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THE FANTASY OF INNOVATION

A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION OF CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES ON MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION

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Abstract

Innovation is one of the dominating concepts in contemporary management discourses. As a consequence of the global interest in innovation, organizations and management gurus explicitly encourage managers and employees to express themselves, to ‘think different,’ and to rebel against bureaucracy. However, translating directives of creativity into organizational practices is a problematic endeavour. This thesis undertakes a philosophical investigation of the normative idea of innovation. Specifically, I examine how this idea is articulated in popular management literature and enacted at a creative company. While contemporary management gurus try to develop an idea of creativity as a management concept, this thesis argues that such efforts stumble over a series of self-engendered paradoxes. What philosophical thought offers this investigation is a point of departure for creating and combining concepts that enable us to explore the paradoxes inherent in the normative idea of innovation. By drawing on Zizek’s psychoanalytic theory of ideology and Greimas’s theory of narratives, this thesis opens up post-bureaucratic discourses on innovation for a philosophical critique. This will be done through a reading of Gary Hamel’s narrative of management innovation primarily informed by Zizek’s concept of fantasy. Extrapolating this psychoanalytic approach to a case study, I examine how the normative idea of innovation functions at a creative company. Instead of drawing attention to the disparities between the rhetoric of creativity and the reality of the case company’s practices, I look at the internal logic of these practices and find that directives of creativity and innovation resist being translated into managerial practices.
Introduction

During World War II, American troops built military bases on a number of islands in the South West Pacific. As a consequence of the sudden influx of advanced technology such as aeroplanes, tanks and aircraft carriers, tribes native to these islands encountered Western culture for the first time. Members of these tribes observed how American soldiers summoned gifts from the Gods by performing various rituals. Trying to get a share of the Americans’ bounty, the islanders meticulously performed the rituals they had observed; they built landing grounds and aeroplanes out of bushes and branches, and they waved down aeroplanes from the sky (or so they thought). Upon performing these rituals, the islanders waited patiently for aeroplane-loads of cargo to arrive. But of course, the gifts from above never came.

The story of the cargo-cult is a perfect fable for contemporary cults of innovation. Throughout the past decades, Western society has witnessed a series of disruptive innovations. Having turned the computer into a consumer-product (like Jesus turned water into wine), entrepreneur Steve Jobs simultaneously made billions of dollars and disrupted the entire computer-industry. Awed by his accomplishments, many of Jobs’s successors, hoping to conjure the next disruptive innovation, imitate his charisma and rebellious attitude. Today, we even find companies that sell innovation as a consulting service. The Danish consultancy Future Navigator, for example, impudently asks prospective clients: ‘Do you sense that you could be a visionary? One of those people that challenge the norm and rocks the boat?’ Although many entrepreneurs and companies try to confine Steve Jobs’s spirit in a replicable procedure, they produce little more than empty gestures of disruptive innovation.

This master’s thesis examines the normative idea of innovation that structures post-bureaucratic managerial discourses. During the past century, various discourses have taken centre stage, so to speak, and each of them has offered a certain way of constructing normative categories of person. That is to say, they tell employees and managers how they should conduct themselves at the workplace in order to be innovative (Jones and Spicer, 2005: 233: du Gay, 2000: 5). Drawing on Zizek’s psychoanalytic theory of ideology, I argue that contemporary discourses on innovation are structured around fundamental gaps. Specifically, I argue that the normative idea of innovation, as management guru Gary Hamel articulates it in his management handbooks, is as dazzling as it is paradoxical. Furthermore, I use a case-study to show how some of these paradoxes manifest themselves in an organizational practice.
The Innovative Organization

It is often stated that companies must innovate in order to survive the mounting pressure of globalization. Drawing on Hamel’s and Prahalad’s immensely influential idea of the corporation’s core competence (1990), scholars of organization and self-fashioned management gurus claim that organizations need to make innovation a core competence and they point out that formal procedures are incompatible with innovation (McGrath, 2013; Rindova and Kota, 2001; Peters, 1987; Moss Kanter, 1983; Hamel 2002; 2007; 2012). Ironically, the proponents of this position propose procedures for operating in the void of procedures.

There is a widespread assumption within this trope of organization literature that innovation is correlated with expressive employee behaviours, and that such behaviours clash with formal principles of organization. In his influential book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2012), sociologist Richard Florida charts the growing role of creativity in contemporary society, and he identifies an empowered class of knowledge workers. Opposing the notion of the authoritative manager, Florida portrays the creative manager as a dressed-down colleague and friend of the employee. Today, many companies portray themselves as emancipatory spaces of play instead of offices. The digital agency Hello Monday for example, writes on their webpage:

A company without a philosophy is like a ship without a compass. Our agency is built on the premise that it is possible to make a creative playground rather than a production factory. The equation is simple: happy people create joyful digital experiences.

However, similar representations of post-bureaucratic management ideals have prompted scholars to examine the drawbacks of informal organization (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Casey, 1997; Deetz, Garsten, 1999; 2003; Fleming and Sturdy, 2007). By deploying concepts such as normative and neo-normative control, critical management scholars endeavour to show that the post-bureaucratic rhetoric of expressivity covers up disciplinary apparatuses of control. Pursuing a slightly different route of critical examination, the present thesis reverses the perspective and thus focuses on the normative idea of innovation that structures post-bureaucratic discourses. This perspective allows us to see the inconsistencies in the idea of innovation that tells contemporary managers and employees which competencies and dispositions to adopt in order to thrive in the post-industrial economy of creative destruction. By studying the normative idea of innovation in an organization, we see how post-bureaucratic
principles of organization render the relationship between the manager and the employee ambiguous. However, we also see how the gaps in the normative idea of innovation subverts ideological interpellation (control by means of identity regulation).

Outline of the Master’s Thesis

This thesis contains 7 chapters.

Chapter 1 provides a description of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic principles or organization. The main goal of this chapter is to outline the discursive trajectory within which we find the normative idea of innovation. I also summarize some of the critical studies of management and organization that draw attention to the implications of post-bureaucratic principles of organization.

Chapter 2 discusses the role of philosophy in organization studies. I briefly discuss Deleuze’s and Guattari’s philosophy of concepts. Drawing on Serres theory of the quasi-object, I thereafter argue that philosophy functions as a parasite in relation to organizational science, that is, organizational philosophy inhabits a space between philosophy and organizational science.

Chapter 3 introduces Zizek’s concepts of the subject, the Other, objects of desire and fantasy. Furthermore, I describe how Zizek’s theory of ideology and Greimas’s theory of narratives can inform an analysis of the normative idea of innovation.

Chapter 4 discusses my selection of empirical material and methodological considerations that concern how I conducted the interviews.

Chapter 5 engages with Hamel’s narrative of management innovation. In this chapter, I show how reading management innovation as a theological narrative can help us engage with the impossible idea that structures this discourse.

Chapter 6 pursues a similar line of inquiry in a case-study of a creative company. In this chapter, I show how a contradictory idea of creativity structures the case-company’s identity. Moreover, I show the paradoxes in the various practices that sustain the company’s identity of creativity. Finally, I argue that the identified paradoxes subvert control by means of identity regulation.
Chapter 7 situates the thesis within Critical Management Studies (CMS) and discusses how the findings of this thesis opens up for a different understanding of post-bureaucratic principles of organization. While many critical scholars of management and organization have drawn attention to managerial colonization of subjectivity, I point out how the fundamental gap in post-bureaucratic discourses prevents colonization from being completely successful.

Chapter 1: Towards Post-bureaucratic Organizations

Today, bureaucracy and other organizations exhibiting high degrees of formality are the target of relentless criticism in organization and management studies, broadly defined. There are many storytellers disseminating different stories about the inevitable decline of formal organizations. Although the specifics of these stories vary, they nonetheless seem to work together to constitute a post-bureaucratic discursive formation wherein the demand for innovation enjoys an axiomatic position. According to an intellectually diverse choir of bureaucracy’s opponents, including Peters (1992) and Shirky (2008), formal principles of organization are not only incompatible with the present economy of chaos, but indeed the source from which organizational ineptitude emerges. Some of these intellectuals even portray bureaucracy as the cause of moral degeneration on a societal scale (see McIntyre 1981; Bauman, 1989). The project of reinventing management tends to involve dismantling formal hierarchies and encouraging managers and employees to adopt entrepreneurial, expressive and creative ways of behaving.

The prophets of post-bureaucratic discourses are concerned with finding the holy grail of innovation, that is, they are concerned with finding principles of organization that can accommodate the disruptive nature of contemporary capitalism. However, their goal of defining organizational principles that can operate in the void of organizational principles, so to speak, is in some ways paradoxical. But before we delve into this argument, let us first look at the difference between bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organizations. The following chapter aims first of all to introduce the distinction between bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic principles of organization. I thereafter survey some of the critical management literature on post-bureaucracy which, as I intend to show, focuses on the effects of post-bureaucratic management
discourses and thereby tends to overlook the gaps in the normative idea of
innovation which structures these discourses.

**Bureaucratic Organizations**

Many scholars of organization and management assume that contemporary
organizations reflect fundamental societal changes. Deleuze (1992) describes this
profound societal transformation as the burgeoning era of societies of control.
Late modernity, he argues in his seminal essay, is a transitory period during
which new social structures displace the social structures of industrial society.
Dispersed, ambiguous and provisional organizations replace stable organizations
such as factories, and these new organizations harbour elusive and intimate
forms of control. Having surveyed various strands of contemporary organization
literature, Deleuze’s diagnosis of late capitalism appears to be more relevant than
ever. Even management gurus such as Hamel (2007) and Peters (1994) agree
with the main tenets of this diagnosis.

Deleuze’s distinction between disciplinary and post-disciplinary societies,
which correlates with the distinction between bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic
organizations, has laid the conceptual groundwork for various tropes of critical
scholarly engagement with contemporary organizations. I will thus draw
extensively on Deleuze’s conceptual framework in the following presentation of
bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic principles of organization. Reed’s (2011: 233)
summarizes the key differences between bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic
principles of organization as follows:

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<th>Rational Bureaucratic Organization:</th>
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Many organizational scholars agree with management gurus that principles
of organization that draw on theories coined before the middle of the twentieth
century have outlived their utility in this day and age of escalating instability. The ideal project of disciplinary societies, being the cradle of industrial production and bureaucratic administration, was ‘to concentrate; to distribute in space; to order in time; to compose a productive force within the dimension of space-time whose effect will be greater than the sum of its component forces’ (1992: 5). Taylor’s scientific management, a management legacy which is often referenced in popular management literature (e.g. Hamel, 2006: 77), is an example of what we may call disciplinary organization. Taylor’s task idea, as he develops this idea in The Principles of Scientific Management, sums up one of the principles of disciplinary organization:

Perhaps the most prominent single element in modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man received in most cases complete written instructions describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used to doing the work. (1911/2003: 138, quoted in Johnsen, 2014: 6)

The conveyor-belt, as Chaplin humorously depicts it in his film Modern Times (1936), is an emblematic example of how modern organizations integrated the task idea into a technology of production. Moreover, the conveyor-belt is one of the technologies which critics of modernity commonly associate with scientific management (Bauman, 1989; Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002). One may get the impression from Taylor’s description of the task-idea, and from Chaplin’s parody of factory-work, that the crass regime of scientific management does not afford employees the freedom to exercise any discretion whatsoever; employees are merely the cogs in the infamous monolithic machine of industrial production. Although there are obvious differences between office-work and factory-work, opponents of bureaucracy tend to correlate bureaucratic offices with assembly lines (Hamel, 2006: 80). Hamel, for instance, claims that bureaucracy reduces employees to semi-programmable robots. While Hamel draws attention to the fact that bureaucracy deters innovation, Bauman claims that bureaucracy, due to its extensive hierarchical and functional division of labour, morally incapacitates employees (1989: 99).

Having briefly explored Deleuze analysis of disciplinary society, we can now briefly summarize bureaucratic principles of organization. RBO consists of ‘reasonably well-integrated configuration of structural elements focused around specialization, standardization, and formalization of all work tasks and the behavioural routines required to carry them out’ (Reed 2011: 233). Bureaucratic
principles of organization include a formal division of jurisdicctional areas and a strict procedural management of office routines. Bureaucrats must undergo lengthy training, usually certified by public examination, in order to hold office. A functional and hierarchical division of labour formally designates and delimits individual employees' responsibilities, that is, formal rules and procedures align individual efforts towards a common goal.

According to Deleuze, discipline stratifies social practices, that is, institutions contain social practices, and rules govern the conduct of individuals within these institutions. The student, for instance, is confined to the school until he eventually ceases to be a student. Upon his final examination, he may move on to the barracks, the factory or the office - possibly the hospital or the prison. The logic that orders the conduct of individuals within a given institution is limited to that particular institution's physical boundaries. When the employee is at the office or the factory, he subordinates himself to the rules which govern the office or the factory (Deleuze, 1992: 3). The office or the factory, for example, disciplines employees to adopt certain ways of behaving. In a commonly cited passage from his autobiography, Ford (2007: 65 - 66) gives an example of what he views as the proper conduct of employees when they are at work:

When we are at work we ought to be at work. When we are at play we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two. The sole object ought to be to get the work done and to get paid for it. When the work is done, then play can come, but not before.

Ford deems certain aspects of employees’ lifeworlds and expressive sensibilities to be irrelevant to and perhaps even inappropriate in at the workplace. Conversely, the social contract that he advocates implies that the employer may not infringe on employees’ personal lives. Additionally, the disciplinary organization grants employees freedom in the form of a private sphere distinctly demarcated from work (Maravelias, 2007: 563). Following a similar line of reasoning, Weber argues that the ideal bureaucrat should exclude various extra-official patronages and personal enthusiasms from his professional judgement:

An official who receives an order which, in his view, is wrong can - and should - raise objections. If his superior then insists on the instruction it is not merely the duty of the official it is also a point of honour for him to carry out that instruction as if it corresponded to his own innermost conviction, thereby demonstrating that his sense of duty to his office overrides his individual wilfulness... (Weber, 1994: 160 -1, quoted in du Gay, 2000: 10)
The ethos of impersonality, which Weber praises as one of Bureaucracy’s significant accomplishments in the struggle against corruption, is the main target of various tropes of bureaucracy-criticism. Whyte (1956: 1), for example, critically remarks that the ideal bureaucratic employee ‘had left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organizational life.’ Exponents of similar criticisms come from a wide array of intellectual disciplines, ranging from management to theology (see Bauman, 1989: 90; McIntyre, 1981: 86). Kanter, for example, writes:

In the traditional bureaucratic corporation, roles were so circumscribed that most relationships tended to be rather formal and impersonal. Narrowly defined jobs constricted by rules and procedures also tended to stifle initiative and creativity, and the atmosphere was emotionally repressive. (1990: 280)

While these criticisms point out the consequences of Taylor’s management principles for individual employees’ work-lives, early critics also address the deleterious effects Taylor’s management principles have on creativity. Randall, for example, wrote in Harvard Business Review that ‘the movement [of scientific management] conflicts in many ways with business practices which are likely to stimulate creative thinking’ (1955: 128) As we shall see in the next subsection, proponents of post-bureaucratic principles of organization similarly claim that bureaucracy is both the cause of moral generation and a deterrent of innovation; the former argument implies that innovation is directly correlated with passion. As Hamel (2006: 80) notes:

The problem is, there’s little room in bureaucratic organizations for passion, ingenuity, and self-direction. The machinery of bureaucracy was invented in an age when human beings were seen as little more than semi-programmable robots. Bureaucracy puts an upper limit on what individuals are allowed to bring to their jobs. If you want to build an organization that unshackles the human spirit, you’re going to need some decidedly unbureaucratic management principles.

Now that we have been introduced to bureaucratic principles of organization, we may proceed to examining post-bureaucratic principles of organization in greater detail. However, there are several post-bureaucratic discourses. Acknowledging the scale of this field, I have narrowed down my
selection of literature to texts focusing on the relationship between innovation and informal principles of organization.

Post-bureaucratic Organizations

Formal principles of organization are direly ill-equipped to deal with today’s incessant bouts of disruption. Although management gurus propose different solutions for dealing with this hyper-competitive external environment - solutions that span from creating ‘bonkers’ organizations with ‘zanies in charge’ (Peters, 1994) to creating radically decentralized network organizations (Hamel, 2006) - the managerial toolboxes they proffer refer to a similar diagnosis of contemporary capitalism: The recent past provided us with rigid, disciplinary organizations calibrated for optimal efficiency, and these organizations were managed through hierarchical structures. Today, and in the not too distant future, the looming chaos of globalized capitalism will endanger bureaucratically organized businesses and public institutions alike. According to management gurus, contemporary managers need to discard formal structures and continuously reinvent their organizational arrangements in order to keep up.

Deleuze, following a remarkably similar line of reasoning, contends that the spaces of enclosure that characterized societies of discipline are in a generalized crisis. It is ‘only a matter of administering their last rites and of keeping people employed until the installation of the new forces knocking at the door’ (Deleuze 1992: 4). Neither physical assets such as factories, nor national boarders delimit contemporary corporations. As Deleuze (ibid) vividly remarks: ‘the corporation is a spirit, a gas.’ In the era of post-disciplinary society, stable organizations, which may be described as ‘distinct castings,’ will lose ground to forms of organization that are in permanent flux ‘like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point’ (1992: 4).

Deleuze’s analysis is mainly concerned with the power relations which post-disciplinary societal structures engender. He therefore draws attention to a burgeoning post-disciplinary regime of power that evades forms of resistance developed in disciplinary societies, noting:

There is no need to ask which is the toughest of most tolerable regime, for it’s within each of them that liberating and enslaving forces confront one another. For example in the crisis of the hospital as environment of enclosure, neighbourhood clinics, hospices, and daycare could at first express new freedom, but they could participate
as well in mechanisms of control that are equal to the harshest of confinements. There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons. (1992: 4)

Meanwhile, scholars of management and organization, as well as management gurus, primarily address the business prospects of this new order of continuous disruption. McGrath, for example, states that the ‘era of sustainable competitive advantage is over’ (2013: 17). Companies can no longer rest on the laurels of past break-through innovations. Opportunities to attain new competitive advantages come and go in temporary waves, and the competitive advantages achieved through previous innovations dissipate at an increasing pace. Companies that cope best with constantly changing competitive circumstances integrate adaptability into the organizational modus operandi (Ibid). Indeed, companies must be able to reconfigure assets, people and capabilities on an ongoing basis in order to remain competitive (see also Kotha & Rindova, 2001: 1263). This process entails companies continuously reallocating resources from stagnating segments to new, promising segments. Corporate offerings, strategic emphasis and overall objectives are continuously reevaluated and subject to change as new opportunities arise (McGrath, 2013: 17).

Change is the name of the game, and contemporary management thinkers therefore present formal structures as deterrents of transition capability. As Hamel, striking a somewhat similar note, praises the company W.L. Gore and Associates for implementing informal principles of organization:

I first visited Gore when doing research for The Future of Management. My friends at Fast Company Magazine had labeled Gore “the world’s most innovative company,” so I was eager to learn more. That first visit was weird, even disconcerting. I found virtually nothing at Gore that matched up with the management practices I had observed in hundreds of other companies. There were no titles, no bosses, and no formal hierarchy. (2012: 193)

Formal principles of organization are the enemy of innovation. Bonuses, prospects of getting promoted, and formal rules efficiently align employees in bureaucratic organizations. However, formality prevents companies from transitioning from advantage to advantage (McGrath, 2013). The managerial challenge is then to align employees’ discretionary behaviours (Boswell, et al. 2006: 505). As we have just seen, proponents of post-bureaucratic principles of organization unanimously contend that formal structures are too cumbersome to deal with the many challenges posed by hyper-competitive environments in
which contemporary businesses conduct themselves. Yet, companies nonetheless need to effectively coordinate employees' concerted efforts. Creating a ‘common identity, culture and commitment to leadership’ (McGrath, 2013: 18) is therefore suggested as a means to attaining organizational coherence in the absence of formal structures. Where formal structures and rules govern with force, crafting an enticing corporate culture persuades. As Boswell et al. similarly note:

In contrast to a single focus on tangible rewards, employees may find the inherent meaningfulness in their jobs an incentive for forwarding the firm’s strategic ideals [...] Employee dedication to the organization and the inherent value in the job may be based on fealty to, or identification with, some intrinsically rewarding aspect of what the organisation represents. (2006: 506)

Thus, we see the contours of technologies of alignment that have to do with ‘regulating the insides of employees’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 622). In post-bureaucratic management discourse, as I have presented in this thesis, not only are employees’ professional competencies of managerial importance (or concern), but also the passion and enthusiasm, or lack thereof, displayed by said employees. Some proponents of post-bureaucratic principles of organization emphasize the performative importance of cultivating playful and expressive dispositions (Peters, 1994; Moss Kanter; 1983). As Richard Burke also notes in an evangelical manner: ‘My formula for utopia is simple: it is a community in which everyone plays at work and works at play’ (1971: 47, quoted in Soerensen & Spoelstra, 2012). The willingness and ability to learn and change, as Deleuze (1992: 5) also observes, is an important individual disposition in post-disciplinary society: ‘In disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in societies of control one is never finished with anything [...]’. Making more or less the same point, a CEO, who McGrath interviewed for her research on continuous organizational reconfiguration, succinctly states that he screened prospective employees for their willingness to learn:

Former Infosys CEO Kris Gopalakrishnan explained that the company places a heavy emphasis on training. When I asked him how the company moves people from advantage to advantage, he said, “We hire for learnability – we deliberately select people for their capacity to learn new things.” (McGrath, 2013: 18)
Thus far, we have seen that informal principles of organization, which today’s ‘Schumpeterian world’ calls for (Teece et al., 1997: 509), are articulated in contrast to bureaucratic principles of organization. Shirky (2008) formulates a radical version of this idea by proposing organizing without organizations as a solution to the challenges posed in the hyper-competitive future of capitalism. Globalization has rendered formal principles of organization obsolete, and contemporary organizations and employees therefore have to be transition-capable. We have also encountered the assumption that employees need to invest in their organizations more so than their professional competencies, and this assumption is predicated on the idea that employees’ enthusiasm make organizations innovative. We have also seen that various critics of formal organization have suggested that companies should coordinate employees’ efforts by means of culture rather than formal procedures. Thus, companies should deliberately try to shape employees’ attitudes and allegiance to the organization.

Now that we have explored post-bureaucratic principles of organization, we arrive at the criticism of these principles of organization.

**Post-bureaucracy and its Discontents**

In her canonical work *The Human Condition*, Arendt categorizes labour, work and politics (vita activa) as separate spheres of human endeavour (1998: 12). Arendt argues that labour strictly concerns subsistence, while politics and contemplation concern man’s self-fulfilling impulses. However, Arendt’s categories are difficult to distinguish from one another in the era of post-bureaucratic organization. Various aspects of employees’ subjectivity such as passion and charisma, subjective dispositions which Ford (2007) may have considered irrelevant to work, are increasingly incorporated into labor (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 622). Furthermore, as a consequence of what is commonly referred to as ‘the reflexive modernization thesis’ (Kuhn, 2006), the individual employee has taken over the responsibility for finding an appropriate balance between work and life (see also Sennet, 1998; Lazzarato, 2004; Pedersen 2008). Reacting to the transition from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic principles of organization, critical scholars reverse the criticism levelled at bureaucratic management by the likes of Bauman and McIntyre. Rather than problematizing the alienating effects of bureaucracy, critical management scholars regard the pervasive personalization of employees’ commitment to the organization as the malaise of contemporary organization.

It is worth noting that critical management studies (CMS) make up a comprehensive and diverse field. Since critical scholars draw on many different theories, it is difficult to delineate the exact boundaries of CMS. However, there
are recurring themes, sources of theoretical inspiration, and normative positions within this field. Adler et al. (2008: 119), for example, contend that many critical studies pivot on a 'deep scepticism regarding the moral defensibility and the social and ecological sustainability of prevailing conceptions and forms of management and organization.' Moreover, various critical management scholars have taken an interest in examining how the transition from formal to informal forms of organization has enabled menacing techniques of organizational control. Scholars pursuing this line of inquiry often draw on concepts from critical theory (the Frankurt School) and postmodernism - the latter typically emphasizing the socially constructed nature of subjectivity (Alvesson & Deetz, 2002: 255).

According to Ekman (2014), there are two substantial currents within critical management studies (CMS). One of these currents consists of studies that demonstrate how organizations enact discipline and normative control by means of soliciting employees' identification with company values. Costea et al., for example, go as far as comparing post-bureaucratic management techniques with therapy. As they note:

On the one hand, the organization translates its need into performance targets, and, on the other, the subject has the opportunity to express its own needs and make the organization responsible for fulfilling them. This is a new mechanism of governance which makes the employee the focus of a quasi-therapeutic encounter. (2008: 668)

In a case-study, Casey shows that the rhetoric of the corporate family covers up a severe disciplinary apparatus of control (1997: 163). Moreover, she contends that these familiar management practices produced deleterious psychic effects in many of the organization’s employees (Ibid: 170). Taking the contemporary jargon of authenticity and anti-conformism into consideration, however, one may wonder how normative control functions as an effective technique of managerial control. This question brings us to the second strand of CMS.

The other current of CMS, characterized by Ekman (2014), shows how organizations exercise neo-normative control, thereby showing how organizations mobilize employees’ authenticity. As Fleming and Sturdy (2007: 3) argue: ‘In short, employees are encouraged and even legislated to be themselves rather than normatively conform to an externally engineered, homogeneous and organizationally based identity.’ Employees do not even need to consciously identify with company values in order to do the company’s bidding. Following a similar path of inquiry, Flemming and Spicer (2003: 163) observe that even ‘though we may negatively distance ourselves from the dictates of enterprise
culture the discourse is reproduced nevertheless.’ In other words, employees may possess all the relevant knowledge to critically assess their objective interests and recognize how organizations deliberately mould their hopes, fears and aspirations, but they nonetheless act in the company’s interest (Ibid: 163). Thus, there is an overarching trend within both of the above-mentioned tropes of CMS to expose how post-bureaucratic management techniques pave the way for subtle yet severe forms of domination and exploitation (Adler et al., 2008; Wilmott, 1993; Alvesson, & Willmott, 2002; Deetz, 2003; Flemming and Spicer, 2003; Flemming and Sturdy, 2007; Flemming and Sturdy, 2011).

Departing from studies that expose organizations as oppressors, some studies draw attention to how post-bureaucratic organizational arrangements cast employees into a ‘constant state of social limbo’ (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2012: 321) thus creating a zone of in-distinction between work and life (see also Garsten, 1999). In a similar vein, Pedersen (2008) delineates the relationship between the self-managing employee and occupational stress. He contends that stress may be regarded as ‘both a product and a component part of the very production of the self-managing employee’ (171, original emphasis).

Muhr & Kirkegaard (2013) show empirically how a need for recognition at work forms consultants’ desires, and that their fantasies about off-work activities help them cope with extreme work-hours. What the surveyed studies have in common, despite varying foci, is a general tendency to address the effects which various post-bureaucratic discourses have on employees’ self-relations. The normative idea of innovation which sustains the consistency of various post-bureaucratic discourses, and which contain prescriptions regarding how employees should conduct themselves at the workplace, have received less attention. By examining the gaps in the normative idea of innovation, we may recognize that processes of identification and colonization cannot be completely successful. Having explored some of the critical research that focusses on themes of domination and exploitation, we now proceed to surveying studies that focus on the concepts that sustain post-bureaucratic discourses.

**Post-bureaucratic Concepts**

According to Marx, a key feature of capitalism is the emergence of a market where agents determine the exchange-value of a commodity irrespective of its use-value, the latter concept denoting a given commodity’s ability to satisfy human needs (1867/ 1973: 49- 55). Marx basically asks: how do markets ascribe commodities exchange-values which corresponding use-values do not justify? Marx’s analysis endeavours to expose the fetishist inversion inherent in the commodity form. Thus, he shows how ideology assigns commodities various
properties. Scholars of organization may be inclined to follow a similar path of inquiry and ask how relatively quotidian management concepts command fealty that their use-values, so to speak, do not justify.

The present master’s thesis strives to look beyond processes of colonisation and coercion, as these processes have been explored in CMS. Instead, my aim is to draw attention to the (sublime) normative idea of innovation which structures post-bureaucratic discourses. In this pursuit, I draw on Cederströms and Spicer’s insight that (management) discourses are ‘structured around fundamental gaps’ (2013: 178). Building on a similar insight, Jones’s and Spicer’s (2005) examination of entrepreneurship research draws attention to the gap which this discursive field is structured around, namely the lack of a positive definition of the entrepreneur. They therefore compare the object of defining the ever-elusive entrepreneur with hunting the Heffalump:

The search for the source of dynamic entrepreneurial performance has much in common with hunting the Heffalump. The Heffalump is a rather large and very important animal. He has been hunted by many individuals using various ingenious trapping devices, but no one so far has succeeded in capturing him. All who claim to have caught sight of him report that he is enormous, but they disagree on his particularities. Not having explored his current habitat with sufficient care, some hunters have used as bait their own favorite dishes and have tried to persuade people that what they caught was a Heffalump. However very few are convinced, and the search goes on. (Kilby, 1971: 1, quoted in Jones & Spicer, 2005: 234)

Since researches keep failing to define the entrepreneur, Jones and Spicer argue that entrepreneurship discourse is a ‘paradoxical, incomplete and worm-ridden symbolic structure that posits an impossible and indeed incomprehensible object at its centre’ (2005: 236). Analogous to how Jones and Spicer identified a fundamental gap entrepreneurship discourse, Johnsen (2014) identifies the impossible-Real object of Hamel’s management innovation. Although Johnsen draws on a different theoretical source of inspiration than Jones and Spicer, he similarly shows that there is ‘a fundamental ambiguity inherent in the concept of Hamel’s management innovation’ (Ibid: 9). Expanding on the insights Johnsen develops in his article Deconstructing the future of management: Pharmakon Gary Hamel and the Impossibility of Innovation (2015), I engage with the contradictory idea of management innovation, and I arrive at many of the same insights. Departing from Johnsen’s article, however, I complement my analysis of popular management literature with a case-study which also addresses the
normative idea of innovation. I will discuss the implications of this approach to discourses on innovation in the method-section. But how may we go about studying an idea? Having outlined the field of inquiry in greater detail, I now proceed to discussing the philosophical presuppositions the present investigation builds on.

**Chapter 2: Philosophy in Organization Studies**

A cursory reading of Hamel’s many books and articles reveals that theological themes are neatly packaged in the seemingly coherent narrative of management innovation. Similar narrative structures are also evident in practical discourses on entrepreneurship and innovation (see Sørensen, 2008; Danish Ministry of Culture, 2000). Thus, a theory of narratives is an appropriate analytical point of departure for the present philosophical investigation. Interestingly, Hamel states that innovation requires the invention of ‘the architecture and ideology of modern management’ (2014, original emphasis). But what does Hamel mean by ideology? To answer this question, I draw on a theory of ideology in examining the normative idea of management innovation. However, the following questions need to be answered before we proceed to the analysis: 1) how can we combine a method for literary analysis of narratives with a method for analysing ideologies? And what philosophy of concepts does the development of such a critical strategy presuppose?

In the following chapter, I reflect on what Zizek’s combination of psychoanalysis and ideology-critique says about his concept of concepts. Furthermore, I will briefly comment on how Deleuze’s and Guattari’s philosophy of concepts guides my attempt to combine Zizek’s psychoanalytic theory of ideology with Greimas’ theory of narratives. In the last two subsections of this chapter, I will discuss how philosophy can be both an under-labourer of science and a productive contribution to science in its own right. Using Serres concept of the parasite, I argue that organizational philosophy inhabits a space in-between organizational science and its philosophy, and it thereby engages in parasitic exchanges with both fields.

**Reconfiguring Psychoanalytical Concepts**

In his immensely influential book The Sublime Object of Ideology (1989), Zizek draws on Lacan’s concept of the unconscious in addition to Marx’s concept of ideology in order to develop a psychoanalytic theory of ideology. Let us
now turn to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s concept of concepts to elucidate Zizek’s use of Marx and Lacan. Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 15) assert that there ‘are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them... There is no concept with only one component.’ Concepts and their components are connected to problems or ‘junctions of problems’ (ibid: 18) which prompt the philosopher to (re)combine components and concepts into new assemblages of concepts. These conceptual assemblages enable an exploration of the problem at hand. Thus, the problem justifies the creation of concepts, and the efficacy of a given concept may be evaluated in relation to the problem it addresses. As Deleuze’ and Guattari (1994: 27) remark: ‘Cartesian concepts [for example] can only be assessed as a function of their problems and their plane.’

Zizek develops a psychoanalytic theory of ideology in order to explore a series of interconnected problems that revolve around a central question. In short, the question guiding Zizek’s philosophical investigation may be stated as follows: how do ideologies work? Marx conceptualizes ideology as ‘false consciousness,’ yet today’s enlightened masses simultaneously criticize and do the biddings of various ideologies. Thus, Marx’s concept of ideology proves less useful when confronting the paradox of ‘enlightened false consciousness.’ By conceptualizing ideologies as an unconscious doing rather than an inadequate knowing, Zizek is able to explore the efficacy of ideologies in our ‘post-ideological’ era. Similar to how Zizek combines Marx and Lacan, I intend to combine Zizek’s psychoanalysis with Gremeis’ structural actant model (1983) so as to develop a psychoanalytic theory of narratives. The question or problem, which I develop my critical strategy in order to explore, may be stated accordingly: how does the normative idea of innovation work?

Now that I have briefly introduced Deleuze’s and Guattari’s philosophy of concepts, and used this philosophy to make sense of Zizek’s approach to analyzing ideologies, we may understand concepts as dynamic entities that address problems. Moreover, we now have a general idea of how I intend to merge two sets of concepts in order to develop a critical strategy that I use to address the problem I posed. We will now proceed to discussing the role of philosophy in organization studies at a general level.

'Para-sense' and Common Sense

There is a consensus in postmodern factions of critical management studies that philosophy’s contribution to organizational science is the ‘autonomous

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1 In his bestselling book *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1989), Sloterdijk rearticulates Marx’s definition of ideology. Marx famously states: ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it.’ Sloterdijk points out that cynical postmodern subjects ‘know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it’ (1989: 19)
creation of paradoxical sense’ (Spoelstra, 2012: 20). Spoelstra, for example, contrasts philosophy as the creation of para-sense with ‘the under-labourer conception of philosophy’, and he maintains that the former route of philosophical investigation ‘opposes common sense,’ while the latter ‘effaces the contradictions in common sense’ (ibid). As we shall see with the help of Serres (1982), this binary logical opposition is problematic. I will develop my argument through a very brief examination of Spoelstra’s analysis of the Rwandan genocide. To begin with, I will enlist the help of Deleuze and Guattari to briefly discuss the role of philosophy in organization studies.

The problem at hand justifies the need for new concepts. Conceptual novelty is not an end in itself. Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 27) note that concepts ‘can only be replaced by other concepts if there are new problems...’. They do not mean that problems are ‘natural’ entities. Problems, just like concepts, are constructed (ibid), and the efficacy of a given concept depends on how its problem is posed/constructed. Philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn famously argues in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962) scientists conduct investigations within the boundaries of a given paradigm (set of concepts and methods) until they are confronted with results that challenge that particular paradigm’s presuppositions. Transitioning to a new paradigm is justified by a need for concepts and methods that can make sense of diverging results and observations. That is to say, creating new paradigms is not an end in itself. Scientific paradigms (and the concepts and methods which constitute paradigms) depend on the problems at hand (and how these problems are posed). It is necessary to inaugurate a new paradigm (introduce new concepts) if the existing paradigm (existing concepts) fall short of explaining, exploring or posing problems.

One may be inclined to ask if the Rwandan genocide warrants the creation of new concepts. I would argue that existing concepts and modes of inquiry suffice. In short, Spoelstra states that commonsensical interpretations of the Rwandan genocide draw attention to the irrational and savage aspects of mass killings (2007: 33). A para-sensical interpretation of the event, on the other hand, may allow us to explore the sophisticated means of organization required to carry out genocides (Ibid: 35). Bauman similarly argues in Modernity and the Holocaust (1989) that mass annihilation presupposes sophisticated means of organization and that ‘we can no longer assume that we have full grasp of the workings of our social institutions, bureaucratic structures, or technology’ (ibid: 83). Similar motifs have been explored extensively within critical tropes of philosophy and social studies (see also Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002). As we have just seen, Spoelstra’s analysis of the Rwandan genocide yields an insight similar to Bauman’s.
Thus, the philosopher does not necessarily need to subvert the common sense of organization studies in order to conduct a productively critical analysis of genocides. We shall now proceed to examining the clearcut distinction between two philosophical positions, which Spoelstra argues are inside and outside organization studies, by briefly examining Johnsen’s (2015) use of Derrida’s deconstruction.

Inside/Outside Organization Studies

Spoelstra argues that philosophy’s contribution to organizational science is the creation of para-sensical concepts that subvert common sense. Moreover, he argues that philosophers, by creating new concepts, operate as a ‘positive force within organization studies’ (ibid: 16, original italics). The under-labourer, on the other hand, positions himself outside of organization studies. In outlining the creative potential of philosophy, Spoelstra nevertheless maintains that philosophical concepts ‘do not need to be ‘translated’ into the concepts of social science’ (Ibid: 29). According to Spoelstra, the philosopher does not need to adapt or combine philosophical concepts in order to address or pose problems pertaining to organization studies. In the following discussion of these philosophical positions, I will argue that philosophy can both act as an under-labourer and an autonomous creator of paradoxical sense in the same analysis.

I will venture the argument that philosophers such as Deleuze, Zizek and Agamben, to name a few, would not consider themselves scholars of organization. Zizek, for example, develops a psychoanalytic concept of ideology from a position presumably exterior to organization studies. He does not develop his critical strategy to explicitly address or problematize phenomena such as total quality management or management innovation. The same holds true for Derrida’s concept of deconstruction, which Johnsen (2015) transposes to a deconstructive reading of Gary Hamel’s management innovation. Johnsen (ibid: 4), referencing Derrida (1981: 6), maintains that his own critical procedure involves operating ‘within the immanence of the system to be destroyed.’

First of all, it is worth noting that Derrida himself does not address the logical inconsistencies of management innovation, but the aporia at the heart of Plato’s criticism of written language (1981). Conversely, Derrida develops his critical strategy irrespective of the problems or research interests of organization studies. Second, Derrida ‘induces’ deconstruction from his reading of Plato by developing his idea of deconstruction from within Plato’s own text. Yet, contemporary philosophers, by regarding deconstruction as a ‘praxis of reading’ (see Critchley 2005: 554), have productively mobilized Derrida’s concept in the reading of organizational texts (see e.g. Boje, 1995; Cooper and Burrell,
1988; Feldman, 1998). However, they inadvertently treat deconstruction as a ready-made concept. By remaining faithful to the grand theory of deconstruction, Johnsen enacts Derrida’s reading of Plato in his own critical reading of Hamel’s management innovation without adapting the Derridean toolbox from within ‘the system to be destroyed.’ Johnsen seeks to explore the internal logic (2014: 2; Derrida, 1989: 99) of management innovation, but he does so from an exterior position. Yet, this approach yields insights that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. Johnsen thereby takes the position of both the under-labourer of organizational science and the autonomous creator of para-sense.

Locke (1995: xlii - xliii) states that the philosopher can be content with ‘removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge.’ On the one hand, Johnsen, shows us that Hamel’s narrative of management innovation is logically inconsistent. Informed by Johnsen’s analysis, scholars of organization may attempt to develop a better concept of management innovation, or recognize that such a pursuit is futile. Taking the stance of the autonomous creator of concepts, on the other hand, Johnsen argues that Derrida helps us ‘open up a [hitherto closed] space of reflection wherein we realize the contingencies of conceptual structures’ (Johnsen, 2015: 4). By mobilizing Derrida’s concept in an analysis of the internal logic of management innovation, Johnsen exposes aspects of ‘the system to be destroyed’ which would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

As we have seen, philosophy contributes knowledge from a position which is simultaneously external to and an internal part of organizational science. Organizational philosophy thus functions as a parasite (Serres, 1982: 230) between organizational science and its philosophical source of inspiration. Much as the microscopic organism thrives by feeding on its human host and the human benefits by allowing the parasite to digest its food, so do the fields of philosophy and organizational science engage in parasitic exchanges for mutually advantageous benefit. By applying Zizek and Greimas to a study of management innovation, philosophy informs organizational science. This in turn sheds new light on the relationship between philosophical and, in this particular example, literary concepts. Now that we have clarified the present thesis’s philosophical presuppositions, we may proceed to an introduction of Zizek’s and Greimas’s concepts.

Chapter 3: Studying Organizations Psychoanalytically

Zizek’s general methodological procedure entails analyzing both intra-subjective dynamics (the functioning of the individual mind) and inter-subjective
ones (the functioning of groups) with the same set of concepts. Drawing on Lacan’s notion of extimacy, Zizek assumes that a foreign thing inhabits the innermost intimate part of the individual’s psychic being, namely his desire. Thus, the relationship between individual and collective levels of existence shade into each other. Following Zizek’s method of inquiry, I similarly assume psychoanalytic concepts can inform an analysis of collective structures such as narratives. In the following chapter, I introduce Zizek’s theoretical framework, and I focus on Zizek’s concept of the subject, the big Other and objects of desire. I thereafter introduce Gremeis’s structural actant model and discuss how combining these two sets of concepts can inform an analysis of the normative idea of innovation.

The Alienated Subject

Marx’s concept of alienation, as it is most commonly used in organization studies, refers to ‘the estrangement of man from man’ (1952: 32, original italics). Critical scholars, that endeavour to show how organizations alienate workers, presuppose that the individual worker has an authentic core which labor processes separate him from. According to both Bauman (1989) and McIntyre (1981: 74), bureaucracy estranges the employee from his authentic core and thus distorts his moral intuition. This Marxist motif has also been explored extensively in traditional humanist tropes of organization studies (see Hochschild, 1983; Sloan, 2007; Tonks & Nelson, 2008). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), for example, suggest that service workers lose touch with their authentic selves (their true feelings) because the organization coerces them to express specific emotions at work. What Zizek adds to Marx’s thesis of alienation, however, is that the subject is constitutively alienated; the subject is born into alienation. To illustrate this point, I will present a reading of Adam’s fall from grace inspired by Zizek’s (and Lacan’s) concept of subjectivity. In this reading of Adam’s fall, alienation is analogous to Adam’s loss of enjoyment.

In the biblical account of creation, Adam lived in paradise until he defied God’s prohibition against eating an apple from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. At a glance, the order of events which led to Adam’s expulsion from Eden may read as follows: first there was Adam’s desire for the apple, then there was God’s prohibition against eating it, Adam transgressed God’s prohibition and was therefore expelled from Eden. It appears that Adam loses enjoyment (full identity with himself) upon his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Adam was expelled from Eden for letting his desire outweigh God’s prohibition. The truth is, according to Zizek, desire, prohibition, transgression and the loss of enjoyment are simultaneous moments in the primordial event of becoming a subject:
When Adam chooses to fall in order to retain jouissance, what he loses thereby is precisely jouissance... Adam loses X by directly choosing it, aiming to retain it... That is to say: what, precisely, is symbolic castration? It is the prohibition of incest in the precise sense of the loss of something, which the subject never possessed in the first place (Zizek, 1997: 15).

Zizek’s point is that Adam’s desire for the apple did not exist prior to God’s prohibition against eating it. Desire is constituted through prohibition, and prohibition is conditioned by its transgression. The function of prohibition, Evans writes, is to maintain the neurotic illusion that enjoyment is possible (1996: 92). However, the subject, in trying to regain his (lost) enjoyment, is trying to do something which is impossible. When interviewed for a documentary, Woody Allen aptly describes the fundamental futility of pursuing ultimate enjoyment: ‘There was nothing in my life that I aspired toward that hasn’t come through for me. But despite all these lucky breaks, why do I still feel that I got screwed somehow?’ (Morais, 2011).

Zizek’s notion of the subject, which he borrows from Lacan, shows us that the symbolic order simultaneously constructs and alienates the subject. Foucault-inspired scholars of organization argue in a somewhat similar vein that the subject is constructed, and that identity construction is an increasingly intentional modality of organizational control; the organization (the symbolic order) exerts a significant influence on employees’ self-relation. As Alvesson & Wilmott (2002: 623) note:

As cultural mechanisms are introduced or refined in an effort to to gain or sustain employee commitment, involvement and loyalty in conditions of diminishing job security and employment durability, the management of identity work becomes more salient and critical to the employment relationship. In these circumstances, organizational identification - manifest in employee loyalty, for example - cannot be presumed or taken for granted but has to be actively engendered or manufactured. (Original italics)

Foucauldians contend that categories of person, such as the manager or employee, ‘must be approached as a series of historically specific assemblages without any underlying ‘essential or natural form’ (du Gay, 2000: 5). Foucault and Zizek agree that the subject does not posses an ‘essential’ core which an organization, for instance, can alienate. However, Zizek would add that the
subject is constitutively alienated. Meaning, the symbolic order *retroactively* produces the authentic core of subjectivity as that which was lost (see also Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010; Arnaud and Vanheule, 2005). Moreover, Foucault and Zizek differ in their view of the subject's relation to the symbolic / discursive order which ‘does’ the subjectivation. Now that we have explored Zizek’s and Lacan’s concept of the subject, I will introduce their concept of the Other.

**The Nonexistent Other**

So far, we have briefly touched on the socially constructed nature of the subject and his desire. The subject becomes conscious of his desire when he attains the symbolic (linguistic) means of articulating it, although these symbolic representations of desire (cars, shoes etcetera) do not correspond to some ‘pre-symbolic,’ authentic desire. In short, becoming a subject is both the precondition for desire and the impossibility of its fulfilment. However, we may further describe the primordial event of becoming a subject with an account of how subjectivity is constituted through the Other in various social (organizational) contexts. But the Other, contrary to what one might expect, *does not exist*. As Zizek (1989: 137) notes:

> Today, it is commonplace that the Lacanian subject is divided, crossed-out, identical to a lack in the signifying chain. However, the most radical dimension of Lacanian theory lies not in recognizing this fact but in realizing that the big Other, the symbolic order itself, is also barré, crossed out by a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible / traumatic kernal, around a central lack.

In *Ecrits* Lacan repeatedly states his famous slogan: man’s desire is the Other’s desire’ (see Lacan 2006: 222, 525 or 690). Lacan suggests that our desire is not formed by what we want; what the Other wants from us forms our desire. That is to say, we do not seek our own satisfaction per se, but we get satisfaction from receiving the Other’s recognition. Muhr and Kirkegaard (2012: 116) deploy the notion of desire as The Other’s desire in an effort to understand the force which sustains consultants’ propensity to work extreme hours:

> What drives the consultants is, therefore, not necessarily what they want themselves. Instead, they constantly find themselves asking the questions ‘what does the Other [the company] want from me? What does the Other want me to desire?’.
Muhr’s and Kirkegaard’s study allows us to see how consultants accommodate themselves to the Other’s desire, and it shows us how they produce fantasies of being more than their work-roles in order to cope with the fact that they spend most of their time at work. What Muhr’s and Kirkegaard’s application of Lacan’s concept misses by focussing on subjective processes of (dis)identification, however, is that the Other does not necessarily know what it wants from its subjects. The symbolic order, just like the subject, is alienated. As Jones and Spicer (2005: 233) note:

The search for the Other is bound to fail, just as an attempt to answer ‘who is God’ or ‘what is [innovation]’ ultimately proves futile. Each of these attempts to answer who or what the Big Other is ultimately finds itself wallowing in futile attempts to fill in an unsignifiable void with particulars.

But if the symbolic order does not exist, as Lacan claims it doesn’t, how do the actions of individual subjects nonetheless sustain the idea that it does? I will invoke the fictional story of John in order to explain this counterintuitive point: John lives in a relatively small town and keeps his money at the local bank. One day, a local teenager starts spreading the rumour that a sudden surge in demand for cash will deplete the bank’s reserves. John, just like his neighbours, knows that the teenager is just spreading rumours in an adolescent pursuit of fun, but he nonetheless wonders if the others know that the rumours are unsubstantiated. If the others (Other) believe this rumour to be true, the bank could very well run out of cash. To be on the safe side, John, just like his neighbours, withdraws all of his money. Although none of the townsmen believed that the bank would run out of cash, their collective belief (the Other’s belief) that a cash-shortage was imminent nonetheless produced the shortage, ultimately causing the bank to default. Thus, the Other’s virtual existence does not depend on the individual subject’s beliefs.

As we have seen, the Other does not exist, yet it still shapes subjective desires. Desire usually has an object (a car, promotion, a vacation), and the nonexistent Other designates which objects are worthy of desire. In the analysis, we will see how the Other (the company) interpellate employees to be expressive and creative. Yet, this notion of creativity is marked by a gap which subverts the consistency of the company’s identity. I will now proceed to discussing which role objects of desire play in relation to the subject.

\[^2\text{ Replaced virtue with innovation}\]
Concept-objects of Desire

The subject’s pursuit of enjoyment revolves around objects of desire. In the analysis, I argue that concepts can function as objects of desire. Contrary to what one might expect, the purpose of desire is not to attain its goal of enjoyment, but to reproduce itself as desire for more products or, in the context of contemporary organizations, more innovation: ‘[D]esire and jouissance are inherently antagonistic, exclusive even: desire’s raison d’etre... is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire’ (Zizek, 1997: 39). The symbolic order offers the subject various quotidian objects which he allegedly lacks in order to fill his ontological lack, and these objects are thus constituted as sublime (Zizek, 1989: 221):

The sublime object is ‘an object elevated to the level of das Ding. It is a structural place - the fact that it occupies the sacred / forbidden place of jouissance - and not its intrinsic qualities that confers on it its sublimity.

The sublime object attains its sublimity by virtue of its position in the symbolic order. We may thus say that various objects, people and concepts are socially constructed as sublime. Superstar rapper Kanye West’s fashion label, for example, does not command an exorbitant price for a shirt solely because that particular shirt is woven of a superior textile, the symbolic order also assigns it a certain sign-value (Baudrillard, 1970/1999). The many people camping for days in front of the shop are not waiting for the latest pair of Kanye West shoes solely because these shoes boast a superior use-value. Rather, the symbolic order confers sublime qualities onto them.

The sublime object, however, can never deliver on its promise of enjoyment. Indeed, the object, in whatever form it may take, is an ‘impossible-Real object of desire’ (Zizek, 1989: 221). The structural place of enjoyment, which various sublime objects fill out, is itself a void, a lack in the signifying chain (see also Bjerg and Presskorn-Thygesen, 2014). In the analysis, I will venture the argument that concepts such as innovation fill out the structural place of enjoyment in various management discourses and command a curious fealty (perhaps akin to the fealty which devoted consumers display in their relentless pursuit of Kanye West-shoes). In short, organizations and subjects of organizations confer sublimity onto popular management concepts. But by which means does the symbolic order constitute concepts as sublime? We may find an answer to this
question in the structure of fairytales. But first, let us take a look at the relationship between fantasy (fairy-tales) and social reality.

**The Fantasy and Reality of Innovation**

I will in the following subsection argue that inquiring into the structure of narratives can yield insights regarding how managerial discourses confer sublimity onto mundane concept-objects such as innovation. Fairytales make up our collective imagination by constituting a virtual cultural reservoir of heroes and monsters enacting epic battles between good and evil. But how do management concepts get caught up in such fairytales? Zizek's notion of ideological fantasy proves useful in conceptualizing the ambiguous relationship between fantasy and social reality.

Ogbor (2000: 605) suggests in his seminal article *Mythicizing and Reification in Entrepreneurial Discourse* that ideology is a method of deception. Ideologies, he argues, are 'discriminatory, gender-based, ethnocentrically determined' and therefore 'systematically reinforce the already legitimized knowledge and the prevailing social order (Ibid: 629). In contrast to Ogbor's concept of ideology, which draws on Marx's ideology-critique, Feyberband (1979) assumes that myth (ideology) and science (social reality) reside on the same epistemological level; myth is a mode of knowledge, and science is a method of mythology. Zizek (1989: 30) similarly assumes that ideological fantasies structure social reality:

> What they do not know is that their social reality itself, their activity, is guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion. What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity.

Building on Zizek's notion of ideological fantasy, the critical strategy deployed in the analysis of popular management literature does not amount to simply revealing that the concept of management innovation is just a mirage, nor does it engender the claim that social reality itself is merely a generalized illusion. Rather, I intend to show how a fairytale (ideological fantasy) stages innovation as a sublime concept. This entails looking for the elements of fantasy which structures the discourse on innovation. Inspired by Sorensen (2008: 88) I will show how Hamel's narrative of management innovation combines the Judaeo-Christian myth of creation with the myth of the Western individual who singlehandedly saves the day by means of innovation. We now continue with a discussion of Gremeis's theory of narratives.
Theological Narratives of Enjoyment

In the first half of the twentieth century, Vladimir Propp developed a ‘morphology of the folktale,’ and the basic components of Propp’s method of analyzing folktales is taken up in Greimes’ (1983) structural ‘actant model.’ Greimas identifies the structural roles often performed in storytelling; such as hero, villain (opponent of hero), object (of quest), helper (of hero) and sender (who initiates the quest). Hamel’s narrative of management innovation lives up to this model (I will develop this argument in the analysis). By conceptualizing the object of the quest as Lacan’s object of desire (objet petit a), we may combine a method of literary analysis with psychoanalysis and thereby craft an approach to engage with contemporary management handbooks as epic narratives. What psychoanalysis may add to the structural actant model, however, is that the object of the quest is the void of enjoyment (jouissance), the fundamental aporia at the heart of the narrative/discourse (see also Cederstöm and Spicer, 2013: 194).

Elaborating on the briefly outlined psychoanalytic theory of narratives, it is worth noting that narratives of enjoyment tend to be theological narratives. Political Philosopher Carl Schmitt famously stated that all ‘significant concepts of modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts’ (1922/1985: 36). An example of Schmitt’s basic argument is the concept of miracle: ‘the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology’ (ibid). Sørensen, Spoelstra, Höpfl and Critchley (2012) argue that Schmitt’s insight holds true for organizational concepts. In an effort to pay attention to the ‘theological niceties’ (Marx, 1867/1973: 85) of organizational life, we may view Hamel’s concept of radical innovation as analogous to the theological concept of miracle, as we shall see in the analysis (see Spoelstra, 2010 for a similar discussion of business miracles).

Common to most theological narratives is an eschatological idea of utopia / apocalypse marking the end of history. According to Gray (2003) both capitalist and communist ideologies have their origins in the secular religion of Saint Simon and Comte (see also Agamben, 2007). Hayek’s vision of a liberal utopia and Marx’s vision of a communist utopia, for example, appear to be predicated on the basic idea that ‘with the growth of scientific knowledge, man kind can rid itself of the immemorial evils of human life- war, tyranny and scarcity ‘ (Gray, 2003: 34). In the context of the present master’s thesis, we will see how Hamel ascribes the management innovator almost messianic powers, and he even combines the utopian visions of liberalism and communism in the grand vision of management innovation, but (ironically) as a utopia that must transcend itself.
Now that we have explored the theoretical concepts that guide the following analysis, I will discuss the discursive contexts wherein I deploy these concepts.

Chapter 4: Method

The purpose of the present master’s thesis is to examine the normative idea of innovation. I do so in the contexts of popular management discourse and practitioner discourse (a case-study). Although both analyses address the same object of inquiry, I conduct the analyses differently. In the first analysis, the analytical emphasis is on the narrative structure of Hamel’s management innovation. In the second analysis, the analytical emphasis is on how the normative idea of innovation structures a collective identity by means of stabilizing and de-stabilizing fantasies. Common to the two analyses, however, is that they focus on the contradictions at the heart of the normative idea of innovation.

How may these two analyses inform one another? The purpose of the case-study is neither to verify nor falsify Hamel’s management narrative. Rather, the goal is the ascertain the practical relevance of studying the normative idea of innovation. Johnsen (2015) deconstructs Hamel’s narrative of management innovation and shows that the normative idea of innovation builds on an aporia, and his analysis thereby has implications for theorizing innovation. I aim to expand on Johnsen’s analysis by also examining the aporia of innovation in a case-study. I will now reflect on the reasons for selecting the empirical material.

Popular Management Discourse

The first part of the analysis aims to confront the normative idea of innovation in the context of popular management literature. Since the 1980s, there has been a prevalent assumption that constant innovation is indispensable for companies competing in today’s almost excruciatingly competitive global economy (see e.g. Peters, 1988; Moss Kanter, 1983; Thrift, 2006; Ismail and Malone, 2014). In order to deal with the pressure to innovate, managers may find inspiration for managerial reform in management handbooks that propose relatively simple solutions to complex problems. Critical scholars have engaged with the managerial prescriptions propagated in popular management literature. Linstead (2002) points out that popular management handbooks tend to be ‘kitsch,’ while Jackson (2001) notes that these books are full of ‘catchphrases.’ It is nonetheless worth keeping in mind that popular management literature influences management practices.
In the analysis, I specifically focus on Hamel’s latest book What Matters Now (2012) and his bestseller from 2007 The Future of Management, which he co-wrote with Breen, since both books outline a generic process for reinventing management. I also draw on several of Hamel’s contributions to Harvard Business Review. I have chosen to direct my attention at Hamel’s account of management innovation due to the attention his ideas command in management and organization discourses.

Hamel regularly contributes articles to Harvard Business Review, and his bestselling books appeal to a large practitioner audience. Apart from authoring many bestselling management handbooks, Hamel also contributes to the academic literature on business and strategy, and he is a highly estimated business consultant. According to Huczynski (1993), Hamel may be regarded as both an ‘academic guru’ and a ‘consultant guru’ alongside prolific consultant-scholar gurus such as Harvard’s Michael Porter. A brief search-inquiry on Google Scholar reveals that other scholars have cited Hamel’s various books and articles in over 20,000 peer-reviewed articles. Moreover, Harvard Business Review ranked Hamel as the 15th most influential management guru in 2011, and Fortune Magazine has labelled him ‘the world’s leading expert on business strategy.’

Hamel cannot be held accountable for how other theorists’ conceptualize innovation, nor for the ways in which companies practice innovation, but I nonetheless maintain that an analysis of management innovation has implications for understanding the project of reinventing management on a general level. Adhering to the logic of induction, we may only regard Hamel’s management innovation as a particular instance of a wider post-bureaucratic discourse on innovation. However, I will venture the argument that Hamel’s concept is what Flyvbjerg (2011) terms a critical case. First, let us take a look at an example of a critical case:

An occupational medicine clinic wanted to investigate whether people working with organic solvents suffered brain-damage. Instead of choosing a representative sample among all those enterprises in the clinic’s area that used organic solvents, the clinic strategically located a single workplace where all safety regulations ... had been fulfilled. This model enterprise became a critical case: If brain damage related to organic solvents could be found at this particular facility, then it was likely that the same problem would exist at other enterprises ...

(2011: 307)
We may similarly infer from an analysis of management innovation that attempts made by other gurus to distill a general recipe for innovation may run into a conceptual contradiction. Hamel’s concept of management innovation aims to capture the process of transgressing conventional management procedures, and it aims to distill this process into a replicable procedure. Basically, Hamel wants to invent a procedure for transgressing procedures. Thus, the concept of management invention, as Johnsen notes, paradoxically ‘arrests, confines and standardizes the production of novelty’ (2015: 2). It is not unthinkable that other authors proffering a generic procedure for innovation, insofar they reduce the production of novelty to a structured sequential process, will run into a similar contradiction. Having briefly specified the books I analyse and discussed the relevance of studying Hamel’s management innovation, we now turn to the case-study.

**Practitioner Discourse**

The case-study is based on three qualitative interviews with three employees (from now on given the pseudonyms Jennifer, Lisa and Jack) working at the Swedish office of an international design-firm. The interviews, which are recorded and transcribed, were carried out over a period of 2 weeks, and each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. I selected the case-company (from now on given the pseudonym Digivation) because I identified an explicit emphasis on creativity and innovation in its various self-representations. Prior to conducting the interview, I surveyed several posts on Digivation’s public blog and several of its presentations on slideshare.net (an online forum for sharing knowledge). The surveyed slides and blogposts can be found in the appendix. This precursory document analysis provided a general idea of the company and introduced me to company slogans such as ‘Fampany’ (family company) and JFDI (Just Fucking Do It). Moreover, the document analysis revealed that a reform of management practices had recently taken place.

My selection of informants reflects an ambition to obtain a varied sample of accounts. I therefore interviewed employees representing differing ranks, tenure, and demographic features (such as gender, ethnicity, etcetera), and regional and occupational origin. Thus, the chosen informants were Jennifer (a user experience designer who has worked at the company almost two years), Lisa (a coach who has recently completed an internship lasting 6 months and has now embarked on a trainee-ship) and Jack (who started at the company almost 2 years ago as a visual designer, but is now transitioning into a coach and strategy role).
The object of this case-study is not to show that an intricate system of coercion hides underneath an alluring rhetoric of expressivity and inclusivity (see Casey, 1997; Flemming and Spicer, 2006): Rather, the goal is to address the normative idea of innovation and, by extension, creativity. Additionally, the goal is to examine the organizational implications of enacting an idea of creativity. The abstract object of inquiry, based on how one views the relationship between abstract and concrete, posed numerous challenges in designing the interview-guide. Parker (1997) points out that psychoanalysis has a tendency to construct its own ‘regime of truth.’ This criticism can be levelled at my philosophical investigation, given that I draw extensively on psychoanalysis. I nonetheless agree with Muhr and Kirkegaard (2012: 110) that a psychoanalytic approach can ‘bring valuable explanation to otherwise unexplainable contradictions.’ The challenge, then, was to design an interview guide that enabled an exploration of contradictions in the informants’ enactment of an idea of creativity, while steering clear of the pitfalls of suggestion.

I structured the interview-guide around the general themes of management, the transition from project managers to project coaches, and the concept of creativity. The interviews were designed to progress from the mundane to the conceptual aspects of the informants’ work-lives. I inquired into how the employees viewed and practiced creativity rather than innovation, since the employees seemed more inclined to use the former term when describing their work-habits. Moreover, they use the terms innovation and creativity interchangeably. At the beginning of the interview, I inquired into the interviewee’s work-role and asked them to briefly describe the company and how it is managed. In this part of the interview, I also asked the employees to elaborate on slogans such as JFDI. I then asked about the transition from project managers to coaches and inquired into the reasons for this transition. Finally, I approached the concept of creativity and asked the informants to describe circumstances which they found to be conducive to creativity, a question which generated accounts of particularly creative projects.

In analyzing the interviews, I draw on Zizek’s theory of ideology, and I therefore pay particular attention to unconscious processes of identification. Deploying what Hoedmakers calls a Lacanian approach, I look for ‘pronounced use of oppositional logic in self-narratives’ and ‘deliberate attempts to perform or fix a particular self-image’ (2010: 383). Combining a Lacanian approach with a psychoanalytic theory of narratives, I use the terms stabilizing fantasies (the heroic force of good) and de-stabilizing fantasies (the villain) to gain a deeper understanding of the oppositional logic expressed in the informants’ accounts. I do not claim that my chosen method of interpreting the interview-data allows me to enter the unconscious of the interviewees. However, I agree with Hoedmakers
that contradictory accounts reveal instances of the subjective unconscious. Furthermore, I suggest that contradictory accounts also expose instances of a collective unconscious. Muhr and Kirkegaard (2012) show that consultants produce fantasies to deal with the contradictory desire to be off-work and to perform at work. I reverse the perspective and instead look at the contradictions in the normative idea of creativity which is the focal point of identification.

The present case-study has its limitations. First of all, the sample-size was not large enough to make generalizations about the normative idea of innovation (see Flyvbjerg, 2011). Second, the case-study would have benefitted from several interviews with the same informants conducted over a longer period of time. Other researchers, using the ‘vignette method’ (see Essers, 2009; Costas and Flemming, 2009), chose to focus on the stories of a limited number of informants in the belief that both intersubjective (between individuals) and intra-subjective (between different events in the same person’s life) comparisons are needed to produce a rich empirical material. Although a richer empirical material would have benefitted the present philosophical investigation, the interview-data nonetheless provided useful insights about the normative idea of creativity. Now that we have explored my reflections on method, we arrive at the main section of the thesis.

Chapter 5: The Fantasy of Management Innovation

Recall the old story about a worker suspected of stealing: every evening, when he was leaving the factory, the wheelbarrow he was pushing in front of him was carefully inspected, but the guards could find nothing, it was always empty. At last they got to the point: what the worker was stealing was wheelbarrows (Zizek, 2006: 21)

I have previously argued that critical scholars of organization have paid attention to the effects which post-bureaucratic principles of organization have on employees; they have been more concerned with the contents of the wheelbarrow than with the wheelbarrow itself, so to speak. The following analysis aims to confront the normative idea of innovation in the context of Hamel’s management innovation and Digivation’s management practices. My analytical approach is inspired by what Cederström and Spicer (2013) have termed post-foundational discourse analysis. One of the main objectives of this analytical procedure is to inquire into the form the dominating discourses (the wheelbarrow which conveys
certain ideas). The overarching object is to determine how dominating discourses are structured. A central part of this procedure entails identifying the ‘lack’ at the heart of the investigated discourse. Elaborating on Cederström’s and Spicer’s framework for post-foundational discourse analysis, I use Greimas’s (1983) theory of narratives in order to delineate the epic structure of Hamel’s management narrative in greater detail, and to show how an ambiguous fantasy of individual and organizational salvation (enjoyment) makes up the this narrative’s focal point.

In the second part of the analysis, I look at how the normative idea of innovation functions at the case-company. In so doing, I inquire into the affective force of the discourse (Cederström and Spicer, 2013) to figure out how organizations and individual employees use and reproduce management discourses on innovation and creativity. An analysis of Hamel’s numerous tomes on management and innovation yields some understanding of the discourse’s seductive powers. As Jackson notes (1996: 572), popular management literature is alluring to practitioners because it promises to provide ‘relatively quick and simple solutions to their organizations’ complex problems.’ However, such an analysis does not tell us how organizations reproduce sentiments found in discourses on innovation. Thus, the aim of the case-study is to examine how the normative idea of innovation functions in processes of identification. Here we find that some employees are affectively invested in a collective identity predicated on notions of creativity and expressivity. However, the notion of creativity itself, as it is told by the interviewed employees, is fraught with ambiguities. Moreover, I argue that these ambiguities subvert processes of ideological interpellation.

**Critiquing Hamel**

Before we delve into the critical analysis of Hamel’s discourse on management innovation, I will briefly address some of the challenges which critiquing his extensive oeuvre entail. Given that I draw extensively on Zizek’s reading of Lacan in developing a psychoanalytic approach to examining narratives, my critical procedure for studying popular management literature resembles Zizek’s (1989) variant of ideology criticism. However, as Johnsen (2015: 4) similarly comments on Hamel’s use of the term deconstruction, one faces a peculiar enigma in attempting to subject Hamel’s thinking on management innovation to ideology criticism. Hamel (2014) aptly exemplifies this enigma with one of his numerous comments about the dominating ideology of bureaucratic management:
Business people typically regard themselves as pragmatists, individuals who take pride in their commonsense utilitarianism. This is a conceit. Managers, no less than libertarians, feminists, environmental campaigners, and the devotees of Fox News, are shaped by their ideological biases. So what’s the ideology of bureaucrats? Controlism.

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have argued that contemporary managers have appropriated the artistic critique of capitalism which surfaced toward the end of the 1960s. In a similar vein, Hamel has appropriated various tenets of Marxist ideology criticism; Hamel views ideology as a veil that skews managers’ awareness of their own ideological biases. Indeed, we may sum up Hamel’s critique of the dominating managerial ideology by saying that controlism is the opium of the managing class. Departing from a Marxist approach to ideology criticism, however, I intend to deploy an analytical approach which does not presuppose a layer of undistorted reality resting beneath the figurative veil of ideology. Assuming that fantasy and social reality reside on the same epistemological plane, the object of ideology criticism is to identify the fantasies which structure various discursive (symbolic) orders (Zizek (1989: 30).

One of the aims of Marxist ideology-critique is to show how reified relations between objects hinge on hegemonic relations between people (Marx, 1844). Hamel (2006: 81) pursues a similar route of critical analysis and shows that managers dress up contingent truths as objective truths in order to wield illegitimate power. The job of the management innovator is then to ‘distinguish between what is apparently true and what is eternally true’ (Ibid). Deploying a rhetorical strategy surprisingly similar to Marx’s, Hamel (2014) asserts that bureaucratic managers are religiously invested in the prevailing order of conformance, and that they hold this order to be eternally true:

Managers worship at the altar of conformance. That’s their calling—to ensure conformance to product specifications, work rules, deadlines, budgets, quality standards, and corporate policies. More than 60 years ago, Max Weber declared bureaucracy to be “the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings.” He was right. Bureaucracy is the technology of control. It is ideologically and practically opposed to disorder and irregularity.

Thus, Hamel has not only assimilated Marx’s concept of ideology into his own management agenda, he has also inherited parts of Marx’s jargon of
emancipation. Basically, Hamel seeks to dispel the dogma of conformance which the oppressed masses (employees of bureaucratic organizations) are unwittingly subjected to. The critical scholar of organization may find himself in an unexpected situation. Given that Hamel is on the same side as the oppressed vassals suffering under bureaucratic rule, and given that he criticises the hegemonic discourse of managerialism and efficiency, why carry out a critical study of management innovation at all?

One of the main points of the analysis is that Hamel’s vision of management innovation is itself laden with many of the theological niceties that he attributes bureaucratic management, and that his envisioned 1000-year reign of innovation compels managers and employees to devote themselves resolutely to innovation; Hamel and his acolytes worship at the alter of non-conformance. Thus, the organizational goal of innovation, as this goal is articulated in Hamel’s narrative (2002; 2006; 2007; 2012; 2014), is itself an ultimate demand that employees and organizations must heed. It is my ambition that the following analysis will confront the normative idea of innovation, as it is expressed in Hamel’s narrative of management innovation, and thus open up for a critical discussion of its merits.

**Innovating management**

Hamel’s basic argument, underpinning most of his writings on innovation, is that companies need to make innovation a core competence in order to remain competitive (2002: 14; 2007; 2012). Long-term commercial success, he argues, depends on the extent to which firms are ‘capable of continually reinventing themselves and the industry in which they compete’ (2002: 12). Hamel’s writes his books and articles to help the reader, presumably a manager, ‘build [his/their] own agenda for management innovation’ (2007: xi, original italics). He defines his central concept management innovation as ‘anything that substantially alters the way in which the work of management is carried out’ (2007: 19). Most companies today, he argues, are not designed for innovation (2002; 2007), hence the urgency of distilling novel management principles. Ultimately, following the procedures of management innovation will enable companies to continually transgress established management procedures. Management innovation is thus situated within what Costea, Crump and Amiridis have identified as the prevailing model of transgression in post-bureaucratic management thinking (2008: 663). Hamel proposes the following formula for management innovation: ‘commit to bold goals; deconstruct your orthodoxies; embrace powerful new principles; and learn from the positive deviants’ (2007: 243).
Many of Hamel’s ideas have circulated in popular management literature for decades. Alongside Peters (1988; 1994), Moss Kanter (1988) and Champy (1995), Hamel laments the impersonal, procedural and hierarchical features of bureaucratic organizations for inhibiting the authentic and, by the same token, creative expressions of employees. And just like Peters (1988), Hamel argues that organizations should be radically decentralized so as to empower autonomous teams to take initiative (2007: 104). Instead of having an authoritative manager who calls the shots, organizations should have an internal market or democracy wherein teams compete for the most promising innovative initiative (Hamel, 2006: 82). Together with Peters, Hamel shares a fondness for unconventional employee habits, and celebrates dispositions that would appear ‘bonkers,’ as Peters so eloquently states (1994), to those who are trapped within the confines of bureaucratic management. It is, as Hamel asserts (2014), the ‘irregular people with irregular ideas who create the irregular business models that generate the irregular returns’. Taking Hamel’s predecessors into consideration, as Johnsen notes, ‘one might question the innovativeness’ of management innovation (2012: 5), a point I will return to in the final section of the analysis.

Having outlined the tenets of management innovation, the contours of an eschatological narrative of collective and individual salvation begin to appear. Analysed with Greimas’s actant model (1983), the narrative of management innovation looks roughly as follows: Contemporary capitalism is marked by a critical rupture. The onslaught of globalization has rendered organisations that abide by industrial-era management principles obsolete and thus endangered. The hero (the management innovator) is therefore summoned to fulfil his project of reinventing management, fighting enemies (stultifying bureaucratic managers) and enlisting helpers (a cohort of anti-establishment subordinates). Where God filled the structural place of jouissance in Greek and medieval mythologies, the metaphysical notion of innovation fills in the space of enjoyment in the discourse of management innovation. We will now take a closer look at each element of this narrative.

A Discourse of Turbulence

Hamel’s case for management innovation, usually exemplified by organizational arrangements assimilating organic ecosystems (2006), networks (2014) or, stated pointedly, sectarian cults, begins with changes in the external environment. The dislocatory effects of globalization, Hamel argues, ought to compel stewards of contemporary organizations to adopt increasingly pliable organizational arrangements, and such arrangements are diametrically opposed a
mechanistic system of organization typically associated with bureaucracy. In a world turned on its head by incessant bouts of technological disruption, only organizations that continually change how the work of management is done stay relevant. As Hamel notes, ‘[it] is essential to build organizations that can change as fast as change itself.’ Thus, Hamel reiterates various themes of what Clarke and Newman refer to as the ‘discourse of turbulence’ (1997: 39).

In keeping with the discourse that designates continuous change as an organizational imperative, Hamel maintains that incremental innovation will not suffice in this age of relentless globalized competition (2014). His programme for reinventing management therefore strives to mobilize managers to imbue their organizations with a capacity for radical innovation. According to Hamel, radical innovation is characterized by the fact that it unsettles ‘some industry convention’ and thus fundamentally changes the parameters of competition (2002: 18). Hamel’s notion of radical innovation thereby resembles Schumpeter’s concept of creative destruction. Companies which respond ‘creatively’ to existing economic and societal circumstances may profoundly alter the basis of competition in a given economy and destroy entire industries in the process (Schumpeter, 1947: 225). Building on his distinction between creative and adaptive responses, Schumpeter distinguishes between managers and entrepreneurs, since it is ‘one thing to set up a concern embodying a new idea and another thing to head the administration of a going concern’ (ibid, 222). The object of management innovation is to incorporate the transgressive or disruptive element of entrepreneurship into a system of management (2006: 74). Only by adopting entrepreneurial principles of management can organizations outrun the chaos of creative destruction.

Leaving behind conditions of relative stability, which purportedly characterized industrial society, dispositions and capabilities commonly associated with bureaucratic employees are losing market relevance. As Hamel states, ‘obedience, diligence and competence are becoming global commodities’ (2012: 140) that can be sourced anywhere for next to nothing. Hamel posits human capabilities of a ‘higher order’ (2012: 140), such as initiative, passion and creativity, as pivotal resources for competing in the new economy of chaos. The manager, however, cannot exercise ‘imperative control’ (2014) over employees and expect passion and creativity in return, just like a woman / man cannot command her / his spouse to be a passionate lover. Thus, the task of managing an organization in the chaotic economic environment of continuous disruption entails seducing the employee to bring his initiative, creativity, and passion to work (Ibid: 141). The survival of an organization ultimately depends on the manager’s ability to mobilize the affective capacities of employees. Management, as it is commonly practiced today, deters efforts aimed at enlisting
employees’ emotional resources. Ultimately, most organizations are hopelessly ill-suited for survival in the age of incessant change and ferocious competition.

**The ‘No’ of the Manager**

As we have just seen, contemporary organizations have to engage employees’ ‘primeval urge’ for creation (Hamel, 2007: 194). Returning to Greimas’ actant model, we can identify the enemy that obstructs employees’ self-fulfilling impulses: the bureaucratic manager. The representation of the bureaucratic manager is, in this discourse, what Zizek refers to as a destabilizing fantasy (1998: 190) that brings forth ‘scenarios in which particular characters or groups are held responsible for preventing us from achieving full identity’ (Cederström & Spicer, 2013: 193). Having appropriated the basic idea of Marx’s thesis of alienation (2012: 143), Hamel characterizes the bureaucratic manager as the culprit responsible for employees’ existential lack of being and, as a consequence, organizational ineptitude.

Bureaucratic organizations, according to Hamel, are structured around principles of repression and control. The bureaucratic manager thus takes on the characteristics of the father, as the father-figure is described in Freud’s Oedipus complex (Freud, 2010). By imposing rules and demanding strict adherence to procedure, the manager produces an existential lack of being in the employee. That is to say, employees’ lost enjoyment should, according to Hamel, be attributed the stultifying bureaucratic manager. Work itself, however mundane, deskilled, and alienating as it may be considered by social scientists, is inherently enjoyable. However, bureaucratic management enables inherently enjoyable work unfulfilling. As Hamel notes:

> My conclusion from all this [the plight of disengaged employees]: if we’re going to improve engagement we have to start by admitting that if employees aren’t as enthusiastic, impassioned, and excited as they could be, it’s not because work sucks; it’s because management blows (Hamel, 2012: 143)

By positing the manager as a stultifying patriarch, Hamel retroactively produces the subject. Hamel portrays the employee as being an undivided entity who, having been subjected to the manager’s formalistic regime of power, is reduced to a ‘cog’ in the monolithic managerial apparatus of bureaucracy. There are evidently countless examples of factories and offices wherein the social conditions of labour deprive employees of the opportunity to express themselves. But apart from being alienated in a particular work-role, the subject, according to
Zizek, is constitutively alienated. The fundamental question that relentlessly nags the subject is then: ‘how do I (re)gain my (lost) enjoyment (wholeness)? Hamel willingly provides an answer to this existential conundrum: management innovation.

The Injunction of Disobedience

The management innovator (the savior) is charged with the heroic task of re-enchanting organizational life, of suturing the existential fissure which the bureaucratic manager (the anti-thesis of the management innovator) and bureaucratic principles of organization are held to have caused. Moreover, he must deliver the organization from the looming threat of creative destruction. Breathing new life into the ideal of an organization structured around principles of expression and creativity, as opposed to principles of repression and control, Hamel summons the management innovator to ‘fan the flames of employee enthusiasms’ (2012: 137). While Hamel portrays the bureaucratic manager as a stultifying patriarch, the management innovator is what Zizek has termed the ‘post-Oedipal father’. The injunction of pious asceticism, which pervaded early capitalism (Weber, 1905), is replaced with a managerially sanctioned imperative of enjoyment (see Zizek, 1999).

Not only is the post-Oedipal manager to provide employees with a degree of decision latitude deemed unthinkable to an employee subjected to the crass procedures of bureaucracy and therewith to build a community of passion approximating a corporate grass roots-movement, he is to empower individual employees to disobey his own directives. As Hamel notes: ‘However creative your colleagues may be, if they don’t have the right to occasionally abandon their posts and work on something that’s not mission critical, most of their creativity will remain dormant’ (2007: 55, original italics). Based on the assumption that adherence to procedure generates predictable and, by extension, uncreative outcomes, the post-Oedipal manager should proactively encourage employees to occasionally deviate from strategic objectives and formal rules set by management. Thus, Hamel’s prescription harbours a paradoxical injunction of disobedience. As Johnsen (2015: 7) notes in a similar analysis of Hamel’s narrative of management innovation:

The self-engendered paradox inscribed in these prescriptions [injunctions of disobedience] is that managers should instruct their employees to disobey their own instructions. However, along the way, disobeying instructions becomes a demand placed upon the employees. Either the employees defy their manager’s encouragement
to ignore superiors and surreptitiously continue to follow management instructions or else they obey their manager’s encouragement to defy superiors.

In order to substantially alter how the work of management is done, the management innovator has to enlist helpers: a vanguard of (productively) renegade employees. According to the scripture of management innovation, the organization should absolve the manager from mediating the relationship between the individual employee and the organization. Hamel (2011) praises the example of the tomato manufacturing company’s, Morning Star, management practices for empowering the individual employee by means of soliciting individualized commitment to the organization:

Every employee at Morning Star is responsible for drawing up a personal mission statement that outlines how he or she will contribute to the company’s goal of “producing tomato products and services which consistently achieve the quality and service expectations of our customers.” Take Rodney Regert, who works in the company’s Los Banos plant. His mission is to turn tomatoes into juice in a way that is highly efficient and environmentally responsible.

According to many writings of Søren Kierkegaard, and other works on existentialism and negative theology, it is emphasized that the individual stands alone before God (Armour, 2004: 408). In the context of management innovation, it is the individual employee’s personal epiphanies and individual resoluteness that determines what he, alone before God (the divine goal of innovation), may do, and how he goes about fulfilling his (managerially sanctioned) personal vendetta against the established order. Thus, some of Kierkegaard’s ideas about the relationship between the individual (employee) and God have evidently migrated to popular management literature in the form of a personal mission statement.

The Eschatological Future of Management Innovation

We now arrive at the structural place of jouissance: the eschatological future wherein the spirit of management innovation finds its proper form in organizational arrangements, similar to Kanter’s post-entrepreneurial corporation (1990: 280), wherein employees’ pent up libidinal energy may be released and put to productive use within the organization. Thus, Hamel’s envisioned utopia is what Zizek refers to as a stabilizing fantasy, the likes of which
portray a given discourse in a dazzling way (Cederström and Spicer, 2013: 193). Even though Hamel posits capitalism and communism as mutually exclusive ideologies, he nonetheless appears to have achieved an odd synthesis of Marx’s (1992) communist utopia and Hayek’s liberal utopia (1944) within the ideal of the innovative organization:

Unfortunately, managers often see control and freedom as mutually exclusive—as ideological rivals like communism and capitalism, rather than as ideological complements like mercy and justice. As long as control is exalted at the expense of freedom, our organizations will remain incompetent at their core. (Hamel, 2014)

Similar to Peters (1988), Hamel’s vision of a communist corporation builds on some of the ideas of an ideal society which Marx and Engels outlined in the communist manifesto (1992). First of all, we find an exotic species of corporate classless society. Through a movement akin to Hegel’s dialectics (1977), the ideal organization overcomes internal antagonisms between the managing class (bourgeoisie) and ordinary employees (proletariate). Having transgressed formal hierarchies (class contradictions), and arrived at an organizational arrangement approximating a global village, managers and employees alike can enjoy collective and individual freedom on a level playing field. Employees seemingly attain a positive freedom to act on their self-fulfilling impulses. Although this vision does not exclude the manager from the ideal organization, Hamel’s ideas gravitate in the general direction of corporate communism when he for instance encourages captains of industry to fire all managers, as his article is so compellingly titled, and when he condemns the unrestrained authority of the managing class. As Hamel (2011) remarks:

Finally, you must look for ways to erase the distinctions between those who manage and those who are managed. If you’re a manager, you can start by enumerating your commitments to your team. Ask everyone who works for you to annotate the list. Getting leaders to be more accountable to the led is essential to building a web of reciprocal responsibilities.

Noting Derrida’s insight that it is difficult to maintain a binary logical opposition within one conceptual structure (1981), it is not surprising that Hamel unwittingly appropriates some aspects of the communist ideal of a classless society in his model of a radically innovative organization. Conversely, Marx’s
vision of a communist society is said to be an inherently capitalist fantasy. As Zizek (2000: 18) notes:

So, in a way, the critics of Communism were right when they claimed that Marxian communism is an impossible fantasy - what they did not perceive is that Marxian Communism, this notion of a society of pure unleashed productivity outside the frame of Capital, was a fantasy inherent to capitalism itself, the capital inherent transgression at its purest...

Apart from appropriating Marxist notions of class antagonisms, although in a derivative form, Hamel also incorporates tenets of a liberal, utilitarian ideology as epitomized by the likes of Hayek (1944). Building on a liberal idea of the market, Hamel believes that an internal market will efficiently coordinate the interactions of autonomous employees, and that the invisible hand will align the self-fulfilling impulses of each and every employee, possibly through a personal mission statement, toward a common organizational goal. The internal corporate market will supposedly provide the individual with nearly unfettered negative freedom, specifically from a coercive manager. Should the vision of an internal corporate market reach fruition, only the most creative initiatives will command company resources. Perhaps we could say that Hamel’s vision of an intra-organizational market is the stabilizing fantasy of an efficient market that almost never fails and which rarely produces market externalities. As Hamel (2011) articulates this fantasy:

Wouldn’t it be great if we could achieve high levels of coordination without a supervisory superstructure? Wouldn’t it be terrific if we could get the freedom and flexibility of an open market with the control and coordination of a tightly knit hierarchy? If only we could manage without managers.

Hamel, however, cannot completely let go of formal authority, and the manager, although Hamel fired him, thus makes a surprising reappearance as a necessary evil:

Managers do what markets cannot; they amalgamate thousands of disparate contributions into a single product or service. They constitute what business historian Alfred D. Chandler Jr. called the visible hand. The downside, though, is that the visible hand is inefficient and often ham-fisted. (2011)
Hamel’s proposed revolution of management ultimately resembles a Judaeo-Christian narrative. First, Hamel unfolds a linear history of management which ends with judgement day where the sinners (bureaucrats) will be killed off due to the incessant pace of creative destruction; only the truly innovative companies will flourish. Then, the once oppressed and divided employee will regenerate once the management innovator graces the individual employee and the entire organization with their presence. However, this discourse is rife with various ambiguities. As we have already seen, the manager still calls the shots as the visible hand that coordinates market activities.

The Return of the Repressed Manager and Taylor’s Ghost

Informed by Zizek’s definition of the Real as that which remains the same in all symbolic universes (1989: 74), the role of the manager, despite Hamel’s countless declarations of dethroning him, remains unscathed in the grand vision of management innovation. Although Hamel tries to excommunicate the manager from contemporary organizations, he nonetheless redeems him and secures his position as the figure of authority responsible for coordinating and directing the actions of subordinates, even when these directives entail disobeying directives.

Taylor, just like the manager, similarly inhabits a zone of in-distinction between inclusion in and exclusion from management innovation. Hamel’s critical remarks, concerning how contemporary management practices are distilled from the outdated principles of scientific management, can initially lead one to think that management innovation necessarily excludes Taylor’s legacy. However, Hamel implies that scientific management is a prime example of management innovation (2006: 77). As Johnsen (2015: 6) also observes, ‘following the definition of management innovation as ideas that profoundly transform the practice of management, Taylor must indeed be considered history’s greatest management innovator.’ Hamel’s fascination with scientific management thus resembles Marx’s fascination with capitalism. Replacing the term ‘bourgeoisie’ with ‘scientific management’ in a passage from Marx’s and Engels’s communist manifesto (1992), Hamel’s fascination with scientific management’s awesome power of managerial disruption may read as follows:

[Scientific management], in its reign of barely a hundred years, has created a more massive and more colossal productive power than have all previous generations put together. Subjection of nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to agriculture and industry, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of
whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground - what earlier century had even an intimation that such productive power slept in the womb of social labor?

Having briefly inspected the role scientific management plays in Hamel’s discourse, we have identified one of several contradictions which subvert its consistency. We shall now proceed to identifying several other ambiguities which may further open up the discourse of management innovation (and its normative idea of innovation) to critical examination.

The Lack of Innovation

We have now reflected on the critical rupture presented by the discourse (incessant creative destruction), been introduced to the saviours (the management innovator and his anti-establishment subordinates), and witnessed Hamel’s vivid scenario of enjoyment. Unfortunately for Hamel, at least according to himself (2012: 137), his vision of management innovation has yet to materialize. Indeed, there is such a pervasive lack of management innovation in contemporary organizations that weaker souls may lose faith in Hamel’s envisioned Utopia. We may find an answer to this perceived lack of management innovation in the double meaning of the word Utopia which denotes both the perfect place and a nonexistent place. Utopias constitute both the object-cause of desire and the void in various political discourses. As we shall see, the envisioned goal of management innovation includes both meanings of Utopia.

Recalling the joke about the factory guards who, being preoccupied with searching a worker’s wheelbarrow for stolen goods, overlooked that the worker was actually stealing wheelbarrows, let us now direct our attention at the wheelbarrow of Hamel’s discourse: the discourse itself. Inspecting the contents of the wheelbarrow would, in this context, amounts to examining empirical examples of management innovators that Hamel invokes to show the benefits of management innovation, and assessing the extent to which they are in fact innovative. Instead of empirically verifying or falsifying Hamel’s narrative, we may also look at lack of innovation in the discourse itself.

First of all, Hamel’s narrative of management innovation does not build on a particularly innovative idea. Similar ideas have circulated in the popular business literature since the 1980s. Hamel has incrementally augmented existing ideas, as opposed to causing a management disruption, by advocating that managers subject management processes to rigorous methods of research and development (Hamel, 2006: 74). Second, the concept of management innovation
is itself somewhat vacuously defined as “anything that substantially alters the way in which the work of management is carried out” (2006: 19). Thus, management innovation builds on a lack of conceptual innovation and an arguably vague definition of innovation.

On a general level, Spoelstra notes that the obsession with creativity in contemporary management literature is rarely challenged (see Spoelstra, 2010: 95). Likewise, innovation and creativity, concepts which Hamel uses interchangeably, enjoy an axiomatic status in his thinking on management innovation. Hamel emphasizes how important ‘deconstructing management orthodoxies’ is for inciting innovation, yet the value of innovation is not questioned, and the imperative of innovation itself thus functions as a management orthodoxy (see also Johnsen, 2015: 7). Thus, we may call innovation a transcendental master signifier. Innovation is an absolute demand placed on contemporary organizations, managers, and employees, which like God in religious discourses, may not be questioned.

Moreover, the alleged efficacy of Hamel’s formula for management innovation depends on the extent to which it is not deployed in actual organizations. Hamel distinguishes between incremental and radical innovation, the latter denoting a capacity to overturn ‘some industry convention’ (2002: 18), and therewith the ability to ultimately change the prevailing parameters of competition. According to Hamel, companies need radical innovation in order to remain relevant in the future of relentless change. Now, let us imagine a scenario where Hamel’s vision of management innovation has reached its goal; let us imagine that each and every company within a given industry adopts his formula for management innovation. The practice of management innovation according to Hamel’s four principles - which are: ‘commit to bold goals; deconstruct your orthodoxies; embrace powerful new principles; and learn from the positive deviants’ (2007: 243) - would itself become an industry convention. In order to sustain the reconfiguration of management processes as an ‘ongoing programme of invention’ (2006: 74), managers would have to transgress Hamel’s own recipe for management innovation. Thus, management innovation mirrors the function of desire. The purpose of desire, as Zizek (1997: 39) notes, is not to reach its goal, but to reproduce itself as desire. Likewise, the purpose of management innovation is not to reach its goal of blessing each and every company with the grace of radical innovation, ultimately rendering the prescriptions of management innovation obsolete, but to sustain a desire for innovation.
The Retroactive Nature of Innovation

We now arrive at another quandary of management innovation. Is it possible to ascertain ex ante if and to what extent substantially altering the way in which the work of management is done will engender radical innovation? Hamel himself, as we shall see with the help of Schumpeter, seems to account for the retroactive process of defining the management innovator. Schumpeter’s concept of creative destruction alludes to Zizek’s (1989: 74) concept of the Real as ‘that which resists symbolization: the traumatic point which is always missed but nonetheless returns, although we try – through a set of different strategies – to neutralize it, to integrate it into the symbolic order.’ Schumpeter explains how creative destruction (what Hamel refers to as radical innovation) can rarely be predicted. As he notes:

First, from the standpoint of the observer who is in full possession of all relevant facts, it can always be understood ex post; but it can practically never be understood ex ante; that is to say, it cannot be predicted by applying the ordinary rules of inference from the pre-existing facts. (1947, 222, original italics)

Given that it is almost impossible to predict disruptive innovation, it must be equally impossible to plan it with the methodical rigour commonly associated with, for example, scientific management. Yet a synthesis of radical innovation and scientific management is the (sublime) object of management innovation. It is worth noting that Schumpeter distinguishes between invention and innovation (1947: 224). While there may be countless inventions circulating within a given economy, there are typically far fewer innovations, given that an invention only becomes an innovation insofar as it succeeds on the market (Schumpeter, 1947: 224). Schumpeter also observes that it is only possible to ascertain whether or not an invention has succeeded on the market ex post. The same seems to apply to the case of management innovation. The object of substantially altering management practices is, according to Hamel, to achieve radical innovation. But it is only possible to ascertain ex post if and to what extent management innovation has achieved its goal of profoundly altering the parameters of competition. Thus, the status of a novel management practice as a management innovation is secured retroactively, hence the seeming validity of the numerous examples of management innovation which Hamel uses to secure the integrity of his concept.

Stevens and Burley claim that only a handful of thousands of more or less identical innovations succeed on the market (1997). Even fewer of these
successful innovations mature into sustainable companies. Thus, the market's selection of the winning invention is to a certain extent arbitrary. Yet companies and managers that have successfully innovated management and made innovative products ascribe a nearly divine necessity to their accomplishments, and management scholars and gurus religiously study their examples. Many companies even try to copy the management procedures of innovative companies in the hope of attaining innovation, just like the islanders copied the gestures of the American soldiers in the hope of bringing back airplanes full of cargo (see introduction). The managers themselves, although graced with a measure of arbitrary success, seem to identify with the label management innovator. The Other, the market, recognizes some elusive factor of innovation in the management innovator which he may not have been able see for himself. Given that the success-rate of attempts to innovate depend on various arbitrary factors, one cannot necessarily infer from the success of case-companies such as Google, which Hamel invokes to gospelize the principles of management innovation, that replicating these practices will lead to innovation. However, these examples function as contingent pieces of the Real that confirm the meaning of Hamel’s narrative of management innovation (Zizek, 1991: 32).

L’Innovation N’existe Pas

As we have seen, Hamel’s discourse about management innovation promises enjoyment, and it is structured around some impossible / Real kernel. Hamel, alongside other management gurus, has conjured a concept of management innovation so as to introduce some form of regularity into the erratic process of innovation, but his attempt to conceptualize innovation gives rise to an insoluble paradox. As Johnsen (2015: 9) also notes:

The concept of management innovation conceptualizes the experience of originality while declaring that the original always exceeds the present experience. But in order to ensure that the original surpasses the horizon of our present experience, it necessarily has to transgress the conceptualization of management innovation.

Johnsen uses Derrida’s method of deconstruction to show how management innovation is an impossible discourse. With the help of Zizek, I hope to have added to Johnsen’s insight a more detailed description of how Hamel’s discourse is structured. As du Gay notes (2000: 3), the theological narrative is the prototypical structure of popular management handbooks that
aim to reinvent management in the future of capitalism (see also Peters, 1988; 1994; Most Kanter, 1983).

Paraphrasing Lacan’s slogan ‘la femme n’existe pas’, we may say ‘l’innovation n’existe pas. Lacan’s point is not that women do not exist, but that it is impossible to distill the essence of women into a generic concept. Likewise, I argue that it makes little sense to distill the disparate aspects of innovation into a generic procedure for innovation and, following the same line of reasoning, management innovation. My point is not that innovation does not occur within management, nor that entire industries are not facing terminal decline due to processes of creative destruction. Publishing, especially news media, is an example of an industry that has been ‘disrupted’ by the onslaught of new digital technologies. I nevertheless question the extent to which a generic prescription such as ‘embrace powerful new principles’ (Hamel, 2007: 243) will lead the baffled captains of sinking news media, for example, to the Promised Land of innovation.

The first part of the analysis focused on the form of Hamel’s discourse. We now turn to an investigation of its force, that is, how do employees use and reproduce the discourse of innovation in a particular organization? It is worth noting that some of the seductive powers of Hamel’s management narrative may be attributed to its biblical form; Hamel promises salvation (enjoyment). And what manager or employee wouldn’t want to build an organization ‘where an electronic current of innovation pulses through every activity’? (Hamel, 2007: xi). Discussions of form and force thus shade into each other, but I wish to build on this insight with an empirical investigation conducted at a company that is charged with the uncanny task of producing creative solutions for some of the world’s largest and most successful multinational corporations such as H&M, IKEA, and BMW.

**Chapter 6: Innovating Management at Digivation**

The procedure for the next part of the analysis is first to show how a discourse akin to Hamel’s discourse about management innovation manifests itself in the case-company’s self-representation and in employees’ accounts of their practices. Second, I will show how a notion of creativity and play function in
a process of ideological interpellation, and I intend to show how some employees affectively commit to the company’s identity of creativity. Finally, I will use the accounts obtained from three of the company’s employees to show how the company’s discourse about creativity lacks an exact definition of its pivotal concept. That is to say, I will expose some of the ambiguities at the heart of the company’s discourse that demands innovation and creativity of its subjects (employees). Ultimately, I argue that these ambiguities undermine processes of ideological interpellation.

I will begin this part of the analysis with a brief introduction to Digivation. The purpose of this introduction is to provide a general idea of the case-company and its structure, and to show how various discursive elements native to Hamel’s management innovation appear in its self-representation. First, I will briefly describe Digivation’s area of expertise. I will then proceed to describing how the company organizes its work, and I will finally account for its ongoing management experiment which aims to grant employees greater autonomy and engagement.

Digivation is an international design- and consulting company with a highly recognized expertise in conceptualizing, designing, and producing a host of digital products and services, often in the form of smartphone applications and websites. The company offers consulting services to large, as well as small, corporate clients, and they also also launch their own ventures. Digivation has successfully brought several of their own digital ventures to the market, and several of their apps have received the industry’s most prestigious awards such as Apple’s App Award.

Digivation, which was founded in London in 2005, now comprises four studios located on three different continents, employing 245 full time staff-members globally. The Digivation studio in Sweden, where I conducted the following study, employs 74 people who work in a shared studio space to facilitate informal communication between members of the organization. Upon a brief examination of the company’s own description of its competencies, I find one of the central ideas of Hamel’s extensive oeuvre on management innovation:

We create and bring our own successful products to market. We partner to launch new ventures that disrupt industries. Above all, our experience gives us the edge in building and launching digital products for others. (Company Website)

The concept of disruption is usually attributed Clayton Christensen (1997), but his concept of disruptive innovation is more or less identical to Hamel’s notion of radical innovation (2002: 18), the result of both having to do with
upending industry conventions. Judging from the statement above, Digivation has a capacity for spurring digital disruptions. An important precondition for disrupting industries, as we shall delve further into later in the analysis, is the capability of continually soliciting creativity from employees. Furthermore, succeeding in Digivation’s line of work requires a pliable organization, and the company therefore organizes work-routines around projects. Thus, adaptability and creativity function as overarching justifications for the company’s transient approach to organizing.

As mentioned in the previous part of the analysis, the managerial conundrum, which Hamel is bent on solving, is the problem of introducing managerial regularity into the inherently irregular process of (radically) innovating management processes. Basically, one of his goals is to invent infinitely malleable principles of organizing that managers can incorporate into a more or less coherent organization structure. In order to achieve the goal of building an organization that can change as fast as change itself, Hamel encourages companies to dismantle formal hierarchies and dethrone managers. In a similar vein, although Digivation to some extent has a formal hierarchy as well as a CEO that presides over the ultimate executive authority, there is an ambition to maintain as flat a hierarchy as possible. As Jennifer describes the balance of power between designers and the head of design:

We have a flat hierarchy and a distributed leadership. We have a head of design, but she delegates some of her tasks to other people in the design-group. So we get together as designers and talk about needs and set our goals, and then we have the design-leader as a representative of our group, but she does not necessarily tell us to do this or that. So that person takes our needs to the leadership team. (Interview 1)

The head of design does not function as a manager with the authority typically associated with the manager-role, but as a kind of mediator between, in this case, the designers and the company’s leadership-team. One of the principle objectives of distributing leadership competencies is, according to Jack, to ‘give them [members of the team] some kind of power and engagement’ (Interview 2). Another aspect of Hamel’s management narrative, which Digivation subscribes to in its own way, is a suspicion towards formality and bureaucracy. Lisa notes that work-roles are only to a lesser extent formally defined:

To some extent they [employees] have formally defined roles, but there aren’t any role descriptions. At least my role is in the process of
defining itself at the moment. It is easier for designers [to define their roles]. There is a lot of space to define individually how you will act in your role. (Interview 3)

Going even further than merely denouncing formality, some of Digivation's employees apparently embrace decidedly anti-authoritarian and emancipatory principles, which the colourful studio-space itself attests to, and these sentiments are to some extent institutionalized. Laura (a pseudonym), the company’s director of fun, defines the procedure JFDI as follows:

And then we have a process we use, I can recommend any one to use it, it’s called JFDI. It means just fucking do it, and what it really means is that if you want to do something just DO it. (Presentation)

At a glance, it may seem paradoxical that Digivation has a procedure in place for circumventing procedures, just like Hamel’s (2007: 55) and Sutton’s ideas of managerially sanctioned injunctions of disobedience give rise to contradictions (Johnsen). However, JFDI, according to Lisa, is regarded more as a mindset than as a procedure:

The process is not really a process, but rather a mantra: Just Fucking Do It - which sort of means that you should try something and see what happens, rather than think a lot and ask for permission. Try it and report honestly how it went, and what you have learnt from it. (Interview 3)

The business-rationale of this mindset, as Lisa explains, is that it allows and encourages employees to capitalize on hitherto unexploited opportunities, and, moreover, to better adapt the company’s services to clients’ specific needs:

It [JFDI] encourages people to grasp opportunities. If you see something that could be improved, something magical that nobody had thought about, you will actually try it, or say to the client: ‘I saw this, it could be game-changing for you.’ No one is checking with five managers to see if their initiative is ok. In this way, we’ve gotten into working on clients’ strategies even though we were hired as designers. (Interview 3)

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3 Suttons idea..
Adaptability, or in the words of McGrath (2013) ‘transition capability,’ is a pervasive theme in Digivation’s self-representation. Although there are various recurring routines at the company, efforts are made to continually adapt these routines to changing circumstances. As Lisa notes:

I think it is efficient to have some sort of routine. But just as I referred to a studio as a place that can change physically, I think the same about routines; that they can be dynamic. If there suddenly arises a need for a different kind of structure, we can shift our habits and structures really easily. There are not many layers that decisions have to go through. The company is some sort of living creature of habits and routines. (Interview 3)

Transition capability is something the company aims to achieve on an overall level, but also into its processes at a project-level. The phases of a given project and relevant success-criteria need to be malleable enough to accommodate new demands that may arise throughout working on the project:

There are some stages of the project that are similar, of course. But we don’t have a mould that we put everything into. We make a hypothesis at the beginning of a project, which we use to set up the team and divide responsibilities. Our ambition is to continuously reevaluate our set-up and proposed project-phases throughout the project. Perhaps we should spend more time on iterations, or maybe we need some deadlines. (Interview 3)

Another facet of the company’s overall emphasis on adaptability is personalisation of commitment, which, as Laura writes in her presentation about company culture, helps the company learn on an ongoing basis:

We want to be a learning organization for example. This means we will adapt to change and fail fast. But what does that even mean? Practically it means everyone on the team should have a personal goal with every project. It’s just an example. (Presentation).

We have thus far seen how themes of adaptability, perpetual flux, and empowerment, themes which are commonly found in Hamel’s writings, pervade Digivation’s self-representation. We shall now proceed to an investigation of a particular example of experimenting with management models that is currently underway at Digivation, a management model which strives to facilitate the
personalization of commitment, so as to afford employees greater autonomy and engage them wholeheartedly in the company's activities.

**Replacing Project-managers With Coaches at Digivation**

Digivation strives to maintain a flat hierarchy in order to 'try to get everyone super engaged, to allow some intelligent people to work and communicate without having to go through a whole bunch of people' (Jack, interview 2). The transition from project-managers to coaches intends to bring this ambition to fruition. Following Hamel’s definition of management innovation as a ‘departure from traditional management principles, processes and practices’ (2006: 75), Digivation’s transition from traditional project managers to coaches can be viewed as an example of management innovation. Once again, we find an oppositional logic, this time between traditional project-managers and coaches; the latter purportedly not really being a species of manager. However, I will venture the claim, based on Lisa’s own description of her role, that the coach assumes many of the same responsibilities as a typical manager. As she comments on the output of her work:

> I produce efficiency in working with clarification, alignment and visualisation of processes which help people collaborate more easily. The smooth functioning of teams can be the output of my work. Another output is growing the people on the teams - the development of people, and also the development of the organization. (Interview 3).

Apart from aligning employees and thereby facilitating team-work, which an ordinary manager arguably also does, the coach also focuses on the development of the employees, and he or she helps process their emotions. The encounter between coach and the employee thus becomes ‘quasi-therapeutic’ (Costea et al, 2008). As Lisa elaborates on the scope of her responsibilities:

> We [the coaches] are responsible for the meta-perspective of the project and the processes. So while the designers are focused on the outcome of their delivery, I focus on how people are working together; are they happy, are they learning? (Interview 3)
The advent of the coach-role is followed by a less flattering representation of its predecessor, the project-manager, as a technocratic patriarch. The representation of the project-manager is quite similar to that of the ideal-typical bureaucrat, as this figure appears in the popular management literature (Peters, 1988, 1994; Moss Kanter, 1983; Hamel, 2007). A principle difference between the coach and a project manager, according to Jack, is that the coach is not solely concerned with directing the professional efforts of employees. Similar to how Ranciere distinguishes between directed and non-directed learning, as he develops this distinction in The Ignorant School-Master (1991), Jack uses a similar teacher-student metaphor to explain the difference between coaches and (stultifying) managers:

The old teaching model is where the teacher dictates to you, and where you absorb the content. But this method is not super effective. It is better to have some kind of internal team learning. The feedback from giving guidelines to the teams is that they are not absorbing them, not changing their behaviors. Our approach to teaching is kind of touching upon coaching, which is a discipline at Digivation that taps into the human potential. We are trying to get the teams to create their own guidelines for the processes which they own. (Interview 2)

Thus, the old, patriarchal teacher, whose corporate counterpart appears as the bureaucratic manager, engenders disengagement by exercising what Hamel calls ‘imperative control’ over employees (Hamel, 2014). As Jack notes:

To me, project managers are in charge of managing the time, the budget, telling people where they should be. Under that kind of management, the team can turn their brain off a bit and wait on instructions regarding where they should be. One of the main responsibilities of the project manager is to remain in contact with the user, but they often neglect this responsibility. They tend to think about their budget, and about their boss. (Interview 2)

Many critical studies of companies adhering to post-bureaucratic principles of organization, legitimized by prospects of empowering employees, show that these novel and seemingly emancipatory approaches to management give rise to more subtle and pervasive forms of managerial control (Casey 1997; Flemming and Sturdy, 2007; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Deetz, 2002; Kunda, 1992). One can make a similar argument about Digivation’s transition from project-managers to coaches. Coaches arguably exercise a form of pastoral power over...
employees. This argument builds on the observation that coaches articulate employees’ happiness and well-being as both an end in itself and of instrumental importance to the company.

Departing from these studies, however, the aim of the present case-study is to examine the normative idea of innovation in the context of Digivation’s practices. The study intends to show how the idea of innovation functions in the company and to assess the consistency of the ideas that structure the company’s discourse on management and innovation. In the next subsection, I draw attention to how the idea of innovation functions in processes of identification.

**Digivation’s Culture of Creativity**

The aim of the following sub-section of the analysis is to show how a notion of creativity is an integral part of a process of interpellation at Digivation. Althusser’s concept of interpellation, parts of which Zizek has incorporated into his own theoretical framework (1989), can be briefly summarized with the following passage from Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses:

> I shall suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ subjects among the individuals (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey you there!’ (Althusser, 1971: 174)

Apart from delineating the tenets of a corporate ‘ideology’ of fun and creativity at Digivation, this part of the analysis intends to show how some of Digivation’s employees affectively commit to and sustain the identified ideology of creativity by positing Digivation as a creative studio as opposed to a traditional office. The point is not to follow the Marxist procedure of unmasking in order to reveal ‘objective reality’ (that Digivation is in reality a profit-seeking business), but to show how a notion of creativity to a significant extent structures the employees’ collective self-understanding. I will proceed by first describing the material (studio space) and recurring practices at Digivation that serve as a backdrop for day-to-day company routines. I will then proceed by describing how the company’s cultural initiatives contribute to processes of ideological interpellation.

First of all, creativity is important to Digivation. The company’s success relies on its employees’ ability to come up with original solutions to clients’ problems. According to the employees who were interviewed for this study, and
judging from the company's numerous awards, Digivation successfully manages to satisfy clients' demand for creativity. Creativity, as Lisa notes, is a capacity which distinguishes Digivation from its competitors. Indeed, creativity is even more important for Digivation than other parameters for evaluating work. As Lisa asserts: 'Yes, I would say so [that creativity is more important than efficiency in execution]. I think that is our strength, that there is something in the environment here that helps creativity flourish' (Interview 3). Thus, the capacity to think up creative solutions distinguishes Digivation from other companies. A brief tour of the studio space reveals how an ethos of expressivity supports the collective self-understanding of Digivation as a creative studio, and the company thus approximates Kanter's (1990: 280) ideal of a post-entrepreneurial corporation:

The post-entrepreneurial corporation (‘because it takes entrepreneurship a stage further’), in contrast [to a traditional bureaucratic corporation], with its stress on teamwork and cooperation, with its building the new, brings people closer together, making the personal dimension of relationship more important.

The studio space bears some comparison with a kindergarten. Employees work at desks in an open office-space, the desks and conference-rooms being some of the fixtures inherited from a traditional office set-up. The studio is equipped with bulletin boards that employees post humorously Photoshopped images of colleagues and clients on. Similar to a kindergarten, we even find a dollhouse (see figure 1) for facilitating meetings, although the dollhouse does not boast any functional facilities which could not be incorporated into an ordinary conference room. There are several social spaces comprising foosball-tables and a television connected to a games console, and these spaces are sometimes used to assimilate clients to Digivation’s way of doing things. As Jack notes:

... we sometimes get employees from BMW at the studio and take a match of FIFA [video game] with the guys from Digivation which provides bonding and trust, so we can get really hard with them in the projects because we have this friendship / fun level. Fun can be used to build trust and connections with people. (Interview 2)

Furthermore, the studio is plastered with post-its, and employees evidently do not hesitate to write with markers on the floors and walls. Thus, one may say that the employees here have adopted dispositions which would appear ‘bonkers’ (Peters, 1994) to employees subject to the strictures of bureaucracy.
As opposed to the traditional bureaucratic corporation, which is structured around supposedly repressive principles of impersonality, the post-bureaucratic manager encourages and even legislates expression (see Flemming and Sturdy, 2007: 3). The following comment from Laura’s presentation about Digivation’s culture exemplifies a similar sentiment of expressivity: ‘We are very diverse, have many cultures and therefore embrace different looks in general. You can even wear a suit if you like’ (Presentation). This comment seems to imply that a suit may stand out as comically formal (see Bergson, 2008). Moreover, the culture of fun and jokes takes the ambition of encouraging expressivity a step further than apparel, as Lisa exemplifies with a description of an ongoing company game:

There are a lot of jokes going around on various digital channels. We also have a music service we developed ourselves called party-pooper. The service is connected to all the speakers. You can queue a song and then vote to poop or pump the song. If there are more poops than pumps after the song has played for 15 seconds, it will stop playing and switch to the next song in the queue. There are sometimes music battles going on while working. (Interview 3)

Apart from providing the company with a creative ‘esprits de corps,’ there is some functional justification of the emphasis on expressivity, as George (a pseudonym) from the London-studio notes in his post on Digivation’s public blog:

We’ve learned that being a “professional” and continuously looking for silliness are not mutually exclusive things. When we let our freak flag fly, our comfort zones expand and honest feedback is given and received more easily. Celebrating each other’s weirdness gives us even more energy than celebrating a big delivery. (Blogpost 1)

Thus, expressing quirks, rather than hiding them under the guise for formality, allows for an honest and thereby better flow of work-related communication. Interestingly, Digivation’s culture of celebrating ‘quirkiness,’ as this culture is similarly represented by the employees who were interviewed for the study, allows and encourages expressivity to the extent that employees even refer to Digivation as a ‘fampany’ (family company). As James (a pseudonym) from the Digivation studio in New York writes in a blogpost about the annual company holiday:
The holiday is eagerly and not so patiently awaited as a time to unite Digivation™ brothers and sisters [from all offices] for their once-a-year opportunity for true togetherness, in a blissful location to soak up some Fampany vibes. The holiday is a singular event in the company calendar that crystallises the true sense of Fampany. (Blogpost 2)

Returning to Althusser’s concept of ideological interpellation, it is worth noting that the employees themselves frequently refer to Digivation as a ‘fampany.’ The notion of fampany, apart from connoting sentiments of fun, expressivity, and togetherness, may even serve as an implied employment criteria. If people do not exhibit a propensity to express themselves or to be emotionally available, they will be filtered out. Thus, looking at this informal employment criterion through the lens of interpellation, procedures of sifting out ideologically incompatible people helps sustain the prevailing company ideology of fun, expressivity and, by the same token, creativity. As Jack explains:

We hire people who are more of a fit with the culture, who are a bit more open minded. There are a lot of emotionally intelligent people here, and there is a lot of energy for the human side of stuff. I have never been in a company with this amount of energy for friendship, and all the stuff that goes for the human part of communication. People are very aware of where people’s energy levels are at, how they are affected by their personal life. (Interview 2)

Another aspect of the identified process of interpellation is the wide-spread reference to the work-space as a studio rather than office, a reference which some employees seem to be affectionately attached to. As Jennifer notes: ‘We call it a studio, and when someone says office we get like ‘no, it’s not an office, it’s a studio.’ That’s because a studio is more a place for experimentation, being more open, and trying and failing’ (Interview 1). The studio-space itself, although it in some respects may look like an artist’s atelier, incorporates various fixtures which could just as well be found in a stereotypical bureaucratic organization. The studio contains desks, computers, meeting rooms equipped with tools for video-conferencing. According to Jack, the main difference between a traditional office and a studio, however, is an imaginary difference (see Lacan, 1977); the difference has to do with images rather than functional capacities:

If you think of a policeman, you think of a New York-cop. You push things into stereo-type labels. The word office... I think of something
grey, boardrooms, something like Microsoft. A studio... I think of something a bit more creative. The images or stereotypes attached to each word are different. I would say that’s the only difference. (Interview 2)

Although the difference between a studio and an office is predominantly imaginary, the employees prefer the term studio, a term that also seems to build on the ‘fampany’-sentiments mentioned earlier. As Lisa implies by describing Digivation as unity that goes beyond company and office:

I would say that the term studio suggests that it is a more shared space than an office. I think that is how we view it, that the space is our common work-area. And there is also something about Digivation being a studio of dreams, also referring to Digivation’s studios all over the world. By saying studio, we say that we are somehow a unity that goes beyond both company and office. (Interview 3)

As it appears from the statements above, the term studio is assigned a series of positive connotations, while the term office is assigned predominantly negative connotations. Thus, the use of an office as a ‘destabilizing fantasy’ (Zizek, 1998) appears to function as an ideological support for Digivation’s self-understanding as a unity akin to a global village. As Lisa elaborates on the distinction between an office and a studio:

When we refer to our space as a studio, we refer to it more as a work-in-progress kind of thing... where an office sounds very commercial, and like a place where you are supposed to do things in certain ways and deliver in certain ways, and where things are not as flexible. (Interview 3)

Thus, Digitavation’s employees posit the studio as something which is in flux, as a unity of creative people whose ambitions transcend the perhaps petty pecuniary concerns of a corporation. Solidifying this ‘self-image’ (Hoedmakers, 2010: 383), the employees produce an oppositional logic where the idea of Digivation as a ‘studio of dreams’ is a vital element of a ‘stabilizing fantasy.’ However, this idea is sometimes undermined by the realities of running a commercial enterprise. As Jennifer notes:

Some clients think that they know the solutions themselves, and that they just need people to execute it. These clients even want to have
ownership over the process. In these situations we question why we are doing the project, and we just decide that we’re doing it for money. (Interview 1)

Informed by Lacan’s insights about the function of fantasies, we may say that the fantasy of being more than a company serves to sustain a series of practices which are quite ordinary for profit-maximizing organizations, practices which seem to conflict with some of the employees’ ideals of artistry and craftsmanship.

We have thus far seen how expressivity, fun, and creativity are pervasive themes in Digivation’s self-representation, and we have seen how employees affectively subscribe to the identified ideology of creativity, an ideology which is sustained through destabilising fantasies of the traditional office. Comparing these findings to similar studies that have focussed on subjectivation of employees (e.g Deetz, 2002; Flemming and Sturdy, 2011; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), we may say that this study in a similar vein shows how intricate culture programmes function as an increasingly intentional modality of control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 622.). This culture of creativity functions as a managerial technology that manufactures the appropriate employee by means of deliberate procedures of identity regulation.

Thus, the case-study of Digivation mirrors Foucault-inspired approaches to studying organizations by showing how the company subjectivates employees through culture (see also Starkey and Hatchuel, 2002). This approach, as it is developed in the present case-study, yields a common Hegelian insight that employees develop a specific self-consciousness or identity by being recognized in the eyes of the organization (Hegel, 1997). The study thereby yields some insights regarding how the normative idea of innovation functions. Taking a different path than studies that emphasize the role of power and discipline in processes of subjectivation, however, we now turn our attention to the symbolic order itself. Here I will explore the gaps in the normative idea of creativity which Digivation’s culture builds on.

**The Lack of Creativity at Digivation**

Creativity and innovation, as these concepts appear in unison, make up the sublime object of various strands of management discourse. Similarly, a significant part of Digivation’s management practices and corporate culture of fun are justified on the grounds that they are conducive to creativity. There are several other key concepts in Digivation’s self-representation, for instance agility, the workplace as a studio, the company being a family. These concepts and ideas
are discursively correlated with creativity and a notion of being ready for an unknown future. However, there is a conspicuous lack in the company’s discourse about creativity, as this discourse is told by the interviewees. That is not to say that employees at Digivation are not creative, nor that the company has failed to produce innovative products. The company’s many awards attests to its innovativeness. The notion of creativity itself nonetheless seems to lack an exact definition, and it is thus difficult to use the employees’ accounts of their practices to distill a generic procedure for creativity. Indeed, the employees’ own descriptions of the circumstances which they find are conducive to creativity, and descriptions of the circumstances which supposedly impede creativity, are contradictory.

First of all, creativity is articulated as a cross-pollination of ideas, and this process requires some degree of coordinating the collective efforts of employees. Digivation’s ‘service definition workshops’ (Interview 2) is an example of a session which directs the collective effort of employees at conjuring creative ideas. Jack describes how creativity thrives in an environment where disparate inputs are sourced from the minds of many different people:

Creativity is just an exchange of ideas in providing a new solution. So it’s just connecting ideas from different parts of the brain, and providing an environment where that can happen; where people from different parts of the company can contribute with ideas. (Interview 2)

Other accounts suggest that creativity is an individual disposition, and being creative concerns how the individual employee conducts him or herself within the organization. As Lisa notes:

It is a personal skill for individuals to manage when they are creative, and how they package what they found and communicate that to other people; and put their findings into frameworks that are created by the client or other team-members. (Interview 3)

Next, we find an articulation of creativity as having to do with transgressing restrictions; hence the emphasis on play, the seemingly lax dress-code at the studio, procedures such as JFDI (see presentation), and the employees’ writing on the studio’s walls. As Lisa articulates the correlation between restrictions and creativity:
I’m thinking that managing creativity is about having the space as an individual or a team to not be restricted by requirements, to have the space to not know what you are doing - and also having the mandate to act on things you see as possibilities to create something. (Interview 2)

Following the same line of reasoning, Lisa asserts that creativity is more likely to occur throughout the initial phases of a project where playful activities related to concept development take place:

I think it is easier to do [to play] at the beginning of projects because everything is more open. We have making magic as one of our principles, we want to make magical products, and I find that this ambition is connected to play. (Interview 2)

Judging from the statements above, it appears that creative thought requires freedom to play, to experiment, and to define the desired outcome of a project as it progresses. Creativity and thinking differently, as Lisa goes on to explain, is to some extent opposed urgency:

The more things you know are constant in a project, the less you need to play. For instance, if you know that a person is dying in front of you, and you know he will die in five minutes unless you save him, then there isn’t any space for play. If some client really needs a prototype tomorrow, we have no time to play (Interview 2)

Jennifer similarly notes that too many restrictions, for instance when clients are too controlling and define the project briefs too narrowly, tend to have deleterious effects on the creative process:

Some projects are very straight-forward, and that’s what we complain about - there is no creativity. We know exactly what we are supposed to do, because that is the business requirement, so there is not space for us to be creative. In other projects, the client tells us what they need, but they are open to exploring what the solution could be. (Interview 1)

Assessing the employees’ descriptions of creativity and the circumstances they find to be conducive to creativity, one may get the impression that loosening restrictions and allowing more room for exploration would lead to more creative
outputs. However, the relationship between restrictions and creativity becomes less clear in subsequent accounts of creativity that emphasize the necessity of restrictions. As Lisa describes how restrictions function as the tarmac that provides necessary traction for creative processes:

[I]n the creative industry in general, if you don’t have any restrictions, you need to make them yourself in some way. If we are given a super open brief, we need to make various restrictions. We have made some pitches where we needed some restrictions that could direct the process in some way. (Interview 3)

Jennifer also points out that having more time for exploration does not always yield a better outcome:

Sometimes you get lost in all the explorations and everything, and you don’t get much done, or you don’t have anything solid at the end. So sometimes they just say... ‘make something and go with it.’ But I don’t know if that means it is killing creativity. The short time helps you be creative in a different way, maybe. (Interview 1)

Urgency, which before was framed as being opposed to play and, by extension, creativity is in the following example posited as a catalyst for creativity:

Sometimes time is one one of those limitations that can really spur creativity. For this project [app-project for Adidas], we only had a week and a rather small budget. They wanted to make a running app that could adjust the tempo of your music to your pace. In the design-process, one person was running while a DJ was cycling next to him, adjusting the tempo of the music to the runner’s heartbeat. That became a really good product, and we had limited time and resources. (Interview 2)

Informed by Johnsen’s (2014) reading of Derrida’s reading of Plato, we may say that restrictions function as a ‘pharmakon.’ That is to say, restrictions serve the paradoxical dual function of inhibiting creativity and as a remedy which facilitates the creative process. Or, using the words of Zizek (1989: 224), the company’s discourse about creativity, although this concept is central to the company’s collective self-understanding, is marked by a lack, an un-signifiable
Real kernel which evades an exact definition. Once again paraphrasing Jaques Lacan, we may say ‘la créativité n’existe pas.’

Although a notion of creativity is a key component of Digivation’s collective identity, as this notion is expressed in various examples of organizational discourse produced by the company’s employees. The notion of creativity itself, and the circumstances which employees deem to be conducive to creativity, allude the grasp of a generic concept or procedure. Thus, we may say that the present study affords some credence to Lacan’s slogan ‘the Other does not exist.’ The symbolic order which disciplines employees to be playful and creative is itself marked by a conspicuous lack gap. My point is not that restrictions, for example, cannot be both conducive and detrimental to creativity, but that the extent to which restrictions facilitate or obstruct creativity appears to depend on a host of circumstances which are beyond the grasp of procedure designed to solicit creativity from employees. We now take a look at how the ambiguities at the heart of the normative idea of innovation, as this idea is expressed by the interviewees, subverts the identified process of interpellation.

(Not) Fucking Doing it at Digivation

So far, we have seen some of the cracks in the processes of ‘subjectification’ (Sauvagne, 2013: 44) through which Digivation constitutes the employees as members of a creative family. In other words, we have seen the lack in the Other. We will now see how this lack renders the relationship between the employee and the organization ambiguous.

Digivation’s employees construct their self-image in contrast to employees working at traditional corporations, and the mantra ‘just fucking do it’ helps sustain this oppositional logic. Unlike a bureaucrat, Digivation’s management encourages employees to just fucking do it. However, this injunction of disobedience is paradoxical. First of all, it is unclear when employees should just do it, and when they should confer with their manager or team. As Jack notes:

Sometimes, just fucking do it isn’t the right approach. Some people are a bit more considerate and don’t want to waste energy by just fucking doing it... I do see the value in using that mindset as a tool sometimes. If we for instance are thinking about something too much, it’s better just to do something (Interview 2)

Thus, it is up to the individual employee to figure out when it is appropriate to take entrepreneurial initiative. Additionally, employees try to stop their
colleagues from acting as lonely geniuses in order to mitigate the risk associated with just fucking doing it. As Lisa explains:

We try to mitigate the risk [of significant failure related to entrepreneurial initiative] by not allowing people to be lonely geniuses. We work as a team, and we work with feedback from the studio as much as we can. Usually, if someone is on a risky path, someone will probably have the courage to say what they think. We aim for passing ideas through more brains than one so we can use collective quality assurance. (Interview 3)

Basically, an employee should obey the injunction of disobedience when his team gives him permission to do so. Other employees similarly point out that going solo conflicts with collaboration, and they argue that meetings are an important part of the company’s routines. As Jennifer notes:

People sometimes complain that we have too many meetings, that we can’t focus on the work because work is interrupted by the meetings. But I think meetings are important to share what is happening, and what is important and all that.... The projects will turn into chaos if we don’t have these meetings. (Interview 1)

The distinction between the traditional project-manager and the coach also helps maintain the employees’ and the company’s self-image. Although distributed leadership constitutes the employees as entrepreneurial and creative members of a family, some employees miss the traditional manager. As Jack point out:

The way it is now, with the more distributed kind of competencies, the amount of communication required to align people is enormous. I think people are realizing that this approach is super energy intensive, to get everyone on board at all levels aware of all aspects of the project [...] But there seems to be request for a person who has a more central role, who is more in control of the project as a whole. I guess it requires a lot of energy to get a high level of commitment and engagement from a number of people, and that can be quite tiring. (Interview 2)
Solidifying the observation that the symbolic order is marked by a lack, the project manager seems to be making a comeback at Digivation. In the preceding subsection, we have seen that the lack in the Other prevents processes of ideological interpellation from being completely successful.

Rounding off the analysis

In the first part of the analysis, we found that Hamel's alluring promise of a generic recipe for continual innovation, a promise which is closely coupled with sentiments of individual and collective salvation, stumbles over various conceptual problems. Indeed, Hamel's vision of a procedure for innovation is basically impossible, since such a procedure would entail the necessity of its own transgression. Informed by Zizek's theory of ideology, we saw that there is a gap at the heart of the discourse about management innovation.

In the case-study, we saw that similar tenets of the discourse on innovation are manifest in the company's self-representation and employees' descriptions of their practices. Moreover, we observed that the normative idea innovation structured processes of identification (ideological interpellation). Irreconcilable notions of creativity constitute aspects of the company's collective identity, and some employees express affective attachment to this identity. Common to both Hamel's management innovation and Digivation's discourse on innovation and creativity, however, is that they are incoherent discourses that posit 'an impossible and indeed incomprehensible object' (Jones and Spicer, 2005: 236) at their centres. In the case study, we see that this impossible-Real object subverts processes of ideological interpellation.

Chapter 7: Discussion

In the previous chapter, I sought to examine the normative idea of innovation at two discursive levels. We shall now turn to the task of drawing out the implications of these analyses to the study of organization. As we have seen, both Hamel's theological narrative and Digivation's discourse are structured around a contradictory idea of innovation. The first analysis has implications for conceptualizing the production of novelty. The second analysis explores these implications in an organizational context. Combining the insights from these analyses, I argue that the present master's thesis contributes a critical study of organization that looks beyond colonization. Specifically, the thesis shows that
translating the normative idea of innovation into managerial practices stumbles over a series of paradoxes. These paradoxes, in turn, prevent processes of colonization from being completely successful.

My examination of Hamel’s concept of management innovation is indebted to Johnsen’s (2015) and du Gay’s (2000) analyses of post-bureaucratic management literature. Let us now look at how Johnsen’s and du Gay’s insights inform one another. du Gay argues that popular management discourse, particularly Peter’s book Thriving in Chaos (1987) is ‘infused with a religious ethos and style drawn from the Christian tradition (du Gay, 2000: 16). In so doing, du Gay shows that the prophets of post-bureaucracy both misunderstand Weber and misrepresent bureaucracy. Moreover, du Gay draws attention to the incompatibilities between the post-bureaucratic ethos of entrepreneurial management and the societal function of bureaucracy. He thus aims to rehabilitate the organizational merits of bureaucratic principles of organization.

Also examining popular management literature, although pursuing a different line of inquiry, Johnsen (2015) points out that the ideal of the creative manager, what du Gay refers to as the entrepreneurial manager (2000, 16), is contradictory. du Gay and Johnsen (Ibid: 8) agree that anti-bureaucratic principles of management render the relationship between the employee and the organization ambiguous. As du Gay (2000: 18) notes:

Peters is definitely trying to organize life, as Weber had it, ‘on the basis of ultimate principles.’ Indeed, he is quite explicit that adopting his worldview is akin to ‘religious conversion’ (1987: 149). In this way, the ‘management revolutionary’ as charismatic religious prophet has enthroned himself as ‘moral judiciary.’ His claim is to reunify, through a strategy of ‘businessing,’ what ‘bad old bureaucracy’ is held to have set apart as separate spheres of existence.

Adding to this insight, Johnsen concludes that the transgression model of post-bureaucratic management is fraught with aporias. In the present thesis, I expand on Johnsen’s reading of Hamel’s management innovation by reading this discourse as a theological narrative. Furthermore, I explore the paradoxical nature of management innovation in a case-study.

In the case-study, we also find that post-bureaucratic principles of organization render the relationship between the employee and the organization ambiguous. The coaches are responsible for both employees professional and personal development. Moreover, employees refer to themselves as members of a family instead of as colleagues. One of the interviewees even remarked that having such a familiar relationship with the entire company is sometimes
exhausting. Thus, Digivation’s managerial practices contain elements of normative and neo-normative control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Fleming and Sturdy, 2007; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2004).

While du Gay points out that proponents of entrepreneurial management propose to erase distinctions between employees’ spheres of existence, thus opening up for colonisation and normative and neo normative control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Fleming and Sturdy, 2007), Johnsen draws attention to the ambiguities inherent in the very logic of the post-bureaucratic ideal of management innovation. As Johnsen (2015: 8) comments on one of Hamel’s paradoxical management prescriptions:

> From the perspective of the employee, one must simultaneously obey and disobey management directives. One might raise the objection that employees are not meant to always break the formal rules and ignore managerial directives but only when it sparks innovation. Yet, such disclaimers only postpone the problem, because now we are left to define the circumstances under which one should remain loyal to management and the circumstances under which one should defy it.

By deploying a psychoanalytic theory of narratives in a case study, I show how Digivation’s employees use oppositional narratives to construct a collective self-image. Furthermore, my approach yields the insight that this self-image is an incomplete symbolic structure, and that slogans such as JFDI, which make up a part the self-image of creativity, lead to ambiguous organizational practices. I do not claim that my empirical study proves that Johnsen’s deconstructive reading of management innovation is correct, nor do I prove that interview-data verifies my psychoanalytic reading of management innovation. However, I claim that the case-study supports these findings.

Departing from studies focussing on the effects of neo-normative control on employee-subjectivity, I show that post-bureaucratic principles of organization can have paradoxical implications for the organization as well as for the employee. Thus, my findings also support Sørensen’s and Spoelstra’s claim that a culture of creativity can usurp employees’ productive efforts (2011: 92). In addition, I claim that the ambiguities at the heart of the normative idea of innovation, as this idea is practiced in the case-company, engenders paradoxical management practices. I make this point by exploring the paradoxes contained in the injunction of disobedience (just fucking do it). Paying close attention to this paradox, one may question the efficacy of Lacan’s Real act of resistance. Zizek describes this idea accordingly:
For Lacan, there is no ethical act proper without taking the risk of such a momentary suspension of the big Other, of the socio-symbolic network that guarantees the subject's identity; an authentic act occurs only when the subject risks a gesture that is no longer covered up' by the big Other. (1999: 313)

Drawing on Lacan’s idea, Contu suggests that resistance necessitates that one breaks ‘with all that seems reasonable and acceptable in our liberal postmodern world with consequences beyond comprehension (2008: 377). However, suspending the big Other’s rules and taking entrepreneurial initiative is exactly what modern management gurus and companies tell employees to do. To truly subvert contemporary management practices predicated on an idea of innovation, the employee must do exactly as the manager says and refrain from taking entrepreneurial initiative (disobeying managers).

**Conclusion**

I began this master's thesis with the observation that innovation is a dominating discourse. Additionally, I argued that discourses on innovation compel employees and managers to adopt creative and expressive behaviours. In these discourses, I found the idea that organizations have to dismantle formal structures and dethrone managers in order to engage employees’ self-fulfilling impulses. Solidifying this idea, management gurus discursively correlate passion and self-fulfilment with innovation. Although these discourses contain sentiments of emancipation, I observed that innovation also functions as an ideologically sustained orthodoxy. I therefore set out to examine how the ideology of innovation functions.

Critical management studies often focus on the disparities between organization's rhetoric of emancipation and the underlying reality of normative and neo-normative control. Therefore, they overlook the disparities within post-bureaucratic discourses such as the discourse on innovation. In order to shed light on these disparities, I reversed the critical procedure often employed in critical management studies and examined the normative idea of innovation. Further, I analyzed how this idea structures a particular post-bureaucratic managerial discourse on innovation. In other words, I examined the ideological fantasy of innovation. I approached this idea at two discursive levels, namely in popular management discourse and in a case-study.

In developing my critical strategy, I combined Zizek’s psychoanalytic theory of ideology and Greimas's structural actant model. Drawing on these theories, I
was able to explore Hamel's concept of management innovation as a theological narrative. In short, I showed how this narrative posits an impossible-Real object of innovation as the sublime object of the management innovators quest. In doing so, I identified several paradoxes inherent in the normative idea of innovation.

Extrapolating elements of my psychoanalytical strategy to a case-study, I found that employees of a creative company identified themselves as members of a family in contrast to employees of a traditional corporation. However, my analysis revealed the cracks in this identity. Delving into these cracks, I explored how the company's identity of creativity and expressivity included a managerial injunction of disobedience. Despite its promise of emancipation, this injunction was accompanied by the paradoxical disclaimer that the employee should confer with his team before "just fucking doing it." Although the mantra of just doing it is an important part of the company's self-image, the interviewed employees discouraged taking it literally. Moreover, I found that employees had a hard time defining one of the central concepts that pervades the company's self-image. Thus, I identified a lack of consistency in the symbolic order, and the case-study thereby showed how fundamental gaps at the heart of the normative idea of innovation subvert processes of ideological interpellation. That is to say, processes of constituting the employees as members of a creative family were not entirely successful.

Summing up my findings, I argue that this master's thesis has implications for studying management critically. By examining the aporias at the heart of Hamel's narrative of management innovation and the case-company's self-image, I elaborate on studies focusing on normative and neo-normative control. While these studies draw attention to processes of subjectification enacted by means of post-bureaucratic principles of organization, this thesis shows how such processes stumble over self-engendered paradoxes.

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Appendix

Interview 1

Interviewee: Jennifer.

Position at Digivation: UX Designer.

Duration of interview: 45 min.

Interview conducted 14.07.2015

I: What do you do at Digitvation?

J: I am an interaction designer. So I make concepts, design user experience, map the needs of users - that kind of stuff.

I: What is your educational background?

J: I studied visual communication design in Turkey, so I was a visual designer for four and half years. Then I got a scholarship for my master’s in New York, where I studied
design and technology. So it wasn’t necessarily interaction design, it was more human-computer interaction.

I: How long have you been at Digitvation?

J: I have been here for about one and a half years. Before that, I joined Digitvation in New York for one and a half months.

I: So how many employees are employed at Digitvation Malmö?

J: I think we’re around 65.

I: How are they grouped?

J: There are some freelance people coming and going, depending on the skills needed for a particular project - so I don’t know the exact number. Apart from the freelancers and interns, we have business development, maybe 7 people - the business development team was formed this year. And then we have business support, two studio managers, one HR and one financial. And then we have about 22 visual and UX designers, we don’t separate them. We have around 15 developers, we have two IT people - and that’s about it.

I: What does a typical workday look like for you?

J: It really depends on what kind of project you work on. My project just ended, so now I am on the bench a bit, and just wrapping up my previous project. Before this project, I was commuting weekly to Gothenburg to work on a project, so it was a totally different setting from everyone else. I was away from the studio quite a lot, going there on Mondays, usually, and staying there for three - four days. There are some people doing that kind of work...

I: So they’re going to the client?

J: It is something we are trying for the first time this year, to see what we can get. Our intention is to bring the client to the studio at some point.

I: How is a typical day at the studio organized?

J: What do you mean?
I: Let’s say you are working at the studio. How would your day start?

J: I was for example working on a project for H&M, the biggest client we had ever had at the time. We were 15 people on the project, 4 designers, 8 developers, and a business person. We would start the day at the studio with a morning stand-up for 15 minutes at around 10, I guess. But it depends. Most people come in at around 08:00 - 08:30, where they answer mails, or have some quite time to do what they need. We have the stand-up to check in and tell others what we are working on - what happened yesterday, what’s going to happen today, so everyone knows who is working on what in the team, and so we can see the dependencies. Then we would group up with the designers to see what we are doing for the day. And then just going back to your desk and working on stuff. We have a lot of meetings as well.. we have weekly meetings, but we also have internal meetings to review wire-frames, prototypes. Then we have lunch at 12. Swedish people are quite sharp when it comes to their lunch-time. Most people leave around 17 - that was very strange for me at first, coming from New York where people leave at around 19.

I: Are your workdays similar to one another? I mean, is there a routine for your workdays?

J: I think the differences between workdays depend on the phase of the project. The tasks you are involved with change based on the progress of the project. In the initial phases, there is a lot of exploration, sketching, activities away from your desk. You do that for a bit, a week maybe, and then you go to your desk and stark creating digitals. Your workdays aren’t changing daily, but maybe on a weekly basis.

I: Are the project phases of different projects similar to one another?

J: It really depends on what we are doing for that client. Some projects are more strategic, so we spend more time on research, competitive analysis, landscaping. Other projects are very production based.. you know what you are doing and you deliver the wireframes, talk a lot with the developers. In the strategy projects, you don’t speak as much with the developers.

I: When you start on a new project, do you invent the process from scratch?
J: It is usually not completely new... Well.. if it’s a new client.. a new project, it is of course completely new. If you join a project which has existed for some time, there is already a process in place. We don’t have as many of these projects now as we have had in the past. We want to stay away from many of those long projects, so our new projects are usually shorter term projects.

I: So there isn’t any routine, since the projects vary so much?

J: I think we usually set our own routines, so the intention is to establish a routine for the given project. We have team coaches that facilitate the stand-up meetings in the morning, regular meetings, regular check-ins. So we find a way to turn it into a routine of some sort.

I: I noticed in a blog-post that project managers have been replaced by coaches. What has the change from project-managers to coaches mean for how you do your work?

J: So project managers are mostly involved with the client and setting up the time-lines, the deadlines, establishing channels of communication - they are more responsible for the administrative aspects of the project. The coaches are more focused on how the team is functioning, how people are communication on the teams, while the project manager-role is distributed in the team. There is no one point of contact for the administrative side of the project, and everyone is encouraged to take ownership, although some people do it more often than others. So.. the coach tries to create a functional team that communicates well, where the people know each other.

I: How would you describe what the coaches do on a day-to-day basis?

J: On a day-to-day basis... they usually... it is a bit hard to tell, because I have worked alone on my projects. They usually run the stand-ups...

I: What is a stand-up?

J: A stand up is when we check in with the team and tell each other what we’re doing. We do a lot of retrospectives. We usually work in sprints, so we deliver something every two weeks.. but then again, that depends on the project. A week after the sprint, we do a retrospective; what was good, what was bad, what needs to be improved.. the coaches facilitate these retrospectives. Apart from that, the coaches arrange some team building-sessions, but otherwise I don’t really know what they do on a daily basis.
I: Have you tried one of those team building sessions?

J: Yes.

I: What did you do at the last session you participated in?

J: We had a combined retrospective and team-building session, where we did a marsh mellow-challenge. We team up and use spaghettis and marsh mellow and build a tower. The object of the game is to build the tallest tower. You learn how to communicate and how to strategize.

I: You mentioned that the coordination of work-tasks is distributed to the teams. So there aren’t any managers at Digitvation?

J: Not really, no. The teams take care of themselves. We don’t have one person telling you to do this or that. We all know what we need to do, and we all know each others roles. With the check-ins and the weekly meetings we keep track of what everyone is doing. We have an account director, who is the person that fixed the client, but most of the time the account director is not involved in the day-to-day work. Sometimes they don’t know exactly what we are delivering for a certain week.

I: Is there anyone at the company who has a final say or ultimate authority to make decisions?

J: We have Marcus, the CEO. He has the final say on things most of the time, but he has a team, we call it the local leadership team, that meets regularly, and this team supports him, the head of design, the head of development or technology, the head of business development.. the commercial director, we call it.. and someone from business support. So they gather and make decisions together.

I: So each group or division has a manager?

J: Yes, but also.. so that is the one thing we are discussing a lot. We have a flat hierarchy and a distributed leadership. We have a head of design, but she delegates some of her tasks to other people in the design-group. So we get together as designers and talk about the needs and set our goals, and then we have the design-leader as a representative of our group, but she does not necessarily tell us to do this or that. So that person is taking our needs to the leadership team.
I: So the design-leader does not have any authority regarding how the autonomous teams work?

J: She does have some... I mean she is the one who kind of decides who works on which project, because she knows all the projects and all the people, supposedly. So she is the one who decides on that, but she comes to you and checks in with the team or the person beforehand.

I: You mentioned that the teams have a lot of freedom regarding how they manage their work. Is there an overall framework for how work is done, which is set by the team-leader?

J: The design manager doesn’t necessarily define how we work, or what we deliver in terms of design work, but she decides on the functionality of the teams; which projects we have, how many designers are needed, what is the time-line, but not the basics of how we do the work.

I: How important would you say creativity is for what you do?

J: Again, it depends on the project. Some projects are very straight-forward, and that’s what we complain about - there is no creativity. We know exactly what we are supposed to do, because that is the business requirement, so there is no space for us to be creative. In other projects, the client tells us what they need, but they are open to exploring what the solution could be. Some clients are more educated on the creative process, and realize they should leave the solutions to the designers, because we know what we’re doing. Some clients think that they know the solutions themselves, and that they just need people to execute it. These clients even want to have ownership over the process. In these situations we question why we are doing the project, and we just decide that we’re doing it for money.

If you don’t get space to try different things... then you start getting disappointed very quickly, and the whole team loses motivation very easily and very quickly.

I: How would you describe creativity?

J: I think it’s about being aloud to try different things, and to see if things work or not without being shot down right away. So it is not about creation itself or making beautiful things, it is more about seeing things from different angles.
I: So experimenting?

J: Yes, it is a lot about that.

I: I noticed that Digitvation refers to its workspace as a studio. What does that mean?

J: We call it a studio, and when someone says office we get like ‘no, it’s not an office, it’s a studio.’ That’s because a studio is more a place for experimentation, being more open, trying and failing. Clients are afraid of failing, but we are not afraid of failing because we believe that if you don’t fail, you don’t learn. And success comes from learning from failures... in a way. When we refer to our space as a studio, we refer to it more as a work in progress kind of thing.. where an office sounds very commercial, and like a place where you are supposed to do things in a certain ways, and deliver in certain ways, and things are not as flexible. But we are very flexible in our processes. We try things, and if they don’t work out, we try something else.

I: Would you say the projects were you get to be creative are completely routineless?

J: No, we still have the same routines, but the way we do things, or the content we are working with is less defined by the client, but we have still have routines and disciplines of delivering on time and setting our own deadlines, instead of the client setting deadlines. So there isn’t chaos.

I: Would you say the routine is compatible with experimentation, which you described as being more open-ended?

J: Yes:

I: Under which circumstances do you find yourself in a more creative mode?

J: Well.. I don’t know how to answer that question. It really depends on the phase of the project. When I worked on the Spotify-project, the first phase was about exploring different things. We spent a lot of time on thinking and sketching... When you are at that phase, you feel free to explore, and you feel more creative. But when you are locking down things, making decisions - in that project, we had to make the decisions very quickly - the implementation phase doesn’t allow space for exploration. So throughout production, you loose your creativity a bit. So after three months of working on the Spotify-project, I started to feel.. this project isn’t fun anymore, because the project became very defined.
I: Do the team-leaders or coaches do anything to facilitate creativity?

J: We have something called designers weekly, and techie-time for developers. We get together as designers one hour a week, and we talk about some design issues, some new technology, something new that is released by Apple, or whatever - or someone shares their project. We just talk about design and technology for an hour. So the leadership wants us to get together and talk design. We also do workshops. Sometimes we do client workshops, just to see how the client views the project - because when you are involved in a project, you start seeing it in one way; so we bring in other people to get some fresh perspectives. Apart from the workshops and the team building-exercises, we have problems to solve. For example we have two buckets, and we need to move water from one bucket to another, and we only have two pieces of rope; so how do you solve that challenge? It is a team-building challenge, but it is also creative. We do that outside the studio. There are different activities like that which are intended to encourage creativity. There were two-three team building exercises for the designers only, and I missed all of them. So the leadership makes up exercises, so we can get out of the rooms. But you don’t always have time for these exercises.

I: Is the purpose of some of these exercises to get out of the day-to-day routines?

J: Yes, that also, to do something as a team together. Or maybe to just not think about work projects, but just some other problem. At the end of the day we are problem solving, so just having another type of problem to solve helps you zoom out from your project. And when you get back to your project, it helps seeing things from a different angle.

I: Do you sometimes find that routines can stand in the way of thinking creatively?

J: I am not sure. People sometimes complain that we have too many meetings, that we can’t focus on the work because work is interrupted by the meetings. But I think meetings are important to share what is happening, and what is important and all that. I don’t think routines such as the stand-ups and other meetings are preventing creativity. They are just about structuring the work. The projects will turn into chaos if we don’t have these meetings.

I: Do you sometimes find that decisions made by team-leaders can inhibit creativity?

J: Yes, I mean.. like.. we are supposed to do something, and focus is on money and time, we won’t have time to explore different options. We do some pitch projects as well, and the time-frame for these projects are very short, usually only a week. You have
to create a concept, pitch the concept to the client, and see what comes out of it. In these projects, you have to make decisions really fast, which maybe kills the creativity a bit, but it helps with the focus. Because at the end of the week, you have something. Sometimes you get lost in all the explorations and everything, and you don’t get much done, or you don’t have anything solid at the end. So sometimes they just say.. ‘make something and go with it.’ But I don’t know if that means it is killing creativity. The short time helps you be creative in a different way, maybe.

I: So sometimes a creative process is more undefined, and other times it is more directed?

J: Yes. And also.. finding creativity in the process itself. You don’t have to prototype it this way or that way, so you can engage creatively in experimenting with the process. You can find what ever works best for this time frame or this process. Sometimes you can paper prototype something, and it works - but for others clients or projects it may not work as well. So maybe we need to find another way to test the concept. So you get creative in terms of rethinking the process itself.

I: So sometimes the limitations set by the clients or the team leaders can spur creativity?

J: Yes. It really depends on the kind of task it is, and what kind of project it is. When we were doing a project for H&M, we knew from the very beginning that we would not get enough feedback, and that we wouldn’t be able to spend enough time on it. So we just started with a what-ever attitude and just started working, so then you don’t try to invent things as much - and we don’t even think about creativity.

I: Do you have an example of a project where a tight definition of the project helped you be creative?

J: We had a presentation last week about a pitch. So it was about transportation in Skåne, and they had an open brief, so nothing was defined by the client. The team said ‘we could have done anything, but we only had a week, so we had to make a decision.’ First they explored five different scenarios, and then they chose one of them and went with it. Having that time limitation helped them focus on a specific direction. But the decision to explore five scenarios is kind of a creative solution to the time limitation.

I: It seems that play is a pervasive theme at Digitvation. Do you get to play at work?
J: We do, but it depends on what we mean by play. We play with post-its a lot. We do a lot of post-it brainstorming sessions. The exercise itself is playful. Sometimes we get together as a whole company and define our principles, have workshops to define what our principles are. And those workshops are quite playful. We use lego for vision workshops with clients, so we build something and ask the client ‘so we want you to build your vision with legos.’ The workshop becomes playful, and at the end, it becomes a tool for you to talk about abstract things - so it helps the clients to think. It doesn’t feel as boring as writing something down, but it helps them to think when they put something out there and talk about it. We have a lot of workshops. We arrange many workshops with clients on purpose, because we want to get them in the same room; we want to get them to talk, and we want to get into their brains, to understand how they are thinking. We give them exercises, let them talk about them, and listen to what they are saying. So these workshops help us a lot to understand what the goal is. The whole thing becomes playful, and they really like it a lot. So that is one way we are more playful.

I: Do you see play and work as activities that are distinct from one another?

J: In the example before, I don’t see play and work as different activities. We plan those workshops as well. It’s not like.. ‘let’s just do this and have fun, and see what comes out of it.’ We plan these workshops on purpose, and they have a goal. It is just the methods that are more like play.

I: What do you think you can achieve by employing these playful methods, rather than employing methods that resemble work?

J: We get really good response from the clients.. I think that everyone kind of appreciates that type of working.. they find it really different from their daily routine. They also say.. ‘we would have spent hours of talking about this subject, if it was a normal meeting. So we get them to sketch, we get them to put things on post-its. So we get the same content, but in a different way. So the clients are impressed by how they achieve in better results.

I: So you mentioned that it takes clients out of their normal routine... which may help them think outside of the box. But you also mentioned that you can integrate creative thinking into a routine. How would you describe the relationship between play and routine?

J: I think it’s like... So we know we have to get this information from the client.. we need to have this meeting, but the way we decide to get this information is our
creativity, because we think up these exercises. But we make it part of the routine.. because this is a planned meeting that is supposed to happen. And the retrospectives as well.. So the weekly retrospective, which could easily be boring, becomes something enjoyable throughout that creative process. For us, it’s good brain gymnastics to define how we can get this information, and what would be nice for them to experience.

I: When you for example plan a workshop and engage in more playful activities.. to get information or define the needs of the client, do you follow a certain procedure for play?

J: It is usually the team coaches who define that process.. we usually start with an ice-breaker. It depends on if the client knows.. if the people in the room know each other. So it’s a quick intro-session, but instead of saying your name and function, we ask to define each other as fruits or whatever - so we get them to talk to each other in a different way. Then we have the agenda for the day. It is usually the team coaches who know which kind of activity goes better in which place. So it’s never spontaneous just like that.. it is always planned, but there is always room for flexibility. It also depends on the sort of feedback we are getting from the crowd at that moment - like if they’re engaged or not. If the participants are becoming less engaged in an activity, we stop it and move on to another. Other times you see the participants are getting into a really good discussion, so you give them a bit more space.

I: You already answered this question in a way before, but I was wondering if there are designated times for play?

J: We also have playful activities, playful times.. the foosball.. so you can take a break anytime and go play fifa or foosball. We have many socials as well. We sometimes do energizers when people seem to be down. Like we have morning meetings, that is every Monday morning, we have breakfast together, and then we talk about the projects, do project updates. The leadership has an announcement that they want to share with us. And sometimes we do a quick energizer of some sort. We have something called mazunga, where everyone goes.. Maaaaaa.. and then they go zunga, and everyone has fun for minute. Something like that. I think we have that mindset in everything. The social space is very social. We don’t have cubicles that we spend the whole day at. So that is also another level of play at work.

J: We also have the summer holiday... where all the studios meet. That would be 250 people getting together. And that is all about play. There is nothing work related. It is just getting together and having a good time together. It connects us in a way. Everyone care a lot about the summer holiday, and everyone looks forward to it. We party hard as
well.. we try to do that regularly, and we go out and all that stuff. So we spend time together to keep that playful thing going on.

**Interview 2**

Interviewee: Jack.
Position at Digivation: Coach and visual designer
Duration of interview: 60 min.
Interview conducted 28.07.2015

I: What do you do at Digitvation?

J: I was hired primarily as a visual designer. I do a bit of everything though. I have some coding experience, I have worked with project management before and with game development - so I am a bit of everything.

I: Is your educational background in visual design?

J: Yes, I started as a graphic designer doing print design, visual communication, branding, systems - those kinds of things. Thereafter I moved into the digital space.

I: How long have you been at Digitvation?

J: I have been at Digitvation for about a year and a half now.

I: Can you describe a typical workday at Digitvation?

J: A typical day at Digitvation... it has definitely changed over the last year. At the moment, a typical day would be sitting in the morning with a planning list for a client, and with a little self-dialogue about the client. What does the client actually want? I then compare what value we can bring to the client with what value the project can bring to Digitvation and to yourself. Generally looking at internal client-Digitvation perspectives. And then I align priorities - figuring out where the pressure is at, who has to know what, making sure everyone is in the loop.

I: Is there a kind of routine for a typical workday?

J: Yes. But sometimes you just know, like If there is pressure to get some kind of production work done. Generally, I like to have a taking-your-head-out-of-the-ground-parascope and see what is really needed.
I: Is having an overview specific for your role?

J: I don’t know. Maybe some people aren’t interested in that. I myself am pushing in a different direction, getting more into thinking strategically over time. I personally feel that you can waste a lot of energy if an overview is lacking. I like to make sure that everybody is aligned.

I: So you are responsible for coordinating the efforts of different employees?

J: Yes, I am working with people that are over people, and I am helping them see how they can change structures and align thinking and processes -align groups of people.

I: What kinds of tools do you use to align people?

J: I guess there are two flip-sides to this. We can interview the teams, see where the bumps are and produce some kind of guidelines, give these guidelines to the teams and watch the results. It is kind of like teaching. The old teaching model is where the teacher dictates to you, and where you absorb the content. But this method is not super effective. It is better to have some kind of internal team learning. The feedback from giving guidelines to the teams is that they are not absorbing them, not changing their behaviours. Our approach to teaching is kind of touching upon coaching, which is a discipline at Digitvation that taps into the human potential. We are trying to get the teams to create their own guidelines for processes which they own.

I: There seems to be a tension between telling people what to do and letting them figure it out on their own...

J: Telling people what to do is traditional waterfall. It is against what Digitvation is pushing culture-wise. We are aiming for distributed leadership where people self-manage and are self-aware. The individual has a lot more responsibility. There is a bit of that coming through in my worknings with the Ikea-group, where we try to get people engaged so they don’t turn up at the computer, read emails and can’t do shit. We want to give them some kind of power and engagement.

I: Are there sometimes conflicts between encouraging self-management and aligning people toward common goals? I mean do employees’ self-management sometimes collide with the overall strategic direction of the company?
J: Yes, I guess. For instance with the Ikea project. When you bring in these changes of process, you are definitely affected by a hierarchy of decision-making. Do you know the build, measure learn-model?

I: Is it a design-model?

J: It is kind of basic human feedback. You do something, you fail, which is the measurement, you learn, and then you try again. You find this in agile processes. You fail fast and you learn. But it's still very basic human communication. If you want to get good at football or some new skill, you learn from these feedback-mechanisms. Basically, in the part of Ikea that I am working with, they don't measure or learn what they do. They just put content on digital without measuring what users are doing. They don't measure and learn, basically. That is a big problem from the top-down. No matter what you do at the bottom level, you are affected by that process. So working with teams, changing processes, I found that they are getting the stuff, but there is a bit of crunch, maybe because they are not used to it culture-wise. Perhaps they are just coming out of school and used to being told what to do. There is a bit of a learning-curve in changing the mentality towards self-learning and self-motivation. Overall, my position is hampered by this overall company structure where they are not measuring and learning. If you are self-learning, and you have a goal, but you can't measure what you've done for success, the link to self-improvement is broken.

I: Who sets the overall strategic direction?

J: The top of the company.

I: So when the top of the company decides on a strategy, do these top-directors just reveal the strategy to the employees and let them figure out how to effectuate it on their own?

J: The guys doing the top strategy are very unclear. They don't have a strategy. I think at Ikea the physical retail business is super strong, and I think they don't have any pressure to improve their online business. There is no real interest in making it amazing. So they are quite lax in their thinking, and there is a lot of old-school thinking too. They strategy is very unaligned, and that is where I am trying to make a difference.

I: Would you call aligning people a kind of management?

J: We have this coaching-role at Digitvation, which is basically about listening to people and getting their potential by raising awareness. That's where the teaching metaphor
comes in again. You can teach someone by giving them information and ordering them to learn it, or you can try to raise awareness within the employee.

I: Using the teacher-student metaphor, what is the role of the teacher?

J: I make the distinction between directive and non-directive learning. Directive learning is when the student is given the information and is supposed to learn it. Non-directive learning, or coaching, would be to get the coachee or the student to become aware of what they want, what is the goal here. They would identify the goal themselves, so at least their focus is on the right thing. Then you would raise awareness of the reality. If we for instance are working together, and you have an ambition to achieve a specific outcome, be it a certain grade or recognition, and you have done 50% of the work - I would raise awareness of the options you have to reach your goal. Sometimes the coachees don’t see the options because they are preoccupied with other things, or because they lack some knowledge.

I: You mentioned that you coached managers at Ikea. Do the coaches work internally with the members of various teams, or do you coach your clients?

J: Coaching is used at Digitvation to get the teams functioning. I am learning the techniques, and a lot of it is just listening to people and raising awareness.

I: I read on a blogpost that Digitvation have made a transition from project-managers to coaches. What approach to managing did Digitvation have before coaching?

J: Here, I would again make the distinction between directive and non-directive learning. To me, project managers are in charge of managing the time, the budget, telling people where they should be. Under that kind of management, the team can turn their brain off a bit and wait on instructions regarding where they should be. One of the main responsibilities of the project manager is to remain in contact with the user, but they often neglect this responsibility. They tend to think about their budget, about their boss. The project manager usually has many directing competencies and responsibilities. At Digitvation, however, UX, design, strategy all have an equal say in the project. There are some teething problems with the transition from project managers to coaches. Everything is new, and people need to figure out where they have to be. The teething problems I see concern the learning process, teaching people to get out of their respective boxes.

I: So does the transition from project managers to coaches mean that there is no management at Digitvation?
J: Yeah, pretty much. It does have problems as well. The New York studio has some project managers.

I: You mentioned that there aren’t any project managers at Digitvation. But you still use the word structure to describe how work is organized. How would you describe the company’s structure?

J: This is still in transition. There has been identified a role called product owner. I am not sure what the differences are between a project manager and a product owner, but there seems to be this movement... which might be a reaction to the lack of success of a more distributed leadership model. The new product owner- role, which the top-management is still trying to define, is kind of a hub or a spider.

The way it is now, with the more distributed kind of competencies, the amount of communication required to align people is enormous. I think people are realizing that this approach is super energy intensive, to get everyone on board at all levels aware of all aspects of the project. There seems to be some kind of reaction to this. There is this new product owner-role. He or she is in the middle and is the main nerve-system of the project, which the other members of the team feed into. So perhaps the test with distributed leadership didn’t really work, and the top-management has decided to move the main managerial responsibilities back to one person.

I: What was the original intention of moving away from the traditional project manager-role?

J: My impression is that people at the lower levels of large, hierarchical organizations are really disconnected. It is not very rewarding for the person, and it isn’t particularly efficient for the team, either. So I think there was an ambition to cut down on that and try to get everyone super-engaged, to allow some intelligent people to work and communicate without having to go through a whole bunch of people. But there seems to be a request for a person who has a more central role, who is more in control of the project as a whole. I guess it requires a lot of energy to get a high level of commitment and engagement from a number of people, and that can be quite tiring.

I: What does a typical project look like from initiation to completion?

J: A proposal would come from a client, the business team will receive this proposal. The process is at the moment that we would put a pitch team together to respond to the proposal. The product owner and the business lead would sit together and look at the business and the design angles. After that, there is usually a second round of
negotiations. And then, if we win the project, we proceed with some workshops. These workshops concern aligning the client's expectations with the reality, with what the user finds important, aligning their budget with a realistic output, we devise a time strategy. It’s about getting clear on the priorities of the project. We talk about MVP, which is a minimal viable product. We list all the features an app could have, and then the Digitvation-team, together with the client, will prioritize these features into a minimum viable product. Ideally, if we have some user-feedback, we try to use the feedback to refine features depending on how end-users actually use the product. We build, measure and learn and then change the product based on actual real-life data.

I: To what extent is the desired outcome of a project decided in advance?

J: What we try to do is.. you have to show the client some respect. Sometimes, they don't have any user-data, they only have some more or less vague ideas in their heads, and you have to take it case by case. For example, we are working with a game company, and we are dealing with a bunch of 40-50 year old men who are making a product for a 7 - 10 year old girl. We would first start by getting all the information and features on the wall.. and then try prioritize these to end up with something very minimal. You could spend three years building the product, every feature, and then you can release it. You may have created a failure. Our approach with building a MVP is that it is smaller, quicker and, therefore, less risky. You have a greater chance at success if you build something smaller and less expensive, test it, and improve it - instead of doing this huge thing that might fail at the end of it. The extent to which features are decided in advance depends on what the client is pushing for. We push for minimum risk. Let us test the client’s assumptions, before they go gambling with some huge project.

I: Would you say there is a procedure for executing projects at Digitvation?

J: Yes, when we get projects in, there are very similar project phases.

I: I noticed that fun and play are pervasive themes at Digitvation. Do you get to play at work?

J: Yeah, I think the core of this idea is Mills’ and Sinc’s. They really wanted to build a place where they could work with people they like. It guess it’s just a couple of young guys who had a dream of doing something super fun. That is the seed of it. I think that is part of the hiring policy, too. We hire people who are more of a fit with the culture, who are a bit more open minded. There are a lot of emotionally intelligent people here, and there is a lot of energy for the human side of stuff. I have never been in a company
with this amount of energy for friendship, and all the stuff that goes for the human part of communication. People are very aware of where people’s energy levels are at, how they are affected by their personal life. There is this joke about Digitvation being a fampany, a family company. I have never before met this amount of open people, or felt this connection with colleagues. There are now over 70 - 80 people now, so it can be tough as well, being emotionally available for people all the time, and also trying to get some production work done. But I do feel a lot of benefits from this culture, especially coming from a country with no family or friends here, Digitvation has provided me with a lot of human needs.

I: Can you describe some of the play activities at Digitvation?

J: Well, you’ve been to the studio yourself. There is the foosball, the characters - just messing with people. There was pingpong last week. I think it’s just the attitude as well. There are guitars lying around the place, the environment is not so strict - people draw on the walls. We have business and work communication, but we also have party-pooper, which is the music channel. And there is a lot of inter-joke communication and fun. And then we have a lot of socials, going for meals - that kind of thing. There is a lot of energy put into us having a good time. That is where we really connect. Last year, at around March, we went for a bootcamp for three to four days, which was about learning a bit more about coaching and just hanging out and connecting with people - I was just an emotional wreck after the bootcamp. The fun just happens when you are in a really safe environment with people that show some kind of care. Then you just relax and sort of make your own fun.

I: The play activities you described don’t seem to be infused into any work-processes. Is play sometimes part of the process of work or used as a tool?

J: When we have kick-off meetings with a client... do you know the team dynamics model? The team meets and everyone is nice and friendly until a conflict appears, which is stage two. If people are not comfortable with going to the next stage, which is the actual feedback stage, then people will go back to phase one. But if they push through phase two into phase three, and actually get feedback with a bit of friction, they can move to phase four, which is a really effective team. Fun would come into the team building session. If we are trying to discuss the project-vision, we might use Lego, or something a bit more childish just to put down these barriers. We might get a client that thinks he is.. he has a super ego, and he doesn’t want to look stupid or not in control - you get different people with different agendas. We would propose some kind of childish activity with lego or drawing on the walls, where the process is quite relaxed and transparent. There is no fear of somebody jumping down your throat. It’s about
pulling down these barriers. This creates some kind of trust or connection with the client. It’s just human connections. For example, we sometimes get employees from BMW at the studio and take a match of FIFA with the guys from Digitvation, which provides bonding and trust so we can get really hard with them in the projects because we have this friendship / fun level. Fun can be used to build trust and connection with people.

I: Are there designated times for play and fun?

J: We expect employees to self-manage and to be in control of their own time. That kind of trust from the company allows you to go with how you feel.

I: I stumbled upon a process called JFDI. What does that mean?

J: It means Just Fucking Do It. It comes from Mills and Sinc, maybe more from Mills. It means just do things. There is a bit of that, but there was a bit of a reaction to that when I started last year. Sometimes, Just Fucking Do It isn’t the right approach. Some people are a bit more considerate and don’t want to waste energy by just fucking doing it. I guess that is coming from one particular mindset, which might come from some of the leadership in London. There was a bit of a reaction from other minds. I do see the value in using that mindset as a tool sometimes. If we for instance are thinking about something too much, it’s better just to do something.

I: How do you align people if everyone has a mindset of just fucking doing it?

J: I think that is in transition at the moment. There is a leadership team in each studio, and we have a lead coach, who is aligning all the leadership of the different studios, and the studio vision is changing a bit. At the moment, it’s ‘make magical products that matters’. They are still defining it though: What is a magical product, and what is a product that matters? So that is individual at the moment, what is magic to the individual and to the team. If we are kicking off, we try to identify what matters, and evaluate if we should take on the project - is there enough space for magic. But that can be interpreted in a lot of ways, so the vision is being refined to something a bit more deep, more depth in terms of thought. JFDI are from the days Digitvation was a younger company with a lot fewer employees. Then it was about just making things happening. The company is expanding a lot more, so there are a lot of different mindsets that have to be taken care of.

I: You may have answered the question already, but does JFDI ever get in the way of effective collaboration?
J: Yes. It’s something that’s on posters and t-shirts. I don’t hear it being used as much now. The company is getting a bit more mature, people are getting wiser on business and strategy thinking, which is not so much just fucking doing it. You can still apply that mindset, and it can give you energy. But there is a lot more tuning into the client - that is what you are hired to do. You are hired to do something for a client or another person in the world, and that requires empathy and listening, and really clarifying what they and the user wants. So... just fucking do it... you can still say it, but it changes in the context. It’s kind of vague.

I: You mentioned the distinction between directed and non-directed learning. Does non-directed learning mean that the employee has complete discretion to do whatever he wants, or how would you describe the difference?

J: It is implied that you can do whatever you want. I’m a designer, I can be a developer if I wanted to, but you have to align your personal needs with the company needs, and there has to be some kind of balance. There are no mentors at our studio. At the New York studio, the employees are used to mentors or senior designers who guide people through a project. I don’t have a boss or a mentor. I could ask for one if I needed it. Having no boss has made me aware of what I need and what my options are. There are many options to explore. Sometimes I am hanging out with the business people, sometimes the strategy people. I am super privileged that I can go ask and learn, instead of being put in a box to do just UX or something. I have seen some designers who were asked to go a certain direction, which they didn’t want, and they were allowed to make that decision. It comes from within - you are allowed to explore what you want to do.

I: How does the leadership ensure that what the individual employee wants to do is aligned with what the company needs?

J: You would just raise it up. Let me see... If you want to acquire a different skill... I am pushing in the direction of learning coaching skills, and I just raised it up with the head coach. There aren’t going to be a lack of chances to use it within the company, so it’s just going to add to my skill set, and it’s not conflicting. And it’s more pushing at my self. You get some personal time at the company to spend on your own projects. It’s not like I want to be a developer, and that I am spending a developers time and resources, which could have been put to better use for the company. If I wanted to be a developer, that could conflict with the resources needed for me to get there. So there has to be some kind of alignment, and you just talk to lead-designer and lead developer.
I: I noticed that there is a strong emphasis on culture at Digitvation. How would you describe the culture?

J: The hiring policy is to get the right people in. They try not to get these super 'I am a genius’ kind of mindsets. A lot of our work is based on working in teams and communicating outwards. So the culture is... it can get distracting as well. I remembered when I landed here that it was super distracting, and it took a while to actually filter out the different channels of communication. That gives you a certain strength of mind to tune in and out. But the culture... it’s a lot of people that are emotionally available, fun for development on a human level. I am touching on the fampany-thing. There are a lot of people I have a lot of meaning with, a lot of depth - maybe even closer then some of my siblings, and I’ve only been here a year and a half. I feel a lot of support in terms of people and... the whole range from sad to happy. There is a real emotion bandwidth from as deep as you want to go to as high as you want to go, and there is no oversharing. Everything is really open to share, you can share everything you like.

I: What kind of activities does the company organize in order to develop or sustain this culture?

J: In the autumn there is going to be some kind of bootcamp, and that’s just going to be about hanging out in some cool house in the country and having drinks in the evening. A lot of it is just forming friendships, and facilitating an environment where there is a slight work-agenda, but it’s really relaxed. The leadership are just one of the gang. Another example is the company holiday a few weeks back, The whole studio went to Portugal, and were hanging around the pool, having drinks, bonding as humans. You get to a different level with people.

I: How important is creativity for Digitvation’s work?

J: I think it’s important, it’s just natural. I think there is an environment for that as well. I described the process of project kick offs earlier, where it’s very democratic and even. Creativity is just an exchange of ideas in providing a new solution. So it’s just connecting ideas from different parts of the brain, and providing an environment where that can happen, where people from different parts of the company can contribute with ideas. The main focus is the user... this is what the product is for. You have to keep the client happy, but you have to enlighten the client to shift the focus toward the user. If everyone is aligned and focused on the user, and everybody is just flowing the ideas into
creating the best experience for the user... you get a cross pollination of ideas and a fair chance of finding a creative solution.

I: I noticed that Digitvation employees refer to their workspace as a studio. What does that mean?

J: I don’t know. I think that people think the word office is boring. It’s just a mindset thing.

I: How is a studio different from an office?

J: I guess... if you think of the way your brain works, it tends to work in stereotypes. If you think of a policeman, you think for a New York-cop, you push things into stereotype labels. The word office.. I think something grey, boardrooms, something like Microsoft. A studio.. I think of something a bit more creative. The images or stereotypes attached to each word are different. I would say that’s the only difference.

I: Is there a difference between the work you’d do at an office and the work you’d do at a studio?

J: Our studio environment is quite playful.. But you can do creative work wherever. It depends on the minds. It’s more about the cross pollination for the minds, really. But then again, we get into deeper stuff; does the environment.. when you listen to a lot of talks on creativity, the environment and play-mentality helps get people into the creative mode. In my mind, if were in a dark, focused place...

I: Do you find that creativity can be managed?

J: There are a lot of ideas outside of projects that pop up, but... can you rephrase the question?

I: Do you see any tension between creativity and aligning employees toward a common goal?

J: I think you just allow a space... People are marinating ideas when they go home.. The space for that is at the kickoffs. When you have rules to align employees, I think the creativity is going to be more focused.

**Interview 3**

Interviewee: Lisa.
I: What do you do at Digitvation?

L: I am a coach. We work in projects within the company, so our task is to facilitate different teams in different settings.

I: What’s your background?

L: I have a bachelor in design, and after that I’ve studied digital media at Hyper Island. That is where I got into process design, facilitation and digital production.

I: How long have you been at Digitvation

L: I have been here as an intern for six months, and I started a trainee-ship just two weeks ago.

I: Seen from your perspective, how is work organized at Digitvation?

L: From my perspective, work is organized mostly around projects. One part concerns the projects that we have, and the other part consists of the administrative tasks. There is a studio team with studio managers, HR, the economy team and a leadership team that is responsible for the different functions such as tech, design, coaching. The coaching team forms a managing team that isn’t really managing in the traditional sense, but they have responsibility for people.

I: Do employees at Digitvation have formally defined roles, or do they do a bit of everything?

E: To some extent they have formally defined roles, but there aren’t any role descriptions. At least my role is in the process of defining itself at the moment. It is easier for designers. There is a lot of space to define individually how you will act in your role.

I: Do you work out your role together with a manager of some sort?

L: Yes, you do it with your manager or directors, as we call them. At a team-level we do it with the other team members and the director.
I: Can you describe a typical work-day as a coach?

L: A typical workday would begin with checking your email to see what has happened, and we would usually start the day with a few stand-ups. Each of us are usually members of a few different teams. We have some presentations of mostly internal stuff. We work on one or more projects at a time, so we usually have our tasks delegated at the stand ups. These tasks can be more or less administrative. Then you would probably attend an internal meeting, where the directors and the coaches review the employees and assess how they are doing personally. This kind of meeting takes place once a week.

I: Is this assessment related to a specific project, or does it concern how the employees are doing personally?

L: No, the meeting concerns how the employees are doing personally. And then we may go to a planning meeting, and then we have lunch. After that we may have some personal planning workshops where we plan ahead according to what the various project teams need. A work day varies a lot depending on the projects we are involved in.

I: Would you describe your work-day as being planned in advance, or would you describe it as being spontaneous?

L: That varies a lot. Sometimes your entire day can be booked with meetings where you have a tight schedule. Weeks can go by in this way, and sometimes you have to wrap up a project where you have a more open schedule, and our task is to hover around and pick up stuff. That is part of our role to do some soft stuff.

I: Can you describe the outcome of your work? What do you produce?

L: I produce efficiency, working with clarification, alignment and visualisation of processes that help people collaborate more easily. The smooth functioning of teams can be the output of my work. Another output is growing the people on the teams - the development of people, and also the development of the organization.

I: How is your work combined with the work of your colleagues?

L: Do you mean specifically coach colleagues, or colleagues from other functions?
I: If you for example are working on a project together with designers and developers, what does your function contribute with?

L: I think it has a traditional project management part, ensuring all the practicalities are in place. That is not our main focus, but we also do some of that. We are responsible for the meta-perspective of the project and the processes. So while the designers are focused on the outcome of their delivery, I focus on how people are working together - are they happy, are they learning. We also focus on some of the strategic goals of the whole company - making sure that these goals are infused into the teams.

I: So they have the hands-on perspective in terms of designing, developing, and you have an overview of what each member of the team is contributing with?

L: And also how they feel doing their work, I would say. Are they working at their best, could they be working better or more happily together.

I: I read a blogpost on your website on the transition from project managers to coaches. Does that mean that there aren’t any ‘traditional’ managers at Digitvation?

L: In Malmö there aren’t. In London and New York there are traditional project managers. We don't have anyone with the traditional project manager role. But right now we are having a discussion about those tasks that a traditional project manager would be responsible for. Are those tasks covered, or do we coaches need to pick up on them, or does some other role need to pick up on them. What we want is self-managing teams, but we are not really sure yet who does what in those teams. Some tasks still need to be done that are not being done at the moment.

I: How would you describe the difference between a coach and a traditional project manager?

L: I would say that a traditional project manager manages the project and we coaches manage the process. So that means we don’t necessarily need to do every task that has to do with running a project. What we do is we facilitate the team, putting all the things in place in a way that suits the members of the team, instead of telling them how they should do it. We need a schedule - that is quite common in a project, we need some kind of overview over what we are going to do. Instead of providing a schedule and saying that you are going to do this task at this time, and you have to work this way, we say: we need a schedule, how do you want to do it? We take a debate on this matter and make a decision, which I then follow up on.
I: Given that the work is organized in these semi-autonomous teams, does each member of the team influence decisions equally?

L: That is our aim. But of course there are individual differences regarding how much the team member cares. It is our aim that everybody’s preferences are included in the process.

I: Are there ever struggles or conflicts in the process of making collective decisions?

L: Yes there are. I have to add that I do not have as much experience as many of my colleagues, so I have not seen everything happen yet. Of course there are disagreements on for instance how important it is to have all tasks visible on a wall. Some employees prefer to work more spontaneously and have all the things in their mind, and I need to mediate these kinds of disagreements.

I: How are conflicts typically resolved?

L: I would say that conflicts are resolved by bringing the matter of conflict up to discussion. It depends on which level the conflict is. If there is some issue there is tension around on a studio level, then there is usually an open discussion where people are encouraged to voice their opinions. And there is usually a clear decision on who makes the decision. So there is clarity on who makes the decision, but also openness for people to voice their opinions.

I: Is there someone who has the authority to make the ultimate decision on a matter?

L: Yes, but there is an ambition to make decisions as collective as possible. But decisions need to be made for the company to function efficiently, so there has to be some place where a decision is made by someone or some people. We had to hire a new design director a few months ago where we had a process of people nominating and those people speaking up for who they wanted. But in the end it was the CEO who made the decision.

I: The next theme I am going to address is the idea of the project. Can you describe what a project typically looks like from initiation to completion?

L: The first thing that happens is that someone at Digitvation gets contacted by a potential client, typically someone from the business team that works proactively with building a network. Otherwise we pitch a design solution to a company that has
solicited the services of several companies. When there is some kind of agreement in place between the business team and the studio, there is a briefing. Then we set a team up, and usually the coaches are very active at this stage preparing the team through team-building, making sure everyone is aligned on what we are going to do and that they understand the challenge we stand before, what the risks and opportunities are, how are we going to work, how they feel about it. Then we usually have a workshop with the client, preferably with their whole team. What we want is to be one team with the client. Some clients have a lot of time which they can spend at the studio, but usually they don’t. We do as much as we can to bring us, the studio and the client, together as one team. Then we start working, building prototypes as soon as we can, preferably having continuous communication with the client. We may have a few deliveries or demos, which we get feedback on. Depending on what kind of tasks we have, we do several iterations. If we cannot work agile in this way, the process may look different. But the projects are quite different from one another depending on the client.

I: To what extent is the desired outcome of the project defined in advance?

L: Usually there is some sort of outcome we strive for. There is a viable product defined based on what the client needs. But we want to have quite a lot of space to make changes to the planned outcome of the project while we work. That is where communication skills are important, to keep the alignment of the team members in place as we redefine the tasks as the project progresses.

I: Would you say that your projects follow more or less similar project phases, or are project phases reinvented from scratch?

L: There are some stages of the project that are similar, of course. But we don’t have a mold that we put everything into. We make a hypothesis at the beginning of a project which he use to set up the team and divide responsibilities. Our ambition is to continuously reevaluate our set-up and proposed project-phases throughout the project. Perhaps we should spend more time on iterations, or maybe we need some deadlines.

I: Would you say that creative ideas are more important than efficiency in execution?

L: Yes, I would say so. I think that is our strength, that there is something in the environment here that helps creativity flourish. But at the same time we are figuring out the balance between creativity and business. How do we actually put creativity into
the business framework. We need to be able to reassure our clients that we will solve their brief. There is always this balance between having a space for creativity and how we frame it while holding the client’s hand as we explore different solutions.

I: Can you elaborate on how you view the relationship between creativity and efficiency?

L: I would say that they are skills on different levels. It is a personal skill for individuals to manage when they are creative, and how they package what they found and communicate that to other people, and put their findings into frameworks that are created by the client or other team-members. But there is also a matter of deciding processes; Here there is an open field where you can do whatever; here we narrow it down. I’m thinking that managing creativity is about having the space as an individual or a team to not be restricted by requirements, to have the space to not know what you are doing - and also having the mandate to act on things you see as possibilities to create something.

I: Is there anything you do as a coach to manage creative processes?

L: One thing that we do is to create trust. Both in having that meta-perspective to know that someone is responsible for each phase of the process, for instance that someone is responsible for the explorative / creative phase. We also work with the teams so they get to know each other and how they work best together. There is a skill that people are aware of their own strengths so they can boost each others’ creative processes.

I: Is there a specific phase of a project where there is more space for creativity - a designated creativity phase?

L: No, we don’t have a designated creativity phase. But usually we focus more on concept development at the beginning of a project, and in some projects there is a designated concept phase. But otherwise, I think creativity is quite intermingled into the project, especially if you work iteratively with making a prototype and then making it again.

I: Would you say that it is possible to plan for creativity? Or would you say that creativity is more coincidental?

L: I think that depends on how you view creativity. It’s one thing being a designer and thinking: Ok, now I’m going to have a brain-storming session. But I think it’s bigger than that - that having the mandate to act and the mandate to fail and owning your own projects makes people use their own intuition and quirks to see where there is a
possibility to do something unpredictable. Creativity is not only about making cool designs, it is also a question of how you view a client’s challenges, or how you relate to their challenge in a creative way.

I: You mentioned that you need to have the mandate to experiment and to fail. Has the consequence of this mandate ever been a significant failure? Or do you somehow try to mitigate the possibility of failure?

L: We try to mitigate that risk by not allowing people to be lonely geniuses. We work as a team, and we work with feedback from the studio as much as we can. Usually if someone is on a risky path, someone will probably have the courage to say what they think. We aim for passing the ideas through more brains than one so we can use collective quality assurance.

I: I was reading a slide show made by Digitvation’s director of fun, Sabine, and I stumbled upon the process JFDI. What does that mean?

L: The process is not really a process, but rather a mantra: Just Fucking Do It - which sort of means that you should try something and see what happens, rather than think a lot and ask for permission. Try it and report honestly how it went and what you have learnt from it.

I: Has an employee ever gotten into trouble from interpreting this idea literally?

L: Well maybe not at work, but we have had christmas parties where someone has thought ‘let’s order a lot of beer and trash a room.’ That is an extreme example of JFDI.

I: Do you have any examples of employees adhering to JFDI at work?

L: There are probably many examples of this, but I don’t think I have been here long enough to know them. One mediocre example is a project I am in now, where we were having lengthy discussions with a client about the way we wanted to try a bolder version of the user experience design, and they wanted to go with a more traditional design. We were discussing the pros and cons of our proposal back and forth, and instead of discussing the matter to death, we made a prototype. Quite often it applies to mundane office things like: I really want this drawer at my desk, which no one is using, so I am just going to take it. I mean, you saw the office the other day. If someone wants to put up stupid stuff, they’ll just do it.

I: What do you see as the advantages of a JFDI-mindset?
L: It encourages people to grasp opportunities. If you see something that could be
improved, something magical that nobody thought about, you will actually try it, or say
to the client: ‘I saw this, it could be game-changing for you’. No one is checking with
five managers to see if their initiative is ok. In this way, we’ve gotten into working on
clients’ strategies even though we were hired as designers. Designers may have spotted
many possibilities for improvement and then just voiced their ideas. We can make a big
difference when the people working with the problems at hand can act on what they
think is important.

I: I noticed that Digitvation’s employees refer to the workspace as a studio. What does
that mean?

L: I actually haven’t reflected on that. I would say that the term studio suggests that it is
a more shared space than an office. I think that is how we view it, that the space is our
common work-area. And there is also something about Digitvation being a studio of
dreams, also referring to Digitvation’s studios all over the world. By saying studio we
say that we are somehow a unity that goes beyond both company and office.

I: How is a studio different from an office?

L: In my opinion, when I say studio, it could be an artist’s studio or a film studio. There
is a space that can move or transform

I: Would you say that there aren’t any routines at Digitvation?

L: Of course there are routines. There are a lot of people doing the same thing every
day. But maybe the routines are not as businessy or officy as at a lot of workplaces. But
yeah, there are routines.

I: Do you find that routines can be an obstruction to creativity?

L: One routine is work-time. We have core-hours, which means that we are supposed to
be at the studio between 10:00 - 16:00. That is when you need to be able to get hold of
people. But apart from that you can decide if you want to start at 07:00, or if you want
to start at 10:00. And you can decide to leave at 17:00 or 21:00. So you can work when
you find it suitable to work. You can even sit where you want, eat where you want.
I: Are there routines that pertain to the actual work-tasks where you find some re-occurring structures?

L: We are trying to wrap the projects in similar ways with kick-off meetings and to wrap them up afterwards with retrospectives so that people can get used to having those meta-wrappings in projects.

I: So you are trying to introduce some sort of regularity to your projects?

L: Yes, some sort of regularity. Instead of having a project manager dictate the structure, we are trying to have rhythms people can put content into, a constant that people can follow. But not as strict as a structure.

I: Is that what you see as the difference between working at a studio compared to an office? I mean is there a difference between an office and a studio in terms of the regularity of work?

L: I think it is efficient to have some sort of routine. But just as I referred to a studio as a place that can change physically, I think the same about the routines - that they can be dynamic. If there suddenly arises a need for a different kind of structure, we can shift our habits and structures really easily. There are not many layers that decisions have to go through. The company is some sort of living creature of habits and routines.

I: Would you say that routines and regularity are compatible with creativity?

L: Yes, I would say so. As long as you have the mandate, the knowledge, and the space to change them - and also the skill to see that they have to change.

I: Are there certain routines that are more conducive to creativity than other routines?

L: I don’t think that I can specify a certain kind of routines, but I think that there is a balance. If you have a certain security with routines, then there is a balance that will enhance your creativity. If the routines are too insecure or too rigid, then routines will diminish the space of creativity.

I: So too much irregularity is counter-productive to creativity, and...
L: Exactly. In order to be creative there have to be some constants. Some sort of box in which you can operate. You need some restrictions, both in terms of your task and what you have to work with. So you need to know who is on your team, are they going to be on the team throughout the entire project, or are they going to leave. We need to know if we are going to work certain hours or not.

I: Would you conceive of creativity as something that has to do with transgressing routines, or would you say that some barriers and limitations can encourage creativity?

L: I would say that those two need to be balanced.

I: You mentioned that limitations can be necessary for a productive work-flow. Do you find that limitations can help you and the team think up new ideas?

L: Yes, I think so. There is almost always a need for some restriction.

I: Do you have an example from Digitvation where you found that a brief which defined the project more narrowly was a pre-requisite for thinking new ideas?

L: I think that is happening all the time. Usually a project comes with a lot of limitations in terms of if it is interesting or not, who it is going to reach, the budget - stuff like that. We had a project for Adidas that wanted... that was the opposite, actually. Sometimes time is one of those limitations that can really spur creativity. For this project, we had only a week and a rather small budget. They [Adidas] wanted to make a running app that could adjust the tempo of the music to your pace. In the design process, one person was running while a dj was cycling next to him, adjusting the tempo of the music to the runner's heartbeat. That became a really good product, and we had limited time and resources.

I: I noticed that play and fun are pervasive themes at Digitvation. Do you get to play at work?

L: Yes, we do.

I: Can you describe some of the play activities?

L: We have foosball, which people play several times a day. We also play video games, and have a culture of sending gifts and modifying photos of each other, which we send around on email. There are a lot of jokes going around on various digital channels. We also have a music service, we developed ourselves, called party pooper. The service is
connected to all the speakers. You can queue a song and then vote to poop or pump the
song. If there are more poops than pumps after the song has played for 15 seconds, it
will stop playing and switch to the next song in the queue. There are sometimes music
battles going on while working.

I: Would you say work and play as different activities? I mean, is it easy to separate
work from play?

L: No, I think they exist in symbiosis. And usually we include our clients into the play
activities, once we get to know them. Our meme-board, where we post photoshopped
pictures of co-workers, also includes funny pictures of our clients. Play puts something
extra into our client-relations, which gives us business, which gives us an open way of
working with them, which makes us take care of possibilities even more. So I think
work and play are catalysts for each other.

I: The examples you gave me, the memes and foosball, show how you play at the office.
But these activities do not seem to be integrated into the actual work activity. Are there
examples of how work is infused into work-processes?

L: That depends on what you mean by playing. I think that every time we brainstorm or
open up a creative session, that can be related to both strategy and visual design, we
create a space where you don’t need to be serious. That is sort of play. There is one
component in our process which we call service definition workshops, which is at the
beginning of a project. The workshop is about the client’s vision, the product we are
going to make - we ultimately try to understand what we are trying to achieve. A part of
this workshop is a lego vision-session where we build the grand vision of the product
and visualise what we want the product to do. That is a part of play as well.

I: How would you define play?

L: I would define it as dislodging what you do from everything you know about it and
trying possibilities - or creating a universe of... somehow creating a universe where
more possibilities are possible - creating a space where we have agreed that we can try
out stuff. It’s about going into that state, and using all the power of being human while
you are in it.

I: Are there stages of a project where this state of mind is less appropriate for the task at
hand?
L: The more things you know are constant in a project, the less you need to play. For instance if you know that a person is dying in front of you, and you know he will die in five minutes unless you save him, then there isn't any space for play. If some client really needs a prototype tomorrow, we have no time to play.

I: So is it mostly at the beginning of larger projects you may have the opportunity to integrate playful elements into work?

L: I think it is easier to do at the beginning of projects because everything is more open. We have making magic as one of our principles, we want to make magical products, and I find that this ambition is connected to play.

I: When you engage in these more playful and conceptualising activities, is it completely chaotic or is it more or less organized?

L: I haven’t been in that many brainstorming sessions yet, so I can’t really say. But from what I have seen so far, I would say that play is quite organized. If the sessions involves only a few employees, it can get a bit chaotic. If it is a larger group, the sessions are quite organized.

I: Is the desired outcome of the play-activity specified before it begins?

L: I think that depends on the project. Sometimes there is a very specific task, for instance we need to make navigation for a service-provider. The play session then serves the purpose of figuring out a navigation concept. But some projects aren’t as narrowly defined. For instance once we had to make an artsy application for a clothing-brand. The client wanted something conceptual, so the brainstorming session was more open.

I: Would you say that projects where you have a more openly defined brief yield more creative outcomes?

L: I can’t answer the question with specific examples, but so far... in the creative industry in general, if you don’t have any restrictions, you need to make them yourself in some way. If we are given a super open brief, we need to make various restrictions. We have made some pitches where we needed some restrictions that could direct the process in some way.

I: Is there a procedure for narrowing down a brief and making it more tangible?
L: We are trying to devise such a process at the moment.

I: Can you elaborate on your view on the difference between work and play? How would you define work?

L: I don’t think there is an essential difference. If there is a difference, it is constructed by the way we arrange society. I think there can be elements of play in even mundane work-tasks, such as doing laundry or entering data into spreadsheets. I think play is a way of opening up perspectives, both in terms of specific tasks and in terms of relations with people - and thereby getting access to more of the world and more of people. There are many resources that don’t come out when you’re only talking about work.

I: Would you say that play is an activity that can be controlled?

L: There is an aspect of play that is about not controlling. But I think you can structure how you use play.

I: What is the difference between structuring play and controlling it?

L: Controlling play would be when you dictate how the play is going to play out. But then it would cease to be play, since play is about not knowing the outcome. You can agree on when you are playing and make routines around that. Now we are playing, and we are going to stop in an hour, then we are going to talk about how we played.

Blogpost 1:

THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEAMS
By George
15.04.2015

WHAT MAKES A TEAM TICK?
In January, our team held a retrospective. That’s a fancy way of saying we stopped working for a day to talk about ourselves.

We have been together for more than a year, growing in number but also becoming more effective. We’re a pretty good team now—we make higher quality work faster and have more fun doing it. But how does this work? Are we special? Nope. Is there some magical mountain spring where good teams come from? Probably not.

If we could get to the bottom of this, we could share it and maybe help others build good teams, too. So we set a goal for our day away: Uncover and clearly define the principles which helped form our team.

THIS, BUT IT’S ALSO THAT. UGH.
Like an archeological dig, the wisdom revealed itself slowly and with lots of careful effort. In a way, it was the hardest work we have done yet. We realized there were few definitive truths, few absolute “rules” for forming effective teams. Instead, each point seemed to have an opposite-yet-crucial counterpoint. So we started to distill our thoughts into a list of principles inspired by the structure of the Agile Manifesto, each principle highlighting the symbiotic nature of two opposing ideas.

We hope you find the 7 principles below to be simple and honest, and that they inspire you to consider how your own values can help you build a better team. Here, have some principles.

1. **HAPPINESS OVER STRESS**
   **WHILE WE VALUE THE RIGIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF TIMELINES AND DEFINED DELIVERABLES, WE VALUE THE OVERALL EFFECT OF PERSONAL HAPPINESS MORE.**

Positivity, clarity, and a shared purpose are stronger motivators for us than deadlines and feature lists. Stress is not a bad thing, but without happiness, stress is hurtful and not productive.

2. **FLEXIBILITY OVER STRUCTURE**
   **WHILE WE VALUE THE DEPENDABILITY OF RULES AND GUIDELINES, WE VALUE THE IMAGINATION AND FREEDOM TO CHANGE MORE.**

Team structure (contracts, rules, process) is only as effective as it is flexible. Structure is itself a tool and should be allowed to quickly change as the work evolves and the team grows.

3. **US OVER ME**
   **WHILE WE VALUE UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES, WE VALUE WORKING AS A TEAM WITH A SHARED PURPOSE MORE.**

A good idea starts with one person, but only a team can bring it to life. We believe that being together, communicating directly, and providing constant feedback is the best way to build strong teams and do good work. Involving other people in your work also creates team-wide ownership.

4. **SILLY OVER SERIOUS**
   **WHILE WE VALUE DISCIPLINE AND PROFESSIONALISM, WE VALUE SPONTANEITY AND FREE ASSOCIATION MORE.**

We’ve learned that being a “professional” and continuously looking for silliness are not mutually exclusive things. When we let our freak flag fly, our comfort zones expand and honest feedback is given and received more easily. Celebrating each other’s weirdness gives us even more energy than celebrating a big delivery.

5. **COLLABORATION OVER HIERARCHY**
   **WHILE WE VALUE THE SIMPLICITY AND CLARITY OF GROUP HIERARCHY, WE VALUE TEAM TRUST MORE.**

Hierarchy can be used as a cheap way to build trust. That said, we believe a hierarchical system that highlights our different levels of expertise can empower team members. In order for a team to be truly collaborative, it needs to value
what each member brings to the table and trust the authority of what they contribute.

6. COURAGE OVER COMFORT
WHILE WE VALUE A LAID-BACK WORKING ENVIRONMENT, WE VALUE UNFILTERED HONESTY MORE.

This team values comfort only when it doesn’t keep us from speaking our minds and hearts.
We believe that good people act with good intentions. Natural and lasting comfort takes hold as a team begins to act with the intent of improving the team or the work, and without fear of being personally hurtful or disrespectful. Over time, this preconception will change. Eventually, it will actually feel more disrespectful and hurtful to withhold feelings or observations than it would be to share them.

7. PRINCIPLES OVER OUTPUT
WHILE WE VALUE THE SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT COMES WITH DOING THE BEST POSSIBLE WORK, WE VALUE THE PRINCIPLES WHICH GUIDE US AS A TEAM MORE.

Awareness of and commitment to shared values are more important to a team than its collective skills, talents, and experience. Output that we can be proud of and which reflects who we are is impossible to create without team principles.

OUR TEAM IS BUILT ON ROCK.
All of these principles are built upon a single, non-negotiable truth: Good teams start with good people who trust each other to work toward a common purpose. This is the foundation of our team.
Watch our team present these principles to the studio in New York:

Blogpost 2:

HOW DO YOU DISTIL 3 USTWO STUDIOS DOWN INTO ONE FRESH HOLIDAY COCKTAIL?

By James - 1.10.2013

The summer holiday has been part of the ustwo™ experience from the very beginning. In previous years, the ever-expanding holidays have taken us to Wales, Cornwall, Fiskecampe in the south of Sweden (so nice we did it twice!) and, last year, Cascais in Portugal. 2013 marked the next generation of ustwo™ summer holidays. After nine years bringing together London and Malmö, we had the added ingredient of our shiny New York studio in the mix.

The holiday is eagerly and not so patiently awaited as a time to unite ustwo™ brothers and sisters for their once-a-year opportunity for true togetherness, in a
blissful location to soak up some Fampany vibes. The holiday is a singular event in the company calendar that crystallises the true sense of Fampany.

**USTWO™ HOLIDAY 2013**

This year, Croatia became our home from home. Three studios, three nights; 135 night-swimming, flat-out sunbathing, bar and BBQ-hopping ustwobies took over Rastovac resort near Tisno. Not your average corporate knees-up, but a special few days of creative thinking and drinking together. Each year the theme is simple: spend quality time with your fellow ustwobies. Make new friends. Build strong bonds and most of all, have an amazing time because you deserve it.

From our point of view in the organisational committee (our very own ustwo™ ‘culture club’), we knew that this year was going to be a bigger fish to fry than our previous successful holidays. Portugal was going to be hard to top, so we had to pull out all the stops to make sure Croatia was blowing any previous holiday experiences out of the water. We had a huge undertaking on our hands: 135 attendees flying out from several different countries, finding accommodation to fit us all, and trying to ensure that all ustwobies with different interests and outlooks had a brilliant time together, no matter what.

**THE POWER OF MUSIC**

The solution to the problem was simple though. MUSIC. A common theme that seems to run through all ustwo holidays is the one essential tool with which to bring everyone together. We equipped a group of our budding ustwo DJs with the set up they needed at the ustwo™ beach bar, situated overlooking a beautiful Croatian cove and distant islands, and let them run the show. With music flows beer, eclectic dance moves, laughing, singing, hugging and an instant physical and emotional connection between the group.

The ustwo™ holiday includes everyone, and we took seriously the potential to help create lasting bonds across the three studios. A handful of wide-eyed recent hires joined us, including one whose very first day began at Gatwick. There’s nothing like being thrown in at the deep end.

**THE USTWO™ OLYMPICS**

Our holiday presented the opportunity for some friendly competition amongst ustwobie teams. With the teams in place, we took a leap of faith and entered everyone into a “ustwo™ Olympics” where teams could race it out in three legged
or flip flop relays to win the all important points at the end. It may have taken 40 minutes to raise enough gusto in our hung-over ustwobies to take part, but once the teams were lined up for the first race – you couldn’t hold back those who wanted to bring glory to their team.

We couldn’t round off team sports without a Tug of War for the winners, and for the unfortunate losing teams, a nomination, or sacrifice, was made for the Chubby Bunny victim. Never underestimate the power of HR and a kilo of Marshmallows.

**SUNSET AND DOLPHINS**

Before we knew it, the sun began to set on our final day in Rastovac, our ustwo™ holiday finale arrived at the jetty. A huge 150 person Party Boat, with an army of bartenders and shipmates hauling crate after crate of beer and spirits into the cabin. The ship took us out for an awe-inspiring trip around the Croatian islands with a sunset view, a school of dolphins swimming alongside and on board DJs setting the scene for our final night of partying on board.

We’re all hyper connected by mobile and online tech, comfortable in the company of our digital companions with the names and faces we know and speak to so regularly. Yet there’s nothing else like stepping back and really engaging with each other within the holiday bubble. It’s deep in our DNA, so even as we grow – and it gets ever more complicated to make happen, we’ll keep stepping up to produce something amazing.
We are very diverse. have many cultures and therefore embrace different looks in general. You can even wear a suit if you like.

And then we have a process we use, I can recommend anyone to use. It's called JFDI it means just fucking do it, and what it really means is that if you want to do something. Just DO it.

I want to give an example on how the vision works. We want to be a learning organization for example. This means we will adapt to change and fail fast. But what does that even mean? Practically it can mean: everyone on the team should have a personal goal with every project. It's just an example.