent variables are about the sender, the medium, and the message; in short, they deal with credibility. Communication-independent variables are about the receiver—level of education, interests, and so on. In acceptance processes, both types of predisposition play a role because acceptance processes deal with novel ideas, which are often raw and unfinished. Because evaluation of the information alone is difficult, these intervening variables are likely to play an important role.

The third issue involves cognitive dissonance, which is derived from the balance theory of Festinger (1957). This has to do with the distance between the pre-communicative meaning of the receiver about an issue or person, the meaning of the sender about the issue or person, and the evaluation of the sender by the receiver. The meanings about persons and issues that exist before the communication and the degree to which the new, and often raw, ideas are challenged in the communication process form an important issue.

Communication studies provide interesting, important, and useful points of consideration with regard to the acceptance of creative ideas. It is interesting to look at acceptance, rejection, or modification of ideas as the effect of a communication process. Furthermore, it is useful to focus on intervening variables, because, as we have seen in Csikszentmihalyi’s model, creative processes turn into social processes. Therefore, it seems logical to focus not only on the informational side or the affective variables around it, but also on the intervening variables of the sender and receiver that relate to credibility and acceptance.

**Interaction**

The concept of interaction can also be used to understand the notion of acceptance in creative processes. Basically, there are two ways to look at interaction. In the first (the mainstream), the study of interaction is used to study other issues, such as leadership, status, stratification, norms and values, sanctions, role demands, motives, attitudes, or hidden complexes (Blumer 1969, Kendon 1988). The study of interactions is used as a tool to get information about these other issues. From this perspective, processes of human interaction may be understood as the ways people behave towards one another, which involves characteristics of individual
members or groups and aspects of the immediate situation (Newcomb, Turner, and Converse 1965).

In the second approach, symbolic interactionism, there are three premises: namely, that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them, that the meanings of such things are derived from social interactions, and that these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process. This means that individuals designate different objects to themselves and that action is constructed or built up, instead of being a release (Blumer 1969). From this perspective, interaction is regarded as something to be studied in its own right.

In his presidential address for the American Sociological Association, Goffman (1983) promoted the face-to-face domain, the interaction order, as he called it, as a domain in its own right with its own methodology, namely microanalysis. From the perspective of the theory of structuration, it would be one-sided to emphasize interaction without taking the context or environment into account. It is probably because of this that Giddens (1988) goes to great lengths to acknowledge that Goffman did take structural conditions into account systematically. According to Giddens, Goffman’s attention to co-presence logically leads to attention to bodily disposition and display, which embodies information. Furthermore, it leads to attention to the time-space zoning of encounters. Social interaction is regarded by Goffman as inherently circumscribed in time-space, and there is routine monitoring of the settings of interaction. With regard to focused interaction, Goffman states that these involve ‘face engagements’ and he uses ‘talk’ as the basic medium of focused encounters. According to Giddens, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that talk is quite different from language as it includes issues like silences and ‘moves’ in turn-taking. It can be noted that the concept of interaction is therefore much broader than the concept of communication. Giddens states that the work of Goffman is very useful to the study of macro-oriented topics, such as social change. Goffman (1983) did not claim situationalism, for example, only because participants enter social situations carrying an established biography of prior dealings with the other participants. He referred to Bourdieu about the issue of the reproduction of social structure and stated that (Goffman 1983: 9)

. . . elements of social life have a history and are subject to critical change through time, and none can be fully understood apart from the particular culture in which it occurs.
Interactions form a central focus of the theory of structuration, and structures are reproduced or modified through interacting knowledgeable actors (Giddens 1984). Based on the theory of structuration, DeSanctis and Poole (1994) developed a model of interactions in organizations that are influenced by structures (such as the structure of ICT and other sources of structure, such as tasks and organizational environment) and the group’s internal system. The interactions themselves are then regarded as forms of appropriation and decision making that result in decisions and emerging structures. In this way, the mutual dynamics between interactions and structures are well represented.

**Intersubjective approach**

From the perspective of Csikszentmihalyi’s model of the locus of creativity, creative processes are not merely intrasubjective processes; they are social processes as well, which involve processes of the selection and acceptance of ideas (Parnes 1967). Creativity cannot be understood in isolation from the social context (Simonton 1988). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), it is time to abandon the Ptolemaic view of creativity, in which the person is at the centre of everything. In his locus of creativity model, variations are accepted or selected by the ‘field’, and selected variations are transmitted to and preserved in the body of knowledge and beliefs of the ‘domain’.

The concepts of communication and interaction are both useful for probing deeper into the processes of acceptance, selection, and transmission, which have been described and compared above. One could say that the concepts of communication and interaction partly overlap, but that the concept of interaction is broader than the concept of communication and more connected with contextual factors. Both concepts fall within the intersubjective level Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999) that was mentioned above, along with the intrasubjective level and the collective level. It appears that Csikszentmihalyi reserves the intrasubjective level for what he called the ‘Person’, the creative process of the one who comes up with an idea. To reserve the intrasubjective level for the creator alone would be a mistake, however. Acceptance processes are also typified by actors who are actively thinking, decision making, and knowledgeable. Acceptance processes can furthermore be understood as social processes that take place on an intersubjective and a collective level. Interactions and communication are constituent parts of both levels. The intersubjective level forms the platform where creativity comes into being in the social field. It therefore forms the focus of this research: personal face-to-face or mediated interactions in organizations. In the next
section attention will be given to theories about how ideas find their way into organizations, which is called idea management.

2.4 Area 3: Idea management theory
The third area that becomes evident when the environment or context of creative processes is studied involves the ways or procedures in which ideas are received or accepted in organizations. Because there is a lot of tension between the concepts of ‘creativity’ and ‘management’, this will be our first focus of attention. After this, attention will be given to current notions about idea management.

Tension between the concepts of ‘management’ and ‘creativity’
The study of creative processes in organizations can be understood as part of the study of organizational development. In his best seller on organizations, The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge (1990) poses an interesting question: Why do the best ideas fail? His answer lies in the observation that ‘mental models’ guide our behaviour, and in his suggestions for improvement, he proposes fighting the traditional hierarchy and following modes of creative thinking in order to challenge these mental models. In order to constantly question our models, we must make jumps in abstraction—to say what we normally think but do not say, to balance our efforts between informing and advocating, and to realize the differences between our ‘theories-in-use’ and those we espouse.

Argyris (as cited in Senge 1990: 241) has himself posed the question of why intelligent managers often do not develop a high team IQ. In other words, this question might be rephrased as: Why do social processes have a bad influence on intelligence? According to Senge, Argyris states the following: ‘. . . we are programmed to develop defense mechanisms . . . and then camouflage them with other defense mechanisms’. Argyris (2005) makes a distinction between two mind-sets that dominate human actions in organizations: namely, productive reasoning and defensive reasoning. In his article ‘On the demise of organizational development’ Argyris (2005: 128) argues that ‘If human beings are to become more effective at double-loop learning, they have to become more skilful at using productive reasoning’.

In his book, Groupthink, Janis (1972) poses the question of why intelligent people can make stupid decisions when they are functioning in groups. He describes how groups can develop feelings of invulnerability and an illusion of unanimity from rationalization, pressure on dissenters and self-censorship. These examples make it clear that a reflective and critical
attitude towards one’s ‘view of the world’ or ‘mental models’ and towards the social processes that one is involved in is important.

At the organizational level, therefore, a lack of attention to social processes and mental models seems to be the major issue that hinders creative processes. But, at the interface between the concepts of management and creativity, more tension can be noted. The concept of management of creativity, itself, may be regarded as a new branch on the tree of management and organizational development—a new branch in which an attempt is made to try to overcome the gap that is caused by the new demands on organizations posed by globalization, individual differences, the shifting role of knowledge, and the changing environment in general. The combination of the terms ‘creativity’ and ‘management’ leads to different sorts of tension.

Because of the new demands that are posed on organizations, there is more need for creativity in organizations (Fairbank and Williams 2001, Scratchley and Hakstian 2001). Scratchley and Hakstian (2001: 367) put it as follows: ‘Historically, creativity has been considered the antithesis of rationality, and, thus, the antithesis of effective management’. There is a big difference between rationality and order, on the one hand, and creativity with all its connotations, on the other. Weick (1995: 82) puts it like this: ‘To organize is to impose order, counteract deviations, simplify, and connect, . . . ’ Gapersz, too, notes a difference between creativity and organizations. He claims that (Gapersz 2002: 29-30 [Translation HB]):

There is tension between the concepts of creativity and organization. Organizing means to create order, to make rules, structures and procedures and often hierarchies. Whereas creativity needs space and freedom. Too much freedom won’t work for an organization and too much order won’t work for creativity. There is no fixed recipe for when and where creativity will arise, but organizations can create conditions to stimulate, evaluate, select and realize ideas from their employees.

Today, however, in the current climate of rapid change and global competition, creativity is regarded as essential (Scratchley and Hakstian 2001). ‘Untapped employee creativity’ is regarded as a wasted organizational resource (Fairbank and Williams 2001). Mauzy and Harriman (2003; ix) remark that companies in the past relied on sporadic outbursts of creativity, and they plead for ‘systemic creativity’—creativity throughout the organization.

Although the necessity for creativity in organizations seems clear to most scholars, the relationship between the two concepts is full of tension. Because innovative changes challenge existing systems, they are often resisted or ridiculed (Millward and Freeman 2002). From the perspective of structuration theory, it could be said that innovative changes constrain the rationale for reproducing existing structures and thereby challenge the privileges that come along
with those structures. Creative action may therefore suffer from censorship, corporate control, and other constraints (Seitz 2003). Creative actions ‘rock the boat’ or interfere with the conventional way of doing things and could affect the system’s equilibrium (Lau, Li, and Chu 2004).

Considering these undesired effects, it is surprising that so much effort is made to implement creative practices in organizational life. One answer to this might lie in the definition of the concept of ‘creativity’. As stated in the first chapter, there seems to be a high rate of consensus about the definition of creativity, which is focused on novelty and appropriateness. Prichard (2002) regards this consensus as a route for ‘normalizing creativity for the workplace’. By emphasizing novelty and usefulness, we lose many of the other characteristics of creativity, such as the fact that the creative act can be rebellious, chaotic, unconventional, bizarre, destructive, and a challenge to authority. Not to mention the fact that it leaves out existential questions (Prichard 2002) and involves ambiguous activities like managing freaks, adventurers, and horse-flies.

This makes creativity an insecure investment. Creative processes are unpredictable. There are no guarantees for success; they are not secure. There can also be unwanted outcomes or side effects, or there might be outcomes that are very good but that won’t generate advantages (Bakker 1998).

There is also the question nobody likes to ask: Are we (in our organization) creative when we want to be? In short, ‘managing creativity’ can be regarded as a real ‘managerial dilemma’.

We can summarize these tensions between creativity and management as follows: the creative act interferes with the conventional way of doing things and, therefore, could destroy existing equilibria. The creative act can be regarded as rebellious, chaotic, unconventional, bizarre, destructive, and a challenge to authority. Creativity opposes rationality, order, rules, structures, procedures, and hierarchies. It asks for space and freedom and can be seen as a deviation from the norm. Therefore, it is often resisted, ridiculed, censored, or constrained. Creativity can be seen as something that can be organized in a systematic way (as ‘systemic creativity’) or it can be regarded the other way around: as something that has to be accepted in its unmanageability.

From the standpoint of structuration theory, structures are regarded as both enabling and limiting to action. In the tensions we have discussed above, the focus lies clearly on the constraining side of structures. But, while creative processes are a real challenge to existing structures, it has to be emphasized that structures also enable creative processes, and we can
identify the specific characteristics that enable creative processes, such as the creative climate, which will be discussed in the next section.

**Idea management**

The concept of idea management aims to enhance the cultivation and use of creative ideas from employees (Fairbank and Williams 2001). The creative climate can be understood as conditional or contextual for the emergence of creativity; idea management is about the things that happen with ideas after they appear. In this section, we will look at the notions about idea management from Gaspersz (2002), Fairbank and Williams (2001), Hellström and Hellström (2002), and Mauzy and Harriman (2003). Gaspersz (2002: 77 [translation HB]) defined idea management as follows:

> With idea management, we understand all actions that an organization undertakes in order to signal, evaluate, and reward ideas and to bring them further into the organization where they can be implemented.

According to this definition, ideas are the result of creative processes and they are to be noted, evaluated, and eventually implemented. In addition to the cognitive side of this approach, there is also a social side, where idea givers (or ‘ideators’) are rewarded. In this definition, we could say that ideas are understood as *ideas that can lead to implementation*. Creative results that do not lead to implementation are left out with the use of this definition.

Capturing ideas from employees is, in fact, an old practice. Many businesses in the past had suggestion boxes in their cafeterias or other common areas. Someone would clean out the box periodically and record the suggestions for consideration at some unspecified time in the future (Fairbank and Williams 2001), but according to Fairbank and Williams, such practices fail to generate enthusiasm and the motivation to participate. With the aid of technology, these old-fashioned suggestion boxes have been transformed from passive boxes into active, sophisticated, electronic idea-management systems. Such a system forms a new environment or context that, from the perspective of structuration, focuses on the relationships between actors and structure. This is an interesting environment to study.

In Amabile’s and Isaksen’s models of the creative climate, a great deal of attention is given to environmental variables but no attention is given to the phases of idea development. In Gaspersz’s (2002) hourglass model, there is a focus on idea development. Gaspersz has identified five phases in the evolution of ideas, from producing ideas, to the selection, evaluation and enrichment of ideas, and finally, to implementation. While the administration
of ideas, which is very important in Gaspersz’s view, is not included in his scheme, he does emphasize its importance in his text, so it is included in the figure below (which is based on his analysis).

![Diagram of idea management process]

*Source: Gaspersz (2002).*

*Figure 2.4.1: Gaspersz on idea management*

The second approach to idea management to be presented here is that of Hellström and Hellström (2002). They have developed an interesting model in which they criticize the unilateral flow of ideas in organizations, which is clarified by the title of their paper: ‘Highways, alleys and by-lanes: Charting the pathways for ideas and innovations in organizations’. It is their opinion that idea processes cannot and should not be regarded as unilateral. In order to find out how creativity is embedded in organizations, they conducted in-depth interviews with 34 members of a large Swedish telecom corporation, based on the question of ‘how stimulation of new ideas comes about and what pathways they take through the organization’. They named this process ‘organizational ideation’, which is interesting because it appears to be broader than the concept of idea management in that it seems to contain the creative processes in which ideas are formed as well as providing room for spontaneous processes. Four factors are involved in the process of ‘organizational ideation’: idea inducement, the pathways, the rules of the road, and ‘gate control’ (figure 2.4.2). It is a very interesting view on idea management because the structures provide room for the ambiguity and informal processes that are so important in the unpredictable process of generating ideas in organizations. The metaphor they use is clearly derived from modern

![Diagram of vehicular traffic with 'highways', 'alleys', 'by-lanes', 'pathways', 'rules of the road', and 'gate control'.]

Source: Hellström and Hellström (2002).

Figure 2.4.2: Hellström and Hellström’s model

When these models of idea management are compared, we can see two striking differences. Gaspersz has used unilateral forms of idea development, whereas Hellström and Hellström have used a multilateral form, which makes their model more dynamic and flexible.

The authors also differ with regard to the perspective they seem to take (table 2.4.1). Gaspersz seems to take a management perspective on idea development, while Hellström and Hellström have a perspective that can be read from the perspective of both the employee and the manager. Managers, in their role as providers of roads, rules, and gate-control, allow the employee to scout for the best routes. These different perspectives on idea management are presented in table 2.4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaspersz</th>
<th>Hellström and Hellström</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unilateral management</td>
<td>multilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>employee and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hellström and Hellström are more in line with structuration theory, which focuses on the actor and the structural components of situations. By emphasizing a perspective that
focuses on both management and employees, the dynamics of actors in structures that are both enabling and constraining become more visible. Because the perspective of both the employee and management is emphasized, their position as knowledgeable actors is recognized (Giddens 1984). And finally, because the ‘highways, alleys, and by-lanes’ are a product of management and serve as a structure for employees, the duality of the structure is also recognized. This is the way organizational structures are produced and reproduced through actions (Giddens 1984).

One interesting point remains to be made: that neither Gaspersz nor Hellström and Hellström have presented a definition of the concept of ‘idea’. As the word ‘idea’ can mean many things and is actually a rather vague notion, this omission can be troublesome in an analysis on idea management. Therefore, we devote a section of the next chapter to clarifying the concept of ‘idea’.

**Volume of ideas**

Organizations are mostly thought of as buildings, collections of people, collections of contracts, and money flow; rarely as a cloud of intangible ideas. Yet, this is the primal soup from which innovations have to come. So, how big are these volumes of ideas? Where do ideas come from and where do they go? What happens in the meantime? How are they processed? Which careers rise and fall as a result? There are too many questions to address here, so the main focus of this section is on the number of ideas and their perceived quality.

It is hard to say which organizations benefit or lose from creativity. With quantitative data, especially, it seems impossible to account for gains and losses since new products or services are launched in so many ways. Quantification in terms of money, safety, or survival is impossible; therefore, benefits from creativity must be expressed in their logical manifestation, that is, in ideas. Ideas can be accounted for, both in numbers and in quality. But even this has rarely been investigated (Heerwagen 2002: 6). Actual measures of creativity in field studies are relatively rare.

In a presentation he gave at the 9th European Conference on Creativity and Innovation (ECCI-9), Isaksen (2005) presented the findings from a large consultancy company on the question how many ideas it took to get one successful innovation or product introduction. According to Isaksen, it takes roughly as many as 3000 ideas to get one successful innovation (see table 2.4.2). The process, according to Isaksen, is roughly as follows: from 3000 raw, unwritten ideas, more or less 10 percent (that is, 300) are submitted, meaning they are written down and submitted to decision-making agents. About 42 percent of these submitted ideas are transformed.
into small projects, meaning that from 300 ideas submitted, 125 small projects emerge. Only seven percent of the small projects go any further and morph into ‘significant developments’, which means that nine significant developments emerge from 125 small projects. From these nine significant developments, only four ‘major’ developments emerge (45 percent). Of these four major developments, 1.7 are launched (42.5 percent), and there is only one success.

**Table 2.4.2: How Many Ideas Are Needed to Get a Product to the Market Place (1)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Phases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3000</td>
<td>raw ideas, unwritten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>submitted ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>small projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>significant developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>major developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>launches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Isaksen (2005).*

Of course, the numbers that Isaksen presented are very rough, but they were investigated by a large consultancy company, which indicates that this information attracts the attention of serious business people.

Buijs and Valkenburg (2005) present the results of a German research by Kienbaum und Partner GmbH which was carried out between organizations. They studied 1919 ideas from which 524 became raw projects. 369 of these projects were presented to the directors which resulted in 176 product launches. It is very interesting that they continued their research 5 years later and then found that from the original number of ideas there were 124 flops, 24 products that made losses, 17 mediocre products and 1 successful product. This is important because a successful product launch does not guarantee success after a few years and from this research a continuous evolution can be seen from the idea phase to success.

**Table 2.4.3: How Many Ideas Are Needed to Get a Product to the Market Place (2)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Phases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>524</td>
<td>raw projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>369</td>
<td>presented to the directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>launches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>flops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>products that make losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>mediocre products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Buijs and Valkenburg (2005).*
It is interesting to note that they used different categories, a different time line and observed quite a different idea decay curve. Of course, companies are very different in product, size, markets, and the concept of ideas, as was pointed out in chapter two, so it is difficult to compare these findings.

Basadur (as cited in Heerwagen 2002) conducted a study of a Japanese programme to improve creativity. This programme included three key components: monetary incentives, training and coaching, and alignment with the strategy of the organization. Monetary rewards were given to individuals as well as to teams. Managers’ performance was evaluated on their ability to get workers to perform well in an idea-generation programme. Quality circles were introduced to align the strategy through ‘theme problems’ with ideas. This programme had wide participation throughout the firm and resulted in as many as 140 suggestions per employee per year.

**Managing creativity as a paradox**
The models that are presented by Gaspersz and Hellström and Hellström are valuable for looking at creative processes in organizational environments it should be kept in mind that the concepts of ‘creativity’ and ‘management’ form a paradoxical combination, whether due to the role of social processes (Argyris as cited in Senge 1992, Argyris 2005, Janis 1972), new demands that are posed on organizations (Fairbank and Williams 2001, Scratchley and Hakstian 2001), the issue of control (Gaspersz 2002, Lau, Li, and Chu 2004, Weick 1995), the issue of ‘normalizing creative processes’ (Prichard 2002), or the ‘unmanageability’ of creativity (Quinn and Cameron, 1983).

### 2.5 Critical comments
In this chapter, we have looked at three areas: the creative climate, acceptance processes, and idea management. These are summarized in table 2.5.1.

*Table 2.5.1: Summary of the Three Areas: Creative Climate, Acceptance, and Idea Management*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative climate</th>
<th>Acceptance: interaction and communication</th>
<th>Idea management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models for Creative Climate:</td>
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<tr>
<td>the KEYS model (Amabile)</td>
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<td>the SOQ model (Isaksen)</td>
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<td>The locus of creativity model (Csikszentmihalyi)</td>
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<td>• Communication</td>
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<td>• Interaction</td>
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<td>• Intersubjective approach</td>
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<td>Tensions between ‘management’ and ‘creativity’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaspersz on idea management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model of Hellström and Hellström</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing creativity as a paradox</td>
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</table>
In the first chapter, we identified two areas of debate: the descriptive-analytic debate and the instrumental-prescriptive debate. In the instrumental-prescriptive debate, the emphasis is on the practical or normative aspects of creativity. It was also noted here that there is a vast commercial market around creativity and the management of creativity (Sternberg 2006). In the descriptive-analytic debate, the emphasis is on exploring the concept of creativity in order to describe and analyze the phenomenon. In this section, we discuss the three different areas presented above in terms of these two debates.

With regard to the creative climate and idea management, the literature tends to fall more into the category of the instrumental-prescriptive debate. The early work of Amabile, such as her componential framework, fits well within the descriptive-analytic debate, with its emphasis on exploring the concept of creativity and providing a framework for describing and analyzing it further. Her later work on the creative climate, as well as Isaksen’s work on the creative climate, falls into the instrumental-prescriptive debate, with its emphasis on managerial prescriptions.

The models presented here on the creative climate are multi-dimensional and emphasize both enhancing factors and limiting factors, which is in line with the theory of structuration in which structures are regarded as both limiting and enabling. Criticism of the creative climate models focuses on the role of conflict (Kurtzberg and Amabile 2001), the relationship between the individual and the environment (Preiser 2006), the role of status and gender (Kwaśniewksa and Nećka 2004), the issue of universal applicability (Hong, Hwan, and Lin 2003), and the concept of ‘interpersonal field’ (Prince 2003).

With regard to the second area—acceptance processes—we looked at Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘locus of creativity’ model, which fits in the descriptive-analytic debate. It provides for a perspective in which individual creativity can be linked with parts of society, or fields, and with existing knowledge and cultural routines. Two main points of criticism are the relationship between fields and domain, or between societies and cultures (Bate 1999), and the role and levels of interaction.

With regard to the third area—idea management—the work of Gaspersz seems to fit right in the instrumental-prescriptive debate. The work by Hellström and Hellström has aspects of both debates: on the one hand, they provide a model for managerial prescriptions, but on the other hand, their model is dynamic in that it serves to analyze both the world of the employee and the environmental structure, which both enables and limits their action. Hence, their model helps us understand the duality of structure with regard to creative processes.
From the perspective of structuration theory, the focus of the Hellström and Hellström model on the relationship between actors and structures is very useful.

We have looked critically at the paradoxical relationship between the concepts of ‘creativity’ and ‘management’, which in the literature, has been attributed to the role of social processes, to the new demands that organizations continually face, to the issues of control and ‘normalizing creative processes’, or to the ‘unmanageability’ of creativity.

The last and most crucial criticism lies in the relationship between these three areas. So far we have treated them as different and unrelated, but from the perspective of structuration, there is a relationship between the micro- and macro-world—between the actor and the structure. Therefore, from the perspective of structuration, these three areas have to be regarded as forming a dynamic constellation in which the structure, creative climate, and idea management enable and constrain the interactions of actors. Through these interactions, structures are reproduced or modified.

### 2.6 Summary

In this chapter, we described the theory of structuration, which provides a frame for this study. We then looked at the adaptive structuration theory, which proposes a way out of the limits posed by structuration theory by looking at interactions as being the intersections of existing and emerging structures. The three areas of creative climate, acceptance processes, and idea management were then brought into the formula to compensate for a lack of attention to the environmental aspects of creative processes. To make the difficulties of managing creativity clear, attention was given to the paradoxical relationship between the concepts of ‘creativity’ and ‘management’. Finally, the three areas were examined critically in regard to the two debates on creativity: the descriptive-analytic debate and the instrumental-prescriptive debate.

In our research, the focus is on the third area: idea management through focusing at interactions (the second area), whereas the creative climate is considered as the environment or context in which the behaviour of actors occurs. That the relationship between these three areas is dynamic, is suggested by embedding them in the perspective of structuration theory.
CHAPTER 3
STEPPING STONES FROM AREA TWO

In the first chapter, we discussed the concept of creativity, and in the second chapter, we looked at the concept of creativity in context. Here, we consider the stepping-stones used in this research, as well as a scheme of sensitizing concepts from an interactionist point of view, and finally, the concept of 'idea'.

Sensemaking can be regarded as an individual's intention to enhance his or her perspective on a subject (Weick 1995). From this perspective, sensemaking processes form an important part of creative processes. According to Weick (1995) sensemaking is contingent on others and can therefore never be solitary—it is grounded in both individual and social activities. This is in line with the theory of structuration, which emphasizes the dynamic relationships between actors and structures. And while creativity has long been regarded as an individual cognitive process, ideas have to be communicated, so there are interactions involved in the ideational process.

3.1 Interaction and creativity
This research is about idea management and has been carried out from an intersubjective perspective. In this way, the term ‘sensitizing concept’ is used in Blumer’s (1969) sense, namely, to give the researcher a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. In our research, creativity is studied as social behaviour around the exchange of ideas, and the concept of ‘interaction’ is used as the sensitizing concept.

Interaction as a root factor for sensitizing concepts
The purpose of this section is to explain the concept of interaction as the root factor for the sensitizing concepts. ‘Interaction’ is the sensitizing concept, but it was divided into two more-precise concepts because it is so broad. These concepts include the idea of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘expression of ideas’ that we understand as being part of ‘interaction’. They serve as a point of reference and guidance in studying the processes of idea management in organizations with regard to the selection, transmission, and retention of ideas. Interaction with regard to ideas always has two sides: namely, the side of the ideator who presents an idea to others and the side of the receiver to whom the idea is being presented.
In studying the literature about ‘reciprocity’ and the ‘expression of ideas’, I decided that they were also too broad, so they were each divided into two more-narrow concepts (see figure 3.1.1). Reciprocity was divided into the concepts of ‘standing’ and ‘trust’. The expression of ideas was divided into the concepts of ‘testimony’ and ‘favourite interaction’. Because these concepts are regarded as having a mutual influence on each other, they are presented with two-sided arrows in figure 3.1.1.

![Figure 3.1.1: Model for the sensitizing concepts](image)

As far as creativity is concerned, there is both a ‘here-and-now’ situation in which the interaction is taking place and a promising ‘future’ situation for which the idea and the exchange of the idea are intended. This time dimension has another aspect, which is the degree of ‘maturity’ or, at least, the perception of the maturity of the idea. Hence, interactions where ideas are exchanged can vary on the scale of ideational evolution. Interactants can meet as idea-partners or as business partners, as colleagues, as equals, or as people with very different status in the power hierarchy. This initial perception or definition of the situation is very influential on the interaction to come (Goffman 1959). The definition of the situation can be understood as the first step in the construction of social reality. In interaction the kind of event that is going to be produced, has to be defined. In other words, are we taking part in a meeting, a party, a wedding or a funeral? This definition must be shared and this is accomplished by symbolic interaction. This definition of the situation offers a scheme for the activities that follow.

With regard to the concept of creativity, this definition of the situation means a number of things: defining the problem, defining the (desired) solution, defining means or procedures, and also defining the relationship, including expectations about inputs and outputs.
So, what was the context of the interaction? What happened before the idea sprang up? What were the inputs for this situation? Ideas don’t emerge ex nihilo; they must be understood from real life situations. If our research is mainly about the ideas of employees in an organization, the most probable context is the daily routine, which forms part of a larger body of knowledge about routines and procedures, as well as knowledge about fringe areas, failures, values about what will and will not be tolerated, and knowledge that has fallen fallow. Furthermore, there is the issue of control and authorization. Within these limitations, there is a highly variable amount of free space, or space for interpretation, where initiative and imagination are possible.

Ideas can be understood as the coming together of past experiences and ambitions for the future. They have reference to existing knowledge and ideas, but when they are brought into action, even verbally, they become part of a social world as well. The ‘idea world’ and ‘social world’ are terms, which, I suggest, can be used here. From an evolutionist perspective, the idea (and its development) would be placed more centrally. In this intersubjectively oriented approach, the interactions between the actors and the interplay between the idea world and the social world are both important. Thomas’s (1928: 571-572) theorem told us that ‘What is perceived as real is real in its consequences.’ This certainly makes sense for ideas, which have consequences. Actions, in most cases, are preceded by thoughts and, therefore, actions can be regarded as the consequences of those thoughts. Inventions have a ‘Promethean promise’: a great, wonderful perspective, but also a more negative perspective. Prometheus stole fire from the gods, which was considered the basis for human civilization, but for his act, he was severely punished by the gods. Contemporary inventions hold a similar promise of reward and punishment, although to a far lesser degree. These rewards are often expressed in terms of money. Bill Gates was the richest man on earth for a long time, which can be seen as a reward for his work. But the inventor of photography, Niépce, was less fortunate. He lost his patent to Daguerre, so he died poor and only a few people know his name. This happens in the adoption of ideas as well, not only in the invention phase. Accepting ideas that do not work has cost many a person his or her head.

**Limiting the scope**
We have already seen that power relations come into play when a situation is defined. Those with more power have more possibilities to claim their ‘definition of the situation’ and, therewith, their ‘definition of the truth’. The ‘definition of the situation’ in a context of creativity is about the ‘definition of the problem’, the ‘ownership of the problem’, the desired
solution, and the perspective on truth. It is also about the definition of a ‘good idea’, about power, and about persuasion. The power dimension is important in perceiving the risks one takes by interacting with another. The question of sharing inputs and outputs, an essential factor in reciprocity in relationships, involves determining whether the other can be defined as a ‘rewarding interactant’. In creative processes, status and career are at risk. Therefore, the perception of risk (which is connected with the perception of the other in regard to his or her status and ability to reward interactions) is important.

The issue of power is closely related to the issue of politics. Power refers to strategic action and carrying out one’s will; therefore, networking and lobbying are important activities, especially in organizational contexts, where actions quickly take on a political connotation. This issue of political behaviour is linked with another complicating factor about interaction, namely the degree to which people lay their cards on the table—human interactions may vary in their degree of ‘truthfulness’. In his theatre metaphor, Goffman (1959) called this ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ behaviour. Frontstage behaviour is what actors intentionally want to show, as actors play their roles before the public. The term ‘backstage’ is reserved for what actors really think or feel. There can be huge differences between frontstage and backstage behaviour.

The ways that information is given and the ways information from others is interpreted—by dramatizing, idealizing, or mystifying it—are part of the information game. Trying to get information that was not ‘given’ from the other and matching this with other information is also part of this game. The information game is particularly important in the exchange of ideas, because uncertain, intangible elements that might be risky, but which also might be highly beneficial, are exchanged. Hence, the quality of the communication—the quality of the expression of the idea—is very important.

Of course, there are more issues that deserve attention, such as the way actors are selected and recruited to participate in these exchange activities. As risks and benefits can be high, it is understandable that there is a selection process and that information is withheld from some (Goffman 1963).

These factors—power, politics, and the information game/frontstage perspective—are also related to the different contexts that organizations can provide (Veenswijk 2005). Because idea management is a new phenomenon, it is interesting to study it in a variety of contexts, which all have an effect on interactions. First, commercial orientation is important: commercial organizations have different interests than non-profit organizations and therefore espouse different attitudes with regard to the communication and development of ideas.
Second, the degree of hierarchy in the organization plays a role. It could be argued that hierarchical (or vertical) organizations show a different attitude towards the communication and development of ideas than non-hierarchical (or horizontal) organizations. A third important organizational factor is the degree to which organizations have provisions in their infrastructure with regard to ideas, such as idea boxes, idea-management systems, or job descriptions that focus on creative processes. In our research, we look at creative processes in these different organizational contexts.

3.2 Reciprocity: standing and trust

From the perspective of interaction as a sensitizing concept, two more-detailed concepts have emerged: reciprocity and the expression of ideas. In this section, we look at the concept of reciprocity, leading to the concepts of standing and trust.

Reciprocity

As social action is permeated with reciprocity, reciprocity is essential to the study of the exchange of ideas (Alexander 1987). In this section, we look at the sensitizing concept of reciprocity in the context of social behaviour regarding ideas.

Wels (2000) distinguished four traditions in regard to reciprocity. At first, he looks at the philosophical tradition of Simmel, who regarded reciprocity as a ‘universal’. Simmel (1908) regards reciprocity as a fundamental issue in human action and relates it to issues like fidelity and gratitude. Second, he examines the ‘anthropological’ tradition of Malinowski and Mauss on basis of the *kula* ring of Papua New Guinea and ‘The Gift’, including the critiques of these phenomena from Sahlins and Lévy-Strauss. In addition, he places van Baal’s four types of reciprocity (including mother/child reciprocity) in this tradition, along with ‘not grudging’, vendettas, bribery, and crimes and punishment, which van Baal sees in reciprocal terms (van Baal 1975). Wels’s third tradition is based on the evolutionary biologist’s perspective, with such questions as how evolution brought forward cooperative and altruistic behaviour. Wilson and Axelrod are leading figures in this socio-biological perspective, which, despite Sahlins’ and Kuper’s critiques, had a strong impact on economists, for example, as can still be seen in terms like ‘win-win situations’ (Axelrod 1990, Wilson 2000). The fourth tradition is mainly linguistic and is concentrated on questions such as how the word *gift* (in Dutch) can mean both ‘present’ and ‘poison’ and how the English word ‘present’ can mean ‘a gift’ as well as the ‘here-and-now’. According to Bailey (1971), there is strong ambivalence in gifts, which is caused by the simultaneous presence of both co-operative and competitive
aspects in all exchanges. If a person makes no exchanges he does not belong to his group, but as soon when he makes the exchanges, the interpretations of the exchanges will lead to challenges caused by misinterpretations or inappropriate returns. Reputations arise from interactions in which one engages and from the messages which these interactions signal about him (Bailey 1971: 22 – 24).

When these lines of thought are evaluated, it can be said that time, reputation, fairness, and trust seem to be essential to understanding reciprocity. Trust is hardly present in immediate transactions, such as trade relations. As we say in Holland, Boter bij de vis, which means that you should pay your bills immediately. Most transactions, however, overlap and then trust becomes important. In trust, reputations are important, but reputations are also defined by group memberships, so inclusion and exclusion form part of the reciprocity debate. In addition to all this, personal relationships play a role, as do instrumental as well as affective aspects.

Trust can be seen as a precondition for exchange, but it can also be regarded as an outcome. Trust is necessary, but it develops slowly and can therefore be seen as a form of ‘social capital’, which can be considered as the sum total of someone’s ‘reciprocal relationships’.

From the perspective of our research, reciprocity is taken as an element of the sensitizing concept ‘interaction’. Based on the tradition of the concept of reciprocity, time, reputation, fairness, and trust appear to be essential. In order to find a balance between ‘focus’ and ‘depth’ in our research, I chose to elaborate further on the concepts of reputation and trust, using the concept of ‘standing’ for reputation.

**Standing**

In the section above, I argued that reputation and trust form important aspects of reciprocity and, hence, of the process of interaction. The concept of ‘reputation’ has been studied from many different perspectives. While this emphasizes the importance of this concept, it, unfortunately, has not led to any single interdisciplinary approach or understanding.

In economics, ‘reputation’ is the preferred term; in sociology, it is ‘prestige’; in marketing, ‘image’; and in accountancy and law, ‘goodwill’ (Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997). Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar point at the fact that these professions have different ways of looking at the subject and show different interests in their focus. For example, marketing people are used to looking at the concept from the focus of the brand or the image,

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whereas in accounting, the term ‘goodwill’ is associated with a firm. Sociologists are more used to looking at the matter from an occupational perspective. Here, I look at it from the interaction level. Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar (1997: 1362) take the organization as their focal point: ‘Standing is the organization’s ranking on relevant criteria, which, as a whole, form the relative position of that organization in the eyes of given constituencies’.

From an intersubjective perspective on creativity, it would be interesting to look at action directed towards the ‘intangible’, and the term ‘goodwill’, as an aspect of standing could be useful here. According to Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar, there are two basic views on ‘goodwill’. The first is that goodwill is a residual category, referring to ‘the excess of the cost over the fair value of the identifiable net assets’ (Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997: 1364). The second is that goodwill represents ‘expected earnings in excess of anticipated normal earnings’ (Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997: 1364). Taking these two points of view together, the term goodwill is connected with such terms as ‘fair’ and ‘normal’. This does not make it any easier. In fact, Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar state that the term ‘goodwill’ is engulfed in an air of mystique and complexity, and they claim the following (Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar 1997: 1364): ‘Accountants describe it as ‘the most intangible of the intangibles’’. In light of this one wonders how people operate and develop strategies for behaviour in regard to ‘goodwill’. Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar (1997: 1366) go on to state that ‘Goodwill is defined in terms of ‘benevolence’ and ‘favour’’. These terms could be useful for looking at interactions concerning creativity or behaviour with regard to ideas. With regard to organizational standing, these terms are related to the role of signalling activities, such as advertising, promotion, and public relations—‘dramatizing’ activities, as Goffman would say. Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar claim that the extent to which signalling is effective is a function of the uncertainty surrounding the organization and its products from the perspective of the given constituencies. For the purposes of our research, the choice is to use the term ‘standing’ because it seems to be more neutral than the other terms.

Trust

The other aspect of reciprocity that we will consider is the concept of ‘trust’. Many authors have emphasized the importance of trust for achieving organizational success (Six 2004). According to Six, trust is necessary in contexts of high ambiguity and uncertainty, and in contexts of high complexity. In addition, it can provide a sense of security or can help with risk-taking, can be a survival advantage in these contexts. Also, trust is said to assist in learning, creativity, and innovation (Six 2004).
Creative activities are often filled with a high degree of expectation. The ideas themselves are intangible and their value is hard to define, but they contain the promise of great rewards in the future. This promise contains a time dimension that, by definition, includes elements of insecurity, unknowability, and unpredictability. Social behaviour with regard to the exchange of ideas is therefore characterized by both intangibility and the time dimension, which gives trust an important role (Lascaux 2003: 2):

Trust begins where knowledge ends, but nobody is able to indicate where exactly this frontier runs, as well as which important and complex interrelations pertaining to the present or the future are mistakenly eliminated from agents’ consideration or regarded as insignificant out of their ignorance.

In a situation of complete and perfect information, there is certainty and, hence, no need for trust. At the opposite end of the spectrum, in a situation with total insecurity, trust alone is not sufficient. The most common state will be that state of ‘partial knowledge’; that is an environment where trust emerges (Lascaux 2003).

Trust is close to hope, faith, loyalty, and credibility. Blomquist and Stähle (2004: 176) define trust as ‘The actor’s expectation of the other party’s competence and goodwill’. These expectations are based on experience. According to Luhmann (as cited in Lascaux 2003: 3), trust rests on illusion:

A person finding herself in the illusory state of trust simplifies extreme complexity of the other world and selectively casts aside external uncertainty in favour of inner confidence.

Based on the work of Heimer (2001) and Fukuyama (1995), Lascaux (2003) states that only when uncertainty and vulnerability manifest themselves simultaneously is the ability to build trusting relationships regarded as an important device in mitigating the risk of unpredictable and harmful consequences.

Because of these characteristics, trust is fragile and constantly has to be reaffirmed (Blomquist and Stähle 2004: 185): ‘In general, trust is believed to evolve slowly, through repeated interactions of increasing satisfaction and through incremental investments and experiences’.

Lascaux emphasizes, therefore, the role of familiarity. He concludes that the basis of trust will be searched for in the past, in familiarity or conventionality, but this is no guarantee for future trust, which he thinks can better be looked for in being well informed about the
trustee. This point of view is shared by Deutsch (as cited in Blomquist and Ståhle 2004: 185), who describes trust as ‘... evolving from past experience and current interaction’. As Blomquist and Ståhle (2004: 178) state: ‘Already at the very first meetings, the behavioural dimension of trust is present in signs and signals, e.g. what information is revealed and in which manner’.

Lascaux also points out the possibilities of attendant variables, such as the reputation of the trustee, calculation about his or her motives, norms of power and control, and the legal context. But these subtle notions are observed through symbolic representations, approximations, unclear feedback, incomplete and distorted perception, (re)interpretations, mental habits, prejudices, ingrained thought patterns, erroneous suggestions, and distorted notions. Trust is a relational concept; one can maintain, withdraw from, or justify it. Lascaux therefore speaks about ‘keeping an eye on the bounds of trust’, ‘tolerance thresholds’, and ‘territories of trust and control’.

We have noted that trust is rooted in experiences and expectations. Furthermore, it contains an element of optimism about the goodwill of others and a positive estimation of their future competence and reliability (Jones, as cited in Lascaux 2003: 4):

Although some prior experience with the object of trust is a necessary condition for establishing the cognitive element in trust, such experience only opens the door to trust without actually constituting it.

Blomquist and Ståhle (2004: 180) go on to define trust as:

... an actor’s expectation of the other party’s capability, goodwill, and self-reference, which needs to be confirmed by experience. Thus, trust is increased by—and decreased by the lack of—evidence of these components in parties’ actual behaviour and communication.

This definition is dynamic in the sense that capability, goodwill, and self-reference are bound by an interactive tension. In the study of social behaviour with regard to ideas, this distinction seems to make sense. In this definition, self-reference is important to make boundaries absolutely clear, to be able to have a dialogue on information—on the manner in which it is processed and on the creation of meaning.

3.3 Expression of ideas: testimony and favourite interaction

In order to achieve results, ideas have to be communicated to others, through a process characterized by offering an idea to others and an evaluation process by receivers about how
valuable they find the contribution. In this acceptance-finding process, influence, power, and persuasion all play a part. According to Albert and Runco (1990), the four Ps of creativity should be expanded with a fifth P, namely persuasion. They see persuasion as an important element of creativity. With regard to expressing ideas to others, Simonton (1988: 394) used the term ‘communication configuration’: ‘This . . . consists of symbols, whether verbal, mathematical, visual, or auditory, that permit the initial idea to be conveyed to fellow human beings’. In fact, this can be in any form, such as an article, an essay, a painting, an opera. Simonton (1988: 386) goes on to suggest that creativity be regarded as an ‘act of persuasion’. A person with an idea and people who make use of the idea support each other: a creator must have admirers to be legitimized. Simonton (1988: 395) immediately recognizes a paradox in this: ‘Change permutations require an iconoclastic disposition, whereas the formation of viable communication configurations demands more of a traditionalist orientation’. In other words, having a good idea is something that creative, probably non-traditionalist people do, whereas communicating this very same idea asks for a more ‘normal’ approach. O’Keefe (1990: 17) gives the following definition of persuasion: ‘A successful, intentional effort at influencing another’s mental state through communication in the circumstance in which the persuadee has some measure of freedom’.

From the perspective of our research, the expression of ideas involves two elements: the testimony itself (which can be regarded as a social expression of an idea) and favourite interaction (which can be seen as the context in which an idea is expressed).

**Testimony**

In this research an idea will be understood as ‘a complex whole of interrelated elements that form part of larger wholes’. Ideas are in the heads of people and they must be communicated to others. From O’Keefe’s (1990) perspective, the message that is given—the expression of the idea—can be called a ‘testimony’.

Testimonies can be regarded as ‘biased’, ‘reluctant’, or unbiased. When an inventor expresses an idea and is claiming the quality of his or her discovery, the testimony is most likely to be biased. When the inventor is also willing to include the disadvantages of his or her discovery, the testimony may be regarded as ‘reluctant’. Unbiased testimonies can only be given by people who have no interest in the outcome of the exchange.

Senders, those who present their ideas, can be distinguished as ‘low-credibility’ senders and ‘high-credibility’ senders. Messages can be distinguished as ‘pro-attitudinal messages’ (those that the receiver can imagine or agree upon) and ‘counter-attitudinal
messages’ (those that the receiving party disagrees with). Furthermore, just as senders can differ in their ‘persuasiveness’, receivers can vary in their ‘persuasivity’ (O’Keefe 1990).

Testimonial activities can be understood as the efforts that are made to build up persuasion. They can include a wide array of persuasive aids, such as talking, PowerPoint presentations, sketches, models, and prototypes. They also imply the investments that are made in order to build persuasion.

In this section, a distinction is made between ‘ideas’ (that exist in people’s minds) and ‘testimonies’ (the expression of these ideas).

**Favourite interaction**

Not all aspects of interaction can be traced back to their persuasive character; therefore, attention is given to other factors that might be important. In this section, we look at the concept of favourite interaction, derived from Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) well-known book ‘Pygmalion in the classroom’.

Rosenthal and Jacobson investigated children in primary education. When these children were being given their psychological tests, the researchers randomly selected a number of them and told their teachers that they expected these children to have an intellectual spurt within the coming six months. After six months, the teachers were interviewed and the researchers found that, indeed, these children had experienced an intellectual spurt. There had been absolutely no reason for this to occur in most of the cases. The only factor that was different for these children was that the teacher had been told to expect it. This is an interesting case of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Rosenthal and Jacobson have been unable to explain their findings other than that the teacher must be the ‘changed’ agent and that the teacher’s ‘new information’ unintentionally changed the quality of their interaction with the children. The change in the teacher’s expectations must have led to some form of favourable treatment. This is in line with observations about examiners (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968: 160): ‘. . . examiners who believed their human subjects to be brighter treated them in a more friendly, likeable, interested, expressive, and encouraging manner’. They have another remarkable finding about the relationship between the intellectual spurt and the children’s ability to judge someone’s tone of voice (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968: 160):

Those children who were better able to judge the tone of voice of an adult female speaker profited significantly more from favourable teacher expectations than did those children who were less successful judges of tone of voice. Such evidence serves
as a basis for speculation that much of the unintentional communication of interpersonal expectations may occur through the auditory channel.

Rosenthal and Jacobson presume that the positive effects they observed have to do with the quality of interaction, the quality of observation, and the expectations. Within the context of the quality of interaction, they presume that interactions become more pleasant, friendlier, more enthusiastic, more likeable, more interested, more expressive, more encouraging, and show warmer behaviour. In other words, they suggest that there is a relationship between intellectual achievements and ‘warm’ or ‘rich’ interaction. With regard to the quality of observation, they identify two things: more rapid judgment of the correctness of behaviour and more rapid rewarding of correct or desired behaviour. In other words, they suggest that there is a relationship between intellectual achievements and the speed and quality of judgment and reward. Based on the teacher’s expectations, they suggest that the teacher might provide greater opportunities and more time for a child to show the competence that is expected, which then stimulates a more reflective cognitive style. In other words, they suggest a relationship between intellectual achievements and the opportunities provided for reflection and showing competence. These findings seem to be very relevant for our study, particularly for the atmosphere in which interactions take place. They shed light on the elements that influence the quality of interactions, which, in turn, can influence the success or failure of ideas.

3.4 Idea versus testimony
In the theory of structuration, an important place is reserved for the actors, who are regarded as knowledgeable agents. According to Giddens (1984), human conduct is bounded by the unconscious and by unacknowledged or unintended consequences. Knowledgeability is about the things that actors know or believe about the circumstances of their actions and those of others (Giddens 1984). When knowledgeability comes into play—in work or in our private lives—it comes in the form of opinions, perspectives, or new ideas. Ideas are an important part of creative processes because, through new ideas, opportunities arise in the form of organizational change, innovation, or human resources. This is why idea management is seen as an important aspect of the management of creativity. However, neither of the authors who have written about idea management has looked at the meaning of the concept of ‘idea’. In this section, I will attempt to describe and analyze current notions about the concept ‘idea’.
This is a very broad concept, indeed and seems like a container that is used for many purposes. The on-line dictionary die.net (http://dict.die.net/idea/, accessed October 2004) quotes the following from the 1913 edition of Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary:

There is scarcely any other word which is subjected to such abusive treatment as is the word idea, in the very general and indiscriminative way in which it is employed, as it is used variously to signify almost any act, state, or content of thought.

It lists the following words as synonyms for ‘idea’: notion, conception, thought, sentiment, fancy, image, perception, impression, opinion, belief, observation, judgment, consideration, view, design, intention, purpose, plan, model, and pattern.

The concept of ‘idea’ seems to hold elements of suggestion, knowledge, belief, and purpose (http://www.dictionary.co.uk/browse.aspx?word=idea accessed October 2004). In philosophy, the term has had several different meanings. In Plato’s view, the concept ‘idea’ had an archetypical meaning of which reality was but an imperfect replica. In Hegel’s view, ‘idea’ was the complete and ultimate product of reason and therefore the absolute truth.

A more down-to-earth definition may be found in the following version from WordNet (r) 1.7 (http://dict.die.net/idea/ accessed October 2004): ‘the content of cognition; the main thing you are thinking about; ‘it was not a good idea’; ‘the thought never entered my mind’’. Here is a more popular notion of idea as ‘the content of cognition’, which points directly to the inner world of thought. But perhaps this notion is still too broad. It might be better to describe ‘idea’ as ‘a product of mental activity’ (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/idea accessed September 2010). The interpretation of an ‘idea’ as ‘the content of cognition’ could easily imply that ideas are about facts and common knowledge. The notion of ideas as personal ‘products of mental activity’ gives room for ‘personal knowledge’ and interpretations and feelings about personal experiences.

But ideas are also expressed—they are communicated to others—which brings another common perspective on the concept of ‘idea’, namely as a ‘carrier of meaning’. Maybe we should distinguish between ‘idea-as-an-inner-experience’ and ‘idea-as-a-communicated phenomenon’. In this research the term ‘testimonies’ will be used for the communicated ideas. The term idea will be reserved for the part of the process that develops in one’s head, the inner experience, which cannot be checked by others. The term testimony will be reserved for the part of the process where the idea leaves the world of the inner experience and enters the public world. This testimony can take all kinds of forms, like words, sketches or PowerPoint presentations.
Although often taken for granted, this point (the aspect of communication) raises some difficulties because meaning cannot exist outside the head of the recipient. Ideas can therefore only be carriers of symbols that can have meaning inside the heads of the communicating parties, which brings us to the aspects of content or representation, symbols, expression, and interpretation—and, hence, the clear link with the process of sensemaking for those involved. So far, we have noted the container-like character of the notion ‘idea’ and the often-used definitions, such as the ‘content of cognition’, ‘a product of mental activity’, and ‘a carrier of meaning’.

Ideas also have some basic characteristics. We will look at six of those here (see also table 3.4.1). First, ideas have a ‘nested’ character; that is, they are part of a larger whole (Rich and Weisberg 2004). For example, a student comes up with an idea for a lesson but then finds out that there is some ‘idea’ or perspective behind the approach and that the lesson itself is part of a larger module, which, in turn, is part of a larger element of the curriculum. The whole course may be seen as a complex whole of interrelated parts that shifts attention from the concept of ‘idea’ to its elements and their interrelatedness. It also becomes clear that ideas conflict with each other: some ideas might be carried out whereas others are not. Behind ideas are other points of view that provide a perspective in decision making, or behind ideas there are main ideas—just as behind some musical arrangements there are leitmotivs or themes. Behind loosely formulated ideas there are theories and paradigms.

Second, ideas presuppose many other things as being equal or as remaining the same. This is the ceteris paribus character of ideas. In short, ideas are a complex whole of interrelated elements that form part of other patterned wholes.

Third, ideas may pop up spontaneously or evolve gradually, but they can differ in maturity—in their evolutionary state. Simonton (1988) makes a distinction between mental aggregates and configurations, where aggregates have elements and interrelationships that are not fully integrated. In configurations they are. This distinction is easily recognizable and may help to explain more of the creative process. An essential point in creative thinking is the coming together of different lines of thought. The ways in which these different lines merge is essential for the evolution of a new configuration. It should be noted that many ideas that emerge do not originally get the name ‘idea’ but are merely vague intuitions, unhappy feelings, unfinished projects, or random footnotes. They can appear as fuzzy images, incomprehensive words, or sketches. This is the true creative ‘primal soup’, so to speak. Simonton also speaks of the ‘communication configuration’ as the way thoughts are expressed or presented. As this can be confusing, I will later use O’Keefe’s concepts of the
communication aspects of ideas. This concept of expression is very important. Along these lines, it should be noted that copyright, for example, protects the way an idea is expressed in a piece of work, but it does not protect the idea itself\(^6\).

Fourth, the level of abstraction as well as these larger patterned wholes can be understood in the range of idea, ideal, and ideology. As such, it becomes all the more clear that ‘content’ and value judgments or beliefs or emotions are all inseparable. Ideas are related to the world around us and therefore they are also related to the legitimation of the established order. Representation, interpretation, and legitimation are important aspects of the concept ‘idea’.

So far, the notion of concept has been subtly directed towards the rational connotations of thought and content. But in the associations noted above, there are other directions, like desires, opinions, and intentions. In Kolb and Fry’s (1975) learning model, there is a clear distinction between different modes of learning: perception, thinking, planning, and action. In order to be realized, ‘ideas’ have to pass through these different stages and to manifest themselves differently in these articulated aspects of the learning process. The concept of ‘idea’ can then transform itself from a perception and a feeling to a carrier of thought, a desire, and a plan of action.

Finally, one could say that up to this point, ‘ideas’ have been regarded as something positive, or neutral at best, but ideas can also be negative things: ‘bad ideas’, illusions, or obsessive thoughts. Even bad developments may have started with the enthusiasm that is so characteristic of new ideas. Judgments, however, come later, and criteria can evolve, so there is no final word about this except the warning that the commonly heard positive interpretation of the concept ‘idea’ is rather dangerous.

An interesting aspect of interpretation is that there are numerous possibilities. Interpretation depends, first, on the frames of reference of the interpreter, so interpretations will always vary. As interpretations are related to legitimation processes, there are interests involved, and in defining the situation, more or less flattering interpretations can be presented. On a broad scale, these interpretations can be said to be maximal or minimal interpretations of the given idea.

As manifestations of thought, we have seen that ‘ideas’ can be understood as complex wholes of interrelated elements, which form part of other patterned wholes. Considered as such, they can be categorized according to their level of abstraction, the number of elements

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\(^6\) Information on patents can be found on www.ipo.gov.uk/ (accessed September 2010).
involved, the number of interrelationships, the character of these interrelationships, and the way these elements and their interrelationships form part of these larger patterned wholes. This allows for a variety of interpretive possibilities and, hence, the way they are perceived as ‘useful’.

In short, ideas can be recognized as ‘the content of cognition’ as long as they are inside our heads, as ‘carriers of symbolic content’, as ‘interpretations’ when they are reconstructed in the receiving party’s head, and as ‘representations’ insofar as they point to the ‘world around us’. It is important to note the interpretive aspect of the concept ‘idea’ because it makes it clear that ‘understanding’ an idea is an active act, not a passive one, and therefore it needs the goodwill and imagination of the receiving party.

It is now possible to construct a working definition of ‘idea’. For the purposes of our research, ideas will be considered as complex wholes of interrelated elements that form part of larger patterned wholes that exist inside our heads. In this context, it must be emphasized that meaning can only exist inside a person’s mind. A distinction will be made between ‘ideas’ and ‘testimonies’. A testimony is understood as the expression of an idea. Ideas that are expressed can take all kinds of forms like books, paintings, objects, and so forth. They are manifestations of the ideas that were once inside one’s head. Testimonial activities are understood as the efforts that are made in order to build persuasion. In the theory of structuration, actors are understood as knowledgeable, and their knowledgeability becomes evident through their testimony—the expression of their ideas. The differences between ideas, testimonies and testimonial activities are printed below in table 3.4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Testimony</th>
<th>Testimonial activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As inner experience</td>
<td>As communicated notion</td>
<td>All efforts in order to build up persuasion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Summary
In this chapter, we looked at the sensitizing concept of interaction and divided it into the concepts of reciprocity and expression of ideas. The concept of reciprocity was analyzed and the concepts of standing and trust were introduced. Then the notion of expression of ideas was introduced, a distinction was made between an idea and a testimony, and then we discussed the concept of favourite interaction.
We have seen that these concepts are interrelated. For example, trust building within work relations is a reciprocal process (Six 2004) and is related to the standing of the persons involved. The expression of ideas is part of a persuasive communication process in which testimony and favourite interaction are important, but in which trust and standing also play a part. Of course, these concepts are interrelated with other concepts, but in this chapter, I have explained why they were selected as the focus for this research. Finally, a more-detailed observation of the concept of ‘idea’ was presented. Representation, interpretation, and legitimization were distinguished as important aspects of the concept ‘idea’ and were therefore combined with the concept of sensemaking.

In the case studies, the processes of idea management are examined from an intersubjective perspective. In other words, interaction is taken as the lead concept. In order to clarify our understanding of the concept of interaction, we have discussed it in the context of reciprocity and expression of ideas, which, in turn, have been examined in regard to standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction. These concepts function as beacons to highlight data and as antennae to scan through the collected interviews. The case studies have been done in the form of observations, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews, but because they could only be carried out according to the agreements that had been made with the organizations, a survey was also included in the case of Corus.

Of course, the phenomenon of idea management is much broader than these concepts suggest, and in order to present a comprehensive view of the idea processes in these organizations, more data should be collected and studied. Our reason for attempting to present these concepts as sensitizing concepts, however, is to shed light on the ways in which creative processes unfold as interactions in organizations, which is our central research question.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the first chapter an analysis of the concept of creativity was presented. We looked at the field of ‘idea management’ in the second chapter and the sensitizing concept of interaction in the third. In this fourth chapter, we discuss the research methodology. At first I will look at the choices that have been made regarding the theory, the decision for case studies, the choices about the number of cases, and the selection of the cases. In the second section discussed the research methodology will be discussed. In the third section, the cases are compared. Then the scheme of analysis, the number and types of respondents, the possible pitfalls and the operationalization of the sensitizing concepts of this research are discussed.

4.1 Introduction
This research is about idea management, studied from an intersubjective point of view. This has consequences for the way the research has been carried out. In this section, we examine the choices that have been made about the role of theory in this research, about the use of case studies, and about the number of cases and their selection.

Choices regarding the use of theory
This research is new in that it tries to study a rather new and interesting phenomenon—idea management—in a way that is new to the field of creativity studies. For this reason, I chose to use theory as a sort of flashlight in the dark instead of as a directive frame or a check after the fact. In this sense, Blumer’s (1969: 148) term ‘sensitizing concept’ was used: ‘… [a sensitizing concept] gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances’.

Giddens’ theory of structuration forms the basis of this research. In addition, three important directions came up during the literature review: Sternberg’s book (1988) The nature of creativity: Contemporary psychological perspectives, contained a number of important contributions. In addition Gaspersz’s (2002) book on competing with creativity, which falls in the instrumental-prescriptive debate, and the article of Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999)
about the sensemaking perspective of creativity in organizations, which falls into the analytic-descriptive debate.

The literature review further consisted of relevant books about the topic and a systematic review of three journals covering the period 2001–2005: the *Creativity Research Journal* (a psychology journal and a scientific platform that presents high-quality articles on the subject of creativity), the *Journal of Creative Behaviour* (containing a wide array of articles related to creativity, also with a psychological slant), and *Creativity and Innovation Management* (which approaches creativity and innovation from a business and organizational perspective). With regard to Giddens structuration theory, it seemed necessary to include both psychological and structural approaches.

We then put together a document called ‘sensitizing concepts’ in order to have at hand the basic concepts for studying the cases. This document was structured to link the concept of ‘interaction’ with Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘locus of creativity’ model—to link the field of idea management with the field of interactionism. The document was broadly laid out, starting from the concept of ‘interaction’ to a number of related concepts, such as reciprocity, the definition of the situation, expression, persuasion, social acceptance, standing, and trust. We have already seen that creativity in this research was studied as social behaviour in regard to the exchange of ideas, so these aspects of interaction are all relevant.

I started with a broad base to make sure beforehand that the scope would be broad enough and could be narrowed down, rather than taking the risk of having the scope too small and needing to be ‘widened up’.

In carrying out exploratory and descriptive research, some dilemmas will be encountered. One of these is that it is difficult to completely operationalize the theoretical concepts in advance. Data gathering is all about the perception of the participants, who normally use everyday language, so there is a gap between the language of the participants and the language of research. In addition, the goal of the operation is to find out about the perceptions of the participants and not to become too distracted by the scientific language and procedures.

Another dilemma is the question of how research issues will be defined. This is, in fact, a creative phase of the research process. Generally, by reading and rereading the data, a process of ordering and re-ordering the material begins. By posing questions and using material that is contingent upon other data (triangulation) and working through comparisons, a process of ‘labelling’ is developed (Glaser and Strauss 1967).
A third dilemma is the fact that, for exploratory research, established procedures only help so far. What is needed in this type of research is an iterative procedure—continuously observing, reworking data, and asking new questions—to find clues for the next step. This is also important for the way the data are examined. The case studies presented here were done with an iterative process in order to shed light on the fascinating field of idea management. But the goal is not merely to generalize these cases. The cases are abstractions from complex wholes, the organizations, and they all shed some light, from different angles, on this subject. Therefore, explicit attention is given to the comparison of the cases.

In this chapter, we try to show, in a transparent way, how these dilemmas were dealt with.

**The choice for case studies**

Case studies can be useful and important in social analysis (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991). The term ‘case study’, however, is a broad concept, and the use (and thereby the character) of case studies has developed rapidly over the last decade (Wester, Smaling, and Mulder 2000). According to Yin (1989), a case study is an enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This has been rephrased by Hutjes (2000: 65 [Translation HB]) who states the following:

> A case study is a strategy to solve scientific questions. It is about the intensive study of a phenomenon in its context, in such a way that the interweaving of the relevant factors is retained.

This definition points out two important aspects of case studies: first, that the study is an intensive one and, second, it is done in context, or *in situ*. With regard to the last point, our research is about idea management, which is a new phenomenon, so the context is very important, and therefore the choice for case studies seems logical. With regard to the other point, the intensity or the depth of the research, this is a major point of concern. ‘Depth’ is the desire to gain and give insight into these processes of idea management, but it is hard to say how much depth can be realized. Therefore, this point deserves specific attention and is discussed separately, below.

According to Hutjes (2000), a case study is suitable when there is a complex situation in which the borders between the phenomenon and the context are unclear and when the possibilities for control and overview beforehand are limited. These three elements—a
complex situation, unclear borders, and limited possibilities for control and overview beforehand—will be considered in the light of our three empirical cases.

In regard to our general research question (How do actors manage their ideas in professional organizations and how do organizational conditions enable and constrain them?), all three of the case studies exhibit the three elements mentioned by Hutjes: the Pentascope case is representative of a horizontal organization where individual and management perspectives intermingle and are subject to change. In the Ter Weel case, we have a hierarchical, bottom-up context with many factors and interests at stake and where the specific organizational context with its idiosyncratic expression of leadership, communication, and learning teams is difficult to separate from the process of idea expression. In the Corus case, we study how employees from Corus RD&T experience the idea management system *Eureka!* (Corus Research Development and Technology, year unknown).

Again, there are many different factors and interests involved. This tool-mediated system of idea management forms the context and is what will be studied. And there is no possibility for control and overview beforehand in any of these situations.

A problem in working with case studies, however, is that there must be a sufficient number of empirical references to rule out alternative interpretations, disturbing factors, and coincident (Hutjes 2000), but it is hard to know what number of empirical references will be sufficient. As in the case of Ter Weel, all managers and team leaders were interviewed. In the case of Corus, triangulation was used, along with a number of checks. For Pentascope, three different idea evolutions, taken from a large number of interrelated interviews, were studied. Hutjes (2000) suggests that a network, pattern, or system of logical consistency and empirically founded reasoning must be constructed around a phenomenon. This has been the case for all three case studies in this research.

Special attention must be given to the term ‘case study’ with regard to its hierarchical use. In the section above, the term ‘case study’ has been used with regard to the organization; hence, ‘Pentascope’, ‘Ter Weel’, and ‘Corus’ are regarded as case studies. The organization or, in fact, a department within the organization is taken as the level of analysis and regarded as ‘the case’ (Burgess 2000). It must be noted, however, that there are cases within the three case studies. For example, in the Pentascope case study, three different studies on idea development are presented. Each of these is considered to be a case within the framework of the Pentascope case study. To avoid misunderstandings, the word ‘case’ has not been used for this sub-organizational level; instead, the word ‘example’ has been used. In the Corus case,
two small illustrations of idea development and two elaborate ones are presented, and in the Ter Weel case, there are different groups in the organization that can each be regarded as ‘cases’, such as the managers versus the team leaders. Again, it must be emphasized that the organizations are taken as the level of the case.

We chose to do multiple-case research, using three case studies, which allows for cross-case analysis. The different cases can be compared to each other, and as they all shed light on some area of the phenomenon of idea management, they can also be used to shed light on each other.

In short, with regard to the concept of the case study, there are three levels in this research: the level of the organization as the case, the micro-level of cases within the cases (which will be referred to as ‘examples’), and the macro-level of cross-case analysis.

**Choices regarding the cases**

I chose to select three cases because I felt that more certainty about the theoretical framework would be needed if only one case was selected. As the notion of idea management is rather new and as it has not been studied from an intersubjective perspective yet, it seemed to make more sense to look at more than one case.

There is also the desire to probe as deeply into the empirical field as possible, so there needs to be a limit to the number of cases included in any study. For our research, the choice of three was a compromise between the desire for ‘depth’, on the one hand, and the need to allow for theoretical exploration, on the other.

An advantage to having more than one case study is that the same theoretical perspective can be used in different contexts, with each setting providing its own specific character and dynamics, making it possible to observe how theoretical notions are received in different fields and how they are related to other notions. Because there was an operational idea-management system at Corus, I chose to contrast this with two organizations that were very different: a vertical one, like Corus, but with a non-commercial orientation and no idea-management system, and another with a commercial orientation, like Corus, but with a horizontal structure unlike the Corus hierarchy.

Using three organizations provides an opportunity to observe three different contexts for idea management, with differences that could be related to their size, their market position, their character, or their internal structure. At the same time, in limiting this research to three cases, there is still room to explore these differences in depth.
In order to maximize possible insights into the way ideas unfold in organizations, we chose very different organizations. Corus has an operational idea-management system. It is a large, technology driven multinational and can be described as commercial and hierarchic. It seems that idea management systems were introduced in these kinds of firms first. In contrast, Ter Weel is hierarchic and non-commercial, and Pentascope is commercial but non-hierarchic. The elements of hierarchy and commerce may be expected to have an effect on the sensitizing concepts of interaction, reciprocity, expression of ideas, standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction. (Mintzberg 1983).

**Selection of the cases**

In this section information will be presented on the selection of the three cases: how access to the organization was gained, the organization’s focus on idea management, and the way the results of the study have been communicated back to the organizations.

Initially, these organizations were selected on the basis of the research question, as professional organizations. In addition to this criterion, there was a second argument for choosing each organization, which is described below.

**The Pentascope case**

In summary, Pentascope was selected because of its creativity-friendly image. This can be found in its mission statement, its high ranking as a great place to work and as the best organization for organizational advice, and in the prizes it gives to others in order to stimulate their creativity. It also fits Gaspersz’s (2002) strategies for organizational creativity.

I wanted to know how colleagues operate on the exchange of ideas. How do people operate with ideas, or the signals that precede ideas, in an organization? For this purpose, I wanted an organization where ideas are likely to emerge—a creative organization that has the kind of employees who are sensitive enough to take this research question seriously and who can reflect well on their own actions, because I thought that much of the information to be gathered would be in hindsight. I was interested in Pentascope because they present themselves as a creative organization—an image they also have in the field (Gaspersz 2002). But more than this, I was interested in Pentascope because I expected them to have highly professional employees who were willing and able to reflect on their own actions.

Access to the organization was gained through an employee of Pentascope who had been a student of mine and who had written her thesis about Pentascope (Hasovic 2003). She

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7 See also the Pentascope website: www.pentascope.nl/ (accessed October 2006).
was going to give a presentation at Pentascope about her research topic (spiral dynamics), and this seemed a good opportunity for me to look around, talk to some people, and see whether this organization would be suitable as a case study for my purposes. I also met the founder and owner, Engbert Breuker, and we had an interesting and enthusiastic conversation. When I later asked him for permission to do research at Pentascope, he told me to contact a manager from the Amsterdam site. I spoke to her and she gave me permission for the study. I also had the help of a student, Sarah Strien, who conducted the fieldwork as part of her thesis (Strien 2006).

I wanted to investigate the middle phase of the crea-political process model (the horizontal level) in an organization that had no idea-management system. And I wanted to do this in a creative organization that had reflective employees. In Pentascope, ideas emerge and develop according to their own course of events. In contrast to Ter Weel, which can be regarded as a professional bureaucracy, Pentascope is an organization with highly autonomous professionals.

Two things changed the course of events in the Pentascope case. It was soon discovered that employees communicated with their managers very quickly, in which case, it is difficult to speak of horizontal exchange, because the managers, who are in a vertical relationship, are incorporated into the process very quickly. With regard to the crea-political process model, one might say either that the managers form part of the horizontal, professional circle, or that the horizontal professional circle is skipped at Pentascope.

At the theoretical level, Pentascope was also different than anticipated. In the beginning, I was rather convinced that interaction variables, derived from Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) Pygmalion effect, together with variables derived from Mumford and Moertl’s (2003) model for social innovation, would explain the positive organizational ideation processes that I expected to find at Pentascope. But the ideational processes that were observed were not as flashy as anticipated. And the variables that were derived from the theoretical perspective only partly explained the data. After carefully reviewing the transcripts from the interviews over and over, I found some other items that seemed to explain the data.

I expected to find that Pentascope was an unusually creative organization, but from the standpoint of the quality of organizational ideation, their ideas can be found in many organizations. With regard to the explanatory power of the theoretical variables, not all the observed processes could be explained by the model of the sensitizing concepts.

Due to personnel changes in the organization, I have made no formal presentation of my findings, although Edita Hasovic, who is an employee of the organization, read and
commented on my final draft of the Pentascope chapter. Her comments led me to believe that my information and conclusions were recognized at the organization and understood.

_The Ter Weel case_

After having studied the exchange of ideas in a horizontal setting, I wanted to focus on the exchange of ideas in a vertical setting, looking especially at how ideas from employees make their way through the organizational hierarchy. So a professional organization that had a clear vertical or hierarchic structure was selected. This was Ter Weel, a care institution for the elderly in the south of the Netherlands.

In addition, I wanted to assess the volume of ideas that arise in an organization. Idea management may be an interesting topic, but what about volume? Therefore, I wanted an organization that was small enough in size to cover and large enough to flatten out individual differences so that I could make an inventory of the total volume of ideas generated. I wanted to interview the managers about the volume of ideas and their perceptions of this.

For this reason, I was interested in a care institution because they have many employees and only a limited number of team leaders and managers. I knew of such an institution in my hometown, and through people I knew there, I arranged an interview with the director. When I asked the director of Ter Weel for permission to do research at his organization, he said he would give permission only if the other managers agreed and if I would also make a report that would be useful to the organization, which seemed reasonable to me.

Ter Weel has no operational idea-management system. Ideas are managed on an ad hoc basis. In total, there are about 20 team leaders and managers and about 700 employees. The organization can be regarded as a professional bureaucracy, and my question was how ideas were managed in this vertical, hierarchical structure.

After having finished the research, I wrote an advisory paper for the organization, as agreed. After being first presented to the director, it was shared with the managers and team leaders.

Not all the observed data could be explained by the sensitizing concepts. It turned out that an organization of this size was a good choice for estimating the volume of ideas at the organizational level. The concept of ‘idea’ was operationalized as ‘an idea that gives you the feeling that you can do something new in your work’. This, of course, contains a subjective element, so in fact, the numbers of ideas in the organization are about the respondents’ feelings about their novelty. At the theoretical level, the ideas about trust were also
productive, using Blomquist and Ståhle’s (2004) definition, which distinguishes between capability, goodwill, and self-reference. While the data did not show much difference on the level of trust, there were differences on these different dimensions.

The Corus RD&T case
For the third case, I wanted an organization that had an institutionalized, well-established and operating form of idea management. In this case, the questions would be more about how the system operates in real life.

Access to Corus RD&T was gained through a Master’s student who conducted research at this site. After communicating with the head of the Corus programme, digesting lots of information about the system, and having several post-research meetings, I was convinced that the Corus’ RD&T system Eureka! would form an interesting case about an operating idea-management system in practice at a prestigious company. Corus, as a high-quality organization with bright people, would certainly provide an idea-management system that had been well thought-through. It would also have employees who were critical enough to explore the limits of the system.

Part of the agreement was to do a survey about their idea management system. The information from this survey has also been used in the case study reported here. In reporting back to the organization, the emphasis was on the results of the survey. It was clear that the head of the programme needed to legitimize his idea-management system. He was also very helpful in reading and criticizing the text for the journal article, which was later published in Creativity and Innovation Management (2006). Before the article was published, the draught had to be approved by a public-relations manager. With this as a basis I have held interviews with researchers in order to find out the practicalities of this system in idea evolution processes. This has resulted in some more elaborate cases of idea evolution in which the functioning of the Eureka! system can be seen in its organizational embeddedness.

The research questions for the cases
In this section, we look at the specific research questions for the different cases. The empirical research question was formulated as follows:

How do actors construct and manage their ideas in different professional organizations and how do organizational conditions enable and constrain them?
This research question was applied in the three cases, although because of the different organizational contexts in each case, the research question is formulated differently for each.

In the Pentascope case, the emphasis was on horizontal interactions, among colleagues. Ideas are often not ‘finished’ when they are communicated to others; they can be mere suggestions, unfinished evaluations, footnotes, etc. They also involve some risk: Why would one communicate them to others at all? Why would one trust a work colleague? As a very successful organization for advisory work, Pentascope had a horizontal profile and employees who would be open to this kind of explorative research. For Pentascope, the research question was formulated as follows:

**How do ideas unfold at Pentascope, an organization without idea management?**

The second empirical question is about how ideas are communicated to the next hierarchical level. Therefore, a typically hierarchical organization with two hierarchical levels (the team leaders, or middle-management level, and the management team) was selected: Ter Weel in Goes, the Netherlands. This organization also provided an opportunity to investigate the volume of ideas that are communicated in the organization because the number of managers is relatively low in relation to the entire workforce. This would provide an idea of the volume of ideas that flow through an organization. The research question formulated for Ter Weel was:

**What is the volume of vertical organizational ideation in Ter Weel and what is the importance of the perceived quality of the ideas and of trust?**

The third case was an attempt to study an idea-management system in operation. In order to investigate the way an idea system stimulates the success of ideas in an organization, I wanted an organization where an idea-management system had been operational for some time and where employees could be questioned about the organization and its idea-management system. Corus—and more specifically, the Department for Research, Development and Technology (RD&T)—met these requirements. They have an idea-management system, called *Eureka!* that had been in operation for about three years at the time of this study. The research question formulated for Corus was as follows:
4.2 Research methods

In this section, we look at the methods used in collecting data for the three cases (see table 4.2.1). In all three cases, time was allocated in the beginning to learning more about each organization and its actual concerns, by studying secondary documents. In the case of Corus, I also needed to get an understanding of their idea-management system. During this orientation period, interviews were also carried out with key figures, and time was spent on participant observation. The data from the orientation period were compared to the themes from the literature, and more time was spent on renewed reading and preparing the final interviews.

At Corus at first, time was spent on the survey, which was part of the agreement to gain access to the organization. The survey questions were derived from the data that came out of the orientation phase, together with the theories from the literature. The survey provided interesting details that were used for a series of probing post-interviews. My graduate student, Sytse Ooreel, carried out the data collection and I supervised him during this process. Later on, I used the interviews to construct the examples of the inventions by the Corus researchers.

In the other two cases, the interviews were semi-structured or topic-oriented. At Ter Weel, I carried out the interviews at both settings: Goes and Krabbendijke. At Pentascope there was only one setting—Amsterdam—where data collection was carried out by my Master’s student, Sarah Strien.

In all three cases, the data were brought back to the organization for checking (member check) to make sure the information was recognizable to the participants. Those sessions often provided more insights. Also, in all three cases I have used my colleague Kees Boersma to brief my findings in order to look for missing links (peer debriefing). Also I had to present my findings to my promoter prof. dr. Veenswijk, which also helped to keep the process transparent. Finally, results of the cases have been presented to different international audiences, which provided expert feedback. The research methods that were used in the cases are listed in the table below:
Table 4.2.1: The Research Methods Used in the Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Case 1 Pentascope</th>
<th>Case 2 Ter Weel</th>
<th>Case 3 Corus RD&amp;T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>secondary documents</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orientation (interviews with key persons and participant observation)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviews</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survey probing in post interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>member check</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer debriefing</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expert feedback</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Reflection on the methodology

With regard to the quality of case studies, Hutjes (2000) makes a distinction between validity, reliability, and generalizability, which can be understood as the classical criteria for assessing quality (Mortelmans 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested other criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Later on, they added a fifth criterion (Guba and Lincoln 1989): authenticity. The main criticism of their approach is that they still omit one other consideration, which is opposed to constructivism (Mortelmans 2007). To deal with this, Mortelmans proposes four things researchers can do to demonstrate the reliability of their findings, namely, analysis recognition, providing the basic material, self-reflection, and leaving an audit trail. By analysis recognition Mortelmans means the recognition of the analysis by the people that have been researched, acknowledging at the same time that the researcher and the interviewees can have different interests and therefore different ways of looking at the material. In my research, the aim has been to focus on the description rather than the analysis. The novelty is in the way the organizational processes have been examined, that is, in the choice of the sensitizing concepts. In fact, Mortelmans’ analysis recognition is the same as the member check, mentioned above. The results of the member checks have been that the material that was discovered was recognized by the members; it also provided an occasion to probe more deeply.

With regard to analysis recognition, the case studies presented here have also been presented to a variety of international audiences. Parts of the chapter on Pentascope were presented by Dr Frido Smulders at the 8th CiNet Conference, held in Gothenburg, Sweden, in September 2007. A rewriting of this contribution is submitted as ‘Make love not war: Co-creation practices in continuous innovation’ (the International Journal of Technology Management, in print). Furthermore, parts of this chapter were presented at the 10th ECCI
Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, by Dr Frido Smulders and myself in September 2007. The title of this contribution was ‘Prelude for a social TRIZ*: Decomposing innovation & creativity through a social prism’. Results from the Ter Weel case were presented in a public speech that I gave for the Centre of Creativity and Entrepreneurship of the WSHE in Łódź, Poland in December 2008. The Corus case has been presented on a number of occasions: in Amsterdam and Łódź by myself and in Eindhoven (the Netherlands) and Warwick (UK) by Dr F. K. Boersma. The expert feedback from these presentations has been taken into account here. The preliminary version of the Corus case, dated September 2005, was published in Transformations, 2006. A later version was published in September 2006 by myself, Kees Boersma, and Sytse Orel as ‘Creativity (ideas) management in industrial R&D organizations: A crea-political process model and an empirical illustration of Corus RD&T’ in Creativity and Innovation Management (Vol. 15, No. 3: 296–309). Preparing and presenting the cases helped to clarify the ideas as well as providing an opportunity for expert feedback, which was gratefully received and used to improve the next versions of the manuscript.

Burgess (2000) asks the question of ‘what the purpose of conducting a series of connected cases might be’, and here we can address the issue of reasoned theoretical selection. Corus was chosen because it has an operational system of idea management and is a well-respected organization. We can call this a ‘typical’ case, and based on this typical case, I wanted to gain insight into these idea-management practices. In choosing the other cases, the procedure of ‘maximum variation’ was used. In other words, organizations were selected with the purpose of gaining more insight into general patterns, on the one hand, and differences with regard to context, on the other, as suggested by Hutjes (2000). Because of the novelty of the phenomenon and the purpose of exploring and describing this phenomenon, no use was made of extreme, deviant, or critical cases, although this might be an interesting approach for the future.

As a second way to demonstrate reliability, Mortelmans mentions providing access to basic material, acknowledging that this can lead to ethical problems. In this research I have not provided the basic material. To do so would conflict with the promise of anonymity that was made with the participants. If questions about the reliability of the findings of this

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research arise, the basic material can be provided to a selected group of researchers, under controlled conditions.

By **self-reflection** Mortelmans means that researchers should disclose their personal and professional interest in the research. My personal interest in this research is my fascination with the field of creativity, which began over 20 years ago and which is still burning. I think creativity is one of the most interesting human attributes and I would like to contribute to insights into this phenomenon, especially its broader context, as this is less studied. My professional interest in this research is that part of my job consists of teaching creativity, and I would like to extend my own insights into this interesting phenomenon. I have no personal or business interests in any of the three organizations used as case studies.

Finally, by **leaving an audit trail**, Mortelmans means that the course of the research must be clear, traceable, and documented and must provide insights into the difficulties and changes of plans. Thanks to the computer, I have documented and dated 15 versions of this manuscript. I have also dated documents related to the data collected, so the research process is clear, traceable, and documented—in hindsight, that is, because plans have not always turned out as they were intended to. On the whole, I must say that I have not encountered serious difficulties or problems with regard to the data collection. Insofar as I experienced problems, they were due to the expectations that I had of this research, of which one could say that I was too ambitious from the start. I have had to narrow down my manuscript, which I did not really like because I thought that I lost interesting details and insights. Also, my decision to take three different cases instead of three comparable ones has made my research more difficult than it should have been. Nevertheless, I am very happy with this choice because I now have the idea that I have gone far deeper into this issue than I would have; otherwise, I would have the feeling that I was becoming a specialist in too narrow a field.

**4.4 Scheme of analysis**

In this research, the concept of interaction is used as a root factor for the four sensitizing concepts of standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction, which are used as guidelines to study the three cases. To this end, an analytic scheme was designed as shown in table 4.4.1:
Table 4.4.1: Scheme of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Case 1 Pentascope</th>
<th>Case 2 Ter Weel</th>
<th>Case 3 Corus RD&amp;T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourite interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because interaction itself can be regarded as very broad for a sensitizing concept, it has been divided into four sensitizing concepts, which serve as the leading concepts in the case studies. Attention is given to the specific contexts of these cases and the way people talk about their experiences. Special attention is given to emergent issues that did not arise beforehand from the study of the literature.

4.5 Choice of respondents
In this section, we look at the numbers and types of respondents. The interviews form part of the larger process of data collection that was described above.

Pentascope
Fifteen interviews were conducted at Pentascope Amsterdam to assess the processes of idea evolution. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their being involved in at least one of the idea-evolution processes. The interviewees were also selected on the basis of their function in the organization to ensure that the relevant functions at Pentascope Amsterdam were represented. This means that there were respondents chosen from the levels of Consultant A, B, C and D, as well as from staff and management. More detailed information can be found in appendix 1.

Ter Weel
At Ter Weel, the research focused on the management level. The management team at Ter Weel is made up of five members\(^9\) of whom I interviewed four (one was missing because of illness): two men and two women, ranging in age from 48 to 58, with between 11 and 36 years of service in this organization. All hold an educational degree of at least HBO level,\(^10\) and they manage or supervise nine to 479 employees.

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\(^9\) The management team at Ter Weel consisted of three official members, but two members were added, because they were asked frequently for questions.

\(^10\) ‘HBO provides theoretical and practical preparation for professional practice. . . . Internationally, the title of Bachelor may be used.’ European Education Directory (2000).
At Goes, there are six team leaders (one of which is the head of activities support). Five of these were interviewed; declined to participate. Those interviewed included two men and three women, aged between 52 and 55, with between five and 24 years in service, most holding an HBO degree, one with a scientific education. They are responsible for 10 to 53 persons.

At Krabbendijke, there are four team leaders, all of whom were interviewed: two men and two women, aged between 33 and 54, with one-quarter to 18 years in service. Three have an MBO diploma\(^\text{11}\) and one has an HBO. They are responsible for 20 to 35 persons.

**Corus RD&T**

The Corus empirical material consists of examples and a survey. The elaborate examples were derived through interviews with researchers. Through contacts with the management permission was granted to have interviews with the researchers. These interviews with the management members, among them René Duursma, Programme Manager Seedcorn and University Liaison Manager and Carel Kleemans, Department Manager Ceramics Research Centre, also provided for interesting background information. Several examples were studied, but finally two examples will be presented in this research. These examples were selected by Carel Kleemans, who is in charge of *Eureka!*, according to a successful case and a ‘bad’ case. The good example is based on the STIR award winner of 2008. In fact there were two winners of the STIR award in 2008 and both processes of idea development have been studied. The example that is presented in this research is the one that turned out to be more successful in terms of follow up, than the other case. The selection of a ‘bad’ case turned out to be more difficult. There are of course more ideas that are rejected than winners of the award, so how to select rejected ideas? The idea of Corus was to present an example on which they could ‘look back with a straight back’. Finally I was given the opportunity to make an example out of the feasibility of advanced building materials for refractory, construction, and consumer product applications. This was a relevant and promising Corus idea that had received STIR funding. So it had gone through the complete procedure and therefore it could be compared to the successful example.

The survey Corus requested consisted of questions about the ideator, the screening of ideas, the role of management, and the funding process. The questionnaire was sent by mail to

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\(^{11}\) The MBO diploma is awarded after four years of secondary vocational education (European Education Directory 2000).
about 850 people, about 550 of whom were researchers. More detailed information can be found in appendix 1.

4.6 Pitfalls
All research has strong points and weak points. In this section, I would like to present the pitfalls of this research and how they were dealt with. These pitfalls can be divided into two major categories: those related to the research design and those related to the quality of the data.

Research design
With regard to the research design, two pitfalls were identified: the role of theory and the number of cases selected.

In this research, I chose to use theory as ‘a light in the dark’ and not as a directive framework or a check after the fact. In order to do this, I compiled an extensive document about sensitizing concepts, which were selected from the theories in order to shed light on the data that would be collected. There was initially a broad selection of concepts, but in the end, not all were used for reasons of parsimony.

The second important decision was the number of the cases. I decided to have three cases in the hope of balancing the desired ‘empirical depth’ with ‘theoretical openness’, as this research has an explorative character. It would have been interesting to select just one case in order to get even more ‘depth’, but then more certainty would have been required about the theoretical notions. This research would also have been interesting with more cases in order to acquire more empirical references, but then possibly there would have been less ‘depth’.

Quality of the data
With regard to quality, four pitfalls were identified: the tension between the scientific requirements and the expectations from the field, the distinctions between the different phases of the research, the use of students in conducting the research, and researcher bias.

The tension between the scientific requirements and expectations from the field is related to the availability of ready-made instruments, models, and so forth. In this research, there have been no such demands from the organizations studied. The only demands (in exchange for access to the organization) have been the advisory report for Ter Weel and the survey for Corus, but there were no expectations at the level of models, instruments, or interpretation of data.
The second pitfall is the fact that in the field, one cannot observe and interpret all things at once. For this reason, clear distinctions were made between the different phases of the research. First, there was the orientation phase, which was characterized by exploratory interviews with key persons, reading secondary data, and participant observation at the organizations. This was followed by constructing the interviews and then conducting them. The last phase involved analyzing the data and writing the case. A great effort was made to check the data—either by the respondents, themselves, or by others. In the case of Pentascope, there was an interesting shift to make the ideas themselves more central, so the interactions around the ideas became more central in the interviews. In Ter Weel, the results were discussed with the director, and in Corus, there was a round of probing, post-research interviews.

The third pitfall with regard to data quality was the use of students in conducting the research. As mentioned above, empirical data were collected at Corus and Pentascope by my graduate students. The greatest risk in doing this is the loss or distortion of data. At Pentascope, there was a high level of interaction from the beginning. Together with the Pentascope management I had set the focus of the research clear at the moment the student was introduced. Because the ideas themselves were made more central in the research, the interviews were contingent upon each other, and each interview was fully transcribed, which resulted in extensive documentation that provided a good basis for analysis.

In the case of Corus, there was a very high frequency of interaction between my student and me, and every step of the research was discussed in detail. In addition, the student’s second thesis supervisor, dr.ir. Kees Boersma, was contacted on a regular basis about the steps to be taken. There was intensive communication between me, my student, the second thesis supervisor, and the innovation manager at Corus RD&T. This part of the research laid the basis for the second part, the elaborate examples, which I collected later in close communication with Carel Kleemans, Department Manager Ceramics Research Centre, and supervisor of the idea management system Eureka!. The students were merely supportive in collecting data in which I always had the lead. I visited all the organizations myself to collect data.

Researcher bias is always a serious consideration. In the course of this research project, many new insights were developed, and in discussing them, it was sometimes clear that I had ‘expectations’. Detecting expectations and other ‘hidden’ motives and eliminating them from the research was on the agenda from the beginning. The most commonly used phrase here was ‘after the research’. It is not wrong to have these motives or expectations, but
they are not useful during the research; they can be put on the back burner and taken out again once the project is finished.

These pitfalls were identified during the course of the research, and I have done my best to take these pitfalls seriously and to be transparent about the way I have dealt with them.

4.7 Operationalization of the sensitizing concepts

It is not easy to operationalize creativity in an organization. In this research, it was done in two steps: first, creativity was understood as behaviour regarding ‘ideas’, and second, it was operationalized as those ideas that the interviewees ‘have the feeling that they can do something new with’. It must be emphasized that this is a subjective perception of the concept of ideas because the notion that you can do ‘something new’ with something will be different for everyone.

With regard to the expression of ideas, at Pentascope, the expression of ideas seemed to be sufficiently clear to both the consultants and their managers. At Ter Weel, ideas were expressed at the two different hierarchical levels, but because of the focus on vertical interactions, only team leaders and managers were interviewed. This notion of ‘idea’ needed no additional clarification during the interview sessions. At Corus, it was very easy because ideas were submitted through the tool-mediated idea-management system.

The concept of favourite interaction seemed to play an important role, especially in the Pentascope case. This organization may be described as a ‘passionate organization’, which makes the link with favourite interaction all the more evident. It was not directly queried, but it could easily be observed in actions or conversations because of words like ‘enthusiasm’, ‘warmth’, and so on.

The concept of reciprocity was not introduced to the respondents for fear of misunderstandings. Instead, it was divided in the concepts of trust and standing, which were introduced and which seemed to be clear enough to enable the respondents to answer the questions. Trust, in accordance with Blomquist and Stährle (2004), was operationalized as trust in competence, trust in goodwill, and trust in self-reference. The term ‘self-reference’ had to be explained quite often, and this was done as ‘the way ideators are open and clear about their intentions’.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, we looked at the methodological aspects of this research, first in regard to the research choices that were made. These choices were about the use of theory, the decision for
case studies, the choices about the number of cases, and the selection of the cases. I argued that because this research is about a new phenomenon (namely, idea management in professional organizations), theory is used as a kind of flashlight to highlight observations. I decided to do case studies because, in cases, there is room to relate to the context of the phenomenon of idea management. The decision to do multiple cases was made because each case sheds light on different aspects of the phenomenon of idea management, and three cases would provide a good balance between theory and ‘depth’. The cases were selected, first, as professional organizations. Second, a division was made between horizontal and vertical paths of idea exchange. Pentascope was selected as representing horizontal exchange, Ter Weel had a vertical, bottom-up path for exchanging ideas, and Corus was an organization where a professional idea-management system was in operation.

In the second part of this chapter, we discussed the research methodology. Interviews were the primary means of gathering information, but, due to a request from Corus, a survey was also carried out there.

In the third section, we compared the cases, and in the fourth section, we looked at the scheme of analysis in combining the cases with the sensitizing concepts. In the fifth section, we looked at the number and types of respondents, and we examined the possible pitfalls of this research and the way they have been dealt with in the sixth section. In the seventh section, we discussed how the sensitizing concepts were operationalized.
CHAPTER 5

IDEA EXCHANGE AT PENTASCOPE

Having now covered the concept of creativity, ‘idea management’, the sensitizing concepts and the crucial aspects of an intersubjective approach, and the methodology, we now look at an example of idea exchange as it was observed at Pentascope, a horizontal organization that has no system of idea management.

Our focus here is on the development of ideas and (from the perspective of the sensitizing concepts) what happens during this process in regard to interaction. This case involves Pentascope, a well-known consulting organization in the Netherlands. Pentascope is an organization for organizational advice, oriented commercially and organized horizontally.

5.1 Introduction

One of the respondents mentioned that ‘You are on earth to be with your client’. This typifies the double position many consultants at Pentascope are in. On the one hand, they are meant to work with their client, which makes internal processes, like organizational ideation, come second in many instances, despite their importance. On the other hand, it means that contacts with colleagues are not always possible and that ‘time’ is often used as a reason for things not working out as hoped.

Pentascope as an organization

Pentascope was founded in 1990 by four partners. At first they worked on big ICT projects, but the ICT people, the employees on the work floor, and the managers had problems understanding each other. Pentascope managed to find solutions for this problem, which was the origin of their process approach (Strien 2006).

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12 Parts of this chapter have been presented by dr. Frido Smulders at the 8th CiNet Conference that was held in Gothenburg, Sweden that was held in September 2007. Smulders, F.E. and Bakker, H.J., Make Love no War. Co-creation practices in Continuous Innovation. In: International Journal of Technology Management, (in print)

Furthermore parts of this chapter have been presented at the 10th ECCI Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark by dr. Frido Smulders and the author, September 2007. Smulders, F.E. and Bakker, H.J. Prelude for a social Triz. Decomposing Innovation & Creativity through a social prism. ECCI Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Pentascope experienced a rapid and successful period of growth, which resulted in a new strategy called ‘integral implementation’, introduced in 1997 when they had grown to a staff of 80. The mission of ‘integral implementation’ was formulated as follows:

We realize changes; better processes are our goal. We implement together with our clients; open and long-lasting relations come first. Our mind reaches the clouds. Our feet stand on the ground. We are Pentascope [Translation HB].

This new strategy had two consequences: a shift from operational work towards strategic and tactical work and more attention to the ‘softer’ side of organizational life, such as organizational culture (Dubbeldam 2006).

Pentascope presented itself as a knowledge-based network organization, which, according to Hasovic (2003) is an organisation in which knowledge constitutes the binding factor. The transformation from a structure based on business units to a network organization was legitimized by an effort to increase synergy. This transformation also meant the end of the traditional hierarchy, shorter lines of communication, a continuously changing structure (i.e., flows) and strategy, and self-managing employees who have the freedom and possibility to innovate.

In 2005, the OSMO\textsuperscript{13} strategy was introduced. This is a way of organizing that is directed towards processes of meaning in which each individual can be him- or herself, where emphasis is on action, and in which people have freedom and responsibility. This concept can have extraordinary results (Strien 2006). On the website it is presented as follows (http://www.pentascope.nl/ accessed October 2006, [Translation HB]):

Working together on shining organizations. . . . Letting organizations shine is what we do through a people-oriented approach. We stimulate our employees to develop their talents, to live their passion. And we stimulate each other, by approaching others in an open and respectful way. It gives us the power to change and renew ourselves and our clients. We combine hard and soft. Soft by stimulating talents. Hard by being alert, unexpected, people- and result-oriented. No hollow phrases as this year we again ended up high in the ranking of the Great Place to Work election, the yearly election of the best employer.

Information on websites serves different functions, one of which is contact with current and future clients, so it is a kind of front stage and should be regarded as such. Still, this information of Pentascope’s shows how they want to see themselves. It reveals

\textsuperscript{13} The word OSMO is an acronym for ‘Onverwacht, Slagvaardig, Mensgericht Ondernemen’ which can be translated as ‘Unexpected, alert and people-oriented entrepreneurship’.

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information about the goals and the processes that should lead to these goals, as well as the concepts behind them.

An important reference in this quote is the announcement that they have been ranked high on the Great Place to Work election. Since this ranking of employers started in 2003, Pentascope has always had a very good ranking (see table 5.1.1). It should be noted that the years 2003 to 2005 give a ranking in numbers but in 2006, the ranking is in categories. In 2006, Pentascope received the golden ranking, which was shared with eight companies. The other categories were silver and bronze (see http://www.greatplacetowork.nl/best/list-nd.htm accessed October 2006). Pentascope’s ranks in the Great Place to Work election are listed in table 5.1.1.

Table 5.1.1: Pentascope’s Rank in the Great Place to Work Election, 2003–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pentascope’s rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I found more striking evidence for their passion in the announcement on their website that Pentascope gives a prize out of the Jan Pieter Boeré Fund each year to a non-profit organization. This year the prize was awarded to the Villa Joep, an organization that collects money for research on a certain kind of cancer in children. This initiative can be seen as a message where social responsibility and stimulating initiatives in others can be read, thereby promoting Pentascope as much more than an organization where people work for their daily bread.

In addition, in 2005 Pentascope was elected as the best bureau for organizational advice in the Netherlands and held first place in the yearly Management Team Advice Top-100 of 2005 (http://www.mt.nl/article.jsp?rubrick=144582&id=191800 accessed October 2006).

Pentascope has several locations in the Netherlands, but for logistical reasons, I decided to focus on only one: Amsterdam. Pentascope Amsterdam is located in the beautiful Raphaël Church in the Apollo quarter of Amsterdam old south. At the time of the research there were around 50 people working there, of whom around 40 people were consultants. The others were account managers and staff. They had recently introduced a new structure. The old team structure had been abolished and the organization was now centred around branches in order to create more synergy.
**purposes of this chapter**

In this chapter, we focus on the expression of ideas—‘the selling of ideas’, so to speak—in a commercial, horizontal context. We will look closely at the way ideas develop at Pentascope, an organization that has highly skilled consultants for whom creativity in their work is important.

Pentascope was selected to allow us to look at situations where there is no formal idea-management system in order to see how people operate at the level of organizational ideation. Because Pentascope is well known (and has been said to carry creativity in its genes), it is provides a good example of how consultants and their managers operate. What steps are taken to arrive from idea to testimony? What interaction variables play a role here? What effects do these variables have on the actions of the actors involved? In short, how do ideas unfold in an organization without idea management but with creativity ‘in its genes’? By looking at an organization in this particular way, we can ensure that attention will be given to the organizational culture as well as to understanding the processes involved.

My research question was formulated as:

*How do ideas unfold at Pentascope, an organization without idea management?*

For the sake of anonymity, the names of the people who participated in this study have been changed, except where the identity of the individual would be obvious.

**5.2 Empirical reference**

The focus of this research is on the ideational processes at Pentascope, and it must be emphasized again that the focus is on internal ideas. These are the creative processes within the organization itself, not the ideas that come up in the context of contacts with clients.

The interviews revealed several very different processes of idea evolution at Pentascope. Three of these were selected as best illustrating the ideational processes at Pentascope: the Human Development group (which is about forming a team around Human Development at the Amsterdam location), Corporate Social Responsibility,¹⁴ and ‘Spain’ (which is about the idea to introduce Pentascope activities in the Spanish market). Other ideas were about rewards, idea exchange, the way meetings and communicable processes are

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¹⁴ In Dutch, Corporate Social Responsibility is ‘Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen’, often abbreviated as ‘MVO’.
organized, support systems, organizational development and transformation, personal positioning, and using theatre in communicating business situations.

For the sake of anonymity, the respondents quoted have been given different names.

**Example 1: Human Development**

The Human Development idea is about setting up a group in Amsterdam that is specialized in Human Development. Twelve people were mentioned as playing a role in the evolution of this idea (which was far from finished): five people were mentioned as having played an important part and seven were mentioned occasionally.

The interviewees had different opinions as to whose idea it originally was. Some thought it was Nicoliën’s idea, whereas others, especially management, said that they had already had the idea. Nicoliën had moved from the Amersfoort location to the Amsterdam branch. She was part of a Human Development Group in Amersfoort and was interested in continuing this activity in Amsterdam.

The story goes like this: an employee wants to move to the company’s branch in another city. She has specific experience and expertise, and it seems logical that she would want to continue using her knowledge in her new environment. Her manager agrees with this and matches her with a commercial person (whom he has selected) to help market her idea:

The idea may take root here, but then we have to look how we upscale people in Amsterdam who will engage with this and want to structure it. And we have to market it; we have to make it known in the market that we have this.

The ideator, Nicoliën, gets the green light for her idea from the location managers in Amsterdam and starts setting up a Human Development Group. She finds setting up this new group very stimulating:

The stimulating factor to set up a team is the enthusiasm of the people. When we are together it is always nice and I feel like it gives energy. The people are very stimulating.

About her role, she says that it involves ‘Cohesion and guarding the big picture’. And ‘It is nice to get this space. Some people are good at creating, but to translate this into action, then you often need different people’.

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The ideator feels good. She has received the green light for her idea and she enjoys her role. The person who was selected to cover the commercial aspects of the idea is Emile. He experiences the process differently. He states that he does not feel 100% drawn to this project, that he does not have the time to do it, and that it is not his role. His interest is in securing his own idea, which was his motive in getting involved in this team: ‘I saw it as a way to follow up on my idea of last year and not let it bleed to death’. From his commercial perspective, Emile thinks that this Human Development Group needs too much time before it will yield something for customers. He says that he is a bit cynical about whether it will really be a success: ‘If I am very honest, I have some strong doubts. I see no clear link between how this process works commercially and how it works at the content level’.

It is interesting that the manager put in a commercial person who says that he is only going to do it because he has plans for an old idea of his own. Whereas the ideator feels very good about the process, the commercial person is not at all impressed because he feels that there is no clear link to the commercial side.

Three more people were added to this Human Development Group: Sanne, Dave, and Nils. They have their own perception of the process.

Sanne says she knew Nicolien from a training activity in the past and that she had done some work for the Human Development Group. She says that she thought this group was doing things that she felt connected to, so she was very interested in this initiative. ‘On the night of the regional meeting, I immediately talked to her about it’. Sanne was already focused on the initiative. She said: ‘How do I put myself into the picture and with whom can I develop this, so that it will lead to something’? Sanne says that there has always been an interest in this subject because Nicolien has a really good story. Sanne likes having Nicolien and Bart, another consultant, take the lead, and she tries ‘... to hook on seriously. I try to give my input by being there and reacting when something is asked and to make time for it’. It is very interesting to hear that, as a team member, Sanne had ideas in the same direction, that she felt comfortable with this area of work, and that she tried to ‘put herself into the picture’. This gives the impression of a person who is very motivated, but at the same time, in her actions, she seems to be a bit passive.

Nils is another team member. He was also part of the Human Development Team from the beginning. He says:

I always wanted to join the Human Development Team, I even intended to go to Amersfoort and join the team there. I am happy that Nicolien took this initiative, so that I can just stay in Amsterdam.
Nils says that the reason he wanted to join this team is because of the content. But the fact that Nicolien initiated the ideas also played a role: ‘She is very professional in this area. She had experience with a Human Development Team in Amersfoort and she can consolidate very well’.

The third team member is Dave. He has a background in human resources and says that that is the reason he was asked to participate in this team. His impressions are different from Sanne’s. He claims that he ‘was asked to participate, whereas Sanne took her own initiative’. Dave is also more sceptical about the process: ‘I would look to see if there is a market for this and if there are no pirates on this coast and then I would severely monitor this process’. He also points out that he does not see a link between this Human Development Group and the goals of the Amsterdam location itself. About Nicolien, he says: ‘I have a lot of trust in Nicolien. I have trust in the way she behaves. I cannot say more about it; it is based on a feeling’. What he does not like is the image this group has. He feels that it is regarded as ‘Team Nicolien’ and he does not feel that to be adequate. He also misses some structure in the process, but he claims that ‘Maybe it is good that there is no structure in it, because otherwise it might be ’structured to death’’.

What is interesting is that Dave had had no prior ideas of his own. He joined because he has a background in this area. He claims that he was asked to join, and he is also more sceptical about the process.

There seem to be varying degrees of motivation in these respondents. The ideator had the idea; the manager had an idea for a group as well and saw the opportunity when Nicolien came to his location. Emile joined because he had an idea of his own, which was related to Human Development. Sanne had no ideas of her own but felt ‘connected’. Nils wanted to join the Human Development Group in Amersfoort. Dave had no ideas of his own, but he has a background in human resources. We can see that the most sceptical people are those who were asked to join: Emile and Dave.

Comment

This looks like an example for the ‘smooth landing’ model. An employee comes up with an idea that was already in the mind of the manager, who makes some ‘interpretations’. However, the team members have varying degrees of motivation to belong to the team; people who were asked to join seem to have more doubts about the process.
Example 2: Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility has to do with sustainable production, using less energy, producing less waste, good labour conditions, and so on. It is an issue for companies to decide how they meet their Corporate Social Responsibility.

At Pentescope, one of the employees came up with the idea to start a project about Corporate Social Responsibility. This seemed logical since it is an important issue and has urgency. This employee, Lonneke, indicated after her pregnancy leave that she would be interested in initiating something about Corporate Social Responsibility. She said she had been interested in this topic for quite a while and that her manager was enthusiastic about the idea.

When she met Engbert, the founder and director of Pentescope, she asked him if he wanted to be her principal. He agreed but on the condition that the focus would be internal and not external: ‘So that we are sustainable ourselves first. Then we have the right image. Otherwise, you will not be very convincing to your clients’.

So then I made an inventory about how we act sustainably. In what ways are people, the planet, and profit in balance? I researched this and my manager put it on the agenda for the Council of Eleven.15

But I was put on a project, so my efforts slowed down. Because it was on the agenda, I could make a presentation about it. After the presentation, the Council of Eleven agreed to the idea and they, too, wanted to have an internal investigation first. Because I was still on project, I had to talk with my manager and new principal and they offered me a month to work on this.

Lonneke did not understand why she was put on a project while she had this idea. She indicates that maybe her plan was not worked out in enough detail, even though she feels she had to put a lot of effort into it. She claims that she had some contacts with colleagues about her idea and names three people, but these conversations seem to have been incidental. She also states that a colleague had previously worked with the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility, but that it did not end very well. Finally, she said that if she wants to achieve something with her idea, she must find much more support.

One of the managers, the one who was so enthusiastic in the beginning, stated that Lonneke had to show much more power in this process. He said he liked her as a person but missed the tight plan, supported with numbers, and the passion: ‘In the beginning of this

15 The Council of Eleven is the highest decision-making constituency at Pentescope. It consist of 11 members, hence its name.
trajectory, I talked a lot with Lonneke and told her that she had to show more power’. He indicates that the plan will be continued but on a smaller scale.

Ah,…yes, it did not go very well for Lonneke’s project. That was understandable with the travelling and her child and that kind of thing. From there we had to slow down for a while and take up this Corporate Social Responsibility. Also, because it had already been agreed upon with Engbert Breuker [founder and director of Pentascope]. He had said in his enthusiasm, ‘Yes, you should do this!’ That was a great support for her, but he did not realize probably that there had to be a consultant assigned full-time to a project. So I had problems with that. But, okay, under the restriction that you make a plan and this must be ready in a month and then it has to stand.

When asked about the chance of success for this project he said: ‘I hesitate. I don’t know’.

Comment
This example sounds like a case of a person who has to struggle hard to get her idea promoted. She does try and she finds support from the company’s head, but lower in the organization, there are doubts (in fact, she passed by her direct manager). She is assigned to another project, which affects her ability to work on this project. Her testimony is received as weak—her manager claims that she did not present herself in the right way, was not powerful enough. She had problems and there was a problem with a project on the same issue that was carried out by somebody else. Both the person and the idea suffer, therefore, from weak status. External factors seem to play a larger role than idea development. She says that she shared her idea with colleagues but there was no feedback.

What is noteworthy is the contrast between her perception of her manager’s reaction as ‘enthusiastic’ and the manager’s own story. She was able to find top support, and the situation now looks like a compromise. The plan has been reduced and there is a demand for a detailed plan within one month.

Whereas the human development idea was expanded by Nicoliën’s manager, in the case of the corporate social responsibility idea, the plan was made smaller.

**Example 3: Spain**
Norbert had the idea of setting up a Pentascope branch in Spain. He had already had the idea for a few years, and he had discussed it with the person who was then his manager.
So when this strategy was presented, that was just what I had been looking for. It was indicated that we [Pentascope] are going to do more things in Europe and you may be part of it. They even asked, ‘Can we expect something from you?’

It was the moment, as he described it himself, to take up his plan and work it out in more detail. He had already been looking for a starting point and this strategy shift was just the thing. When management asked him if they could expect something from him, it became more than a good idea. Norbert saw that it was not just something that he wanted, but that it fitted into the new Pentascope strategy. Before this strategy shift, he did not know where his idea would fit in the organization. ‘I just looked for possibilities and the starting point was this new strategy’. When he had had the idea a few years earlier, he was working for a project where he had to go to Spain frequently. He had communicated the idea that Pentascope could do more in Spain and his manager was positive about the idea. ‘But we never discussed what that would mean exactly. How much it would cost. How much time I would spend on it. I discussed it a few times with him’. ‘Maybe, if I had pushed a bit harder, I would have succeeded, but I have not done that. So then, I think, the time was just not right for it’.

I have the idea that with the projects I did then, I was focused on how Pentascope implements things, and I wanted to be able to do that. In the meantime, I have done that for four years now, so that gives me something to hold onto.

It is interesting to note that Norbert had the idea before and discussed it with his manager, but felt the time was not right for it then. So there is a dimension of ‘timing’ in this example. It is also interesting that his idea for Spain was based on empirical evidence because he went to Spain regularly when working on another project. Finally, it is interesting to hear that he also perceived himself as having gained some personal experience in the field of implementation in the meantime. He does not blame anybody or ‘the organization’ for his idea not having been developed, but sees it as his own responsibility:

I have not gone into conversation directly. Then you get a discussion like, yes it is a good idea, go do something with it. I found that too bare. I wanted to come up with something more tangible.

Norbert then went to a fair in Madrid to find out if he would be able to make contacts for his organization. He did make some contacts there, and when he came back, he wrote a plan about his Spain idea, part of which was to take inventory of the market in Spain. He sent this plan to the management team in Amsterdam, which then consisted of six people. They were very enthusiastic but the idea was not translated in terms of budget and time. ‘I thought,
now I have an idea that they like, but I cannot do anything with it, because I lack the space for it, I need means’. ‘At that time, I talked a lot with Sytse, who was process manager. He became regional manager and then we talked about it from a different angle’. Norbert also worked with an organization: ‘I knew one of the partners of that Bureau and together we wrote the proposal for the market survey’. He also connected with another Pentascope employee, Eric Mandersloot, because

I found it important at an early stage to engage with somebody from the network . . . because at a certain point you need to make decisions, and for a decision process it is important that you engage some people within Pentascope in the right manner so that they not only know what is happening, but also have a feeling about how I work on it, where it will lead, and so forth. I have noticed that it is not easy if you put everything on paper and confront people with a detailed plan because they have not made the changes of thought like I did. I also wanted to take Eric along in these idea changes to help organize a starting point with the Council of Eleven. . . . Eric was the one who had presented that [European] strategy, so that too was why I wanted to be in contact with him. . . . For me, he was the one who communicated that strategy and I thought there would be a great chance that he would sponsor this one.

Norbert and Eric then wrote a proposal (two A4 pages with all the relevant data about the idea) for a market study. They sent it to the Council of Eleven, who agreed with the plan and gave them the budget to do the market study. The critical phase—getting a budget—was now realized. It was agreed that the results would be presented in about four months.

In addition to the people already mentioned, Norbert communicated with other people about the idea, such as consultants who had clients in Spain and other members of the Council of Eleven.

I have engaged various people, not as a project group, but always just at the place where it was needed. I did that consciously to prevent it from becoming a talking group that would occupy them with nice ideas. I wanted to keep it focused on action and detail.

So I remained at the wheel myself and I feel that it is necessary if you want to continue with business; otherwise; it will get silted up in discussions about how it would be possible and how it should be done, but then it will become open-ended, and I wanted to prevent that.

There was one year between the announcement of the strategy shift and the time he received the budget for his idea: ‘It took one year to arrive at this point, but that was how I pictured it to be. It would have been different if I had thought to start with it in three months’. Norbert said there was not much resistance to his plans. He feels people have been enthusiastic about his idea and when he asked for something they would try to help him: ‘And
far as that is concerned, I found it very positive. It gave me a good feeling. . . . I saw that some energy came free, certainly in a positive sense’. Norbert said that he also received critical questions, especially from the Council of Eleven, such as, why should we start in Spain? Why would you be the right person? How long is it going to take before we see some benefits? Can we get enough profit? ‘I find that positive because it prevents you from stepping in and getting confronted with these things later on’.

The two current managers have played a positive role. One said that he supported Norbert and would help him whenever he wanted. The other one was actively involved, which Norbert said, ‘. . . gave me the stimulus to continue with even more energy’. Norbert said that if these people had not been supportive, he would have gone somewhere else to find support. He also said that if he had not been able to find support within Pentascopic, he would venture the idea outside Pentascopic. This indicates his determination to pursue his idea.

Comment
In the evolution of this idea, timing seems to have been an important issue. The idea did not change, but the shift in the company’s strategy meant that his idea fitted organizational policy. It is also interesting that he does not feel sorry about this, but mentions that he developed skills in the meantime that he can use now. Interestingly enough, when his opportunity came, Norbert did not discuss his idea; rather, he skipped to action immediately. He went to a fair in Madrid to see what he could do for his organization. This adds testimonial value because it shows his motivation and it adds important information.

In working out his idea, he uses a large and diverse network, including colleagues, managers, a member of the Council of Eleven, and an outside company. Although he communicates frequently about his idea, he has not formed a group because he is afraid the process would become too open-ended. Instead, he has remained at the wheel himself. He does not feel that he encountered resistance, and he likes critical questions because he feels they help him get deeper into the issue. What is also striking is that his colleagues are very cooperative. In addition, he seems to be very determined: he would take the idea outside Pentascopic if he could not find support inside the organization. From the other interviews, it was clear that people thought very highly of Norbert in the sense that if he did something it would probably be successful.

Summary
The three examples given above illustrate different approaches to the evolution of ideas. The ideas have been used as themes to present the empirical evidence, and the additional
information received through the interviews has contributed to our understanding of how the process works with regard to the evolution of ideas. We will now look at this information according to three themes: criteria, a culture of passion, and management style.

5.3 Sensitizing concepts
Here, we will look at the findings in regard to the sensitizing concepts: standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction. In the last part we will look at the specific elements at this case, namely the used criteria, the culture of passion and the management styles.

Standing
When one has the right image in the organization, it is easier to communicate ideas. In the Human Development idea, Nicolien had the right standing because she had been part of a similar group before. Nils said that the fact that Nicolien initiated the idea also played a role in his reason for joining the team because he found her ‘very professional’ and ‘experienced’. In the Spain example, the ideator had the right standing because he had had the idea at an earlier stage but had waited until the timing was right for his plans. In the Corporate Social Responsibility example, there were questions about the consultant’s standing and criticism about the way she ‘sat on her idea’.

Another thing that plays a role here is the way ideators are assessed by their managers. A manager can have a perception of someone as ‘having a lot of credit’, and the manager claims to know the amount of this ‘credit’—what they are good at and enthusiastic about. This leads to an assessment about which things someone will be good at, according to the manager.

A final point is the observation that an ideator will be asked why he or she is the right person to do the job. When consultants express an idea, they will normally be asked to do something with it. But one of the questions will be why this particular person is the right one to carry out the idea. In the example about Spain, this question has not emerged at all, quite the contrary. Because Norbert expressed similar ideas years ago, he was already ‘tagged’ to fit into the new strategy shift.

Trust
One consultant said that he had a lot of trust in another person because he found this person ‘very professional’ and ‘experienced’. When contact with colleagues is looked for, it is mostly for reasons of expertise or experience, and the consultants refer to each other in terms of education and experience rather than relationships. This underscores the idea of ‘trust in
competence’. Managers frequently ask ideators if they have been communicating with colleagues. They see it as a precondition for the decision-making process. This is something that can be found throughout all the interviews.

Sometimes people mentioned ‘vague’ notions such as having a lot of trust in someone based on a feeling. These ‘feelings’ came back in the interviews as well, which did not show that these feelings were related to ‘trust in goodwill’ or ‘trust in self-reference’ because the concerns seemed to be with the outcome of the process. For this reason, trust may be seen as connected with two Pentascope characteristics. The first is the question of ‘Are you the right person to do that?’ Initially, this seemed like a psychological way of dealing with one another, but later, it seemed to me to function as a signal for trust. Second, the enthusiasm, which is shown through the organization and which will be described in the section on favourite interaction, may function as a signal for trust.

Another way trust is shown is the way that ideators are asked ‘to do something with it’ when they express an idea. The consultants claimed that this was a problem because having projects with clients is the core business and gets priority. They do not have time to ‘do something with it’, which can frustrate ideational processes.

An interesting type of trust was noted in the Spain example when Norbert said that he telephoned regularly from Spain, just to make sure that people could give him their feedback. He did not phone because he had something to say, but to give others an opportunity to give him feedback. This seemed to work as a trust-enhancing activity because he gained support more easily.

**Testimony**

It was remarkable that ideators went to their managers with their ideas instead of incubating them more intensely at a horizontal level, with colleagues and so on. For Pentascope, which is considered to be a flat organization, and consultants who are self-motivated, it seems strange that they go to their boss directly with ideas. The managers agreed that consultants do not share enough with each other.

A good testimony is very important for the success of an idea. If the testimony is not good, questions will be asked about the motivation of the ideator. For employees, it would therefore be a good idea to take the time to develop a good testimony before communicating it. Some people have ‘a good story’ and that makes it easier for them, but from the examples, it is also clear that some people invest lot of effort developing a good testimony. The example of Spain is a good example of this.
In addition, it was observed that ‘a testimony’ is not just one occasion. When ideas mature, there are many contacts about the idea, so developing a testimony is a long-term process. It might be better to call it ‘testimonial activities’, which makes it all the clearer that a testimony is embedded in a social relationship and in group processes.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there are no fixed routes for idea evolution. There is not just the process of idea evolution itself, but also defining the road while marching along.

The managers have different strategies with regard to ideas. One manager tries to enrich the ideas and stimulate people to connect, even with people outside Pentascope. This manager regards his role as stimulating creativity and he would like to take this point further, to stimulate people to be more creative in order to get creative in an organized way. The other manager says he is always open to creativity. His strategy is based on intuition and checking ideas with reality: Is it feasible and are we doing the right things?

One manager is regarded as supervising in an indirect way—he is available when needed. Some consultants felt that some people would find this kind of supervising inadequate, that some consultants would need more direction.

After an idea has been expressed, there is a period of time during which questions are asked about the reasons for the idea, plans for action, and expectations about results. One consultant said that he likes this style because it gives him initiative and responsibility.

As mentioned above, there are no criteria about idea quality. The questions that the ideator is asked are related to business, except for the one that seems to be very important: Are you the right person to do this? There seems to be a preoccupation with determining the right match between ideas and people.

Enthusiasm is a word that was often used by the consultants. People love others to be enthusiastic, and this was said to be in line with the Pentascope vision. But in addition to enthusiasm, the managers look at the capacities of the ideators, the means of the organization, and whether the idea fits the organizational goals.

**Favourite interaction**

It was remarkable that in the successful examples, the role of ‘energy’ was spontaneously mentioned. The ideational processes led in some way to processes that were described as ‘generating energy’ and ‘feeling good’. Most interviewees emphasized the role of enthusiasm, which, as discussed above, appears to be an integral part of Pentascope. In addition,
consultants do not say ‘no’ easily, and it is also generally remarked that there is a lot of open-endedness.

In terms of Pentascopers, the enthusiasm is referred to as a ‘culture of passion’. People are encouraged to ‘follow their passion’, to develop themselves according to these drives. In fact, one could say that the culture of Pentascope is in line with the humanistic ideal that was discussed in the section on organizational development in chapter two. But there is quite another side to this enthusiasm. On the one hand, there is an atmosphere in which ‘all ideas are good’. On the other hand, it appears that this atmosphere leads to situations where nothing happens with the ideas. As an excuse, people argue that they are all busy with their own projects. There seem to be two big questions about ideas: What will happen with them and who is going to put them into action?

It also appears that people do not give each other much feedback and that they do not take responsibility. This leads to the feeling that people are cautious with the development of new products. In other companies, creativity dies in the structure, whereas at Pentascope, it dies because of a lack of structure. Investing and control are regarded as weak elements of Pentascope.

There is an atmosphere where enthusiasm is emphasized, ideas are always perceived as good, very little feedback is given, and little responsibility is taken, at least for ideas. The reasons that were given for this were that if you express an idea it will come back to the ideator, who will be asked ‘to do something’ with it, which is a problem because people are caught up in their own projects—employees feel there is a lack of time and there will be a conflict if they express an idea. The cycle is more or less like this: there is an atmosphere of stimulation. All ideas are good. Because of this, people go to their managers, who will say that the ideator should ‘do something’ with the idea. Because there is no provision of time to ‘do something’, people get stuck. Another reason given is that Pentascope has too little structure or is ‘bad’ in control. Hence, there are individual and organizational reasons for the meagre results.

Finally, an interesting observation was that one consultant explicitly mentioned that getting critical questions was encouraging. This points to a weakness in the favourite interaction theory that ‘warm’ or ‘encouraging’ behaviour cannot be ‘warm’ or ‘encouraging’ in itself but must be experienced as such, which makes it a two-way process.
Criteria
We have observed that at Pentascope, there are no criteria about the quality of an idea. The questions that the ideator is asked are business questions—except for one interesting question that seems to be very important: Why are you the right person to do this? There seems to be a concern about determining the right match between ideas and people. ‘Enthusiasm’ is a word that was often used by the respondents. When asked about it, one of the regional managers said: ‘I always love to see it when people are so enthusiastic. And I think we have to take advantage of that. And that fits the Pentascope vision’.

The other manager explicitly added that he felt that enthusiasm can be an extension; an extra reason for positively evaluating one’s idea. Enthusiasm is obviously highly valued at Pentascope, but it is not the only thing that is valued. When this manager was asked about his criteria for judging an idea, he said: ‘I look at what Lonneke can do and if it fits with our means to do it. . . . But in a plan, it must also be clear that you are the right person to carry out this plan’. Most important is whether the managers feel the need for the plan or idea that has been expressed:

We have 10 goals for this year, so I can very quickly see if an idea fits with those or not. And if it does not fit and it does not add a lot, then we have something like, ‘We are not going to do that’.

A culture of passion
In the section about criteria, above, the word ‘enthusiasm’ was mentioned. It seems to be a very important notion because some interviewees explicitly mentioned it. One in particular, Dave, said that ‘We very much have a culture of ‘all ideas are good’’. Another consultant, Lonneke, said:

Yes, but at Pentascope, it stays with the ideas. At meetings, for example, people express many things, all sorts of things, and then I ask myself what will happen with this? The reason is that everyone is busy with his or her project.

And Dave continued by saying: ‘We have many sessions at Pentascope in which we express ideas, but we have no idea what happens with all that. . . . The big question always is, Who is going to do it’? Another consultant said: ‘We are very good in pointing at what is important, to be creative, to take initiative and yada yada. But these are words, not actions’. Dave said: ‘We give each other little feedback’. And Emile said: ‘The average Pentascoper does not take responsibility. We do not dare do that’.
And that is very much in our Pentascope culture. I am very careful with new products and ideas. I say to Human Development, Please do not start developing new products, because I do not believe in that, not within Pentascope.

And another consultant said: ‘We are very bad in investing and control. Those are the weak elements at Pentascope’.

I think that Pentascope, like many other companies, has a lot of creativity. But in the other companies, it dies because of the structure. At Pentascope, it dies in the lack of structure.

Management styles
There are two regional managers, called ‘regio webbers’, at the Amsterdam location, both with different management styles, which the consultants have noticed. The regional managers themselves are aware of these differences.

Initially, the differences in management style are due to personal differences. Manager Alfred notes that ‘At first, Sytse pulls things towards him more easily’. Personal differences are normal, but they are not a reason for different management styles. Alfred has worked much longer at Pentascope, but when questioned about this, he does not feel this to be a reason for their different management styles:

Yes, but we are very different people. If you look at our talent analysis, then you can see very clearly how we are: exactly at opposite ends of the spectrum. That is why I said that we complement each other very well. Otherwise, you would end up with more of the same. For me, that explains more than the fact that I have worked here longer.

Emile remarked:

Sytse wants you to come up with a business plan. When you have an idea, very nice, but you have to elaborate on it and write a business case. So in other words, make an investment proposal, show how much it will cost to make that idea work and what it will deliver.

It seems that there are different ideas about the desired management style. The ‘old’ Pentascope, reflected in Alfred’s style no longer seems to be the prevalent ideology. Changes towards a more businesslike orientation seem to have evolved. Hence, the differences
between the management styles of Alfred and Sytse reflect the longer-term development of Pentascope itself.

In management of creativity, there is a classical tension between freedom and control. The two managers differ in their place on this continuum. Alfred said:

I have the idea quickly, like, there are intelligent people working on it and let them do it. . . . And as long as I feel that it is developing, it is fine with me. So naturally, I follow the organic model as long as I see interactions and progress. I think that Sytse is more at the steering wheel, pulling and pushing and that sort of thing.

He said that he would intervene if results did not legitimize the input of consultants’ time. When asked what the differences were between him and his fellow manager, he said:

I think I leave more room. Sytse gives people a place and says you can play in this space. And I am more like, well you can play and discover the boundaries yourself. I think that is really a different side of the coin.

The risk of this strategy is that people feel disconnected because there can be too much space. Alfred said that he has experienced problems with this occasionally:

I think I give my opinion. . . . But in the first conversation about an idea, it’s not like I would say, ‘It’s all right. Spend two days a week on it and I want a report within a month.’ It is more that I say, ‘Go and scout.’

Alfred emphasized personal differences in the sense that some people like more freedom whereas others need to know more about the limitations. In addition, he said that people have a choice about which manager they choose, so he expected to have those who preferred his management style.

5.4 Reflection
In this section, we look at the process of idea development at Pentascope in light of the sensitizing concepts and the concept of frontstage creativity.

The sensitizing concepts
Three conclusions can be drawn in regard to the concept of ‘standing’. First, standing is very important at Pentascope and is often talked about in terms of professionalism, that someone is ‘very professional’ or ‘experienced’ in a certain area. Second, there is the question whether the ideator is the ‘right’ person for the idea. Third, there is the management point of view in
which some persons have more ‘credit’ than others in terms of the manager’s perception of what fits someone or whether this person can realize the idea.

Trust is related to standing in regard to trust in competence, communicated as someone being ‘very professional’ or ‘experienced’. There is also a ‘feeling’ side of trust, where respondents claim to have trust in someone because they have a ‘good feeling’ about the person or his or her plan. It seems to be based on the perception of the outcome of the plan. The question ‘Are you the right person to do that?’ seems to work as a signal for trust. Enthusiasm also seems to work as a signal for trust. From the management point of view, trust is shown when ideators are asked to ‘do something’ with their idea. It was also observed that one respondent built trust by seeking contact regularly.

With regard to the concept of testimony, first, it was very remarkable that ideators went to their managers directly instead of incubating their ideas more intensely with their colleagues. The managers themselves found it strange as well. Second, a good testimony is very important for the success of an idea. If the testimony is not good, questions will be asked about the motivation of the ideator, and some people invest a good bit of effort in developing a good testimony. Third, it was observed that ‘a testimony’ is not just one occurrence but a long-term process, which might better be called ‘testimonial activities’, and that it is embedded in social relationships and in group processes. Fourth, it was observed that there are no fixed routes for idea evolution, so when ideas are being developed, the routes have to be developed at the same time.

At first it seemed that there were no criteria about idea quality, but two very different types of criteria for support were observed. On the one hand, there are criteria like enthusiasm and being the right person for the job. On the other hand, the idea needs to fit within the strategy or the year plan.

With regard to favourite interaction, there is ‘a culture of passion’ at Pentascope. Most respondents emphasized the role of enthusiasm, which seems to be an integral part of the organization. People are encouraged to ‘follow their passion’, to develop themselves according to these drives. Sometimes the word ‘energy’ was mentioned where ideational processes were described as ‘generating energy’ or ‘feeling good’. It was also observed that consultants do not say ‘no’ easily. One respondent said, ‘We very much have a culture of “all ideas are good”.’

On the other hand there are complaints that it is too open-ended, they give each other little feedback, or there is a lack of responsibility, structure, and control. It was also observed that there is a kind of ‘enthusiasm cycle’ where people are excited about an idea, get positive
reactions, go to their manager (who will say that they ‘have to do something’ with it), but they get no concrete support so it adds to their busy agenda and they feel stressed for time.

The fact that one consultant explicitly mentioned that he experienced getting critical questions as an encouragement points at a weakness in the theory about favourite interaction. ‘Warm’ or ‘encouraging’ behaviour must be experienced as warm or encouraging; it should be a two-way process.

It should be noted that the kinds of ideas that came up at Pentascope were about issues that were widely shared in the Netherlands at the time of the research, and the criteria for support were more oriented more around business than creativity. This combination of shared ideas and the contrast of enthusiastic performance with business-oriented evaluation leads us to the idea of frontstage creativity—a concept that seems to explain the differences between the ideas and the businesslike evaluation on the one hand and the enthusiasm, passion, and drive communicated on the other.

Finally, with regard to theory it was concluded that testimonies are long term activities and are therefore imbedded in social relations and group processes. Finally it was also concluded that the way in which feedback is interpreted is very important for the ‘favouritism’ in interaction.

Critical factors and frontstage creativity
In this chapter, we looked at three examples of ideas at Pentascope, and one might conclude that two of these examples (Spain and human development) were successful but one (corporate social responsibility) was not especially so. What makes the two successful examples different? What accounts for their success? Is it possible to distil variables from these theories that could identify the chance of success at an early stage? Might these variables be helpful in planning processes of idea evolution in different ways? Are the differences in success understandable from the sensitizing concepts or are there different variables at work?

We could say that the successful ideas were developed by people who had good standing, a high level of trust, good testimony, and a high level of favourite interaction. The non-successful example showed lower standing and a mixed level of trust (with top management supporting the idea and local management having doubts). In addition, the consultant who had brought forward the less successful idea was said not to have had a good testimony, and there was a mixed sense of favourite interaction.
We could say that the sensitizing concepts help us understand processes of idea development, but there is another observation that obscures this picture. The example about Spain only became possible when the organization’s strategy changed. This makes it clear that the ‘fit’ of the idea into the organization’s strategy is very important. When asked about the initiatives, consultants explained how their ideas originated, and twice there seemed to be a fit: the human development team and the Spain idea. There must be some degree of agreement between management goals and personal goals.

This point of ‘idea fit’ is in line with the fact that ideas need support. The example of corporate social responsibility shows an intriguing mix: it was not supported by the consultant’s direct manager, but it was supported by top management. One could say that support from top management does not compensate for a lack of support from one’s own manager.

We could say that successful ideas will get support, but from these examples, it is obvious that ideators must organize their own support, which could be called ‘support-finding behaviour’. And even when ideas are regarded as successful and receive support, they are not funded directly. It seems, from these examples, that ideators, having gained support, must organize their means, which could be called ‘means-organizing behaviour’. The success, ‘idea fit’ and support for the three examples at Pentascope are listed in table 5.4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The three examples</th>
<th>Human Development</th>
<th>Corporate Social Responsibility</th>
<th>Spain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea fit</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>a little bit / no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>mixed</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the sensitizing concepts help us understand the development of ideas within the organization of Pentascope, ‘idea fit’ and support are even more important. If the idea is not in line with the organization’s strategy, it has very little chance. ‘Idea fit’ is an important prerequisite for getting managerial support.

Pentascope as an organization was selected because it is generally known as having creativity ‘in its genes’. It is how they are known and how they see themselves: creativity is a critical factor for their success.

Hence, it was remarkable that the ideas people were working on were so general. They were about topics that were widely shared within the Dutch organizational context of this
time. Human development, corporate social responsibility, and globalization are characteristic of our time. It was not strange to find them at Pentascope, but I had expected more novelty.

One could argue that creativity is not as much in the topics but in the way they are dealt with. That may be true, but it is not a satisfactory explanation. Another argument might be that creativity is not really ‘in the organization’, but more likely to be found at the front in the interface between clients and consultants, and that creativity in this interface does not automatically translate itself into organizational creativity. This is an interesting point that deserves further investigation.

A second point that deserves attention is the ease with which consultants approach their managers. This might be a characteristic feature of a horizontal organization, but there also seems to be some disagreement about whether this behaviour is really to be desired.

In general, managers at Pentascope act in a very positive way to ideas, and not only managers—it is in the organizational cultural to be enthusiastic about new ideas. The other side of this coin, however, is that when there are good ideas and they get support, the ideator is not necessarily given the means to carry them out. This leads to a somewhat critical observation about creativity in Pentascope: that this creative behaviour seems like frontstage behaviour, because there are no consequences attached to it. Veenswijk introduced the terms of the frontstage and backstage sides of innovation with regard to public sector innovation (Veenswijk 2005). These terms, derived from Goffman, direct attention towards the symbolic meaning of this ‘matching language’.

It was found that the fit of the idea into the organization’s strategy was one of the best indicators for success. This might be expected at most organizations, but for an organization that takes creativity seriously, it comes as something of a surprise. Ideas could evolve from the bottom of the hierarchy and explore new directions for the organization.

Creativity at Pentascope could be improved by simple interventions. At first, because there seem to be no routes for organizational ideation, it would be interesting for consultants to read these examples about how ideational processes unfold in the Pentascope context. This could be followed by segmenting routes for ideation because, as it becomes clear from these examples, it is hard ‘to invent a car and develop roads at the same time’.

Another action would be to take the subject of creativity far more seriously. Of course it is important to maintain good spirits, but when words are followed by actions, they make a greater impact.
5.5 Summary

In this chapter we looked at Pentascope as illustrating ideational processes in a horizontal organization, focusing on three examples of idea development: human development, corporate social responsibility, and opening a branch in Spain. These examples were analyzed using the sensitizing concepts of standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction.

We noted a discrepancy between the frontstage image of Pentascope as an organization that has creativity ‘in its genes’ and the actual situation in regard to the development of ideas at Pentascope and the criteria for success. Because of this discrepancy, the creative process at Pentascope was labelled as ‘frontstage creativity’.

Finally, we concluded that the choice of sensitizing concepts worked out rather well, except that the time dimension should have been taken into account for the concept of testimony. It was also apparent that the concept of favourite interaction can be regarded as a two-way process.
CHAPTER 6
IDEA EXCHANGE AT TER WEE16

In this chapter, we will look at the upward mobility of ideas at Ter Weel, a care institution for the elderly in the south of the Netherlands, that has no system for idea management.

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on the hierarchical level, in other words, how ideas are communicated and received in hierarchical situations.

Ter Weel as an organization

Foundation Ter Weel sees itself as a modern organization, providing a broad package of care, primarily for the elderly. On their website (www.terweel.nl accessed March 2005), they present themselves as providing ‘high value in care in the areas of living, caring, and well-being’. Because of the aging population, privatization, and technological developments, health care in the Netherlands faces many challenges to reduce costs, increase transparency, and maintain standards. This is an area that needs innovation.

Foundation Ter Weel has three locations in the Netherlands: Goes, Krabbendijke, and Yerseke, which is a new addition. With about 700 employees, of whom around 200 work part-time, the two locations of Goes and Krabbendijke provide day care and other support services for the community. There are 325 recognized places for patients and the yearly budget is around 15 million euro.

The location Goes is in the city of Goes that has around 35,000 inhabitants and can be regarded as a city in a predominantly regional, agricultural environment. The location Krabbendijke is located in the village of Krabbendijke that is part of the Municipality of Reimerswaal and has approximately 5000 inhabitants.19

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16 Parts of this chapter were presented in a public speech that was held by the author for the Center of Creativity and Entrepreneurship of the WSHE in Łódź, Poland, December 2008.
17 Because of the timing of the addition of Yerseke, it is not included in this report.
It is important to note that the organization consists of a Management Team that oversees the work of the team leaders. The five members of the Management Team each have different tasks, and there is only one who is responsible for all the team leaders.

**Purposes of this chapter**

In this chapter, we will look at the way ideas are expressed to the next hierarchical level. In the context of Ter Weel, this includes employees expressing ideas to the team leaders or team leaders expressing ideas to the members of the Management Team.

The research question for this chapter is as follows:

*What is the volume of vertical organizational ideation in Ter Weel and what is the importance of the perceived quality of the ideas and of trust?*

In this chapter, we, first, attempt to shed light on the importance of organizational ideation and, second, to gain more insight into what happens when ideators express their ideas to the next hierarchical level above them.

**6.2 Empirical reference with regard to the volume of ideas**

In this part we will first give attention to the empirical reference with regard to the volume of ideas. In the second part we will give attention to the empirical reference with regard to sensitizing concepts.

**The volume of ideas**

Humans have exchanged ideas for millennia, but in order to improve and function well, idea-management systems should be in harmony with the nature of idea exchange. But what if there is no idea-management system? In this research project, I wanted to look at idea flows within organizations, realizing that, to be successful, ideas generally need to make a hierarchical move upward. This is why I wanted to study managers and their perception of ideas. In addition to providing the opportunity to study all the leaders in the organization, Ter Weel, as an organization where there is no idea management, could also give me some insight into how idea flows can be directed within organizations.

In order to understand the importance of idea management, we will assess the volume of organizational ideas that were expressed to the next hierarchical level at Ter Weel. This will help answer the research question about the volume of vertical organizational ideation in Ter
Weel and the importance of the perceived quality of the ideas. In addition to volume and perceived quality, we also assess the streams of ideas: Where in the organization do ideas come from?

We operationalized the concept of ‘idea’ as ‘an idea that gives you the feeling that you can do something new in your work’. This, of course, contains a subjective element, so in fact the numbers of ideas in an organization are related to the respondents’ feelings about novelty. It was not easy for the interviewees to express how many ideas they received, but after probing and giving them some time to consider, the respondents gave me their answers. It is a subjective notion of numbers, but I always asked if they had the feeling that the number they gave me ‘made sense’. There was one person who did not want to give me a specific number and who gave me an answer between this and that, so I used the mean of those numbers. When an interviewee was missing, I estimated mathematically: that is, if one out of five persons was missing, I divided the total by four and multiplied it by five to get an estimate for the total group.

**The Management Team**
The members of the Management Team estimated that they received around 255 ideas per year. There was wide variation among the managers, ranging from six ideas per year to as many as 130. The mean number of ideas was around 64 per year, which is a little over one every week. But individual differences are great. With a manager who receives six ideas per year, that is only one idea ‘that you can do something new with’ every two months; whereas, another receives as many as 10 per month, which would mean around two or three each week. One manager was ill, so the total number of ideas received by the four remaining members of the Management Team could be estimated as 320 ideas per year. All these ideas have to be accounted for. They cost a lot in terms of time and, hence, money, because they have to be listened to, employees have invested their time in their ideas and each idea has to be evaluated.

When looking at where these ideas come from, some answers jump out. The greater majority (nearly 60%) are received horizontally, that is, from the other members of the Management Team. It could be noted that to a large degree, the Management Team tends to be occupied with their own ideas instead of those in the rest of the organization. A little over 40% of the ideas that they receive come from their employees (from the middle managers, in this case), as it is not possible for normal employees to express their ideas to the Management Team directly.
It is also interesting to note that there have hardly been any ideas received from higher in the hierarchical order. This may seem logical because the Management Team is at the top of the organizational hierarchy, but there are other institutions like The Clients Council and the Enterprise Board that can provide ideas. However, it does not appear that they work that way. A last interesting notion is that only one manager said that he had had an idea himself. Talking about ideas here means talking about other people’s ideas. The observations on the ideational flow in the Management Team are presented in table 6.2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Total number of ideas</th>
<th>Variation per manager</th>
<th>Mean number of ideas per manager</th>
<th>Estimated total for Management Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of ideas per manager per year</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6 – 130</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sideways / Horizontal</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>0 – 117</td>
<td>30.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From employees</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>2 – 60</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From themselves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team leaders in Goes

The team leaders in Goes estimated that they receive around 710 ideas per year. One team leader was missing, so the estimated total would be 852 ideas per year, giving us a mean number of 142 ideas received per team leader per year, which is around three ideas per week. The individual differences are enormous, ranging from zero to as many as 520 ideas per team leader per year. One team leader receives zero ideas per year, meaning nothing ‘that you can do something new with’, whereas another receives as many as around 10 per week, which would mean around two ideas ‘that you can do something new with’ every day.

Again, all these ideas have to be accounted for. They cost a lot in terms of time and money, yet they represent enormous potential in terms of flexibility, adaptability, commitment, and possibilities for the future.

The ideas come from various places: 12.8% come from above (that is, the Management Team), 38% come horizontally (from fellow team leaders), 29.8% are own ideas, 18.7% come from below (from employees), and 0.3% come from elsewhere (national advisory institutions, etc.).

Colleagues are the main source for ideas, then, followed by own ideas, which makes about two-thirds arising at this hierarchical level. The findings on the ideational flow within the group of team leaders in Goes are presented in table 6.2.2.
Table 6.2.2: Ideational Flow within the Group of Team Leaders at Goes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team leaders at Goes</th>
<th>Total number of ideas</th>
<th>Variation per team leader</th>
<th>Mean per team leader</th>
<th>Estimated total for Goes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of ideas</td>
<td>710  100%</td>
<td>0 – 520</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From above</td>
<td>91   12.8%</td>
<td>0 – 52</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sideways / Horizontal</td>
<td>270  38.0%</td>
<td>0 – 260</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From employees</td>
<td>133  18.7%</td>
<td>0 – 60</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own ideas</td>
<td>212  29.8%</td>
<td>0 – 156</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From elsewhere</td>
<td>4    0.3%</td>
<td>0 – 4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team leaders in Krabbendijke

The Team leaders in Krabbendijke estimated that they receive around 375 to 389 ideas per year, giving us a mean of around 97 ideas per team leader per year, which is around two ideas every week. There is a wide variation per team leader, ranging from thirteen ideas per year (around one idea per month ‘that you can do something new with’) to as many as 198 ideas per year (around four ideas each week).

The ideas come from all directions, but almost all the ideas come from employees and own ideas. Ideas that come from ‘above’ and horizontally together add up to only 7.6%, which is much lower than the first two groups we looked at. The information that was found on the ideational flow within the group of team leaders in Krabbendijke is presented in table 6.2.3.

Table 6.2.3: Ideational Flow within the Group of Team Leaders in Krabbendijke

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team leaders at Krabbendijke</th>
<th>Total number of ideas</th>
<th>Variation per team leader</th>
<th>Mean per team leader</th>
<th>Total for Krabbendijke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of ideas</td>
<td>389  100%</td>
<td>13 – 198</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From above</td>
<td>16   4.1%</td>
<td>0 – 12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From sideways / Horizontal</td>
<td>13.5 3.5%</td>
<td>0 – 12</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From employees</td>
<td>192.5 49.5%</td>
<td>6 – 110</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own ideas</td>
<td>167  42.9%</td>
<td>0 – 120</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall number of ideas

Although far from perfect, this gives us some information about the volume of ideas that float around Ter Weel. The totals of the three groups have been combined in the table below for purposes of comparison.

The total number of ideas is around 1561 per year. For an organization with around 700 employees, this amounts to approximately two ideas per employee per year. It means, on average, 104 ideas are expressed to every manager or team leader each year. The ideational
flow among the Management Team and the team leaders in Goes and Krabbendijke are presented in table 6.2.4.

Table 6.2.4: Ideational Flow among the Management Team and the Team Leaders in Goes and Krabbendijke

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Management Team</th>
<th>Estimated total, team leaders, Goes</th>
<th>Total, team leaders, Krabbendijke</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of ideas per year</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>1561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of ideas per manager per year</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of ideas from above</td>
<td>0.5 %</td>
<td>12.8 %</td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From sideways / Horizontal</td>
<td>57.8 %</td>
<td>38.0 %</td>
<td>3.5 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From employees</td>
<td>41.2 %</td>
<td>18.7 %</td>
<td>49.5 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own ideas</td>
<td>0.5 %</td>
<td>29.8 %</td>
<td>42.9 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas from elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highest mean number of ideas was received by the team leaders in Goes: 142 per team leader per year. This was followed by the team leaders in Krabbendijke, who had a mean of around 97 ideas per team leader per year. Amusingly, the members of the Management Team had a much lower score—only 64 ideas per manager per year.

It is evident that ideas arise within the organization. With only 0.3% of the ideas coming from outside the organization, it seems that the organization functions as an island.

The three groups score quite differently on where they perceive the ideas coming from. The Management Team strongly favours ideas from fellow members of the Management Team, followed by ideas expressed by employees.

The team leaders in Goes get their ideas mainly on their own or from their colleagues, followed by their employees. Although the hierarchy seems closed here, too, the team leaders in Goes are the most diverse in the way they get ideas.

The team leaders in Krabbendijke get their ideas from their employees and from themselves. They have the highest score on ideas from employees, as well as in the category ‘own ideas’. Unfortunately, the respondents were unable to say what percentage of ideas were successful. The general feeling from the respondents was that not much was happening with the ideas.
The kinds of ideas

In addition to the number of ideas, I have tried to assess what the ideas are about—how they were labelled. The Management Team members listed the following categories: internal ideas; client-oriented ideas; ideas for and about the kitchen and the computer; and other, externally oriented ideas. One could say that quite diverse ideas are brought in.

The team leaders in Goes also indicated very ‘diverse’ ideas, mentioning communication, feedback, experience-oriented care, PDL, the transfer policy, contact with the employees, planning, and timing. For example, a physiotherapist came up with an idea to organize a prevention programme to help the elderly from falling. At Krabbendijke, one team leader indicated that the ideas are basically about ‘money, . . . mostly practical and oriented towards the clients’. Another team leader said that the ideas are ‘both client oriented and employee oriented’. The third team leader said that the ideas are mostly ‘care oriented and quality oriented’. The fourth team leader indicated that the ideas are mostly linked to ‘direct working processes and sometimes client oriented or PR oriented’.

Perceived quality of the ideas

The importance of the ideas was scored 3.9 (on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive), which indicates that there is agreement on the perception that the ideas are important. However, there is a difference in perception among the three groups. The Management Team scored the importance of the ideas much lower (3.4) than did the team leaders, who scored the importance as 4.2 and 4.0.

On the question ‘To what degree do these ideas contribute to the unity of the organization?’ the Management Team scored the ideas higher than the team leaders (namely, 3.9 versus 3.4 and 3.5). In short, although the Management Team members find the ideas less important than the team leaders do, they think that the ideas contribute more to the unity of the organization than do the team leaders.

On the question of whether the ideas contribute to meaningful action of the ideator, the results do not vary as much; all parties seem to agree on the fact that they do. In table 6.2.5 the perceived quality of ideas is presented.

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PDL is the passivity of daily life. Accepting PDL offers the highest possible quality of life.

Many problems arise when older people fall, because their bones do not heal as quickly as those of younger people. In addition, surgery can be very risky.
Table 6.2.5: Perceived Quality of Ideas at Ter Weel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Team leaders, Goes</th>
<th>Team leaders, Krabbendijke</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of ideas per manager per year</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important do you think these ideas were for the organization?*</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scores were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.

Although there are variations in perception, all groups have a positive perception of the importance of the ideas. They also think that the ideas have a positive effect on the unity of the organization and on the meaningful action of the ideators themselves.

When this is compared with the volume of ideas that are received, there seems to be a relationship with the perception of their importance. Team leaders in Goes receive more ideas and they find ideas more important. The members of the Management Team receive fewer ideas and find ideas less important.

6.3 Empirical reference with regard to the sensitizing concepts

In this case study, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. In addition to open questions that provided room for new topics and probing on questions, a section was included that consisted of questions in a Likert scale format to persuade the interviewees to be as precise as they could with their opinions.

Standing and trust

The Management Team on standing and trust

Although the general opinion of the members of the Management Team was positive about the ideators, from the interviews it was evident that they felt that ideas could be expressed in a more convincing way. Table 6.3.1 shows the questions about standing and trust and the scores within the Management Team.

Table 6.3.1: Opinions within the Management Team about the Ideational Flow—Standing and Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What impression do you have of the ideators?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their competence?</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their goodwill?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their self-reference?</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scores were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.*
With regard to trust, the opinion of the members of the Management Team about the ideators was also relatively positive. They rated both the competence of the ideators and their self-reference as 3.3, which is lower than their general impression, but they rated the goodwill of the ideators as 3.8, which is rather high.

It is striking that the members of the Management Team scored the ideators highest on goodwill, much higher than on competence and self-reference. Trust matters, and goodwill plays the most important role.

The team leaders in Goes on standing and trust
The team leaders in Goes were very positive about the ideators, scoring them at four points out of five on general impressions, which is rather high. They scored the ideators 4.3 on competence, which is even higher than their general impression. However, they gave them a score of only 2.8 on goodwill, which is very low, and they gave them only 3.0 on self-reference, which is also not very high. Table 6.3.2 shows the questions about standing and trust and the scores among the team leaders of Goes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What impression do you have of the ideators?</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their competence?</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their goodwill?</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their self-reference?</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scores were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.*

The team leaders’ general impression of the ideators is very good, a score of 4.0, which is one of the highest in this sequence. When looking at this impression in more detail, it is competence that received the highest score, 4.3. Goodwill scored the lowest, followed by self-reference. The team leaders in Goes appear to be most impressed by the competence of the ideators, rather than their goodwill or self-reference. Again, trust matters, but here the perception of competence plays the most important role.

The team leaders in Krabbendijke on standing and trust
The team leaders in Krabbendijke were very positive about the ideators, scoring them at 4.3 out of five, which is very high and higher than the general impressions of the other groups. They scored the ideators 3.5 on competence and 3.1 on goodwill, which are both lower than their general impression. On self-reference, the ideators received a score of 3.3, which is also
not as high. In table 6.3.3 the questions about standing and trust and the scores among the team leaders at Krabbendijke are presented.

Table 6.3.3: Opinions among the Team Leaders at Krabbendijke about the Ideational Flow—Standing and Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What impression do you have of the ideators?</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their competence?</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their goodwill?</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their self-reference?</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scores were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.*

It is notable that the team leaders in Krabbendijke were very positive about the ideators, scoring all categories at three or higher, with their general impression the highest of this sequence. After general impression, competence received the highest score. Goodwill and self-reference both scored lower, with goodwill being the lowest. As in Goes, trust matters, and the perception of competence plays the most important role. In the interviews, the team leaders also mentioned that it is important for ideas to be expressed in a convincing way.

**Standing and trust: summary**

In general, the members of the Management Team and the team leaders all have a good impression of the ideators, with the team leaders in Krabbendijke being the most positive.

With regard to the competence of the ideators, the members of the Management Team gave the lowest score and the team leaders in Goes gave the highest. The members of the Management Team scored the ideators highest on goodwill and the team leaders in Goes scored the ideators the lowest. The team leaders in Goes scored the ideators the lowest on self-reference, whereas both the members of the Management Team and the team leaders in Krabbendijke both gave them a score of 3.3. Table 6.3.4 shows a comparison on the questions about standing and trust and the scores.
Table 6.3.4: Comparison of Opinions among the Management Team and the Team Leaders at Goes and Krabbendijke about the Ideational Flow—Standing and Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Team leaders, Goes</th>
<th>Team leaders, Krabbendijke</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What impression do you have of the</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideators?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to their competence?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to their goodwill?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to their self-reference?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scores were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.

The most striking differences are between the team leaders at Goes and the members of the Management Team in regard to competence and goodwill, where their scores are reversed. The members of the Management Team scored ideators high on goodwill and low on competence, whereas the team leaders in Goes gave a high score on competence and a low one on goodwill. The team leaders in Krabbendijke fall in between the other two, and there seem to be no major differences in regard to self-reference.

Standing and trust and the volume of ideas

It is interesting to look at the relationship between the scores on standing and trust and the volume of ideas. The team leaders in Goes receive the highest number of ideas. They also have the highest opinion of the ideators with regard to their competence, but they have the lowest opinion in regard to their goodwill.

The members of the Management Team are exactly the opposite. They receive the fewest ideas but they scored the ideators highest on goodwill, and lowest on competence.

Again, the team leaders in Krabbendijke fall in between these two groups, both for numbers of ideas received and for their opinions about the ideators. Table 6.3.5 shows a comparison on the scores about standing and trust and the volume of received ideas.

Table 6.3.5: Standing and Trust and the Volume of Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Team leaders, Goes</th>
<th>Team leaders, Krabbendijke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of ideas per manager per year</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to their competence?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to their goodwill?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to their self-reference?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scores were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.
Testimony
In this case study, the managers were interviewed about their perspective on the expression of ideas by ideators.

Management Team
A system of learning teams had been introduced in Ter Weel, and apparently it was often the case that when an employee expressed an idea to his or her team leader, the team leader would ask if this idea had the support of the whole team. If this was not the case, the ideator was sent back to the team and nothing was done with the idea. This appeared to be the most common way that ideas were either not approved or even listened to.

About criteria one manager, Theun, said: ‘If the idea looks like something, adds something, and is well thought through, I give it a green light’. Two managers, Theun and Arie Dick, insisted that ideas should not include building activities (such as an idea for a smoking room in the special care department) because they would have little chance of being implemented: ‘If ideas include or concern building activities, then they will not be passed easily’. Linda, another manager said: ‘Put [the idea] on paper and I will bring it to the Management Team’.

Arie Dick said that 90% of the time he will ‘push the brakes’. He thinks most ideas that he receives are not very well thought through and that they are a result of too much enthusiasm. He thinks that money is very often a problem and that ideas must have added value in the ‘core business’. Budget neutrality makes it easier to implement ideas. ‘We have no profits and reserves are limited. It helps if it is obvious that you get something back for your investment, for example a Quality Certificate’.

Many explanations were given for the low level of successful ideas and just a brief selection is included here. Arie Dick also thought that ‘There is more attention for improvement than for renewal; we are no renewing, pro-active organization. You should have another type of person on this chair’. Another manager, Eva, said that Ter Weel is no innovator. And she continued that ‘People [here] are not creative . . .’

Renewal, . . . what it asks from people. You have to push, monitor, guard. If it happens. If it is implemented, maintained. This is a real weakness of this organization. . . . Implementing and maintaining it.

And Arie Dick said: ‘Those ideas, . . . that is learning for me, too. Now there is too little time for strategy and long-term policy. So we miss innovation as well’.
New things in Ter Weel are often very small things. Sometimes things get another name, just to cash money streams. And another thing is that innovation must be carried out within our time budgets. There is no extra time for carrying things out or controlling them. There is much enthusiasm and they try hard, but then they haven’t looked at other options. They are always so motivated. . . . They just do it extra. And that will turn against them. Daily routines, we are very operational. An idea is the consequence of a plan that has not been worked out very well. They say ‘yes’, but they do not see the consequences. And then they have to walk faster and faster.

In spite of all the creativity evident in finding explanations for why ideas were not getting through, the remark of the last manager might shed some light on this issue. This manager reduced the issue of creativity to budgets. Because of the lack of money, he kept ideas from coming up, he ‘put on the brakes’, and he felt that by doing so, he protected his employees from getting overworked because they were so enthusiastic, so motivated.

*The team leaders of Goes and Krabbendijke*

Because the answers of the team leaders of Goes and Krabbendijke are more or less at the same level, they are presented together.

One team leader, Dick, noticed that there were often discussions about whether ideas were feasible, and he thought the best way was to let people ‘find that out themselves’. According to him, ideas were not approved when they are perceived as ‘threatening’, but he did not explain this. Another team leader, Kees, said: ‘Everything can be talked about, as long as it is well thought through’. And Dick said:

You can do something with [around 50% of the ideas]. Ideas should not be too progressive. When you communicate ideas ‘above’, you will not get means but often you will get opposition.

Feasibility, a solid argument, and not being ‘too progressive’ seem to be important criteria for the positive communication of ideas, in addition to the degree of perceived ‘threat’, but these criteria are very vague. Dick said (about the Management Team): *They want to look progressive; they act as if they are, but they are not. They do not wish to change things*. Kees said that there was a quick shift between ideas that could be implemented directly and those for which more funds were needed. When ideas looked promising but could not be implemented due to financial reasons, they would be put on next year’s budget. When the costs were reasonable, ideas could be implemented very quickly, but they had to be very well argued. And Kees continued by saying that ‘I do not disapprove of anything. But at times I have to put things into perspective’. Another team leader, Annehien, also said that she did not
disapprove of anything, either, but she said that timing was very important. Kees said that he did not approve about ‘10 to 20% of the ideas received. But mostly these ideas are not totally disapproved of, just partially. There is an attempt to keep part of the idea afloat.

Two team leaders, Annet and Marcel, spontaneously indicated that they work on the ‘climate’ by stimulating people to be communicative about ideas. Annet put it explicitly: ‘I want an atmosphere in which it is possible for you to present new ideas in a good way’.

**Knowledgeability**

When the course of idea streams are evaluated, different forms of knowledgeability come to light. According to the information from the respondents, there are several factors that make the expression of ideas difficult. First, the learning teams are used as a threshold in the way that team leaders will ask if the whole team supports the idea. If that is not the case, the ideator is sent back to build team support. Here the learning teams are used strategically: the ideas are screened on the basis of the team’s support and not on their potential value. From the perspective of the theory of structuration actors are knowledgeable actors. In this example team leaders seem to think that they are better off by using the concept of the learning team as a threshold. Together with this, the request to put ideas on paper also serves as a threshold, especially for hard-working employees who are not very well educated. From the perspective of the team leader this seems a very reasonable thing to ask, but in the daily practice of the employees it is regarded as a major threshold.

From the perspective of the Management Team, strategic ideas about the organization seem to be regarded as more important than ideas from other parts of the organization. So there seems to be a division in the organization between employee ideas and management ideas. A related notion of management knowledgeability is the manager who actively ‘puts on the brakes’ because he fears that his employees will get overworked.

Finally there is the issue of ‘getting something back’. Managers and team leaders say that they want to get something back for their investment. Ideas are seen as ‘an investment’ for which there should be ‘a return’.

**Persuasiveness**

The respondents were also asked about how they perceived the testimonies—how persuasive were they? In response to the question, ‘How convincingly did you think these ideas were expressed?’ the members of the Management Team gave a score of only 2.8 out of five, the lowest score. The team leaders in Goes gave the highest score, 3.8, and the team leaders in Krabbendijkje were in the middle with a score of 3.1.
There appears to be a correlation between how convincing the testimony was perceived to be and the volume of ideas received. The members of the Management Team (who receive the fewest ideas) scored the ideators the lowest. The team leaders in Goes (who receive the highest volume of ideas) gave the highest score on persuasiveness, and the team leaders in Krabbendijke are in the middle on both the volume of ideas and on persuasiveness.

**Documentation, accessibility, and reward**

In this section, we look at documentation, accessibility of ideas, and rewarding the ideators—from Gaspersz’s (2002) idea management theory.

**Management Team**

Three members of the Management Team said that ideas were not documented, and one said that it happens ‘often’. Two members of the Management Team said that the ideas received were accessible to others, and two said that they were not.

Asked whether the ideators were rewarded for their ideas, three members of the Management Team said they were not, and one said that they were. Probing revealed that these rewards consisted of a pat on the shoulder, a card, a bouquet of flowers, or some other form of attention. There was no money or raise in salary. One member of the Management Team said that he compliments the ideator’s supervisor. Table 6.3.6 shows information on the documentation, accessibility and rewards for ideas received by the Management Team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always or yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of ideas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the ideator rewarded?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can conclude that the vast majority of ideas are not documented and that accessibility is low. Rewards are scarce and tend to be symbolic. A member of the Management Team said: ‘Ideas are also important for another reason. It is very good when people are engaged with the organization. Good for the atmosphere of the clients and the employees’. This respondent indicated that it people are disappointed when ideas are not approved. It is noteworthy that ideas from employees are brought to the Management Team by their supervisors.
Team leaders in Goes on documentation, accessibility, and rewards

Three of the five interviewed team leaders indicated that the ideas that they receive are documented, and four indicated that these ideas are accessible to others. Three indicated that the ideators are rewarded for their input. They mentioned ‘compliments’ as the reward, positive affirmation, or a little plant. No financial or salary rewards were mentioned. Here, too, rewards take a symbolic form. Table 6.3.7 shows information on the documentation, accessibility and rewards for ideas received by the team leaders in Goes.

Table 6.3.7: Documentation, Accessibility, and Rewards for Ideas Received by the Team Leaders in Goes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always or yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of ideas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the ideator rewarded?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Team leaders in Krabbendijke on documentation, accessibility, and rewards

One team leader said that the ideas received were always documented, another said that this was sometimes the case, and two said that there was no documentation. Two out of four team leaders said that the ideas were accessible to others; the other two said that this was not the case.

One said that he rewarded the ideators. He was very explicit about his strategy and he mentioned, ‘Compliments. I give this person more responsibility. I let him go to a symposium or something.’ These rewards are still merely symbolic, but this could also be a beginning for more serious action. Table 6.3.8 shows information on the documentation, accessibility and rewards for ideas received by the team leaders in Krabbendijke.

Table 6.3.8: Documentation, Accessibility, and Rewards for Ideas Received by the Team Leaders in Krabbendijke

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always or yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the ideator rewarded?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documentation, accessibility, and rewards: summary

The fewest ideas are documented by the Management Team. The team leaders in Goes document the most, and also have the most accessible ideas. Also the percentage of ideator rewards is highest in Goes. In table 6.3.9 a comparison on the documentation, accessibility and rewards for ideas is presented.
Table 6.3.9: Comparison of Documentation, Accessibility, and Rewards for Ideas Received by the Management Team and the Team Leaders in Goes and Krabbendijke

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Team leaders, Goes</th>
<th>Team leaders, Krabbendijke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of ideas</td>
<td>often / yes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>often / yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the ideator rewarded?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team leaders in Goes scored highest on all three criteria. The members of the Management Team scored the lowest, and as usual, the team leaders in Krabbendijke are in the middle, except for accessibility, where their scores are the same.

Again, there is a correlation with the volume of ideas received. The higher the number of ideas received, the higher the levels of documentation, accessibility, and rewards; the lower the number of ideas, the lower the levels of documentation, accessibility, and rewards.

Favourite interaction

Favourite interaction is rather difficult to observe. In the interviews there was no mention of anything like enthusiasm or warmth. The interactions seemed professional and the employees, team leaders and managers all seemed very committed to their work. But something struck me while writing the reports of the interviews. As shown above, there seems to be a consistent pattern with regard to the number of ideas received. The team leaders in Goes receive the highest number of ideas and the members of the Management Team receive the lowest number, with the team leaders in Krabbendijke falling in the middle. This same pattern was evident for the interview questions regarding the perceived importance of ideas, persuasiveness, documentation of ideas, and rewarding the ideator (see table 6.3.10).
Table 6.3.10: Number of Ideas, Perceived Importance, Trust, Perceived Persuasion, Documentation, and Rewarding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Team leaders, Goes</th>
<th>Team leaders, Krabbendijke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of ideas per manager per year</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important did you think the ideas received were for the organization?</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their competence?</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate the ideators with regard to their goodwill?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How convincingly did you think that these ideas were expressed?</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of ideas (scored ‘yes’ or ‘often’)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the ideator rewarded? (scored as ‘yes’)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Ratings were on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.

In other words, the team leaders in Goes find that ideas are more important than the other groups do, have a higher level of trust in the competence of their staff, and have a lower level of trust in their goodwill. They perceive the testimonies as being more persuasive, they document the ideas much more, and they reward the ideators more often.

The members of the Management Team are exactly the opposite. They find the ideas less important, show a lower level of trust in the competence of their staff, but a high level of trust in goodwill. They do not think the ideas are expressed in a convincing way and they do not show much interest in documenting the ideas or rewarding the ideators.

The team leaders in Krabbendijke fall right in the middle with regard to the number of ideas they receive, their perception of the importance of the ideas, their level of trust in the competence and goodwill of their staff, how persuasive they feel the testimonies are, the level of documentation of ideas, and how often they reward the ideators.

6.4 Sensitizing concepts

Here, we will look at the findings in regard to the sensitizing concepts: standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction.

Standing and trust and the volume of ideas

As discussed above and shown in table 6.3.10, the team leaders in Goes had the highest score with regard to trust in the competence of their staff and the lowest score with regard to trust in
their goodwill and received the highest number of ideas. The opposite was found for the members of the Management Team, and the team leaders in Krabbendijke scored in the middle.

This suggests a relationship between the volume of ideas and the level of trust. More ideas seem to come up in an environment that has a high level of trust in competence, whereas fewer ideas seem to come up in an environment with a high level of trust in goodwill. Trust with regard to self-reference does not seem to be correlated with the number of ideas.

**Testimony**

We found six factors that inhibited the expression of ideas. On the level of the team leaders, the organization of learning teams, seem to function strategically to block ideas because the ideas are screened on support and not on their potential value. Along with this, the request to put the ideas on paper also inhibits the expression of ideas.

On the level of the Management Team, it seems to matter where ideas come from. There seem to be layers in the organization that do not communicate with one another. Besides, there are conflicting messages: on the one hand, the Management Team indicates that they would like to receive more ideas from employees, but on the other hand, many team leaders do not feel that they are heard by the Management Team. There is a process of ‘getting silted up’, as exemplified by the manager who actively ‘puts on the brakes’ to keep his employees from being overworked.

On both levels there seem to be two more issues that inhibit the expression of ideas, namely in a reciprocal sense: managers and team leaders want to get something back for their ‘investment’. They perceive ideas not as a gift but as a demand. Besides they use criteria that are very unclear, where ideas must be ‘very well thought through’, but it is not made clear what this means.

**Summary**

Again, we note the correlation between the volume of ideas and the perceived persuasiveness of the testimonies (table 6.3.10). The members of the Management Team who received the lowest number of ideas gave the lowest score on persuasiveness as well. The team leaders in Goes were highest in both, and the team leaders in Krabbendijke were in the middle. This pattern is repeated in the scores on documentation and reward.

We noted some variation in this pattern with the scores for accessibility, where the members of the Management Team and the team leaders in Krabbendijke scored equally high, but both lower than the team leaders in Goes.
Favourite interaction
The observed correlations between the volume of ideas received and the sensitizing concepts puzzled me quite a bit, but they are too consistent to overlook. It might be hard to pinpoint favourite interaction, but I think it is shown here. It is not expressed in words, but in deeds. The team leaders in Goes do not just say that they find the ideas important, but they show it unconsciously through their actions, such as documenting the ideas and rewarding the ideators. This is interesting because it is not something these team leaders discussed or made a conscious decision about.

It also shows that the concept of trust is rather difficult to measure. Blomquist and Ståhle’s (2003) distinction of trust in competence, trust in goodwill, and trust in self-reference has proven to be very useful. I must add that I was also surprised that trust in competence is correlated with a high volume of ideas, that trust in goodwill is correlated with a low volume of ideas, and that trust in self-reference does not seem to be related to the volume of ideas.

6.5 Reflection
In this case study, we looked at two questions: (1) the volume of organizational ideation and (2) trust and the importance of the perceived quality of the ideas. We will reflect here on the volume of idea and the sensitizing concepts. For the latter we will also present the comments of the Management Team on our findings.

Volume of ideas
The concept of ‘idea’ was operationalized as ‘ideas where you have the feeling that you can do something new in your work’. So it has to be emphasized once again that these are subjective perceptions. The total number of ideas at Ter Weel was estimated at 1561 ideas per year (ranging from 0 to 520 per manager), which the staff at Ter Weel found very surprising—that there were so many. All the team leaders and members of the Management Team were convinced that the ideas were important, but one could say that at Ter Weel a lot of ideas emerge but they do not find their way into the substance of the organization, which underscores the importance of idea management. It was not possible to assess the success rate of the ideas at Ter Weel, but the general feeling in the interviews was that the respondents did not think that much was happening with all these ideas. There is no attempt to stimulate ideas at Ter Weel, so all these ideas emerged spontaneously in a kind of natural process—employees want to contribute to the organization.
Sensitizing concepts

The standing of the ideators was perceived as good. All members of the Management Team and the team leaders had a good impression of the ideators. It was not possible in the interviews to determine if standing influenced the decision process, but we can conclude that bringing up ideas had a positive effect on one’s standing.

Trust

With regard to the concept of trust, ‘trust in self-reference’ did not differ much among the three groups. The biggest differences were found on ‘trust in competence’ and ‘trust in goodwill’, where the Management Team scored their employees much lower on ‘competence’ and much higher on ‘goodwill’ than did their middle managers.

We have noted the correlation between the volume of ideas and trust in regard to competence and goodwill, with high trust in competence correlated with a high volume of ideas, the reverse with regard to trust in goodwill, and no apparent relationship between trust in self-reference and the volume of ideas. This is contrary to the theory of creative climate in which it is assumed that a good creative climate would lead to more ideas.

Perhaps this could be explained by a difference between the Management Team and the team leaders. If one looks only at the team leaders, there is a clear relationship between trust and the number of ideas. The team leaders in Goes (who had the highest number of ideas per manager) showed a higher degree of trust in competence, although they scored lower on both ‘goodwill’ and ‘self-reference’ than their counterparts in Krabbendijke. It could be hypothesized that it is not so much ‘trust’ as a factor of the creativity climate that accounts for the higher number of communicated ideas, but the perception of ‘competence’.

This does not answer all the questions, however, because the type of work is not completely the same. At Krabbendijke, the staff in general have a lower level of education because there is an emphasis on a different form of care. Still, it would be interesting to look at the relationship between creativity and ‘the manager’s perception of an employee’s competence’, as well as between organizational ideation and the degree to which this importance becomes manifest in actions such as documenting ideas and rewarding ideators.

The team leaders in Goes found the ideas to be more important than the other two management groups. They had higher trust in their employees’ competence, thought that ideas were expressed in a more convincing way, documented ideas more often, and rewarded ideators more often. This is not just a verbal expression of ‘importance’, but a way of putting it in action, albeit unconsciously.


Testimony

As we have seen, several factors were found to stand in the way of expressing ideas. The ideator’s learning team must support the idea, the request to put the ideas on paper (when most ideas are expressed orally and many employees are not well educated), where the ideas come from in the hierarchy—the lack of communication between levels, reciprocal expectations (managers and team leaders perceive ideas not as a gift but as a demand), avoiding ‘getting silted up’ and protecting overworked employees), and unclear criteria (ideas must be ‘well thought through’ and must have ‘added value’).

It is worth noting that the team leaders in Goes found their ideators much more convincing than did the team leaders in Krabbendijkje or the members of the Management Team. This seemed to be one of the factors related to a high volume of ideas.

Favourite interaction

It was difficult to observe favourite interaction directly. In the interviews, some managers and team leaders mentioned the enthusiastic spirit of the employees. But the relationship that was found between the number of ideas and their perceived importance, their persuasiveness, trust in competence and goodwill, documentation, and reward was more convincing evidence of favourite interaction.

We have noted that the team leaders in Goes received the most ideas, perceived the importance of the ideas as higher, showed a higher level of trust in the competence of their employees and a lower level of trust in goodwill, perceived the testimonies as more persuasive, documented the ideas much more, and rewarded the ideators more often. The members of the Management Team were exactly the opposite, and the team leaders in Krabbendijkje fell right in the middle.

This illustrates favourite interaction, not so much in words, but in deeds. It also shows that the concept of trust is difficult to apply; I do not believe that this pattern would have been found if such a precise definition had not been used. Blomquist and Ståhle’s (2003) division of the concept of trust into three aspects (trust in competence, trust in goodwill, and trust in self-reference) has proven to be very useful.

The reception of the results by the Management Team

In return for permission to do this research at Ter Weel, the director of the Management Team asked me to provide some ‘advice’ that ‘would be useful’ for the organization. When the results presented here were communicated to the director of the Management Team, his first reaction was that he was flabbergasted about the huge number of ideas in his organization.
His comment was that they were probably just ‘little ideas’, but I got the impression that he was also very proud of this large number of ideas and that he interpreted it as a manifestation of commitment.

I did not get the idea that the members of the Management Team would be ready or willing to do anything with these results now or in the near future. There were problems with a merger and there was a reorganization of the government financial structure that they said were acute. On the other hand, I think that this attitude is in line with the general findings in this case.

6.6 Summary
In this chapter we looked at Ter Weel as illustrating ideational processes in a vertical, hierarchic organization. Because all the managers were interviewed this gave the opportunity to include the question on the volume of ideas, as perceived by the management.

In this chapter, we, first, attempt to shed light on the volume of ideas at the Management Team and the team leaders in Goes and Krabbendijke. We concluded that there is a large amount of ideas floating around the organization. Then we shed light on the empirical reference with regard to the sensitizing concepts standing, trust, testimony and favourite interaction.

We noted that a great part of the ideas get lost in the organization and that a large amount of them gets actively killed by the Management Team. Also the members of the Management Team are more inclined to ideas from other Management Team members than from employees at other hierarchical levels. We noted a discrepancy in the volume of ideas with regard to trust, where the Management Team scored their employees much lower on ‘trust in competence’ and much higher on ‘trust in goodwill’ than did the team leaders. We observed a relation between high levels of ‘trust in competence’, ‘low levels of trust in goodwill’ and high levels of ideas.
CHAPTER 7

IDEA MANAGEMENT AT WORK:
THE CASE OF CORUS22

In this chapter, we look at an idea-management system at work: at Corus RD&T. This is an operational, computer-based idea-management system, called Eureka! In the first section, the organization is introduced and in the second, the Eureka! system is presented. The third section is about the empirical evidence. In the fourth section, the sensitizing concepts are evaluated and in the fifth, the material is summarized.

7.1 Introduction

In this section attention will be given to Corus as an organization, creativity management, the Eureka! Model and to the kinds of ideas that are brought in.

Corus as an organization

The Corus Group is a large multinational metals company. It was formed through the merger of the Dutch Koninklijke Hoogovens and British Steel in 1999. Its headquarters are in London, but it has operations worldwide, with major plants in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Norway23, and the USA. In 2007, the Corus Group was taken over by the Indian steel company, Tata Steel Ltd. At the time of this study, Corus presented itself as follows:24


I would like to thank the contributors of these seminars and the two anonymous referees of the journal Creativity and Innovation Management for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

23 Closed in 2007.

24 The information presented here on the Corus Group can be found at their website: www.corusgroup.com (accessed April 2010).
Corus is a customer focused, innovative value-driven company, which manufactures, processes and distributes steel products and services to customers worldwide.

In addition to manufacturing, the Corus Group also provides design, technology, and consultancy services. It is divided into four main divisions: strip products, long products, distributions & building systems, and aluminium. Each of these divisions contains several business units, 22 in total. In 2010, around 41,000 people worked for the Corus Group in over 40 countries, from which 11,300 in the Netherlands (http://www.corusjobs.nl/corus-als-werkgever/het-bedrijf-corus.html, accessed 30 March 2010).

Some well-known landmarks in the Netherlands that were built with steel from the Corus Group are the Amsterdam ArenA, the Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam, Schiphol Airport, and the headquarters of ING. Corus products are also used in the Renault Megane, the Audi A2, and airplanes (like Boeing and Airbus), as well as in batteries (Duracell), which need very thin, but strong cases without perforations because of the corrosive acid and can have a leaking tolerance of only one in a million. The Corus Group has about ninety percent of this specialized, high-quality market, and at the time of this research, the Corus Group was in seventh place for the production of steel worldwide. Due to the expansion in China the world market for steel and aluminium has changed dramatically. In 2008 the Tata Steel Group (Tata Asia and Corus) were on place eight. Their goal is to be able to continuously deliver high-quality products to their customers.

About 900 people work in the Corus Group’s department of Research, Development and Technology (RD&T), about 500 in the Netherlands (at IJmuiden) and 400 in the United Kingdom at Teesside and Rotherham, near Sheffield. By supporting the business units, not only at the product level, but also in processes, RD&T plays an important and strategic role in the process of innovation at the Corus Group. The promotion of sustainability of products and processes also plays an important role in the work of the RD&T organisation.

**Creativity management**

It is generally acknowledged that an innovative environment is needed for creativity to prosper. On the other hand, creativity is a process that is hard to manage. In fact, creativity management is a very important issue in the debate about the innovative organization. Corus RD&T has a computer-based idea-management system (*Eureka!*), designed to capture,
review, evaluate, and select new ideas, which led to the research question for this case study being formulated as follows:

How do employees from Corus RD&T experience the idea-management system
Eureka!?

In order to gain insight into employee experiences in an open and non-evaluative way, their names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Corus RD&T requested that we do a survey as part of the case study. The survey was preceded by participant observation, and at the end of the study, a follow-up with examples was made to probe more deeply into the question.

The Eureka! model
The Eureka! model (which had only recently been introduced when we started this study\textsuperscript{26}) has connections to existing notions about idea management, such as the theories of Rickards (1990), Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999), Van Dijk and Van den Ende (2002), Gaspersz (2002), Hellström and Hellström (2002) and Mauzy and Harriman (2003), which we discussed in chapter two. In the Eureka! manual, it says the following (Corus Research Development and Technology, 2002, page 2):

We have to generate a continuous stream of market winners by developing new processes, products, product applications and new business concepts. The start will be building up our portfolio of Ideas.

Figure 7.1.1 presents the formal structure of Eureka! (which is part of the Corus RD&T internal Infonet), showing the routes of ideas through the system.

\textsuperscript{26} Since March 2010 there is new version Eureka2010.
Ideas, which can be submitted by any Corus RD&T employee, are received in the ‘Ideas Capture’ section. At this stage, a superficial description of the idea is enough. The area called ‘Opportunities Capture’ is there to stimulate the ideation process. Here the business units of the Corus Group can put in information about their needs in order to enhance the ideation process.

When an idea is submitted to the *Eureka!* system, the ideator has to select at least one programme manager, at least one resource manager, and optionally, some (researcher) colleagues to judge the idea (this is the ‘1st screen’ phase). If the resource manager or the programme manager is positive about the idea, the ideator can continue to work on it. The manager who has given this permission has to commit him or herself to the idea. If the selected evaluators are not convinced about the value of the idea, they will reject it, but they have to provide a reason for their rejection. According to the respondents, some of the ideas are not well evaluated because the evaluators do not always have the necessary knowledge or expertise. Ideators said that it is hard to select the right evaluators if the idea is in a field that is not well known to them.

Most of the ideators do not resubmit their idea. One respondent put it like this:
The system might be improved by having an option to automatically resubmit an idea that has been modified in response to specific comments—evaluators who have voted ‘No’ should, in such cases, receive a notification that their concerns have been addressed and that the idea should be re-evaluated in the light of these modifications.

Rejected ideas go to the ideas archive, which functions as a backup of rejected ideas to which new ideas can be compared, as well as storage for ideas that can be used at a later time. As we saw in the Pentascope case, timing is important. Ideas that were rejected at one time can become useful at a later moment because of changing technologies, an increase in the research budget, or other factors such as market developments. The archive could be more useful if, for example, it had a search function.

Successful ideas then pass into the ‘enhancement phase’, where they are researched further on by the ideator. The ideator has to provide information with regard to ‘objectives and deliverables’, ‘probability of success’, ‘business unit needs that will be met’, ‘resources’, ‘key go/no-go decisions’, and ‘intellectual property’.

After the ‘enhancement phase’, the idea is put forward into the ‘second screen’ phase. Now that it is submitted in more detail, the idea will be evaluated again and, again, it could be rejected or approved. If the idea is rejected, it will go into the ideas archive, and if it is approved, it will go on to the ‘waiting for adoption’ phase. The idea can then be picked up by one of the Corus funding managers. If the idea has not been picked up after a specific period of time, it will end up in the ideas archive.

The *Eureka!* model described above resembles the theories about idea management that we discussed in the second chapter. Gaspersz’s (2002) model, in particular, is easily recognizable because there is a stream from the top down, in a straight line, that is supposed to be the main route of ideation. The process is one of enrichment and selection. Ideas that are not approved are kept in an archive, which was also a suggestion made by Gaspersz.

There are two points in the *Eureka!* model that were not mentioned by Gaspersz. First, at the beginning, there is the ‘opportunities capture’, a section of the system where business units can bring forward situations that need attention. This is an interesting addition in that it brings idea management and creative thinking more closely together.

Second, there is a ‘fast idea track’ that goes from the ‘enhancement phase’ directly to the ‘funding phase’. This is in tune with the ideas of Hellström and Hellström (2002), who, in their metaphor of highways, alleys, and by-lanes, promoted a variety of idea routes in organizations.
Two things can be said about the experience of employees with the formal structure of *Eureka!*. In response to the statement, ‘I can explain my ideas clearly enough in the format of *Eureka!*’, 82% of the respondents answered affirmatively, indicating that the computer-based (hence, structured) format is not experienced as a handicap by the large majority of respondents.

Approximately half of the respondents (51.1%) felt that one screening would be enough to make a reasonable assessment of an idea. So half of the respondents are comfortable with two screening phases, whereas the other half are not.

Despite the formal structure of the *Eureka!* model, and the respondents’ apparent acceptance of it, in daily practice it was found that researchers take alternative routes to get their ideas funded—in ways that are more complicated than the model would suggest. This is discussed below.

**Kinds of ideas**

In 2004, about 250 ideas were submitted to *Eureka!*, and about 20% were funded. Since most of Corus’s products are mass-produced, a single idea has the potential to lead to enormous benefits or savings. Also, some of the *Eureka!* ideas in 2004 resulted in patentable outcomes. Because of the sensitivity of the ideas in terms of competition, we will not discuss them in detail here. I can say, however, that they cover the whole range of products and processes.

In 2009, about 150 to 225 ideas were going through *Eureka!* per year. Of these ideas, around 35 to 50 were passed over to the STIR Programme27 (roughly 20% to 25%), with around three to five patents resulting. Other ideas result in projects or are absorbed into programmes. The idea manager, Kleemans, felt that there had been a limited number of ideas during the last few years, but I found the numbers to be in line with those of 2004.

**7.2 Empirical reference**

In this section, we will look at two small examples that shed some light on the functioning of the *Eureka!* system. Then two more elaborate examples will be presented to show how the total idea-evolution process works. In the last section, we will look at information that was found through the survey.

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27 The STIR fund is a stimulation fund for innovative ideas. In principle *Eureka!* and STIR are independent routes. A large amount of the accepted ideas from *Eureka!*; roughly 80%, are absorbed in the STIR fund, but not all of them.
Two small examples of idea development

The first example is that of Ian at Rotherham, which was meant to improve efficiency in measuring. When measurements needed to be made, someone had to be on the site. The objective of Ian’s idea was to enable personnel to access the measuring device through the Corus Wide Area Network. This would reduce the number of trips to the measuring facility and, therefore, would also reduce expenses in terms of time and money. A feasibility study was carried out, but further investigation with regard to user-friendliness was necessary. Ian’s manager proposed publishing the proposal through Eureka! At the first screening, the enhancement meeting, and the second screening, Ian received very positive feedback, so he thought the idea would be funded in a short while: ‘I waited for adoption; I had no action to take. But I waited and nothing happened. I got very disappointed. Then I got other things to do. Now the technology has been superseded’. This case shows that the concept of an idea-management system could raise unrealistic expectations. Ian got the impression that the idea-management system would do the work, but this was not the case.

The second example is the case of Frank at IJmuiden. Frank says that his idea was inspired by developments in Germany. The plan to develop the idea was supported by a committee, which gave him a one-year budget to develop it. The idea was recorded in the system of the business unit, where it was finally rejected. Frank visited the business unit to figure out why the idea had been rejected. The reason was a lack of information about the implications for the business unit. Moreover, they argued that the idea was already in use by other companies and therefore not innovative enough. At that time, Frank continued his lobbying activities to get funding for the idea, which was difficult because he had to convince the people who had already rejected the idea. It is often argued by R&D people that the business units don’t have any focus. However, Frank thinks that researchers cannot always convince the business units of the importance of their ideas. Frank went to the business unit to talk with the people who seemed to be interested in the idea. His lesson was not to stop lobbying after a ‘no’ from a single person, but to convince others of the importance of his idea. The argument that the business units cannot focus is too easy, and according to Frank, the argument of budget problems is not good enough—they can try to implement the idea with a smaller budget.

So, what I did, and I think this is a success factor, was not to talk first with the product manager (which is the ‘normal’ way to do it), but I went directly to the commercial people. After all, they have a feeling for the market and have reasons to say whether this is interesting or not. After our meeting, the commercial person went to the product managers with the
message: ‘This is important for us!’ The influence of the commercial person on the product manager was of great importance.

From this case, we can see that it is important to know how the concept of the idea-management system is embedded in its larger context. Frank took the initiative, crossed organizational borders, and managed to be successful by taking action alongside *Eureka!*

**Comparison**

Both these small examples of idea development illustrate how the *Eureka!* model functions. But there is one other point: the issue of participant behaviour. The tool-mediated system of *Eureka!* might give the impression that the system is functioning for the ideator, but such is not the case. It was found many times that success depended on the actor’s initiative, as shown with Frank. The perception of a functioning system might lead people to passive acceptance, which is by no means helpful. Ian interpreted the response at the adoption phase as ‘I had no action to take’. On the other hand, Frank did not take ‘no’ for an answer and tried to convince others, going to the ‘commercial people’. Hence, it is not just the quality of the idea but also the actual act of selling the idea that counts. From the interviews with researchers, it appeared that the social or political activities that were taken parallel to the formal route were important for an idea’s success. One respondent put it like this:

> The system is only facilitating; you have to do the lobbying yourself. Therefore, it is always difficult to get funding for a new project, because it is not so much the technological innovation, but the lobbying and the organizational skills that count.

The process of persuasion or ‘selling’ is the phase in which receivers are convinced of the usefulness of the idea. In this process of ‘idea transfer’, social activities, like informal contacts and meetings, are very important. The Programme Manager of Innovation put it like this:

> If you are acquainted with someone, you can call to discuss your idea, and if you have worked together, he knows that you are capable of good research. That is different to the situation in which one receives the idea electronically without knowing about the background of the researcher.

What is important in this process of persuasion, selling, or lobbying is to have contact with people who have the necessary knowledge, are committed to the idea, and can provide quick and adequate feedback. Respondents were keen to receive remarks and comments on
their ideas. Inter-unit ties are therefore very important, which is related to the concept of standing or reputation that will be discussed in the next section.

One of the main frustrations for ideators was when they received positive feedback, moved up to the ‘waiting for adoption phase’, and still got no funding, as we saw in Ian’s case. As Ian noted, he had put a lot of effort into his idea and it still got no funding, and now it has been superseded.

More elaborate descriptions of idea evolution are given in the two examples that follow, and the relationship between Eureka! and STIR is made more explicit.

**Investigating the feasibility of advanced building materials for refractory, construction, and consumer product applications**

*Introduction*
The researcher who came up with this idea, Pim, works for the Ceramics Research Centre (CRC), which is part of Corus RD&T. CRC is dedicated to refractory applications in iron, steel, and aluminium production, meaning that its activities are focused on characterizing and developing high-temperature materials. The CRC is also active in the development of cermets, which are materials composed of ceramic and metallic materials, and the production of ceramic components. The CRC has developed advanced iron- and steel-making refractories, thereby improving the reliability and availability of Corus’s production facilities. The CRC also extends the use of its know-how and research facilities to other, ‘non-refractory’, areas, offering a wide range of services, from consultancies through materials testing to product development, process simulation, computer modelling, prototyping, damage analysis, and refractory courses (http://www.ceramics-research.com/index_tmp.html, accessed 10 May 2009).

*The idea*
The idea of investigating the feasibility of advanced building materials for refractory, construction, and consumer product applications was made by Wim Hofstede, who is another researcher at CRC and a colleague of Pim’s. Wim Hofstede found information on these advanced building materials in recent literature and was convinced that it was worthwhile to investigate further, but he did not have time to spend on this promising idea himself.
The information in the literature (for which two patents were already registered) indicated great promise in terms of strength and heat resistance. Because of the production method, such materials are required inside melting facilities. When these materials wear out, they have to be replaced, resulting in work delays for maintenance and subsequent loss of productivity. Heat-resistant materials that last longer would be very useful.

**Phase I: Initial phase and defining conditions**

Wim Hofstede came up with the idea for a material with promising properties for refractory, construction, and consumer-product applications in 2007. It was considered to be a new material that would be useful for high-temperature processes and heat-resistance applications. Since Hofstede was working on his Ph.D. at the time, he did not have enough time to develop the idea. Since Pim had recently come into the organization, it was decided that he would work on this idea. For the project, it could have the advantage of a ‘fresh look’, while for Pim, it could provide a good opportunity to get to know the organization. This material seemed very promising. As Pim puts it: ‘There were two patents; it looked serious and well thought through’. Pim started with a literature review. He analyzed the report in which the material was described and started talking to people (especially his colleagues, Wim Hofstede and Jan Bakker, and his superior, Sytse Sijbes) about the material’s heat resistance. Pim mentions that he finds it important for his superior to know what he is doing. He also knows a lot of people and it was important for him to find the right people. Through his superior and his colleague, Wim Hofstede, he was brought into contact with someone from the Business Unit Building and Construction, Enno Elsinga, and also with someone from the RD&T Department in the UK, Gary Moorecraft, who is a specialist in this field. In the sphere of applications for Corus, the new material could be used for refractories and constructions, such as tunnels and lightweight panels. In this initial phase, it was necessary to learn the most important information about the material: How could it be tested? What criteria were needed to make it interesting to Corus? What would be the condition for looking for applications? And also, what would be the advantages (in terms of cost, production process, and toxicity) with regard to existing materials? Pim is very positive about the cooperation of his colleagues, he says: ‘I have not noted that people have their own agenda. Together we tried to make something good out of it’.

The testimony in this phase then turns out to be: We have a new material with such and such properties. This could be interesting for Corus, especially in the fields of refractories and heat-resistant building applications.
Phase 2: Eureka!
Pim submitted the idea to STIR and *Eureka!* and he wrote the proposal for STIR himself. Because this project did not belong to a business unit and therefore had no specified budget, it could be sent to STIR. As reviewers for *Eureka!* he selected Rene, the manager of *Eureka!*, Gary, the RD&T specialist from the UK, and Reinier Ribbink, the supervisor of his colleague, Jan Bakker. Pim says that they skipped the second round of *Eureka!* and that he was invited to start his research right after the first review. From this, we might conclude that *Eureka!* is used in a flexible way.

Phase 3 and 4: STIR
Pim is very positive about the STIR phase, finding the atmosphere very constructive and positive. The STIR committee members were actively thinking with him: ‘*They do not sit with their arms crossed waiting to kill the idea, not the feeling that you would have to conquer the budget*.’ After Pim got the STIR funding, he could start the process of researching and testing the material. The STIR funding had two tranches, one with which he could start right away and a second that would become available after he could prove substantial progress.

It is interesting that during the interview, when Pim talked about this process, he continuously referred to ‘we’, which could mean that he did not see this process as his own, but as a group process.

Pim made contact with the inventor of the material, Dr Nicolae, at a Belgian company. He requested the track record, which seemed hard to get. Finally, he received the samples of the material—two variants—and he started some preliminary tests. The first test, with regard to heat insulation, was not very impressive, and the results of the second series of tests, on the strength of the material, were totally disappointing. The claims that had been made about the material could not be reproduced at all. This was not a matter of degree: the tested strength was only about 10% of what had been claimed. He contacted the inventor again and was sent new samples, but the claims could not be verified.

A third series of tests was made with regard to the material’s heat resistance. Although it was claimed that the material could resist 2000°, in the tests it melted at 1400°, so here too, the claims could not be verified.

The conclusion was that the test results did not match the claims and that the material did not realize the promises that had been made in the literature. Also, the track record had never been sent. He therefore concluded that it was useless to continue investigating this material and that the STIR project should be stopped. Pim’s conclusion was that ‘*if something
is too beautiful to be true, it probably is not true’. Pim says that at first sight, on the basis of the reports and the patents, he was absolutely convinced and so were his colleagues and the STIR committee. Pim feels that it was important to carry out this project and test the material, because, if the claims had been accurate, it would have been the goose that lays golden egg for Corus, one that they could have acquired easily.

The testimony is then that material X has certain qualities, which cannot be confirmed. Pim has contacted the inventor and received new samples and variants, but these do not match the claims either. At the end, it was thought there might be other applications for this material, but its qualities with regard to density and heat isolation were not found to be unique.

**Time Table**

Table 7.2.1 below presents the evolution of the idea with the approximate corresponding years.

*Table 7.2.1: Time Table of the Idea Evolution Process of Investigating the Feasibility of Advanced Building Materials for Refractory, Construction, and Consumer Product Applications*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Important contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appr. second half of 2007</td>
<td>Wim Hofstede, colleague and ideator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan Bakker, colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sytse Sijbes, chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enno Elsinga, Business Unit Building and Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gary Moorecraft, chief of RD&amp;T, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rene, head of <em>Eureka!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wim Hofstede found the idea, Pim starts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>working on it Defining conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Appr. end of 2007 Idea submitted to <em>Eureka!</em></td>
<td><em>Eureka!</em> reviewers: Rene, Gary, Reinier Ribbink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1st part of 2008 Idea funded in STIR</td>
<td>STIR commission (appr. eight people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Nicolae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Appr. beginning of 2009</td>
<td>STIR commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Dick Dekker, testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quick tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Updating STIR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project end: claims not reproducible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern in this example is that one researcher finds an idea through studying the professional literature. For lack of time, this researcher delegates the opportunity to a colleague. The colleague starts working around through both the technical and the marketing side. Following the route of *Eureka!* / STIR, he writes his proposal and succeeds in getting funding. This gives him the opportunity to test the material, which, he finds, does not stand up to the claims. Hence the project is ended.
Improving the corrosion behaviour of aluminium

Introduction
The aluminium division formed part of Corus but was sold to Aleris International, Inc. (a global leader in the production of aluminium according to their website http://www.aleris.com/, accessed 30 March 2010) in 2006. Aleris produces both rolled and extruded products as well as recycled aluminium and specification alloys. Aleris headquarters are in Beachwood, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. Aleris has more than 40 production facilities and employs over 8000 people. Its major customers include some of the world’s largest companies in the aerospace, building, construction, container, packaging, metal-distribution, and transportation industries. On its website, Aleris mentions its industry-leading research and development (http://www.aleris.com/about.php, accessed 14 April 2009). When Aleris took over the aluminium division of Corus, they had no research and development department. They needed R&D, but it would cost too much to initiate themselves, so they agreed with Corus to continue having the necessary research done by Corus RD&T.

The idea
The idea of improving the corrosion behaviour of 5000 aluminium alloys was made by John, an English metallurgist, who had worked for Corus for about seven years at the time. He won the 2008 STIR-NL award for his innovative idea. Starting at Corus in the UK, John moved to Corus RD&T in Ijmuiden, where he had been with the aluminium group for six years. ‘Here you make the most money,’ he says. The Aluminium Group at Corus RD&T is a small group of about 30 to 40 full-time people and another 200 who often work in projects on aluminium. They are all concentrated here and form a tight-knit team. Currently, John is coordinator of a group of eight to nine people, handling 11 projects with a four million-euro budget.

The unfolding of the idea evolution process can be described in four phases: the initial phase, the Eureka! phase, the STIR phase, and the business unit phase.

Phase 1: Initial phase
John has a background in aluminium and aerospace engineering and he knows that the most important properties of aluminium are strength, toughness, and corrosion resistance. John’s idea was to improve corrosion resistance, where he felt there was the most to win. In his words: ‘We understand what causes the corrosion. So the question is then: What can I add to the alloy to stop the corrosion forming?’ Damien shared this view, saying that corrosion was recognized as a fundamental problem. What was needed was a step change, a perception
change. Damien was a project leader at the time and worked for John. He was having the same kind of ideas as John, but mentioned that John’s idea had more structure and was more detailed, and also that John had more ideas about how the idea could be proven. Their ideas fused; John talks about Damien as co-innovator. Damien talks about John as someone with whom he can exchange ideas in an open way.

John says that it is a great advantage to work at Corus IJmuiden, because there are many software packages in which phase formation can be simulated. Damien mentions that nowadays, for five to ten thousand euro, you can buy a software programme and be running your tests in a couple of hours. Of course you have to be careful—you have to relate the results to your own knowledge—these programmes are not necessarily reality, but they indicate trends and you can make a sensitivity study. Ten years ago it would have taken months to do it. John says that, thanks to the software programmes,

one afternoon I sat down at a computer and amazingly found an element [to slow down the corrosion process]. Strange thing was … the element had a reputation of being worse for corrosion.

John’s idea promised better corrosion resistance and, as an unforeseen benefit, increased strength. The application of the material would therefore be much wider than aerospace alone: it could also be used for shipbuilding, storage silos, and fuel tanks.

As mentioned above, the Aluminium Group at Corus RD&T is a small group that interacts strongly. John says that he naturally bounced the idea off some colleagues—three to four people in which he has a lot of trust. These are people that he works closely with and gets on well with. Their areas of expertise also play a role here. John says that hierarchy does not play a role for him and that the Aluminium Group is structured in a matrix format. It should be noted, however, that as a coordinator, John has a rather high position himself. He says: ‘I am near the top of the tree myself. That’s why people are more likely to listen to me’. John says that he is very good at presenting and communicating, with diagrams, PowerPoint, or just pen and paper. He says that in this case he had a clear idea and he was not looking for cooperation; he wanted feedback—whether his colleagues agreed with his findings or not. He experienced the responses of the Aluminium Group as the ‘usual mixture’ (from enthusiasm to scepticism) but emphasizes that his colleagues gave him confidence. He experienced their reactions as ‘very attentive, very supportive. They asked intelligent questions and they gave me confidence’.
Phase 2: Eureka!

As John puts it, in 2007, one year after having had the idea, ‘I had a choice: go to the BU (business unit) and be laughed at, or go to STIR, to get hours. I needed a couple of hundred hours to cast three or four alloys’. The decision to bring the idea to Eureka! was made because someone from the Aluminium Group was in STIR, namely Gunther, a project leader. Gunther said that one day John dropped by, that he had an idea and had done some calculations and that he asked him what to do if he wanted to submit the idea to STIR. In Gunther’s words,

He just walked in. He is doing that more often, so it was not really special. I already knew that he is creative and has many ideas. I found it very nice because I am a great supporter of creativity and innovation in the company. Besides, it was an idea about metallurgy, which is my field too. And he had made a smart use of models.

Gunther explained that there are people who use models but then stay at this stage. On the other hand, there are people who do experiments. But getting something new from a model is quite a positive point and it made him enthusiastic, and he emphasized that this smart use of models was an extra plus for John’s idea. Gunther mentioned that this first conversation lasted about half an hour and that he encouraged John. According to Gunther, John needed a feasibility study because the business unit was not likely to accept an idea based solely on a model and without experimental data. John submitted his idea and nominated Gunther, Damien, and his programme manager to evaluate it. Damien said he and John wrote the Eureka! proposal together and had been thinking about how they could test their ideas.

About Eureka!, John says that it is easy to use, but it is not a fantastic system. He finds it impersonal and he thinks it is much easier to meet someone face to face and comment on the idea in about five minutes. Besides, it is in a system so you have to act in a way that will not upset anyone, which the system makes difficult to evaluate, and the response time is too long. John finds it easier to call someone, which is what he does nowadays when he is asked to evaluate an idea. He also mentioned that STIR is probably not used as much as it should be.

Phase 3: STIR

After his idea was evaluated in Eureka!, it was sent to STIR. John finds that STIR is different. He mentions that it is professional, warm, friendly, and responsive. ‘They (the STIR committee members) want it to work; they see the best in the idea’. John was asked to make a PowerPoint presentation to STIR of about fifteen minutes, to legitimize his hours claim. Because he had a prior engagement, he asked Gunther to give this presentation, which again demonstrates his
high level of trust in him. He describes Gunther as a supportive, people-person, and great personality who will always make time for you.

There was a committee of five people who were all supportive. Later on, John attended all the meetings and, about the members, he said that he respected them and they respected him. He says he knew one or two of them from beforehand. They tended to be people like Gunther. For John, it was a guarantee that Gunther was there, because he trusts Gunther’s judgment. ‘I know he wouldn’t stay there if it was nothing’. John had trust in the STIR committee. He feels that he had a fair hearing and he found the members attentive and supportive and felt they asked good questions. He got the hours that he needed to perform a feasibility study. About his idea, John said, ‘It worked.’ He did some testing and the results came through. Apart from the increase in corrosion resistance, he also found an increase in strength, which was an unforeseen benefit. About his idea John says: ‘Even I am still surprised’. John says that his testimony did not change during this STIR period, but that he has become more confident about his idea. About Eureka!, John says that the Aluminium Group gets more hours out of it thanks to Gunther. Damien adds that in this STIR phase, he did some practical work on this idea and he comments that without STIR the idea would not have been realized. At the end of this phase, John gave a final presentation in which he reported to the STIR committee the findings of his feasibility study.

Phase 4: Business unit

After the Eureka! and the STIR phases, John had the experimental data he needed to take to the business unit to try to convince them of his findings. Damien explains that John’s idea about adding a specific element to the aluminium is an idea that is ‘outside the box’ in the aluminium community.

In the Koblenz business unit, where they had had experience with this element, it was particularly difficult to go in and say that they had not done it in the right way, especially since high-placed employees had been involved with these experiments. In addition, John’s and Damien’s test results sounded like an American infomercial: ‘Here is the normal corroded product and here is the wonder product!’ In the business unit, they would never believe it. Hence, a clear story was very important, together with experimental results and theoretical underpinning. Without these, convincing the business unit would have been impossible. John went to the business unit himself. He asked for presentation time at one of their quarterly meetings and was given a slot of 20 minutes. In fact, he gave his presentation twice, because after the first time, he was asked to give it again.
There were about 40 to 50 people present at the first presentation. John said they were willing to listen because he has a reputation of giving good presentations and can explain results, and furthermore, because of his position and experience. This is confirmed by his colleagues, Damien and Gunther. Gunther says that during this phase, John kept him informed about his progress, even though he had no formal role in this phase, which he appreciated.

John says that his estimation of his presentation was that about one-third of the audience understood his idea straight away and were optimistic about the results. Another third said that the idea might be interesting. And the last third did not understand and were not convinced. John mentions the role of a particular person, Fleischer, in the audience of whom he says: ‘I knew I had to convince him. But he was not convinced. The idea went against his principles’. This is a person who has worked 30 years in this place. He has a good reputation and people listen to him. John worked with him a couple of years, so they know each other and there is trust between them. Fleischer can be understood to be a key figure. John felt that if he could convince this man, the others would follow. So there were two things John had to do when he came back from Koblenz. On the one hand, he could do more experiments and work on the theoretical explanation of his findings; on the other hand, he could work on convincing this key figure. He did both. When he came back, he started more experiments, trying to reproduce the results and explain his findings. This was done over a three- to four-month period. He also worked on convincing Fleischer. At this time, John was in Koblenz once a month, and he had about three meetings with Fleischer that lasted a couple of hours. These meetings were not only about his idea, but John gradually convinced Fleischer, who is now a big supporter of John’s idea.

I tried to find out what his issues were. I tried to reassure him and I tried to explain the idea and I showed him my data so that he could understand my thought process. This man is a field engineer; he talks to customers.

John thinks that he gained the trust of the Koblenz people because he had worked with them before. It still took some time, because it takes time to get accepted by the people in Koblenz. ‘But once you are accepted, they are happy to work with you. We are kind of friends. We share a beer’.

Gunther adds that the business unit in Koblenz later informed the STIR committee about the results of John’s idea. And although that does not bring in any money, Gunther found that very good, because this is what STIR was meant for: to bring ideas further into the organization.
Current situation

After the idea was accepted by the Koblenz business unit, a programme could be written. At the moment, it is quite remarkable that there are *three* projects running on the basis of John’s idea: one in aerospace, one in the automotive sector, and one in the commercial sector (engineering products, armour plate, shipbuilding), each consisting of a couple of thousand hours per programme. Damien says that there is a lot of cooperation between these three different projects, and as coordinator of the aerospace cluster, John is close to all three projects.

According to Damien, who is responsible for the automotive project, John’s idea will be very useful for car parts. He has already found interested clients in the German automotive market, and John thinks that there might be new products in 2010.

John received the STIR-NL prize 2008 for his idea, which is formally called ‘Improving the corrosion behaviour of 5000 Aluminium Alloys’. He says he feels rewarded, but that he did not do it for the money, and he regards it especially as peer recognition. John says that you have to put your trust in other people. He feels that it is nice that his ideas have turned into programmes, but it also feels strange, a bit scary: *'What if it goes horribly wrong'”?

Time table

Table 7.2.2 below shows the evolution of the idea, with the approximate corresponding years indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Important contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appr. 2006</td>
<td>Damien, some other colleagues, Gunther were important in making the move to <em>Eureka!</em> and STIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Appr. 2007 Idea submitted to <em>Eureka!</em></td>
<td>Damien, Gunther, Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Appr. 2007 Idea funded in STIR</td>
<td>Damien, Gunther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Appr. 2008 Idea presented to business unit in Koblenz</td>
<td>Damien, Fleischner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2009 Three projects running: aerospace, automotive, commercial</td>
<td>Damien (automotive)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aluminium Group

All the respondents had the notion that the Aluminium Group at Corus RD&T is special. For example, it is a group that has many ideas, which (according to them) makes their business
unit enthusiastic. John uses the dichotomy ‘steel people’ versus ‘aluminium people’ or, in short, ‘the group’.

The Aluminium Programme comprises approximately 70 man-years, of which there are approximately 35 full-time workers. According to Gunther, that is a small group when compared to IJmuiden, where there are around 450 researchers. He also feels that this group is quite strong on content. Damien, on the contrary, finds the group rather inexperienced. Gunther emphasizes the fact that the Aluminium Group is strongly focused on one client, Aleris, which is located abroad and not on the site, which means that contact is formal and that the telephone has to be used a lot. Gunther admits that this is a handicap, but because it is a shared handicap, it helps bind people together. In addition to these points, Gunther thinks that people in the Aluminium Group work harder than the other units, although he cannot say why. Another point is that the Aluminium Group makes money in the lab because they receive a higher hour rate for their research than does the steel research\(^2\). And, finally, Gunther says that working on aluminium can also be a bonding factor, as it is different.

It can be said conclusively that all the respondents feel that the Aluminium Group is special: the size of the group is one factor, the strong focus on one client (which is abroad and not around the corner—the shared handicap) is another, and the material itself, because it is different in an otherwise steel-based context, is a third.

**Differences and similarities**

At the time of this research one project had ended, namely, the first example. The other example was still ongoing, so the second was the successful one. There had been three projects based on this finding, which is also quite unusual, since there would normally be only one project.

When we compare these two examples with regard to the sensitizing concepts, we find the following: with regard to standing, the standing of colleagues in both the examples was considered positive. It is remarkable that in the first example, the idea was given to a new employee, whereas in the second example, the idea came from someone who had a high position himself. One could ask if the idea in the first example were really that good, would it then have been given away, notably to someone who was new in the organization?

\(^{2}\) This higher tariff for research hours for aluminium research was based on the research agreement with Aleris. In 2009 Aleris also had problems as a result of the international financial crisis and they had to cut down their expenses on research.
With regard to trust in colleagues, again there are very positive reactions in both examples. The difference is that at the end of the first example, doubts arose about trust in the inventor/supplier. In the second example, it is remarkable that in the entrée to the business unit, a key person emerged, with whom the ideator already shared a trusting relationship. This turned out to be a key success factor for the further development of this idea.

That the testimonies of the ideas in these examples were both good is affirmed by the awarding of STIR funding. In the second example, however, a few other observations were made with regard to the testimony. The problem that the idea was about was widely recognized and a change in perception was needed. In the early phase of the idea, there was a colleague who had ideas about the topic that could be compared, and the ideas of the ideator and the colleague fused. Secondly, in entering the Eureka! / STIR phase, it was noted that the idea was remarkable because a good use had been made of models. Here, the testimony has a remarkable quality, not in its content, which is hard to assess at this point, but in the way it came about. Third, it was emphasized several times that the idea could be communicated well and that the ideator was known to give good presentations. On the other hand, although a change was needed, the idea went against what was generally understood about this added element: that it would only make things worse and would definitely not be the answer to the problem.

Then there was a lot of effort invested in convincing Mr Fleischer. It is interesting to note that the ideator knew exactly that this was the man who had to be persuaded, and that there was already a trust relationship between them. Even then, the persuasion process was time consuming. Finally, this idea was awarded the STIR-NL prize.

About favourite interaction, it can be said that in both examples a high level of favourite interaction was experienced by the STIR committee. In the first example, favourite interaction was experienced throughout the process, with the exception of the inventor/supplier. In the second example, favourite interaction was related only to the role of the STIR committee member through whom the idea was introduced to STIR. It is noteworthy that the favourite interaction remained after STIR’s role was finished.

Finally, in the last example, special attention was given to the roles of team identity and of software, both of which played an important part. According to the ideator, the special status of the Aluminium Group was an enhancing factor. The role of the software was also very important, because without it, this idea might not have come up. In table 7.2.3 below, the findings on the two examples are presented:
Table 7.2.3: Remarkable Issues in Regard to the Sensitizing Concepts for the Two Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Example 1: Heat-resistant material</th>
<th>Example 2: Aluminium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Standing             | Positive reactions about colleagues  
Idea is delegated to a new employee                                                                       | Positive reactions about colleagues  
Ideator has a high position                                                              |
| Trust                | Very positive about trust with regard to colleagues  
Questions about trust in the inventor/supplier                                                      | Very positive about trust with regard to colleagues  
Trust with Koblenz group already existed                                                  |
| Testimony            | STIR funding                                                                                       | STIR funding  
Widely recognized problem  
Step change needed                                                                            |
|                      | Idea is fused with idea from colleague  
Idea is against general opinion  
Good use of models  
Idea could be communicated very well  
Ideator is regarded as giving good presentations  
Persuading Mr Fleischer  
STIR-NL award                                                                                 |
| Favourite interaction| In general  
STIR Committee                                                                                   | Gunther  
STIR Committee                                                                 |
| Diverse              |                                                                                                     | Team identity  
Software                                                                                   |
| Current status       | ended                                                                                                | 3 projects                                                                         |

**Final remarks**

Finally, some remarks can be made about the experiences of the researchers with *Eureka!* and about the concept of ‘match’ as a way to understand successes in the examples.

*Eureka!*

In the first example, the second round of *Eureka!* was skipped and the researcher was invited to start his research right after the first review. In the second example, it was mentioned that *Eureka!* is easy to use, but that it is not a fantastic system. The researcher found it impersonal and he thought it was much easier to meet someone face to face and comment on the idea. In addition, *Eureka!* is in a system so one has to react in such a way that no one gets upset, which is difficult to assess. The researcher found it easier to phone someone up. Finally, the response time was found to be too long. The researcher mentioned a dichotomy with regard to *Eureka!* and STIR in which *Eureka!* is mentioned as easy to use but impersonal, complicating communication at the level of information as well as at the level of feedback. This contrasted strongly with his experiences with STIR, which was described as professional, warm, friendly, and responsive.

We can conclude that while researchers are not always very enthusiastic about *Eureka!*, the phases in *Eureka!* are used in a flexible way.
Differences and similarities in the two examples or how things ‘match’

In the first example, things were going fine until the material had to be tested. The researcher was very positive about the cooperation of colleagues at Corus and about getting the funds through the STIR programme. He noted that it took a long time before the material was sent by the inventor and in the end there were doubts about the inventor’s integrity. This last situation can be regarded as a mismatch.

In the second example, the process seems to go rather smoothly. There is the situation with the co-inventor, with whom the idea was fused. So, there was a good match between these people and their ideas. Also, there was a good match between the ideator and the STIR committee, which was supported by the observation that good use was made of models. In addition, Gunther, who was on the STIR committee, was very positive about the fact that the researcher kept him informed, even when he was no longer involved in the process. Finally, there is the situation about convincing the key person in the business unit, Mr Fleischer. The researcher took plenty of time for this and in the end this key person shifted from scepticism to support. So here too, the situation was a good match.

A match can be described as a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved. Observations about matches and mismatches in the different examples are listed in table 7.2.4.

Table 7.2.4: Matches and Mismatches in the Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1: Heat-resistant material</th>
<th>Match</th>
<th>Mismatch</th>
<th>Current status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal within Corus STIR</td>
<td>Doubts about trust in the inventor/supplier</td>
<td>ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 2: Aluminium</td>
<td>Colleague Gunther STIR Persuading Mr Fleischer</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 projects running</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3 Empirical references from the survey

Here, we will look at information from the survey, presented according to the sensitizing concepts.

Standing

With regard to standing, respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement, ‘My reputation within the organization influences the chances of success of my idea.’ Of the people who had submitted ideas through Eureka!, 65% thought this was the case. Of those
who had not submitted an idea through Eureka!, only 57.1% agreed. This difference would indicate that reputation or standing does matter.

Additional support for the importance of standing was received through the interviews and in the member check. It was noted that for the evolution and realization of ideas, it is very important for employees to contact someone from another department to gather information or insights with regard to their ideas. This is hardly possible to do by calling people you do not know. But when someone knows you from a past project or another activity, and they think well of you, they are more likely to be helpful. This can smooth operations—and emphasizes the importance of cross-departmental networks.

**Trust**

Five questions were posed to highlight different aspects of trust at Corus RD&T (table 7.3.1). The responses indicated a high level of trust in the system but a relatively low level of trust in the people who make the assessments. Nor is there a high level of trust in the efforts assessors make, although there is a high level of trust in the quality of the assessors’ judgments.

On the question about the enhancement process, a high number of respondents agreed with the statement ‘I think the enhancement data that are delivered by the ideator are unreliable’, which shows a very low level of trust in the ideators. The findings about trust are mentioned in table 7.3.1 below:

*Table 7.3.1: Trust at Corus RD&T*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have trust in Eureka! and the assessors as an honest system that looks for solutions to help Corus further.</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer a fixed committee to make the assessments.</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes the evaluator does not take the time to give thorough and adequate comments.</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general I experience the arguments of the assessors as fair.</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the enhancement data that are delivered by the ideator are unreliable.</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, we can say that there is a high level of trust in the system and in the quality of the assessors’ judgments. On the other hand, there are doubts about the individuals involved. The respondents doubt whether the assessors go deeply enough into the ideas, but only a small majority want a fixed committee to make the assessments. There is a low level of trust in regard to the reliability of the ideators, which concerns the reliability of the data that are asked for in the enhancement phase.
**Testimony**

On the level of cognition, we have made a distinction in the process of idea-tion between ‘mental aggregates’ (raw, unfinished ideas) and ‘configurations’ (ideas where the elements fit together in a manner that makes sense). As ideas have to be communicated to others, the expression of the idea has been defined separately as the ‘testimony’.

There were four questions regarding testimony. The first was about the motivation for assessing the idea. The majority of the respondents agreed that the assessors were sufficiently motivated. When asked about the criteria used for making a decision about their ideas, a similar number felt that the criteria the assessors used were the most logical ones, although respondents also felt that the assessors had their own opinions about the ideas they evaluated. And, almost three-fourths of the respondents felt that the assessors were too busy with their own tasks. The findings on testimony are presented in table 7.3.2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testimony</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, I experience the motivation of the assessor for his decision as sufficiently adequate.</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I experience the criteria used as the most logical ones for the decision on funding.</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that the evaluators are too busy with their own tasks.</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apart from the criteria used, assessors have their own opinions on the usefulness of ideas.</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there seems to be a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the criteria used for evaluating the ideas and the reasons for the decisions, the ideators also think that the assessors are, in fact, often too busy, which would mean that they question the decisions. In addition, the ideators think that the assessors use their own opinions to assess ideas, which would mean that the decisions are biased.

**Favourite interaction**

The ideators think creativity is very important for Corus. Almost all agreed with the statement ‘Creativity is essential for research at Corus, so I think that valuable ideas should be rewarded.’ Again, almost all agreed with the proposition ‘I respect people for their creative contribution in the form of ideas.’

These responses contradict the responses to the other two questions, however. When asked about *Eureka!*, only about half of the respondents agreed that they were stimulated to submit ideas to *Eureka!*, and just over half noticed positive reactions from colleagues or
managers about the use of *Eureka!* The findings about favourite interaction are listed in table 7.3.3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favourite interaction</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity is essential for research at Corus, so I think that valuable ideas should be rewarded.</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect people for their creative contributions in the form of ideas.</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I notice in my environment that people are stimulated to submit ideas to <em>Eureka!</em></td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I notice that using <em>Eureka!</em> evokes positive reactions from colleagues and/or managers.</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures indicate a double attitude towards favourite interaction. On the one hand, the respondents think creativity is very important and show a high level of respect for ideators. On the other hand, there is not a strong feeling that the use of *Eureka!* is encouraged or that its use evokes positive reactions. This could mean that there is a gap between expectations and reality: the answer must be that there is a low level of favourite interaction experienced, which contrasts with much higher expectations.

**Lobbying and flexibility**

In this section, we discuss the observations that convincing, lobbying, and networking seem to play a role in the ideation process at Corus. A key observation is that respondents mentioned that there was no use submitting an idea once the yearly project plans had been set. This issue was taken up as a question in the survey, and 81% of the respondents agreed with the statement that ‘After the yearly plans for the projects have been made, it is impossible to get funding for ideas.’ This makes it clear that the *Eureka!* model is not just a platform for creative processes but that it is also an instrument to divide funds, and is therefore political. Creative and political processes meet and mingle in a kind of grey area.

Acknowledging this political element allows us to look at strategic behaviour, which is discussed below, as it was observed around three areas: the selection of actors, taking initiative, and flexibility.

**Selection of actors**

With regard to the choice of evaluators or actors in general, there is a sense that the ideator’s network serves a positive function for bringing an idea forward. When the respondents were asked if the people in their network could help promote their idea, almost all agreed. So most are convinced that networking helps, indicating that personal factors play a role. Three-
fourths of the respondents agreed that ‘acquaintances would be more positive about my idea’ and that they ‘select as many acquaintances’ as they can as their evaluators. In other words, the respondents believed that acquaintances would evaluate their idea more positively, and they indicated a strong tendency to select acquaintances as evaluators.

Evaluating ideas takes time, which is in addition to regular work. When asked about this, most respondents did not feel that it was a problem. Only a little over one-third agreed with the statement ‘I do not like to annoy acquaintances with extra work doing judgments in order to gain financing’, meaning that almost two-thirds had no concerns about giving their acquaintances extra work in the hope of getting a better evaluation for their idea. The table 7.3.4 below presents the findings on the selection of actors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of actors</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People in my network can help me to promote my idea.</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect acquaintances to be more positive about my idea.</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I select as many acquaintances as I can as evaluators.</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not like to annoy acquaintances with extra work doing judgments in order to gain financing.</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Taking initiative**

In response to the statement ‘Because of the importance for Corus, the ideator only needs to wait for funding’, only just over half of the respondents agreed, which indicates that the respondents do not believe that passivity will help to bring their idea further. This is in line with the response to the next statement, ‘When I look for “funding” for my idea I have to show initiative to a “funder”; you cannot expect the system to do this for you’, to which almost three-fourths of the respondents agreed. In other words, the majority of the respondents were convinced that some initiative should be taken. The next statement, which was answered affirmatively by 82% of the respondents, confirms this: ‘In the use of *Eureka!* one has to take action to bring one’s idea further.’

Sometimes ideators go to the funder directly, thereby skipping the whole process of *Eureka!* The majority of respondents agreed with the statement ‘When I think I have a successful idea, I do not bother to take the steps in *Eureka!* but go immediately to the ones who decide about the funding.’ This could mean that the respondents regard *Eureka!* as a way of achieving funding and behave instrumentally towards it. The findings on taking initiative are listed in table 7.3.5 below:
Table 7.3.5: Taking Initiative at Corus RD&T

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because of the importance for Corus, the ideator only needs to wait for</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I look for ‘funding’ for my idea, I have to show initiative to a</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘funder’; you cannot expect the system to do this for you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the use of Eureka! one has to take action to bring one’s idea further.</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I think I have a successful idea, I do not bother to take the steps</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Eureka! but go immediately to the ones who decide about the ‘funding’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flexibility

A large majority of respondents agreed with all four of the statements about flexibility, indicating that ideators are interested in feedback, alternative possibilities, marketing and financial support, and they want to be ‘up to date’ on the desires of the business units from an early stage. In table 7.3.6 below, the findings on flexibility are presented:

Table 7.3.6: Flexibility at Corus RD&T

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on my idea by evaluators is always welcome.</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I appreciate it when judges point out alternative possibilities for my idea.</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I appreciate the support of people from the marketing and financial</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of ideas with the market-oriented desires of the business units</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would be desirable at an early stage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While all this could indicate a strong concern with the success of an idea, it contradicts the view of creativity theory in which inventors are pictured as persons who want to see their idea ‘work’, no matter what. The respondents in Corus show a far greater degree of flexibility, or maybe even ‘creative flexibility’. Ideas develop in the context of organizational politics.

7.4 Sensitizing concepts

In this section, we look at the data from our four examples and the survey, with regard to the sensitizing concepts.

Standing

In the examples, the relationships with other colleagues are described as ‘good’. A few times the word ‘enthusiasm’ was mentioned. The respondents were very positive about their colleagues. The standing of colleagues was mostly described in terms of expertise, theoretical abilities, and experience. Occasionally, other qualities were mentioned, such as having good ideas, networking, and analytic qualities. More rarely were references to qualities like creativity and self-assuredness made. Quite often there were references to how long people
had known each other. Working together on projects and travelling together for business were mentioned as ways to get to know each other. Sometimes differences between people from the Netherlands and the UK were mentioned. It is also noteworthy that in the second example, the winning of the STIR-NL award was seen as a sign of peer recognition. This shows clearly how important peer recognition and peer standing are.

A difference is that in the first example the research on the idea was done by a new employee, whereas the research in the second example was done by someone who, according to his own words, was ‘high in the tree’ himself\(^\text{29}\).

These findings were also found in the survey, where 65\% of the people who had submitted ideas through *Eureka!* agreed with the statement ‘My reputation within the organization influences the chances of success of my idea’, compared to 57.1\% of those who had not submitted an idea through *Eureka!*. This indicates that reputation or standing does matter.

Additional support for the importance of standing came out in the interviews and in the member check. It was noted that it was very important for employees to contact someone from another department to gather information or insights with regard to their ideas, which is difficult if you do not know anyone to contact. But when someone knows you from a past project or another activity, and they think well of you, they are more likely to be helpful, which can make the process smoother and emphasizes the importance of cross-departmental networks.

**Trust**

In the examples, trust was mainly related to standing and described in the same terms, although a distinction can be made in that trust has to do with competence, goodwill, and self-regard. In one example, a clear distinction was made in which it became clear that trust was regarded as trust in competence. In another example, the respondent spoke about ‘we’ and ‘us’, indicating that he regarded the process as a group process and that he had great trust in his colleagues. In the first case, at the end, we find an exception in the questions with regard to trust in the inventor/supplier. In the second case, the trust of the ideator in the people in Koblenz, especially Mr Fleischner, was a success factor.

From the survey, it was found that while there seemed to be a low level of trust in the reliability of ideators’ enhancement data, the ideators, themselves, had a high level of trust in

\[^{29}\text{The phrase ‘high in the tree’ himself is from the respondent. According to the ‘dual career ladder’ his position can be described as ‘middle management’}.\]
the system and a high level of trust in the quality and motivation of the judgments made by the assessors. Ideators felt that the criteria used to make judgments were logical, but at the same time, they felt that the assessors were too busy with their own tasks and that they used their own opinions in making judgments.

**Testimony**
The second example won the STIR-NL award. The first example did not win any prize and the project was terminated because the claims for the material could not be reproduced. In both examples, the testimonies remained quite the same through the process, except that in the first example the results did not meet the claims and the testimony had to be redefined. In the second example, the persuasion process appeared to be a real challenge. A few remarks can be made here. Firstly, it was noted that the idea was about a widely recognized problem, which needed a step change, but the idea contradicted widely held beliefs. Secondly, the idea was found to be interesting because of the clever use that was made of models. Thirdly, in this example, the ideator mentioned several times that he was good in giving presentations, which was acknowledged by the other respondents. Fourthly, in this example, all respondents agreed on the fact that the idea was clear and could be communicated well. Finally, it was striking that the ideator knew exactly whom to convince in the business unit and he invested a lot of energy in doing this—through face-to-face meetings without presentation tools.

The survey showed that ideas at Corus RD&T were communicated through a computer-based idea-management system, which has led to the notion that ideators only had to submit their ideas and then wait for the system to do the job. This was not the case, however. It appears that ideators also had to lobby actively in order to get their ideas funded. We saw this with Frank, who connected with the commercial people. They conveyed his testimony to the decision-making person as ‘This is important for us’, which the ideator, because of his position, would never have been able to do himself. This implies that testimonies must not only be good, but must also be backed up. Behaviour must be convincing and ideas must be sold through lobbying activities in which informal contacts can provide a helping hand.

**Favourite interaction**
In both the more elaborate examples, the respondents were very enthusiastic about the role of the STIR committee, which was described as ‘a warm bath’, the committee members wanted the idea to work, they helped the respondents, they were very positive and very constructive, actively thinking with the respondents and critical in a positive way. In the second case, one
of the involved respondents mentioned how he was kept informed during the process and how much he appreciated that.

The survey revealed mixed feelings with regard to favourite interaction: on the one hand, ideators found creativity very important for the organization; they believed that ideators should be rewarded, and they reacted positively to other contributors. On the other hand, they did not feel they were encouraged to submit their ideas, nor did they receive positive reactions for their contributions.

7.5 Reflection
In this reflection, the findings of this chapter will be briefly reviewed according to the sensitizing concepts, to *Eureka!* as a social process, and to the concept of ‘match’.

**The sensitizing concepts**
We can make a number of observations in regard to the sensitizing concepts of standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction.

The standing of the ideator is important. In the examples, relationships among colleagues were described as ‘good’. The respondents were very positive about their colleagues and the standing of colleagues was described mostly in terms of expertise, theoretical abilities, and experience. Occasionally, other qualities, such as having good ideas, networking, and analytic qualities, were mentioned, as well as creativity and self-assuredness. It is noteworthy that in the second example, the winning of the STIR-NL award was seen as a sign of peer recognition. This shows clearly how important peer standing is. The more successful case was achieved by someone high in the hierarchy. From the survey, we also found that reputation or standing influenced the chances of an idea’s success and that it was easier to find someone from another department to get information or insights from if that person regarded the ideator in a positive light.

There were high levels of trust in the system and in the quality of the assessments, as well as high levels of satisfaction with regard to the quality of the criteria used to make decisions and the motivation for the decisions, while, at the same time, there was a low level of trust in the reliability of ideators’ data enhancement. Quite often references were made to how long people had known each other and how they had become acquainted: working together on projects and travelling together on business were mentioned. It appears that trust is built slowly and is a very important criterion for success. For example, in the second case, the ideator could not have won over Mr Fleischer from the business unit if they had not
already been acquainted and if Mr Fleischer had not trusted him. This turned out to be the key success factor in this process of idea evolution.

With regard to the testimonies, it is remarkable that in both examples, the one that won the prize and the one that failed, the respondents argued that their testimony had remained quite the same. The persuasion process in the second example included a clever use of models and an ideator who was known to be good at giving presentations. It is also noteworthy that the ideator knew exactly whom to convince in the business unit and that he invested a great deal of energy in this persuasion process. From the small examples, there was Ian, who thought that the computer system would do the work for him, which was obviously not the case, and Frank, who showed us that testimonies must not only be good, but must also be backed up by evidence. Ideas must be sold through lobbying activities in which informal contacts can provide a helping hand. With regard to Eureka!, survey respondents had doubts about the efforts taken by assessors to go deeply enough into the ideas. Ideators thought that the assessors used their own opinions in assessing ideas, which would suggest that funding decisions were biased.

With regard to favourite interaction, we saw that in both the larger examples, the respondents are very enthusiastic about the role of the STIR committee, which was described as ‘a warm bath’. Respondents mentioned how the committee members wanted the idea to work and how helpful they were. They were described as very positive, very constructive, actively thinking with the respondents, and critical in a positive way.

The survey revealed mixed feelings with regard to favourite interaction. On the one hand, ideators found creativity very important for the organization, but they felt that they were neither encouraged to submit their ideas nor given positive reactions for their contributions. There seems to have been a gap between what was expected and what was experienced in regard to favourite interaction.

**Eureka! as a social process**

We have also noted that the *Eureka!* model is not just a platform for creative processes, but as an instrument to allocate funds, it is also both a social process and a political platform. Creativity in Corus RD&T is more than just a matter of individual preferences and cognitive processes—it is creative processes in a social context, where ideas come up, are negotiated, and are transformed within the context of the organization. Strategic behaviour was observed around actor selection, taking initiative, and (creative) flexibility, which contradicts the more straightforward, goal-oriented creativity found in the literature.
There are six elements that should be taken into account as a result of this research. First, creativity at Corus RD&T is not just the result of one genius or individual, although the standing of the individual plays a role in the negotiation process. Creativity is specific in the sense that it takes place within a specific context, which consists of specific domains of knowledge, social processes, and elements of the organizational infrastructure (as, for example, the electronically based *Eureka!* model). Creativity, *per se*, is an evaluative notion that has little relevance in the decision-making process itself, but comes afterwards when decisions have long been taken and can be safely pointed out to have been good or bad.

The second point is that this organizational context also consists of social processes. The transformation of individual ideas into collective practices is a socio-cognitive process: ideas are transformed in the context of the organization. The selection of evaluators, the standing or reputation of the ideator, the expected and experienced levels of trust all play a part in this negotiating process. With regard to knowledge, the crossing of ‘knowledge boundaries’ or cognitive limits is important. It was mentioned several times that knowledge from the business units or from production, marketing, or finance was highly desired.

Thirdly, it must be noted that social processes in organizations become political very easily, especially when money is at stake. We have concluded that, as an instrument to divide funds, the *Eureka!* model is also, therefore, a political platform. This means that actors use political strategies, which is exactly what was observed in the selection of evaluators, networking, convincing, and exposing a flexible attitude. It can be said that the respondents have to sell their ideas to their colleagues, peers, and managers.

Fourthly, it is hard to distinguish between the social and the political dimensions because they shift rapidly, but it is also difficult to distinguish between the socio-political and the creative dimensions because they overlap regularly. Creative processes unfold within the realm of socio-political forces. So, maybe, it is better to see these processes as a continuum.

Fifthly, it is interesting to note that there are shifts in the actors involved in these creative processes. Ideas normally materialize in the head of an individual and because many elements are usually still missing, the idea is kept to oneself or shared only within a circle of intimates. When ideas mature or move from the phase of ‘mental aggregate’ to ‘configuration’, opportunities arise that allow the ideas to be expressed on a professional level and new people get involved in the ideation process. At the end of this process, when requirements have been met, there is a decision-making phase during which the ideator has to wait for funding. As we have seen from the examples, simply waiting is not a good strategy; during the ‘waiting period’, other strategies can be applied.
Finally, we can see that there are three separate phases in this continuum. There is an individual creative process, where just intimates are involved. Then there is a ‘selling’ phase in which professionals (such as peers, colleagues, and evaluators) are involved. And then there is the ‘funding’ phase in which managers decide about funding. There is no clear distinction between the creative phase and the political phase, but there is an intermediate phase in which elements of both processes intermingle and influence each other. We can call this the ‘crea-political’ process.  

It was noted in this chapter that some researchers were not very positive about *Eureka!* At the time of this research some actions were taken to develop a newer version, ‘*Eureka 2010*’. Gutter, who was working on this, argued that some elements of *Eureka!* needed to be renewed. These elements were about the design of *Eureka!*, which could be made more user-friendly and interactive, and the place of *Eureka!*, the ease with which it could be found by employees. *Eureka!* itself was simplified by keeping only one screening phase, leaving the second screening out, and the process was streamlined by limiting the time for people to react to ideas to six weeks. If the selected person had not responded within that time, then he lost that opportunity and another solution would be chosen. A last point of improvement was in the combination of *Eureka!* with other idea-management systems that are operational at Corus in other departments.

**The concept of ‘match’**

The concept of ‘match’, which implies harmony between the testimony and the actors involved in the particular phase that the idea is in, appears to be promising with regard to analyzing the processes of idea evolution. We have seen that the difference in the success of the two examples could be described in terms of ‘matching’ in the different phases of the process of idea evolution.

In the second example, which is the successful one, there are several moments that could be described as ‘matches’. At first, there was the fusion of the idea with the co-inventor. The problem was widely recognized and the ideas of the two researchers matched very well and fused. Then there was a good match between the ideator and the STIR committee contact person, which was supported by the observation that good use was made of models. Finally, there was the situation about convincing the key person in the business unit. Thanks to the

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30 This concept was published in Bakker, Boersma, and Oreel (2006).
31 This last idea was an issue at the time of the research, but has not been incorporated in the *Eureka 2010* version.
ideator’s persuasive powers and the trust that already existed between them, he was able to win this person over, which was also a good match. What we see here is a process of idea evolution that, in terms of the people involved, ranged from the intimate circle to the professional circle. It seems that an idea can only be successful when it progresses through these phases in such a way that a match is made each time. Finally, the idea has been turned into projects and here, too, matches have had to be made in order to successfully come up with innovative products.

7.6 Summary
In this chapter, we looked at Corus for illustrating ideational processes in an organization that has an idea-management system. We gave two small examples to illustrate the role of the ideator. Then we gave two more elaborate examples to illustrate the way the idea-management system is related to the larger organizational context, namely the STIR programme and the relation to the business units.

We noted the importance of the sensitizing concepts on various levels and observed the transition of the ideas from the personal parts of the network, through the STIR programme to the business units. We have labelled this transition as a ‘crea-political process’ because creative processes and political processes overlap, and we noted that each phase had to be successful—that they had to ‘match’.

We have concluded that it seems to be very practical to have a system of idea management because it provides routes for ideas and a means to improve testimonies and, finally, that it is important how the idea-management system is integrated into the organizational culture.
CHAPTER 8

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND COMPARISON

In this chapter, we compare, analyze, and interpret the empirical cases. Although this research was descriptive rather than explanatory, we will look at the question of why the strategies of idea management we have seen in the case studies are so different, and the importance or potential of idea management. In the first section, an analysis of the sensitizing concepts will be presented. In the second section, we look at the volume of ideas, in the third section we will look at the interrelationship of the three cases and in the fourth, the empirical references are linked to the theory.

8.1 Analysis of the sensitizing concepts

There are many different ways to look at the process of analyzing data. According to Snow and Anderson (1991), there are five characteristic elements in the analytic process of case studies: holism, multiple perspectives, triangulation, capturing social processes, and open-endedness. With regard to the first, they state the following (Snow and Anderson 1991: 152): ‘The quintessential characteristic of case studies is that they strive toward a relatively holistic understanding of cultural systems of action’. They argue that the level of analysis is some system of action, rather than a cross-section of individuals. This is what I have attempted to examine in this research. My units of analysis are the different ‘systems of action’—idea management at three different organizational loci. The focus in this research has been to understand the focal concerns in terms of their embeddedness within the context of the organization rather than abstracting them from their context.

With regard to multiple perspectives, it can be said that since description alone cannot provide an overview of contextualized activities, efforts are needed to articulate the linkages between the phenomenon of idea management and the social world it constitutes, and in which it is embedded. So, the goal of this research was explorative and descriptive, and in order to achieve a contextualized description, multiple sources and perspectives were needed and collected.

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32 Parts of this chapter were presented by the author in a public lecture for the Dutch-Flemish Study Days that were held at the University of Applied Sciences InHolland, in Diemen, October 2008, and published by the author in 2009 as ‘Ideeenmanagement voor de vrije tijd sector’ in Vrijetijdstudies, Vol. 27(1): 63–65.
The issue of triangulation has already been mentioned in the chapter on methodology. It was used in all three cases, but it took different forms with respect to the different organizational settings and demands.

With regard to capturing social processes, we can say that because case studies are conducted over a period of time, they can grasp change. We saw this in the Pentascope case where different management styles reflected a moment of cultural transition.

Finally, Snow and Anderson (1991: 152) describe their fifth characteristic, open-endedness, whereby case studies have an ‘emergent quality that facilitates the discovery of both unanticipated findings and data sources’.

This was true in all three of my case studies. In Pentascope, the serendipitous findings on the theoretical level about the relative explanatory power of the theories meant that a shift had to take place, and the concept of frontstage creativity was introduced. At Ter Weel, this was true as well in the data, but at the level of theory, there was the serendipitous finding of the role of trust. At Corus, which may best be seen as an attempt ‘to map the terrain’ of idea management, what came out was totally new: the data could not be explained by the existing theories, so a new model was developed—the crea-political process model and the concept of ‘match’ were proposed.

In the sections below, we will look at the cases in their most essential form according to the sensitizing concepts of standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction.

Standing
Standing seems to be important at all three organizations. At Pentascope, standing is very important and is mentioned as a professional characteristic (in terms of experience), as personality type (whether the person ‘fits’ the idea), and in terms of managerial ‘credit’ (which is about the manager’s perception of the ideator in terms of prior experience and the feeling that ideators can realize their ideas). While standing appears to influence the ideation process at Pentascope, it also seems to be part of a larger process in which ideators are screened in a psychological sense with questions like: What does this idea mean for you? Why would you be the right person to do it?

At Ter Weel, we have seen that the managers and team leaders all have a good impression of the ideators, so we can say that the standing of the ideators is perceived as good. It was not possible to determine whether standing influenced the decision-making process, but we can say that bringing in ideas has a positive effect on one’s standing at Ter Weel.
Although at Corus there is a computer-based idea-management system at work, reputation or standing still matters in the process of ideation. We have seen that the employees at Corus feel that their reputation can influence the success of an idea. The standing of colleagues is mostly described in terms of expertise, theoretical abilities, and experience; occasionally other qualities are mentioned, such as having good ideas, having a good network, analytic abilities, creativity, and self-assuredness. Working together on projects and travelling together on business trips are mentioned as a way to get to know each other. It is noteworthy that in the second example, the winning of the STIR-NL award was seen as a sign of peer recognition. This shows how important peer standing is. Also, one’s position in the hierarchy might play a role. It might not be a coincidence that the successful idea was from someone high in the hierarchy, whereas the failed example was submitted by a new employee. From the survey, it was found that respondents agreed that reputation influences the chances of an idea’s success. It was also found that people were more helpful to those about whom they had a good impression—something that is especially important when people need help or information from other departments.

**Trust**

Trust also appears to be important in all three organizations, but the levels of trust differ (varying by team or department), as do the ways in which trust is verbalized.

In the Pentascope case, we observed that there is trust in the standing of the ideator and his or her testimony. The way an idea is brought forward to the manager and communicated to other actors is very important. At Pentascope, we have seen that ‘trust’ is trust in competence, which is communicated as someone being ‘very professional’ or experienced: consultants refer to each other in terms of education and experience. There is also trust as a ‘feeling’ in which respondents claim to have trust in a person because they have a ‘good feeling’ about this person or his or her plan. This seems to be related to a perception of the outcome of the plan, and enthusiasm seems to work as a signal for trust. The concern is more or less concentrated on the question ‘Are you the right person for this idea?’

In the Ter Weel case, we observed a rather strange relationship between trust in competence and trust in goodwill. Managers gave high scores on trust in goodwill and low on trust in competence. The team leaders who received the highest number of ideas scored their employees high on trust in competence and low on trust in goodwill. Trust in competence was correlated with the importance of the ideas, the degree of how convincingly the ideas were expressed, the documentation of ideas, and rewarding the ideators. In contrast, the
Management Team scored their employees much lower on ‘trust in competence’ and much higher on ‘trust in goodwill’ than did their middle managers. High ‘trust in competence’ was correlated with a high volume of ideation, with the opposite found in regard to ‘trust in goodwill’, which was correlated with low volumes of ideation. Furthermore, there seemed to be no relationship between ‘trust in self-reference’ and the volume of ideation. The team leaders in Goes receive more ideas, and they find ideas more important, they have higher trust in the employee’s competence, they find that ideas are expressed in a more convincing way, they document ideas more often, and they reward ideators more often. This appeared to be not just a verbal expression of ‘importance’, but a feeling that was unconsciously put into action.

In the examples of the Corus case, trust is mainly related to standing and described in the same features. It became clear that trust was mainly regarded as trust in competence. Trust in colleagues is described as good. That trust is an important factor can be seen in the first example where question marks with regard to trust in the inventor/supplier is correlated with the failure of the idea-evolution process. With its idea-management system, the procedures for submitting and selecting ideas at Corus are clear. With regard to trust, there is a high level of trust in the system and in the quality of the idea evaluations, but, although the ideator has some influence on the persons who will evaluate the idea, there are doubts about whether the assessors go deeply enough into the ideas. There is also a low level of trust with regard to the reliability of the ideators in the enhancement phase.

Testimony
In all three cases, it became very clear that the expression of ideas is not a one-time event, but rather forms a set of events, implying that the time dimension is important. It is clear that the expression of ideas, or testimonial activities, is embedded in social relationships and, hence, in group processes. We can conclude that interactions play an important role in the ideation process. When the expression of ideas lands within existing social relationships, such aspects as standing and trust become all the more relevant because they influence how receivers evaluate the ideas that are presented to them.

The concept of testimony appears to be important for all three cases, but in different ways. At Pentascope, we saw that ideators went to their managers directly instead of incubating ideas more intensely with their colleagues, something the managers themselves found strange. It was noted that a good testimony is very important for the success of an idea, and some people put much more effort into their testimony than others. If the testimony is not good, there are questions about the ideator’s motivation. We also saw that ‘a testimony’ is not
just a single-occasion event, but rather, a long-term process, for which the term ‘testimonial activities’ might be used. It was clear that testimonies are embedded in social relationships and group processes. There are no fixed routes for idea evolution at Pentascope; therefore, when ideas are being developed, the routes have to be developed at the same time. Finally, we found two very different types of support criteria: on the one hand, there are criteria like enthusiasm and ‘Are you the right person to do this?’, but on the other hand, ideas need to fit within the strategy or the annual plan.

At Ter Weel, we observed widespread inhibition of ideas and found several factors that accounted for this, mainly related to the knowledgeability of the actors. Team leaders use learning teams and putting ideas on paper as thresholds for receiving ideas. From the perspective of the team leaders, demands for team support and administration may sound logical; however, from the perspective of the employees, who do not have a high level of education, it serves as a barrier. From the perspective of Management, it should not come as a surprise that they regard ideas related to the organization’s strategy as more important than employees’ ideas. Therefore, it seems that members of the Management Team appear to be more interested in ideas from the other members of the Management Team than in ideas coming from below. In addition, they sometimes ‘put on the brakes’ when they fear employees might end up with too much work, so they actively try to kill ideas. Finally, it seems that managers and team leaders regard ideas not as something they get from employees, but as demands—as an investment they have to do, for which they (the managers and team leaders) want a return.

At Corus, testimony plays an important role. It might be more than a coincidence that the case with the highest level of success was the one where it was repeatedly mentioned that the ideator was good at giving presentations. In the second example of the Corus case, the persuasion process looked like a real challenge. With regard to testimony, it can be said that the idea was found to be interesting because a clever use was made of models. It is also noteworthy that the ideator knew exactly whom to convince in the business unit, and he invested a great deal of energy in doing this. At Corus, it was observed that ideas go through different phases and it seemed that each phase had to go well before the idea could move into the next phase. This ‘going well’ seems to involve a kind of harmony or agreement between the testimony and the actors involved. The term ‘match’ was proposed as a way to deal with this. In addition to submitting ideas to the electronically based idea-management system, there also has to be active lobbying for support, something the researchers felt was the most important factor for success. This can be seen as part of a larger process of networking and
exercising influence on the outcome of the process, which I have called the ‘crea-political process’.

At Corus RD&T, testimonies must not only be good, but must also be backed up. Ideas must be sold through lobbying, where informal contacts can provide a helping hand. At Pentascope and Ter Weel, there is no idea-management-system—ideas are usually expressed verbally or, sometimes, in writing; ideas at Corus are submitted through the idea-management system Eureka!. The ideas are evaluated and, when necessary, the ideators are asked to answer questions or to provide more information. After approval at this stage, there is then a wait for the idea to be adopted. Survey respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the criteria used for evaluating the ideas and the reasons for the decisions; however, they also thought that the assessors were often too busy to do a proper evaluation and that the assessors used their own opinions in evaluating ideas, which would mean that decisions are biased.

**Favourite interaction**

Favourite interaction played a role in each case but in different ways. For Pentascope, with its ‘culture of passion’, we came up with the term ‘enthusiasm loop’ because encouragement and following ‘your passion’ do not always lead to results. In Ter Weel, we observed that favourite interaction does play a role, which seems to be connected with the concept of trust. A mixed attitude was found in Corus, where there seemed to be a difference between people’s expectations and the perceived importance of creativity.

Enthusiasm appears to be an integral part of Pentascope. While this might contribute to a stimulating atmosphere, it also leads to a situation in which feedback becomes problematic. As one respondent said, ‘We very much have a culture of “all ideas are good”’. The other side of this ‘culture of passion’ is the open-endedness and lack of feedback, responsibility, structure, and control that the respondents mentioned. All of this contributed to a kind of ‘enthusiasm loop’ where someone gets excited about an idea, gets positive reactions, goes to his or her manager, but then is told ‘you have to do something’ with it—without being given the means to do it. The lack of critical feedback and not being given the time to work on the idea led to feelings of ‘time stress’. At Pentascope, we also noted the consultant who explicitly mentioned that he saw critical questions as encouragement. This points out a weakness in the theory about favourite interaction that ‘warm’ or ‘encouraging’ behaviour is a two-way process: it must be experienced as such. We introduced the term ‘frontstage creativity’ for Pentascope because the combination of the kinds of ideas that were discussed
(which could be found in many organizations at the time of the research), together with the criteria for support, led to the notion that creativity is used as a way to profile the organization rather than being an inherent part of its culture.

We could not observe favourite interaction directly at Ter Weel, but we have seen that there was a relationship between the volume of ideas and a higher perception of the importance of the ideas, a higher level of trust in the competence of the ideators, a higher level of the perceived persuasiveness of testimony, greater documentation of ideas, and a higher level of rewarding of ideators—but, a lower level of trust in goodwill. The group with the lowest volume of ideas had exactly the opposite scores, and the group that fell in the middle on volume also scored in the middle on these other issues. Therefore, we have concluded that these observations show favourite interaction, not so much in words, but in deeds.

At Corus, favourite interaction was found without exception with regard to the STIR committee members. This phase was described in positive terms as ‘a warm bath’. The committee members were described as wanting the idea to work, helping the respondents, and furthermore, being very positive and constructive, actively thinking with the respondents and critical in a positive way.

In the second example, one of the involved respondents mentioned how he was kept informed during the process and how much he appreciated that. From the survey, favourite interaction did not seem to play a large role although there seems to be a gap between the perceived importance of creativity and the way ideators are encouraged to submit ideas to Eureka!. While ideators are respected, they do not experience any positive response when they submit ideas to Eureka!. This mixed attitude was evident in the observation that only a small number of the respondents felt encouraged to submit ideas to Eureka! or noticed any positive reactions from colleagues or managers when they did.

Favourite interaction does not seem to be merely a black box. In the example of Spain at Pentascope and the case of aluminium at Corus, it was observed that by keeping in contact, even when there seemed to be no need, people felt more connected and tended to respond in a more positive way to the ideator. In the table below the evaluation of the cases according to the sensitizing concepts are presented:
Table 8.1.1: Evaluation of the Cases According to the Sensitizing Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pentascope</th>
<th>Ter Weel</th>
<th>Corus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standing</strong></td>
<td>Fit between problem and person is very important</td>
<td>Management and team leaders have a good impression of the ideators</td>
<td>Standing influences the success of the idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>Trust in competence, in testimony and as ‘a good feeling’</td>
<td>Trust in competence versus trust in goodwill</td>
<td>Very important Trust in competence, trust in the procedures of Eureka!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Testimony</strong></td>
<td>Good testimony is very important Going directly to the manager No fixed routes Fit with strategy Learning teams Organizational strategy Put on the brakes Ideas are seen as questions or as demands</td>
<td>Good testimony is very important Lobbying strategies Crea-political process ‘Match’ Eureka! has clear procedure, selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favourite interaction</strong></td>
<td>‘Enthusiasm loop’ ‘Time stress’ Frontstage creativity Favourite interaction can be influenced by close contact Relationship between favourite interaction and volume of ideas</td>
<td>STIR committee as ‘a warm bath’ Mixed attitude in Eureka! Favourite interaction can be influenced by maintaining close contact</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8.2 The volume of ideas

We were able to estimate the volume of ideas in Ter Weel because all the team leaders and members of the Management Team were interviewed. The concept of ‘idea’ was operationalized as ‘ideas where you have the feeling you can do something different in your work’. It must be emphasized that, based on this definition, the number of ideas reported is subjective.

The number of ideas at Ter Weel was estimated at 1561 ideas per year, which is quite a volume and came as a surprise to the employees, team leaders, and members of the Management Team. There were large differences in the number of ideas per manager, ranging from zero to 520 per manager per year, with an average of 104.

Despite the lack of an idea-management system at Ter Weel and no sign of a creative climate, this number of ideas emerged spontaneously as a natural process in which employees wanted to contribute to the organization. Hence, the potential for idea management is enormous. With an idea-management system, ideas could be assessed, evaluated, and enriched. Later, the volume of ideas could be enhanced still further by encouraging creativity and the creative climate, which would increase the rate of innovation in the organization. All
the team leaders and members of the Management Team were convinced that ideas are important, which emphasizes the importance of idea management.

At Corus, about 250 ideas were submitted to *Eureka!* in 2004, and about 20% were funded. Since most of Corus’ products are mass-produced, a single idea can lead to enormous benefits or savings. In addition, some of the ideas submitted in 2004 resulted in patentable outcomes. In 2009, it was mentioned that in *Eureka!* there is a flow of about 150 to 225 ideas per year. From these ideas, around 35 to 50 are passed through to the STIR programme, with around three to five patents resulting yearly. Other ideas result in projects or are absorbed in knowledge programmes. The bottom line at Corus is that ideas are extremely important.

We have not assessed the volume of ideas at Pentascope because the research was focused on internal organization and not on the work that consultants do with their clients. And we cannot compare the volumes of ideas from Ter Weel and Corus because they are expressed differently and under very different circumstances. With the idea-management system at Corus, it is obvious that the situation there is at quite a different stage of development than the situation at Ter Weel, where ideas are expressed verbally at staff meetings.

Personally, I would like to emphasize that working with ideas in the way Corus does is highly preferable, because ideas are formulated, archived, and enriched through a stimulation fund.

### 8.3 The interrelationship of the three cases

Having three case studies enables us to look at three different cases from their respective points of view. The case of Pentascope was selected in order to focus on the horizontal aspects of the organization, Ter Weel was selected because it is a hierarchical organization, and Corus was selected because it is an organization that has an operational form of idea management. When we look at Pentascope, we can conclude that there is a culture of enthusiasm and that it leads to a form of frontstage creativity: an enthusiasm about creativity in words that is not always backed up by deeds. We saw that in this horizontal environment people quickly went to their bosses when they had ideas. Employees were then stimulated to act on their ideas, but they were not given the means. They had to struggle to find their way with their ideas with regard to routes for support and implementation, time management, and means. At Ter Weel, management was much less supportive. We observed that management actively tried to discourage employees from working on their ideas. In addition, the different management levels operated in different ways, with the Management Team occupied mainly
with ideas that come from other members of the Management Team. A way around this
dilemma is found in the case of Corus RD&T where an idea-management system is
operational. We observed that this system was very helpful in the process of idea evolution. It
provided routes for the creative process and clarified the criteria being used. Because it was
part of a larger innovation fund, it also provided means, giving ideators at least a chance to
improve their testimony. We saw that in this system, people used it in a strategic way and that
the allocation process had become a political process in itself. At the same time, the budgets
for the system were limited, so the real difficulties started when the employees tried to sell
their idea to the business units.

As we’ve seen with Ter Weel, where there were about 1500 ideas per year, even if
organizations do not encourage creativity, employees still have a lot of ideas. Management at
Ter Weel was not evaluated on its innovative performance and tended to regard employees’
ideas as demands. It is tempting to conclude that this is influenced by an organization’s
market position. Both Pentascope and Corus are commercial organizations that have to
survive in competitive environments. Hence, their cry for creativity is understandable, as
opposed to Ter Weel, which receives its money from the government and has to obey
government rules and procedures. When creativity is not made part of these rules or
procedures, it will not be strived for. And when creativity is regarded as a risk (for example,
that people might have too much work), it is discouraged.

It can be said that Pentascope and Corus have both tried their best to enhance
creativity in the organization. Pentascope, as a national, people-oriented organization, has put
its emphasis on conditional factors, such as a horizontal structure and an enthusiastic
atmosphere. Corus, as a large multinational in the field of technology, has put its emphasis on
idea management. It must be added that this idea-management system is supported by an
innovation fund, so it is an organizational tool that has an allocated budget.

From the perspective of size and area of work, this distinction is logical. An idea-
management system might be easier to use for technological ideas. In addition, it costs money
to develop or purchase, which makes more sense for a larger company—looking at economies
of scale. One good idea can lead to a lot of profit when it can be applied to a large production
process. So for Corus, the size of the company (with over 900 employees in Corus RD&T),
with locations in different countries, the economies of scale, and the technological character
of the ideas, make it understandable that a form of idea management was chosen as a way to
enhance creative processes. In the context of Pentascope, where management consultants
deliver specialist services and have to meet their targets, ideas can more easily be seen as
giving away one’s competitive advantage. So, because of size, investment, and competitive advantage, it seems logical that Pentascope, as a people-oriented organization, would follow conditional routes in enhancing creativity, which is also in line with their organizational culture. We have seen that creativity can be inhibited when it is not made part of the evaluation process (Ter Weel). When creativity is enhanced in the organization through conditional factors, the unintended consequence is frontstage creativity, where this behaviour is received enthusiastically but without providing employees the necessary means to pursue their ideas (Pentascope). When creativity is enhanced through budgets on the basis of ideas, the unintended consequence is strategic and political behaviour, where employees strive for funding (Corus). This particular consequence is easier to deal with, because the idea-management system serves as a filter and because budgets are not very big and are sometimes allocated in segments, so the next portion is awarded only after positive results have been shown.

These same factors may help us understand the differences in the way the sensitizing concepts were manifested. It is logical that at Pentascope, as a people-oriented organization, the concept of standing would come forward with people-oriented issues, such as: What does idea mean for you? Why are you the right person for this idea? At Ter Weel, where creativity was not regarded as a concept that mattered, creativity was interpreted as something else, namely, as a form of commitment. At Corus, where technology plays a crucial role, the emphasis in standing was on ‘being good at what you do’.

This can also be seen with regard to the concept of trust. At Pentascope, the concept of trust was related to trust in persons, which is in line with Pentascope as a people-oriented organization. At Ter Weel, the concept of trust was an important factor because other, more basic processes of creativity were suppressed. At Corus, the concept of trust was related not only to individuals, but also to procedures and systems, which is in line with Corus as a professional, technology based bureaucracy.

With regard to differences in the concept of testimony, it was clear that at Pentascope there was no such a thing as idea management, so ideators had to improvise to find routes and to organize means. Here, the unintended consequence of frontstage creativity was manifested because testimonies were very important and employees were encouraged, but there was no back-up. At Corus, the testimony was also very important, but there was an operational idea-management system, backed up with a fund for innovation. The unintended consequence here was that lobbying became an important activity.
Favourite interaction was observed in all the organizations, but in different forms. At Pentascope, favourite interaction played an important role; it came into existence by keeping people informed and taking initiative. At Corus, favourite interaction also played an important role and was also related to taking initiative and keeping people informed. At Ter Weel, favourite interaction was observed on an informal level, which was in line with the status of creativity in the organization. We can therefore conclude that to a large degree, the organizational context determines the choices that are made about creative processes, such as emphasis on creative climate or idea management. It also determines to a large degree in what ways standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction are manifested.

8.4 Theoretical perspective
In this study, we have looked at ideas in their social form. In other words, creative processes are understood as social behaviour involving the exchange of ideas, and in order to become successful, ideas have to be expressed, understood, and accepted. We noted earlier that the context in which the creative process occurs has received less attention than it deserves, which led us to focus on three areas: the creative climate, processes of interaction and acceptance, and the ways or procedures through which ideas are received or accepted. In this section, by focusing on these three areas, then on the application of the theory of structuration, and finally on the current discussions surrounding creativity, we will see how the results of this study match our theoretical approach.

Area 1: creative climate
In this research, ‘creative climate’ was used to provide a context in which interactions can be understood. According to Arieti (1976), Simonton (1988), Amabile (1988), and Isaksen and Lauer (2002), a creative climate can be understood as a complex set of factors that enhance creative processes. The most elaborate models are Amabile’s KEYS and the SOQ model of Isaksen and Lauer, both of which contain enhancing and constraining factors.

Here, I have used creative climate as a context variable in a more limited sense than in the KEYS and SOQ models. There are three reasons for this: the broader application of the models, the cost, and relevant criticism. With regard to the cost, do not forget that there is a vast commercial market around creativity and the management of creativity (Sternberg 2006). It is also true that tests for measuring or studying creative climate cost money. In addition, there is some criticism of these tests, which is relevant to this study, especially in regard to the role of conflict (Kurtzberg and Amabile 2001), the interrelationships between environment
and personal traits (Preiser 2006), the role of gender and status (Kwaśniewska and Nečka 2004), the role of universal applicability (Hong, Hwan and Lin 2003), and the discount/revenge syndrome (Prince 2003).

In this research, I focused on the interactions between participants. It is through these interactions that various aspects of the creative climate come into existence. Parts of both models of creative climate have been used to understand the interactions and their context.

In the first case, Pentascope, we found a very positive attitude in the organization, which was labelled a ‘culture of enthusiasm’. People reacted to each other in a very stimulating way. The question is whether this leads to results, which was a question that was raised by many employees. For this reason, I have used the term ‘frontstage creativity’, as described by Veenswijk (2005).

At Ter Weel, in general, it can be said that there was no creative climate, considering that one of the managers claimed that he was proud to kill at least 90% of the ideas. We looked at the creative climate in different locations for this organization. One location was described as ‘rural with mostly part-time, female employees’ (a description that was used by the Management Team to indicate that these people had interests other than work: they wanted to get married and/or take care of their household).

There was already an idea-management system in place at Corus and this was interpreted as a signal that at Corus creativity was regarded as an important issue. The descriptions by the ideators about the STIR committee as ‘a warm bath’ particularly indicate that at some places in the organization there existed a stimulating creative climate.

I believe we can conclude that people sometimes behave differently than they say or that they use enhancing prescriptions in a strategic way (Pentascope), that the way Management members are evaluated on creativity and the percentages of part-time workers in an organization should be taken into account (Ter Weel), and that organizational efforts in terms of stimulating arrangements and supportive tools can help in establishing a creative climate (Corus).

**Area 2: processes of interaction and acceptance**

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988) model lets us break out of the individual perspective on creative processes to put them into a social context, which leads us to processes of acceptance. Following Csikszentmihalyi, we can identify three important aspects of creative processes: the role of criteria for accepting ideas, the role of gatekeepers, and the relationship between the field and the organization.
At Pentascope, criteria for accepting ideas, were unspecified, but in practice, they turned out to be business-oriented, which was surprising because it was not in line with the creative image of the organization projects. In the case of Ter Weel, the criteria for accepting ideas were unspecified. In the case of Corus, these criteria were more explicit. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), fuzzy selection criteria will make it difficult to establish the creativity of a new idea. It must be added that creativity itself was not a criterion in any of the three cases; creativity itself was not something that was strived for.

Csikszentmihalyi also emphasizes the role of gatekeepers. In his opinion, gatekeepers that are not highly respected will lead to situations in which creativity is difficult to assess. In the case of Pentascope, the gatekeepers were the managers, but colleagues who had expertise in the field could also play a role as gatekeepers. Legitimating, therefore, depended on one’s education or work experience. In the case of Ter Weel, the role of gatekeeping was limited to the team leaders and the Management Team. The team leaders also used the learning teams as a gatekeeping device. At Corus, ideators could choose the people who would assess the idea, which left more room to choose people who were experts in certain fields and to avoid the idea that personal feelings influenced the assessment.

Csikszentmihalyi’s model also considers the relationship between the organization and its environment. He uses the term ‘field’, which is part of the wider social system. It is clear that organizations form part of a ‘field’, although in some theories, it seems that the focus is on ideas that emerge in the organization itself. In the case of Pentascope, we saw that most ideas that people came up with also existed in other organizations; they were part of wider trends. The same can be said about ideas in the case of Ter Weel. At Corus, this was also the case, although some ideas were new and came up in the organization itself. In fact, some ideas led to patents. For many organizations, this would not be the case, and it is therefore surprising that theories on creative processes seem to imply that most new ideas spring up in the organization. It would seem more logical to differentiate between theories about coming up with new ideas in the organization and theories where ideas are part of larger trends in the ‘field’ or in society.

We can conclude, then, that at first, creativity, per se, is never strived for. It is looked for in other ways, such as solutions, new ideas, or project proposals, which can then be labelled as ‘creative’. It is also clear from the cases that the role of criteria and gatekeepers is very important to assessing creative processes. Finally, Csikszentmihalyi’s model needs to be reformulated because cultural processes should be understood first as social processes. A
combination of Csikszentmihalyi’s model and the theory of structuration would be an interesting way to do this.

**Area 3: idea management**

We have looked at three aspects of idea management: the tension between management and creativity, idea management, and managing creativity as a paradox.

*The tension between management and creativity*

We have noted three things here: first, that creativity might disrupt existing equilibria; second, that it is rebellious, chaotic, a challenge to authority, and that it opposes rationality, order, and hierarchies; and third, that it is therefore often restricted, censored, or constrained.

The creative act can be regarded as interfering with the conventional way of doing things—it may disrupt existing equilibria. However, this was not found in the three case studies. The new ideas at Pentascope were no different from those found in many other organizations at that time. At Ter Weel, where around 90% of the ideas were killed, the reason was not that ideas would disrupt the equilibrium, but that following up on them would take too much time, which was not available, and that people could burn out (although this is another way of disrupting the equilibrium—time bookkeeping). The question may be raised to what extent these arguments are used as an excuse to avoid disrupting existing equilibria. The ideas would certainly shake up the existing top-down structure of time management, but the ideas themselves are nowhere outside the range of the professional goals of the organization. Nor did we find any notions of disrupting equilibria at Corus, perhaps because the idea-management system works as a means to get funds. In addition, in a matrix form of organization, there is a continuous process of decision making about turning ideas into projects.

The second point was that the creative act is often rebellious, chaotic, a challenge to authority, and that it opposes rationality, order, and hierarchies. At Pentascope, this was not observed. What we did observe, however, was that when people had ideas, they went straight to their managers. This could be related to the chaotic aspect of creativity, it could be that people are claiming their territory and their right to this territory. But none of the other aspects—rebelliousness, irrationality, or being a challenge to authority—was found. On the contrary, by going directly to the manager, hierarchic structures seem to have been strengthened by creative processes. At Ter Weel, rather than being rebellious, chaotic, or challenging authority, ideas seemed to follow rational lines of thinking, orderly procedures, and hierarchical structures. The same was observed at Corus: no rebelliousness, chaos, or
challenging of authority—creative acts seemed to follow rational lines of thinking, orderly procedures, and hierarchical structures. The fact that the STIR award winner interpreted the prize as a sign of peer recognition would indicate that creativity leads to a sort of informal peer hierarchy, which is quite different from a challenge to authority. It must be emphasized that this research focused on the Corus RD&T department itself and did not take into account the consequences that might be caused by the ideas in the business units where the ideas were implemented.

Idea management

We have looked at two models of idea management: that of Gaspersz and that of Hellström and Hellström.

There was no formal idea-management system at either Pentascope or Ter Weel. At Pentascope, employees went to their manager when they had an idea. The manager would then tell the employee to ‘do something with it’ or to talk to certain people. There was no selection in this conversation, only a demonstration of enthusiasm. It is interesting to note that the managers had very different management styles, which is something that should be taken into account in idea-management models.

The Spain example at Pentascope proved how complicated it can be to turn an idea into a success. The complexity lay in demonstrating the possibilities of the idea and staying in touch with the many different people who could influence the outcome.

At Ter Weel, we noted that there were management filters—at the level of the team leaders as well as the Management Team. This cannot be interpreted as a kind of selection mechanism because there was no relationship with the quality of the ideas. In addition, most of the ideas that members of the Management Team occupied themselves with came from other members of the Management Team.

Corus gave us the example of the idea-management system Eureka!, which looks a lot like Gaspersz’s model with an additional function: one can actively look for opportunities in the system. So we can conclude that the Gaspersz model works in practice, although we must remember that Eureka! was not the only way people could get funding for their ideas. It seems that Gaspersz’s model overlooks one thing: that the system is used as a way to get money and therefore has political connotations, such as how decisions can be influenced (through reputation or timing, for example).

In theory, the Hellström and Hellström model is more flexible because it offers variable routes. Informal networks also play a role. In practice, this is what happened at
Corus, where the system was used in a flexible way. We had an example of an employee who managed to establish connections in another department and so got his idea through. Finally, it is important to note that there were a number of ways to get funds for one’s project; *Eureka!* was just one of them. People had the flexibility to find alternative routes in order to realize their ideas.

*Managing creativity as a paradox*

At Pentascope, we saw this in the relationship between ideas and the ‘culture of enthusiasm’. This ‘culture of enthusiasm’ is interesting in itself but did not seem to help get ideas realized. I called this phenomenon ‘frontstage creativity’ because the creativity seemed to be more show than reality. In practice, creativity was dealt with through selection criteria that were straightforward business criteria.

The paradox at Ter Weel was solved as a management issue. Management made decisions and creativity had a very small role, despite the fact that, in general, there is a loud call for innovation in care institutions.

At Corus, the paradox was solved through the implementation of an idea-management system, which reduced creative processes to administrative fund raising but also enabled employees to pursue their goals and careers.

The examples in the case studies did not reveal the rebellious nature of creative processes mentioned in the literature. Contrary to the literature, creative processes seem to strengthen the hierarchy in organizations (Pentascope), or lead to shifts in informal peer-based hierarchies (Corus), but despite this, they were still found to be restricted, censored, and constrained (Ter Weel).

Based on our three case studies, we can draw several conclusions about idea management. First, it seems to be far more practical to have an idea-management system in place, even though at Corus, we found that the idea-management system existed alongside other routes for getting support. We have also noted that political and lobbying issues emerge when idea management is used as a funding mechanism.

*The theory of structuration*

The main focus of Giddens’s theory of structuration is the dynamic relationships between actors and structures. For creative processes, it is exactly this that we are looking at: how individual processes and actions are made possible or become constrained by their environment (in the form of organizational strategies, needs, and demands) and how they, in themselves, create new contexts that are enabling or constraining.
The theory of structuration helps overcome the pitfall of regarding creativity as a personal trait or as an internal, individual action. My aim was to use the theory of structuration as a framework to bridge the gap between individual and higher-level processes. Structuration can then be regarded as a social process that involves the reciprocal interaction of human actors and structural features of organization (Orlikowski 1992)—structures are seen to both constrain and enable human action, but they are also the result of previous actions. The concept of ‘match’, which was described as a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved, can be seen as an example of this. Applying an idea-management system at Corus leads to an emphasis on lobbying activities. Creative processes are extended with an extra layer of funding activities. In other words, the new structure both enables and limits activities in a way that is different from the previous situation, without the idea-management system. The structural features of the organization will be reflected in the actions of the actors involved, and the concept of ‘match’ can be used to see how ideas evolve in the organization. In the history of a successful idea, several of these ‘matches’ were observed in Corus. It seems that ‘matches’ have to be successful in order to pave the way for an idea to continue its course. Every successful ‘match’ opens up the door for a next step. In other words, it both enables and constrains new possibilities.

Giddens (1984) considers human beings as knowledgeable, reflexive agents. By ‘knowledgeable’, he means that actors know or believe things about the circumstances of their action and the actions of others, which includes both tacit and discursively available knowledge. ‘Tacit knowledge’ is understood as knowledge that can be used by actors but not articulated in words, whereas discursively available knowledge refers to knowledge that actors are able to articulate. The concept of knowledgability helps to avoid the pitfall between creative actors and stupid or irrational management decisions. In the case of Ter Weel, 90% of the ideas were killed by a manager. But this manager followed his own line of thought; in his job description he was assessed not on creativity, but on the number of employees that fell ill. So if creativity was perceived as causing a risk of illness, it is logical that that was where he drew the line.

Giddens uses the term ‘duality of structure’ for his insight that structures serve as both the medium and the outcome of conduct. This makes the theory of structuration interesting for the study of creative processes because of the dynamic framework it provides between actors and structures. It avoids the pitfalls of voluntarism (related to inventors, artists, or employees acting in free space), and it also avoids the pitfalls of determinism, claiming that developments will happen anyway, with no eye to individual efforts or choices. The examples of ‘Spain’ at Pentascope and ‘aluminium’ at Corus both reveal the interesting relationships between
organizations and structural features, on the one hand, and creative actors and the way they operate, on the other hand.

Finally, because of the dynamic interrelationship between actors and structures, the relationships themselves become the focus of attention. This is called the ‘LOA issue’, which stands for ‘level of analysis’. Following Weick (1995), Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999) made a distinction between an intrasubjective level, an intersubjective level, and a collective level. The intersubjective level may be regarded as the cutting edge between actors and structure and is therefore selected as the most important focus of this research. The intersubjective level forms the platform where creativity comes into being in the social field; hence, it forms the dynamic field where individual creativity and organizational demands overlap. For example, in the case of ‘aluminium’ at Corus, it becomes evident that this idea would never have had a chance if the ideator had not known who to convince in the business unit and if there had been no trust between these people. So, understanding how people interact is crucial to understanding how creative processes unfold.

Because Giddens’s theory is rather abstract and therefore difficult to use as a tool for gathering empirical evidence, we discussed the adaptive structuration theory, which seems promising with regard to the tensions between the concepts of ‘management’ and ‘creativity’. It presents a dynamic model where one does not have to choose between the logic of the ‘rational manager’ and the employee who comes up with a creative idea. In fact, it has proven to be very useful. Theoretically, I felt it was an omission that DeSanctis and Poole (1994) did not look at personal traits and characteristics in their model. In creative processes, these traits are usually seen as the starting point. As the focus of my research was on the intersubjective level, this caused no problem whatsoever, but future use of the adaptive structuration theory would, in my opinion, benefit from including personal traits and characteristics in the model.

*Knowledgeability, the duality of structure, and the LOA issue*

We will now look at three characteristics of the theory of structuration: knowledgeability, the duality of structure, and the LOA issue.

Knowledgeability was manifested in all three case studies. At Pentascope, it was something that was easily problematized. Both managers and colleagues would ask such questions as ‘Why do you want to do that?’ ‘Why are you the right person for this?’ ‘Can you accomplish that?’

At Ter Weel, we saw that the team leaders who scored their employees high on trust in competence received more ideas than others. The Management Team scored the employees
the lowest on trust in competence and received the lowest number of ideas, which implies
that, in fact, they were not convinced of their employees’ knowledgeability. It was also found
in the way ideas were cut off, as described above. At Corus RD&T, knowledgeability was
found in all phases of idea development, including the flexible use of the idea-management
system *Eureka!* or in the way lobbying activities were pursued. In conclusion, we can say that
the concept of knowledgeability offers the researcher a chance to overcome the choice
between the rational manager and the creative employee.

The duality of structure was easy to observe in all three cases. At Pentascope, the
example of Spain started with a policy change. When management indicated that they were
interested in investing abroad, one employee could pursue possibilities that he had already
seen but for which the organization had not been ready. At Ter Weel, we saw that the learning
teams, which are advocated in the literature as being an instrument to enhance creativity, were
being used to hold ideas back. At Corus, the duality of structure was seen in the idea-
management system, which enabled ideas to be communicated but was also seen as limiting
activities. We can conclude that the concept of the duality of structure is important and useful.
It clarifies the fact that creative processes cannot be studied only when ideas emerge—the
structural aspects that enable and constrain the communication of ideas have to be taken into
account, as well as the processes that occur after ideas have been communicated. This concept
can be used to analyze how ideas bring forth new or modified structures that enhance and
constrain future ideas.

In regard to the level of analysis (the LOA issue), the research reported here has been
on the intersubjective level—the level between individuals—but from the perspective of the
actors, it might be seen slightly differently. As a researcher, I was able to follow the
development of the ideas, but for the actors, this was not always possible. Their ideas might
become part of a communication process in which they have no part. In other words, for them,
it was no longer part of their intersubjective level, but became part of a collective level. At
Pentascope, the LOA issue could be observed as part of their image as a ‘horizontal
organization’, despite which, ideators had to deal with different actors at different levels in
order to realize their ideas. Going to their manager was easy, but then they were subjected to
different types of questions and told who ‘they should talk to’, making one wonder how
horizontal a horizontal organization actually is. At Ter Weel, the issue was observed as
different inhibitions imposed by the team leaders and the Management Team. The hierarchical
structure led to a situation where the team leaders would represent their employees’ ideas. At
Corus, it was also observed that, in order to become important, ideas had to attract different
actors and that the creative process was gradually transformed into a decision-making or political process. The level of analysis, therefore, makes it possible to study ideas in their development, starting from the traditional psychological point of view of intrasubjective processes to intersubjective processes, and then to the collective processes that are mostly out of sight for the ideators.

The debates
In the first chapter, we discussed the two approaches to the concept of creativity: the descriptive-analytic debate (in which attempts are made to describe and analyze the concept of creativity) and the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate (in which the emphasis is on the application of creativity for its practical use or value-driven orientation). We discussed the commercial market around creative activities, which influences instrumental practices of creativity (Sternberg 2006) and the fact that many organizations need creativity and, hence, instruments, tools, and other devices to encourage and enhance creativity. The development of standardized tools and instruments can be seen as a process of maturation in the field of creative thinking. Here, we have looked at both debates, which is evident in the research questions.

From the perspective of the descriptive-analytic debate, we have found information on the sensitizing concepts (presented in the sections above). With regard to the theoretical aspects of the sensitizing concepts, some conclusions can be drawn in terms of interaction. First, creative processes are not ‘one-night stands’; they are embedded in social relationships and group processes. One’s standing in the group is therefore important and influences processes of acceptance and idea evolution. If one does not have the right standing, it will become very difficult to get ideas accepted.

Second, the sensitizing concept of trust was found to be important at Ter Weel. It was observed that subtle demonstrations of trust, such as taking notes, documenting ideas, and giving small symbolic presents, influenced the volume of ideas received. This makes it very clear that creative processes are also influenced at the subconscious level. This was not the focus of this research, but in interactions, respondents are aware of these subconscious influences and they influence their behaviour.

Third, with regard to testimony, interaction also turned out be very important. Lobbying activities and knowing the right people to persuade turned out to be critical at Corus. We introduced two terms for this behaviour: namely, ‘match’, a positive relationship
between the testimony and the actors involved, and ‘crea-political’ processes, the overlap between creative processes and political processes.

Finally, with regard to favourite interaction, we observed that this is not a black box, as the literature suggests, but it is an important factor in acceptance of ideas, and it can be influenced by taking initiative and maintaining contact.

From the perspective of the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate, we have gained some interesting insights. In the case of Pentascope, we found a great deal of information on the creative climate. The employees of the organization seemed to follow a culture of ‘passion’, or enthusiasm, and yet, they also criticized this. Employees were afraid that ‘nothing will happen’ with their ideas. In the literature, enhancing and stimulating behaviour is regarded as good, but in the real world, it does not work; it makes people sceptical and tends to make them hold back. It could be said that a prescription to demonstrate enthusiasm leads to an artificial world where enthusiasm is demonstrated because it is believed to be good. But the employees are too smart to be fooled by this, and they develop other ways of understanding their organizational environment. As a horizontal organization, it was strange that the Pentascope employees would go to their manager as soon as they had an idea. In other words, instrumental prescriptions might be developed, but they should not be taken for granted. They should be questioned as to how they actually work in daily routines. This observation corresponds with the situation that was observed at Ter Weel, where we have seen that the members of the Management Team scored the employees high on trust in goodwill (which was related to low levels of ideas), but low on trust in competence (which was related to high levels of ideas). It seemed like a demonstration of trust by management, which was, in fact, not experienced as such by the employees.

At Corus, something else was observed. From the literature, it seems good to have an idea-management system and Corus has one, called *Eureka!* In looking at the way this system worked, we saw that it was used strategically as a way to receive funding and that it appeared to function as a political instrument. The idea-management system led to strategic behaviour. The system did not work for the employee—employees had to take action (which can be described as lobbying activities) themselves in order to make their ideas viable.

The descriptive-analytic debate and the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate cannot stand in isolation. In trying to improve performance, organizations attempt to implement academic findings, and scholars, in their turn, try to learn from these experiences. I think that based on this research, it is safe to say that Pentascope and Corus have tried to develop their own approaches to enhancing creative processes. But human action can have unintended
consequences (Giddens 1984). Pentascope has put its emphasis on conditions and communication, which led to a form of frontstage behaviour. Corus, on the other hand, put its focus on idea management, which led to forms of strategic behaviour that were identified as an overlap between creative and political processes.

**8.5 Summary**

In this chapter we looked at and compared the sensitizing concepts of standing, trust, testimony, and favourite interaction in the three case studies. Then we looked at the volume of ideas at Ter Weel and Corus. After this we looked at the interrelationship of the three cases. Finally, we compared our findings with the theoretical perspective of the theory of structuration and on the descriptive-analytic debate and the instrumentalist-prescriptive debate in the three areas of creative climate, processes of interaction and acceptance, and idea management.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

In this ninth chapter, the research questions will be answered and suggestions will be given for the future management of creativity: the paradox of frontstage creativity, bringing creativity back into the organization, and improving idea management. At the end there is a brief overview and summary of the findings.

9.1 Introduction

In the introduction of this research, we looked at several reasons for the current emphasis on creativity in organizations and we discussed several reasons for this. The role of knowledge, which has to do with an increasingly complex business environment, due to competition and diverging views, was presented as an important factor. Globalization and innovation have unleashed unpredictable events, creating a less predictable environment. These processes are reinforced by the role of technology and the computer, which, while regarded as the solution to these problems, also contribute to the growing avalanche of changes around the world. The shifting roles of the individual in knowledge societies, which, themselves, are undergoing a process of individualization, combined with cultural diversity, contribute to this avalanche of change and increasing complexity. Organizations can depend on luck, chance, or mad geniuses to enhance their creativity, or they can stimulate creative processes in a more strategic way.

These problems are recognized not only at the organizational level, but also at a national level. Over the last few years, the Dutch Government has made several attempts to enhance innovation, of which I would like to mention the ‘Innovation Platform’ and the ‘Buitenhuis’. The ‘Innovation Platform’ is meant to stimulate innovation on a national level. In 2009, the innovation conference of the Netherlands Academy of Technology and Innovation (AcTI-nl), held on 29 October, focused on cooperation between knowledge institutes and trade and industry. According to Jan Mengelers, chairman of TNO and Dirk Jan van den Berg, chairman of the Delft University of Technology, the goals are continuous investments in R&D and continuous cooperation between all partners in key areas in order to enhance the innovative capacity of the Netherlands, which is important to foster economic growth and employment. In order to do this, universities must excel, ‘Great Technological Institutes’ must valorise their knowledge, and trade and industry must use this knowledge for
innovation. Improving the climate for innovation and strategic cooperation is therefore a key factor.\textsuperscript{33}

The ‘Buitenhuis’, a facility for Dutch ministries, contributes to renewing public services by supporting public servants in finding solutions for organizational and policy issues. A wide range of workshops are offered to accomplish this.\textsuperscript{34} This is important to note because it shows that the government is not merely interested in making plans but also facilitates innovation processes at the level of the employee.

In the care sector the Dutch then Minister Klink and then State Secretary Bussemaker from the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport (VWS\textsuperscript{35}) want to stimulate innovation with an extra 100 million euro, with four instruments directed towards providers of care, care-related entrepreneurship, institutes for knowledge, and advisors in care. These instruments will be carried out by AgentschapNL\textsuperscript{36} as part of the Innovation Platform for Care. They will be working with innovation vouchers, contracts for innovation achievement, and calls for experiments and upscaling.\textsuperscript{37}

The pressures mentioned above can also be seen in the organizations that were selected as the cases for this research. At Pentascope’s website,\textsuperscript{38} attention is given to the fact that reducing costs is not enough to survive as an organization. They emphasize the fact that product turnover and quality must be increased and that customers must be more closely associated with the organization. They say that an offensive strategy calls for a different market approach, different concepts, and above all, a different use of people. They ask the question: How can innovation and creativity be brought back into the organization to foster the necessary commercial vitality? They indicate that a different mentality is needed, that employees must be motivated to act and that creativity, productivity, innovation, and customer satisfaction must be enhanced.

At Corus, the need for innovation was expressed as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{\textcolor{red}{system}}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item See [www.het-buitenhuis.nl](http://www.het-buitenhuis.nl) (accessed 2 November 2009).
\item VWS is Dutch and stands for ‘Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport’. This can be translated with ‘Health, Welfare, and Sport’.
\item AgentschapNL is an agency of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which brings together knowledge on innovation, energy, climate, and the environment, contributing in this way to optimizing the position of trade and commerce in the Netherlands, as well as to a sustainable society that cares for people and their environment ([www.agentschap.nl](http://www.agentschap.nl), accessed 30 March 2010).
\end{itemize}
Continuous development and renewal are essential to gain and hold the position of quality that Corus wants. Innovation at Corus is aimed at products, services, production processes, and business concepts. Investments in research and development are not only done to keep the knowledge on production processes up to date, but also to be able to think together with the client. Therefore, Corus is able to advise clients and designers about processing and possibilities for the application of the different metals and their specific qualities (www.corus.nl/Innovatie, accessed 4 October 2009; Translation HB).

In all these examples, the need for innovation and creativity is emphasized, which is important with regard to the results of this research—where the focus is on the intersubjective level. Innovation is a social process and, at the intersubjective level, the attention is on interactions between people. This is important because it gives us an understanding of how these organizational goals, such as continuous innovation and cooperation, are shaped on the work floor, in the everyday life of ordinary employees. Continuous innovation and cooperation are social processes and they are therefore influenced by the way people see each other. The results of this research can be summarized as follows:

This research builds further on the locus of creativity model by Csikszentmihalyi (1988) in which creativity is regarded from a wider perspective than merely an individual cognitive process. We have observed that organizations have large numbers of ideas hanging around them, even when creativity is not encouraged—and these ideas are spread over organizations in an uneven way. The leaders who find ideas more important, who have higher trust in their employees' competence, who feel that the ideas are expressed more convincingly, and who document ideas and reward ideators more often—in other words, those who demonstrate favourite interaction—receive the highest volume of ideas. Leaders who only show high trust in goodwill are correlated with low volumes of ideation, which was interpreted as an example of ‘frontstage creativity’.

With regard to horizontal idea exchange—the way ideators deal with their ideas with regard to their colleagues—we have observed that employees want to communicate their ideas to their managers, which indicates that the concept of a horizontal organization is relative. We have also seen that having an image of organizational creativity and taking creative processes seriously, are two different things. The concept of ‘frontstage creativity’ was used for the
case where the importance of creativity was communicated but the organizational facilities were absent.

From this research, it is clear that it is advantageous for organizations to have a computer-based idea-management system that is backed up with resources and a selection committee. Idea evolution is not only about the process itself, but also about defining the road, and organizing the means. Having an idea-management system through which means are allocated introduces political dimensions, however. Hence, timing, reputation, lobbying and negotiation become important. The stages of ideation can be labelled as the creating, selling, and funding phases, which correspond with changing sets of actors. The concept of ‘match’, which is regarded as a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved, was suggested to help focus on the processes within these phases. This analysis resulted in a model: the crea-political process model, in which creative and socio-political processes are linked, and in which the management of creative processes is understood as part of these multi-faceted and interrelated processes.

This research shows that it is fruitful to regard creativity as a social process and that the interactional variables that were used as sensitizing concepts in this research (namely standing, trust, testimony and favourite interaction) are important to the way ideas evolve within organizations. Furthermore, contrary to the existing literature, this research has shown no evidence that the existence of a hierarchy undermines any aspects of creative processes. Ideators came up with relevant ideas that did not threaten the existing power relationships.

9.2 Answering the research questions

The empirical research question was formulated as

| How do actors construct and manage their ideas in different professional organizations and how do organizational conditions enable and constrain them? |

Before this question can be answered, we must look at the three research questions that were formulated for the three different cases.
Pentascope
The first research question was

**How do ideas unfold at Pentascope, an organization without idea management?**

This case was selected to probe the horizontal exchange of ideas. The consultants, however, wanted to communicate their ideas to their manager, but the ideator would usually be asked to ‘do something with it [the idea]’. Not only managers, but also other employees reacted very positively to new ideas, which was described as the ‘enthusiasm loop’, because it was felt to cause time constraints. Ideators had to organize their own support, and gaining support did not mean that they would be given the means. It may be noted that there were no fixed routes for idea evolution found at Pentascope. Idea evolution, therefore, is not only about the process itself, but also about defining the road. In addition, the primary business of the organization—to have projects with clients—was given priority, which could frustrate internal ideational processes. There were no explicit criteria for ideas. ‘Idea fit’ (the degree of fit between the idea and the organizational strategy), good testimony, good standing, and support from one’s direct supervisor were observed to be important. Psychological issues also played a role, arising in such questions as, why are you the right person to do this?, does it ‘give energy’ or does it ‘feel good’? The best indicators for ideational success at Pentascope was how well the idea fit into the organization’s strategy. We also observed that the ideas that people were working on were very general, or widely shared, to put it mildly. Taken together, this justifies labelling the creative process at Pentascope as ‘frontstage activity’.

Pentascope was selected because it was generally known as an organization with creativity ‘in its genes’. This is the way they see and present themselves and how they are known: creativity is a critical factor for their success. There are three clusters of observations: observed behaviour, criteria and theory.

The first cluster concerns the observed routines with regard to the evolution of ideas. What we first noticed was the ease with which consultants approached their managers. This
case was selected to probe horizontal exchanges, but the employees were in the habit of going to their managers rather quickly instead of incubating their ideas more intensely at a horizontal level (with colleagues and so on). Ideational processes at Pentascope seemed to be characterized by consultants who wanted to communicate their ideas to their manager. When they looked for contact with colleagues, it was mostly for reasons of expertise or experience; relational reasons were hardly mentioned. Managers, however, frequently asked ideators if they had communicated with colleagues. They saw it as a precondition for the decision-making process. When the idea was expressed to the manager, there appeared to be an understanding that the ideator would be asked to ‘do something with it’. The consultants claimed that this was a problem because if they wanted to ‘do something with it’, they would run into time constraints. The primary business of the organization—to have projects with clients—was given priority, which could frustrate ideational processes. It was observed that ideators had to organize their own support, even when they were stimulated by their managers, and that gaining support did not automatically mean that they would be given the means of following through on their idea. Finding means was another phase of the process.

The second cluster of observations has to do with the criteria that were used to evaluate ideas. First, it was observed that there were no explicit criteria about quality. The questions that were asked the ideator were merely business questions. Four things seemed to play a role: the ‘idea fit’ (the degree of fit between the idea and the organizational strategy), good testimony, good standing, and support from one’s direct supervisor. Apart from these business-oriented questions, there was one question that seemed to be very important: ‘Why are you the right person to do this?’ There seemed to be a cultural preoccupation with determining the right match between ideas and people.

The third cluster of observations has to do with the theory: the concepts of testimony and of favourite interaction. We saw that a ‘testimony’ does not materialize on just a single occasion; it was a long-term process, embedded in social interaction, and hence, good standing is important in communicating testimony. As to favourite interaction, we noted that in the successful examples, the role of ‘energy’ was spontaneously mentioned or that processes were described as ‘giving energy’ or ‘feeling good’. Another noteworthy observation was that one consultant explicitly mentioned that he felt that getting critical questions was encouraging. In other words, a person’s experience or interpretation of an action is more influential than a description of the action itself.

Culturally, one could say that managers at Pentascope, in general, acted in a very positive way with regard to ideas—and not only managers, but also other employees. It is a
trait in the organizational culture to be enthusiastic about new ideas. Although this might keep
spirits high, we have seen that even good ideas and support did not mean that people would
get the means to follow through on their idea. This was described as the ‘enthusiasm loop’.
The suggestion to work out ideas without providing means led to feelings of ‘time stress’.
Organizing the means to realize the idea was another phase of the process. In addition, we
have seen that one of the best indicators for ideational success at Pentascope was how well the
idea fit into the organization’s strategy. This may sound predictable for most organizations,
but it is a bit disenchanted for an organization that promotes itself as a creative one. We have
also observed that the ideas that people were working on were very general, or widely shared,
to put it mildly. Taken together, this justifies labelling the creative process at Pentascope as
‘frontstage activity’.

**Ter Weel**
The second research question was

**What is the volume of vertical organizational ideation in Ter Weel and what is
the importance of the perceived quality of the ideas and of trust?**

**The estimated volume of ideas at Ter Weel was about 1500 ideas per year,
which was about two ideas per year per employee. This was something of a
surprise, because hardly any encouragement of creativity was observed, and
the ideas were very unevenly spread around the organization. The team
leaders who received the highest volume of ideas also found ideas more
important, had higher trust in their employees’ competence, felt the ideas were
expressed more convincingly, documented ideas more often, and rewarded ideators more often. It was not just a verbally expressed ‘importance’, it was
already unconsciously put into action. With regard to trust in goodwill, the
relationship was inverted: high trust in goodwill was correlated with low
volumes of ideation. This was interpreted as an example of frontstage
creativity. The ideational inhibitions were linked to the concept of
knowledgeability.**

We’ve discussed the fact that it is difficult to define ‘ideas’ methodologically and that
I used a working definition of ‘ideas that you can do something new with in your work’. The
estimated volume of ideas at Ter Weel was 1561 ideas per year (which is, of course,
subjective and can therefore never be precise)—sufficient for one successful innovation each year, using Isaksen’s (2005) calculations. The rate of ideas at Ter Weel was about two ideas per year per employee. Creativity, as measured by the communication of ideas, was spread very unevenly over the organization, varying between zero to 520 ideas per manager per year, with a mean of 97 ideas per manager per year. Hardly any encouragement of creativity was observed, so it might come as a surprise that even this number of ideas was communicated. It was a surprise to the managers at Ter Weel.

The ideas received were perceived as important. While the Management Team scored the importance of the ideas much lower than did the team leaders, they thought that the ideas contributed more to the unity of the organization than did the team leaders. It is interesting to note that there was a correlation between the perception of the importance of the ideas and the volume of ideas received. The group of team leaders who found ideas most important also received the most ideas.

While one could say that there was no relationship between the volume of ideation and trust in general, there was a relationship between the volume of ideas and trust in competence. High trust in competence was correlated with a high volume of ideation. With regard to trust in goodwill, the relationship was inverted: high trust in goodwill was correlated with low volumes of ideation. Finally, there was no relationship found between trust in self-reference and the volume of ideation.

In the literature on creativity, it is assumed that a creative climate leads to more ideas. But these data indicate that there is more to a creative climate than theory suggests. The trust in goodwill communicated by the Management Team in combination with their low level of trust in competence would make one wonder if they only say they have trust in their employees but are not really interested, which would give us another example of fronstage creativity. It was also observed that sometimes managers seemed to regard ideas as requests for which something was wanted in return. The Management Team received the fewest ideas and also scored employees low on persuasiveness, while the team leaders who received the highest volume of ideas gave the highest score on persuasiveness. The team leaders at Goes, who received the highest volume of ideas also found ideas more important, had higher trust in their employees’ competence, felt the ideas were expressed more convincingly, documented ideas more often, and rewarded ideators more often. It was not just a verbally expressed ‘importance’; it was already unconsciously put into action. This brings up a well-known paradox. Trust in competence means having faith in people doing their work well, but why
would that mean coming up with good ideas? It seems to be contradictory: to expect novelty from ‘good workers’.

Ideational inhibitions seemed to be at work at Ter Weel. These inhibitions were linked to the concept of knowledgeability. At the level of the team leaders, the organization of learning teams functioned as a threshold. When employees came up with ideas, team leaders would ask if there was enough support in the team, and only then would they listen to the idea. At the level of the Management Team, there was an active policy of repressing ideas from below. When I reported the results of my findings to the director, he was astonished about the high number of ideas that were expressed in his organization. But even so, the Management Team was not interested in taking any action on organizational ideation. The things they were occupied with were mergers and quality certificates. They argued that the high volume of ideas was a good sign of the level of commitment of their employees.

**Corus**

The third research question was

How do employees from Corus RD&T experience the idea-management system Eureka!?

From the Corus case, it is clear that it is advantageous for organizations to have a computer-based idea-management system that is backed up with a stimulation fund. However, having such a facility introduces political dimensions. The timing of submitting a project, the reputation of the researcher, and lobbying activities become important. Ideas do not come up or evolve in isolation; they are the outcome of negotiation. The stages of ideation at Corus can be labelled as the creating, selling, and funding phases, which correspond with changing sets of actors. The concept of ‘match’, a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved, was suggested to help focus on the processes within these phases. This information resulted in a sensitizing model: the crea-political process model, in which creative and socio-political processes are linked, and in which the management of creative processes is understood as part of these multi-faceted and interrelated processes.
The idea management system *Eureka!* is part of STIR, which is a stimulation fund for innovative ideas. One of the first things noted was that the creative process at Corus RD&T had political dimensions. For example, the respondents agreed that ‘after the yearly plans for the projects have been made, it is impossible to get funding for ideas.’ This means that the creative process followed a political round of allocating funds and could be regarded as a political issue at the organizational level. The creative process was also found to be political at the individual level. For example, respondents agreed on the observation that their ‘reputation within the organization influences the chances of success’ of their idea and also that ‘people in my network can help to bring my idea further’. It became clear that respondents viewed lobbying as the best explanation for the funding process. From these observations, we could see that the creative process was embedded in social and political processes.

It was observed that the employees were said to ‘appreciate it when judges point out alternative possibilities’ for their idea and also that the ‘business units do not always benefit from new, radical ideas’. It seems that the respondents did not follow any form of ‘free, unlimited’ creativity but strove, instead, for success or adoption of their idea, and they were willing to adjust their idea to practicality. This seems to be a different modality of creativity—a form of ‘limited’ or ‘bounded’ creativity—which is a mix of individual expression on the one hand and organizational commitment on the other. This means that ideas do not come up or evolve in isolation but that they are the outcome of negotiation.

Employees were convinced that their standing would influence the success of their idea. Trust was mainly regarded as ‘trust in competence’ and, from the successful case, it became evident that this was a key success factor. Good testimonies were very important as well as the persuasive activities in which they were put forward. The STIR committee itself was experienced as ‘a warm bath’ and a contrast with *Eureka!*, which was in general seen as useful but impersonal.

Based on this contextual, intersubjective perspective, I have labelled the stages of ideation at Corus as the creating, selling, and funding phases, which correspond with changing sets of actors. The initial (creating) phase is associated with one’s intimate circle. As ideas evolve, the creating phase moves into a selling phase and other actors get involved. This is typified as the professional circle. The third phase is the funding phase, which corresponds to the managerial circle. The concept of ‘match’, a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved, was suggested to focus on the processes within these phases.
The system of idea management at Corus worked in both an enabling and a constraining way. The procedure and the information on the computer made things easier, but there was a danger that people would think of it as a system that would automatically do the work for them, which was definitely not the case.

Other problems that were noted with regard to the idea-management system were the waiting time and the effort that had to be put in. The ‘awaiting adoption’ phase was repeatedly regarded as ‘another excuse for delay’.

This information resulted in a sensitizing model: the crea-political process model, in which creative and socio-political processes are linked, and in which the management of creative processes is understood as part of these multi-faceted and interrelated processes.

**The central research question**

The central research question was

*How do actors make sense of creative processes in professional organizations and in what ways do organizational conditions enable and constrain these processes?*

It is impossible to know how many ideas arise in the heads of employees, but with regard to the communication of ideas, one can conclude that there are massive clouds of ideas swirling around organizations—but many die an early death. At Pentascope, it was difficult to get an estimate of the total number of ideas so I looked at the ideas that were circulating at the time of the investigation. At Ter Weel, it was estimated that around 1561 ideas were communicated to management each year. It was not possible to estimate how many ideas survived, but the percentage would have been rather low. Also, there was no real routine for registering ideas. At Corus RD&T, ideas that were brought in were documented in an archive so they would not get lost if they were not approved. In 2004, about 250 ideas were put in the idea management system *Eureka!* of which around 20% were funded, meaning that about 200 ideas were kept in the archive as a result of one single year. In 2009 it was mentioned that in *Eureka!* there was a flow of about 150 to 225 ideas per year. From these, roughly 20% to 25% went into STIR. The clouds of ideas swirling around organizations serve as intangible assets, but most are not taken full advantage of. Of these three case studies, the idea-management system of Corus RD&T might appear to be the most straightforward way of dealing with these intangible assets, especially because the ideas are registered and the routes for ideation
are established. Others might argue that a computer-based ideation system will act as a filter, and of course, this is true. But while such a system constrains in one way, it also enables things that would otherwise not be possible. Besides, there were inhibiting factors in the other two cases as well. At Ter Weel, the main filters were the learning teams and the policy of the Management Team to ignore ideas from below. Both can be related to the knowledgeability of the actors.

At Pentascope, strategic fit turned out to be a key variable for success. We saw one example where a change in strategy led to a new and successful idea. But strategy is not static and it is not always clear to the employees. At Ter Weel, there was no evaluation of strategic fit; the team support was the first barrier. At Corus, the whole notion of idea management was much broader. Of course, it was embedded in a strategy, but the notion of idea management is essentially to cross existing borders.

We’ve seen that the role of the direct manager was important at Pentascope. There was even an example in which the direct manager was overruled by top management, but the idea was still not successful. At Ter Weel, because of the ‘learning organization’ structure with work teams, the support of colleagues was the first thing someone had to achieve for an idea to make it to the management level. At Corus, the idea-management system meant that ideas were evaluated by people other than the direct manager, which presented problems because with such specialized knowledge, it was hard to find competent evaluators.

The standing of the ideator played a role in all three cases. At Pentascope, standing played a crucial role: was the ideator the right person to carry out the idea? At Ter Weel, managers said that they had a good impression of the ideators. At Corus, respondents agreed that their reputation influenced the chances of their idea’s success.

The term ‘testimony’ has been used here for the ‘expressed idea’, and the distinction between the concepts of ‘idea’ and of ‘testimony’ has proven to be very useful. At Pentascope, testimony was very important. We observed that testimonial activities are long-term activities embedded in social relationships. At Corus, the procedure for expressing an idea was more or less clear. The idea was submitted by computer and later on questions were asked. If the idea went through the STIR committee, additional questions were asked. If the STIR money was awarded, researchers could work on their idea and improve their testimony.

We distinguished between trust in competence and trust in goodwill, and from there on, patterns started to emerge. We saw in Ter Weel that high trust in competence was correlated with a high volume of ideas, a higher perception of persuasiveness, more
documentation, and more rewards. At Corus, trust appeared to lie in the procedure for idea management, and at Pentascope, we found trust to be related to standing and testimony.

Veenswijk’s (2005) concept of ‘frontstage creativity’ seems very applicable to Pentascope, an organization that presented itself as creative and was said to have creativity ‘in its genes’, yet the ideas found there were common in the Netherlands at the time of the research and the variables for success were predictable from a general business point of view. It could also be applied to Corus, where both the volume and quality of ideas were expressed in terms of patentability and generated cash. At Ter Weel, the concept of frontstage creativity was found in the relationship between the volume of ideas and types of trust: the members of the Management Team performed as if they had high trust in their employees but in fact they did not.

I think we can say, in regard to how creative processes unfold as interactions, that large numbers of ideas do not unfold at all, but die an early death, sometimes by accident, sometimes by idea killers who claim it is to the advantage of the organization.

The last research question was formulated as:

**How can the observed processes of interaction with regard to creativity be analyzed and interpreted in terms of the theoretical framework?**

Below, we will look at this in terms of the sensitizing concepts and how observations can lead to new approaches.

**Sensitizing concepts**

In this section, I want to briefly discuss the findings about the sensitizing concepts and give some suggestions about what could be done with this information to improve creative processes. Standing was formulated mostly in terms of education and experience. At Pentascope, there were additional ways to look at standing, based more on a personal level such as personality type and questions such as: What does this idea mean for you? and Why would you be the right person to do this? The fit between a problem and a person was regarded as essential. At Ter Weel, we observed a relationship between people that have ideas and the impression that Management had of them. Creativity is not considered to be very important in this organization and standing related to creativity, such as having ideas, was
regarded in terms of commitment. At Corus, standing was seen as reputation and expressed in
terms of expertise, theoretical abilities, and having good ideas, as well as in terms of having a
good network and being self-assured. It was also observed that the winner of the STIR-NL
award interpreted this award as a mark of peer recognition.

There are a number of ways in which organizations can improve on this theme, which
I would propose to call *standing work*. First, it is important that employees see how important
this issue is and how it influences their chances of success in acceptance processes, even long
before they come up with ideas. So it is important to demonstrate expertise, experience, and
abilities and maybe even to demonstrate personality and networks. This could be in terms of
turning daily routines into standing platforms, such as a name plate on the door, or it could be
more elaborate and include information on expertise or projects, lectures, and so on, in the
form of tags, posters, or even show cases. Other forms of attention could be given by putting
this information in written or visual media. And in virtual space, employees could put
weblogs on the intranet. It is important to show others who you are, what you are doing, and
how you are doing it. Organizations can use these platforms to emphasize the directions that
they want to take with regard to strategy or elements of creative processes that they want to
enhance.

Another way to improve standing would be to organize opportunities for interaction,
not just between direct colleagues, but also between employees who are further away from
each other. These activities could range from stimulating interactions by putting coffee tables
in the hallway to providing ‘free spaces’ in the organization, which could be physical or
temporal. Physical places can be places with a beautiful view, a restful environment, or just
places with an interesting atmosphere where things happen or are made possible. Stimuli that
encourage conversation can be handy, such as posters or show cases. These could be up-dated
frequently so that the stimuli are current and relevant. They could be inside the building or
outside in the open air. Temporal spaces could be occasions where people can demonstrate
their standing, such as lectures, product demonstrations, group discussions, viewings, or
feedback sessions. It might also be possible to organize excursions or meetings. Creating
opportunities where people could get to know each other would be interesting. In the case of
Corus, travelling together while visiting a business site, created possibilities for closer
contact. Respondents mentioned that in the long ride to the business unit, conversations could
become personal, which affected their mutual trust in a positive way.

This overlaps with the concept of trust, which was the second sensitizing concept. We
observed that small things, such as taking notes, documenting ideas, and giving small
symbolic presents went along with receiving more ideas. It would be logical to take this seriously and put it into practice. One could expand on demonstrations of care, personal involvement, and participation. However, to a certain degree, this is a matter of body language and there would probably be a limit to what people would find credible.

The sensitizing concept of trust was important at Pentascope in terms of competence, testimony, and also as ‘a good feeling’ that one might have about someone’s idea. It was observed that some employees interpreted trust as a feeling, indicating that communicating an idea is not simply transmitting information, but that it is about evoking reactions in listeners. This could be expanded on by giving attention to the emotional side of communication, such as dress code, atmosphere, decoration of the place, style of speech, and so on.

At Ter Weel, a difference was observed between trust in competence and trust in goodwill. The line managers regarded their employees as having competence, whereas Management emphasized trust in goodwill, and we found a correlation between trust in competence and the volume of ideas.

At Corus, special attention was given to trust in the ideators in the enhancement phase (when they had to provide additional information) and to the assessors of the ideas. Doubts about trustworthiness could be reduced by opening up the procedures and making them more transparent. Trust was seen as very important, especially trust in competence and trust in the procedures of Eureka!

With regard to testimony, a number of observations were made. Exchanging ideas takes place in a set of events, called testimonial activities. At Pentascope, with its image as a horizontal organization, employees went directly to their managers with their ideas. There were no fixed routes for idea development, but for the idea to be taken up, it was important that it fit the organizational strategy. Besides, we found a relationship between bad testimony and a lack of motivation, as well as a close relationship between ideas and the organization’s strategy and between ideas and individuals. At Ter Weel, management put on the brakes when ideas were communicated. Furthermore the observation was made that sometimes managers regarded ideas as requests, for which a return would be expected. At Corus, three important observations were made. First, it was very important to have an idea-management system because it provided criteria, routes, and initial budgets. In addition, we observed that presentational skills and lobbying activities mattered, that persuasion was important, that it was important to know the right people, and that every situation had to involve a match between ideas and the participants involved. Because of this coinciding of creative and political processes, the term ‘crea-political process’ was introduced. At Corus, it seemed that
every step had to be successful in order for the idea to be developed. This was described as ‘match’: a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved.

We can now look at some suggestions that could enhance the success of this phase. First, questions could be raised about the organizational strategy, the form of idea management, and the steps required (namely, the criteria used, the routes and alternative routes, the allocation of budgets, the selection of the people who make the decisions, the procedures they have to follow, and the way in which people interact). These are decisions at the management level.

Secondly, from the perspective of employees, there are a number of actions that can be taken to improve success. Good ideas do not speak for themselves; communication and strategy are very important. Training in improving communication skills are a first step that could be taken. This should include all possible forms of communication and persuasion, from PowerPoint presentations to personal conversations. Another step could be to analyze power relationships. We have seen that some people have more influence in the decision-making processes than others. It would be useful to work this out in advance and make a network analysis of the significant actors. And, in order to succeed, it can be an advantage when people experience the idea as ‘special’: because they find it clever, for example. It could be useful to look for ways to demonstrate the uniqueness of the idea or the way it came up.

Furthermore, we have seen that successful ideas involve a match between the idea and the actors involved. In the course of an idea’s evolution, several of these matches will be gone through, and if they are not successful, they will cause a delay—or failure. It would be useful, therefore, to see how matches can be enhanced, so that success can be more widespread. Besides, lobbying plays an important role. Employees could look at successful lobbying practices and start lobbying at an early stage of idea evolution.

Favourite interaction was observed to play an important role. With regard to the sensitizing concept of favourite interaction, at Pentascope, ideas were received in a positive way (the ‘enthusiasm loop’) and employees with ideas were encouraged ‘to do something with it’, but they were not given any means, which led to time stress. This phenomenon was described as ‘frontstage creativity’. Furthermore the theory implies that favourite interaction is a black box that cannot be influenced, but from the cases, we have seen that favourite interaction can be induced by taking initiative and keeping in close contact, especially when actors are already convinced that the ideator is the right person for the idea (Pentascope). Favourite interaction is usually seen as warm or encouraging behaviour, but from the case of Pentascope, it is clear that it has to be experienced as such, which is something quite different.
Here, the ideator said that he saw criticism as encouragement, which is a useful perception. What we can see from these cases is that favourite interaction is not an unchangeable black box, but that interactions with other actors can be turned into favourite interaction by making the first move yourself: taking the initiative to involve others and staying in close contact with them. At Ter Weel, there was a correlation between favourite interaction and the volume of ideas, whereby favourite interaction came with a larger volume of ideas. At Corus, the actions of the STIR committee were described as ‘a warm bath’, and we also found that favourite interaction could be influenced by close contact, just as in the Pentascope case.

**Volume**

We have seen that at Ter Weel—an environment in which there was hardly any encouragement of creativity—approximately 1500 ideas a year were mentioned. We can therefore conclude that employees bring large amounts of creativity to the workplace, and intelligent forms of creativity management should be able to turn this into better forms of organizational vitality.

**Context**

The differences between the cases can, to some degree, be understood as part of their different contexts. A culture of enthusiasm at Pentascope could be part of the way consultants animate clients at different workplaces and stimulate their initiative. The killing of creativity at Ter Weel could be the response of managers to the way they are evaluated: managers who are not evaluated on innovation will see innovation as a threat to the other targets they are responsible for, such as employee attendance. If innovation is regarded as a threat to other targets, it will not be encouraged. The emphasis on peer recognition at Corus could be part of the employees’ culture, which is an R&D environment where publications, often peer reviewed, play an important role.

**9.3 Suggestions for future management of creativity**

What is needed is to unleash creativity in the Netherlands—in organizations and beyond—at regional levels and on a national scale. This calls for a mixed approach, where creativity should first be brought back into the organization, and frontstage creativity should be turned into a more productive form. Second, idea-management practices should be widely stimulated and improved in organizations, between organizations, in municipalities, among regions, and
at the national and supra-national level. Finally, there is a need for more adequate theories on creativity. Creativity can no longer be regarded as solely a psychological subject, but creativity and innovation must also be regarded as social processes requiring social theories.

**Three strategies for managing creativity**

In each of the three cases, we found different approaches to managing creativity, and for each case, different steps need to be taken in order to enhance creative processes (table 9.3.1). At Pentascope, the culture of enthusiasm was paramount, and although this is very nice, people felt that it was not really productive. The challenge is how to move Pentascope and organizations like it from this culture of enthusiasm to more productive forms of playfulness. At Ter Weel, creative processes were seriously inhibited, even though there is a call for innovation in the care sector, and it is obvious that employees could add a lot to innovation processes. The first step would be for creativity to be brought back into the organization, which could easily be done by starting with conditional factors and taking learning processes seriously. At Corus, the idea-management system played an important role. The impact of this system could be enhanced by a move towards total and integrated idea management.

**Table 9.3.1: Three Organizational Strategies for Creative Processes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pentascope</th>
<th>Ter Weel</th>
<th>Corus RD&amp;T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Move from a culture of</td>
<td>1. Bring creativity back in</td>
<td>1. Move towards total idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiasm towards productive</td>
<td>2. Start with conditional factors</td>
<td>management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Move towards integrated idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the following sections, these strategies are described in more detail, together with some suggestions about how they can be realized.

**The paradox of frontstage creativity**

During the 1990s—the so-called ‘new economy’ of the internet bubble—there was a period of high expectations around creativity and informality. In the subsequent crisis, many organizations were forced to cut costs and to focus on their primary processes; developments in the business cycle were dominant. As creativity and ‘new’ work habits emerged, new creative organizations followed the dot coms and profiled themselves according to the new work ethics. It may be said that Pentascope’s image was like that.

But there can be difficulties when organizations try to profile themselves as ‘creative experts’. First, they have to advise and work for organizations that focus on primary processes and control-oriented management. Second, when working for these organizations, their contributions add to an ever-widening gap between creativity and the focus on primary
processes and control-oriented management. Third, when the processes of organizational ideation (at Pentascope, for example) are evaluated, we would expect the consultants to be focused on their own primary processes as well. A quote (from an anonymous consultant) was that ‘[as a consultant] you are on earth to be with your client. . . .’

With regard to Pentascope’s organizational ideation, we have seen that the issues at hand were broadly recognized and the arguments for selection predictable on the basis of general business criteria. Creativity is hard to Taylorize, as Florida (2002) mentions, so creativity must be highlighted and communicated openly. The perception of creativity forms an important asset for one’s public image as well, important for acquiring clients and for recruiting new consultants, who are needed to continue the strategy of creative expertise.

If the organization fails to live up to its creative image, its credibility will be severely questioned. It is therefore necessary to play up the image, while, at the same time, raising the degree of creativity. A culture of enthusiasm by itself is just not good enough. The key for development would be for the organization to take its own creativity seriously so it could lead from a culture of enthusiasm to productive play—remaining enthusiastic and playful, but truly embodying the image that is so nicely projected.

From the perspective of the national level, specialization among organizations with regard to creativity is probably a good thing. It corresponds to an increasing division of labour and specialization and adds value to knowledge processes. In the short term, the pitfall of frontstage creativity needs to be avoided wherever possible. The main way to operate in such a situation would be to employ a form of idea management (either with or without a computer-aided system, but in such a way that employees have a number of organizational routes through which they can develop their ideas). Another way would be to allocate support to selected ideas. An innovation or stimulation fund could be an easy way to enhance these processes. As ideas are often taken up by consultants that sit ‘on the couch’, continuity is an important issue for these internal ideas, which could probably best be handled by management.

**Bringing creativity back in**

There appears to have been an acceleration over the last few decades with regard to the concept of creativity. Developments in society as well as developments within organizations have contributed to this, leading to a diversification of strategies with regard to creative processes, as we have seen here. In the search for survival, many organizations have cut their infrastructure to the bone in order to get as lean and mean as they think the market wants them
to be—focusing on cost reduction, economies of scale, mergers, and primary processes. As part of this process, many organizations have outsourced their creativity with the result that creative processes have been objectified.

Focusing on primary processes and actively neglecting, repressing, or outsourcing creative processes has led to some fundamental problems. First, when you lack both the manpower and the brainpower to innovate, it becomes difficult to innovate yourself; you become dependent upon external parties. Second, in the process of becoming dependent, you lose insight into the organization’s own innovative processes. External parties, by definition, miss the links with these primary processes. Outsourcing creativity is tantamount to giving away one’s heart and brains. This combines with the third issue, that outsourcing creativity is against human nature. It is impossible to be creative at home and not creative at work, and vice versa. It is impossible to carry out processes and not learn from them and improve them. Stripping an organization to the bone means losing these learning experiences and alienating Taylorized employees, leaving them to autistic managers who are only good at top-down decision making. In the end, it will alienate employees from their work and their clients.

On the other side of the coin, an organization that serves as a creativity specialist, like Pentascope, has its own characteristic processes (as we have seen). Such organizations tend to get stuck in their own primary processes, emphasizing their frontstage creativity, but when we look at them closely, it is hard to find any real creativity.

It would seem logical to bring creativity back in. But this involves some conditional factors that must be met first, among which should be, primarily, establishing a culture of learning and innovation. When people engage in their work, they automatically learn. Outsourcing creativity means that this knowledge is lost, whereas it would be welcomed in a culture of learning and innovation. A second conditional factor would be the role of engagement, attachment, and commitment. These concepts are closely related and partly overlap, but they are used together deliberately because they form the heart of learning processes. In many cases, this commitment is there but there is little room for acting on it, which could be made possible by providing more opportunities for communication (horizontal, vertical, and cross-departmental). From these learning experiences, bottom-up initiatives would be unleashed and stimulated, which, instead of repressing engagement and commitment, demands it. In addition, people might be included and involved in change processes.

These conditional factors can improve commitment, engagement, and attachment as identity-forming processes that contribute to job satisfaction, which can unleash and improve
social creativity. This lies at the heart of organizational innovation. In other words, this is a plea to bring creativity back into the organization.

**Improving idea management**

Idea management is an important tool for developing and improving creative processes in organizations. Organizations that do not have an idea-management system should consider whether implementation of such a system would be useful. Idea-management systems do not have to be regarded merely as computer-based tools; the basic concept is how ideas are handled throughout the organization. It is worth mentioning that computer-based idea-management systems are readily available nowadays. It is also interesting to note that governmental organizations are in the process of introducing idea-management systems. The idea-management system *Eureka!* at Corus functions very well but could be improved.

First, the whole notion of idea management rests on the concept of ‘idea’, which is not a clear concept, as we discussed in the chapter about idea management. Alternative procedures can be developed. For example, a distinction between ‘mental aggregates’ (very rough ideas) and ‘configurations’ (finished, polished ideas) could be very useful. At present, the concept of idea management is based on finished ideas, whereas the *development* of these ideas might be of interest as well. If the process of ideation were incorporated into the idea-management system, hidden alternatives, uncovered routes, and imaginative concepts could be further explored and exploited. Another way to develop idea-management systems would be to expand them in terms of the people involved: to encompass groups such as departments, organizations, networks, regions, and perhaps, nations or beyond. A third way to expand idea-management systems would be to incorporate knowledge-sharing practices into it. Obviously, idea management rests on the development of knowledge—all sorts of knowledge. Idea management could be stimulated by accelerating knowledge exchange. The fourth way to expand idea-management systems would be to incorporate creative thinking. The idea-management system at Corus has a section for ‘opportunity scouting’ in it. This is very good because users can actively use the system in their quest for new ideas. But there are many more possibilities, such as using trends, TRIZ\(^{39}\), and other creative-thinking techniques. These four suggestions can be explored and incorporated into existing idea-management systems, thereby improving their influence, impact, and results.

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I have two additional remarks to make about these suggestions, one about the creative climate and one about the implied interactions. With regard to the creative climate, it should be noted that ideas are always embedded in a context, so they vary with the frames of reference of those involved. The process of idea management, therefore, must be linked to the creative climate and the creative processes.

The other remark is connected to the first one and involves the embedding of idea management in the whole process of an organization’s ideational infrastructure. What insights exist in the creative processes in the organization? Which procedures play a role? What kinds of meetings, work-related debates, or points of address are there? How do interactions take place at these different levels and in what ways do these contribute to the perception of standing and trust of the participating actors? What criteria are used to manage employees and managers? How are creative processes a part of job descriptions? And, how are all these stimulating, well-meant initiatives administered? In other words, it is important to integrate the idea-management system into the organization in order to benefit most fully from its potential.

For example, when standing is found to be important at Corus, standing-expressive instruments could be fostered: for example, researchers keeping a blog of their work, rooms that have not just the employee’s name on the door but a box with some souvenirs of past achievements and a list of coming events, expositions about important events coming up in the next quarter, informal gatherings to stimulate networking across departments and business units.

**Role of leadership**

In this research some elements on the role of leadership have been found. The role of leadership in the three cases that were researched is very different. In order to improve creative processes the three organizational strategies for creative processes can be used: moving towards productive play, bringing creativity back in, implementing idea management, moving towards total and integrated idea management. When using idea management it seems necessary to combine this with a fund from which certain elements of idea enrichment can be paid. From the case of Corus it could also be learned that the role of software played an important role, so this would mean that leadership should invest in up to date means. Furthermore from the Corus case it can be learned that despite the economic turmoil, management has not reduced on R&D costs and this continuity is very important. Other elements that played a role in these cases were a culture of learning and engagement. What
could be improved is the communication between researchers and the Business Units. The
enrichment phase can be understood as a “warm bath”, but the acceptance of ideas by the
Business Units is quite another story. Management could provide for means to enhance
communication between these different parts of the organization. From the Pentascope case it
can be learned that organizational fit plays an important role in the success rate of ideas. This
would mean that Management could contribute to creative processes in the way they
communicate their strategy and the implications it has. One could take this point further and
ask management to provide for an organizational innovation agenda. A question could be
raised as to what degree management wants innovation to be top down, bottom up or a
combination. Finally leadership could enhance creative processes by providing opportunities
for employees to deal with standing, trust, testimony and favourite interaction.

The future of idea management
The future of idea management is linked with the direction that organizations want to take.
Because innovation is a priority, idea management has the potential to develop further. Also,
there are more computer programmes available for idea management. Besides, people and
organizations get used to the practice of idea management and the continuing digitalization of
data bases stimulates the availability of information. So the conditions for further growth of
idea management practices are there.

In the development of idea management I see three challenges. The biggest challenge
will be to make idea management suitable for non-technical problems. At the moment
computer related idea management practices are mainly associated with technical ideas. The
reason for it may be that they can be better described. It would be interesting if these
programmes could be designed in such a way that non-technical ideas also could be handled.
With the state of software that is available nowadays, this must be possible.

Another challenge would be to think across existing organizational lines and to
develop idea management practices between organizations, governments, municipalities,
educational institutions, entrepreneurial individuals and so on. A third challenge is in the
integration of idea management practices, computer related or not, into organizations. Idea
management is not just a matter of technology and money, it is also a cultural issue.
Especially for small organizations, where investment in an idea management programme
seems out of reach, it is important to bear in mind that idea management is not about
computers only. It is about all sorts of activity that carry ideas further into the organization.
A probable way of how idea management practices might evolve in the coming years is through the path of diversity. The concept of idea management can be adjusted in different domains and get their own form, ranging from “the best idea of the Netherlands” to solutions through the internet on sites like jovoto and other forms of crowd sourcing and co-creation. Different configurations can appropriate the forms that are best adapted to their needs. As different forms of idea management evolve academics from different fields can evaluate what the best ways are to operate idea management systems in terms of experts, rewards, financial investments and so on.

Theory development

In the second and third chapter of this paper, there was an overview about theoretical insights on creativity—insights into aspects of creative processes. However, because these theories are not integrated with one another, they provide us with only fragmentary understanding. In order to stimulate creativity, it is clear that better-integrated views on creativity must be developed. In this section, I would like to share some ideas on how this could be done, looking at the operationalization of creativity, the definition of creativity, creativity as a social process, and the paradox between management and creativity.

First, I have operationalized creative processes as the exchange of ideas. In the literature, coming up with ideas and trying to implement them is seen as the core of creative processes. The term ‘idea management’ can be understood as a symbol of this. We can ask, however, whether creative processes equal idea exchange or whether other processes are involved as well. For example, complaining or expressing dissatisfaction can be an interesting start for improvement, but at that stage, there are no solutions. Raising questions, shifting attention to other than mainstream processes, questioning strategies, preferences, motivation, and commitment, just to mention a few issues, also influence creative processes. As does the relationship between people and the ideas they have, including the consequences these ideas have for their careers or future perspectives.

A second point that should be raised is the question of the definition of creativity. Amabile’s (1983) definition, which links ideas to the concepts of novelty and appropriateness, is widely accepted, and also used in this research, but neither novelty nor appropriateness are as uncomplicated as they seem. Tassoul (2009) has investigated the interjudge reliability (the consistency of results when judged by different individuals) of experts for creative ideas. And

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40 This is a popular TV programme in the Netherlands (Het beste idee van Nederland).
although these people are experts, the interjudge reliability is very low, which has to make us rethink the value of Amabile’s definition in daily use.

Another question with regard to definition would be in what way ethics play a role. Is finding a new way to steal or to kill creative? In discussions on innovation and creativity, there seems to be a rosy hue around innovation: it is seen as a positive thing, contributing to our wealth and security. But this can be a naïve point of view.

Third, creativity and innovation are social processes to a large degree. I think the locus of creativity model by Csikszentmihalyi, the LOA model, and Giddens’ concept of knowledgeability, which were all used in this research, provide interesting insights. But more work needs to be done on innovative and creative processes as social processes. Here, the focus was on variables with regard to interaction. This should be developed further to see if there are more factors that influence these processes and how these different variables influence one another. It would be challenging to combine insights from creativity theory with insights from the social sciences to increase our understanding of creative and innovative processes. For example, in the literature, it is emphasized that creative processes challenge authority, but I did not find this to be the case: creative processes seemed to strengthen authority. Other effects that I found were that any measures taken in organizations have unforeseen consequences, which is predicted by the theory of structuration. So if theory claims that enthusiasm is important, people will be enthusiastic and develop a culture of enthusiasm that, rather than emphasizing creativity, becomes frontstage creativity. And if theory emphasizes the importance of idea management—backed up with funds and implemented—political games about the allocation of resources develop.

Finally, there should be more understanding about the creativity/management paradox. Managers could attempt to understand creative processes in the same terms as rewards: in other words, a theory on a meta level that has a symmetrical vocabulary so that the participants can be understood from their different points of view. The tension between creative employees and management is not just a barrier, but provides interesting occasions to shed light on the dynamics of organizations and their intermediate levels, as well as the role of governmental organizations.

**Overview and conclusions**

The three cases studied in this research illustrate different strategies around creativity. Pentascope presented itself as an organization with creativity ‘in its genes’—as a ‘creative specialist’. The paradox is that Pentascope advises organizations that focus only on primary
processes, but it gets caught up in its own primary processes as well, which creates serious problems with legitimation and their raison d’être. In the long run and on a large scale, organizational specialization and a division of creative labour is probably a good thing, but in the short run, the pitfall of frontstage creativity might better be avoided. This can be done by evolving from a culture of enthusiasm to one of productive play by simply accomplishing the things that have already been so nicely formulated.

Ter Weel appears as an organization where creativity is actively constrained. Creativity exists among committed employees, but managers do not encourage it. Government regulations force them to think in terms of economies of scale and acquiring certificates in order to make them ‘transparent’. Although Ter Weel is a public organization rather than a private one, it seems to be an organization that focuses on primary processes. Rather that rejecting creative processes, a far better strategy would be to bring creativity back in, starting with the conditional factors mentioned above, such as establishing a culture of learning and innovation; welcoming and supporting engagement, attachment, and commitment; providing opportunities for communication (horizontal, vertical, and cross-departmental); unleashing and stimulating bottom-up initiatives; and involving employees in processes of change.

Corus, on the other hand, employed its own research strategies, developed an innovation fund with an idea-management system, and continued taking control over its own creative processes. I have two suggestions for improving idea management by intensifying this procedure: first, by stretching the concept to include ‘mental aggregates’, processes of knowledge and ideas at different stages, as well as other departments, organizations, and even regions or nations—to move in a direction of ‘total idea management’. These procedures can be integrated with creative processes so that the input becomes part of a large-scale creative process. The second suggestion is to integrate the idea-management system with other parts of the organization’s ideational infrastructure, such as meetings, procedures, policies, job descriptions, and the like. This is called ‘integrated idea management’.

The case of Ter Weel shows us that there is a large volume of creativity in organizations, but we have also seen that this creativity is not sufficiently taken advantage of.

The current mantra in the Netherlands—that we must innovate and work on our knowledge economy—is not reflected in the organizational praxis. Some organizations, like Corus, do take it seriously. But many do not, or just simply deny it. It seems that a new myth has risen, based on thinking about the role of creativity in the economy: an ‘econo-myth’, if you will. Of course, creativity is important for the economy, but talking about it does not help.
It is dangerous to think that we can survive as a knowledge economy and that other countries like China and India will remain in their places as manufacturing economies and not make the step towards becoming knowledge economies themselves. The preparations for this leap are already well on their way.

In short, what is needed is to unleash creativity in the Netherlands, both in organizational environments and also outside these environments, at regional levels and on a national scale. This calls for a mixed approach:

1. Creativity should be brought back into the organization and frontstage creativity should be turned into productive forms of creativity.
2. Idea-management practices should be widely stimulated and improved, both in organizations and at other levels, such as between organizations, in municipalities, among regions, and at the national and supra-national level.
3. There is a need for more adequate theories on creativity. Creativity can no longer be regarded as solely a psychological subject; it is also a social process requiring social theories.
SUMMARY

Over the last several years, there has been increasing interest in the concept of creativity, with a dramatic increase in the number of books, training programmes and internet sites on the subject. However, I have noted that the environmental or contextual aspects of creative processes have received less attention than they deserve. Therefore my research builds further on the locus of creativity model by Csikszentmihalyi (1988) in which creativity is regarded as more than a merely individual cognitive process. In this research I take an intersubjective view of creativity: creative processes are understood as social behaviour involving the exchange of ideas, and the concept of ‘interaction’ is used as the root factor of the sensitizing concepts of standing, trust, testimony and favourite interaction. These four sensitizing concepts form the red threat for this research that is based on the study of literature and fieldwork in three Dutch organizations: Pentascope, Ter Weel and Corus. I have observed that organizations have large numbers of ideas hanging around, even when creativity is not encouraged—and these ideas are spread through the organization in an uneven way.

With regard to horizontal idea exchange—the way ideators deal with their ideas in regard to their colleagues—I have observed that employees want to communicate their ideas to their managers, which indicates that the concept of a horizontal organization is relative. Also, having an image of organizational creativity and taking creative processes seriously are two different things. The concept of ‘frontstage creativity’ is introduced for the case where the importance of creativity was communicated but the organizational structure to facilitate creativity was absent.

With regard to vertical idea exchange—the way ideators deal with their ideas with regard to leaders—we found that leaders who find ideas more important, who have higher trust in their employees’ competence, who feel that the ideas are expressed more convincingly, and who document ideas and reward ideators more often (in other words, those who demonstrate favourite interaction)—receive the highest volume of ideas. Those leaders who only show high trust in goodwill receive a low volume of ideation; this was interpreted as an example of ‘frontstage creativity’.

From this research, it is clear that it is advantageous for organizations to have a computer-based idea-management system that is backed up with resources and a selection committee. Idea evolution is not only about the process itself, but also about defining the road and organizing the means. Having an idea-management system through which means are
allocated introduces political dimensions, however. Hence, timing, reputation, lobbying and negotiation become important.

The stages of ideation can be labelled as the creating, selling and funding phases, which correspond with changing sets of actors. The concept of ‘match’, which is regarded as a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved, is suggested to help focus on the processes within these phases. This analysis resulted in a model: the crea-political process model, in which creative and socio-political processes are linked, and in which the management of creative processes is understood as part of these multi-faceted and interrelated processes.

This research shows that it is fruitful to regard creativity as a social process and that the variables for interaction that were used as sensitizing concepts in this study (namely, standing, trust, testimony and favourite interaction) are important to the way ideas evolve within organizations. Furthermore, contrary to the existing literature, this research has shown no evidence that the existence of a hierarchy undermines any aspects of creative processes. Ideators came up with relevant ideas that did not threaten existing power relationships.

The central research question is: How do actors construct and manage their ideas in different professional organizations and how do organizational conditions enable and constrain them? This question was reformulated for each of the three cases.

For Pentascope, the questions is: How do ideas unfold at Pentascope, an organization without idea management? This case was selected to probe the horizontal exchange of ideas. The consultants, however, wanted to communicate their ideas to their manager, but the ideator would usually be asked to ‘do something with it [the idea]’. Not only managers, but also other employees reacted very positively to new ideas. This enthusiasm was described as the ‘enthusiasm loop’ because there was a feeling that there were time constraints: ideators had to organize their own support, which did not necessarily mean that they would be given the means to follow through on their ideas.

It may be noted that there were no fixed routes for idea evolution found at Pentascope. Idea evolution, therefore, is not only about the process itself, but also about defining the road. In addition, the primary business of the organization—to have projects with clients—was given priority, which could frustrate internal ideational processes. There were no explicit criteria for ideas. ‘Idea fit’ (the degree of fit between the idea and the organizational strategy), good testimony, good standing and support from one’s direct supervisor were observed to be important. Psychological issues also played a role, arising in such questions as, Why are you the right person to do this? Does it ‘give energy’ or does it ‘feel good’?
The best indicators for ideational success at Pentascope was how well the idea fit into the organization’s strategy. It was also observed that the ideas that people were working on were very general, or widely shared, to put it mildly. Taken together, this justifies labelling the creative process at Pentascope as ‘frontstage activity’.

For Ter Weel, the question is: \textit{What is the volume of vertical organizational ideation in Ter Weel and what is the importance of the perceived quality of the ideas and of trust?} The estimated volume of ideas at Ter Weel was about 1500 ideas per year, which was about two ideas per employee per year. This was something of a surprise, because hardly any encouragement of creativity was observed, and the ideas were very unevenly spread around the organization. The team leaders who received the highest volume of ideas found ideas more important, had higher trust in their employees’ competence, felt the ideas were expressed more convincingly, documented ideas more often and rewarded ideators more often. This was not just a verbally expressed ‘importance’; it was unconsciously put into action. With regard to trust in goodwill, the relationship was inverted: high trust in goodwill was correlated with low volumes of ideation. This was interpreted as an example of frontstage creativity. The ideational inhibitions were linked to the concept of knowledgeability.

For Corus, the question is: \textit{How do employees from Corus RD&T experience the idea-management system Eureka!?} From the Corus case, it is clear that it is advantageous for organizations to have a computer-based idea-management system that is backed up with a stimulation fund. However, having such a facility introduces political dimensions. The timing of submitting a project, the reputation of the researcher, and lobbying activities become important. Ideas do not come up or evolve in isolation; they are the outcome of negotiation. The stages of ideation at Corus can be labelled as the creating, selling and funding phases, which correspond with changing sets of actors. The concept of ‘match’, a positive relationship between the testimony and the actors involved, was suggested to help focus on the processes within these phases. This information resulted in a sensitizing model: the crea-political process model, in which creative and socio-political processes are linked and in which the management of creative processes is understood as part of these multi-faceted and interrelated processes.

The last research question is formulated as: \textit{How can the observed processes of interaction with regard to creativity be analyzed and interpreted in terms of the theoretical framework?} The structuration theory of Giddens (1984) was used to theoretically overcome the difficult relationship between individual creativity on the one hand and the constraining and enabling elements of the organizational structural on the other. Giddens’ concept of knowledgeability was helpful in this. The LOA model by Drazin, Glynn and Kazanjian
(1999) was helpful in delineating creative processes and demarcating the field of the intersubjective level as different from the traditional fields of the intrasubjective and collective levels. However, because the theories that were used in this research are not integrated with one another, they provide us with only fragmentary understanding. The term ‘frontstage creativity’ was borrowed from Veenswijk (2005) to help explain observations at Pentascope and Ter Weel.

In this research, the focus was on social processes, which proved to be an interesting approach. And the choice of the four sensitizing concepts (standing, trust, testimony and favourite interaction) proved to be an interesting one. These four sensitizing concepts were found to be very important in creative organizational processes.

Some questions remain open. Do creative processes equal idea exchange or are other processes involved as well? For example, complaining or expressing dissatisfaction can be an interesting start for improvement, but at that stage, there are no solutions.

There is also the question of the definition of creativity. Amabile’s (1983) definition, which links ideas to the concepts of novelty and appropriateness, is widely accepted and also used in this research, but neither novelty nor appropriateness are as uncomplicated as they seem.

A third question with regard to definition would be how ethics play a role. Is finding a new way to steal or to kill creative? In discussions on innovation and creativity, there seems to be a rosy hue around innovation: it is seen as a positive thing, contributing to our wealth and security. But this can be a naïve point of view.

In the literature, it is emphasized that creative processes challenge authority, but I did not find this to be the case: creative processes seemed to strengthen authority. Unforeseen consequences, predicted by the theory of structuration, play a role. If theory claims that enthusiasm is important, people will be enthusiastic and develop a culture of enthusiasm that, rather than emphasizing creativity, becomes frontstage creativity. And if theory emphasizes the importance of idea management—backed up with funds and implemented—political games about the allocation of resources develop.

Finally, there are some suggestions for the future management of creativity. What is needed is to unleash creativity in the Netherlands—in organizations and beyond—at regional levels and on a national scale. This calls for a mixed approach, where creativity should first be brought back into the organization, and frontstage creativity should be turned into a more productive form. Second, idea-management practices should be widely stimulated and improved in organizations, between organizations, in municipalities, among regions and at the national and supra-national level. The process of idea-management can be improved by
relating it to creative thinking, knowledge management and by integrating it in the organizational idea structure. And finally, there is a need for more adequate theories on creativity. Creativity can no longer be regarded as solely a psychological subject, but creativity and innovation must also be regarded as social processes requiring social theories.
SAMENVATTING

De laatste jaren is er een toenemende belangstelling voor het begrip creativiteit. Dit blijkt uit een substantiële toename in het aantal boeken, trainingsprogramma’s en internet sites over dit onderwerp. Ik heb echter wel geconstateerd dat de omgeving of context van creatieve processen relatief onderbelicht is gebleven. Mijn onderzoek bouwt derhalve voort op het locus of creativity model van Csikszentmihalyi (1988) waarin creativiteit als meer dan enkel een individueel cognitief proces wordt opgevat. In mijn onderzoek volg ik een intersubjectieve benadering van creativiteit: creatieve processen worden opgevat als sociaal gedrag waarin ideeën uitgewisseld worden en het concept interactie is gebruikt als de kernfactor voor de sensitizing concepts standing, vertrouwen, testimony en favourite interaction. Deze vier sensitizing concepts vormen de leidraad voor dit onderzoek dat is gebaseerd op literatuurstudie en veldwerk in drie Nederlandse organisaties: Pentascope, Ter Weel en Corus. Ik heb geobserveerd dat er grote aantallen ideeën rond organisaties hangen, ook wanneer creativiteit niet wordt aangemoedigd—en deze ideeën zijn ongeldig over de organisaties verdeeld.

Met betrekking tot horizontale idee uitwisseling—de manier waarop ideators met hun ideeën omgaan in relatie met hun collega’s—is er geconstateerd dat werknemers hun ideeën graag communiceren aan hun managers, wat impliceert dat het begrip ‘horizontale organisatie’ een relatief begrip is. Bovendien is er het verschil tussen het hebben van een creatief imago en het serieus ondersteunen van creativiteit. Het begrip frontstage creativiteit is geïntroduceerd daar waar het belang van creativiteit werd gecommuniceerd, terwijl de organisationele structuren om creativiteit te stimuleren absent waren.

Met betrekking tot verticale idee uitwisseling—de manier waarop ideators met hun ideeën omgaan in relatie met hun leiders—heb ik geobserveerd dat leiders die ideeën belangrijker vinden, die een hoger vertrouwen hebben in de competenties van hun werknemers, die vinden dat ideeën overtuigender worden gebracht, die ideeën vaker documenteren en die ideators vaker belonen (met andere woorden, zij die favourite interaction demonstreren)—ontvangen de hoogste volumes aan ideeën. Leiders die enkel vertrouwen hebben in de goodwill van hun werknemers ontvangen lagere volumes aan ideeën, dit is ook geïnterpreteerd als frontstage creativiteit.

Op basis van dit onderzoek is het duidelijk geworden dat het een voordeel is voor organisaties om een computerondersteund ideemanagementsysteem te hebben dat wordt
geruggensteund door een commissie en met middelen. Idee evolutie gaat niet enkel over het proces zelf, maar ook over het definiëren van de te nemen weg en het organiseren van de benodigde middelen. Het hebben van een ideeemanagementsysteem waarlangs middelen gedistribueerd worden introduceert echter wel politieke dimensies. Daarmee worden timing, reputatie, lobbyen en onderhandelen belangrijk. De beste graadmeter voor het succes van ideeën bij Pentascope was hoe goed het idee paste binnen de organisatiestrategie. Ook werd er geobserveerd dat de ideeën waar mensen aan werkten, namelijk algemeen of breed gedragen waren. Samen rechtvaardigt dit de conclusie om creatieve processen bij Pentascope in zekere zin op te vatten als *frontstage* creativiteit.

De fasen van ideeontwikkeling kunnen gelabeld worden als de creatiefase, de verkoopfase en de ondersteuningsfase, die elk corresponderen met wisselende combinaties van actoren. Het concept *match*, dat opgevat wordt als een positieve relatie tussen een testimony en de betrokken actoren, is voorgesteld om focus te bieden op de processen binnen deze fasen. De analyse resulteerde in een model: het crea-politieke proces model, waarin een overlap is van creatieve en socio-politieke processen en waarin het management van creatieve processen opgevat wordt als onderdeel van deze veelzijdige en elkaar wederzijds beïnvloedende processen.

In dit onderzoek is het vruchtbaar gebleken creativiteit op te vatten als een sociaal proces en dat de interactievariabelen die in deze studie als sensitizing concepts werden gebruikt (namelijk standing, vertrouwen, testimony en favourite interaction) belangrijk zijn tijdens het proces waarin ideeën binnen organisaties evolueren. Verder werd er, in tegenstelling tot de bestaande literatuur, tijdens dit onderzoek geen bewijs gevonden voor de opvatting dat creativiteit de hiërarchie ondermijnt. Ideators kwamen met relevante ideeën die de bestaande machtsstructuren niet bedreigden.

De centrale vraagstelling luidt: **Hoe construeren en managen actoren hun ideeën in verschillende professionele organisaties en op welke manieren maken organisationele voorwaarden dit mogelijk of belemmeren zij dit?** Deze vraag is voor iedere casus geherformuleerd.

Voor Pentascope is de onderzoeksvraag: **Hoe ontwouwen ideeën zich bij Pentascope, een organisatie zonder idee management?** Deze casus was geselecteerd om dieper in te gaan op de horizontale idee uitwisseling. De consultants wilden evenwel graag hun ideeën communiceren naar hun managers en de *ideator* werd doorgaans aangemoedigd ‘iets’ met zijn of haar idee te doen. Niet alleen de managers, maar ook de andere werknemers reageerden erg positief op nieuwe ideeën. Dit enthousiasme is omschreven als de ‘enthousiasme loop’, omdat
er een gevoel was van tijdschaarste: ideators moesten namelijk hun eigen steun organiseren en als ze die hadden betekende dat nog niet dat ze dan de benodigde middelen kregen.


Voor Ter Weel is de onderzoeks vraag: *Wat is het volume van verticale organisationele ideeervorming in Ter Weel en wat is het belang van de ervaren kwaliteit van ideeën en van vertrouwen?* Het geschatte volume van ideeën in Ter Weel ligt op ongeveer 1500 ideeën per jaar, wat neerkomt op ongeveer 2 ideeën per werknemer per jaar. Dit was een verrassing, aangezien er nauwelijks enige vorm van aanmoediging van creativiteit was geobserveerd. De ideeën waren erg ongelijk over de organisatie verdeeld. De teamleiders die de hoogste volumes van ideeën ontvingen, hadden meer vertrouwen in de competenties van hun medewerkers, vonden dat de ideeën overtuigender werden geuit, documenteerden de ideeën vaker en beloonden de ideators vaker. Dit was niet enkel een kwestie van verbaal uiten van ‘belangrijkheid’, maar het werd onbewust in de praktijk gebracht. Met betrekking tot vertrouwen in de goodwill was de relatie omgekeerd: een hoge score op vertrouwen in goodwill correleerde met lagere volumes aan ideeën. Dit werd geïnterpreteerd als *frontstage* creativiteit. De verschillende manieren van omgaan met ideeervorming werden toegeschreven aan het concept *knowledgeability*.

Voor Corus RD&T is de onderzoeks vraag: *Hoe ervaren de werknemers van Corus RD&T het ideemanagementsysteem Eureka!?* Uit de Corus casus wordt het duidelijk dat het organisatie voordelen biedt om te beschikken over een computerondersteund ideemanagementsysteem dat geruggensteund wordt door een stimulatiefonds. Evenwel wordt hiermee een politieke dimensie geïntroduceerd. De timing wanneer een project wordt ingediend, de reputatie van de onderzoeker en lobby activiteiten worden belangrijk. Ideeën komen niet geïsoleerd op; ze zijn het resultaat van onderhandeling. De fasen van ideeervorming bij Corus kunnen gelabeld worden als de creatiefase, de verkoopfase en de ondersteuningsfase, die elk corresponderen met wisselende combinaties van actoren. Het
concept *match*, dat opgevat wordt als een positieve relatie tussen een *testimony* en de betrokken actoren, is voorgesteld om focus te bieden op de processen binnen deze fasen. Deze informatie resulteerde in een model: het crea-politieke proces model, waarin een overlap is van creatieve en socio-politieke processen en waarin het management van creatieve processen opgevat wordt als onderdeel van deze veelzijdige en elkaar wederzijds beïnvloedende processen.

De laatste onderzoeksvraag is geformuleerd als: **Hoe kunnen de geobserveerde processen van interactie met betrekking tot creativiteit geanalyseerd en geïnterpreteerd worden in termen van het theoretisch framework?** De structuratieetheorie van Giddens (1984) is gebruikt om theoretisch de lastige relatie tussen individuele creativiteit aan de ene en de beperkende en mogelijkheden biedende elementen van de organisationele structuur aan de andere kant het hoofd te bieden. Giddens’ concept van knowledgeability was hierbij nuttig. Het LOA model van Drazin, Glynn en Kazanjian (1999) was bruikbaar om creatieve processen uit te tekenen en het veld van intersubjectieve creativiteit af te bakenen van de traditionele intrasubjectieve en collectieve niveau’s.

Omdat de theorieën die in dit onderzoek gebruikt zijn niet met elkaar zijn geïntegreerd leveren zij ons tijdens dit onderzoek slechts gefragmenteerde inzichten. Het begrip *frontstage* creativiteit werd geleend van Veenswijk (2005) om observaties bij Pentascope en Ter Weel te verklaren.

In dit onderzoek lag het accent op sociale processen, wat een interessante invalshoek is gebleken. De keuze van de vier sensitizing concepts (*standing*, vertrouwen, *testimony* en *favourite interaction*) is heel handig geweest. Deze vier sensitizing concepts bleken erg belangrijk bij creatieve organisatieprocessen.

In de literatuur wordt het benadrukt dat creativiteit een uitdaging is voor autoriteit, maar dat heb ik in dit onderzoek niet kunnen bevestigen: creatieve processen leken autoriteit te versterken. Toevallige gevolgen, voorspeld door de structuratietheorie, spelen zeker een rol. Als theorie claimt dat enthousiasme belangrijk is zullen mensen hun enthousiasme tonen, een cultuur van enthousiasme ontwikkelen en in plaats van creativiteit te benadrukken zal het *frontstage* creativiteit worden. En als in de theorie het belang van ideemanagement wordt beklemtoond—gesteund door fondsen—zullen er zich politieke spelletjes ontwikkelen over de allocatie van middelen.

Tenslotte zijn er een aantal suggesties voor het toekomstige management van creativiteit. Wat nodig is, is om creativiteit in Nederland te ontketen—in organisaties—en er buiten—op regionale niveau’s, nationaal en internationaal. Hiervoor is een gemengde aanpak nodig, waarbij allereerst creativiteit terug gebracht wordt in de organisatie en *frontstage* creativiteit in meer productieve vormen wordt omgezet. Ten tweede zou ideemanagement gestimuleerd en verbeterd moeten worden in organisaties, tussen organisaties, in gemeenten, regio’s, nationaal en internationaal. Het proces van ideemanagement kan worden verbeterd door het te verbinden met creatief denken, kennismanagement en door het te integreren in de organisationele idee infrastructuur. Tenslotte is er behoefte aan meer adequate theorieën over creativiteit. Creativiteit kan niet langer beschouwd worden als een puur psychologisch onderwerp, maar creativiteit en innovatie moeten eveneens gezien worden als sociale processen die sociale theorieën nodig hebben.
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