



# **ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY - HEGEMONIC AND ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES**

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## SUMMARY

### Organizational creativity – hegemonic and alternative discourses

Over the course of recent developments in the societal and business environment, the concept of creativity has been brought into new arenas. The rise of ‘creative industries’ and the idea of creativity as a form of capital have attracted the interests of business and management professionals – as well as academics. As the notion of creativity has been adopted in the organization studies literature, the concept of organizational creativity has been introduced to refer to creativity that takes place in an organizational context. This doctoral thesis focuses on organizational creativity, and its purpose is *to explore and problematize the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse and to provide alternative viewpoints for theorizing about creativity in organizations*. Taking a discourse theory approach, this thesis, first, provides an outline of the currently predominant, i.e. *hegemonic*, discourse on organizational creativity, which is explored regarding themes, perspectives, methods and paradigms. Second, this thesis consists of five studies that act as illustrations of certain alternative viewpoints. Through these exemplary studies, this thesis sheds light on the limitations and taken-for-granted aspects of the hegemonic discourse and discusses what these alternative viewpoints could offer for the understanding of and theorizing for organizational creativity.

This study leans on an assumption that the development of organizational creativity knowledge and the related discourse is not inevitable or progressive but rather contingent. The organizational creativity discourse has developed in a certain direction, meaning that some themes, perspectives, and methods, as well as assumptions, values, and objectives, have gained a hegemonic position over others, and are therefore often taken for granted and considered valid and relevant. The hegemonization of certain aspects, however, contributes to the marginalization of others.

The thesis concludes that the hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity is based on an extensive coverage of certain themes and perspectives, such as those focusing on individual cognitive processes, motivation, or organizational climate and their relation to creativity, to name a few. The limited focus on some themes and the confinement to certain prevalent perspectives, however, results in the marginalization of other themes and perspectives. The negative, often unintended, consequences, implications, and side effects of creativity, the factors that might hinder or prevent creativity, and a deeper inquiry into the ontology and epistemology of creativity have attracted relatively marginal interest. The material embeddedness of organizational creativity, in other words, the physical organizational environment as well as the human body and its non-cognitive resources, has largely been overlooked in the hegemonic discourse, although there

are studies in this area that give reason to believe that they might prove relevant for the understanding of creativity. The hegemonic discourse is based on an individual-centered understanding of creativity which overattributes creativity to an individual and his/her cognitive capabilities, while simultaneously neglecting how, for instance, the physical environment, artifacts, social dynamics and interactions condition organizational creativity.

Due to historical reasons, quantitative as well as qualitative yet functionally-oriented studies have predominated the organizational creativity discourse, although studies falling into the interpretationist paradigm have gradually become more popular. The two radical paradigms, as well as methodological and analytical approaches typical of radical research, can be considered to hold a marginal position in the field of organizational creativity.

The hegemonic organizational creativity discourse has provided extensive findings related to many aspects of organizational creativity, although the conceptualizations and understandings of organizational creativity in the hegemonic discourse are also in many respects limited and one-sided. The hegemonic discourse is based on an assumption that creativity is desirable, good, necessary, or even obligatory, and should be encouraged and nourished. The conceptualizations of creativity favor the kind of creativity which is useful, valuable and can be harnessed for productivity. The current conceptualization is limited to the type of creativity that is *acceptable* and fits the managerial ideology, and washes out any risky, seemingly useless, or negative aspects of creativity. It also limits the possible meanings and representations that 'creativity' has in the respective discourse, excluding many meanings of creativity encountered in other discourses. The excessive focus on creativity that is good, positive, productive and fits the managerial agenda while ignoring other forms and aspects of creativity, however, contributes to the dilution of the notion. Practices aimed at encouraging the kind of creativity may actually entail a risk of fostering moderate alterations rather than more radical novelty, as well as management and organizational practices which limit creative endeavors, rather than increase their likelihood.

The thesis concludes that although not often given the space and attention they deserve, there are alternative conceptualizations and understandings of organizational creativity which embrace a broader notion of creativity. The inability to accommodate the 'other' understandings and viewpoints within the organizational creativity discourse runs a risk of misrepresenting the complex and many-sided phenomenon of creativity in organizational context.

Keywords: Organizational creativity, creativity, organization studies, discourse theory, hegemony

## TIIVISTELMÄ

### Organisatorinen luovuus – hegemoninen diskurssi ja vaihtoehtoisia tarkastelutapoja

Luovuuden käsite on noussut keskusteluun uusilla areenoilla viimeaikaisten yhteiskunnallisten ja talouselämän muutosten seurauksena. Luovien toimialojen tuottaman taloudellisen lisäarvon tunnistaminen sekä erityisesti luovuuden näkeminen yritysten ja yksilöiden pääomana ovat nostaneet luovuuden käsitteen myös yritysmaailman mielenkiinnon kohteeksi. Kiinnostusta luovuuteen on ilmennyt myös organisaatiotutkimuksen parissa, jossa on otettu käyttöön käsite organisatorinen luovuus kuvaamaan erityisesti organisaatiokontekstissa tapahtuvaa luovuutta.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkastelukohteena on organisatorinen luovuus, ja työn tarkoituksena on *tarkastella ja problematisoida organisatorisen luovuuden hegemonista diskurssia sekä tarjota vaihtoehtoisia tarkastelutapoja organisatorisen luovuuden tutkimukselle*. Tutkimus pohjautuu yhdistelmään laadullista empiiristä tutkimusta sekä diskurssiteoreettista tutkimusta. Diskurssiteoreettisella tutkimusotteella jäsennellään luovuuden tutkimuksen kenttää ja tunnistetaan luovuuden vallitseva, toisin sanoen hegemoninen, diskurssi, jota problematisoidaan neljän näkökannan kautta. Näitä ovat teemat, näkökulmat, metodit ja paradigmat. Tutkimus koostuu viidestä osatutkimuksesta, jotka voidaan nähdä esimerkkeinä vaihtoehtoisista tarkastelutavoista ja joiden avulla hegemonista diskurssia problematisoidaan. Kukin osatutkimus siis illustroi yhtä tai useampaa vaihtoehtoista teemaa, näkökulmaa, metodologiaa tai paradigmaa.

Tämä tutkimus perustuu oletukseen, että organisatorisen luovuuden diskurssin kehittyminen – aivan kuin minkä tahansa akateemisen diskurssin kehittyminen – ei ole progressiivista, vaan jossain määrin sattumanvaraista. Diskurssi on kehittyneet tiettyyn suuntaan, ja tietyt teemat, näkökulmat, metodit ja paradigmat ovat saaneet hegemonisen aseman toisiin nähden. Hegemonisen aseman saaneita tarkastelukulmia ja lähestymistapoja pidetään jokseenkin itsestään selvinä, relevantteina ja tärkeinä organisatorisen luovuuden tutkimuksessa. Näin ollen voidaan sanoa, että hegemoninen diskurssi onnistuu dominoimaan diskursiivista kenttää ja marginalisoimaan toisia, vaihtoehtoisia teemoja, näkökulmia, metodeita ja paradigmoja, jotka saattaisivat olla olennaisia organisatorisen luovuuden ymmärryksen kehittämisessä.

Tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan todeta, että hegemonisessa diskurssissa korostuvat tietyt teemat ja näkökulmat, kuten yksilön kognitiivisiin prosesseihin, motivaatioon sekä organisatoriseen ilmapiiriin liittyvät teemat ja luovuuden edistämisen pyrkimys. Sen sijaan useat teemat, kuten luovuuden negatiiviset seuraukset tai sen hyödyntäminen haitallisiin tarkoituksiin, luovuutta estävät ja

haittaavat tekijät sekä luovuuden luonteeseen liittyvät ontologiset ja epistemologiset kysymykset ovat jääneet vähäiselle huomiolle. Myös kehollisuus sekä fyysinen organisaatioympäristö ovat jääneet marginaaliin organisatorisen luovuuden tutkimuksessa, vaikka muutamien olemassa olevien tutkimusten pohjalta niillä voidaan olettaa olevan merkitystä ilmiön kannalta.

Osin historiallisten syiden takia organisatorisen luovuuden tutkimusta dominoivat kvantitatiiviset menetelmät sekä funktionalistinen orientaatio, joskin tulkinnalliset tutkimukset aiheesta ovat lisääntyneet viime vuosina. Kriittinen, radikaaleihin paradigmoihin pohjautuva tutkimus sekä siihen liittyvät metodologiset lähestymistavat ovat suhteellisen harvinaisia. Vaikka vallitseva organisatorisen luovuuden diskurssi on kyennyt lisäämään ymmärrystä monesta luovuuteen vaikuttavasta ja siihen liittyvästä seikasta, on hegemonisen diskurssin tarjoama ymmärrys luovuudesta monessa suhteessa rajoittunutta. Se tarkastelee luovuutta lähinnä yksilön ominaisuutena tai kyynä, eikä ota huomioon miten esimerkiksi fyysinen organisaatioympäristö, artefaktit tai sosiaalinen vuorovaikutus ja dynamiikka muovaavat ja ehdollistavat luovaa prosessia. Lisäksi hegemonisessa diskurssissa painottuu luovuus, joka on tuottavaa, hyödyllistä ja mahdollista valjastaa yrityksen hyödyksi. Hegemoninen diskurssi perustuu oletukselle, jonka mukaan luovuus on lähtökohtaisesti positiivinen ilmiö, joka on vapaasti hyödynnettävissä ja jolla ei ole negatiivisia vaikutuksia. Diskurssi on näin ollen rajautunut käsittämään vain luovuuden positiiviset puolet, ja poissulkenut kaikki sen negatiiviset ja haitalliset tai riskialttiit ja radikaalit puolet.

Tämän tutkimuksen pohjalta voidaan todeta, että vallitseva käsitys luovuudesta on monessa suhteessa rajoittunut ja kapea. Se pohjautuu yksiuolotteiseen käsitykseen luovuudesta, ja viittaa ainoastaan sellaiseen luovuuteen, joka on hyvää, positiivista ja taloudellisesti hyödynnettävää. Mikäli luovuus rajataan ainoastaan sellaisiin muotoihin, jotka ovat hegemonisen diskurssin näkökulmasta sallittuja, päädytään laimennettuun ja valjastettuun luovuuteen, joka saattaa soveltua managerialistiseen diskurssiin, mutta joka myös rajoittaa luovuuden potentiaalia. Hegemoninen käsitys luovuudesta saattaa itse asiassa jopa toimia luovuutta vastaan, tai kannustaa inkrementaalisiin uudistuksiin radikaalimman luovuuden sijaan. Tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan kuitenkin todeta, että organisatorisen luovuuden tieteellisessä diskurssissa on nähtävissä myös vaihtoehtoisia tarkastelutapoja, jotka nojautuvat laajempaan ymmärrykseen luovuudesta. Antamalla tilaa vaihtoehtoisille tarkastelutavoille ja laajentamalla ja monipuolistamalla nykyistä luovuuskäsitystä tutkimuksen olisi mahdollista tarjota monipuolisempi, tasapainoisempi ja teoreettisesti perustellumpi ymmärrys organisatorisesta luovuudesta.

Asiasanat: organisatorinen luovuus, luovuus, organisaatioteoria, organisaatiotutkimus, diskurssiteoria, hegemonia.

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Raisio, 4th December, 2015

Annika



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**PART I:**  
**SYNTHESIS**



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Creativity is a foundational aspect of human society, but at the same time very challenging to grasp and define. Traditionally, it has been connected to the arts, imagination, and even intelligence. The technological development, globalization and demographic shifts have induced changes in business logic, employment practices, and increased the competition between nations, regions and business organizations, and thus brought the concept of creativity to new arenas: to national and communal policies, corporate strategies and value statements, job advertisements and everyday discussion. And why not, as the concept of creativity has a pleasant sound and a positive halo – we all want more and better of it. However, adopting the concept of creativity to one used in academic research poses several challenges: Creativity as a concept has many meanings, or it may mean nothing at all. It can be considered as something exceptional, or something we all have and show every day. Creativity can be something taking place in between an individual's ears, or it can be given transcendental qualities. It may be seen as a straightforward process, or a complex mélange of processes, actors, and influences.

So, how do we define creativity? In an everyday understanding, which is mostly shared by academics as well, the usual answers include 'newness,' 'originality,' 'uniqueness,' and 'difference'. Creativity can, for instance, be defined as original thinking (Amabile 1988), as a process of finding and solving problems (Basadur et al. 1982), as a creative use of existing knowledge (Henard & McFadyen 2008; Basadur & Gelade 2006), as a capability to see associations between seemingly nonrelated things (Fong 2006) or as an ability to create new combinations between fields of knowledge (Mahmoud-Jouini & Charue-Dupoc 2008). It is the act of seeing what others see, while connecting things in ways that no one else has done (Wycoff 1991).

Regardless of how creativity is defined or conceptualized, the concept of novelty is inevitably involved with creativity. Novelty is aggressively pursued in contemporary society (Rehn & Vacchani 2006; Strannegård 2002; Styhre 2006), and in this overarching pursuit of novelty that characterizes our society, creativity has become a central notion. Much of the current policy and economic talk sees creativity as capable of turning organizations "into powerhouses of value," in which intellectual property, a sort of condensed outcome of individual creativity, is the "oil of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Ross 2008, 32, cited in Taylor 2013, 180). Creativity, thus, includes a

promise of increasing profits and money-making for business organizations (Study 3), and of driving the growth and development of cities, regions and nations (Florida 2003).

The entanglement of creativity with economic thinking can be particularly localized to the UK in the 1990s, where the British New Labour Party started to promote the central role of creativity in economic development (Stephensen 2015). Along the raising interest in creativity as a driver of economic development in the UK, the centrality of the so-called creative industries for the national economies was recognized also in other Western countries. Creative industries, defined as “*those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property*” (DCMS 2001, 3<sup>1</sup>), promised fast growth and increasing competitiveness (Banks et al. 2002; DCMS 1998; 2001), and therefore became a common theme in the policy talk of the turn of the century. Richard Florida, with his famous book *The Rise of The Creative Class* (2002), was able to convince the world of the idea that highly creative people – the creative class – are to thank for much of the value generated by businesses and societies, and are therefore central resources for the success of businesses, cities, and regions.

In the course of this process, the whole of human culture became subject to commodification (Scott 2000, 2), and the aesthetic, symbolic, cultural, and informational aspects of products and services gained new value and worth (Banks et al. 2002; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Scott 2001). It thus became widely accepted that we now live in the ‘experience economy’ (Pine & Gilmore 1999), ‘creative economy’ (Howkins 2001) and the ‘age of creativity’ (Florida 2002). The following extract from a website on John Howkins and his famous book *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas*, published in 2001, well illustrates the ideology behind the ‘creative economy’:

*New ideas, not money or machinery, are the source of success today, and the greatest source of personal satisfaction, too. The creative economy is revitalizing manufacturing, service, retailing and entertainment industries. It is changing where people want to live, work and learn – where they think, invent and produce.*

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<sup>1</sup> The UK government’s Creative industries mapping document produced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), now the Department for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (DCOMS), succeeded by a follow-up document in 2001, can be considered to be among the first national-level attempts to argue for the importance of culture and creativity in creating economic growth and wealth. The mapping documents aimed at systematic listing and defining of what are called ‘creative industries,’ and the estimating of their financial value (The British Council 2010). According to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport listing (DCMS 1998; 2001), the creative industries are a multifaceted group of industries that have one thing in common: their profits derive from the creative skills of their workforces and the generation of intellectual property.

*The creative economy is based on a new way of thinking and doing. The primary inputs are our individual talent or skill. These inputs may be familiar or novel; what is more important is that our creativity transforms them in novel ways. In some sectors the output value depends on their uniqueness; in others, on how easily it can be copied and sold to large numbers of people. The creative economy brings together ideas about the creative industries, the cultural industries, creative cities, clusters and the creative class. (Howkins & associates 2001)*

As the extract above illustrates, creativity is considered to bring about not only success, but also personal satisfaction. Therefore, in the thinking behind creative economy, creativity is not only connected to making money, but also getting personal satisfaction for the moneymaking.

The terms creative industries and creative economy are sometimes used interchangeably (British Council 2010), while other authors point out that ‘creative industries’ has a narrower meaning and refers to the specific industries, while ‘creative economy’ is a more inclusive term and refers to the wider societal development:

*The interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology as expressed in the ability to create and circulate intellectual capital, with the potential to generate income, jobs and export earnings while at the same time promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development. This is what the emerging creative economy has already begun to do. (UNCTAD 2008)*

According to this stance, creative economy has potential to promote social inclusion, diversity and human development, which reflect even higher expectations regarding creativity and its role in the economy. The concepts of knowledge economy or knowledge society (Castells 2001) and experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1999) are sometimes also used interchangeably with the concept of creative economy.

Regardless of the debates on the definitions, value, and contents of the creative economy and creative industries (Flew & Cunningham 2010), it is evident that creativity has taken its place at the center of socio-economic and political discussions. Alongside the rise of creativity, innovation, and the knowledge-intensive economy, many other changes are taking place in the society. The boundaries between leisure and work, between organizations, and between nations and other fields of society have become liquid and difficult to define (Castells 2001; Deuze 2007). The lines between what is considered private or public, political or personal, have blurred (Loacker 2013). The role of the state in certain areas has diminished, especially in the promotion of the arts and culture (see e.g., Gahan et al. 2007; Loacker 2013). The

new perception of the role of the state is to encourage individual autonomy and responsibility, and to mobilize individuals rather than constrain or guide them. This can be considered to reflect neoliberal values (cf. Barratt 2008; Vanolo 2013), and suggests that all cultural, social, and human activities can now be configured as fields of production. It further implies that the values of competition, investment, and rivalry are considered valuable in the society (Loacker 2013).

At the same time, many social functions, mostly related to welfare, health, and employment, which in the Scandinavian welfare states in particular have been defined as the government's responsibility, have been privatized and are now an individual's own responsibility. This so-called self-responsibilization of individuals means that, for instance, the responsibility to find and maintain employment is brought into the realm of self-management (Hamann 2009, 40; Thanem 2009). An individual, therefore, must be able to develop and maintain characteristics and skills that are required to belong to the attractive workforce. This neoclassical discourse has become entangled with discourses on creativity, and thus characterizes how creativity is conceived in political and societal discussions.

Likely because of the hype and high expectations around creativity, the creative industries and the creative economy, creativity as a concept and a phenomenon assumed a central interest for business management consultants and gurus, general business people, and academics specializing in business and management. Although by the 2010s, the strongest hype around the creative industries had faded, the expectations regarding creativity and innovation have not shown signs of abating. Quite the contrary, in fact, as the quest for creativity has escalated from the creative industries to other realms of the business world and life in general, even so far that creativity has become "a generalized value in itself" (Schlesinger 2007, 379). All businesses regardless of their industry sector are required to be creative and to drive for innovations and regeneration (e.g., Amabile 1997; Andriopoulos 2001; Daymon 2000), and the same is expected even in the public sector (e.g., Berman & Kim 2010; Castiglione 2008; Coelho, Augusto & Lages 2011) and in non-profit sector organizations (e.g., Barrett, Balloun & Weinstein 2005).

## **1.2 Organizational creativity as a topic of study**

As the concept of creativity entered the realm of management and organizational studies, the concept of organizational creativity was introduced (Basadur 1997; Ford 1996; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin 1993), with the aim of focusing on studying creativity in the particular context of work organizations. Organizational creativity commonly refers to the production of new and valuable, useful or appropriate ideas (Amabile 1988), products, processes or services (Scott & Bruce 1994; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin 1993) taking place in the context of an organization. Therefore, the

research on organizational creativity focuses especially on the social and organizational context and their influence on creativity (Woodman et al. 1993).

As a research stream, organizational creativity has been growing quickly in recent years. According to Shalley and Zhou (2008), active work on organizational creativity research started in the late 1980s, but it was only in the late 2000s that academic interest on the topic started to grow exponentially. For instance a search via Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.fi/>) shows that the number of publications mentioning 'organizational creativity' was 114 in 1990, 510 in 2000, and 3,030 in 2010. At the same time, the yearly increase in the number of hits was seven between 1990 and 1991, 100 between 2000 and 2001, and 530 between 2010 and 2011. The interest in the subject, thus, is growing rapidly (see also Study 2; James & Drown 2012, 21).

In recent years, there have been review studies aimed at synthesizing the body of knowledge concerning organizational creativity (e.g., Anderson et al. 2014; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Mumford 2000), and other studies aiming at mapping the field more systematically (Styhre & Sundgren 2005; Watson 2007). General models of organizational creativity have also been created in order to synthesize a number of contributions into a single model (e.g., Andriopoulos 2001; James & Drown 2012, 19; Woodman et al. 1993). However, most of the attempts to map the field of organizational creativity have been written from a mainstream perspective, thus representing perspectives, theories, and themes that are widely agreed upon. Actually, when reading the reviews published on organizational creativity, such as those published by Anderson et al. in 2014, Andriopoulos in 2001, Klijn and Tomic in 2010, and Shalley and Gilson in 2004, one is left with an impression of an almost total lack of any critical or postmodern (cf. Alvesson & Deetz 2000) contributions on organizational creativity.

Therefore, it is easy to agree with Gahan, Minahan and Glow (2007), who argue that current organizational creativity knowledge has developed in a rather uncritical vacuum. Any inquiry into the ontological and epistemological questions related to organizational creativity has been relatively modest (Styhre 2006; Styhre & Sundgren 2005), and this has contributed to creativity being treated as an unambiguous and stable phenomenon (Study 1; Cromptley 2010), instead of as a socially constructed category or label. As creativity can be viewed from the viewpoint of individual cognitive abilities or dispositions (see e.g., Fong 2006; Martinsen & Kaufman 1999), individual motivation and behavioral tendencies assessed by an individual him/herself, his/her supervisor, or customers (see e.g., Madjar 2008; Madjar & Ortiz-Walters 2008; Zhou & George 2001), factors or characteristics of an organizational culture (e.g., Ekvall & Ryhammar 1999; Kwaśniewska & Nečka 2004; Mostafa 2005), or as an engagement in creative acts (Drazin, Glynn & Kazanjian 1999), to name a few possibilities, it is obvious that the studies are dealing with different sides of creativity. These so called uni-disciplinary approaches, which have a tendency to

look at one side of creativity as the whole phenomenon, are quite typical in creativity research (Sternberg & Lubart 1999, 4). The phenomenon of creativity is more multifaceted, comprehensive, and complex than what is easily approached by means of empirical research. Therefore, studies on creativity are able to shed light on one specific side, aspect, or dimension related to creativity, but simultaneously, some other aspects or viewpoints are necessarily left out. The complexity of organizational creativity as a phenomenon and a research topic thus makes it crucial to be critical and reflexive about what side or aspect of creativity is actually being studied, and how it relates to other contributions and conceptualizations on organizational creativity. This points to the necessity to provide not only synthesizing studies on organizational creativity knowledge, but also to the need to provide critical and reflexive inquiries on the development and the current status of organizational creativity knowledge.

According to the social constructionist stance on knowledge (Berger & Luckmann 1966), the development of any body of academic knowledge is not a straightforward, objective, and neutral process, even if that is the general narrative of how knowledge and theories on any phenomenon in the social sciences develops (Willmott 2013). Quite the contrary, all knowledge is created in processes of negotiation and power struggles, which are influenced by different value-orientations, ethics, ontologies, epistemologies, and ideologies resulting in a heterogeneous body of knowledge (Willmott 2013). This applies also, or even especially, to the study of organizational creativity, since the understanding of the phenomenon is as ambiguous as it is, and the scholars contributing to the field come from many disciplines, traditions, and backgrounds. The roots of creativity research can be found in psychological and psychometric research, but it has also been connected to mysticism and spirituality (Sternberg & Lubart 1999, 4), which still may cast influences on our understanding of creativity and the tendencies of our thought related to it. Even more importantly, the current research on organizational creativity is taking place in the crossfire of many different influences; economic pressures, an emphasis on the value, usefulness, and applicability of the results, and the overall commodification of cultural values all affect the discourse on creativity and our understanding of it. As Reed (1999, 27) argues, the theory-making process is a “*historically located intellectual practice directed at assembling and mobilizing ideational, material and institutional resources to legitimate certain knowledge claims and the political projects which flow from them.*” Therefore, theory-making related to organizational creativity is not a simple process of truth-seeking, but instead a struggle for intellectual dominance taking place in the discursive field of organizational creativity (cf. Chan 2001) which is affected by various different influences, motivations, conditions, objectives and tendencies.

### 1.3 The research gap and the research objectives

This study aims at reviewing the field of organizational creativity and the knowledge it consists of. It attempts to map the terrain of organizational creativity knowledge and to identify what can be considered the hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Then, through five studies, it offers some exemplary perspectives, themes, and approaches, which are considered alternative from the viewpoint of hegemonic knowledge. Through these exemplary studies, this dissertation sheds light on the limitations and taken-for-granted aspects of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, and discusses the viewpoints that these alternative perspectives can offer for the understanding of creativity in organizations.

This study adopts a social constructionist (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1966) take on organizational creativity knowledge, and draws on Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) political theory of discourse, here labeled as 'discourse theory'<sup>2</sup> in analyzing the discourse. Discourse theory is an approach which allows us to acknowledge and focus on the politicized conditions and negotiations involved in the process of the construction of organizational creativity knowledge (cf. Reed 1998). In particular, the discourse theory approach allows us to see the development of the academic field of organizational creativity as contingent: in other words, as possible, but not necessary (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002; cf. Laasonen et al. 2012). The field of organizational creativity has privileged certain directions and foci, and considers certain themes and perspectives as central, but it might well have developed differently. Seeing an academic field as contingent allows us to challenge the current development and open it for alternative possibilities, which is one of the aims of this study.

The concept of hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) is central for this study, as it refers to the process through which a particular meaning or representation becomes dominant and established, thus marginalizing other meanings and representations. The purpose of this thesis is *to explore and problematize the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse and to provide alternative viewpoints for the theorizing on organizational creativity*. The hegemonic discourse is critically appraised through the alternative viewpoints offered in the studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) of this thesis. To further explicate the purpose of this study, the following research objectives can be posed:

1. To provide an outline of the hegemonic discourse of organizational creativity regarding four aspects: themes, perspectives, paradigms, and methods.
2. To discuss themes, perspectives, paradigms, and methods, which remain marginal from the viewpoint of the hegemonic discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> See Torfing (1999, 11–12) for further discussion on the labeling of the theory.

3. To problematize the hegemonic discourse through the alternative viewpoints offered in the studies and to provide alternative options for future theorizing.

The five studies have different roles in the argumentation of this thesis. Study 1 presents a critical assessment of the organizational creativity discourse, and thus supports the analysis of the synthesis section. Study 2 is a literature review that enables us to identify central themes and perspectives of the organizational creativity discourse, thus assisting in mapping the hegemonic discourse. Studies 1 and 3 can be considered to represent alternative themes, perspectives, paradigms, and methods, and as they adopt a critical stance, they have a central role in the argumentation of this thesis. Study 4 can be considered to represent a hegemonic perspective, paradigm, and method, while shedding light on an alternative theme. Study 5 represents an alternative theme, perspective, and method, although it represents a hegemonic paradigm. To sum up, the studies of this thesis present certain aspects which are considered alternative or marginal herein, and that act as illustrations of alternative viewpoints, which might complement the currently hegemonic discourse. Expressed differently, although the studies contribute to the argumentation of this thesis, they can also be considered to represent illustrative ‘cases’ of alternative themes, perspectives, methods, or paradigms. It is also notable that the studies share some – or several – hegemonic aspects, as well, and thus also contribute to the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse. Therefore, the aim is not to argue for the superiority of any alternative viewpoints or to downgrade the hegemonic discourse, but to identify certain problematic aspects of the hegemonic discourse, and suggest alternative viewpoints, which could open the discussion toward more inclusive and comprehensive understandings of organizational creativity.

The study is structured in the following way. First, an introduction to this doctoral thesis is provided, the research gap for it is indicated and the research objectives are set in Chapter 1, followed by Chapter 2, which introduces organizational creativity as a topic of study and explicates the research approach of the thesis. Chapter 3 includes the summaries of the studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), presents their research approaches and materials, and explicates their contributions to the thesis. Chapter 4 offers an overview of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse concerning themes, perspectives, paradigms, and methods. Next, the hegemonic aspects are critically appraised through the alternative viewpoints offered in the studies, and the themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms which have a marginal position in the organizational creativity discourse are discussed. Chapter 5 goes beyond the points brought up in the five studies of this dissertation, and discusses how organizational creativity is conceived and conceptualized in the hegemonic discourse, and suggests some alternative understandings. Finally, in Chapter 6, conclusions of this study are presented and its implications and limitations are discussed.

## 1.4 The central concepts of this study

The focus of this study is creativity in organizations, or *organizational creativity*, which refers to creativity that takes place in a work organization. The concepts of organizational creativity and creativity in organizations are used interchangeably throughout the synthesis section of this thesis, as well as in the Studies 1, 2 and 3. Due to the difficulties involved in measuring and operationalizing organizational creativity (Sailer 2011; Walton 2003), the two empirical studies in this thesis approach the topic with slightly different conceptualizations. Study 4 explores *a culture conducive of creativity* rather than organizational creativity per se, although the study is based on the assumption that organizational culture is closely linked with creativity in organizations (Study 4; Ahmed 1998; Andriopoulos 2001; Amabile 1988; 1996). Study 5, on the other hand, explores a specific form of creativity, *collaborative creativity*, which emerges from social interactions and dynamics over the course of intensive, collaborative work (Study 5; Hargadon & Bechky 2006). Although moments of collective or collaborative creation do not occur often or on demand but rather in a mutual collaboration, they are needed, for example, in order to solve complex problems that could not be solved by individuals alone (Study 5; Hargadon & Bechky 2006).

The central theoretical concepts of this study are discourse and hegemony, which will be briefly defined below and further discussed in Chapter 2.5. The analysis of the material is structured according to four viewpoints that are theme, perspective, method and paradigm, and their definitions in this thesis will also be summarized below.

*Discourses* can be considered to be structured collections of texts (Parker 1992). The term 'text' may refer to spoken or written texts that have a material form of some kind and are thus accessible to others (Taylor et al. 1996, 7). In this thesis, the concept of discourse refers to texts related to creativity in organizations and especially to the ways in which the topic is understood and talked about in these texts. A discourse, for instance, the academic organizational creativity discourse, can be seen to be comprised of a plethora of discourses, although this study limits itself to identifying and exploring what are termed *hegemonic* and *alternative* discourses.

The concept of *hegemony* refers to certain views and understandings of a topic of study that tend to dominate the discourse at a specific period of time. In this study, hegemonic theories, views, and understandings are those that can be considered to represent somewhat *established* and agreed-upon views related to a field of academic inquiry. Although the hegemony of an academic discourse could also be defined in other terms, such as in terms of research quality or impact, in this thesis, it is conceived of in terms of a certain establishedness of views. The concepts of hegemony and discourse will be further discussed in Chapter 2.5.

In structuring the analysis, the concept of *theme* refers to a topic or a subject covered in research that is considered relevant in seeking to understand creativity in organizations and is examined from a certain *perspective*. A perspective is a way of looking at and approaching the topic that embodies an understanding of the nature of the topic under study and its interrelationship with its ideational and material surroundings. *Paradigm* refers to a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions on which the research is based, while *methods* refer to the methodological approaches, including the collection and analysis of empirical or theoretical material, employed in studies.

### 1.5 The scope and limitations of the study

The synthesis section and three studies (Studies 1, 2 and 3) focus on mapping the theoretical discourses of organizational creativity, and on the understandings of organizational creativity as they appear in literature on the topic. Two of the studies are empirical (Studies 4 and 5) and highlight certain alternative themes and perspectives which were found relevant based on the empirical material. Their role is to complement the otherwise theoretical discussion and act as illustrations of certain marginal viewpoints. However, although understandings and conceptualizations of organizational creativity as conceived by various people or organizations would be an interesting topic of research, this study focuses for the most part on exploring how they appear in the literature.

Although theoretical and conceptual studies on organizational creativity are quite common (James & Drown 2012, 22), they are mostly interested in a specific concept or theme (e.g., Driver 2008; Mainemelis 2001; 2010), instead of the field of organizational creativity studies in general. In addition, although there have been some literature reviews on organizational creativity and attempts to synthesize the body of organizational creativity knowledge (e.g., Anderson et al. 2014; Andriopoulos 2001; James & Drown 2012, 19; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Mumford 2000; 2003; Woodman et al. 1993), they mostly focus on synthesizing the mainstream themes and perspectives, which can be considered to come close to what in this thesis is regarded as hegemony. Therefore, they appear to have largely ignored critical and/or postmodern writings on organizational creativity. However, although the themes and perspectives presented in the previously mentioned studies appear to predominate the field, they do not cover the whole field.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, to contribute to the attempts to map the field of organizational creativity, this study aims at a synthesis of the extant literature, its critical exploration, and at broadening the discourse by offering some alternative understandings of organizational creativity.

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<sup>3</sup> For a more balanced presentation, see Styhre & Sundgren (2005).

Although an extensive review of alternative understandings and perspectives on organizational creativity would be a needed and interesting contribution to the current organizational creativity discourse, providing one is beyond the scope of this study. Consequently, the alternative themes, perspectives, paradigms, and methods discussed in this thesis are limited to those touched upon in the studies of this dissertation, thus leaving out a broad array of other, potentially interesting perspectives. However, the themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms of the studies serve an illustrative purpose, in other words, they highlight the ways in which the hegemonic understandings are problematic or limited, and suggest aspects, which could complement the hegemonic discourse.

Naturally, the alternative understandings are also incomplete in their determinations and have problematic aspects as well. The purpose of this dissertation is, therefore, not to highlight or celebrate the supremacy of any alternative perspective, or any perspective for that matter. Rather, the purpose is to suggest that more space for alternative perspectives should be given, and that certain problematic aspects of the hegemonic discourse might be worth a more careful consideration. Moreover, an attempt is made to map and synthesize the body of organizational creativity knowledge from a critical viewpoint, and thus to provide a more comprehensive and diverse outline of the discourse.

This study is interested in the academic discourse on organizational creativity, which is touched upon in several research fields, such as innovation management, knowledge management, change management, organizational learning, and entrepreneurship. Literature from all the aforementioned fields is included in the scope of this dissertation, whenever the studies specifically use the concept of creativity and discuss it or somehow apply it to an organizational or work-related context. However, texts focusing on innovation, learning, change, knowledge, entrepreneurship, or any related concept without using the concept of creativity or providing a direct reference to organizational creativity are not included in the scope of this dissertation.

The description of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse can also be considered limited, in that a knowledgeable reader will most likely be able to point to writings which represent the hegemonic discourse, although they are not included in this dissertation. Therefore, it should be noted that this study aims at providing an *outline* – instead of an exact depiction – of the discourse and the understandings of organizational creativity, related to themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms, which can be considered hegemonic.

The discussion and analysis of the synthesis section of this dissertation is based on an extensive set of articles, for which the article search conducted for Study 2 provides the basis. In addition, in the course of writing the studies and the synthesis section, a snowballing technique was used to collect a resource of scholarly articles on organizational creativity. In May 2015, the author's reference manager software

Mendeley included 782 full-text articles which included the term ‘creativity,’ and which have been collected throughout the process. Moreover, several handbooks, such as the *Handbook of Organizational Creativity*, edited by Shalley and Zhou (2008), the *Handbook of Organizational Creativity*, edited by Mumford (2012), and the *Handbook of Creativity*, edited by Sternberg (1999), were used in writing this dissertation, together with several textbooks. Therefore, it can be argued that this study is based on an extensive reading of scholarly texts on organizational creativity, although it is clear and natural in regarding the scope of the dissertation that there are also many writings which have been left out.

## 2 THE TOPIC OF STUDY AND THE RESEARCH APPROACH

### 2.1 Organizational creativity

Research centered on creativity occurring especially in an organizational context talks about organizational creativity, which is a concept aimed at distinguishing individual-oriented, psychological perspectives on creativity from research interested in creativity taking place in a context of a work organization (Shalley & Zhou 2008, 3–4). Even if organizational creativity owes much of its theoretical construct to the extensive psychological research on creativity, that research has been rather limited in terms of understanding creativity in an organizational setting (Shalley & Zhou 2008, 3; Sundgren & Styhre 2007). Organizational creativity, as a subfield within organizational behavior (Shalley & Zhou 2008, 3), organization theory (Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 14), or organization studies,<sup>4</sup> deals with creativity taking place in work settings and within organizational contexts (Shalley & Zhou 2008, 4). Therefore, organizational creativity is looked at as something more than a mere collection of creative individuals; it is considered a psychosocial process taking place in an organization (Sundgren & Styhre 2007; Woodman et al. 1993). A widely cited definition offered by Woodman et al. (1993, 293) defines organizational creativity as “*the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system.*” This definition emphasizes the social aspect of creativity and the complexity of social processes, as well as various contextual and situational influences. In addition, organizational creativity is affected by formal organizational practices, structural elements, and management-related issues (Andriopoulos 2001; Bharadwaj & Menon 2000; Kallio & Kallio 2011; Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 31; Sundgren & Styhre 2007). According to their survey, Bharadwaj and Menon (2000) conclude that high levels of organizational creativity mechanisms result in remarkably superior innovation performance than lower levels of organizational and individual creativity

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<sup>4</sup> This thesis represents the field of organization studies, which is a concept commonly used in Europe to label the academic field interested in the study of organizational phenomena. Organization theory can be used as its synonym, although in North America the concept of organization theory is taken to refer to macro level phenomena related to organizations and organizing, whereas organizational behavior is used to cover the micro phenomena (Tsoukas & Knudsen 2003, 2). In this thesis, the concept of organization studies is used in order to label the field, covering both macro and micro level phenomena.

mechanisms. They argue that formal processes, programs, structures, and budgets for facilitating creativity influence employees psychologically, since they highlight the importance of creativity and innovation; and that the organizational creativity mechanisms are more important than hiring creative individuals (Bharadwaj & Menon 2000). Therefore, it can be concluded that organizational creativity is a complex, psychosocial process, which is influenced by contextual and social factors as well as by formal processes, structures, and management practices (Bharadwaj & Menon 2000; Kallio & Kallio 2011).

## **2.2 The basic models of organizational creativity**

Zhou and Shalley (2008), the editors of the *Handbook of Organizational Creativity*, consider that the foundations of contemporary organizational creativity theory were laid by two main theoretical frameworks; Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin's (1993) interactionist model and Amabile's (1988; 1996) componential model. In their review, Anderson, Potočnik and Zhou (2014) suggest that the foundation of organizational creativity is based on four theoretical frameworks: i) the componential theory by Amabile (1988; 1996), ii) the interactionist model by Woodman et al. (1993), iii) Ford's model (1996) of individual creative action influenced by multiple social domains, and iv) theorizing on cultural differences and creativity, which is not a specific model but rather a description of cultural differences and their influence on creativity (see Anderson et al. 2014 and Study 2 for details). Therefore, there appears to be an agreement that the models of Woodman et al. (1993) and Amabile (1988; 1996) are among the central models of organizational creativity (see also Klijn & Tomic 2010; Study 2).

Woodman et al.'s (1993) well-known article "Toward a theory of organizational creativity" in the *Academy of Management Review* highlights the various social and organizational influences on organizational creativity. They divide the influences into three levels: individual, group, and organizational. Individual determinants of creativity include antecedent conditions, creative behavior, cognitive style/abilities, personality, knowledge, and intrinsic motivation. Social and contextual influences affect individual level creativity. Group level creativity, in turn, is influenced by group composition, group characteristics, and group processes, but also by contextual influences. The creative performance of an organization depends on the creativity of the groups, and the individuals the groups consist of, as well as on organizational aspects, such as organizational design and structure, communication channels, and information flows. Woodman et al.'s (1993) model was among the first that truly acknowledged the multilevel nature of organizational creativity and the various influences occurring across different levels, and therefore has been widely influential.

Amabile's (1988; 1997) componential model of creativity also connects individual creativity to the work environment, and thus to organizational creativity (Figure 1). According to the componential model, individual creativity occurs in the intersection of motivation, creativity skills, and expertise, and is influenced by three aspects of the work environment in particular: the organizational motivation to innovate, management practices, and resources. The organizational motivation to innovate refers to an organization's basic orientation towards creativity and innovation. Management practices include all levels of management, and refer especially to management support for creativity. Resources include all resources available and allocated to employees in order to allow for creativity and innovation.

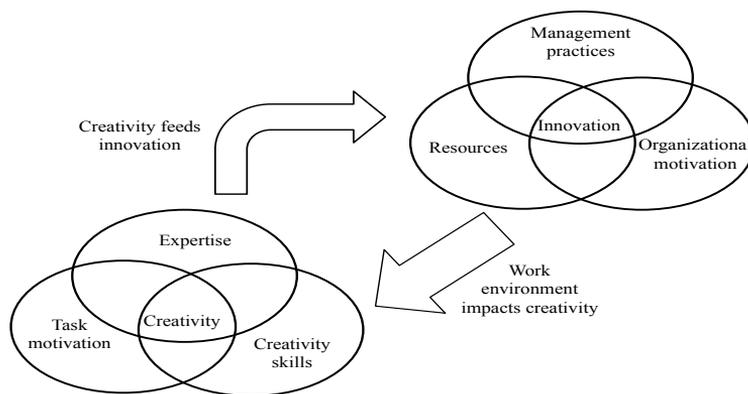


Figure 1 The componential model of creativity, and the impact of the organizational environment on creativity (Adapted from Amabile 1997, 39-58).

Amabile's (1988; 1997) model puts forward the idea that individual creativity is the primary source of organizational creativity, while the work environment and its elements influence it. The most immediate impact occurs through motivation, but creative-thinking skills and expertise are also influenced by the work environment. Amabile (1988; 1996) highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in creativity and the importance of having both expertise and creative thinking skills. She also stresses the centrality of the social work environment to creativity. (See Figure 1.)

To widen the perspective of looking at creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1997) has proposed a systems approach, according to which creativity occurs through a dynamic operation of "a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the domain, and a field of experts

who recognize and validate the innovation” (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 6). To express the model’s idea differently, the system’s operation begins with an individual learning and adopting the traditions, memes, and codes of the domain, which can be conceptualized as a culturally defined symbol system, such as physics or modern art. By using his/her creativity, an individual is able to extend or transform the domain, but only if allowed to do so by the field. Whether or not an individual act is considered ‘creative’, in other words, such as it actually succeeds in influencing and changing the domain, is validated by the field, i.e. the people who control the domain and act as gatekeepers for new ideas. Although Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988; 1997) systems approach is an encompassing model, which illustrates the cultural and social processes required in recognizing something as creative and incorporating it in the domain, it is relatively little used in empirical studies on organizational creativity (see e.g., Kerrigan 2013; McIntyre 2011; McIntyre & Paton 2008 as exceptions). It takes a broader view on the creative process, or on the process of recognizing something as creative, and is limited to creativity, which is radical or exceptional enough to change the domain. Therefore, Csikszentmihalyi’s model (1988; 1997) ignores smaller creative achievements and does not provide detailed information on how the creative process occurs and what might influence it, which may be among the reasons it has not been as influential as Woodman et al.’s (1993) model, for instance.

Clearly inspired by Csikszentmihalyi’s system model, Ford (1996) proposed a model of individual creative action, which is affected by multiple social domains. According to his model, individual creativity results from a combination of sense-making, goals, motivation, knowledge, and ability, as well as emotions, and receptivity and capability beliefs, referring to an individual’s beliefs about his/her own capabilities related to creativity and the task at hand and the potential reactions of the field. Ford (1996, 1125) suggests that creative and habitual actions are competing possibilities of action for any individual, and argues that people are prone to choose habitual actions over creative ones, unless creative actions possess a relative advantage compared to habitual actions. What makes Ford’s model different from other models on organizational creativity is that multiple social domains, such as groups, subunits, organization, institutional environment and market, *simultaneously* affect an individual’s creative action and sense-making processes. Similarly to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988; 1997) systems model, Ford’s model has not been as widely used in organizational creativity literature as Woodman et al.’s and Amabile’s models, probably due to their broader focus. Both Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988; 1997) and Ford’s (1996) models stress the perspective that creativity requires both a cognitive-emotional process of creating something new, and a social process through which the social context recognizes and accepts the creation as new enough to represent ‘creativity’.

### 2.3 The approach of this study

The overall approach of this dissertation, i.e. the synthesis section, can be seen to represent a critical-synthetic approach, which consists of three aspects: a synthesis of the existing literature as its aim, an interdisciplinary nature, and a critical stance (Kallio 2004, 49–53; Takala 1995). A synthetic approach refers to the opposite of analysis, i.e. breaking the topic of study into its component parts. *Synthetic approach*, therefore, means reconstruction of the whole by combining the constituent elements. In this thesis, a synthetic approach is used to refer to the attempt to map the organizational creativity discourse regarding four elements: themes, perspectives, paradigms, and methods, resulting in a synthesis of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, which is then problematized from the viewpoint of certain alternative understandings. *Interdisciplinary nature*, in this thesis, refers to the fact that although organizational creativity is considered a sub-theme of organization studies, creativity is touched upon not only in several discourses under the umbrella of organization studies, but also in other disciplinary fields, such as psychology and its sub-fields, arts and education. Therefore, although this dissertation explores organizational creativity from the viewpoint of organization studies, it is impossible to escape the interdisciplinary nature of creativity as a topic of study. The approach of this study can also be considered *critical*, in the sense that it is interested in the hegemonic articulations of organizational creativity knowledge and their taken-for-granted aspects (see Chapter 2.4). Moreover, a social constructionist viewpoint is clearly central to this thesis, as it treats all knowledge as socially constructed and produced in inter-communication. The social constructionist view of knowledge highlights the nature of ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’ as a linguistic effect rather than as an account of reality (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, ch. 6), and recognizes the performative, productive, and constitutive role of language and texts, which makes them a central focus of this study (cf. Alvesson & Kärreman 2000; see Chapter 2.4). Applying a social constructionist perspective to the study of organizational creativity knowledge, i.e. to prevalent theories and understandings among academics and practitioners of what organizational creativity is and how it should be dealt with, means that the construction and validation of knowledge in the academic social context is brought into the center of the focus.

Consequently, the main topic of this study is not organizational creativity per se, but instead the extant *knowledge* about it, in other words theories, views, conceptualizations, and models of organizational creativity. More specifically, this study is interested in organizational creativity as a *concept* and as a *discourse*<sup>5</sup>, in

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<sup>5</sup> The notion of discourse is used in a singular form to refer to the various texts on organizational creativity, while the plural form is used to indicate that the organizational creativity discourse consists of several competing discourses. This thesis focuses on identifying the ‘hegemonic’ discourse and ‘alternative’ discourses.

other words, the discourse centered on understanding creativity in organizations, and the conceptualizations of creativity. Therefore, although the general perspective of this study is that of discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe 1985), it can be seen to come close to the interpretative study of concepts (cf. Takala & Lämsä 2001; 2004), in that it is interested in the meanings and interpretations of the concept of organizational creativity, as well as its conceptualizations.

According to Reed (1998, 196), discourse shapes “the strategies and rules by which we can speak about and act on a domain.” Therefore, being interested in organizational creativity discourse means that we are not only interested in what is known about the topic, but also in how it is talked about, how it is presented, how the knowledge is justified, and also how it is *not* talked about. The main focus of this study is, therefore, academic discourse on organizational creativity, although wider societal discourses are touched upon as well.

Although it would be easy to claim that academic publishing takes place in a silo and that academic discourses do not have any wider implications, this thesis takes a different stance. Academic texts, as well as other texts, whether spoken or written, provide us with discursive resources and conditions of possibility, with which individuals make sense of the world and themselves as parts of that world (Watson & Harris 1999, 6) and are informed of what is considered ideal, normal, and appreciated (cf. Ahonen 2001, 219). Although it would be naïve to claim that academic texts have a wide readership among non-academics, they do influence the world outside academia. Scholars can be regarded as ‘cultural gatekeepers’ who play an important role in mediating and transmitting trends and cultural knowledge (Zukin 1995). Using cultural industries as an example, Zukin (1995) illustrates how academics have influenced the re-orientation of cultural policies towards the more economically oriented. Knowledge in academia is also transmitted through key theorists, who gain a ‘celebrity status’ (Gibson & Klocker 2004) and often publish more popular versions of their ideas in best-selling books. Therefore, although academic texts may not be consumed by the general public directly, it is reasonable to believe that academic ideas and practices get easily transmitted, even globally (cf. Gibson & Klocker 2004).

## **2.4 Taking a social constructionist perspective and a critical stance**

Taking a social constructionist perspective means that knowledge of the world is constructed through an individual’s negotiations and navigations of the social world. The social constructionist perspective sees reality as a subjective construction, which develops into an *intersubjective* understanding of the world through objectivation. The social constructionist stance on organizations, creativity, organizational creativity, or any social phenomenon for that matter, means seeing them as constructed through social interactions. As common understandings, meanings, and

perceptions are repeated and reproduced in the processes of social interaction, they become *objectified*, and thus reinforced as ‘reality.’ (Berger & Luckmann 1966, 33–34.)

Using a social constructionist perspective means that language and discourses become a central focus of study, as it is through discourse that organizational members create a sense of a coherent social reality (cf. Mumby & Clair 1997, 181). Therefore, social constructionist perspectives reject the notion of ‘organization,’ ‘creativity,’ or ‘organizational creativity’ as objective and stable categories, and recognize and take into account the social negotiations involved in their construction. Consequently, according to a social constructionist stance, language, texts, and discourses are not seen as mirrors of reality, but as value-laden systems, in which power is inherently involved (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000). The concepts of value-ladenness and power bring us conveniently to the critical stance adopted in this thesis.

Although all research is and should be critical, criticality in the context of this study refers to critical management studies, which derives from critical theory (Ahonen 1997, 5). Critical theory is a socio-philosophical school of thought, whose concern is to criticize the unjustified use of power, analyze social conditions and relations, and to question and change established social institutions and traditions (Alvesson & Deetz 2000, 16–20).

The success of the natural sciences in explaining natural phenomena and taking advantage of nature has appeared as a demonstration of the superiority of the rational, scientific method. As a result, positivism has been seen as a dominant model of theorizing in the social sciences as well. The Frankfurt School, from which the concepts of critical theory are largely drawn from, and which consists of scholars such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, became dedicated to criticizing both this positivist domination and modern capitalism (Scherer 2009, 30). According to Horkheimer and Adorno (in Scherer 2009, 31), the dominant positivist model of science in modern society focuses on a “one-sided instrumental conception of reason,” which enables human beings to dominate nature and social institutions. That makes science an efficient instrument of control and power for those who already have a powerful position. That, according to Horkheimer and Adorno (*ibid.*), may lead to even more destructive forms of domination than those grounded in tradition, religion, or common sense.

The foundations of critical theory can also be partly located in Habermas’s (1984/1987) thinking, as he saw the communication as a central aspect of social relations and argued that communicative distortion is the cause of unbalanced power relations and domination structures. Habermas’s (*ibid.*) argument concerning distorted communication raised communication and language into the center of research interest. Throughout the history of critical theory, its advocates have addressed the questions of skewing and closure of discourse through reification, universalization of certain groups’ interests, domination of instrumental reasoning,

and hegemony, to name a few. They have also wished to promote a broader conception of rationality, a drive for the inclusion of the suppressed, and the overcoming of distorted modes of communication. (Alvesson & Deetz 2000, 15.)

Critical theory, originating from sociology, has also attracted interest in management and organization studies from the late 1970s on (Alvesson & Deetz 2000, 10), and is nowadays known under the label critical management studies (CMS). Although the field of critical management studies is relatively fragmented and characterized by many unsolved contradictions (see e.g., Parker 2002, 125; Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman 2009), research connected to CMS often shares some points of interest. According to Fournier and Grey (2000), CMS studies commonly share: i) non-performative intent, meaning that CMS studies are not interested in finding ways to increase efficiency, but instead in questioning the connection between knowledge, truth, and efficiency; ii) de-naturalization, referring to the aim of exposing and questioning practices and assumptions, which are taken-for-granted and seen as natural; iii) reflexivity concerning philosophical and methodological questions, meaning that the assumptions of the researcher need to be reflected and explicated. Although Fournier's and Grey's (2000) points have also raised debate and even received criticism (especially non-performative intent, for a further discussion of which, see e.g., Spicer et al. 2009; Thompson 2004), they serve as a good illustration of what kind of interests and purposes are often connected to CMS.

Since drawing a line between what is CMS and what is not CMS is difficult, and maybe even unnecessary, discussion of whether this study is actually a representative of CMS or non-CMS is somewhat irrelevant for understanding it. Regardless of the labels one might or might not attach to this study, there are some interests that are also commonly associated with CMS. The purpose of this study is to explore the hegemonic discourse of organizational creativity, to problematize it, and to illustrate how alternative discourses might prove useful for the understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, the criticality of this study derives from its interest in de-naturalizing and problematizing the hegemonic discourse in order to enable critical discussion of the views and conceptualizations of the dominant organizational creativity discourse. One of the aims of this study is to offer – if not counterpictures, as Alvesson and Deetz (2000, 17) suggest – at least alternative viewpoints and understandings regarding organizational creativity. Moreover, this study is not searching for a universal or objective truth, not even claiming its existence, but rather attempting to open up different perspectives and offer new avenues for research on the topic (cf. Zundel & Kokkalis 2010).

## 2.5 The central concepts of this study

The discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and especially their conception of discourse and hegemony function as a framework for the analysis and structuring of the organizational creativity discourse in the synthesis section of this thesis. Below, Laclau and Mouffe's (ibid.) idea of *discourse* and *hegemony* is outlined, and the notion of hegemony as understood in this study is discussed.

### 2.5.1 Discourse

Studies interested in discourse comprise a broad and heterogeneous field and tend to resemble a compilation of various perspectives, each having its own assumptions, methods, and aims, rather than reflect a specific research approach (Alvesson & Kärreman 2011; Hardy 2001; Phillips & Oswick 2012). Regardless of differences in perspectives and levels of analysis, as well as other disputes around discourse-oriented studies in the organizational context (see e.g., Alvesson & Kärreman 2011; Hardy & Grant 2012), all theories on discourse share a common assumption; language does not mirror the social reality, but instead actively shapes, constructs, and structures it (Alvesson & Kärreman 2000).

Of the many options available for a scholar interested in discourses, this study adopts Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory as an analytical framework. The discourse theory approach, as suggested by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), is not a strict linguistic technique, which is often conducted under the label 'discourse analysis.' Neither is it a theory in a strict sense, as it does not consist of a set of empirically testable hypotheses (Torfing 1999, 12). Rather, discourse theory can be considered as a theoretical framework, which is non-objective and context-dependent, and which aims at unveiling and questioning the totalizing attempts which "deny the contingency of the criteria of truth and falsity" (Torfing 1999, 12).

Discourse, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is "*a relational totality of signifying sequences that together constitute a more or less coherent framework for what can be said and done*" (in Torfing 1999, 300). Discourse, therefore, is a system or a framework, the elements of which are in specific *relations* with each other. A single element of a discourse is insignificant; it is the system of relations that gives it its meaning. Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 105) specify:

*We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse.*

A discourse is thus a totality in which meanings are partially and temporarily fixed through articulatory practice. A totality, however, does not refer to a closed and centered entity but rather to an ensemble of differential positions that *constitute a configuration* and can thus be *signified as a totality* (ibid., 105). The formation of a discourse occurs through the partial fixation of meaning around so-called nodal points, which are privileged points around which the other signs are organized (Ibid., 112; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002).

A structured totality refers to a system of relations and differences according to which we structure and categorize the world (Jokinen & Juhila 1991, 6). Discourses are seen to be constitutive of social reality because they organize social relations, in other words, they actively shape the world (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 96). Therefore, our experience of the world is structured through discourses and the ways in which discourses categorize, group and label things around us. Thus, through discourse, certain ways of talking about a topic are made to appear sensible, acceptable and possible, while other ways are not. Discourses produce ‘knowledge’ of or ‘truth’ regarding a topic, and once individuals begin conceiving of the world through these discourses, social practices come to reproduce and enforce these ‘truths’ (Knights & Morgan 1991). In addition to structuring the world, discourses also structure individuals through subjectivities, social identities and “ways of being in the world” (Alvesson & Deetz 2000, 97; Alvesson & Willmott 2002). Discourses are not naturally oppressive or omnipotent and can be resisted or rejected (Knights & Morgan 1991), although their influence is inescapable.

According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985) discourses belong to the social-material reality. This refers to the stance of not separating the discursive and non-discursive reality from each other, but instead seeing them as intertwined. Although the existence of stones is a physical fact independent of human consciousness, the fact that stones are labeled as ‘stones’ is a social construction of the physical object. Therefore, although stones as physical objects do exist even if there were no human beings to perceive them, the socially constructed understanding of them as ‘stones’ is dependent on people. Moreover, once we learn that stones (the physical object) are ‘stones’ (the socially constructed definition), we are no longer able to conceive them without the lenses given by the socially constructed definition (Jokinen & Juhila 1991, 27; Laclau & Mouffe 1985, 108).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 113) also emphasize the *contingency* of discourses, or their constantly changing nature, and thus the fact that any fixation of meaning is only partial and temporal. However, the temporality and partiality of the fixedness does not mean that discourses are easy to change; rather, they are often stagnated and blind us from seeing things differently.

Different discourses are in a constant competition for the status of providing the best and most truthful interpretation of reality; in other words, they vie for domination of the discursive field, trying to exclude other meanings and interpretations. Although

one of the basic ideas of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory is that meanings are never permanently fixed, certain discourses may gain a dominant position, and succeed in framing people's understanding and action. Consequently, there are discourses and interpretations, which are weaker and even marginalized in the struggle. As each discourse can be considered an over-determination of reality, meaning that the world can be interpreted in so many ways that they could not be communicated through one conceptualization, the excess of meaning needs to be filtered in order to create unity of meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). The unity of meaning brings us to the other central concept of this study, *hegemony*.

### 2.5.2 *Hegemony*

In common usage, hegemony is seen as the domination of an ideology or a group of people over another. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hegemony as "a group or regime, which exerts undue influence within a society." In this thesis, the concept of hegemony is understood in the way used by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). In their usage, hegemony refers to *an articulation* or *a closure of meaning*, which reconstitutes unambiguity (Laclau 1993, 282; cf. Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas & Davies 2008). A discourse becomes hegemonic if it succeeds in dominating other discourses by marginalizing or dissolving any conflicting meanings.

Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conception of hegemony is based on language, and its capability of forming consent, instead of looking at hegemony as a form of political or ideological authority. The concept of hegemony as understood by Laclau and Mouffe (*ibid.*) evolved partly as a critique of Marxism, and the idea of cultural hegemony put forward by the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1971) is central for Laclau's and Mouffe's thinking.

One of the central Marxist critiques deals with the question of ideological determinism: if the capitalist ideology determines how working class people think and act, – as historical materialists generally agree – how would they be able to recognize their subordinate position in the society and question it? As a contribution to the question of ideological determinism, Antonio Gramsci (1971) introduced the concept of cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci, hegemony is about the organization of consent, referring to "*the processes through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence or coercion*" (Barrett 1991, 54 cited in Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). In practice, it means that the ruling class disseminates their culture and ideology, and the values and norms related to them, throughout the entire society. Through this dissemination, the values and norms of the ruling class become 'common sense' and start to appear normal and natural.

Gramsci's (1971) theory stands in contrast to classical historical materialism, as it assumes that the hegemonic processes are occurring on the level of superstructure, not on the level of the base, i.e. the economy. Theoretically, this Gramscian shift provides an opening for the people to put up meaningful resistance and make revolution against dominant ideologies and power relations, since they would not be completely trapped by the economy. This also implies that the processes and practices of meaning-making are a relevant topic of research, contrary to classical historical materialism, according to which we should only be interested in the economy, as it is where all relevant processes occur (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, ch. 2). Therefore, from the point of view of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) idea of hegemony, the production and regulation of meaning is central in creating and stabilizing power relations.

However, Laclau and Mouffe's theory differs from Gramsci's thinking, as regards their ontological position. Gramsci's theory is based on an objectivist understanding of social phenomena, such as classes and class divisions, while Laclau and Mouffe emphasize a social constructionist stance, according to which classes and other groupings of the society are created in discursive processes. There are, thus, not any objective rules or practices, which would exist outside discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, ch. 2).

Following Laclau (1999), production of any knowledge cannot be apolitical; it is always "hegemonic to a certain extent." Hegemonic struggle takes place around what Laclau calls 'floating signifiers' (1993, 287), in other words signifiers, i.e. concepts or notions, which are open to contestation and struggle. Creativity can be considered one such concept, as it has varying meanings in different discourses; it may be used in reference to very different things in fields such as arts, education, developmental psychology, and organization studies. Even within the context of organization studies, where the concept of organizational creativity is located, it can have competing meanings and connotations. Hegemonization of a concept means the fixing of its meaning, in other words, that certain meanings become dominating and appear so 'natural' that they are taken for granted.

Furthermore, Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 137) deny Gramsci's assumption of a single political space, which dominates others, but instead argue that there are a plurality of spaces and democratic struggles. Therefore, hegemony refers to a *relation* between discourses, some of which dominate the field, and others that are weaker or marginalized (ibid., 139). In this thesis, the concept of hegemony is used to denote the themes, perspectives, methods, paradigms, and understandings of organizational creativity, which have become somewhat established, and thus predominate the organizational creativity discourse and contribute to the overlooking of others. Although it is very difficult, if not impossible, to draw exact lines between what can be considered hegemonic and non-hegemonic, or marginal, one way of approaching the problem is to employ the concept of the 'mainstream.' In order to get a grasp of what can be considered 'mainstream,' it is necessary to ask 'Whose needs are served

with the knowledge?’ In the case of mainstream studies on organizations, the purpose of the studies is to provide managers with knowledge and theories, which help in the effective management of organizations (Alvesson & Deetz 2000; Chan 2001; McAuley, Duberley & Johnson 2007). In an influential text, Pugh (1977, 9, cited in McAuley et al. 2007, 20) defines organization theory in the following way: “...*the study of the structure, functioning and performance of organizations and the behavior of groups and individuals within them... [in order]...to distil theories of how organizations function and how they should be managed.*” In this context, non-mainstream organization studies are comprised of perspectives, which are *not* guided by the aim of finding practical knowledge or advice for managers, but are instead interested in what is going on in organizations and organizing more broadly (Alvesson & Deetz 2000).

In this thesis, the notion of what is ‘mainstream’ in organizational creativity studies is, to begin with, guided by research questions such as ‘how can creativity be managed or increased.’ However, what this study considers as the hegemonic discourse is not limited to studies which have the explicit aim of producing practical knowledge for managers, but is also understood more broadly to comprise views and conceptions which are discussed widely and largely agreed upon, and thus are considered to represent a somewhat *established* understanding of creativity in organizations.

The concept of hegemony could also have other meanings in relation to academic literature. It could be seen in relation to, for example, the reputation and academic credibility of scholars responsible for a contribution, a journal’s ranking or the citations received by a specific piece of research. All these viewpoints may provide interesting insights on the topic, although they may not differ that greatly from the analysis presented in this study. The main reasons for rejecting a research-‘quality’- or impact-based understanding of hegemony are, first, that the rankings and lists are subjective and partly contradictory, which makes assessing research quality, even based on the existing lists, a challenging task and, second, that using them would require at least some engagement with the fierce debate regarding research quality assessments related to academic publishing and their influence on organization studies and management education (see e.g., Kallio 2014; Kallio, Kallio, Tienari & Hyvönen 2015; Macdonald & Kam 2007; Meriläinen 2015; Mingers & Willmott 2013; Willmott 2011). Although this debate is important and also somewhat related to the discussion initiated in this study, it is a different discussion and thus, beyond the scope of this study.

Before considering the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse in greater detail, the next chapter provides the summaries, roles and contributions of the studies, which include alternative viewpoints from the perspective of the hegemony.



### **3 WRITINGS FROM THE MARGINS – THE SUMMARIES OF THE STUDIES**

#### **3.1 The studies and their research approaches and methods**

This chapter includes summaries of the studies and a discussion of their role and main contributions to this thesis (Chapter 3.2). Study 1 is a critical analysis of organizational creativity discourse and acts as the starting point for the analysis presented in the synthesis section of this thesis. Study 2 has a slightly different role from the other studies, as it mostly assists in providing an overview of organizational creativity studies, and thus helps in identifying themes and perspectives, which are frequently encountered in the hegemonic discourse. More specifically, it outlines themes and perspectives that have been dominant in the organizational creativity discourse over recent decades, as well as some central findings related to creativity in organizations. The study 1 and the studies 3, 4, and 5 serve another purpose in the argumentation of this thesis. All four studies have been written from diverse perspectives with somewhat different interests and foci, and their role is to act as illustrations of themes, perspectives, methodological approaches, and paradigms that hold a marginal position from the viewpoint of the hegemonic discourse. With the help of these illustrative alternative perspectives, the hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity is problematized and critically discussed. However, it should be noted that all the studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) include at least some hegemonic aspects, contribute in that manner to the hegemonic discourse, and are by no means ‘pure-breed’ representatives of any alternative discourse. Each of the studies, nevertheless, highlights one or several aspects of organizational creativity which have been overlooked or marginalized in the hegemonic discourse, and thus can be considered as discussion openers towards alternative understandings.

Table 1 summarizes the studies, and presents their authors, publication outlets, approaches, material, methods, and their contributions from the point of view of this thesis.

Table 1 The authors, publication outlets, research approaches, material, and methods of the studies, and their contribution to the thesis.

	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Publication outlet</b>	<b>Approach and research material</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Contribution to the thesis</b>
1	Blomberg, A.	Journal of Organizational Change Management	Discourse theoretical exploration of discursive practices in academic literature.	Multi-method approach: content, argumentation and discourse analyses.	Neglected aspect in creativity discourse: limiting discursive practices.
2	Blomberg, A. Kallio, T. Pohjanpää, H.	Manuscript under review.	Literature review: a narrative review of academic journal articles.	Theretical analysis.	Overview of the organizational creativity discourse.
3	Blomberg, A. Kostova, I.	Conference publication presented at EGOS, July 2015.	Discourse theory approach.	Discourse-oriented theoretical analysis.	Neglected aspect in creativity discourse: the dark side of creativity.
4	Kallio, T. Kallio, K-M. Blomberg, A.	Facilities	Longitudinal, qualitative approach; empirical material collected through sets of interviews, and secondary data.	Data-driven analysis of the interview material, and its triangulation with the secondary data.	Neglected aspect in creativity discourse: physical space.
5	Satama, S. Blomberg, A.	Manuscript under review (2nd review round).	Qualitative approach, ethnographic material.	Data-driven analysis of the field notes, diaries and photos.	Neglected aspect in creativity discourse: aesthetic dimensions of collaborative creativity.

As can be seen from Table 1, Study 1 is a discourse-oriented textual study (cf. Ahonen & Kallio 2002), which uses a multi-method approach, i.e. combines content analysis, argumentation analysis, and discourse analysis for a critical assessment of scholarly texts on organizational creativity. Study 2 is a narrative, or traditional state-of-the-art review (Jesson, Matheson & Lacey 2011), reviewing and synthesizing scholarly articles on organizational creativity. As the reviewed literature itself provides the source of data and is the focus of analysis, it can be considered a form of empirical study (cf. Ahonen & Kallio 2002; Kallio 2006), although it is often regarded as a theoretical, i.e. non-empirical study. Similarly, Study 3 is a discourse-oriented textual study (Ahonen & Kallio 2002), applying the discourse theory approach as a broader framework for its theoretical analysis, while Studies 4 and 5 are empirical studies in a more traditional sense. Both studies are qualitative and take a rather data-driven approach, with an emphasis on interpretation of the empirical material (cf. Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2006). Study 4 is a longitudinal qualitative study, the empirical material of which consists of two rounds of interviews, the case company's internal survey, and photographs. Study 5 is an ethnographic study, in which the empirical material derives from two separate dance productions and includes participant observation, photographs, and informal conversations. The research approaches and materials of the studies are further explicated in the next chapter.

### 3.2 The summaries of the studies

Two of the studies (Studies 1 and 4) have been published in international scholarly journals and have been subjected to peer-review. Two of the studies (Studies 2 and 5) have been presented at international conferences<sup>6</sup>, and submitted to international scholarly journals for peer review, and one of the studies (Study 3) is a conference publication<sup>7</sup>.

Each of the studies has been written as a separate publication, which means that they have a purpose and a contribution independent of this thesis. In this chapter, brief summaries of the studies are presented, and the main points and contributions of each study are discussed from the viewpoint of this thesis.

#### 3.2.1 *Organizational creativity diluted: a critical appraisal of discursive practices in academic research*

Study 1 explores *discursive practices employed in academic research on organizational creativity through a critical lens*. The paper takes a discourse-theoretical perspective on academic organizational creativity literature, and is interested in its discursive practices. The practices reproduced in the discourse reflect the understanding of the studied phenomenon, and emphasize certain aspects, while necessarily leading to the ignorance and exclusion of other aspects. The paper explores some predominant discursive practices shared by organizational creativity scholars, and discusses their theoretical and practical implications. Aspects and views that are ignored or excluded are also discussed.

Taking a discourse-theoretical perspective on an academic field, in this case organizational creativity, allows us to explore why some practices gain the status of ‘true’ or ‘normal,’ and thus manage to guide the ways a phenomenon is understood and talked about. Although one could very likely identify other discursive practices which predominate the discourse and cast implications on the understanding of organizational creativity, this paper recognizes three groupings of practices: objectivist ontology, productivity rhetoric, and omnipotence.

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a set of articles, which were collected using a systematic data collection method. A search of relevant articles was made in three electronic databases in February and March 2012. The search targeted scholarly articles on organizational creativity. Based on predetermined criteria 151 articles were selected for analysis. The set of articles is considered to represent a

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<sup>6</sup> A previous version of Study 2 was presented at the European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS) conference in Barcelona, Spain, in July 2009, and of Study 5 at the European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS) conference in Montréal, Canada, in July 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Study 3 is a conference publication that was presented at the European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS) conference in July 2015, in Athens, Greece.

meaningful sample of organizational creativity discourse, and thus to illustrate the practices prevalent in the discourse. The method used to analyze the material can be considered a multi-method approach, including approaches such as content analysis, argumentation analysis, and discourse analysis.

Objectivist ontology, in this case, refers to two aspects of organizational creativity research: it is a discursive practice, and an ontological and epistemological starting point of a study. The categorization of the reviewed articles according to their methodological approach indicates that quantitative approaches are still considered an established practice of organizational creativity studies, implying that organizational creativity is often seen as a quality or phenomenon that can be quantified and measured. Second, a predominant way of defining organizational creativity is to conceptualize it as an outcome which is both new, and useful or valuable. Although an outcome-based definition sounds relatively easy and alluring from the perspective of empirical research, it limits the understanding of organizational creativity.

Productivity rhetoric refers to a widely used discursive practice of connecting organizational creativity to what is called productivity rhetoric, consisting of words such as company performance, competitive advantage, innovativeness, productivity, growth, and survival. The need for studies on organizational creativity is frequently justified by the presumed increases in productivity that creativity will bring, and this is considered an inherently valid argument which is usually not questioned, empirically tested, or further considered.

The last grouping of discursive practices is labeled omnipotence, and refers to practices aiming at portraying organizational creativity in a positive light: relatively easy to achieve and manage, and generating positive outcomes. The potential negative side effects or implications, or any difficulties related to creativity, are mostly ignored.

The paper concludes that the dominant discursive practices contribute to the creation of a one-sided view of organizational creativity and to the dilution of the concept. Although the diluted notion fits the managerial agenda and organizational discourse well, it risks reducing the value of creativity to a mere management fad.

From the viewpoint of this dissertation, Study 1 can be seen to represent an alternative discourse regarding several aspects of organizational creativity. To begin with, although *critical exploration of academic texts* has been conducted in many fields of study (see e.g., Ahl 2006; Ahonen, Tienari & Meriläinen 2014), in the case of organizational creativity discourse it has attracted relatively modest interest so far. Therefore, the perspective and approach of this paper can be considered as alternative from the viewpoint of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, as discourse-oriented studies on organizational creativity are rather scarce (see e.g., Driver 2008; Prichard 2002; Tuori & Vilén 2011 as exceptions). Due to the relatively modest interest in the critical exploration of scholarly texts, the multi-method

approaches of the kind used in Study 1 seem quite uncommon among studies on organizational creativity. Finally, the main contribution of this study for the dissertation lies in its pointing out that certain discursive practices of scholarly organizational creativity texts – although they may appear natural, valid and largely agreed-upon – may also *contribute to a limiting and one-sided understanding of creativity in organizations.*

### **3.2.2 *The antecedents of organizational creativity: drivers, barriers, or both?***

Study 2 reviews organizational creativity discourse, focusing especially on the antecedents of organizational creativity. The study points out that the organizational creativity discourse has a tendency to dichotomize factors influencing organizational creativity into drivers and barriers, and mostly confine itself to studying the drivers. Due to this dichotomizing tendency, it has largely been ignored in the organizational creativity discourse that some if not most of the factors influencing organizational creativity might, in fact, be either-or factors by their nature. The concept of an either-or-factor refers to an antecedent, which may both enhance creativity, i.e. act as a driver under some circumstances, and hinder creativity, i.e. act as a barrier under other circumstances.

This study is a traditional or narrative state-of-the-art review, aimed at giving a contemporary yet extensive review of organizational creativity (Jesson et al. 2011). It is based on a scan of three electronic databases, which were searched in order to track academic journal articles dealing with the topic. Based on the articles' abstracts it was assessed whether the article explicitly contributes to the knowledge of organizational creativity, in which case the full article was read and included in the analysis. The electronic database search was confined to articles published during the time period starting in January 2000 and ending in August 2014, although snowball sampling was applied to complement the set of articles with some older articles that were considered central. The articles were read and thematized using a pattern-matching technique, and the frequently discussed themes are presented in the study.

From the point of view of this thesis, this paper assists in providing an overview of the organizational creativity discourse, and thus allows for the identification of themes that are frequently studied and agreed upon. It also provides the material necessary for a mapping of the perspectives that are commonly encountered in the studies on organizational creativity, thus playing a key role in outlining the themes and perspectives that predominate in the discourse (see Chapters 4.2.1. and 4.3.1).

In addition, Study 2 highlights the prevalent tendency of organizational creativity discourse to focus on enhancing creativity, i.e. to concentrate on searching for drivers of organizational creativity, and to neglect those aspects that might hinder or prevent it from taking place (i.e. barriers). Moreover, the paper points out that the either-or-

nature of several antecedents has not been properly acknowledged. Although several reasons for these tendencies could be put forward, this could also be interpreted as a demonstration of organizational creativity being a more complex and context-dependent phenomenon than it has been typically considered. Study 2 discusses also how, in the cases of affect (Amabile et al. 2005; George & Zhou 2002; 2007; Walton 2003), structure (e.g., Bissola & Imperatori 2011; Çokpekin & Knudsen 2012), rewards (e.g., Amabile 1983; Baer, Oldham & Cummings 2003; Mumford 2000; Walton 2003), and diversity (e.g., Bunduchi 2009; Egan 2005; Hemlin 2009; Richter et al. 2012; Walton 2003), to name a few factors considered central for the occurrence of creativity, the research findings are contradictory. The contradictory findings related to some antecedents might be due to the use of different conceptualizations of creativity and different analytic methods. In addition, they could possibly also be interpreted as a hint that studies on organizational creativity are based on an assumption of creativity as too invariant and static, and that the studies fail to address the complex and dynamic nature of creativity.

However, although Study 2 provides some openings towards critical exploration of the organizational creativity discourse, its role in this dissertation is, above all, to provide an *overview of the organizational creativity discourse*, and to assist in mapping some central themes and perspectives of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse.

### ***3.2.3 Exploring the dark side of creativity in organizations***

Drawing on discourse theory perspective, Study 3 *explores the dark side of creativity in organizations* and *challenges the excessive positivity* towards creativity present in the related discourse. Study 3 also discusses the potential implications of the excessive positivity of the creativity discourse and the neglect of the dark side.

In the contemporary discourse on creativity in organizations, creativity wears a certain halo and evokes mostly positive connotations. A shared assumption seems to be that creativity is good and leads to beneficial advances in the arts and science, as well as in business and organizational life. It is therefore easily forgotten that creativity can also be used for negative ends and harmful purposes (Cropley 2010, 1; James, Clark & Cropanzano 1999; McLaren 1993) and may have unintended or unanticipated consequences that are negative. In fact, when creativity is used for negative purposes, one must attach an extra qualifier to it; some call it malevolent creativity (Cropley, Kaufman & Cropley 2008; Eisenman 2008) or negative creativity (Clark & James 1999; James et al. 1999), but in any case, creativity without an extra label is considered good by default.

Although in the common way of thinking, creativity is seen as inherently good, in organization studies literature the goodness of creativity derives from the various

positive outcomes that it is assumed to bring about (see also Study 1). Organizational creativity results in a higher competitiveness (e.g., Politis 2005), competitive advantage (e.g., Chong & Ma 2010; Parjanen 2012), and success (e.g., DiLiello & Houghton 2008); and employee creativity leads to organizational innovation, effectiveness, and survival (e.g., Ahmed 1998; Amabile 1996; Politis 2005). We are even informed that, at worst, inability to nourish creativity in an organization may result in organizational dissolution (Egan 2005), which therefore makes it necessary to allow for and ensure creativity. In addition to the excessively positive halo around creativity, there is a tendency to view it as a free resource, which can be exploited without too much consideration of any negative consequences or social costs related to it (Styhre 2006).

Although the dark side of creativity has received some attention in academia (see, e.g., Cropley 2010; Cropley & Cropley 2013; McLaren 1993), the studies mostly focus on creativity as a general construct, instead of considering it in the context of an organization, which is the interest of this study. Moreover, this study also attempts to illustrate the ways in which the excessively positive discourse around creativity has implications and consequences that may be harmful or negative. Adopting a discourse theory perspective, this study recognizes discourses as not only constituting social realities but also as regulating, disciplining and constructing individuals through identities and subjectivities (Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Watson & Harris 1999; cf. Knights & Morgan 1991). Therefore, discourses on creativity are not neutral or irrelevant from the point of view of those who consider themselves to be ‘creatives,’ are engaged in ‘creative work,’ or strive to be ‘creative’ but instead provide discursive resources an individual may tap into, as well as norms, ideals, and practices that an individual must either accept and relate to or decline and resist. Their influence is, in any event, inescapable for those doing ‘creative’ work.

This paper represents an alternative perspective to the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, firstly because it *challenges and problematizes some assumptions of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse*. This study seeks to highlight the fact that the assumption of the inherent goodness of creativity or at least a belief in the capacity of creativity to bring about positive outcomes is a value-laden and political assumption rather than a natural state of affairs. Secondly, it represents an alternative to the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse because it adopts a *discourse-theory approach* and is thus an example of an alternative approach among organizational creativity studies (see, e.g., Driver 2008; Prichard 2002; Tuori & Vilén 2011 as other examples).

### ***3.2.4 Physical space, culture, and organizational creativity – a longitudinal study***

Study 4 explores *how the design of a physical organizational environment can support the emergence of an organizational culture conducive to organizational creativity*. Using longitudinal, qualitative empirical material, the study points out that physical space and its instrumental, symbolic, and aesthetic aspects influence organizational culture, and in the case under study, support the cultural changes promoted by the management. This article illustrates the importance of an often-neglected aspect of organization – physical space – in creating a culture more conducive of creativity.

The paper is based on a single-case study, in which the case organization was a Finnish regional newspaper with 115 full time employees. The empirical material was collected in two waves and includes thematic interviews and observations. The first wave comprised 15 thematic interviews, and the second wave included yet another 15 interviews, out of which 11 interviewees were the same as in the first wave. In addition to the interviews, observation both in the old and new facilities was a central method of data collection, and was supplemented with the company's internal organizational survey and photographs.

The theoretical perspective of this paper can be located in the intersection of two research streams, organizational creativity studies and studies interested in physical organizational space. Although both constructs are studied extensively, their combination has received a relatively marginal interest. As the relationship between organizational creativity and physical space is quite challenging to study, the concept of an organizational culture conducive of creativity is used as a mediating variable between the two constructs. Therefore, the paper focuses not on organizational creativity as such, but rather on organizational culture, which is generally regarded as its determinant (Ahmed 1998; Andriopoulos 2001; Martins & Terblanche 2003). Organizational culture influences organizational creativity not only through dominant philosophies, rules, norms, policies, and practices, but also through the socialization process, during which employees familiarize themselves with what is expected, valued, and allowed in an organization (Dobni 2008; Martins & Terblanche 2003).

The management of the case organization had been pushing for a change in the organization's culture, as it was considered too conservative and hierarchical, and even 'given up,' as an interviewee characterized it. Although some changes in the culture had taken place already by the time of the first wave of interviews, the changes were considered slow and painful. The symbolic aspects of the physical layout seemed to reinforce the hierarchic, authoritarian, and conservative culture, and the aesthetic experience of the environment was dark, messy, and backward-looking. The instrumental aspects of the physical environment effectively divided the employees into their departments, and kept the level of interaction low both between departments

and between employees and supervisors. The physical environment, thus, appeared to hamper the desired cultural change.

The move to new facilities could be considered as a successful symbolic act which enforced the desired cultural change. The new facilities, the design of which involved employees from all the different functions of the company, were playful, interesting, and unconventional. The change in the physical space had many implications for the organizational culture, although there were three aspects in particular which could be considered central from the perspective of creativity: openness, equality, and collectivity.

The paper shows how three aspects of culture – equality, openness, and collectivity – can be positively influenced by the physical environment of an organization, and therefore, might also positively influence organizational creativity. From the viewpoint of this dissertation, Study 4 explores *physical space* and its instrumental, symbolic, and aesthetic aspects, which represent somewhat neglected themes in the organizational creativity discourse. Although Study 4 can be considered as a representative of the hegemonic discourse in many respects, it highlights the *material embeddedness* of organizational phenomena, including organizational creativity, and emphasizes the *nature of creativity as a social and cultural process* (Csikszentmihalyi & Sawyer 1995), thus also offering an alternative to the individual-centered understandings of creativity prevalent in the hegemonic discourse.

### ***3.2.5 Creative bodies on the move: Exploring aesthetic dimensions of collaborative creativity in dance***

Study 5 explores the aesthetic dimensions of collaborative creativity in an ethnographic study in the field of professional dance. The paper explores how collaborative creativity emerges and is actualized in aesthetic ways in the everyday context of dance.

The empirical material of the study was gathered from two dance productions. The first production was one with two dancers, who had retired from the Finnish national ballet and were working together, while the second one was a freelance production with five dancers, a choreographer, and other actors involved. The ethnographic material consists of participant observation and field notes and diaries based on observation, as well as photographs, videos, and informal discussions with the participants. The study is based on an aesthetically sensitive approach, meaning that both the researchers' and the researched subjects' sensual experiences are a central focus of interest.

The paper identifies three aesthetic dimensions of collaborative creativity through which it evolves. First, different emotional loadings – those of the dancers, those of the piece, and those evoked during intensive collaboration – acted as sources for

creativity in the studied productions. Second, interplay between the solitary intuitions of the agents and their development into a shared experience formed a central dynamic in the emergence of collaborative creativity. Third, interplay and the alternation between serious and playful improvisation were found to contribute to the emergence of creativity. The three aspects identified are aesthetic in that they occur in and through the body, and are conveyed in sensuous ways among the agents involved.

This study contributes to the organizational creativity literature in two ways. First, it agrees with several scholars (e.g., Glăveanu 2011; John-Steiner 2000; Kenny 2008; Sawyer 2007) on the inherently social and collaborative nature of creativity and illustrates how a final dance piece is developed in an intensive collaboration of two or more people. Second, it complements the existing literature on collaborative creativity by emphasizing the fundamentally aesthetic foundation of collaborative creativity.

Study 5 contributes to this dissertation as it provides an alternative perspective on the study of organizational creativity in several respects. First, it centers on *collaborative* creativity (e.g., Hargadon & Bechky 2006; Sawyer 2007; Sawyer & DeZutter 2009; Sonnenburg 2004), in other words on creativity emerging from the interactions of several people, instead of looking at creativity as an individual or group-level phenomenon. Therefore, the paper is interested in the dynamics of interaction of collaborative groups, and especially in how creativity emerges in and through these dynamics. Second, the paper focuses especially on collaborative creativity from an *aesthetic* viewpoint, seeing it as emerging from the sensuous and aesthetic interaction and communication among the agents. Third, it explores the phenomenon in the *context* of professional dance, which is not a typical context of study in the field of organization studies (see e.g., Chandler 2012; Slutskaia 2006 as exceptions), nor in organizational creativity studies, and thus can be considered to represent an alternative. Fourth, although ethnographic studies on creativity in organizations do exist (Andriopoulos & Gotsi 2005; Hargadon & Bechky 2006), taking an *aesthetic approach* to studying the phenomenon represents an alternative viewpoint.



## 4 HEGEMONIC AND ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES ON ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY

### 4.1 Mapping the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse

Although organizational creativity knowledge consists of a rather fragmented set of findings (Hennessey & Amabile 2010; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 32), a dominance of certain themes and perspectives taken in the studies is discernible. Moreover, there are methodological approaches which are frequently used, and which rely on specific sets of assumptions, and therefore hold a certain position in the paradigmatic field (cf. Burrell and Morgan 1979). For the purposes of this study, they are considered *hegemonic*.

Hegemony, according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 134–139; 141–142), is a political *type of relation* that emerges through articulatory practices. In this thesis, hegemony refers to a set of articulations which have succeeded in fixing – although partially and temporally – the meaning and their relation to *other* meanings, which are regarded as marginal or alternative. Although hegemonic articulations predominate in the field, there are also alternative discourses. In fact, this is an unnecessary statement, as the hegemony *requires* antagonisms to exist, as without antagonistic forces, there could not be any hegemony (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Therefore, hegemony derives its meaning as it manages to dominate the field and the possible meanings and interpretations available.

Hegemony, as understood in this thesis, does not constitute a single center or core, but rather a field of themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms, which are widely agreed on and considered central, relevant, or important, and which therefore marginalize others and make them appear less so. Nor is it possible to draw exact lines between hegemony and alternative discourses, and the lines, i.e. decisions regarding whether something represents hegemony or an alternative, are always non-objective, as they are based on the researcher's interpretation. However, by this attempt to map the hegemonic discourse, it is possible to recognize the hegemonic understandings and conceptualizations of creativity and to explore the meanings attached to it.

The mapping of the hegemonic discourse is based on the literature review conducted in Study 2, which is complemented with literature reviews made by other scholars (e.g., Anderson et al. 2014; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Shalley & Zhou 2008), as well as an extensive reading of scholarly texts for the purposes of the studies and the

synthesis section of this dissertation. However, it is evident that the discussion does not cover in detail *all* the possible themes, perspectives, and methods, which could be considered hegemonic in organizational creativity discourse, but rather provides an overview of them, followed by a discussion of their problematic aspects. Similarly, the discussion of the marginalized themes, perspectives, and methods does not even try to cover all the possibilities that could be considered as such, but discusses those brought up in the studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). The viewpoints offered in the studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) both guide and limit the discussion, but also act as triggers for a broader understanding of organizational creativity.

The following chapters aim at creating an overview of the themes and perspectives that are considered hegemonic (Chapters 4.2.1 and 4.3.1). Then, some overlooked or neglected, i.e. marginal themes and perspectives which are touched upon in the studies of this dissertation are discussed (Chapters 4.2.2 and 4.3.2). Next, the studies on organizational creativity are discussed from the viewpoint of common methods and paradigms, which inform us about the prevalent ontological and epistemological assumptions (Chapters 4.4.1 and 4.5.1). Then the paradigms and methods, which are considered to represent the hegemonic discourse, are discussed and problematized, and methodological questions and paradigmatic assumptions which appear more marginal are brought up (Chapters 4.4.2 and 4.5.2).

## **4.2 Hegemonic and marginal themes**

There are a variety of themes which are frequently discussed and studied in organizational creativity texts and there appears to be an agreement on their centrality and relevance in seeking to understand organizational creativity. In this chapter they are considered *hegemonic*. As “*every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power and that always entails some form of exclusion*” (Mouffe 1999, 756), it is also worth asking what the consensus or agreement *excludes*. While in academia something that is widely accepted and cited is considered good, valid, and important, it is worth acknowledging that other themes, might also complement the current understanding of organizational creativity. Therefore, some marginal themes, touched upon in the studies of this dissertation (especially Study 4 and 5), are discussed in Chapter 4.2.2.

### **4.2.1 Hegemonic themes**

In this chapter, the central themes of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse are explored according to the individual, group, and organizational levels. The division of the analysis into the individual, group, and organizational levels is a

common method of conceptualizing the levels of analysis and organizing the findings among organizational creativity studies. It is also used as a structuring principle in this chapter (see also Study 2; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Mumford, Hester & Robledo 2012; Woodman et al. 1993).

According to Shalley and Zhou (2008, 3), the current understanding of organizational creativity draws extensively from conceptualizations and models of individual creativity, which still tend to dominate how organizational creativity is understood. According to Shalley and Zhou (2008, 7) there are two main approaches which provide influential insights for the understanding of individual creativity in organizational creativity studies. The two approaches are the study of individual differences and the study of cognitive processes, and their influence in organizational creativity discourse is still observable.

The studies on *individual differences* have been popular in psychologically oriented creativity studies, including attempts to determine particular personality types (e.g., Feist 1999; Mumford, Costanza, Threlfall, Baughman & Reiter-Palmon 1993) or social or life-historical variables related to creativity (e.g., Feldman 1999; Simonton 1975; 1976). Although individual differences were an especially popular topic in earlier studies on creativity, newer studies on the topic have also been conducted (see e.g., Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Gardner 1994). The studies on individual differences usually result in lists of traits or characteristics, which are considered more typical among ‘creative’ or ‘eminent’ people than among ‘non-creative’ or ‘non-eminent’ people<sup>8</sup>. The lists include traits such as openness, determination, high motivation, extroversion, autonomy, flexibility, self-confidence, aggressiveness, intuition, playfulness, high energy, and broad interests (Dellas & Gaier 1970; Barron & Harrington 1981; Feist 1999), self-esteem, locus of control (Woodman et al. 1993), curiosity, persistence, self-direction, and achievement (Rice 2006), to mention a few. Although the lists of traits of creative people have interested researchers, and the general public as well – at least if judged based on the frequency of various ‘traits of creative people’ lists in magazines and on the Internet – it is not clear if these traits have any predictive value for understanding creativity in organizations (Woodman et al. 1993).

The latter of the two main approaches on individual creativity identified by Shalley and Zhou (2008) is focused on *cognitive processes* related to creativity. Studies looking at creativity as a cognitive phenomenon include those interested in cognitive skills related to creativity (see e.g., Acar & Runco 2012; Newell, Shaw & Simon 1962), cognitive styles (e.g., Kirton 1976; Martinsen & Kaufman 1999), and cognitive processes (e.g., Finke, Ward & Smith 1992; Ward, Smith & Finke 1999) and their phases (e.g., Amabile 1988; 1996; Basadur et al. 1982; Wallas 1926). A

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<sup>8</sup> The assessment of who is considered creative or eminent and who is not is a matter of debate and largely subjective. The assessment methodology used in the studies is not discussed here, as it is outside the scope of this thesis.

relatively established view on organizational creativity considers organizational creativity to be a cognition-based skill, aptitude, or process related to creative thinking and idea generation (Amabile 1983; 1996; 1997; Axtell et al. 2000; Shah & Ali 2011; Litchfield 2008; Van Dijk & Van den Ende 2002; Woodman et al. 1993). Divergent thinking, a cognitive process during which an individual generates many diverse ideas or explores a variety of possibilities, is considered central to individual creativity (e.g., Acar & Runco 2012; Ford 1996; Williams 2004; Woodman et al. 1993). However, it has also been recognized that creative problem solving requires efficient use of both divergent and convergent thinking (Brophy 2001; Hemlin et al. 2013; Rickards 1994; Woodman et al. 1993). Basadur et al. (1982), in fact, claim that the creative problem-solving process consists of three phases – problem finding, problem solving, and solution implementation –, and that each of the phases includes a two-step thinking process, the former of which is called ideation and the latter evaluation. Ideation, in this model, constitutes the divergent phase, while evaluation represents the convergent aspect.

Mumford, Antes, Caughron, Connelly and Beeler (2010) developed a more fine-grained process model, arguing that there are eight core processes included in creative thinking: 1) problem definition, 2) information gathering, 3) information organizing, 3) conceptual combination, 5) idea generation, 6) idea evaluation, 7) implementation planning, and 8) solution monitoring (for more details, see Mumford et al. 2010). They conclude that the creative thinking process includes multiple, complex processes, which require the use of efficient strategies and valuable knowledge (see also Hennessey & Amabile 2010). An attempt to explore and explicate the *processual nature of creativity* and its phases or stages still appears to be a common perspective in organizational creativity studies (e.g., Andriopoulos & Lowe 2000; Basadur & Gelade 2006; Litchfield 2008).

The interest in the cognitive processes involved in creativity has also brought along a wide array of *creativity enhancing techniques*, proceeding from Osborn's brainstorming (1963) and De Bono's thinking hats (1985) to more recent writings on creativity techniques or training (see e.g., Study 2; McFadzean 2000; Riquelme 2000; Thompson 2003). Despite frequent critiques (see e.g., Elsbach & Hargadon 2006; McFadzean 2000; Purser & Montuori 1999; Walton 2003), various creativity-enhancing techniques still appear to be an appealing theme, both in the academic context (e.g., Basadur et al. 1982; Burbiel 2009; McFadzean 1998b; 2000; Thompson 2003; Walton 2003; Litchfield 2008; Burbiel 2009), and even more so in the popular business literature (e.g., McFadzean 1998a; Michalko 2006; VanGundy 1992; Young 2009). This appeal reflects a belief that creativity can be learned, taught, or somehow developed, and also an interest in finding ways to increase creativity.

According to Amabile (1997), creativity occurs in the intersection of creative thinking skills, intrinsic motivation, and domain-specific skills or expertise. Creative thinking skills are the element of creativity that provides something extra to a

technically good or adequate performance. The skills include cognitive thinking styles, working styles, and the application of techniques for finding “new cognitive pathways” (ibid., 42). The *domain-specific skills or expertise*, according to Amabile (1997), are the foundation of creativity, and refers to technical skills, factual knowledge, and special talents in the work domain. Several other scholars have also highlighted the importance of knowledge and expertise to creativity (Study 2; Egan 2005; Mumford 2000; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange 2002; Mumford et al. 2010; Sundgren & Styhre 2007; Woodman et al. 1993; Weisberg 1999), thus making it a central theme of interest in organizational creativity studies (Study 2). The third component of Amabile’s (1997) model, *intrinsic motivation*, conditions what the person will actually do, as it determines the level of engagement with the task (Amabile 1997). Motivation is among the themes related to creativity that has been discussed widely among organizational creativity scholars (Study 2; Amabile 1983; 1997; Baer et al. 2003; Barron & Harrington 1981; De Dreu, Baas & Nijstad 2012; Hennessey 2000; Shalley & Oldham 1997).

Intrinsic motivation is tightly connected to the notion of self-efficacy, which refers to the self-perception of effectiveness related to a certain domain. Creative self-efficacy has been defined as an individual perception of having “the ability to produce creative outcomes” (Tierney & Farmer 2002, 1138). As discussed in Study 2, in addition to the concept of creative self-efficacy (Chong & Ma 2010; Mathisen 2011; Tierney & Farmer 2002; 2011), other *notions related to identity and self*, such as creative personal identity (Jaussi, Randel & Dionne 2007), creative role identity (Farmer, Tierney & Kung-McIntyre 2003), and self-regulation (De Stobbeleir, Ashford & Buyens 2011) are predominant themes in organizational creativity discourse (see also Study 2).

As the understanding of organizational creativity as a phenomenon influenced by the social environment has evolved (Amabile et al. 1996; Klijin & Tomic 2010), *psychological states*, such as mood and affect, have been found to influence organizational creativity (see e.g., Study 2; Amabile et al. 2005; Adler & Obstfeld 2007; Baron & Tang 2011; De Dreu et al. 2012; George & Zhou 2002; 2007; Isen 1999a; 1999b; Isen, Daubman & Nowicki 1987). Therefore, psychological states and their relation to creativity are a theme frequently covered in the organizational creativity literature (Study 2), and thus can be considered hegemonic.

Groups provide the most immediate influences on individual creativity, and have thus attracted an increasing interest in organizational creativity studies. In recent years, notable advancements have been made regarding the understanding of group or team-level creativity, yet research in group creativity has been far scarcer than research in the organizational level (Study 2; Anderson et al. 2014).

Group-related themes which appear to be of central interest among organizational creativity scholars include: *relationships in and outside of the group* (Burbiel 2009; Hemlin 2009; Kratzer, Leenders & Van Engelen 2005; Perry-Smith 2006; Walton

2003; Woodman et al. 1993), *group composition* and *diversity* concerning, for instance, skills, background, knowledge or organizational positions (see e.g., Study 2; Egan 2005; Bunduchi 2009; Burbiel 2009; Hemlin 2009; Richter et al. 2012; Shin et al. 2012; Walton 2003; Yoon et al. 2010), *the clarity of shared objectives and goals* (Egan 2005; Isaksen & Lauer 2002; West 1990) or *vision* (West & Richter 2008, 218), and open *communication* (Amabile & Gryskiewicz 1989; Hemlin 2009; Walton 2003). A team or group *climate* favorable to creativity has been a focus of a strong interest in academic literature (see Study 2; Al-Beraidi & Rickards 2003; Fagan 2004; Isaksen & Lauer 2002), and the studies conclude, for instance, that an organizational climate that favors innovation and creativity (West & Wallace 1991), participative safety (Hennessey & Amabile 2010; Kessel, Kratzer & Schultz 2012; Walton 2003), trust (Amabile & Gryskiewicz 1989), a preoccupation with continuous improvements (Isaksen & Lauer 2002; West 1990), and an informal and playful atmosphere that encourages idea sharing (Hemlin 2009; Isaksen & Lauer 2002), will likely lead to an increase in group creativity (for a review, see Study 2). *Team leadership* and *management* are also central themes of interest related to group creativity (Study 2; Al-Beraidi & Rickards 2003; Chamakiotis, Dekoninck & Panteli 2013; Coget, Shani & Solari 2014; Hemlin 2009; Hemlin et al. 2013; Isaksen & Lauer 2002; Misra 2011).

Many observers argue for the importance of organizational level influences and organizational context for the understanding of organizational creativity (Bharadwaj & Menon 2000; Mumford et al. 2012, 12; Kallio & Kallio 2011). Among the frequently covered themes related to organizational level influences, a *creative culture* and *climate* appear significant (Study 2; Andriopoulos 2001; Cummings 1965; Dobni 2008; Ekvall & Ryhammar 1999; Isaksen & Ekvall 2010; Kwaśniewska & Nečka 2004; McLean 2005; Mostafa 2005; Moultrie & Young 2009; Shah & Ali 2011; Sundgren, Dimenäs et al. 2005; Sundgren, Selart et al. 2005). The central aspects of a creative climate are organizational encouragement, supervisory encouragement, work group supports, freedom, sufficient resources, and challenge (Amabile et al. 1996), and trust/openness, idea time, playfulness/humor, conflict, idea support, debate, risk-taking, and dynamism/liveliness, among others (Ekvall 1983; 1996; Moultrie & Young 2009).

The role of *management and leadership* has attracted a reasonable level of interest among organizational creativity scholars (Study 2). Different leadership styles, such as transformational (Al-Beraidi & Rickards 2003; Shin & Zhou 2003; Wang & Rode 2010), or participative and democratic (Andriopoulos 2001; Somech 2006; Mathisen et al. 2012), and their role in facilitating creativity have generated interest, too. Leaders' emotional intelligence has also been of interest in creativity research (Zhou & George 2003; Rego et al. 2007; Castro, Gomes & de Sousa 2012). Management's support for innovation and creativity (Choi & Chang, 2009; DiLiello & Houghton 2008; Sundgren, Selart et al. 2005; Wang & Casimir 2007), and its providing employees with enough resources, freedom, and autonomy (Daymon 2000; Mumford

2000; Sundgren, Selart et al. 2005; Moultrie & Young 2009) are other management-related themes frequently discussed in the organizational creativity discourse.

Other themes which are frequently encountered in organizational creativity studies include *job characteristics*, such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (see e.g., Axtell et al. 2000; Oldham & Cummings 1996); *organizational structures, control, and hierarchy* (see e.g., Study 2; Amabile et al. 1996; Damanpour & Aravind 2012; Hirst, van Knippenberg, Chen & Sacramento 2011; Mahmoud-Jouini & Charue-Duboc 2008; McLean 2005; Shalley, Gilson & Blum 2000; Sundgren, Dimenäs et al. 2005; Walton 2003; Wang & Casimir 2007); *rewards and performance measurement related to creativity* (see e.g., Baer et al. 2003; Eisenberg 1999; Kloz, Wheeler, Halbelesleben, Brock & Buckley 2012; Ligon, Graham, Edwards, Osburn & Hunter 2012); *resources and resource allocation* (see e.g., Mumford 2000; Bunduchi 2009); and work and time *pressure* (see e.g., Amabile 1988; 1996; Amabile, Hadley & Kramer 2002; Baer & Oldham 2006; Hemlin 2009).

The listing of themes provided in this chapter functions as an overview of the themes which are frequently encountered in the studies on organizational creativity. The fact that they are frequently discussed and studied indicates that a relationship between the theme and organizational creativity has been found, thus suggesting that the themes are regarded as important for the understanding of the phenomenon and that they also are valid and relevant topics of study. However, an excessive focus on exploring certain themes necessarily leads to the ignorance or neglect of some other themes, which might prove useful for our understanding of organizational creativity, if properly explored and studied. In the next chapter, some marginal themes, touched upon in the studies of this thesis, will be discussed.

#### **4.2.2 Marginal themes**

The lengthy listing of themes presented in the previous chapters hints that several themes related to organizational creativity have been studied quite extensively (see also Klijn & Tomic 2010). Even if this listing can only be considered an overview or an illustration of the discourse, and is by no means comprehensive, it points to the themes frequently covered in the discourse (see also Study 2). However, there are themes which are rarely encountered in the hegemonic discourse, or are almost lacking altogether, although they could be relevant for the understanding of organizational creativity. These themes can thus be considered marginal in the organizational creativity discourse.

Study 4 explores one such theme, physical space, which has occupied a rather marginal position in the organizational creativity discourse, despite the wide interest in the use of design and elements of physical environment to encourage creativity in the business world (see e.g., Forbes 2013). There are only a few examples of studies

on the relationship between organizational creativity and physical space (Haner 2005; Kristensen 2004; Magadley & Birdi 2009; Martens 2011; McCoy & Evans 2002; McCoy 2005; Sailer 2011; Vithayathawornwong, Danko & Tolbert 2003).

The studies interested in physical space and creativity have focused particularly on special innovation environments, such as ‘innovation labs’ (e.g., Haner 2005; Lewis & Moultrie 2005; Magadley & Birdi 2009), studied the relationship of physical space and creativity from an individual perspective (McCoy & Evans 2002) or conceptually (McCoy 2005). Therefore, empirical studies interested in physical space and organizational creativity in everyday working environments are scarce, although a few studies do exist (see e.g., Martens 2011; Sailer 2011; Williams 2009; Vithayathawornwong et al. 2003).

The relatively marginal position of physical space in organizational creativity theories is also reflected in the fact that none of the confluence models of organizational creativity, such as the theories of Woodman et al. (1993) and Amabile (e.g., 1988), which attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of factors considered to influence organizational creativity, include any factors related to the physical environment. Even more surprisingly, none of the theories of creative climate (Amabile et al. 1996; Ekvall 1983; Isaksen 2007) mentions physical space or environment, even if physical space and its aspects are considered influential for organizational culture, and thus also for climate<sup>9</sup> (Hatch & Cunliffe 2006, 241). Therefore, it can be concluded that the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse tends to overlook the material embeddedness of all organizational and social life (cf. Carlile et al. 2013), and the indisputable, yet subtle influences of a physical environment on organizational creativity (see Study 4).

The concept of physical space and materiality bring us to another marginalized theme in organizational creativity studies, which is “the material form of the human” (Dale 2001), that is the human body and its related constructs (Study 5). While the concept of body refers to the biological and social characteristics of a human body, the notion of embodiment is understood as an “indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world” (Csordas, 1994, 12), which is the viewpoint Study 5 represents.

Although the ‘turn to embodiment’ in organization studies (e.g., Dale 2001; Dale & Burrell 2008; Hassard, Holliday & Willmott 2000) has brought the role of the body within the scope of the field, the embodied origins of creativity have received a rather marginal interest. Despite a few exceptions (Nisula 2013; Stierand 2014; Stierand, Dörfler & MacBryde 2014; Styhre 2011; Tanggaard 2012), creativity is generally considered as a cognitive phenomenon, from the viewpoint of which the body is

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<sup>9</sup> Organizational climate refers to the everyday manifestations of practices and behaviors rooted in the assumptions and basic beliefs that make up an organizational culture (McLean 2005). Because it is known that physical settings and their artifacts cast an influence on organizational culture (Hatch 1993; Hatch & Cunliffe 2006, 241), these most likely affect its everyday manifestation, climate, as well.

considered irrelevant. According to the hegemonic understanding, the human body is mostly considered as a side issue, even when studying contexts in which the body, i.e. bodily gestures and expressions, appearance, and embodied knowledge could be considered central. As examples of such contexts, one can give hair stylists (Madjar & Ortiz-Walters 2008), healthcare teams (Kessel, Krazter & Schultz 2012), and management and leadership positions (e.g., Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan & Uda 2013), even though the bodily foundation of leadership has long been recognized (Duke 1986; Koivunen 2003).

Stierand, Dörfler and MacBryde (2014) complement the existing, mostly cognitively-oriented understandings of creativity by suggesting that the creativity of haute cuisine chefs is an embodied experience guided by intuition. In addition, Stierand (2014) suggests that the creativity of chefs requires experience, embodied sense-making, aesthetic experiencing, and the development of tacit knowledge, thus bringing aesthetics and embodiment into the center of their understanding of creativity. Intuition, which could be conceptualized as a form of knowledge of the body, often defined as a ‘gut feeling’ (Radin & Schlitz 2005; Sundgren & Styhre 2004), is something increasingly accepted as an element of creativity (Andersen 2000; Kenny 2008; Sundgren & Styhre 2004), although the studies which recognize the role of intuition in creativity can still be considered to occupy a relatively marginal position in the organizational creativity discourse.

The so called ‘practice turn’ has brought to light a kind of knowing which differs from conscious symbolic cognition, inspiring some organization studies scholars to become interested in non-cognitivist perspectives, including for instance aesthetic and embodied knowing (Gherardi 2006; Strati 2007; for a review, see Gärtner 2013). Although the practice turn does not appear to have gained much prominence in studies on organizational creativity, there are some studies which touch on the relevance of embodied knowledge to creativity (Küpers 2011; Leung et al. 2012; Nisula 2013; Rosa, Qualls & Fuentes 2008; Stierand 2014; Stierand et al. 2014; Styhre 2011). Styhre (2011) and Rosa et al. (2008), for example, highlight the role of embodied resources in complementing cognitive resources in knowledge-intensive work, which gives reason to expect that they have a role to play in creativity as well. However, the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse still tends to ignore the bodily foundation of knowing, and to lean on a conceptualization of knowledge as a mostly cognitive resource.

Study 5 explicitly explores the aesthetic and embodied foundations of creativity in collaboration, thus offering an alternative perspective to the hegemonic understanding of creativity. It highlights the nature of creativity as emerging from the dynamics of a group (see also Sawyer & DeZutter 2009), and from aesthetic interplays of emotions, intuitions of the agents involved, and different styles of working. Although the embodied foundation of creativity is more easily identifiable in the context of professional dance than it is in some other contexts, such as

knowledge-intensive work, the aesthetic foundation of creativity should not be downplayed in other contexts, either.

Although the marginal themes discussed in this chapter are limited to those touched upon in the studies of this dissertation, it is clear that there are many other possibly relevant themes which could be considered marginal. Therefore, the discussion opened in this chapter should be understood as an invitation to engage in exploration of other marginal themes, as they are likely to shed light on overlooked or under-theorized aspects of organizational creativity.

### **4.3 Hegemonic and marginal perspectives**

Studies on organizational creativity can be conducted from many different perspectives. The perspective determines how the phenomenon is approached and studied, and embodies assumptions on the nature of the topic of study and on how it relates to its environment. In the case of organizational creativity, there appears to be certain perspectives that predominate the discourse, and although they embody assumptions which have far-reaching influences on how creativity is understood in organizational contexts, they are often taken for-granted and not usually questioned. Certain hegemonic perspectives are discussed and problematized in the next chapter (Chapter 4.3.1), and perspectives which can be considered far less common or even largely overlooked, i.e. marginal, are discussed in Chapter 4.3.2.

#### **4.3.1 *Hegemonic perspectives***

An underlying assumption behind the hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity appears to be that creativity is as a desirable goal that organizations, employees, and managers usually strive for (Study 1; 3). Only rarely do scholars explicitly bring up the possibility that creativity may not be as desirable or admirable as generally thought. Among them are Ford (1996), who argues that habitual action overrides creative action, unless there is something that makes creative action more desirable; Unsworth and Clegg (2010), who try to find factors that make people want to be creative, thus suggesting that it is also possible that people *do not* want to be creative; and Mueller, Melwani and Goncalo (2012) who discuss why people desire creativity, but still tend to reject ideas that are creative.

Most writings on organizational creativity, however, are based on an assumption that when the various environmental, organizational, and personal factors are ‘right,’ i.e. favorable to creativity, people and organizations do want to be or become creative. Therefore, the implicit assumption behind many writings on organizational creativity is that creativity should be promoted, enhanced, and stimulated, and this piece of

writing will tell you how. Article or chapter titles of extant studies illustrate this tendency well, and below is a short, exemplary list of such titles:

- Shopfloor innovation: Facilitating the suggestion and implementation of ideas (Axtell et al. 2000).
- Networked creativity: A structured management framework for stimulating innovation (Brennan & Dooley 2005).
- Enhancing creativity through ‘mindless’ work: a framework of workday design (Elsbach & Hargadon 2006).
- Making knowledge workers more creative (Henard & McFadyen 2008).
- Building organisational culture that stimulates creativity and innovation (Martins & Terblanche 2003).
- Fostering creativity and productivity through emotional literacy: the organizational context (Park 2005).
- The 4R’s model for nurturing creative talent (Pryor et al. 2010).
- Social yet creative: the role of social relationships in facilitating individual creativity (Perry-Smith 2006).

To sum up, many studies on organizational creativity, such as the articles mentioned above, inform and instruct us how creativity can be nurtured, facilitated, fostered, or stimulated, thus suggesting that the more creativity there is, the better. Nevertheless, although assumptions on the positivity of creativity appear to predominate the discourse on organizational creativity, it is not fair to claim that all organizational creativity studies are based on those assumptions. Naturally, there are also studies which aim to gain a more thorough understanding of organizational creativity as a phenomenon (see e.g., El-Murad & West 2001; Styhre 2006; Unsworth 2001), or to critically assess its measurement and assessment (e.g., El-Murad & West 2001; Montag, Maertz & Baer 2012; Ng & Feldman 2013; Simonton 2013), to mention a few examples of studies that are not built on the assumption that creativity should be promoted. Moreover, while the assumption of the goodness and desirability of creativity may not be problematic as such, it might be worth a more critical exploration as to whether creativity actually is something that an organization or individual wants or needs, or whether it is something imposed from the outside. In addition, the tendency to present creativity as a general imperative in organizational life has implications which might be positive and productive in some respects, yet it could also be harmful or have negative side effects for individuals and organizations (see Study 3).

The assumption of the desirability of creativity leads to a tendency in organizational creativity studies to aim at searching for and finding determinants, antecedents, precedents, and drivers of creativity (see e.g., Study 2; Amar 2004; Andriopoulos 2001; Jaskyte & Kisiliene 2006; Klijin & Tomic 2010; Sundgren, Dimenäs et al. 2005; Tierney & Farmer 2002), in other words, factors which

contribute to the emergence of creativity. A similar perspective is taken in Study 2, and indirectly in Study 4, as well. This focus on determining what drives or encourages creativity is natural because the occurrence of creativity is *required* in order to study it. However, studying what prevents or hinders creativity is much less common in the organizational creativity discourse (Study 2).

Moving from the general perspectives adopted in the studies to more specific views of the nature of creativity, one central question concerns what or who is the creating unit behind organizational creativity (cf. Watson 2007). Typically, organizational creativity discourse regards the individual as the creating unit. This was especially prevalent in pre-1980s psychologically oriented creativity studies, in which individual creativity, considered apart from its social, cultural and organizational contexts, was the chief topic of interest (Glăveanu 2010). Even though research interest in creativity taking place in a social and organizational context began to develop in the late 1980s (Shalley & Zhou 2008, 12), for a long time, it was “the least developed area in creativity research” (Amabile 1996, 264). Moreover, although the hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity willingly recognizes the importance of social influences on creativity (Amabile 1996; Woodman et al. 1993), the predominant perspective views creativity as an individual-level phenomenon that is affected by occasional influences from the organizational and social environments. Creativity is considered to occur in an individual mind, and it is the task of an organization and its management to influence its emergence by offering a supportive and facilitative work environment (e.g., Amabile et al. 1996; Chong & Ma 2010; Scott & Bruce 1994; Rice 2006).

Even socially-aware theories of organizational creativity, such as Amabile’s and Woodman et al.’s models, can be criticized for the individualistic assumptions behind their thinking (Glăveanu 2010). In Amabile’s (1988; 1997) componential model, a social context is seen to affect individual creativity through intrinsic motivation; it is the social pressures, encouragement, feedback, and rewards, among others, received from the people around the individual, which influence how intrinsically motivated s/he is. In Woodman et al.’s (1993) model, group characteristics, such as norms, cohesiveness, diversity, and roles, which can be thought to refer to social dynamics, are included in the very idea of the model. However, in both models the social factors are seen to condition and regulate creativity, which is still considered an *individual-level* phenomenon (Glăveanu 2010). Accordingly, in the two models, organizational creativity, although influenced by social factors, is still over-attributed to individuals, and under-attributed to the social or situational context (Kasof 1995; Sasser & Koslow 2012). Consequently, these individual-centered views disconnect an individual from a wider social environment and social dynamics (Glăveanu & Tanggaard 2014), a perspective to which Study 5 attempts to offer alternative viewpoints.

Study 5 depends on the theoretical framework of collaborative (e.g., Littleton & Miell 2004; Sawyer 2007; Sawyer & DeZutter 2009; Sonnenburg 2004; Sullivan 2011) or collective (e.g., Hargadon & Beckhy 2006; Parjanen 2012) creativity, which highlights the social embeddedness of creativity. It can be considered an alternative perspective to the hegemonic discourse, as in collective or collaborative creativity the creation is not attributed to a single individual, but considered to emerge from the social interaction of two or more people. In collective creation, an individual contribution is impossible to separate from the whole, and the result of collective creativity is considered to be more than the sum of its parts, thus making *emergence* its central element (Sawyer 1999; 2000). Theories of collaborative or collective creativity deal with the social world as a set of dynamics and relations rather than as a set of variables or attributes whose influence on creativity is predictable and unambiguous once empirically established. Moreover, they acknowledge that creation is rarely an individual accomplishment but rather a result of a collaborative process that builds on the participants' ideas, knowledge and viewpoints and emerges only as they clash, contradict or complement one another.

#### **4.3.2 *Marginal perspectives***

The dominating viewpoints have contributed to the marginalization of many perspectives which might be fruitful for the understanding of organizational creativity. To begin with, a tendency to neglect the study of what hinders or prevents organizational creativity can be noticed in studies on organizational creativity. In that respect, Study 2 represents a somewhat marginal perspective in that it includes the barrier perspective in its focus, i.e. reviews the potential barriers to organizational creativity covered in the reviewed material. Although it would be unjustified to claim that organizational creativity research has totally neglected the barrier perspective (see e.g., Amabile 1998; Hennessey & Amabile 2010; Kilbourne & Woodman 1999; Mostafa & El-Masry 2008; Mueller et al. 2012; Sadi & Al-Dubaisi 2008), it is far less common than studying the drivers. The tendency to focus on factors that facilitate, enhance, or stimulate creativity might reflect a belief in the capacity of various facilitating factors, i.e. drivers of organizational creativity, to overcome the potential barriers to creativity, which may actually be a precipitate assumption, as people have a tendency to be more strongly influenced by negative events than by positive (see Study 2; Baumeister et al. 2001).

Moreover, Study 2 points out that many of the factors affecting organizational creativity might, in fact, act as drivers under certain circumstances, and as barriers under others, a possibility which has largely been neglected by the hegemonic discourse. As an example of such a factor, Amabile et al. (2002) present time pressure. When employees are able to concentrate on a task and find it meaningful,

time pressure may actually encourage creativity. On the other hand, in a situation where the task is fragmented, the employees get distracted often and are not able to focus on the task fully, time pressure makes it harder to exhibit creativity (Amabile et al. 2002). Regardless of the fact that Amabile et al. (2002) and some other scholars (see e.g., Baer et al. 2003; Baer & Oldham 2006; Elsbach & Hargadon 2006; George & Zhou 2002; Zhou & George 2001) have pointed out that certain factors may act as either drivers or barriers depending on the circumstances and have discussed them accordingly, it is still very common among organizational creativity scholars to focus on studying factors or elements which *enhance* organizational creativity, neglect the study of potential barriers of creativity, and ignore the possible either-or nature of many antecedents (Study 2).

The emphasis on enhancing, nourishing, and finding drivers of organizational creativity can also be seen as an indication that organizational creativity is considered good, desirable, and beneficial for the organization. The supposed desirability of creativity and the emphasis on its enhancement has led to the marginalization of, first, studies that would question that assumption and explore it critically (see e.g., Levitt 1963/2002 and Osborne 2003 as exceptions), and second, studies exploring any darker aspects related to creativity, such as its undesirable, negative, or harmful implications, unanticipated consequences, or its use for harmful purposes (Mumford 2003).

Study 3 provides an alternative perspective in that it questions the assumption of the inherent goodness and desirability of creativity, exploring what is in the paper called the ‘dark side’ of creativity and how it has been dealt with in the organizational creativity literature. Although the dark side of creativity has been the topic of a few studies (see e.g., Cropley et al. 2010; Cropley & Cropley 2013; McLaren 1993), and some earlier studies in particular were interested in the relationship between creativity and mental disorders or problems (e.g., Andreasen 1987; Jamison 1989; Rothenberg 1990a; 1990b), the current organizational creativity discourse tends to ignore any negative aspects or potential consequences of creativity. However, creativity in organizations can easily be used for negative and harmful purposes, such as theft, sabotage, social attacks, exploitation, and the undermining of management goals and policies (James et al. 1999), or for the advancement of personal goals while undermining the organization’s or customer’s interests (Gilson 2008). In addition, creativity directed at beneficial purposes may have unintended consequences that are negative and harmful as well (cf. Lindell 2012; Sveiby, Gripenberg & Segercrantz 2012 concerning innovation<sup>10</sup>).

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<sup>10</sup> Sveiby, Gripenberg and Segercrantz (2012) review an extensive set of innovation literature and conclude that less than 0.5 % of the studies were devoted to the study of unintended and undesirable consequences of innovation. Lindell (2012) analyzes innovation models from the perspective of unintended consequences and concludes that they rarely include any consideration of such consequences. The same appears to apply to the organizational creativity literature in general.

Study 3 provides yet another alternative viewpoint in that it discusses the potential negative implications of the excessively positive discourses around creativity in organizations, which is a largely unexplored perspective (see also Tuori & Vilén 2011). As an exception to the general positivity, Osborne (2003, 507) argues for the “potentially moronic consequences of the doctrine of creativity,” claiming that the compulsory and continuous production of ideas only for the sake of producing ideas has conservative effects, instead of leading to better or more creative ideas. Gahan, Minahan and Glow (2007) also criticize management scholars’ fascination with creativity. They argue that the management discourse on creativity is a discursive device aimed at controlling individuals by making them accept project-based work, incentive wages and long working hours only because this is what is expected of creative people and what creative work requires. Prichard (2002) also recognizes that discourses on creativity are used to normalize and control creative professionals and managers, and to regulate creativity in ways that are acceptable from the perspective of the organization and management. However, regardless of the few exceptions mentioned here, critical, discourse-oriented explorations have been far scarcer within the organizational creativity literature than in many other subfields of organization studies, such as organizational change (e.g., Dunford et al. 2013; Oswick et al. 2005), human resource management (e.g., Mueller and Carter 2005; Zaroni & Janssens 2004), or diversity research (e.g., Ahonen et al. 2014).

Although some critical, discourse-oriented studies on creativity have been made from the viewpoint of creative industries, arts policy, and artists (e.g., Loacker 2013; Madden 2004; Osborne 2003; Stephensen 2015), the adoption of creativity rhetoric into organizational studies discourse has taken place in a rather uncritical vacuum (Gahan et al. 2007). Therefore, as argued by Studies 1 and 3, there is a need for more discourse-oriented studies on the application of creativity themes in management and organization studies. The imperative of creativity is nowadays directed towards a growing number of organizations and professionals even outside creative industries or creative work, especially those labeled knowledge-intensive and engaged in knowledge work (e.g., Henard & McFadyen 2008; Kallio 2015, 45–47; Kallio & Kallio 2011). As discourses are not neutral or simply reflective of ‘reality,’ the knowledge claims and ‘truths’ related to creativity as a general imperative deserve further exploration.

Societal discourses, as well as academic knowledge and discourses, are central devices of regulation through which people are controlled, and through which they govern themselves (Rose 1996). This regulating of thinking and behavior is enabled and limited by what, at a particular time, can or cannot be thought of (Eräranta & Moisander 2011). In this particular case, it conditions how the concept and phenomenon of organizational creativity are understood and managed, and thus informs us what we are dealing with when talking about creativity, what it means to be ‘creative,’ and how creativity in organizations should be performed. Studies 1 and

3 open up discussions regarding these aspects and highlight the ways in which the excessively positive discourse on creativity may also be harmful. However, the political and economic interests behind and symbolic consequences of the contemporary discourses on creativity are topics that this thesis only touches upon from a limited number of viewpoints, and therefore, their further analysis would certainly be justified.

Organization studies, as a policy science (Whitley 1984; Tsoukas & Knudsen 2003), and organizational creativity, as its subfield, are often characterized by a practical research interest, in other words, by an interest in producing knowledge that is easily utilizable by practitioners. At least partly due to that, there appears to be a wide interest among organizational creativity scholars in generating practical instructions and guidelines on how to enhance creativity and solve related problems. Consequently, questions on the ontology and epistemology of creativity, as well as any further enquiry into the theoretical understanding of the concept, tend to be largely ignored (Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 36). Although there are, naturally, exceptions, which provide alternative perspectives to this tendency (e.g., Study 1; De Cock, Rehn & Berry 2013; Driver 2008; Jeanes 2006; Rehn & Vacchani 2006; Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 41–64; Styhre 2006; Sundgren & Styhre 2007), many questions related to the theoretical understanding of the concept are still largely unexplored. Study 1 contributes to the discussion on the ontology of creativity by questioning the unambiguous nature of the two widely-agreed-upon prerequisites for organizational creativity, which are (1) novelty and (2) usefulness, value or appropriateness (e.g., Amabile 1997; Oldham & Cummings 1996; Rego et al. 2007; Sternberg & Lubart 1999; Zhou & George 2001). Originality or novelty is the requirement of creativity that is almost unanimously agreed on, even if different views on how it should be understood exist. The second requirement of creativity, the appropriateness or utility or value, is also somewhat uncontested and widely agreed on. Most scholars seem to think that originality and novelty are required but insufficient conditions for creativity, and that therefore the creative process or outcome should also be valuable or useful to the person or organization in question (Amabile 1997; Oldham & Cummings 1996; Rego et al. 2007; Sternberg & Lubart 1999; Zhou & George 2001). This view implies that the creative outcome cannot be simply bizarre, but must have at least potential value to be considered creative instead of just unusual (Amabile 1997, 40; Study 1).

Both of the prerequisites, however, are not as simple as it first seems (see Study 1). First, some scholars, such as Rehn and Vachhani (2006) and Styhre (2006), question the assumption of novelty and creativity actualizing at one point of time. Styhre (2006) suggests that creativity is more about assemblage, connectivity, and associations than about novelty, while Rehn and Vachhani (2006) criticize the “original value event,” that is, the moment when an innovation is considered to become such. Moreover, Rehn and Vachhani (*ibid.*) argue that reproduction and

copying actually affirm innovation, instead of being lesser forms of it, as traditionally conceived. Second, usefulness or appropriateness as the prerequisite of creativity is problematic in many respects, which is further discussed in Study 1. Also, Studies 3, 4 and 5 can be regarded as touching on the topic of the ontology of creativity in that Study 3 questions the inherent goodness of creativity, Study 4 emphasizes its material embeddedness and Study 5 considers it as a property of interaction rather than as located inside a human being.

#### **4.4 Hegemonic and marginal paradigms**

All research on social science is based on a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions, which provide an understanding of the nature of the world, the people in it, the relationship between the world and the people, and basic moral and aesthetic judgments about life (cf. Alvesson & Deetz 2000, 23), and which can be categorized or grouped in many ways. In the field of organization studies one of the most influential categorizations is the four-paradigm model by Burrell and Morgan (1979), which has gained an almost hegemonic position in defining the alternatives of research in organization studies (Deetz 1996). Although there are other approaches and categorizations aiming at mapping meta-theoretical assumptions and the paradigmatic field of organization studies (see e.g., Deetz 1996; Hassard & Cox 2013), the paradigmatic framework developed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) is considered suitable for the purposes of this study.

The basic idea of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) model is that all research on organizational theory can be positioned in one of the four paradigms according to the ontological and epistemological assumptions taken and the methodological approach used in the study. They name the paradigms as functionalistic, interpretivist, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. It however should be noted that the paradigm limits are not rigid, nor easy or unambiguous to draw, but rather represent continuums from one extreme to another (see Figure 2).

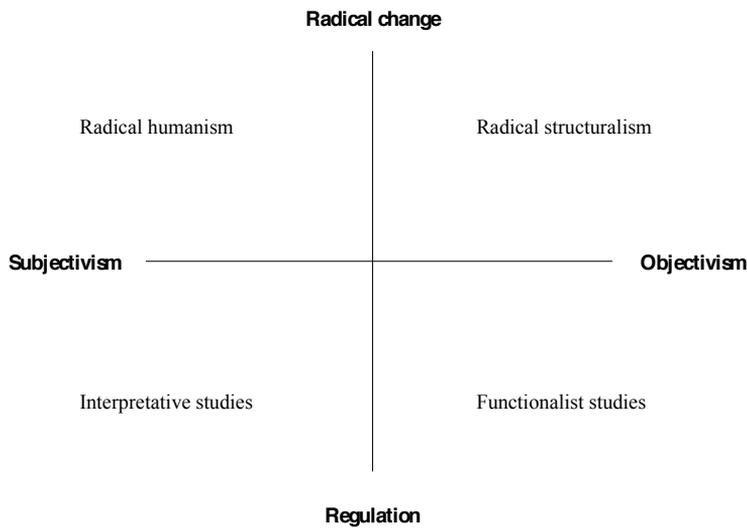


Figure 2 Four paradigms for the analysis of organization studies (Adapted from Burrell & Morgan 1979, 22).

The horizontal axis of the four-paradigm model developed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) represents a continuum from subjectivism to objectivism, indicating a change in the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research and the researcher. On the vertical axis, there is a continuum from the acceptance of stability at the bottom to the urgency of change on the top of the field (see Figure 2). Expressed differently, studies which accept things as they are and maintain the status quo can be positioned at the bottom of the continuum, while studies which aim at changing and challenging the current state of affairs can be located on the top of the continuum.

The following chapters discuss how organizational creativity can be conceptualized, understood, and studied from the viewpoint of the four paradigms developed by Burrell and Morgan (1979). Creativity research has already been explored using Burrell's and Morgan's (ibid.) four-paradigm framework by Rickards and De Cock (1999), Taylor and Callahan (2005), and Styhre and Sungren (2005). The following two chapters complement the existing endeavors by including more recent studies in the discussion, and especially by problematizing the hegemony of certain paradigms and the marginal position of some others.

However, as intelligently pointed out by Rickards and De Cock (1999, 241) "assessing the absolute degree of someone's subjectivity, or regulatory practice, is an activity of highly dubious methodological validity." Keeping this in mind, the following chapters do not attempt to categorize the existing literature on organizational creativity, but rather they discuss what the different meta-theoretical

assumptions might mean for the conceptualizations of creativity. The paradigm categories are illustrated with the help of the studies of this dissertation, as well as with a few examples categorized by scholars who have looked at studies on creativity from the viewpoint of Burrell's and Morgan's (1979) framework (i.e. Rickards & De Cock 1999; Taylor & Callahan 2005; Styhre & Sungren 2005).

#### **4.4.1 *Hegemonic paradigms***

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), most research on organization studies falls into the functionalist paradigm, which is also the most common paradigm among studies on organizational creativity (Taylor & Callahan 2005). The functionalist paradigm is based on objectivist assumptions about the nature of the world, assuming that the world consists of real, tangible objects, which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, and quantified and measured. The relationships between various objects are considered identifiable and measurable, and regulation rather than change is the central aim of study.

The purpose of functionalist research in organization studies is to generate knowledge for the use of management, for instance, for increasing the efficacy and competitiveness of the organization, and finding ways to use resources more efficiently. Since the roots of the organizational creativity discourse are in psychological studies on creativity, and since it is a subfield of organization studies, which is traditionally considered a policy science aiming at producing practical knowledge (Whitley 1984; Tsoukas & Knudsen 2003), it is actually not surprising that the most studies on organizational creativity represent the functionalistic paradigm (Taylor & Callahan 2005). For instance, most studies relying on an outcome-based definition and especially an outcome-based operationalization of creativity tend fall into the functionalist category, as they see creativity as something that actualizes in an identifiable, evaluable, and measurable outcome. The common methods employed in the functionalist paradigm include experimental or laboratory studies, correlational studies conducted on the field, and multi-method approaches in which quantitative methods dominate (see Chapter 4.5.1 for further discussion).

In order to conduct a quantitative study on creativity, one must develop a quantifiable measure of creativity (for a further discussion on the measures of creativity, see Chapter 4.5.1), and study the occurrence of the measure in relation to other measures or variables. In functionally-oriented research designs, researchers are expected to be careful not to influence the object of research, but to study and analyze it from a distance. According to Rickards and De Cock (1999), most articles published in the *Creativity Research Journal* and also in the more practically oriented *Journal of Creative Behavior* follow a functionalistic orientation. Although the situation may have changed since Rickards's and De Cock's (1999) book chapter was published, and both mentioned journals are

nowadays more likely to publish non-functionalistic studies, a quick look at the recent issues of the journals hints that Rickards' and De Cock's (ibid.) argument is still somewhat valid, and also holds true in the case of many U.S. journals which publish research on creativity (James & Drown 2012, 31). On the contrary, a European journal focusing on creativity research, the *Creativity and Innovation Management Journal*, seems much more open to other paradigms, and many of the few critical or radical studies on organizational creativity has been published in it (see e.g., Jeanes 2006; Prichard 2002; Tuori & Vilén 2011).

The interpretative paradigm, located in the intersection of subjectivism and regulation, is another relatively common paradigm among organizational creativity studies. Although not as dominating as the functionalist paradigm, it is nevertheless relatively well represented.

Studies that fall into the interpretative paradigm reject an assumption of a reality existing independent of individuals' minds, and emphasize that the social world is a subjective construction instead of an objective fact. These assumptions make everyday language and interaction a central tool in constructing the social world and in negotiating a shared meaning. The social world is thus intangible by nature, and in a continuous process of change (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 260). Interpretative studies on organizational creativity are not interested in analyzing a single relationship between creativity and some other variable, but rather in describing aspects and relationships which appear relevant from the point of view of organizational creativity. Interpretative studies explore experiences, perceptions, feelings, values, and other inner phenomena of the researched subjects.

Study 4, for instance, studies experiences of the employees of the case organization before and after the move to new facilities. The three aspects of the culture that were found relevant from the viewpoint of creativity – equality, collectivity, and openness – derive from the experiences, interpretations, and feelings of the employees. The aim of the study was not to explore causal relations or correlations between the physical environment and creativity, but to seek to understand and describe how aspects of the physical space in question supported the cultural change. Study 5, another interpretive study, takes an ethnographic and aesthetic approach and explores how creativity emerges in a collaborative process in the context of dance. The interpretations of the researchers, as well as of the researched subjects, were central to the research process, which is a typical aspect of interpretationist studies.

The conceptualizations of creativity in interpretationist studies on organizational creativity emphasize subjective assessments of creativity and what the research subjects themselves regard as creative. Drazin et al. (1999, 287) present an illustrative example of a definition clearly indicating an interpretative approach: “*the process of engagement in creative acts, regardless of whether the resultant outcomes are novel, useful, or creative.*” Therefore, interpretationist studies on organizational creativity provide a larger scope than functionalist studies, especially those focusing on a

creative outcome. Defining creativity as an outcome, which is both novel and useful, valuable, or appropriate, means including only the kind of creativity that results in an actualized, successful end-result, while studies based on the interpretative paradigm enable a wider conceptualization of creativity (see also Study 1).

Although research belonging to the functionalist category clearly dominates the field (Study 1; Taylor & Callahan 2005), it would be unfair to argue that it has a hegemonic position in the field. Studies falling into the interpretative category are also numerous, and thus it might be justified to say that the functionalist and interpretative categories together dominate over the two radical paradigms.

#### **4.4.2 Marginal paradigms**

The radical humanist paradigm shares the same subjectivist ontology as the interpretative paradigm, but differs from it regarding its central research interests. Whereas the interpretative paradigm is interested in individuals' constructions of social reality and the meanings attached to it, radical humanism assumes that the socially constructed reality comes to mold, control, and restrain individuals (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 306–307). Many concepts and social constructions which seem natural and given from the perspective of the functionalist paradigm are seen as mechanisms of ideological control by the radical humanist paradigm. Freedom, rationality, gender, and progress, as well as creativity (see e.g., Prichard 2002; Tuori & Vilén 2011), can be seen as powerful tools or devices, which control individuals through identities and subjectivities, and alienate them from their 'true self' (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 279–280; 303–305). Radical humanist approaches to organizational creativity represent a marginal paradigm, although some studies do fall into it.

To name a few examples, Parush and Koivunen (2014) study art-based leadership workshops from a perspective which could be regarded to belong to the radical humanist quadrant of the four-paradigm model. They focus on managerial subject positions constructed through the art-and-management discourse in general and through the workshops in specific. They argue that managerial subjectivities and identities draw on various discourses, and the workshops encourage managers to embody the idea of a 'creative' or 'artistic' manager. The creative managerial self is, however, contradictory and involves paradoxes and conflicts, which may enable creativity, but can also cause stress, confusion, and even a kind of paralysis. Tuori and Vilén (2011) also take a discursive approach to creativity and conclude that emphasizing creativity in an organization may create power relations and hierarchies which co-exist with formal organizational structures, and which may also have negative consequences. Prichard (2002) engages in a Foucauldian reading of two articles about Steve Jobs published in *Fortune* magazine, and discusses how discourses on creativity can be used for oppressive and exploitative purposes.

Studies 1 and 3 can be seen as examples of the radical humanist paradigm. Study 1 is a critical exploration of discursive practices within the academic organizational creativity literature, and sees the discussed practices as contributing to a one-dimensional and limited understanding of organizational creativity. Study 3 is an even ‘purer’ example of radical humanism because it focuses on exposing the potential dark sides of creativity and further discusses the implications of its ignorance. A central argument in Study 3 is that the discourses on creativity can also be used as mechanisms of control and have disciplinary effects that may also be negative.

The fourth paradigm, the radical structuralist paradigm, is a rather heterogeneous paradigm. It is based on a realist ontology and views the social world as having an existence independent of human consciousness. However, even if the radical structuralist paradigm shares its ontological assumptions with the functionalistic paradigm, its fundamental *raison d’être* is critical of it, and it is dedicated to radical change instead of regulation. Whereas the radical humanistic paradigm sees the mechanisms of control and structure as socially constructed, radical structuralists see them as real. They strive to understand structural conflicts, forms and ways of domination, and see the society as comprised of conflicts and tensions, which result in changes through economic and political crises (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, 34). Regarding creativity, radical structuralism is interested in structures, processes, and practices which may foster or hinder creativity, and aims at changing those (Taylor & Callahan 2005). As an example of the radical structuralist perspective in creativity studies, Rickards and De Cock (1999) give Magyari-Beck (1993), whose aim is to establish a new science of creativity, which would then replace the current – flawed and fragmented – theories of creativity. In the radical structuralist quadrant Richards and De Cock (1999) also locate De Bono (1971), who engages in developing a creativity technique aiming at fostering higher-level creativity through certain ‘creativity-enhancing heuristics.’

When assessed in terms of the radical structuralist interest in structures, arrangements, and processes, which may or may not encourage creativity, there are several studies that could be positioned in the radical structuralist quadrant. As an example of such one can give Study 4, which explores how the structures created by the physical space enhanced or hindered the creative organizational culture. Regardless of this interest, Study 4 is, however, clearly an interpretationist study, as it is based on relatively subjectivist ontological assumptions, and is mostly interested in the interviewees’ interpretations of the changes.

Therefore, none of the studies this thesis consists of represents the pure radical structuralist paradigm, although the roots of Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) theory lie in Marxism and historical materialism, which can be considered as representatives of this paradigm. Laclau and Mouffe’s theory, however, was developed as a critique of Marxism and historical materialism, and the ontological and epistemological

assumptions shared by Laclau and Mouffe (*ibid.*) clearly indicate that it belongs to the radical humanist paradigm rather than the radical structuralist paradigm.

## **4.5 Hegemonic and marginal methods**

The following chapter (Chapter 4.5.1) discusses examples of methodological approaches and means of empirical material collection which are commonly used in studies on organizational creativity, are therefore considered as valid methods of collecting empirical material on creativity, and are thus labeled here as hegemonic. However, instead of pointing out methods that have *not* been used in the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, Chapter 4.5.2 brings up methodological questions related to creativity which have been overlooked, possibly due to the predominance of certain methodological approaches.

### **4.5.1 Hegemonic methods**

Because of the predominance of the functionalistic orientation and the influence of psychological research, various quantitative methods are still relatively common among studies on organizational creativity. Laboratory or experimental studies (see e.g., Choi & Thompson 2005; Fong 2006; Goncalo & Staw 2006; Madjar, Oldham & Pratt 2002; Pai, Lee & Jung 2010; Paulus & Dzindolet 1993; Paulus & Yang 2000; Shalley & Oldham 1997; Shalley & Perry-Smith 2001; Zhou 1998) often attempt to find factors that cast causal influences on creativity, and analyze relationships between creativity and other variables through the manipulation of variables in a controlled environment. Correlational studies (e.g., Amabile et al. 1996; Hirst et al. 2011; Lapierre & Giroux 2003; Oldham & Cummings 1996; Shin & Zhou 2003; Shin et al. 2012; Sousa & Coelho 2011; Tierney & Farmer 2002; Zhou 2003), typically based on surveys and questionnaires, also search for variables and explore their relationships with creativity measures, although the studies are conducted in the field instead of under controlled conditions.

Multi-method approaches are becoming more common in organizational creativity studies, referring to studies that use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Multi-method approaches consist of various method combinations, some of which are more quantitatively oriented (see e.g., Amabile et al. 2005; Chang & Chiang 2008; Gloor et al. 2010), while others clearly emphasize qualitative methods (see e.g., Bakker, Boersma & Oreel 2006; Kerr & Lloyd 2008; Moultrie & Young 2009; Sailer 2011). Studies with largely qualitative material and analysis may also be complemented by quantitative analyses, or quantitative material can serve an illustrative and argument-building purpose in an otherwise qualitative study, as is the case in Study 1.

In order to conduct a quantitative study, creativity must be operationalized and measured in some way. As discussed in Study 1, one common measure of creativity consists of supervisor ratings of the level of creativity of their subordinates (e.g., Baer & Oldham 2006; de Stobbeleir et al. 2011; George & Zhou 2002; Madjar 2008; Madjar & Ortiz-Walters 2008; Oldham & Cummings 1996; Shin & Zhou 2003; Tierney & Farmer 2002; Zhou 2003; Zhou & George 2001). Also outside judges (see e.g., Williams, 2004), colleagues (e.g., Williams, 2004), and customers (e.g., Madjar & Ortiz-Walters, 2008) may be called on to rate and assess an individual's creativity or creative performance. Some studies rely on an individual's self-assessments regarding creativity, either alone, or combined with other measures (e.g., Gloor et al. 2010; Jaskyte 2008; see Ng & Feldman 2012 for a comparison of self-ratings and other ratings of creativity).

Creative climate questionnaires are a common method of assessing the creativity of an organization or team (e.g., Al-Beraidi & Rickards 2003; Ekvall & Ryhammar 1999; Fagan 2004; Isaksen & Ekvall 2010; Kwaśniewska & Nečka 2004; Politis 2005; Shah & Ali 2011; Sundgren, Dimenäs et al. 2005; Sundgren, Selart et al. 2005). Several models and measuring instruments have been developed, three of which are probably the most common: Amabile et al.'s (1996) Assessing the Climate for Creativity (KEYS), Ekvall's (1983, 1996) Creative Climate Questionnaire (CCQ), and Isaksen's (2007) Situational Outlook Questionnaire (SOQ), which is the CCQ instrument translated to the North American context. The three instruments discussed here provide a basis for many other instruments that organizational creativity scholars have developed for the purposes of their studies (e.g., Kwaśniewska & Nečka 2004; Politis 2005).

Amabile et al.'s (1996) model KEYS is a 78-item questionnaire which identifies six support aspects: a) organizational encouragement, b) supervisory encouragement, c) work group supports, d) freedom, e) sufficient resources, and f) challenge. The model was designed to provide assessments of aspects of work environment perceptions that may influence creative (i.e. novel and useful) ideas. Of the 78 items in KEYS, 66 describe the work environment, whereas 12 items measure respondents' assessments of two work performance criteria: creativity (6 items) and productivity (6 items) of the work being carried out in their units (Amabile et al. 1996). According to Ekvall's (1983; 1996) model, the dimensions of organizational climate that have an impact on creativity are: a) challenge, b) freedom, c) trust/openness, d) idea time, e) playfulness/humor, f) conflict, g) idea support, h) debate, i) risk taking, and j) dynamism/liveliness, which are also the aspects measured and assessed by the questionnaire. Both models were developed to assess individuals' perceptions of different aspects of organizational environment and climate, which have been found to be central from the perspective of creativity.

In qualitative research, which is often interpretationist, the empirical material is typically collected through in-depth interviews (e.g., Study 4; Hemlin 2009; Martens

2011; Napier & Nilsson 2006; Sundgren & Styhre 2003), focus group interviews (e.g., Bissola & Imperatori 2011; Björkman 2004; Daymon 2000), and semi-structured interviews (e.g., Sundgren & Styhre 2007); and also via methods of action research (e.g., Kylén & Shani 2002) or ethnographic approaches, which often include observation, interviews, and informal discussions, as well as the analysis of documents and/or pictures (e.g., Study 5; Andriopoulos & Gotsi 2005; Banks et al. 2002; Hargadon & Bechky 2006; Tuori & Vilén 2011). Visual analyses of photographs have also been conducted, although they are fairly uncommon (e.g., Ceylan, Dul & Aytac 2008; McCoy & Evans 2002). The analytical approaches may include narrative analysis (e.g., Sundgren & Styhre 2004; 2007), grounded theory approach (e.g., Banks et al. 2002; Bissola & Imperatori 2011; Unsworth & Clegg 2010), and content analysis (e.g., Kwaśniewska & Nečka 2004), to name a few.

Theoretical studies using scholarly texts as their material are also quite common among studies on organizational creativity (Studies 1, 2 and 3). Typically they explore one theoretical construct or question (see e.g., Adler & Obstfeld 2007; Borghini 2005; DiLiello & Houghton 2008), or review the literature concerning a specific aspect of organizational creativity, such as meta-theoretical assumptions (e.g., Taylor & Callahan 2005; Rickards & De Cock 1999) or a specific context of creativity (e.g., Castiglione 2008; Mumford 2000). A few general literature reviews have also been written on the topic of organizational creativity (see e.g., Study 1; Anderson et al. 2014; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Mumford 2003).

To sum up, quantitatively oriented studies can be considered to dominate organizational creativity studies (Study 1; James & Drown 2012). The dominance of quantitative studies is more prevalent in U.S. journals, while European journals are more likely to publish papers which use alternative approaches (James & Drown 2012, 31). Although there are historical reasons for the quantitative orientation of organizational creativity studies, the continuous dominance of it is still somewhat surprising (Study 1), because creativity is quite a challenging concept to measure and operationalize (Sailer 2011; Sundgren and Styhre 2003). Therefore, the quantitative conceptions of creativity are necessarily quite narrow, and focus only on one side of creativity, such as attitudes (e.g., Basadur & Hausdorf 1996), behavioral tendencies (e.g., Zhou & George 2001), or past behaviors (Audia & Goncalo, 2007). Although findings related to these specific aspects of creativity might well be useful for the understanding of the overall phenomenon, their perspective remains necessarily quite limited.

#### **4.5.2 *Marginal methods***

In this chapter, the dominant tendencies concerning the methods of organizational creativity studies are discussed and problematized, and some alternative

methodological approaches are suggested based on the studies of this dissertation. The aim is not simply to list methods that are not often used and thus could be considered marginal but rather to discuss some approaches that might be easily overlooked due to the dominance of certain methods and methodological approaches.

To begin with, due to the popularity of quantitative methods, a prevalent tendency in the organizational creativity discourse is to view many constructs related to the occurrence of creativity, such as emotions and various self-concepts, as mediating variables, whose influence on creativity and relation to other variables are studied (see e.g., Chong & Ma 2010; Fong 2006; Wang & Zhu 2011; Wang & Cheng 2010) without further interest in understanding the constructs, and what actually is being measured with them (see Walton 2003 for a discussion concerning creativity). These studies provide us knowledge on the relationships between different variables, and might be useful in many ways. They are, however, also limited and problematic in several ways.

The first problem is the obvious difficulties related to measuring creativity. Most measures of creativity actually measure divergent thinking, attitudes, interests, personality traits or creative accomplishments (Walton 2003), which all highlight and assess aspects that are somehow related to creativity but still may not tell us much about actually *being* creative. As Walton (2003) problematizes, an agreement with a statement such as “I would like to be an inventor” informs us more about the fact that the respondent would like others to see him/her as an inventor, than about his/her abilities as an inventor. Measures of past performance are also problematic, as the past performance might not predict the future performance, or might even hinder future creative achievements (Audia & Goncalo 2007). The ratings of creative accomplishments by supervisors or peers may, in some cases, prove relevant because they often focus on job-specific knowledge and abilities and a willingness to exhibit creativity related to them (Walton 2003). However, because any assessment of creativity is always subjective and context-specific and depends on many factors that are not related to creativity (Study 1), there is a risk of measuring something other than what was intended. For example, because creativity – naturally depending on how it is defined – often involves intentional behavior (Axtell et al. 2000; Ford 1996), it may be difficult to assess from the outside, unless the individual is also active in impression management and attempts to get attention and approval for his/her behavior (Ng & Feldman 2012). Therefore, what is measured is the successfulness of the individual’s impression management, rather than any creativity-related behavior. Without going further into the obviously problematic aspects related to measuring creativity (for further discussion see Montag et al. 2012; Ng & Feldman 2012; Walton 2003), correlational studies have other inadequacies, as well. Therefore, although they inform us about a relation between two or more constructs, we do not know much about the nature of the relationship. For instance, although emotions have been studied in relation to creativity somewhat extensively (e.g., Amabile et al. 2005;

Averill et al. 2001; Fong 2006; George & Zhou 2002; Isen 1999a; 1999b; Isen et al. 1987; Lofy 1998), the studies on emotions and creativity still mostly fail to inform us about the nature of the relationship between them. The studies are problematic also because emotions are typically regarded as stable and universal, and people are considered to be able and willing to name and express them unambiguously. As emotions are complex phenomena, this kind of conception might be too straightforward to actually inform us of their meaning and the complexities necessarily involved in them. Study 5 complements the hegemonic discourse by viewing emotions as social phenomena, which are shared and negotiated both verbally and aesthetically in collaborative working. However, since emotions are not the focus of the paper, only limited conclusions can be made.

Moreover, identities and other self-concepts related to creativity in organizations are a central theme of interest in the hegemonic discourse, and research findings related to them face similar troubles as those regarding emotions; identity, self-efficacy, and the related concepts are treated as moderators or mediating variables between an individual and his/her creativity (see e.g., Chong & Ma 2010; Wang & Zhu 2011; Wang & Cheng 2010). Therefore, organizational creativity scholars have been less interested in viewing identity and self-concepts from other perspectives, such as exploring what it *means* to identify oneself as ‘creative’ and how individuals deal with the discursively constructed subjectivities and subject position related to creativity (Glăveanu & Tanggaard 2014, see also Study 3) or viewing creative identities from a critical angle, for instance, as forms of regulation (Study 3; cf. Alvesson & Willmott 2002) or self-governance (see e.g., Prichard 2002; Study 3).



## **5 PROBLEMATIZING THE HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE**

### **5.1 Organizational creativity discourse – conceptualizations, agendas and underlying assumptions**

The hegemonic organizational creativity discourse embodies a set of assumptions on the nature of creativity as an organizational phenomenon, which might be helpful for our understanding of organizational creativity in some ways, but also limiting in other ways. Similarly, the discourse tends to privilege certain values and objectives over others, which also has a marked influence on how the phenomenon is understood and dealt with. This chapter discusses and problematizes how organizational creativity is conceptualized and understood in the hegemonic discourse, and what kind of assumptions, values and objectives it is based on, as well as what kind of implications that may have. This problematization is triggered by the issues brought up in the studies of this dissertation, and thus is not even meant to be comprehensive. Therefore, it is likely that more problematic assumptions or aspects of the hegemonic discourse could be found.

This chapter also suggests alternative understandings which challenge or complement the hegemonic discourse. The discussion of this chapter goes beyond the alternative viewpoints, i.e. alternative themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms offered in the studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), and brings in some alternative understandings of organizational creativity discussed in recent scholarly journal articles or books on organizational creativity.

### **5.2 Creativity as an outcome**

The hegemonic organizational creativity discourse tends to rely on an assumption that creativity is a ‘real’ phenomenon, a quality that is either inherited or fostered through encouragement and learning (Taylor 2013, 177) that individuals and organizations either have – to different extents – or do not have. This is related to objectivism, which is an ontological assumption and discursive practice that characterizes the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse (Study 1).

First, objectivism refers to the dominance of quantitative studies, which are interested in those aspects of creativity which are possible to measure, and thus seek to understand creativity as a variable influenced by other variables, an issue which

was already discussed in Chapter 4.5.2 (see also Study 1). Second, creativity is often talked about as if it was a real ‘thing,’ in other words, as there was a real-world equivalent for creativity, instead of it being a socially constituted category. This tendency is noticeable in the hegemonic discourse in several ways. First, the prerequisites of creativity, that is novelty and usefulness, are treated as unambiguous and simple categories which can be objectively assessed. It is often neglected that both of the constructs are subjective, and depend on the context and on who is making the assessment. Second, the assessments of an employee’s, colleague’s or supervisor’s creativity (see Chapter 4.5.1), which are often used measures of creativity in organizational creativity studies, are regarded as somewhat objective, and their possible subjectivity or potential bias is rarely even mentioned (for exceptions see e.g., Madjar & Ortiz-Walters 2008; Williams 2004). This kind of conception of creativity as an objective quality of a process, person, organization or outcome, however, effectively dispels the subjectivity and contingency of deeming something ‘creative’. Simultaneously, it takes the focus of research away from the criteria of assessment of creativity and from the political processes and negotiations necessarily involved the construction of something as ‘creative’, for instance in a specific organization or in academic literature. (Study 1.)

Third, creativity is often viewed as existing or actualizing in a material form. Most notably this is true in the case of outcome-based definitions of organizational creativity (see Study 1), which demonstrate a tendency to focus on something material – an outcome, which can be a process, procedure, idea, service, or product – in studying creativity. Attribution to materiality is a powerful rhetorical tool that makes an abstract phenomenon appear tangible, stable and fixed and thus may help in creating an appearance of importance and conviction. By implying that something is material, we argue for its immutability, certainty, and solidity. Although this is already obvious in the case of physical objects, it is possibly even more important in the consideration of qualities such as gender, intelligence – or creativity, as in this thesis. Whether gender, for instance, is considered to depend on physical differences, or immaterial, ideational processes, most certainly has consequences in real life. Similarly, it matters in dealing with creativity whether we conceive of it as rooted in our genetic code, or as emerging at the ideational level (cf. Carlile et al. 2013, 4–5).

Focusing on creativity actualized in a material form, i.e. an outcome of some sort, reifies it into something visible, touchable, perceivable, or somehow tangible, but also limits how we understand creativity (Study 1). Although there are certainly cases such as the invention of a new drug in which the presence of creativity may be considered objective and inarguable (Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 60–61), in most cases creativity actualizes first and foremost at the ideational level, and its presence is a matter of subjective assessment (cf. Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Ford 1996).

Conceiving of creativity as always actualizing in a material outcome may mislead our attempts to understand what it means to manage or encourage creativity, or to

understand the process leading to it. Approaches that focus on the outcome tend to ignore the process, especially if it fails to produce an outcome that can be deemed creative (Study 1). The creative process, then, is a ‘black box,’ that we do not know much about, but which is expected to bring about novel and useful outcomes. Furthermore, an excessive focus on outcomes may work against the adoption of changes when their consequences are unknown and difficult to predict, even though they might prove worthwhile in the long run. Therefore, it is a narrow and limiting starting point for the understanding of organizational creativity, as it does not embrace change as an unpredictable and open-ended process or possibility. Instead, the emphasis is on ensuring that the valuable outcome gets produced.

### **5.3 Creativity as productive**

The hegemonic discourse is based on an assumption that creativity is good and results in positive benefits (Study 1; Study 3) and actualizes in organizations in the form of competitiveness, growth (e.g., Baer & Oldham 2006), success (e.g., Rego et al. 2007), effectiveness, performance (e.g., Gloor et al. 2010), innovation or survival (e.g., Chang & Birkett 2004; Mumford 2000; Oldham & Cummings 1996; see Study 1), to name a few. Therefore, the most prominent and frequent justification criteria of the importance of creativity in the organizational creativity discourse are related to the performance and success of the company (Study 1). This reflects the centrality of economic thinking and neoliberal values in the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, which imposes certain assumptions and limits on the views, conceptualizations, and motives available – and acceptable – for an organizational creativity scholar.

This intermingling of creativity and economic thinking makes creativity appear as an appealing and promising construct capable of becoming a savior in the new turbulent economy, but the question remains whether this is a mere fantasy or a matter of fact, an issue which is further discussed in Study 1 (see also Study 3). Moreover, regardless of what the actual relationship between creativity and economic constructs is, the discursive framing of creativity through economic rhetoric in the organizational creativity discourse also has wider implications. The fact that the current conceptualizations of creativity are often rooted in the capitalist framework is not negative as such – nor should this be read as an essentially anti-capitalist statement. However, the economic values and motives embedded in the organizational creativity discourse have limiting and even harmful effects for creativity *itself*, both as a construct and as an organizational phenomenon.

First, it appears that the intermingling of economic thinking with creativity has caused what can be called a ‘commodification of creativity’ (Purser & Montuori 1999, 320–325). This means that creativity is no longer wanted because of its use

value, referring to its ability to destabilize the prevailing order and generate novelty, but because of its exchange value, that is, the possibility to sell it on the labor market or its outcomes on the commodity or service markets (ibid. 323). Creativity as such is no longer valued by business organizations; instead they need and appreciate a harnessed form of creativity – something that is used to solve the problems designated by the organization, that occurs on demand rather than randomly, and that acts as a value-add for the company (Study 1).

Second, as suggested in Study 1, organizational creativity discourse has adopted only those views and aspects of creativity which fit the dominant managerial ideology, and suppressed those that the dominant perspective considers risky, useless, or difficult. Therefore, out of the many possible interpretations and meanings of creativity as a concept, the mainstream discourse only embraces a few, and the ones embraced are those that can be harnessed for productivity and economic growth (Gibson & Kong 2005; Study 1). This is also reflected in the uncritical adoption of the prerequisite of usefulness, which is commonly agreed on (see Chapter 4.3.2 and Study 1). This means that those forms of creativity which are seemingly useless or difficult to harness for economic outcomes are excluded or marginalized not only in the discourse, but also in practice.

Gibson and Kong (2005) discuss the marginalization of certain forms of creativity, and the implications of this in the case of cultural policy. They (ibid.) argue that if the economically-bound creativity discourse remains normative, then unproductive forms of art or culture, such as graffiti-art, may become degraded and rejected in the society. This tendency has consequences in organizational life, as well. Tolerating and encouraging only those forms of creativity which are useful, productive, and believed to bring about financial benefits means adopting a very limited view of creativity. From this limited viewpoint, creativity which *appears* useless, overly risky, or unproductive – no matter how actually productive it might be in the long run – stands a strong chance of being rejected *a priori*. Therefore, the economic framing of creativity in the organizational creativity discourse has conservative effects, as it values the kind of novelty which has been proven efficient and productive, while overlooking and marginalizing other forms of novelty and creativity. When creativity is assessed in terms of value and use, the most radical ideas will likely be rejected, and only ideas with a very modest level of novelty but with an obvious value or use will be accepted.

Therefore, the problem of the economically intertwined discourse is that it disables any radical creativity (De Cock, Rehn & Berry 2013), and creative thinking that goes beyond or outside the capitalist discourse (Jeanes 2006), thus diminishing the potential of creativity. Economically intertwined creativity comes close to the concept of reproduction (cf. Jeanes 2006), in that it favors new and better versions of existing commodities, processes, and ideas, rather than something that did not exist before. The paradox here lies, however, in the fact that the more we expect of

creativity, – in the form of innovations, creative insights, and ideas that can be commercialized – the more restricted the conception of creativity gets. Every time creativity is assessed in terms of its use, value, or potential to create wealth, we are taking steps back from something that has the capacity to extend the limits of current thinking and create something radically new.

Driver (2008) looks at creativity as an imaginary construction of the self and illustrates the problematic aspects of the productivity imperative by questioning the prerequisite of usefulness from a psychoanalytic perspective. According to the predominant discourse, creativity is about conceiving and presenting oneself as a creative individual, a status characterized by a positive self-image and a high level of intrinsic motivation. However, even though a creative self-image has been found important for creativity (Farmer et al. 2003; Ford 1996), the reactions of others and expectations concerning the reactions also influence one's potential engagement in creativity (Ford 1996; Woodman et al. 1993). As the current conceptualization of organizational creativity stresses the importance of producing something new and useful, the creative self-image is dependent on the validation of others as to whether something new and useful has actually been produced. This results in a contradictory pressure to be intrinsically motivated, but simultaneously to behave in a way that is likely to encourage others to confirm one's creativity – which can be done by producing something new and useful that they might approve. This contradiction works against creativity by making people produce things only marginally new but unquestionably useful, because their creative self-image is dependent on the validation of others. Driver (2008) argues that the verbally expressed imaginary construction of self is always distorted and misrepresented. However, as individuals disrupt the imaginary constructions of the self, they become, in fact, most powerful and creative. Therefore, instead of attempting to correct the failure of the imaginary and finding a 'better' way of selling the creative self, it would be more fruitful to allow for failures and to "experience them as powerful markers of who we are," as expressed by Driver (2008, 193). She therefore recommends creating a discursive space that would allow people to work through the failures of the imaginary, which would actually make them more creative and make more radical creativity possible.

To sum up, the intermingling of creativity discourse with economic imperatives includes a risk of having conservative effects, and favoring routine or very small adaptations instead of more radical creativity. Therefore, as De Cock, Rehn and Berry (2013, 156) point out, creativity research has the responsibility of embracing concepts of creativity which "advance the emancipatory potential of human action," instead of "stifling creativity's own 'revolutionary potential'." Consequently, regardless of what kind of creativity is expected in business organizations and societies, creativity research should be concerned with creativity as a field of possibility, as something that extends the limits of what is already known (cf. Jeanes 2006).

## 5.4 The creativity ideal

The societal and academic discourses on creativity present it as a desirable goal or a general imperative that is good and beneficial for individuals and organizations. Due to this, there is a widespread belief that creativity should to be enhanced, nurtured and increased (see Chapter 4.3.1 and Study 3). This, in turn, is reflected in the common aim of organizational creativity studies, which is to find antecedents of organizational creativity (see Chapter 4.3.1, Study 2; Amar 2004; Andriopoulos 2001; Jaskyte & Kisiliene 2006; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Sundgren, Dimenäs et al. 2005; Tierney & Farmer 2002), in order to generate knowledge on how individuals and organizations can become more creative. These antecedents identified in the studies are then often used to provide generalized or generic management guidance which ignores particular contexts and situations; in other words, to provide findings from a *specific* context and to treat them as universal guidelines which one can apply to *any* context. This results in a plethora of ‘how to’-lists which make creativity appear as “what is a quick fix, fun, easy and liberating” (Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 36; see also Study 1), the utility of which in practice may be debatable. The discursive tendency to present creativity as something that can be bestowed on an employee, who for some reason or another is not considered creative enough highlights a belief in creativity as something that can be produced on demand (Purser & Montuori 1999, 325), instead of something complex and unpredictable.

A risk inherent in these ‘how-to’ lists and lists of characteristics of creative people, groups or organizations is that organizational creativity discourse may only serve to provide guidelines for strategic self-management, making people *perform* creativity instead of actually *being* creative (Study 3; Hjorth 2004). By providing guidelines and resources for impression management and rhetoric, the lists may increase the amount of ‘creativity talk’ and behavior, which, however, remain on the surface level and do not contribute to any actual change in organizational behavior, practices or mindsets. Moreover, the question of *how* to accomplish the ideals described in the lists and guidelines and actually incorporate them in the organizational reality is not that simple, despite the illusion of being in control of such things that is prevalent in organization studies discourse (Stacey 2005a, 5; Study 1).

The creativity ideal is also worth discussing from a more critical theory-inspired viewpoint, namely that of the creative subject constructed in the organizational creativity discourse (Study 3). It comes back to the point of looking at discourses as not only informative but also having normalizing and governing effects in that they construct the creative subject, normalize what it is to be creative (Study 3; cf. Gahan et al. 2007; Prichard 2002) and influence how people construct themselves as occupying the subject position of a ‘creative worker’. The creativity discourse includes tensions and paradoxical demands that may be meaningful and productive while also being frustrating and wearing (e.g., Parush & Koivunen 2014; Study 3).

For example, the discourse encourages disobedience and unconformity (Olin & Wickenberg 2001; Pech 2001), while on the other hand, it instructs an individual to direct his/her performance towards shared goals and objectives (Isaksen & Lauer 2002). Autonomy, freedom and intrinsic motivation are emphasized (Amabile 1997), although the creative output must be something that the management deems useful and valuable. The organizational creativity discourse appears to draw a picture of a seeming freedom to question, re-think and invent, yet it remains confined to a managerially defined frame, which effectively prevents anything too risky or radical. This issue has already been discussed from the viewpoint of the construct of creativity (see Chapters 5.3 and 5.2), while the contradictions and tensions of the creativity discourse also have implications for individuals because they are difficult to accommodate and make the struggle for a secure sense of self challenging (cf. Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Study 3).

Keeping up with the creative ideal may not always be an easy task, for instance, because creativity, as a work-related objective, is subjective and difficult to measure and therefore may prove impossible to achieve. A potential failure to live up to the ideal may result in disappointment and self-blame because the ideal of self-expressive and self-actualizing work seems so appealing and irresistible (cf. McRobbie 2002a). The possibility of self-actualization by having a creative, autonomous, intrinsically motivating and challenging job (cf. Amabile 1997) is made to sound so promising that the disadvantages of such jobs are conveniently dispelled (cf. Gahan et al. 2007; Taylor 2013). Resisting the creative ideal, on the other hand, is easy to interpret as incompetence or an unwillingness to commit oneself to an organization (cf. Alvesson & Willmott 2002). (Study 3.)

An alternative perspective on the understanding of creativity could be interested in what kind of subjects are constructed through the current excessively positive (Study 3) yet managerially defined (Study 1) creativity discourse. In his work, Hjorth (2003; 2005) aims at a critical deconstruction of the entrepreneurial subject in which managerialism and economic rationality are inscribed and suggests replacing the current entrepreneurial ideal with *homo ludens*, the playing individual. Instead of relying on conventional ways of controlling and managing creativity, the management of creativity could be re-configured as a set of tactics aimed at creating spaces for play/invention. Hjorth (2003; 2004) suggests resisting the predominant discourse by creating playful and creative spaces, both mental and physical, which encourage creativity that “disturbs the reigning order” (Hjorth 2003, 5) and would complement the current ‘manageable’ views of creativity (Study 1; Bilton 2010). The question, however, remains how this could be done without it turning into yet another way of making individuals devote their lives and souls to work, as already happened in the case of the dot.com businesses of the 90s (Ross 2003) and is happening in many ‘creative’ jobs (McRobbie 2002a; 2002b; cf. Taylor 2013).

## 5.5 Creativity as an individual capacity

Organizational creativity is generally considered to refer to a psycho-social process that is ingrained in organizational structures and practices rather than to a collection of creative individuals (Kallio & Kallio 2011; Sundgren & Styhre 2007). Although a conception of organizational creativity as more than a group of creative individuals is widely agreed upon, it is not always evident in the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse. The assessed levels of creativity of separate individuals is a relatively typical topic of study in organizational creativity research (e.g., Williams 2004; Zhou & George 2001), and the studies often focus on studying individual-level cognitive processes (e.g., Fong 2006) or group-level processes that take place in the context of an organization (Watson 2007). Although individuals have a central role in organizational life, this kind of conception, however, tends to overlook the capacity of groups or organizations to form emerging systems (see e.g., Study 5; Sawyer 2000; 2007; Sawyer & DeZutter 2009) that exhibit properties and features that cannot be reduced to the individual level (Stacey 2005b, 22). Therefore, the crucial role that individual-centered, psychological creativity theories are considered to play in the understanding of organizational creativity (Shalley & Zhou 2008) may have been exaggerated in that this has taken the focus away from patterns of interaction (cf. Stacey 2005b), including social dynamics, and tended to overlook the individual as embedded in the social, organizational, cultural and material environment. It centers on an individual as the creating unit, and neglects the fact that creativity involves multiple agents, and resources, and is dependent on social processes of interaction and negotiation and recognizing something as creative (Study 5; cf. Ford 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1997).

An alternative understanding of creativity adopts a wider conceptualization of creativity and understands it as distributed and collective action (Study 5; Miettinen 2013; Sawyer & DeZutter 2009) or as a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, in Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 47). The former viewpoint emphasizes creativity as evolving within social dynamics, and conceives of it as a property of the interaction, “which in turn influences the emergent processes that are generating it” (Sawyer 2010, 377). Miettinen (2013), in his work, emphasizes the role of ‘interactive emergence’ and ‘generative relationships’ that he defines as unplanned encounters that lead to the emergence of a collaborative agency, which is central in scientific breakthroughs. The latter viewpoint highlights the nature of creativity as not occurring in a single point of time, but rather unfolding as a result of “interconnected events and undertakings” (Sundgren & Styhre 2007, 215). The rhizome view of creativity sees it as a form of connectivity and as an ability to connect any point to any other point, highlighting the free play of resources and knowledge. A central event in the rhizome model occurs when a new connection is made, in other words, when an idea is related to another idea and generates a new synthesis. With this kind of conceptualization of

creativity, Styhre and Sundgren (2005, 46), suggest that creativity researchers should also acknowledge the co-dependency of an individual, theoretical framework that guides individual action, the technical equipment and other non-human resources. The distributed view of creativity decenters the human as the sole creator, and emphasizes the interdependency of various human and non-human ‘agents’ (see also Study 5). This kind of view brings to light the fact that a creative process requires multiple agents with different roles<sup>11</sup>, it emerges in social interactions and dynamics, but is also dependent on resources, artifact, tools, and technological, material and spatial affordances (Sailer 2011; Tanggaard 2012, cf. Gärtner 2013). The conception of creativity as a distributed and interconnected phenomenon shifts the current focus of organizational creativity discourse from enhancing and ‘managing’ individual-level creativity taking place in an organizational context to taking all these co-dependencies into account, engaging in activities which would make connectivity a guiding principle, thus enabling new, unexpected connections to emerge.

Looking at creativity as a distributed phenomenon also highlights the social negotiations and political processes involved in creativity. In individual-centered understandings of creativity, the creation is attributed to an individual, although the recognition and acceptance of something as ‘creative’ is still a social process (cf. Csikszentmihalyi 1997). However, the distributed view of creativity highlights the complex and multifold – and also contingent and political – processes, events and actions that are required in the generation of novelty, which the collective in question and the relevant others deem as ‘creativity’.

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<sup>11</sup> For a review of various roles of ‘others’ in creative professional fields, see Glăveanu and Lubart (2014).



## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Conclusions

Although organizational creativity as a research field is rather young, there appears to be a variety of themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms that have become a relatively established part of organizational creativity discourse. In this thesis, they are considered to represent the hegemonic discourse, referring to the fact that they are widely agreed upon and considered relevant to the understanding of organizational creativity. The hegemonic discourse has numerous causes and points of origin. They can, however, be traced back particularly to two issues: i) the roots and contributions of psychological creativity research, which have had an indisputable influence on the current understandings of organizational creativity, and ii) the economic and managerial bindings, which predominate organization studies in general.

First, the current understanding of creativity in the organizational context owes much to the legacy of psychological studies on creativity, but that legacy comes with baggage. The focus on individual-level creativity and the popularity of quantitative methods and functionally-oriented, often correlational studies, especially among those published in U.S. journals (Study 1; James & Drown 2012; Taylor & Callahan 2005), have provided an extensive set of findings on various variables which have been found to contribute to organizational creativity (see Chapter 4.5; Study 2). However, the findings constitute a dispersed and fragmented set (Hennessey & Amabile 2010; Klijn & Tomic 2010; Styhre & Sundgren 2005), and our understanding of organizational creativity is often reduced to lists of factors that have been found to contribute to it. Our understanding of the phenomenon that we are actually studying when dealing with organizational creativity still remains somewhat limited.

Moreover, the tendency to look at creativity as a phenomenon occurring inside a human being (in the mind, thinking, intellect, etc.), and to view the external environment as a set of variables, which may influence the intra-psychological processes and their outcomes, leans on an overly cognitive conception of human beings, and disconnects them from the wider socio-material environment (Glăveanu 2014). Simultaneously, the notions of creativity as a relational process taking place between the human being (the ‘inside’) and the human body, physical space and its aspects, material affordances, artefacts, and tools have not gained prominence despite

a few exceptions (cf. e.g., Glăveanu 2014; Stierand 2014; Stierand et al. 2014; Study 4; Study 5).

Second, the economic bindings of organizational creativity studies refer to the assumed link between creativity and economic outcomes (Study 1; Study 3), and the intertwined nature of economic thinking and organizational creativity discourse. This tendency is reflected in many ways in the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse. The predominant perspective in the studies is finding ways to enhance, promote, or even manage creativity, and an underlying assumption is that creativity is needed, wanted, and good (Study 1; Study 3), and any conflicting views or critical concerns are rarely expressed. This tendency is also linked to the view that creativity actualizes only in a new and useful outcome, and creativity that fails to produce a new and useful outcome is not interesting, or really creativity at all, but something useless, bizarre, or strange. This makes creativity literature come close to innovation literature, since although both of them are interested in processes aimed at producing something useful and productive, neither of them actually covers creative behavior which fails to produce an acceptably new and useful outcome. Moreover, although it may be practical to focus on creativity which ‘proves itself,’ i.e. turns out to be useful or appropriate in some ways, the imperative to produce something useful may actually reduce the likelihood of creating something truly novel (cf. Driver 2008; Nisula 2013; Osborne 2003).

The hegemonic discourse emphasizes creativity as a key to positive organizational outcomes from survival to success, while overlooking any negative implications or side effects of creativity. It proposes organizational creativity as a solution to many problems, without realizing that creativity may, in fact, also *cause* problems. Creativity as a general imperative, ideal, or norm may generate tensions and paradoxes, as the objectives of business organizations and their behavioral norms are often weighted against creativity (Cuatrecasas 1995). Moreover, the ‘ideal’ employee constructed in the hegemonic creativity discourse is the subject of paradoxical demands which can cause tensions and may be difficult to accommodate. Moreover, the imperative of creativity can also be used to exploit employees and make them accept unfair working conditions, such as unpaid overtime, short-term contracts and irregular income by justifying it via the stimulating nature of creative work, which is intrinsically motivating and provides possibilities for self-actualization (Study 3; Gahan et al. 2007; Taylor 2013).

Moreover, when the arguments on the centrality of creativity as a key driver of value-creation and profit-making are combined with argumentation rooted in ‘objective’ measures of creativity studied using quantitative methods, we are building an aura of conviction and authority around creativity in the respective discourse. Although this authority and conviction might help in raising organizational creativity as a subfield of organization studies from its rather marginal position to a more central stream of interest (cf. Styhre & Sundgren 2005, 14), it includes a risk of leading to a

one-sided or even skewed understanding and conceptualization of creativity which actually may even disable its real potential.

However, the basic assumption of this thesis is that the development of organizational creativity discourse into its current form is not final or permanent but open to possible contest and struggle. In order to open up various ways of seeing organizational creativity (cf. Zundel & Kokkalis 2010), this thesis has aimed at challenging the hegemony by bringing up alternative perspectives that could complement the predominant understanding. Due to the hegemony of certain articulations, the alternative views can be regarded as located in the margins of the discourse, thus representing ‘the other’ of organizational creativity understanding: something that is considered less relevant, marginal, and unnecessary to take into account. Similarly, the themes, perspectives, and methods of the hegemony are more likely to be regarded as universal and important, while the alternative perspectives are easily dismissed as somehow secondary and particular, which is the case with many of the themes and perspectives discussed in this thesis.

Moreover, the alternative perspectives are often assessed from the point of view of the hegemony, and therefore forced to defend themselves from an underdog position, using the concepts, values, and argumentation of the hegemony. When the assessment of the validity, relevance, and goodness of a study is made in terms of the hegemony, there is a risk of accepting only certain types of studies with acceptable themes, perspectives, and methods as valid or relevant organizational creativity knowledge. This ‘othering’ of alternative understandings may result in an overall misrepresentation of the complex and many-sided phenomenon of organizational creativity and to the homogenization of research on the topic.

Therefore, it is first necessary to acknowledge that the hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity does not represent a universal truth but the currently hegemonic understanding. Research based on that understanding has provided extensive and important findings related to many aspects of organizational creativity, but it is nevertheless one-sided and limited in certain respects. Although not often given the space and attention they deserve, there are alternative conceptualizations and understandings of organizational creativity which are able to paint a different picture of the phenomenon – perhaps more sophisticated and fine-grained in some ways, but also limited in other ways. Therefore, as too much consensus leads to apathy (Mouffe 2000, 104), more space for agonistic pluralism in organizational creativity discourse is called for. Agonism, according to Mouffe (1999, 755), sees the ‘other’ not as an enemy but as an adversary, that is, as “*somebody with whose ideas we are going to struggle but whose right to defend those ideas we will not put into question*”. Although the relationship between the hegemonic and alternative discourses on organizational creativity probably does not equal to a conflict (cf. Mouffe 1999), agonistic pluralism in the case of organizational creativity discourse

would mean being more open to alternative viewpoints, understandings, and conceptualizations, and allowing for methodological and paradigmatic pluralism.

## **6.2 Summary of the main arguments related to the research objectives**

The basic assumption of this study is that the development of organizational creativity knowledge and the related discourse is not inevitable or progressive, but instead contingent (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Organizational creativity discourse has developed in a certain direction, meaning that some themes, perspectives, methods, paradigms, as well as motives, values, and objectives, have gained a hegemonic position over others, and are, therefore, often taken-for-granted, accepted, and considered valid and relevant. The purpose of this study was *to explore and problematize the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse and to provide alternative viewpoints for the theorizing on organizational creativity*. To accomplish the purpose, three research objectives were formulated. The first objective was *to provide an outline of the hegemonic discourse of organizational creativity regarding four aspects: themes, perspectives, paradigms and methods*, which was then complemented with the second objective, i.e., *to discuss themes, perspectives, paradigms and methods, which remain marginal from the viewpoint of the hegemonic discourse*. The studies (Studies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) of this thesis can be seen to act as illustrations of certain alternative viewpoints, through which the hegemonic discourse is problematized. That brings us to the third objective of this study, which was *to problematize the hegemonic discourse through the alternative viewpoints offered in the studies and to provide alternative options for future theorizing*. However, although the studies of this thesis highlight certain alternative viewpoints, and thus act as triggers in problematizing the hegemonic discourse, they also share some or several hegemonic aspects, and thus cannot be simply labeled either ‘hegemonic’ or ‘alternative.’ Therefore, the aim of this thesis is not to criticize or downgrade the hegemonic discourse as a whole, nor claim the superiority of any alternative viewpoint, but to open a discussion concerning certain problematic aspects of the hegemonic discourse. In the following, the main arguments regarding the objectives are summarized.

The hegemonic discourse on organizational creativity is based on an extensive coverage of certain themes and perspectives, such as those focusing on individual cognitive processes, motivation, or organizational climate and their relation to creativity, to name a few. The focus on a limited number of themes and the confinement to certain prevalent perspectives, however, contributes to the marginalization of other themes and perspectives. The negative, often unintended, consequences, implications, and side effects of creativity, the factors that might

hinder or prevent creativity, and a deeper inquiry into the ontology and epistemology of creativity have attracted relatively marginal interest. The material embeddedness of organizational creativity, in other words, the physical organizational environment as well as the human body and its non-cognitive resources, has largely been overlooked in the hegemonic discourse, although there are studies in this area that give reason to believe that they might prove relevant for the understanding of creativity.

Due to historical reasons, quantitative studies as well as qualitative yet functionally-oriented studies have predominated the organizational creativity discourse, although studies falling into the interpretationist paradigm have gradually become more popular. The two radical paradigms, as well as methodological and analytical approaches typical of radical research, can be considered to hold a marginal position in the field of organizational creativity. The hegemonic discourse is based on an assumption that creativity is desirable, good, necessary, or even obligatory, and the creativity imperative extends beyond the creative industries and those doing 'creative' work. The necessity of creativity combined with the predominant interest in producing creative outcomes, i.e. outcomes deemed new and useful, may lead to an endless race for producing something which could be considered new, yet not too radical or deviant in order to be accepted as useful. The excessive emphasis on the kind of creativity which can be harnessed for productivity may actually have conservative effects. To conclude, the conceptualizations and understandings of organizational creativity in the hegemonic discourse are in some respects limited and one-sided, and may actually entail a risk of fostering management and organizational practices which limit creative endeavors, rather than increase their likelihood.

The hegemonic understanding of organizational creativity conceptualizes creativity as a fixed entity, a new and useful outcome generated by individuals, and facilitated by an organizational environment and its variables. A complementary understanding of organizational creativity might consider it as an emergent, socially and materially embedded process occurring in the dynamic relations between the creating humans, artifacts, material affordances, other resources and the validating audience (cf. Glăveanu 2014; Sundgren & Styhre 2007). The complementary understanding would extend the conceptualization of creativity as a time- and space-bound event, and highlight assemblage and connectivity as its central principles (Glăveanu 2014; Styhre 2006), thus changing how it is conceived and how it should be managed in an organization.

Moreover, the hegemonic discourse makes creativity appear as a powerful 'norm' or 'ideal,' which might be challenging to achieve and which creates paradoxical demands and tensions. The excessively positive hegemonic discourse and its tendency to neglect any dark side of creativity can also be used for exploitative purposes and for the advancement of the capitalist agenda. The hegemonic discourse is firmly rooted in capitalist thinking which emphasizes that which is productive,

valuable, and of use. However, it simultaneously comes to limit the potential of creativity to mere reproduction, modest alterations, and limited novelty. A more balanced understanding of organizational creativity, which would also acknowledge the so-called dark side of creativity, and allow for a broader conceptualization of creativity in organizations, might encourage an understanding of creativity as possible yet not obligatory, as actualizing in often serendipitous connections, rather than as a norm or ideal to strive for, or an act to perform.

To conclude, although alternative discourses have emerged in the field of organizational creativity, they appear quite separate from the hegemonic articulations, and their contribution to the development of the discourse remains somewhat scant. Therefore, they can be considered to contribute to the understanding of organizational creativity from the margins of the discourse, representing the ‘other’ understandings. The inability to accommodate the ‘other’ understandings and viewpoints within the organizational creativity discourse runs a risk of misrepresenting the complex and many-sided phenomenon of organizational creativity. Therefore, just as Mouffe (1999) suggests agonism as a goal for democratic politics, defined as an accepting and appreciative attitude towards adversaries, this thesis can be read as an invitation for organizational creativity scholars to acknowledge the limitations of the hegemonic discourse and to engage in seeking to understand organizational creativity as a more multifaceted construct and phenomenon.

### **6.3 Theoretical and methodological contributions of this study**

The study contributes to the discourse on organizational creativity in several ways. First, by identifying certain hegemonic themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms, and discussing viewpoints overlooked in the discourse, a synthetic-critical overview of the discourse has been provided, being thus the first contribution. Second, this thesis especially points to many aspects of organizational creativity which have been neglected or overlooked in the hegemonic discourse, and thus deserve to be further studied. Nevertheless, this should not be seen as suggesting that the hegemonic themes, perspectives, methods, and paradigms have nothing further to offer to the understanding of organizational creativity; instead, this thesis should be seen as an invitation to engage *also* in studying alternative viewpoints and aspects and taking new approaches. However, this should not either be seen to suggest that there would not be any more problematic aspects in the hegemonic discourse. Quite the opposite, in fact, as one of the main arguments of this thesis is that the critical exploration of the organizational creativity discourse has been relatively scarce, and thus further critical inquiries into it are encouraged.

Next, this study problematizes the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse from certain viewpoints. As organizational creativity studies, influenced by their historical roots in individual-oriented, psychological, and often quantitative research, have entered the economically intertwined, practically and functionally-oriented management and organization studies discourse, the resulting discourse has become limited in its conceptualizations of creativity, as well as confined and one-sided regarding its central themes, perspectives, and methods as well as paradigms. This limited and one-sided conception of creativity in organizations emphasizes that which is positive, good, and productive, and limits its interest to activities resulting in a useful creative outcome. The current conceptualization views creativity as a fixed entity, as actualizing in an outcome, and as limited to the type of creativity that is *acceptable* and fits the managerial ideology. It also limits the possible meanings and representations that ‘creativity’ has in the respective discourse, excluding many meanings of creativity encountered in other discourses. Therefore, this study contributes to the organizational creativity discourse by problematizing these hegemonic conceptualizations, and encouraging scholars to adopt alternative conceptualizations.

By suggesting broader conceptualizations of organizational creativity, this thesis also contributes to the research stream of organizational creativity as separate from innovation studies. The line between the constructs of creativity and innovation is somewhat fuzzy (e.g., Nisula 2013, 128), and therefore this thesis agrees with Montag et al. (2012), who suggest that research interested in creative outcomes should be distinguished from that interested in creative behavior. By embracing creativity as creative behavior, or an organizational capacity to evolve (Borghini 2005) and generate novelty as a system (Nisula 2013), the focus of organizational creativity studies would shift away from innovation studies, which especially emphasize commercializable and productive outcomes.

This thesis also makes a contribution by challenging certain taken-for-granted assumptions of the hegemonic discourse. The goodness and desirability of creativity, the lack of any dark side to creativity, and the unquestionable connection of creativity and productive organizational outcomes are among the assumptions that are challenged in this thesis. By doing so, this study invites scholars to engage in further research on the assumptions – as well as other assumptions, which were not the focus of this study – and thus contributes to the construction of a more grounded and nuanced theorizing on organizational creativity.

One of the theoretical contributions of this thesis is that it invites organizational creativity scholars to complement the existing contributions to the literature by adopting a less individual-centered conception of organizational creativity (cf. Glăveanu 2014; Styhre & Sundgren 2005). The intention of this study is not to deny the centrality of the individual in organizational creativity, but to highlight that the creating individual and the environmental variables that influence his/her behavior

have been studied extensively compared to alternative perspectives, which would dislocate the individual from his/her position as ‘the creating unit.’

Finally, this dissertation makes a methodological contribution. A theoretical analysis of the academic discourse can be seen as an important methodological approach, which has traditionally received a relatively marginal interest in business studies (Kallio 2006). In this respect, this thesis, hopefully, will act as a trigger for further theoretical inquiry into the academic organizational creativity discourse.

#### **6.4 Managerial/practical contributions of this study**

This thesis also makes some managerial and/or practical contributions. By problematizing the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, this study encourages managers to adopt a broader understanding of creativity. Although business organizations are likely to wish for innovations and other forms of ‘productive’ creativity, a restricted view of creativity as the continuous production of productive ideas entails a risk of preventing creativity rather than encouraging it.

That brings us to the next managerial contribution, which is the acknowledgement that organizational creativity, like any other organizational phenomenon, has a dark side. The hegemonic discourse tends to present creativity in a positive light and to ignore the fact that it also involves harmful aspects and negative side effects. It may have unintended and undesirable consequences, it can be used for harmful ends, but most importantly, a kind of dark side is *inherent* in creativity – something needs to be destroyed in order to create something new. Therefore, although creativity certainly may be positive and beneficial for organizations and their members, it needs to be acknowledged that creativity inevitably includes questioning the old ways of doing things, shaking up the existing order, and altering that which is habitual, usual, and normal, and that which has worked so far. The old needs to be destroyed and demolished in order to create new (cf. Schumpeter 1939), which is not always experienced positively and may have negative implications for some parties.

Another practical contribution of this thesis is that it challenges the assumption of creativity as a necessity or imperative, and opens discussion towards a more nuanced presentation of creativity that embraces also darker aspects of creativity. Although creativity can be a positive and beneficial phenomenon, it also might be worth asking whether we only expect the productive and positive *outcomes* of creativity, or are we also willing to accept the risk and the possible social costs and side effects of creativity? Similarly, in organizations it is definitely worth considering whether we only engage in creativity on the level of rhetoric, or are we willing to allow the kind of creativity which may also be rebel, difficult and even painful? Engaging in creativity on the level of rhetoric and truly embracing creativity – its bright side but

also its dark and greyish aspects – have different consequences from the viewpoint of the organization and its members.

Although individuals and individual creativity are naturally important from the viewpoint of organizational creativity, a practical contribution of this study is also that it suggests looking at creativity as a broader, materially embedded and socially distributed phenomenon. Instead of focusing on attempts to increase and encourage individual creativity, it might be fruitful for organizations to focus on providing an environment, where connections and serendipitous encounters would be possible. Social dynamics, interaction as well as the physical environment are issues, which might reserve more attention from management interested in allowing for creativity.

## **6.5 Limitations of the study and potential avenues for future research**

Taking a social constructionist perspective on organizational creativity knowledge necessarily means that the researcher is expected to be aware of and reflective about his/her own role in the construction of the conducted study. The starting point of this study was an intention to be constructively critical of the hegemonic understanding of organizational creativity, and thus, a limitation of this study might be the manifestation of a less critical attitude towards alternative perspectives or understandings, as they are only discussed as openings toward different conceptualizations of creativity without engaging in a more in-depth exploration of them. As already mentioned in Chapter 1.5, a more exhaustive, and also critical, exploration of what in this thesis are called alternative understandings of organizational creativity would be a needed and interesting topic of study, although providing one is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, a more thorough exploration of alternative understandings of organizational creativity is an example of a topic that requires further research – and thus represents a first suggestion for future studies.

Among the alternative understandings of organizational creativity, a variety of interesting avenues for future research can be found. One of the points of this thesis is that creativity has been regarded as a mostly individual-level, cognitive phenomenon, while this thesis argues that the relevance of the human body, the physical environment, and social environment for organizational creativity has not been properly understood or theorized (cf. Glăveanu 2014; Styhre & Sundgren 2005). An interesting question might be the role of tools and physical artifacts in creativity, and the ‘boundaries’ of an individual. In many professions and activities, the use of tools needs to be internalized and embodied, becoming thus an extension of the individual, and plays a key role in a creative endeavor (Stierand 2014). Although this kind of views might provide interesting insights for the understanding of organizational creativity, they go far beyond the discussion of this thesis, which might

be considered a limitation. However, the physical environment and artifacts and tools as an extension of individual capacity would certainly make a fruitful topic of future studies.

Moreover, as the critical exploration of the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse in this thesis was limited to the themes and perspectives offered in the studies, there are certainly several other themes and perspectives that deserve a critical scrutiny. Therefore, a further critical exploration of the organizational creativity discourse is encouraged, thus forming the next suggestion for future research.

Although one of the arguments of this study is that creativity is over-attributed to the individual in the hegemonic discourse, individual agency and its role in creative endeavors would be an interesting viewpoint to explore. More specifically, although the individual is often regarded as the creating unit or the starting point of creativity, the overall discourse paradoxically seems to treat the individual as a passive and predetermined ragdoll of contextual, social, and organizational factors. Human agency, or the will or choice of an individual, is assumed to be in line with the will of the organization and its management (as often in structural theories on organizations in general). But when it comes to creativity – an inherently complex psycho-social process – the human being as an active agent would seem to deserve more attention in organizational creativity discourse. Moreover, the conception of the human in organizational creativity discourse is relatively one-sided, and views humans as a combination of knowledge, personality, cognitive skills, and motivation. Their will, desire, and passion are seen as irrelevant for understanding organizational creativity, or they can even be seen to disturb the harmonious organizational life. In addition, the whole discourse tends to overlook the bodily dimension of human beings, and the embodied experiences of ‘being in the world’ of organizational members are conveniently ignored. These are viewpoints that most certainly would be worth further exploration.

One of the limitations of this study is that all the discourse-oriented pieces of research this dissertation includes (Study 1; Study 3, Synthesis section) are analyses of academic texts. As discourses cannot be studied directly, one must naturally study them through texts, but the texts in this thesis refer mostly to academic and scholarly literature. Although this limitation can be considered purposeful from the point of view of the research purpose, which was to explore and problematize the hegemonic organizational creativity discourse, it could be seen as a limiting factor from the perspective of a wider audience. Studying how creativity is conceptualized, discussed, and understood in real-life organizations, and especially what kind of discourses could be identified there, would definitely make an interesting topic of research. It might well be that creativity is something not much talked about in everyday life, regardless of creativity being an inherent part of the work, as was found by Sundgren and Styhre (2007) in their study of a pharmaceutical company. As well,

it might be that understandings of creativity are variable and contested, and depend on the cultural conditions of the company, as concluded by Banks et al. (2002). Therefore, although one of the assumptions of this study is that academic discourses also influence societal discourses as well as local discourses, they most likely differ in many respects (see e.g., Banks et al. 2002; Ford & Gioia 1995). Therefore, more practice-oriented, discourse-aware studies on organizational creativity would be an interesting avenue for future research (see e.g., Tuori & Vilén 2011).

Each study of this thesis has some limitations of its own that are discussed in the respective studies, and thus do not need to be repeated here. However, looking at the studies as a whole, i.e. as constituting a compilation thesis together with the synthesis section, there are some issues than might be regarded as limitations. It might, for instance, be possible to criticize the fact that some of the studies (Studies 1 and 3) highlight the nature of creativity as a discourse, or as a linguistic achievement, while on the other hand some of the studies (Studies 4 and 5) rest on an assumption that creativity is a real-world phenomenon that can be experienced by the researched subjects and identified by means of empirical research. However, although the stances may appear contradictory, the contradiction is more seeming than real. In the empirical pieces of this study, the discursive agreement labeled creativity is made by the researched subjects. Therefore, instead of looking for creativity as a ‘real’ phenomenon, Studies 4 and 5 are interested in creativity as constructed by the researched subjects. Similarly, in the theoretical pieces of the thesis, the focus is on the notion of creativity as constructed by other scholars. However, as discussed already earlier in this thesis, looking at the discursive construction of creativity – both in academia and in practice – has been rare, and thus could offer various possibilities for further theorizing.

Furthermore, perspectives that highlight the role of language and discourses as *constituting* rather than *reflecting* reality have been accused of reducing all social experiences to something that can be swept away by changing the discourse (Fournier & Grey 2000). This, however, is based on a skew understanding of discourse, its effects and changeability. Although discourses can be changed and do change, they tend to be stagnated, and their change is slow and unpredictable. The efforts of totalitarian governments to guide and limit discourses are an example of that. Although great amounts of resources are often allocated to mold discourses, and advocate the ‘right’ way to address issues, there are always antagonistic discourses and powerful alternative voices simmering below the surface. Discourses, therefore, cannot possibly be subject to a person’s or group’s full control, even under extreme circumstances. Moreover, discourses are rooted not only in discursive but also in material and social practices, and thus cannot be reduced to ‘mere talk.’ For example, with respect to creativity, the individual-centered discourse bound to the notion of creativity actualizing at one specific point in time has a very real, material (i.e.

financial) implication in the form of copyright, which has not changed much regardless of changes in the creativity discourse.

Applying the political theory of discourse of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) to the analysis of academic discourse poses also some challenges. First, as a central point in Laclau and Mouffe's theory is the contingency and undecidable character of everything, the outlining of the 'hegemonic' discourse conducted in this thesis has been a totalizing attempt (ibid., 136) which may create an image of stability and an illusion of explicit borders in between hegemony and non-hegemony that is contradictory to the theory. However, although the contingency of the social as seen by Laclau and Mouffe (ibid.) is the starting point for this thesis, in order to say something about the researched phenomenon there is a need to take a look at the temporal fixation of meanings, even at the risk of creating an illusion of stability. Second, this thesis can be criticized for the loose use of the discourse theory instead of engaging in the theory in full theoretical sophistication. This point of critique is indisputable, although also justifiable, as the current use of the theory was considered appropriate for the purpose of the synthesis section of this thesis, and any deeper engagement with the theory would have increased the risk of losing sight of what is actually tried to accomplish with it (cf. O'Doherty 2015).

The adoption of a social constructionist perspective on organizational creativity knowledge, and of discourse theory as the selected approach, can be considered subjectivist in their ontological and epistemological positions. Therefore, the structuring of organizational creativity knowledge and any decisions regarding, for instance, whether something represents the hegemony or an alternative is based on the researcher's interpretation, and it may well be that some other researcher would have arrived at different analyses and conclusions. This does not, however, mean that this study has not been successful in its attempts but rather highlights the fact that all products of research are political interventions of some kind and can be defined as follows: "*a contingent articulation of elements which reproduces or challenges the given discourses in the never-ending struggle to define the world*" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Therefore, as this study looks at organizational creativity discourse, and divides it into hegemonic and alternative discourses, it simultaneously comes to reproduce some aspects of the discourse and challenge some other aspects. This study, thus, is an attempt to fix and create a unity of meaning in its own right. There is no reason to believe that this study's attempt to create a unity of meaning would be any more 'right' or any more 'true' than any other attempt. This could – and should – be seen as an act of persuasion, rather than as an act of articulating or arguing for scientific truths.

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