Doctoral Thesis

Managing Tensions in Creative Content Development Work

Cases from the Media Industry

Sari Virta
Doctoral Thesis in Business Administration

Managing Tensions in Creative Content Development Work: Cases from the Media Industry
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Omistettu kiitollisuudella ja kaipauksella mummolleni Saimille (1911–2008),
joka opetti minulle rohkeutta.
This work is dedicated with gratitude and longing
to my grandma Saimi (1911–2008), who taught me courage.

Ainoastaan sydämellään näkee hyvin. Tärkeimpiä asioita ei näe silmillä.
One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.
(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943)
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Sari Virta, almost PhD

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Abstract

This dissertation explores organisational tensions and their management in creative content development work in the context of creative industries, particularly media. Creative industries represent an increasingly significant sector of current and future business potential within knowledge-intensive economies. Creative content is a fundamental strategic resource for media organisations, and creative content development work is a core function for future renewal and innovation. This study focuses on the dynamic relationship between current business (exploitation) and future business (exploration), in which various tensions need to be managed in creative work in practice.

The study builds on dualities as the overarching analytical concept. It combines three theoretical perspectives to explore tensions as the empirical focus. The combination of theorisations on ambidexterity (structural and contextual), value networks and hybrid organisations (conceptualised as network ambidexterity) is utilised to examine organisational tensions, which are defined as dynamic interrelationships between poles or elements of dualities. This approach enables a multifaceted understanding of the complex real-life phenomena in the focus of the study from different, but related perspectives.

To fulfil the purpose of the study, this compilation dissertation builds on three qualitative case studies, which are investigated in six individual papers. Each paper provides an empirical study that utilises one of the three case studies, as well as theoretical perspectives, in exploring organisational tensions. Together, the papers elaborate on the research purpose and on the research questions from different theoretical and empirical angles.

The case organisations include a company from both public and private media, as well as a collaborative arrangement in a newly formed creative industry cluster. The study’s perspective is both intra- and inter-organisational. The empirical data was collected utilising a longitudinal approach. The methods and respective empirical data comprise diary writings, interviews, documentation and participant observations.

This dissertation can be placed in the evolving field of media management scholarship. The study provides insights for both theory development and management practice. It contributes to earlier research by producing in-depth knowledge about the nature and management of organisational tensions in creative content development work: it does so by exploring the dynamic interrelationships between the constituent elements of dualities as tensions.

To begin, the study contributes to previous literature on ambidexterity by offering called-for empirical evidence on its management in practice. The combination of the theoretical perspectives that creates links between existing approaches on ambidexterity enables a deepening understanding of complexities involved in integrating current business with future development, especially in relation to mature organisations. Regarding clusters, the study offers new
knowledge by shifting the focus from mere spatial co-location to shared value creation through collaborative relationships, while also elaborating on the respective complexities.

The study extends understanding about how and why organisational tensions pose a demanding managerial challenge to established companies that are facing disruptive change. It shows that the interrelationships between the poles of dualities are dynamic. The resulting tensions are interrelated, coexisting, enduring and in constant flux. Further, these tensions cross both intra-organisational and inter-organisational boundaries. The study suggests that these tensions cannot be solved as such; instead, they need to be managed “with” rather than “against”, because tensions are not only inescapable but also instrumental in creative content development work.

Finally, the study offers implications for practice concerning the complex nature of organisational tensions and their management in creative content development work that aims to achieve innovative outcomes. The study suggests that managerial effort is required to anticipate, identify, evaluate, and navigate tensions in creative work. This is expected to benefit companies in creative industries and in the wider range of knowledge-intensive industries that strive for innovation and change. The results emphasise the core importance of embracing complex tensions as a multifaceted package of various dualities, instead of treating them as separate organisational aspects of management practice.
Tiivistelmä

Tässä väitöskirjassa tutkitaan organisatorisia jännitteitä eli tensioita ja niiden johtamista luovassa sisältökehitystyössä. Tutkimuskonteksti on luovat toimialat, erityisesti media. Luovien toimialojen rooli osana tietointensiivisiä yhteiskuntia on yhä merkittävämpi nykyisen ja tulevaisuuden liiketoiminnan ja kasvupotentiaalin kannalta. Luova sisältö on mediaorganisaatioiden perustavanlaatuinen strateginen resurssi, ja luova sisältökehitystyyö on keskeisessä roolissa tulevaisuuden uudistumisessa ja innovaatioiden synnyttämisessä. Väitöskirjatutkimuksen fokuksessa on nykyisen liiketoiminnan (exploitation) ja tulevan liiketoiminnan (exploration) dynaaminen suhde, jossa moninaisia tensioita on johdettava luovan työn käytännössä.


Väitöskirja sijoittuu mediajohtamisen kehittyvälle tutkimusalalle. Tutkimus tarjoaa uutta tietoa sekä teoreettisesti että johtamisen käytännöihin. Tulokset kontribuoivat aikaisempana tutkimukseen tarjoamaalla syvällistä tietoa organisatoristen tensioiden luonteesta ja niiden johtamisesta luovassa sisältökehitystyyössä tarkastelemalla näitä tensioita dynaamisina dualiteitteen olennaisten elementtien välisinä suhteina.

Tutkimus tarjoaa ambidekstrisyynyt koskevaan tutkimuskirjallisuuteen kaivattua empiiristä evidenssiä ambidekstrisyynen johtamisesta käytännössä.

Tutkimus laajentaa ymmärrystä siitä, miten ja miksi organisatoriset tensioid luovat vaativia haasteita erityisesti vakiintuneille organisaatioille, jotka kohtaavat disruptiivisia muutoksia toimintaympäristössään. Tulokset osoittavat, että dualiteettien ”napojen” väliset keskinäiset suhteet ovat dynaamisia. Tämän myötä syntyy tensioida, jotka liittyvät kiinteästi toisiinsa, esiintyvät yhtä aikaa, ovat pysyviä ja jatkuvaltaa muutoksessa. Nämä tensioidat ylistävät organisatorisia rajoja sekä organisaatioiden sisällä että niiden välillä. Tutkimus esittää, että tensioidat ei voida ratkaista sinällään eikä tänän tavoittele ole hyödyllistä. Sen sijaan tensioida tulee johtaa niiden ”kanssa” eikä niitä ”vastaan”, koska tensioidat kuuluvat vääjäämättömästi luovaan arvoonluonti ja ovat sille instrumentaalisia.

Tutkimus tarjoaa päätelmiä, joita voidaan hyödyntää käytännön johtamistyössä. Se tarjoaa sovellettavissa olevaa tietoa organisatoristen tensioiden ja niiden johtamisen kompleksisesta luonteesta luovan työn prosessissa, joka tähtää innovatiivisiin tuloksiin. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että luovan työn johtamisessa keskeisenä tärkeänä on vaivannäkö tensioiden ennakoimiseksi, tunnistamiseksi, arvioimiseksi ja niiden keskellä luovimiseksi, jotta luovien ja laajemminkin tietointensiivisten toimialojen organisaatiot voivat onnistua pyrkimyksissään tuottaa hyödyllisiä innovaatioita ja toteutta tarpeellisia muutoksia. Tuloksissa korostuu, että kompleksisia tensioiden on lähestyttävä moninäköisenä dualiteettien kokolemana ja kimpunna sen sijaan, että niitä pidettäisiin erillisinä tai yksittäisinä johtamisen käytäntöihin liittyvinä organisatorisina aspekteina.
Preface

This dissertation research project was initially inspired by my practical experience as a manager in the media industry. I worked on professional media content development and innovation for well over a decade, and on more general media-related issues for nearly double the time. A significant part of that period involved managerial roles and duties, including creating and managing an internal content development and innovation unit at the Finnish Broadcasting Company (i.e. Yle, the public broadcaster in Finland) in the early 2000s. The unit’s task was to support content development and innovation at Yle to equip this traditional media company to cope better with disruptive digital change in the industry. As a member of the unit’s management team, it was especially challenging to balance the creative content development work and the efficient, process-oriented on-going media production of Yle. Despite general agreement about the usefulness of the unit as a distinct function in the company, and despite thorough planning patterned on the latest research-based knowledge in its creation and operations, the unit was unsustainable due to various internal tensions and power struggles in the company. At the time of the unit’s ending I was left wondering why managing and operating it was so complicated in practice, despite its usefulness in overall terms.

A few years after leaving Yle, I started to consider exploring the empirical enigma of this case in detail theoretically in the scholarly field of media management. I was encouraged by media management scholars whom I had previously cooperated with in my practical work. Soon thereafter, I was accepted as a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Communication Sciences¹, in the University of Tampere (UTA) in Finland. The initial idea was to explore the management of organisational creativity for media content innovation in the context of media organisations in the creative industries. Thus, the starting point was familiarisation with the literature in organisational creativity and media innovation management. This approach soon proved to be insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomena, which led me to theorisations on ambidexterity as the simultaneous exploitation of current business (efficiency) and exploration for future innovation (opportunities). I found the concept highly useful for exploring the research topic. Beyond ambidexterity as a general concept, the inherent tensions between exploration and exploitation especially resonated with my practical media management experience with the content development unit in the context of a traditional media company. The theoretical framework of my dissertation research was clarified accordingly.

Rather early in the dissertation research process, the usefulness of including a case from the private sector, i.e. commercial media, became evident for

¹ At the time it was the School of Communication, Media and Theatre
creating a more comprehensive picture. This choice reflected the dual nature of the Finnish media industry, which is characterised by both strong public and private media. Fortunately, I was offered an opportunity to join an experienced researcher from the Aalto University Business School in his project on managing creativity in the media industry. This provided access to the second case organisation for the study at one of the biggest (top-3) established legacy media companies in Finland, alongside the case organisation of the public broadcaster Yle, second of the top-3.

As the dissertation research project proceeded, focusing solely on individual organisations and intra-organisational ambidexterity was insufficient due to the requirement for and investment in collaborative arrangements between companies in media content development and production. Collaboration is required for success in today’s increasingly complex industry structure and environment, which is characterised by disruptive digitalisation. There are naturally more ideas, resources, knowledge and capabilities outside any individual company or organisation than within it. Collaboration in the creative industries is strongly supported by governments and public authorities because of the sector’s expected potential to contribute to economic growth through innovation. Thus, the crucial importance of collaboration in content development encouraged my investigation of a new media cluster called Mediapolis in Finland. This was a third empirical case in this dissertation research project, and I was granted access via my previous professional contacts in the industry. This is where theorisations on value networks and hybrid organisations became useful because they provide focused angles on shared value creation and achieving innovation, alongside current production in networked contexts within the extensive literature on inter-organisational collaboration in general.

Since August 2015, I have been pursuing joint-degree PhD studies at UTA and the Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) in their Media, Management and Transformation Center (MMTC) in Sweden. The joint-degree reflects fundamental dual realities of media management in practice as a function that links the content and business aspects – and sometimes opposing or at least diverging “camps” of art and commerce – within media organisations. Accordingly, this dissertation is a combination of three empirical case studies and combined theoretical perspectives in the context of a dynamic and rapidly changing industry that builds on strong traditions but has to make significant leaps towards an unknown future.
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1 Introduction

This dissertation explores organisational tensions in creative content development work in the context of creative industries. The focus is on the dynamic relationship between current business and future business, where various tensions need to be managed in creative work in practice. The interdisciplinary approach reflects the everyday realities and requirements of creative industry organisations and their management to combine the dual aspects in which art and commerce (Caves, 2000), novelty and familiarity (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000) and optimisation and innovation (Küng, 2017a) create characteristic and enduring tensions within companies and across their collaborative arrangements. Further, tensions between innovative product development and current business viability are especially striking in the creative industries, supporting the choice of the context as the field for empirical exploration of the research interest (DeFillippi, Grabher & Jones, 2007).

Tensions, which typically arise between competing or opposing simultaneous demands and forces, are regarded as an innate feature of content production and innovative development in the creative industries (Jones, Svejenova, Pedersen & Townley, 2016; see also Lewis, 2000). In this thesis, tensions are defined as dynamic interrelationships and constant struggles between the two "poles" of dualities, the fundamental one being the duality of current business understood as exploitation, and future business understood as exploration (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013; Papachroni, Heracleous & Paroutis, 2015). Accordingly, this study does not attempt to “solve” or dispose of these tensions, but to create comprehensive, in-depth understanding that is essential for recognising and finding ways to handle various tensions in content development work and its management. This is done by exploring the dynamic interrelationships between the constituent elements of dualities as tensions (see Papachroni et al., 2015).

Tensions in creative content development work and its management in practice are examined as empirical phenomena to create deeper understanding on the more theoretical construct of dualities. Duality is conceptualised as two ostensibly opposing, but interdependent organisational elements or demands (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Farjoun, 2010; Sydow, 2018), which reflect “jointly desirable but competing objectives” (Zimmermann, Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2015). The elements of a duality comprise simultaneous pressure and countervailing pressure, making the duality a continuum between them. In this study, dualities are conceived as inseparable elements of dynamics that exist in constant tension between opposing forces or demands. Tensions illustrate the interrelationships between these duality poles, and thus enable understanding of dual dynamics. Generally, tensions increase complexity in organisations, as well as create discomfort and frustration (Lewis, 2000). Identifying and managing tensions in creative content development work in practice is crucial, because
failing to do this comprehensively may lead to dysfunctions threatening the viability and sustainability of creative industry organisations (Jones et al., 2016). Managing tensions is essential for nurturing organisations’ internal flexibility, which is required for the ability to respond to environmental complexity and rapid change (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003).

This study draws on three theoretical perspectives with duality as the overarching theoretical concept and tensions as the empirical focus. The perspectives of organisational ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations are real-life aspects where organisational tensions become evident as managerial challenges, but they also provide analytical tools to make sense of the complex phenomena under study. This approach enables exploration of the research topic from different but related perspectives supporting the creation of a necessary multifaceted understanding of the complex phenomena (Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow, 2018).

The study delves into the research topic by utilising a qualitative approach in three case studies. The dissertation consists of six independent, interrelated papers and this summarising introduction and conclusion, called the “Kappa” (in Swedish). The Kappa illustrates the overall purpose and framework of the study, discusses the methodological choices and elaborates on the combined theoretical and practical contributions of the three case studies. Each case is the focus of two individual papers, which form the second main part of the thesis.

This study provides insights for both theory development and management practice. It deepens understanding about how and why tensions pose a demanding challenge to mature and established companies facing disruptive change. In this pursuit, the dissertation develops new insights and combines elements relating to the management of tensions on the basis of case studies that provide empirical support for theory development. Further, the practical implications of this study open new understandings about the complex nature of organisational tensions and the necessity of their management in the processes of creative content development work. The individual case studies illustrate various aspects of topical tensions, while their communal collection emphasises the importance of managing complex tensions as a multifaceted package of various dualities, not only as separate organisational aspects of management practice. Finally, the practical implications of the study suggest the core importance of identifying, understanding, navigating and managing tensions in creative work to achieve innovative results in content development, in order to avoid being hindered by the complex and often development-inhibiting effects of tensions in practice.

In the following, this introduction chapter first explains the motivation and background of the study, and then states the purpose and the research questions. Next, short definitions of the key concepts are provided. The chapter ends with an outline of the dissertation.
1.1 Motivation and Background of the Study

“I face a schizo situation. My one hand rearranges and streamlines the 140 year old business; my other hand inspires and builds something new. Both hands wave, but in different rhythms. In the morning it’s savings and in the evening investments. But both things need to be in agreement, because if you let the old and the current dispute for too long, it’s the company’s future that becomes the loser.”

(Aalto-Setälä, August 4th 2015, Aller Media Blog translated from Finnish)

This quote from the blog of Mr Pauli Aalto-Setälä, the CEO for Aller Media Finland, illustrates characteristic realities of media management. It captures the current situation as well as persistent concerns for managers of large, established and traditional media companies, which is the specific context of this study as part of the creative industries. The need to combine production efficiency in times of diminishing resources with constant exploration to achieve content development and innovation is a required balance and tension for future success. The two dimensions are simultaneous aspects in the managerial task and may call for different approaches. Finding effective ways to deal with tensions between them is vital for sustainable operations. This raises several questions about what is going on and particularly how seemingly opposing forces can be mitigated to secure the future of creative businesses in operational circumstances that can be characterised as “schizophrenic”.

The managerial task is made even more demanding when confronted with today’s disruptive environment of technological change, digitalisation and collapsing business models, which challenge the sustainability of media organisations (Küng, 2017a; Küng, 2017b). The operational environment can be characterised as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, which has led to continuously changing media markets that are complicated to manage (Picard & Lowe, 2016). This kind of environment is currently known as “VUCA”. The concept was originally used by the U.S. military and now wider in management, and the term consists of a combination of volatility (V), uncertainty (U), complexity (C) and ambiguity (A) (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Mack & Khare, 2016).

The VUCA environment comprises four challenges: volatility refers to rapid unexpected challenges and dynamic instability; uncertainty means lack of clarity and unusability of established information in new situations; complexity necessitates understanding situations through many interconnected parts and interacting variables; and ambiguity denotes unclear causal relationships that cannot be understood from a singular perspective (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Kail, 2010a; Kail, 2010b; Kail, 2010c; Kail, 2011). The disruptive change of the media industry primarily due to digitalisation is consistent with the VUCA environment (Halek & Strobl, 2016). Coping with this operational reality in the research context of this study emphasises the central importance of constantly
developing creative content and achieving successful content innovation as the core strategic resource of media organisations for future viability (Küng, 2017a). Accordingly, developing new understandings of the challenges of creative content development work and its management is the focus of this study.

The current realities for media organisations, as illustrated by the real-life example above, correspond with my motivation to explore how this dynamic and complex situation can be usefully understood and effectively managed in practice. More specifically, the motivation for this study arises from the desire to explore interrelated tensions in creative content development work as a defining media management challenge. This is rooted in a wider interest in understanding the complex realities of organisational change in the creative industries, which especially include media. This is important, because creative industries (see e.g. Doyle, 2016; Flew & Cunningham, 2010) represent a growing and increasingly significant sector of current and future business growth potential through innovation in knowledge-intensive economies (Foord, 2009; Jones et al., 2016; see also European Commission, 2018). For example, the contribution of the creative industries to the UK national economy, one of the largest EU economies for the cultural and creative industries (Nesta, 2015; Universities UK, 2015), reached a record £91.8bn in 2016, and the Gross Value Added by these industries rose by 7.6 percent in the same year – more than double the growth rate compared to the average of 3.5 percent for industries overall in the UK. Additionally, the creative industries are expected to create one million new jobs between 2013 and 2030 in the UK alone, which is anticipated to further drive future growth (CiC UK to the World, 2018). In a wider perspective, the creative industries, including media, are widely considered a key driver of the growing digital economy worldwide (UNESCO, 2015). However, alongside the positive role and high expectations for the creative industries’ potential to facilitate growth and development, it is necessary to understand the inherent challenges faced by organisations operating in these industries as illustrated in the starting quote, because this is crucial to realising that expected future potential in practice.

Creative industries depend fundamentally on originality and novelty (Jones et al., 2016), which emphasises the significance of continuous development of content. Creative content has always been of core strategic importance for media companies as part of the creative industries, and the realities of the current VUCA environment emphasise this especially in relation to the needed revitalisation of traditional, legacy media organisations (Küng, 2017a; Picard & Lowe, 2016). Accordingly, creative professionals represent a vital strategic resource for these companies (Gershon, 2013; Küng, 2008; Mierzejewska & Hollifield, 2006; Redmond, 2006), reflecting the character of the media industry as “a people business” (Aris & Bughin, 2009: 364; see also Seager, 2017). Building on these realities, this dissertation research project started with an empirical enigma and idea to explore the management of creative content development work in media organisations as a core function for future renewal and innovation. Practical interest was in factors that support or hamper
organisational creativity in this regard due to its cornerstone importance for media content development, and coping with characteristic difficulties encountered in managing this work. Consequently, the focus is on organisational creativity as an empirical notion, followed by orientation to corresponding literature.

Traditionally, and especially in the field of psychology, research on creativity has emphasised individual talent, imagination and internal motives over collective processes and contexts (Amabile, 1996a; Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Bilton, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; George, 2007; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010; Styhre & Sundgren, 2005). But being creative per se is not the primary goal or sufficient condition for organisational interests (Sydow, 2018); the focus for companies must be on achieving results that produce value to markets and the organisation. Thus, collective and organisation-level approaches that emphasise organisational and interactional aspects in the concept of organisational creativity are more useful and have gained increasing interest and importance. Organisational creativity can be understood as the creation of new and useful ideas for developing new products, services, processes or strategies in and for organisational contexts (Amabile, 1996a; Fisher & Amabile, 2009; George, 2007; Mumford & Simonton 1997; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). Accordingly, the concept of organisational creativity focuses on the everyday environment of creative work as collaborative practice combining diverse experiences and expertise, and their necessary management to produce value (Mumford, 2012; Styhre & Sundgren, 2005; Zhou & Shalley, 2009).

Organisational creativity is integral to media work (Bilton, 2011; Deuze, 2007) and essential for developing new concepts and innovations in media organisations (Malmelin & Nivari-Lindström, 2017). Thus, it can be considered a prerequisite for development and the key precursor to innovation in media content. More generally, organisational creativity is critical for sustainable value creation and effectiveness in dynamic operational environments in most industries (George, 2007). However, contextual factors in organisations may either facilitate or discourage organisational creativity (Jones et al., 2016; Mumford, 2000). Organisational creativity in complex organisations typically emerges when differences “collide”, and tensions are even necessary for creativity (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller & Staw, 2005; Bilton, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; George, 2007; Miron-Spektor & Erez, 2017; Runco, 1994). At the same time, various tensions make the management of organisational creativity to achieve innovative outcomes a complex and demanding activity that can make a fundamental difference to success or failure (Andriopoulos, 2003; Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Mumford & Licuanan, 2004; Tan, 1998).

Interlinked tensions in creative work may serve as important enablers of change in media organisations, which makes managing the entirety of various tensions significant for future viability (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). In understanding and managing organisational tensions in relation to creative content development work, and especially in relation to combining it with
current production, this dissertation takes an integrative perspective of different approaches because co-existing tensions are interdependent and enduring (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Papachroni et al., 2015; see also Andriopoulos, 2003; Gotsi, Andriopoulos, Lewis & Ingram, 2010). This is crucial for effectively managing the potential negative impacts of tensions, and reducing respective dysfunctionalities in relation to content development work.

As definitions of organisational creativity imply, this does not happen in a vacuum or in any way separate from routine operations. It is closely tied to and based in the real-life context of organisations, which tightly links content development work with on-going operations. Creative content development work requires resources that are provided by current production, but at the same time, may impend efficiency and threaten the profitability of the on-going business (cf. Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a, 2010b). The quest to understand the complex dynamics between an efficient on-going business and flexible adaptation to environmental changes explains the growing scholarly interest in ambidexterity, a concept to describe the simultaneous exploration for future innovation and exploitation of current efficiency. This is partly due to a widely shared consensus that ambidexterity is crucial for long-term sustainable success, competitive advantage and the survival of organisations (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Duncan, 1976; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Turner, Swart & Maylor, 2013; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). Thus, theorisations on ambidexterity are relevant and pivotal for this dissertation project in examining organisational tensions in the relationship between on-going production and creative content development work.

Previous research has established ambidexterity as especially valuable for organisations facing environmental uncertainty and increased competitiveness, as well as for companies with comparatively ample resources and larger size (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013). All of this well characterises the empirical context of this study. However, earlier research offers limited understanding of how ambidexterity is managed in practical terms, including the interfaces and various tensions between the duality of exploration and exploitation (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2011, 2013; Papachroni et al., 2015; see also Gilbert, 2005). Ambidexterity is fundamentally characterised by tensions in relation to current production and product development for innovation (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a, 2010b). This may become evident, for example, between organisational units or functions respectively responsible for exploration or exploitation, and especially in resource allocation between them. The creative industries in general, and media organisations in particular, are inherently ambidextrous because of the adjacent and integral connection between current production and new content development (Küng, 2017a; Wu & Wu, 2016). While applying the concept of ambidexterity to managing creative content development work provides a useful perspective for generating new knowledge, previous management studies that utilise the concept are rare in the context of media organisations (Järventie-Thesleff, Moisander & Villi, 2014). Also, the creative industries more generally merit greater scholarly attention as a
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context for research on organisational ambidexterity (Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Wu & Wu, 2016).

There is sparse empirical evidence on how organisations deal with seemingly opposing poles and extremes of change-oriented exploration and stability-focused exploitation, or flexible and formal ways of working on innovative projects (Mattes, 2014; Papachroni et al., 2015). Qualitative in-depth studies are essential for creating new knowledge about the phenomena (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Viewing exploration and exploitation as a duality and combining different analytical perspectives on ambidexterity are considered useful for new knowledge creation, and understanding ambidexterity management requires investigation of dynamic tensions between the elements of the more static concept of a duality (Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow, 2018). In helping to fill these gaps, this study applies the viewpoint of tensions to enable examination of interactions and interrelationships between too often separately considered elements of dualities, including ambidexterity, in everyday practices of organisations where the interrelationships emerge (Papachroni et al., 2015; see also Farjoun, 2010; Gupta, Smith & Shalley, 2006).

To keep up with the required development in VUCA environments, collaborative inter-organisational arrangements have become crucial (Kisinger & Walch, 2012). Disruptive change and innovation typically originate from outside the big legacy organisations (Bruns, 2014; Drucker, 2007) and resource constraints have fuelled the need for collaboration and specialisation. Further, inter-organisational collaborative arrangements in networks have been theorised as potential resolutions for challenges between on-going operations for exploitation and future development for exploration (Stadler, Rajwani & Karaba, 2014). This idea of “network ambidexterity” refers to organisational ambidexterity in networked organisational contexts, where networked arrangements are utilised for incorporating ambidexterity in individual companies in these networks (Kauppila, 2007). This aspect is a necessary addition to the more traditional approaches of exploring ambidexterity (Papachroni et al., 2015; Stadler et al., 2014; Sydow, 2018). That is why this dissertation addresses requests by previous research for further empirical studies on tensions of collaborative inter-organisational arrangements aiming at ambidexterity, including clusters (Nosella, Cantarello & Filippini, 2012; Stadler et al., 2014; Sydow, 2018; Wu & Wu, 2016). The study responds also to invited scholarly interest in the wider collaborative environment and industry ecosystems as ways to build organisational ambidexterity, including the necessary crossing of organisational boundaries by hybrid organisational structures (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Further, concurrent examination of both intra-organisational and inter-organisational solutions aiming at ambidexterity between current production and content development work for innovation may be beneficial, because scrutinising simultaneous exploration and exploitation across different approaches and viewpoints offers great potential for both deeper and broader insight on the phenomena (Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow, 2018; Wu & Wu, 2016).
Clustering is an increasingly common inter-organisational arrangement in the creative industries, and the inherently collaborative nature of media production explains the high levels of clustering, especially in the media industry (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Davis, Creutzberg & Arthurs, 2009; Hitters & Richards, 2002). Clusters are expected to achieve innovation in content due to their potential for increased knowledge for companies within cluster contexts (Picard, 2008). However, clusters in the basic form, i.e. as established spatial agglomerations of organisations and institutions, are not sufficient to achieve routine content development and innovation. This is because actual value creation in the media industry is increasingly dependent on networked collaboration in and across organisations, which relies heavily on the roles and positions of organisations in value-creating and value-adding webs (Baumann, 2013; Bilton, 2011; see also Picard, 2008). Thus, focusing on the interrelated dynamics between companies in value networks and hybrid organisations offers potential to advance understanding of the problems and challenges for media clusters beyond traditional approaches.

This dissertation explores organisational tensions faced in cluster development and management in the light of theorisations of value networks and hybrid organisations as potential approaches for successfully combining exploration and exploitation in networked organisational contexts. The potential for value creation is dependent on the amount and quality of collaboration, both within (internal) and across (external) organisational boundaries (Lowe & Yamamoto, 2016). This encourages shifting the focus of value creation to collaborative advantage as a contemporary dimension in competitive advantage (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Kanter, 1994; Lampel et al., 2000).

The strategic importance of content creation and development concerns media organisations of all types, both public and private. Collaboration across public and private sectors is typically considered as a potential tool for achieving content innovation. However, this endeavour is complicated by conflicts and tensions (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2015). Effectively managing tensions between public and private organisational approaches needs additional research, which builds on understanding the dynamic interdependence and interrelatedness of opposing organisational elements (Schad, Lewis, Raisch & Smith, 2016), conceptualised as dualities in this thesis. Further, in-depth knowledge about “dualities, their antecedents, and how they should be managed” is necessary (Sutherland & Smith, 2011: 538; see also Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). This is especially important and challenging in relation to managing large and complex organisations (Sánches-Runde & Pettigrew, 2003). Accordingly, this dissertation research explores organisational tensions as dynamic interrelations between the elements of dualities from different theoretical and practical perspectives. Studying this is fruitful for understanding the management of content development work in media organisations and their collaborative arrangements. The focus is especially on legacy media organisations that are striving to master ambidexterity either internally or through their collaboration in value networks and hybrid organisations.
1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

Building on the insights from extant literature and previous discussion, the purpose of this study is to explore organisational tensions and their management in creative content development work. The context of the study is media organisations, which belong to the creative industries. The primary objective of content development work is to pursue innovation in content and services. This is vital for coping with the continuous and disruptive change, significantly due to digitalisation, which characterises the creative industries, including media (cf. Küng, 2017b).

Contradictions permeate organisational life in general (e.g. Briscoe, 2016), and complex tensions are an inherent feature of creative work in media organisations (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). These tensions merit attention to advance understanding of content development work and its management in practice. It is common to elaborate on and benchmark successes and best practices of organisational processes and operations, but there is no guarantee that past success will predict future accomplishment in the current VUCA environments. There is potentially a lot worth learning from cases even when not high-performing and entirely successful (cf. Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010). Thus, my focus is potentially more widely applicable in researching how companies may mitigate organisational tensions. This is because copying successful operational principles or practices from one organisational context rarely works as well as hoped for because each organisation has its own culture and organisational history. These have an effect on practical operations and development options. Improved general understandings of tensions as dynamic interrelationships between constituent poles of dualities, as well as their management, might be more transferable between situations and contexts than particular approaches, specific success factors or operational practices.

The future success of media organisations as creative enterprises depends on their adaptation abilities, which are severely challenged by established practices and routinised ways of working, especially in legacy media companies (Ess, 2014; Küng, 2017c). This matters greatly because traditional media operations continue to provide the lion’s share of industry revenue that sustains operations and provides resources for future development and content innovation (Küng 2015). Large, established companies typically struggle with creativity and innovativeness despite more abundant resources and well-defined organisational processes (Amabile, 1998; Drucker, 2007). Innovation, including development of content, is typically ranked a top strategic priority by media organisations, but only 15 percent of media companies say they are good at doing this (Aris & Bughin, 2009). Innovative activity is therefore easily compromised, and companies with long histories of stable operations face particular difficulties in coping with disruptive technological change and increasing global competition (Dougherty & Hardy, 1996). Ideas for development are often borrowed from other successful innovative organisations, but established companies fail to replicate their success due to unrecognised barriers that inhibit non-innovative
firms from becoming innovative in the first place. A core challenge is to manage inherent organisational tensions, which easily compromise innovative activity (Jones et al., 2016). This is why exploring tensions in creative content development work in established companies attempting to cope with disruptive change is important and potentially fruitful, as is done in this dissertation.

Much of the traditional focus has been on stability and equilibrium. Investigating cases of disequilibrium opens new possibilities for understanding and responding to organisational tensions (Putnam, Fairhurst & Banghart, 2016). Accordingly, developing scholarly knowledge and insight about complexities and tensions that may inhibit creative work and hamper explorative development of content is potentially very useful for established organisations striving for competitive development. Such knowledge is broadly relevant to the creative industries and for media organisations facing disruptive change today. This dissertation will elaborate on the complex nature and management of creative content development work in practice. In pursuing this goal, this study draws on extant theorisations concerning ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations. The focus on organisational tensions, which characterises and connects these theoretical perspectives, is utilised as the overarching empirical frame for conducting the study.

The study breaks new ground by investigating characteristic tensions in both intra-organisational and inter-organisational settings rather than making a separation (cf. Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow, 2018). They are instead treated here as interrelated elements in contemporary content development management, which is expected to combine exploration and exploitation. This is studied on the basis of three empirical case studies (Stake, 2005, 2006; Yin, 2014). The first two case organisations represent one private and then one public media organisation. The private media organisation is one of the three largest commercial media firms in Finland in terms of financial turnover. The public media organisation is the Finnish Broadcasting Company, “Yle”, which is second in the top-3 of Finnish media companies. Both organisations are large and traditional, legacy mass media companies. They were chosen because of comprehensive access, but especially because they possess ample resources to cope successfully with change. However, their organisational rigidities pose difficulties in adjusting to the VUCA conditions of the changing media industry that are especially due to advancing digitalisation. This characterisation can be extended to other industries, and large traditional corporations that face change in their specific operational environments as industries become knowledge-intensive. This widens the potential usefulness of my research results.

Despite the historically independent character of media companies, even the largest of them cannot rely today on succeeding in isolation. Economies and operations are networked and converging, especially in relation to content development and innovation. This is evident in an increasing number of international media clusters, the growth of which is fuelled by an expected capacity to provide each organisation with opportunities to gain new knowledge and inspiration for innovation and creative development (Bathelt, 2005; Davis et
Clusters can be tools for achieving content innovation, but only if well managed. However, research-based knowledge on the challenges and successes of collaborative arrangements in managing media clusters is lacking and especially needed (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014). To date, their structure and dynamics have been studied more than their management.

Thus, in addition to the two individual case organisations, the third case study features the recent development of a Finnish media cluster called “Mediapolis”, in which Yle has played a central role. This study shifts the focus from the established scholarly focus on clusters as spatial and structural formations (e.g. Porter, 1998), regional and geographic organisational agglomerations (e.g. Komorowski, 2017), and the formation process and characteristics of creative clusters (e.g. Hitters & Richards, 2002; Picard, 2008), to examine the actual functioning of a cluster as a collaborative arrangement between the involved organisations jointly aiming at content development and explorative innovation. This is where theorisations on value networks (Allee, 2000, 2009) and hybrid organisations (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Jay, 2013) are especially relevant, because they focus on the dynamic and complex inter-organisational aspects of cross-sector collaborations, which include clusters. As mentioned earlier, research is beginning to elaborate on inter-organisational networked collaboration as a potential source of ambidexterity for the participating organisations (Kauppila, 2007, 2015). This emphasises the importance of the research interest on tensions regarding collaboration, in addition to ambidextrous tensions between exploration and exploitation in individual organisations.

Based on the research purpose elaborated above, the research questions for this study are:

1. What characteristic tensions emerge in content development work in creative industry organisations and their collaborations, and why?
2. How do these tensions affect creative content development work?
3. How does management of creative industry organisations and their collaborative arrangements deal with these tensions?

Organisations in the creative industries, especially media companies, have long experience in dealing with the challenges of continuous innovation in content alongside current production. What is especially relevant here is the way these companies navigate between and integrate the seemingly opposing, but interrelated poles of this and other dualities. By exploring the dynamic interrelationships between the constituent elements of dualities, i.e. tensions that are characteristic in content development work in practice, this dissertation contributes to management knowledge in the rapidly changing contexts of digital disruption. This dissertation especially contributes to understanding creative content development work as an endeavour that is characterised by various tensions, and how understanding this can benefit managers of knowledge-intensive companies striving for innovation and change. Specifically, this study contributes to the so-far sparse number of empirical
investigations about managing ambidexterity and ambidextrous tensions in the practical terms of everyday organisational life, including core systems and practices (e.g. HRM) that may either enable or inhibit organisational creativity in the pursuit of innovation. Overall, then, this study contributes to scholarly discussion on managing organisational tensions in creative content development work by combining theoretical perspectives to paint a more encompassing and contemporary picture of the research interest (cf. Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow, 2018).

More generally, research into managing content development work in today’s VUCA environments of the creative industries has real potential for offering insights and learning to benefit all knowledge-intensive industries. This is because learning from the challenges and solutions of content development work and its management in the context of the media industry can support successfully coping with similar situations elsewhere (cf. Jones et al., 2016; Lampel et al., 2000; Townley & Beech, 2010). Although management principles and practices in creative industries are sometimes considered to be at odds with established views of management in general terms, the characteristics are becoming increasingly shared across industries in the larger context of knowledge-intensive information societies. As Townley and Beech (2010: 3) explain:

“Organizational practice exemplified by the creative industries emphasizes coping with dilemmas and paradoxes, managing in states of uncertainty and unknowability, and thus challenges traditional thinking on managing people, production and marketing channels to the consumer. It highlights the practical reasons why we can learn much from a closer examination of creative industries and creative-based organizations. ... Hence an in-depth exploration of creative industries can help deliver a theoretical understanding that engages complexity, change and creativity along with a practical orientation that seeks to stimulate innovative practice in various aspects of organizing.”

Accordingly, the results of this dissertation may have wider applicability potential beyond the specific context of the study, and thus offer opportunities for both theory development and practical implications more broadly.

In conclusion, this dissertation builds on multiple theoretical perspectives – dualities as the overarching concept and ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations as specific perspectives – that together constitute the theoretical framework of the thesis. Accordingly, this study explores tensions and their management in creative content development work in light of theorisations on contextual and structural ambidexterity, as well as value networks and hybrid organisations as potential approaches towards network ambidexterity (see Kauppila, 2007). These three perspectives reflect concomitant requirements for organisations in the creative industries, including media, to combine exploitation for a current efficient business and exploration for future content development (ambidexterity), for creating value through
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collaborative arrangements (value networks), and for accomplishing cross-sector collaboration in public and private organisational forms (hybrid organisations). All of that is needed to cope with content development for innovation in disruptive VUCA environments. The chosen approach enables combining different theoretical and real-life aspects on the phenomena of interest in the study, reflecting the complex and dynamic character of creative content development work, and offering opportunities for new knowledge creation to advance theory and benefit practice.

The general framework of the study is depicted in Figure 1 below. As illustrated by the white arrow shapes, the three individual case studies utilise the specific theoretical perspectives of contextual ambidexterity, structural ambidexterity, as well as value networks and hybrid organisations (network ambidexterity) in exploring organisational tensions. Contextual ambidexterity is utilised in the context of the private media company (anonymous), structural ambidexterity in the context of the public broadcasting company Yle, and network ambidexterity in the context of the Mediapolis media cluster. Although ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations represent separate streams of scholarly research, they interrelate in many key respects. The most important connections for this study are evident in tensions that are characteristic and integral to each of these phenomena. Thus, the overarching approach of the study concerns organisational tensions, as illustrated in Figure 1. These tensions reflect the interrelationships between the elements of corresponding dualities. Dualities are inherent to creative work in general, and to media content development work in particular. They include, for example, the fundamental duality between creative and commercial aspects of production in creative industry organisations (Caves, 2000; DeFillippi et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2016; Lampel et al., 2000) and the dual requirement of simultaneous optimisation of current efficient production and the development of innovative products for the future (Küng, 2017a). The inherent connection between dualities and tensions is implicated by the dotted grey line in Figure 1. The empirical focus is on tensions, because the existence of dualities manifests in emerging organisational tensions, which can actually be studied in practice. Finally, the last element in Figure 1 is organisational creativity. In this study, organisational creativity is considered a key practical prerequisite of content development work for innovation in media organisations. Thus, it reflects the empirical realities of this work and cuts across the case studies, as indicated by the dotted line through cases 1-3.
Figure 1. The general framework of the study

This dissertation can be placed in the young, but rapidly growing field of media management scholarship (Achtenhagen, 2016; Achtenhagen & Mierzewska, 2015; Küng, 2007; Lowe, 2015; Picard & Lowe, 2016). The field lies at the intersection of media studies and management studies, two interlinked but distinctive disciplines that are also complicated in the everyday realities of media managers’ work and media organisations’ operations. Media management research is often funded by industry or foundations, which explains the typical orientation towards practice in the research (Lowe, 2015), an approach that is also reflected in this dissertation thesis. The orientation is partially due to the swift pace of change in the media industry, which challenges time-consuming academic research processes (Küng, 2015). Trends come and go before scholars find proper time for long-term research approaches, analysis processes and theory construction, further aggravated by slow publication procedures. Thus, it is useful and necessary to follow practice when it happens and produce insights on the basis of on-going analysis and participation in the empirical processes.
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(Brundin, 2007). This chapter illustrates the “progressive elaboration” from the initial idea for this dissertation to the three theoretical perspectives, reflecting how the research interest is both empirically driven and theoretically advised.

This dissertation work represents a long-term project, where the distinction between theory and field material in a “leading” role is not definite, which is typical in qualitative research. In the beginning of the project, theoretical explanations for the empirical enigma of tensions in creative content development work were sought, and the subsequently found theorisations on organisational creativity and especially ambidexterity were utilised in further exploring the research interest. As the project progressed, empirical phenomena and material invoked the use of value networks and hybrid organisations as theoretical perspectives to explore and create understanding about network ambidexterity. As an overall approach, the focus is on characteristic organisational tensions that need to be managed in creative content development work in practice. In relation to particular aspects, each of the six papers included in the thesis focus on specific research aims, which together elaborate on the research purpose and questions from different theoretical and empirical angles. These are discussed in detail in the respective papers included in Part II of this thesis. The individual papers are also presented in digest in Chapter 4 of this Kappa.

1.3 Definitions of Key Concepts

Next, the key concepts used in this dissertation are briefly defined.

Ambidexterity. Ambidexterity is defined as “the ability of an organization to both explore and exploit – to compete in mature technologies and markets where efficiency, control and incremental improvement are prized and to also compete in new technologies and markets where flexibility, autonomy, and experimentation are needed” (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013: 324). Thus, ambidexterity implies organisational capacity for simultaneous profitable exploitation of current assets and mature markets, and exploration of new opportunities for innovation and future success (March, 1991; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996).

Value Network. A value network consists of cooperating organisations with the aim of benefitting the network members (Tuominen, Wessberg & Leinonen, 2015). Allee (2009: 429) defines a value network as “any purposeful group of people or organizations creating social and economic good through complex dynamic exchanges of tangible and intangible value”. A value network comprises the roles and interactions used for engagement in value exchange, which aims at achieving economic or social good, and value networks may focus on internal or external (boundary-crossing) organisational collaboration (Allee, 2008).
Hybrid Organisation and Hybrid Organising. The idea of hybrid organisations combines aspects of several organisational forms and logics, typically between public (non-commercial) and private (commercial) forms, blurring distinctions and boundaries (Battilana, Lee, Walker & Dorsey, 2012; Jay, 2013). Hybrid organisational forms require collaboration between organisations or their parts, which in the simplest form refers to working together in cooperative relationships (Kaltoft, Boer, Chapman, Gertsen & Nielsen, 2006; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2000). Hybrid organising refers to “the activities, structures, processes and meanings by which organizations make sense of and combine multiple organizational forms” (Battilana & Lee, 2014: 397).

For understanding the contexts of the case studies, the following additional explanations may also be helpful:

Organisational Creativity and Innovation. Organisational creativity is defined as “the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system” (Woodman et al., 1993: 293). Organisational creativity emphasises an imaginative thinking process that is necessary for creating new and useful ideas in order to develop new products, services or processes in, by or through organisations (Fisher & Amabile, 2009; George, 2007; Mumford, 2000; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Shalley & Zhou, 2008). Organisational creativity is considered a fundamental prerequisite for innovation (Amabile, 1996b), which in this dissertation is understood as the successful implementation of creative ideas, leading to useful and value-creating outcomes (Bilton, 2007; Küng, 2008; Rosing, Frese, & Bausch, 2011).

Media Cluster. Clusters in general are “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions … in a particular field that compete but also cooperate” (Porter, 2000: 16; see also Connell, Kriz, & Thorpe, 2014; Diez-Vial & Fernández-Olmos, 2013; Porter, 1998). The media industry features high levels of clustering (Davis et al., 2009). Karlsson and Picard (2011a) define media clusters as spatial agglomerations of organisations, where co-location facilitates on-going interaction, which is integral to creative content production. The emphasis on the importance of creative content production and content innovation potential distinguishes media clusters from the more general characterisation of industrial clusters. Also, media clusters are typically “anchored” by one or a few large companies (Noam, 2009) and feature a dual focus on local agglomerations of facilities and wider networks of creative resources and skills (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Picard, 2008).
1.4 Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of two parts. The first part is the Kappa, which provides the introduction and four main chapters explained below. The second part contains six individual but related papers that explore the three case studies featured in the study from different perspectives, elaborating on tensions in relation to creative content development work. Prior to the six appended papers, the author’s contributions for each of them are detailed.

Chapter 2 covers the theoretical background of the study. It discusses dualities as the overarching theoretical concept utilised in the study, as well as ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations as perspectives of the theoretical framework for this dissertation research project about managing tensions in creative content development work. By combining these different approaches to analysing tensions, the complexity of content development work can be elaborated in a more comprehensive way, reflecting the multifaceted realities of managing the work in practice.

Chapter 3 explains the production of the dissertation in relation to methods. The chapter starts with a description of the media industry as a research context to provide the background for the study. Following this, an explanation of ontological and epistemological considerations is provided. The main part of this chapter details the qualitative research approach and study design, case selection and case access, as well as data collection and analysis approaches overall and for each of the three case studies. The chapter concludes with a note on credibility and ethical considerations, especially in relation to my previous employment in one of the case organisations.

Chapter 4 introduces and summarises the six individual papers, and illustrates their relationships to the case studies. This provides a departure point for Chapter 5, which focuses on discussing the research results, answering the research questions, and elaborating contributions in relation to the research purpose and making connections between the individual case studies. Contributions to theory are explained, and implications for practice outlined. Also, limitations of the study are identified and suggestions for further research delineated. The chapter ends with concluding remarks.
2 Theoretical Background

This chapter discusses previous research on the concepts that together comprise the theoretical framework of the thesis: dualities, ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations. The study builds on scholarly literature on dualities as the overarching analytical concept. This choice was made because dualities are an inherent feature of creative work and organisations in the creative industries, including media. Respective tensions, conceptualised as dynamic interrelationships between the constituent elements of dualities pose generic challenges, especially for managing the content creation, production and development work that are at the core of these organisations’ performance and vital to sustainable success in practice (Lampel et al., 2000). If interlinked tensions are not well understood and intentionally managed, they may severely inhibit creative performance (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009).

In the following chapters, dualities are explained first as an analytical concept and the theoretical backbone of the study. Following this, the theoretical framework of the study is discussed, including ambidexterity (structural and contextual), as well as value networks and hybrid organisations (as approaches towards ambidexterity in networked contexts). Finally, tensions are addressed as the combining characteristic of all the elements in the theoretical framework, and as the empirical focus of the study.

2.1 Dualities

Continuous creation of novelty in content is crucial for a sustainable business and future growth in media companies as creative industries. At the same time, disruptive environmental change necessitates continuously increasing the efficiency of the current business and business models. Understanding the complex realities of the situation is improved by the concept of dualities as an analytical and explanatory perspective. The indicated core duality between two fundamental operational realities of exploration and exploitation features an inherent set of tensions that make the management of content development work for innovation quite challenging (Jones et al., 2016; Küng, 2017a; Lampel et al., 2000).

Duality theory has been considered “a by-product” of Giddens’ (1984) seminal work on the duality of structure (Sutherland & Smith, 2011), which emphasises the importance of both structure and agency in the social process of creation. Agents and structures are mutually influencing and co-involved in enacting social systems, with a focus on social practices across time and space (Giddens, 1984). Structures comprise the rules and resources that agents employ and modify by using structures in actions. However, intentional conduct may
produce unintended consequences because it is not possible to exactly predict or control the outcomes of action (Sydow & Staber, 2002). This uncertainty, in addition to the complex interrelation of structure and agency, leads to continuous and constant flux in social systems, among which institutions are “the more enduring features of social life” (Giddens, 1984: 24).

Giddens’ structuration theory conceptualises agency and structure as a duality rather than a dualism, which would refer to “two independently given sets of phenomena” (Giddens, 1984: 25). Instead, duality in the structuration perspective emphasises the dynamic character of institutional processes and the importance of contradictions, especially including tensions, in analysing organisations (Sydow & Staber, 2002; Šydow & Windeler, 1998). Further, structuration theory focuses simultaneously on structure and process, which has been considered highly useful for analysing networked inter-firm collaborative arrangements (Sydow & Windeler, 1998). These features are central for this dissertation’s interest on managing tensions in creative content development work. The organisation’s structural arrangements both support and constrain content development actions in practice, while at the same time agents (including and here especially managers) find ways to operate under the constraints but also transform structures through their actions (see Sydow & Staber, 2002).

Previous research suggests that the dualities approach is especially suitable for analysing management and organisations when they aim to improve performance through increased innovative activity (Sánchez-Runde & Pettigrew, 2003) “in a world of rapid change and high complexity, a world where global business requires multidimensional organizational capabilities” (Evans & Doz, 1999: 90). As argued throughout this dissertation, these characterisations are well suited for today’s creative industries, particularly media, which has faced highly disruptive change due to digitalisation, internationalisation and consolidation as significant forces pressing for change.

The essential character of dualities has been conceptualised as “opposing forces that need to be balanced - properties that seem contradictory or paradoxical, but which are in fact complementary” (Evans & Doz, 1999: 83). Along similar lines, Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009: 33) illustrated the nature of dualities in their study of duality management in a newspaper company: “Dualities imply the need to simultaneously consider two opposing demands, which might form an entity without becoming a unity.” Thus, the concept of dualities has been considered to enjoin the simultaneity of something and its seemingly opposite pole, force or demand. Illustrations have included, for example, stability - change, global - local, flexibility - efficiency, hierarchies - networks, control - collaboration, decentralisation - centralisation, or competition - cooperation (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt & Pradies, 2014; Evans & Doz, 1999; Sánchez-Runde, Massini & Quintanilla, 2003). To illustrate, stability and change are interrelated poles of a duality, because total change would be chaos and total stability a complete standstill.
There is always some element of change in stability and of stability in change, and the poles are interdependent.

Research on dualities has emphasised the opposing character of the dual elements as a core feature (Papachroni et al., 2015). Although this aspect is certainly important for conceptualising dualities, it may lead to overemphasising the incompatibility of, or contradiction between, the presumed dual elements, which may not be altogether opposite in actuality. The realities of content development work indicate that the elements of dualities are intertwined and their relationship is dynamic. The integrated dynamics feature concurrent opposition and interdependency between the dual elements. The different elements must thus be attended to simultaneously, and the respective tensions effectively managed. This process is dynamic, complex and instrumental. Valuable results depend on how well the poles of a duality are both recognised and connected, and how the fundamental tensions between them are managed as an interdependent entirety. Thus, for the purposes of this study, Farjoun’s (2010: 203), conceptualisation is used, which states that duality “retains the idea of two essential elements, but it views them as interdependent, rather than separate and opposed”.

Although the general idea of dual forces can be traced to ancient history, especially in the “Yin and Yang” of Chinese philosophy, scholarly discussion on dualities and respective tensions is fairly recent (Schmitt & Raisch, 2013). Parallel to the concept of dualities, previous research has discussed organisational tensions between opposite demands or conflicting forces, especially with respect to “paradoxes” (e.g. Eisenhardt, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011), but also in relation to concepts like “dilemmas” (e.g. Janssens & Steyaert, 1999; Smith & Lewis, 2011), “ambivalence” (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2014), “dialectic” (e.g. Tracy, 2004; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), “tradeoff” (e.g. Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003), “dualism” (e.g. Farjoun, 2010; Putnam et al., 2016) or “polarities” (e.g. Kayser, Seidler & Johnson, 2017). Some researchers use these concepts more or less interchangeably, while others have aimed at distinguishing and making choices between concepts (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 1999; Putnam et al., 2016). The latter seems to be a more useful choice for analytical purposes and for conceptual clarity (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003), especially due to the variety of different concepts that reflect different types of dynamics between elements in dual relationships.

Of the various alternatives, paradox has attracted increasing interest in organisation and management studies since the 1980s (Eisenhardt, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Quinn & Nujella, 2017; Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011) and is considered to be developing towards a meta-perspective or meta-theory (Fairhurst, Smith, Banghart, Lewis, Putnam, Raisch & Schad, 2016; Schad, 2017; Schad et al., 2016). Thus, paradox theory merits a short explanation in relation to the choice of duality as the grounding theoretical concept for this dissertation. Smith and Lewis (2011: 387) define paradox as “contradictory yet interrelated elements (dualities) that exist simultaneously and
persist over time; such elements seem logical when considered in isolation, but irrational, inconsistent, and absurd when juxtaposed”. As illustrated in the definition, paradoxes and dualities are conceptually close, and are sometimes understood as substitutive. However, the concept of paradox is most often used “to describe conflicting demands, opposing perspectives, or seemingly illogical findings” (Lewis, 2000: 760). Thus, contradiction and incongruity are central here, and it is considered impossible to balance or make choices between contradictory elements of a paradox (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Putnam et al., 2016).

Dualities, on the other hand, have been perceived in paradox research as “opposites that exist within a unified whole” (Smith & Lewis, 2011: 387). A duality comprises an entity of opposing elements or poles, which differentiates the concept from the simultaneous presence of conflicting and contradictory elements emphasised in paradoxes or the impossibility of choice between elements built in dilemmas (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 1999; Papachroni et al., 2015; Sánchez-Runde & Pettigrew, 2003; Sutherland & Smith, 2011). Although paradox has increased in popularity as a theoretical concept, duality offers a more comprehensive approach, because it enables built-in dynamic interrelations of the seemingly opposite forces or elements. Also, as Sánchez-Runde and Pettigrew (2003: 243) state: “Paradoxes, dilemmas, dialectics, and conflicting goals and values can all be seen as dualities, but not the other way around.” Along similar lines, Janssens and Steyaert (1999: 122-123) argue that “paradoxes and dilemmas can be seen as dualities, but not all dualities can be seen as paradoxical or simultaneously contradictory, or involving an either-or situation or an impossible choice”. Thus, duality elements are distinct but intertwined, and also independent (to a certain degree) but interdependent and inseparable. Their management requires a both-and approach to organisational tensions in practice, rather than either-or (Putnam et al., 2016).

As Dittrich, Jaspers, van der Valk and Wynstra (2006: 793) suggest: “Dealing with dualities necessarily starts with understanding dualities”. Understanding dualities and their characteristics offers organisations a powerful framework for managing interrelated aspects of organisational life, especially continuity and change (Graetz & Smith, 2008). In efforts to do this, it is necessary to explore the corresponding tensions and their management (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Lewis, 2000; Smith & Tushman, 2005) because dualities become evident in organisational tensions, which emerge through everyday organisational practice (Papachroni et al., 2015). Moreover, it is essential to respect the importance of both countervailing forces that constitute a duality due to the creative tension between them (Graetz & Smith, 2008, 2009; see also Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). It would be unhelpful to dispose or avoid these tensions, which is typical in traditional management approaches. Managers pursuing innovation need to especially understand the importance of interrelations and simultaneous utilisation of both elements that comprise a duality to see the duality as an integrated package, as this is crucial for
organisational success (Farjoun, 2010; see also Schmitt & Raisch, 2013; Sutherland & Smith, 2011). This task is complex and demanding because a simple halfway balance between the dual elements rarely suffices, and never for long (Eisenhardt, 2000).

As this discussion of dualities implies, the conventional and divisive “either-or” managerial approaches aimed at prioritising and choosing one dimension over another that is not actually an opposite but is seen as such, are counterproductive for harnessing competing organisational forces. Thus, exploring links and bridging the elements of each duality are important (Sutherland & Smith, 2011). It is not sufficient to analyse and manage only one pole of a duality because the underlying drivers and logic of the duality are lost to this view (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). Also, ignoring inherent tensions in dualities does not make them disappear and may result in dualities constraining development and organisational growth rather than supporting it (Sutherland & Smith, 2011). Both elements of a duality have value and exist simultaneously (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Graetz & Smith, 2008). Thus, the management of dualities needs to focus on their entirety rather than making decisions between polarised options. Applying a “both-and” attitude accepts organisational ambiguities rather than focusing on choices between conflicting demands. (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Graetz & Smith, 2008; Putnam et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Sutherland & Smith, 2011; Townley & Beech, 2010).

Both-and managerial approaches include, for example, paradoxical thinking, vacillation back and forth between two dual poles, as well as integration and balance (Putnam et al., 2016). The first approach builds on individual managerial abilities, and the second emphasises the importance of shifting dynamically between and bringing dual elements together. Integration and balance seek for ways to embrace the dual forces by merging them, finding a compromise or working through the tension to meet competing demands in some kind of an equilibrium (Smith & Lewis, 2011). However, the last approach may not be entirely applicable to fast-changing organisations due to their complex nature (Putnam et al., 2016). This is because the relationships between competing demands are dynamic, making a potential equilibrium unstable and often implausible. The decisive factor is being able to manage and utilise the poles of a duality as an entity, and at the same time be aware of the characteristic complexity of a task that requires sustaining the dynamic interplay that is inherent between the duality elements. This is a crucial requirement for content development in practice because respective tensions act as potential enablers of innovative content creation (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). At the same time, these tensions pose complex challenges that, if unmanaged or mismanaged, can certainly inhibit reaching innovation.

Various tensions shape organisational practices in the creative industry organisations (Lampel et al., 2000), the context of this study. Media work typically involves routine production operations in parallel with content development and innovation operations (Bleyen, Lindmark, Ranaivoson &
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Ballon, 2014; Küng 2013). This gives rise to a key question: how can managers support exploration to develop new content at the same time as exploitation of a currently profitable business, and do both as mutually reinforcing elements of creative media work? This requires competence in managing tensions between the dual functions. From the duality perspective, the movement between exploration and exploitation should be dynamic and in tandem to enable effectively responding to evolving environmental pressures (Graetz & Smith, 2008). However, tensions between content development and on-going operations in practice typically cause conflict, which can escalate (cf. Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a) often due to discrepant interests between different organisational groups or dissonance over the allocation of scarce resources (Mintzberg, 1989; Morgan, 2006). The theoretical framework of the study that is utilised to explore and create understanding on these complex phenomena is explained next.

2.2 Theoretical Framework in the Study of Tensions

In this dissertation, organisational tensions are considered as a generic organisational challenge for content development work and its management in creative industries. Legacy media organisations that constitute the specific context of the study must deal with the key duality of exploration and exploitation, i.e. development for future and maintenance of ongoing efficient operations. The corresponding concept of organisational ambidexterity connects the theoretical perspectives utilised in the study. It has particular relevance to all three, and cuts across them. The three theoretical perspectives of ambidexterity (structural and contextual), as well as value networks and hybrid organisations (a network approach to ambidexterity, see Kauppila 2007) represent distinctive, but connected perspectives for exploring tensions as interrelationships between the dual elements of current business and future development. Combining typically separate analytical approaches is useful for new knowledge creation on management of organisational tensions between the poles of the exploration - exploitation duality in practice, because this may enable finding ways to make them mutually reinforcing beyond separation (cf. Papachroni et al., 2015; Stadler et al., 2014).

Figure 2 below illustrates the overall theoretical framework of the study.
The theoretical framework is used to explore tensions and their management in creative development work for producing innovative content which is vital to cope with and succeed in the current operational VUCA environment of the creative industries. Accordingly, various characteristic dualities can be conceptualised. Figure 2 depicts the overarching dual relationship between current business (exploitation) and future business (exploration). This relationship is dynamic and reflexive, where the elements are co-influencing, as suggested by the double-headed arrow shape. This also illustrates that the “distinction between exploration and exploitation is often a matter of degree rather than kind” (Lavie, Stettner & Tushman, 2010: 114), which implies that ambidexterity is not a choice between discrete options, but more of a continuum of their combinations. Tensions emerge through the interrelationships between the poles and opposing forces of this and other dualities. Tensions are explored as empirical phenomena by utilising the theoretical perspectives of contextual and structural ambidexterity, as well as value networks and hybrid organisations (as approaches to network ambidexterity). The overarching analytical concept of dualities is discussed in detail above in Chapter 2.1. The three theoretical concepts of ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations are discussed in the next three chapters.

The three theoretical perspectives – ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations – are primarily used as analytical tools to explore the
empirical research interest and data. However, they may also refer to more concrete realities of the research context, indicating the difficulty of strictly separating the two viewpoints. As Figure 2 shows, ambidexterity connects the theoretical perspectives as an overarching conceptualisation between exploration and exploitation. However, it represents both a theoretical concept and a practical organisational aim in combining current and future business. Further, exploration is a theoretical construct, but can also be used to illustrate the work of creative content development in practice. Value network is a conceptual tool of the study but may also refer to a network of organisations aiming to create shared value in practice, and hybrid organisation is both an abstract concept and useful to illustrate the concrete realities of joining public and private organisational forms together for achieving development in creative content.

Practical operations striving for ambidexterity is where characteristic organisational tensions become managerial issues. The three theoretical perspectives in the theoretical framework - ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations - represent different sides of these tensions. Structural and contextual ambidexterity feature the necessary connections between on-going operations and future development inside an individual organisation, whereas network ambidexterity refers to organisational ambidexterity facilitated by networked organisational contexts (Kauppila, 2007). Accordingly, the concepts of value networks focusing on relationships and hybrid organisations focusing on structure are utilised to explore tensions in relation to network ambidexterity. The network aspect is crucial because it takes the current real environment of organisations in the creative industries into consideration in addition to the intra-organisational focus (Kauppila, 2007). Value network is a concept reflecting the aimed-for outcome of collaborative activity as collaborative value. Value networks are crucial for value-creating activities, especially innovation (Kauppila, 2007). Hybrid organisations provide a structural viewpoint to developing cross-sector collaboration. Previous literature suggests both approaches as potential tools for achieving ambidexterity (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Kauppila, 2007), but empirical research is sparse, especially in combining different approaches to ambidexterity (Papachroni et al., 2015; Stadler et al., 2014). Thus, these theorisations combined with the more established contextual and structural approaches to ambidexterity provide a useful lens for analysing tensions in creative content development work in practice to advance conceptual understanding on dualities as the overarching theoretical concept of the study. Next, contextual and structural ambidexterity are discussed.

2.2.1 Ambidexterity

Disruptive change consumes resources and often requires restructuring to increase efficiency. This is certainly true for legacy media organisations and it causes creative work for content development to clash with the constraints of everyday production. This is because developing new products contends for the same resources needed by on-going production. Thus the demands of creative
and routine work compete, requiring continual balancing (DeFillippi et al., 2007; Sonenshein, 2016). Discontinuous development is ideal for creating new and future opportunities in response to change because break-through innovations transform markets. But on-going operations are simultaneously fundamental for company viability and sustained performance today (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a, 2010b; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). Without efficient on-going operations to provide profits and other resources, developmental endeavours cannot be supported. At the same time, the resources required for content development threaten the efficiency and profitability of on-going production (cf. Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010b) because success cannot be guaranteed. Exploitation of current resources typically produces more certain and immediate returns than the uncertain exploration for something new. Thus, content development operations face a significant risk of being criticised and even cancelled because they do not contribute to short-term results like on-going operations, and use resources the latter desire and perhaps require. Sustainable success necessitates both elements to exist in parallel, which is reflected in the concept of ambidexterity.

Scholarly interest in ambidexterity has proliferated since the late 1990s (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013), and several recent articles summarise research on the topic (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013; Lavie et al., 2010; Nosella et al., 2012; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Turner et al., 2013). In everyday English, ambidexterity refers to a human ability to use right and left hands equally well. Whereas, the scholarly concept of organisational ambidexterity refers to “the ability of an organization to both explore and to exploit – to compete in mature technologies and markets where efficiency, control and incremental improvement are prized and to also compete in new technologies and markets where flexibility, autonomy, and experimentation are needed” (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013: 324). In other words, “an organization’s ability to perform differing and often competing, strategic acts at the same time” (Simsek, Heavey, Veiga & Souder, 2009: 865). The everyday and scholarly definitions are connected in relation to the underlying idea. At the abstract level, both describe a comparatively unique and valuable ability or capability. However, very few individuals are equally adept with both hands; often one hand is stronger or weaker than the other.

Extant research considers organisational ambidexterity highly beneficial and required for organisational success overall (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013), especially in the performance of nonmanufacturing industries (Junni, Sarala, Taras & Tarba, 2013). This makes the concept useful for studying creative industries, including media organisations. However, the allure of organisational ambidexterity as the ability to simultaneously explore and exploit in harmonious fashion rarely reflects the complex realities involved with combining content development work and efficient on-going production. Exploitation for immediate gain easily overrules exploration for longer term potential because the priority of efficiency is baked into mature organisations (Govindarajan &
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Trimble, 2010a, 2010b). Achieving ambidexterity in practice is not easy or straightforward. That is why ambidexterity is not well developed in organisations. It is a capability that requires investment in learning, endurance for trial and error, and tolerance for various organisational and operational tensions.

Research on ambidexterity has elaborated on various aspects of the concept. In the early stages of research on ambidexterity, exploitation and exploration were described as evolutionary / incremental vs. revolutionary / radical change respectively, and ambidextrous organisations were characterised as being equally adept to manage both in parallel (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). March (1991) characterised exploitation as refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution, and exploration as search, variation, risk-taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery and innovation. More recently, the concept has been applied in analysing diverse organisational phenomena using different research approaches – qualitative and quantitative, empirical and conceptual. Ambidexterity has been utilised, for example, in studying dynamic capabilities (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Taylor & Helfat, 2009), strategizing, strategic management and strategic ambidexterity (Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2014; Judge & Blocker, 2008; Kortmann, 2015; Smith & Tushman, 2005), new product development and product performance (Li & Huang, 2012; Wei, Yi & Guo, 2014), alliance portfolio management and inter-organisational relationships (Kauppila, 2015; Yamakawa, Yang & Lin, 2011), firm performance (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; He & Wong, 2004, Junni, et al., 2013), organisational learning (Danneels, 2002; Gupta et al., 2006), business model innovation (Markides, 2013), ambidextrous leadership in innovation processes (Rosing et al., 2011; Zacher & Rosing, 2015), the role of management boards in relation to ambidexterity (Oehmichen, Heyden, Georgakakis & Volberda, 2017), as well as tensions in innovation operations (Andriopoulos & Lewis 2009; Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a). This suggests a multifaceted research field that is developing to date (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

Recommended solutions for achieving organisational ambidexterity can generally be divided into two principal approaches – structural and contextual ambidexterity (e.g. Lavie et al., 2010; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013). The initial and more traditional approach has typically considered ambidexterity from the structural (or “architectural” as Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) call it) viewpoint (Duncan, 1976; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). This approach is characterised by attempts to simultaneously pursue exploration and exploitation by utilising distinct and autonomous organisational units for each – although these units are supposed to be connected by an overarching vision, common strategy, shared set of values and skilful leadership at the top of an organisation (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2011; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Simsek, 2009). Earlier, O’Reilly and Tushman (2008: 192) explained structural ambidexterity as an approach that “... entails not only separate structural units for exploration and exploitation but also
different competencies, systems, incentives, processes, and cultures – each internally aligned”.

A more recent approach introduces contextual ambidexterity, which is characterised by the capacity to achieve flexible adaptability for the future, i.e. exploration and the efficient alignment of current operations, i.e. exploitation (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). Gibson & Birkinshaw (2004: 209) defined the concept: “Contextual ambidexterity is the behavioural capacity to simultaneously demonstrate alignment and adaptability across an entire business unit”. However, this approach has been questioned, for example, by Kauppila (2010: 286): “A key shortcoming of the contextual ambidexterity model is that it does not really consider how a firm can simultaneously conduct radical forms of exploration and exploitation. Rather, it merely assumes that explorative knowledge is produced somewhere and that it is then selectively adapted to the organisation’s purposes.”

Despite the analytical utility of separating structural and contextual approaches to ambidexterity, this study suggests the usefulness of combining the different approaches. This is necessary for creating new knowledge on organisational ambidexterity in the real-life practice of organisations in order to capture its complex and multifaceted character. Organisations gain experience and learn to divide resources between operations in exploration and exploitation. Because the consequences of exploitation are quicker, clearer, more precise and more certain than those of exploration, it is typically supported more readily and persistently than exploration. In other words, organisations learn what currently works and stick with it (cf. Ess, 2014; March, 1991). This is useful for short-term profitability in reasonably stable markets, but typically leads to structural and cultural inertia that inhibits needed change. As companies grow older and larger they become trapped in their path-dependent ways of operation (Drucker, 2007). Although making a choice to focus on either exploration or exploitation is considered easier, it can be disastrous in the long run (March, 1991). An excessive focus on exploitation leads to organisational inertia that prevents required adaptation to environmental change. At the same time, too much concentration on exploration disrupts the process of developing profitable solutions in ongoing practice (Junni et al., 2013). Thus, there is wide agreement on the necessity of balancing exploration and exploitation in organisations (Gupta et al., 2006; Lavie et al., 2010), especially the media industry (Dogruel 2013; Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013a).

Balancing creative ideation for novelty and a structured process of production is typically dictated by deadlines (Lowe, 2015), which may be even more critical in media than elsewhere because media products feature more intangible components than products in other industries (Aris & Bughin, 2009). Thus, ‘integrate or separate?’ is a fundamental question for legacy media organisations aiming to respond to disruptive change (Küng, 2015). The simultaneous need to optimise and to innovate causes tensions in the everyday operations of media companies (Küng, 2007, 2017a). While necessary, media organisations and their management typically find balancing the integration for
efficient exploitation and supporting capabilities for creative exploration a
strategy (Baumann, 2013). Also, as illustrated by this study, the traditional
division of structural and contextual ambidexterity may fluctuate in media
companies.

Following from the above considerations, this dissertation suggests that a key
question in operational ambidexterity concerns organisational arrangements,
especially difficulties of the process that may seriously inhibit accomplishing
ambidexterity in practice. In times of disruptive changes, which are
characteristic to the media industry today as a consequence of structural changes
keyed to advancing digitalisation, ambidextrous management may require
“cannibalising” the established business to avoid decline. But doing so can court
as much risk as avoidance. In short, there is no risk-free path to contemporary
development of future success.

Combining approaches to understand and create ambidexterity is necessary
for individual organisations, but equally between them, which adds another level
of complexity (Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst & Tushman, 2009;
antecedent provides intriguing explanations, a comprehensive picture of how a
firm can create ambidexterity is missing. … In reality, firms are likely to create
ambidexterity through a combination of structural and contextual antecedents
and at both organizational and interorganizational levels, rather than through any
single organizational or interorganizational antecedent alone.” Thus, combining
different perspectives in researching organisational ambidexterity offers
potential for creating new understanding about combining existing
organisational realities with future opportunities. Accordingly, this study adds
the viewpoint of network ambidexterity by utilising theoretical perspectives of
value networks and hybrid organisations, which are the focus of the next two
chapters. The concept of value networks is discussed first.

2.2.2 Value Networks

Creative industries, including media, are characteristically cooperative in
content development and production because diverse specialisations must be
combined, as evident for example in the credits listed at the end of a television
series’ episode or on the first pages of a magazine publication detailing the
maker’s team (Eikhof, 2014; Townley, Beech & McKinlay, 2009). Additionally,
previous research suggests the usefulness of approaching innovative
development in media content and production as an interactive, long-term
process beyond the control of individual organisations (Dogruel 2015). Thus, the
central importance of collaborative arrangements for producing value is
emphasised, especially in relation to the specialised knowledge required to cope
with complexities rooted in disruptive digital change (Lowe, 2015). The
increasing dependence on external networks challenges traditional company-
internal and linear value chain thinking (see Porter 2004). A wider and more
comprehensive focus on value networks enables an understanding of the
complex interdependencies involved in networked collaboration for development.

Finding and benefiting from having a recognised position in a value network is an increasing challenge today. This is crucial for the future competitiveness and success of media organisations in creative industries (Baumann, 2013, Bilton, 2011). This emphasises the significance of collaborative arrangements, for example in the context of media clusters (Karlsson & Picard, 2011a; Komorowski, 2017). Clustering is also important because involvement in media clusters is expected to stimulate media content development alongside current production (Karlsson & Picard, 2011a), which connects the concept with ambidexterity discussed above. Additionally, “…it is critical for firms in media industries to actively monitor the products of their competitors, and transform and improve their own products accordingly. Presence for a media firm in a cluster with other media firms nearby makes it easier to formally and informally monitor and study the products of these other firms” (Karlsson & Picard, 2011a: 13).

However, the mere physical co-location and agglomeration typical of spatial clusters (Porter, 1998) does not suffice for the successful development of cluster participation (Komorowski, 2016). For presence to become participation requires efforts to develop collaborative, value-creating relationships in value networks that provide the practical benefits for partners (see Allee, 2008). Although the anticipated benefits of collaboration are great, it is often arduous for traditional media organisations, especially due to internal structures that do not support networked arrangements (Reca, 2006) and may actively resist them. Thus, tensions are inevitable. Moreover, the benefits that can be derived from cluster participation vary between participants (Picard, 2008) because networks involve risks and pose constraints, including the potential for restricted access among existing members of the network (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2011; Håkansson & Ford, 2002).

At the most basic level, a value network consists of two or more cooperating organisations with the shared aim of benefitting each and all of the network members (Tuominen et al., 2015). Allee (2009: 429) defines a value network as “any purposeful group of people or organizations creating social and economic good through complex dynamic exchanges of tangible and intangible value”. Value networks are considered to be crucial for the ability of established companies to achieve innovative development, especially in knowledge-intensive industries under rapid change (Bengtsson & Powell, 2004). As Christensen (1997: 54) explained in relation to disruptive change: “…[the] value network in which a firm competes has a profound influence on its ability to marshal and focus the necessary resources and capabilities to overcome the technological and organizational hurdles that impede innovation”.

Thus, value networks can be understood as purposeful collaborative configurations between interdependent organisations aiming to create mutually beneficial value (Allee 2003, 2009). This orientation links network analysis with organisational performance, which especially includes value creation, improved
business outcomes and sustainable success (Allee, 2009). Traditional (social) network analysis has been widely used in organisational research for decades (e.g. Nohria & Eccles, 1992), in which there has accumulated a wide and scattered field of theorising and applications. The value network approach tightens the focus by linking the interactional and relationship viewpoints characteristic of network analysis with practical business and management processes to improve organisational performance and achieve specific innovative outcomes, which acknowledges the central importance of intangible value (Allee, 2009). Further, value networks have been suggested to provide an opportunity towards ambidexterity in combining exploration for innovation with production-orientation between organisations in a network striving for shared value creation (Birkinshaw, Bessant & Delbridge, 2007; Charue-Duboc, Aggeri, Chanal & Garel, 2010).

The value network perspective is useful for widening the traditional view of value chains as a company’s internal source of competitive advantage, and by adding a dynamic layer of external relations that challenge the static understanding of networks as mere structures. Value networks are fluid, multidirectional, reflexive, dynamic, volatile and complex (Allee 2000, 2009). As Ghezzi (2013: 1332) states: [the] “Value network theory and model embraces the concept of interdependencies and widens the value chain model by including not only the traditional goods/services and revenue flow but also extended value exchanges”. This is illustrated in a change of vocabulary from the firm-focused “competitive advantage” to a network-oriented “collaborative advantage” (Kanter, 1994). Actors need to possess or acquire new capacities to succeed in value networks. For example, it is vital to understand their positions within networks, consider the needs of partners, and rethink the source of competitive “edge”. This implies the priority importance of communication and negotiation skills, as well as developing a partnership orientation. Thus, despite the appeal of collaborative networks for producing shared value, the concept entails various complexities in constructing and maintaining value networks in practice.

Collaborative networks must be managed as a whole to realise their potential value (Duysters, de Man, & Wildeman, 1999; Ritter, Wilkinson, & Johnston, 2004). This is especially crucial in discontinuous contexts that characterise disruptive change (Ghezzi 2013), as in the VUCA environments. The complexities of value networks, and their management, include dynamic relationships and dependencies between members, along with related tensions. Depending on the nature and quality of relations between the value network participants, especially relating to power, organisations are dependent on other organisations in the value network, but to differing degrees. This interdependence can be positive or negative, i.e. supporting or hindering an organisation in achieving its objectives. However, dependencies are not of one or the other type, but rather contain cooperative, competitive and conflictual elements in the same package. In other words, network management is a dual process that requires “manageability” as well as management by the
participating organisations. Collaboration presumes interdependence to an important degree, and unbalanced power relations stifle the innovativeness and potential for value creation within the network (Håkansson & Ford, 2002). Further, value networks are not stable over time, which increases the complexity of their management. As examples, there is continuous tension between collaboration and competition, or self-interest and collaborative interest, which can be considered a characteristic duality of value networks.

2.2.3 Hybrid Organisations

As discussed above, media companies rely increasingly on collaboration for content production and development. This requires working across various organisational boundaries and borders, including between organisations in public and private sectors (Lowe & Yamamoto, 2016), which is common in European media clusters (Karlsson & Picard, 2011b). As a result, organisational elements get “coalesced” when organisational borders fade, virtually or actually, in novel combinations such as cooperatives and networked organisational formations. These organisational arrangements require reformed managerial practices because traditional approaches do not fit well or even suffice in such formations (Küng, 2017c; Picard & Lowe, 2016). This is due to the unique characteristics of the various organisational arrangements described as “hybrid” forms (e.g. Borys & Jemison, 1989). Understanding the new realities benefits from recent theorisations on hybrid organisations (Battilana, Sengul, Pache & Model, 2015; Jay, 2013) and hybrid organising (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

Research on hybrid organisations has accentuated social enterprises, where social and commercial logics combine (Agafonow, 2017; Battilana & Lee, 2014). Widening the perspective to other domains, and especially tensions between public and private logics is called for (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Ramus, Vaccaro & Brusoni, 2017). As a scholarly concept, hybrid organisation can be understood from two somewhat varying perspectives (Jay, 2013). First, this organisational form may combine some characteristics from both market and hierarchical governance structures, but nevertheless features a distinctive “network form of organisation” (Powell, 1990: 295). Interestingly, Powell’s early work uses cases from the creative industries, including publishing as well as film and recording operations to illustrate the network form. Powell also combines these with industrial districts that feature similarities to media clusters. Further, this perspective emphasises the importance of networked organisational forms for technology-intensive industries, which media increasingly is. That supports the focal interest of this study as a research context of recognised value. In connection to Powell’s thinking, it is possible to also establish a connection to theorisations on value networks because both approaches emphasise organisational arrangements that require various types of exchange, interdependent resource flows and collaborative relations between participating organisations.
A second perspective on the concept of hybrid organisations describes them as organisational arrangements that combine public and private organisational logics (e.g. Jay, 2013). Hybrid organisations aim at integrating, to a useful degree, different organisational logics and identities (Mongelli, Rullani & Versari, 2017; Pache & Santos, 2013), or different institutional demands (Pache & Santos, 2010). Traditionally, these aspects are considered distinct and not easily compatible (Battilana et al., 2012; Emmert & Crow, 1987; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta & Lonsbury, 2011). This illustrates the inherent complexity of the hybrid organisation construct. Further, the dual nature of hybrid organisations connects the concept with ambidexterity because both concern the necessary linking or coordination of potentially contradictory organisational elements or activities (Battilana et al., 2015). On the other hand, O’Reilly and Tushman (2013) suggest hybrid organisational structures as potential responses to ambidexterity challenges and the usefulness of combining the two concepts in empirical research, as is done in this dissertation.

Moving beyond a more static idea of hybrid organisations, recent research has introduced the concept of hybrid organising, which Battilana & Lee (2014: 397) defined as “the activities, structures, processes and meanings by which organizations make sense of and combine multiple organizational forms”. The distinction is useful, both analytically and in relation to multiple organizational forms”. The distinction is useful, both analytically and in relation to practice, for focusing on how the combining process becomes actualised, and via which practical solutions. Here the role of management becomes central in the complex and dynamic process of hybrid organising towards creating hybrid organisations. The process features tensions between competing dual forces and organisational demands, and the resulting structural challenge of hybrid organisations mirrors similar complexities of ambidexterity (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

In ideal terms, the hybrid organisational form could be assumed to enable combining the best characteristics of the public and private organising models, as well as aspects of public and private organisational forms, to provide a highly useful approach for creating added value in changing conditions and operational uncertainty (cf. Battilana & Lee, 2014). Also, collaboration between public and private sectors is typically encouraged by governments and public authorities (Hitters & Richards, 2002), so hybrid organisations may offer fruitful solutions to these initiatives. However, hybrid organisational models and hybrid organising practice encounter prominent challenges that may inhibit their potential usefulness and, accordingly, successful operations (Battilana et al., 2012). To begin with, the fundamental mission and objectives of public and private organisations are often distinct. Thus, combining them in the process of hybrid organising requires high tolerance of friction between unlikely combinations in relation to, for instance, legal structures and financing, which have typically developed separately in public and private sectors and are not entirely suitable for hybrids (Battilana et al., 2012). Further, it could be argued that when hybrid organising aspires to combine different organisational identities, the identity of the hybrid organisation itself may be difficult to
constitute or remains unclear, leading to additional complications in benefitting from the hybrid organisation as a source of added value.

All in all, hybrid organisations are institutionally complex and therefore do not automatically provide a guaranteed means for achieving the desired creative development and innovation potential or ambidexterity. Further, hybrid organisations are not stable (Jay, 2013), and the relations regarding the duality of logics (public-private) change in the dynamic process of hybrid organising. This complexity of competing dual demands must be managed because the process features various tensions that may lead to confusion and cause conflicts (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Battilana et al., 2015; Greenwood et al., 2011; Jay, 2013). How these tensions can be effectively managed in practice in various kinds of organisations and industries is a critical research question (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Thus, reflecting on characteristic tensions between dual organisational forces and elements is an important key for developing improved understandings of hybrid organisations. This study is based on an understanding that managing these tensions is of central importance for enhancing and releasing the potential of hybrid organisational forms to support innovative development and potentially ambidexterity, which builds on and deepens previous research (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Battilana et al., 2012; Jay, 2013; Mongelli et al., 2017; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

2.3 Tensions as the Combining Element

The overarching theoretical framework discussed above and adopted throughout the dissertation research builds on dualities as the overall analytical concept (see Chapter 2.1). The empirical focus is on characteristic tensions between innovative development (exploration) and current efficient production (exploitation) in creative work for innovative content. The dynamic interrelationship between constituent poles of dualities emerges through everyday organisational practice (Papachroni et al., 2015), and the nature of this interrelationship between the countervailing forces that anchor a duality is always in tension. Thus, tensions can be understood as “the source and substance” of dualities (Putnam et al., 2016: 132). These features are shared by the three theoretical perspectives of ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations that are utilised in the individual papers of the thesis. Thus, this dissertation research highlights the role and importance of tensions in everyday creative content development work to deepen understandings about complexities and managerial challenges in the context of creative industries.

Tension between inseparable poles of any duality is a constant struggle that is never at absolute rest, while resolution is only ever temporary and partial. This is why tensions cannot be totally or finally resolved, but must be identified and managed to create a dynamic balance (Gupta et al., 2006; Karhu & Ritala, 2018; Sheep, Fairhurst & Khazanchi, 2017). Tensions imply complications and challenges, but they can also be important means to energise and fuel
development for valuable results (Sydow, 2018). If tension dries out, movement stops. Thus, a key task and persistent requirement for management is to continually work on balancing the inescapable and instrumental tensions that are inherent to a range of dualities that are characteristic of content development work.

This study focuses especially on tensions at the organisational level, as reflected in the overall level of analysis. However, it is important to note that tensions appear at every level of operations and organisational activities: individual, group or team, organisational and inter-organisational. Tensions are inherent to creative content development work and media production, and the tensions are co-existing and interdependent (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). Managing the entirety of organisational tensions is challenging, and complex environments make the task even more demanding (Almandoz, 2012). The long-term survival of organisations depends greatly on the ways managers respond to simultaneous organisational tensions between multiple and divergent dual demands (Smith & Lewis, 2011, see also Quinn & Nujella, 2017). Accordingly, attending to the multiplicity of tensions can enhance scholarly understanding because organisations facing coexisting and interrelated tensions merit corresponding research attention to capture the complex totality in practice (Fairhurst et al., 2016).

Managing complex tensions inherent to the simultaneous existence of countervailing poles of dualities can facilitate organisational improvement in product development and change projects generally (Achtenhagen & Melin, 2003; Graetz & Smith, 2008; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Further, tensions are prevalent in managing creativity overall. Thus, organisations and their collaborative arrangements in creative industries are highly characterised by dualities and corresponding tensions (Jones et al., 2016; Slavich & Svejenova, 2016). This makes the creative industries a rich empirical context for studying the phenomena under investigation (DeFillippi et al., 2007). For example, in their research on a news media organisation, Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009) identified three types of organisational tensions: structural (originating in formal structuring of tasks), processual (originating in organising workflows) and cultural (originating in differences between professions). Such categorisation is useful for understanding the nature and dynamics of the tensions. Of particular importance is the interdependence of the interlinked tensions, as well as their dynamic behaviour in the experience of organisational change (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009).

The relationship between on-going efficient operations in exploitation and exploration for innovative development unavoidably fuels ambidextrous organisational tensions (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a; Govindarajan & Trimble 2010b). As one of the main challenging features, tension between exploration and exploitation is a built-in element of ambidexterity according to Duncan’s (1976) seminal discussion of dual structures in ambidextrous organisations. Duncan (1976: 179) discussed the “potential of conflict” between organisational structures, especially between
R&D and manufacturing. He considered the ability of organisational units to deal with conflict across structures as a key success factor for organisational ambidexterity. This emphasises the core importance of managerial abilities to deal with ambidextrous tensions.

As discussed, the character of exploitation and exploration are fundamentally different and they compete for scarce organisational resources. This explains various types of organisational tensions that are characteristic of ambidexterity (Andriopoulos 2003; Andriopoulos & Lewis 2009; Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Ashforth et al., 2014; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2004; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Some researchers now believe that the whole concept of ambidexterity is invalid or unreasonable without conflicting demands and respective tensions (Markides, 2013). This dissertation embraces that understanding. The various tensions between exploration and exploitation need to be identified and understood to deal with them. This is crucial for “both increasing the alignment or fit among strategy, structure, culture, and processes, while simultaneously preparing for the inevitable revolutions required by discontinuous environmental change” (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996: 11). This means that organisations that are capable of embracing tensions between seemingly contradicting simultaneous activities have the highest potential to succeed (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss & Figge, 2016).

Accordingly, tension between exploration and exploitation is a crucial aspect of ambidexterity that merits consideration in study and practice about managing ambidextrous organisations (Andriopoulos 2003; Andriopoulos & Lewis 2009; Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Ashforth et al., 2014; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2004). Exploration and exploitation may seem opposite imperatives (Graetz & Smith, 2005), but the central idea is that successful ambidexterity involves exploration and exploitation as simultaneous interdependence, i.e. not a trade-off but an intertwined pursuit. For achieving this, it is useful to consider ambidexterity from the perspective of dualities, as Hahn et al. (2016: 217) states: “ambidexterity posits as its fundamental premise that firms can achieve complementarities or synergies between different activities that are [seemingly] contradictory”.

Achieving ambidexterity, content innovation and sustainable competitive advantage may be supported and enabled by inter-organisational collaboration in value networks (Ferrary, 2011). While achieving and managing ambidexterity within a single organisation is complex and creates vulnerabilities with insecure results, networked partnerships enable ambidexterity development in a cooperative setting to potentially overcome these complications (Kauppila, 2010). But one of the core dualities in value networks is “their simultaneous role as enabler and barrier; they can both facilitate and promote change … but on the other hand they can act as a barrier or hindrance to change” (Dittrich et al., 2006: 792). Further, networked collaboration where managers need to handle the simultaneous forces of cooperation and competition with partner organisations is a source of organisational tensions, and the same applies for product development tensions (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Van de Ven, 2013). As an example
Theoretical Background

of tensions in networked collaboration, media clusters combine cultural, economic and political objectives, which leads to complexities that hinge on tensions (Karlsson & Picard, 2011a) in efforts to create shared value in networks within and between the clusters.

In cluster contexts but also more generally, hybrid organisational arrangements have the potential to be highly useful for creative development and achieving innovativeness, but they also feature dualities in aspiration of combining the public sector (non-commercial) and the private (commercial objectives and logics), which can create instability (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Battilana et al., 2012; Jay, 2013). Cross-sector collaboration can include organisations from public, private and not-for-profit sectors in different combinations, as also reflected in hybrid organisations. Earlier research suggests important differences between organisational environments, goals, structures and management when comparing public and private organisations (Boyne, 2002). Various tensions arise from these differences. The value-creation potential of cross-sector collaborations depends on how the tensions are managed, because they cannot be resolved as such (Koschmann, Kuhn & Pfarrer, 2012). To successfully compete and survive in rapidly changing operational environments, organisations need to accomplish and maintain dual goals and operations, which means that managing the fundamental tensions becomes indispensable (Nosella et al., 2012). As a tool for achieving this, Graetz and Smith (2005: 311) suggest: “The dualities interpretation emphasizes an acceptance of texture and the simultaneous presence of what are conventionally viewed as incompatible organizing forms”.

Tensions are inherent to collaboration, which is a defining and instrumental aspect for content development work. This requires management, and applies to all three theoretical perspectives – ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations – used in this study. In addition to tensions characteristic of each perspective, enhancing collaboration as such is a complex process (Kaltoft et al., 2006) that adds to the complexity of creative content development work. Collaboration in a particular organisation simply means working together internally. Cross-sector collaboration typically involves both intra-organisational and inter-organisational aspects, and can be defined as “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organisations in one sector separately” (Bryson et al., 2015: 648). This kind of collaboration is dynamic and systemic, which leads to complexities and further tensions that can hamper the potential usefulness of the arrangement (Bryson et al., 2015; Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Building on the theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter, this study reflects the complex realities involved in creative content development work and its management. I elaborate on these realities from several interrelated perspectives in the context of creative industries, particularly media, in order to develop more nuanced understandings of the central role of coexisting tensions
in this work. Next, I outline the methodological choices made during the research process.
3 Methods

The framework of conducting scholarly research intimately involves the researcher’s philosophical worldview assumptions that are brought into the study, which influence the chosen research methods (Creswell, 2014). These interconnected elements inform and comprise the research approach and methodology. As the social sciences are characterised by a rich variety of paradigms in philosophical approaches to research, reflection on the basic assumptions regarding ontology and epistemology is needed to expose and to understand the driving motivation for conducting specific research. It is also necessary for justifying the research purpose and the respective practical choices made during the research process for data collection and analytical approach.

This chapter describes the research design and methods used in this study. First, the research context of the media industry is introduced, with explanation of characteristics I consider relevant for the choice of this specific context for the study. This is followed by reflections on my ontological and epistemological assumptions. The next section outlines the overall qualitative research approach and design of the study. Then, the selection of the case organisations and the issues related to access are presented, followed by explanations of the data collection process and analytical approach of the individual case studies. The methods section ends with a note on credibility and ethical considerations, especially in relation to my personal relationship to one of the case organisations.

3.1 Media Industry as Research Context

I chose the media industry as the research context of this study for two main reasons. First, I consider the media industry an interesting context for empirical research due to disruptive change in operational environments characterised by VUCA conditions (Picard & Lowe, 2016) of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (see Chapter 1.1), and due to the industry’s inherent characteristics. The second reason is my personal experience of working in the industry, as discussed in the preface. I believe this practical experience supports understanding the industry as a research context. Furthermore, my professional contacts have enabled access to the empirical case organisations, making the data collection for the in-depth case studies possible. The media industry as research context is briefly discussed in the following.

The media industry is part of the wider creative industries. These are defined as “sectors of organised activity whose principal purpose is the production or reproduction, promotion, distribution and/or commercialisation of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature”
Currently, the creative industries in general, and especially the media industry and media organisations, are challenged by dramatic changes and turbulent environments keyed to digital transformation (Oliver, 2013, 2016; Rosenberg & Seager, 2017). At the same time, media organisations act as agents of this change and are a crucible for the situation that well illustrates Schumpeter’s (1942) concept of creative destruction, referring to new market entrants that change the whole “game” of an industry and severely challenge incumbent players. In the media industry, examples include Netflix, Facebook and BuzzFeed, whose business models and operational principles are fundamentally different from traditional mass media organisations.

The most fundamental driver of this change is digitalisation, which has challenged the production, distribution and use of media contents, as well as business models (Küng, 2015; Picard, 2014). Corresponding with these changes, the media industry is increasingly globalised and concentrated. Media production happens across various platforms that combine traditional and digital production operations, as well as distribution technologies and processes (Dwyer, 2016). Although challenging, the digital environment offers vast opportunities for creative content development, as evident in the inventive approaches and products of new players. Yet, legacy media organisations, especially, face great difficulties in managing the digital transformation to produce innovative solutions (Ess, 2014; Küng, 2017c). The day-to-day realities of media content creation and development have significantly altered the industry and operations. This change is not only constant, but also accelerating and expanding. Thus, the operational environments of media organisations are increasingly complex and characterised by high degrees of volatility, uncertainty and ambiguity (Picard & Lowe, 2016). This requires paradoxical “both-and” thinking rather than the traditional and limited “either-or” approach to understand organisational phenomena and organisations’ responses to complex environments that impose competing demands (Quinn & Nujella, 2017).

The media industry is a diverse concept combining aspects of creativity and business. It covers a variety of businesses, segments and organisations that differ in many respects, for example in relation to business models and products (Aris & Bughin, 2009). The fundamental common element at the heart of the industry is creative content. Accordingly, the main daily challenge for media organisations is the continual creation of new content (Caves 2000; Küng, 2007), which is a perishable and intangible commodity. Management’s role is emphasised in this process: “As media products are invented anew every day, day-to-day management practices are the key to success” (Aris & Bughin, 2009: 13). Also, management of the content generation and development process differs fundamentally from other processes in a media company, leading to divisions and tensions between the creative content functions and the efficient “supporting” processes that are focused on execution (Aris & Bughin, 2009). Established management approaches are challenged in times of rapid change caused by digital disruption and the VUCA environment, especially in more
mature media sectors like newspaper publishing and broadcasting (Halek & Strobl, 2016). Competent management is profoundly important for future viability, because in the current situation “…media firms, and perhaps even entire industries, will evolve or disappear as managers succeed or fail.” (Picard & Lowe, 2016: 62).

Digitalisation has rapidly transformed the operational environment and internal production processes for media organisations. The media industry has historically featured oligopoly in markets with high barriers of entry, and this industry has also been remarkably stable and profitable (Picard, 2011). However, digitalisation, convergence and consolidation have disrupted markets and caused high volatility (Doyle, 2013; Lowe, 2015; see also Jenkins, 2008). Simultaneously, traditional revenue sources for media organisations, like subscription fees or advertising, have been undermined and high historic profit margins have declined, often dramatically (Picard, 2011). Higher and intensified competition has fuelled the search for new business opportunities and models. As Küng (2015) suggests, however, it is especially difficult for legacy media organisations to let go of the “old days” and ways.

Drastic changes keyed to digitalisation deeply affect the creative industries in general, and media in particular. The essential importance of high-quality creative content for value creation in media organisations is growing as original and novel content becomes an increasingly core strategic resource (Küng, 2017a). This drives demand for innovation in media products, services and contents. The fragmentation of audiences, changing publishing platforms and a growing range of devices for consumption, cooperative organisational arrangements and organisational restructuring all raise the need for improvements in management of content development work (Küng, 2015; Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013b). The sustainability, future competitive advantage and survival of media organisations depends on their ability to channel organisational creativity into the accomplishment of innovative content and ensure this happens continuously (Aris & Bughin, 2009; Jones et al., 2016; Küng, 2015; Lampel et al., 2000). Success will require developing new competencies and engaging in more collaborative arrangements (Küng, 2017a).

Organisational creativity provides strategic advantage for media companies, and more widely in knowledge-based societies (DeFillippi et al., 2007). In such societies, the creative industries are increasingly important and one of the fastest growing sectors, as especially evident in the Western economies (Jones et al., 2016; Townley & Beech, 2010). Since the 1980s the creative industries are typically envisioned as drivers of economic growth and beneficial change, with important roles in urban renewal and regional development (Flew & Cunningham, 2010; Jones et al., 2016; Lampel et al., 2000; Townley & Beech, 2010). This is reflected in governments’ push to foster the development of local and regional media clusters (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Davis et al., 2009; Hitters & Richards, 2002; Karlsson & Picard, 2011a; Komorowski, 2016; Picard, 2008; Waluszewski, 2004). An additional expected benefit of cluster composition is the improvement of constructive dialogue between the public and
private sectors “by revealing how businesses and government together create the conditions that promote growth” (Porter, 1998: 89). Typically one or a few large companies anchor each media cluster (Noam, 2009), and these organisations determine the cluster’s credibility and economic stability (Huggins, 2008). Clusters are populated by smaller companies and related institutions, including freelance firms and academic institutions (Karlsson & Picard, 2011a).

It is crucial to explore the characteristic dynamics of industrial clusters and to analyse them empirically (Gordon & McCann, 2000). The growth of media clusters in recent years reflects the strategic importance of content development for media organisations. Media clusters are distinguished from the more general range of industry clusters by a tight focus on the production of creative content and a dual focus on local agglomerations of facilities and creative resources with a global network of creative inputs and skills (Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014; Picard, 2008). Media clusters also “involve a complex interplay among cultural, economic and political objectives. This creates a milieu in which far more complex objectives than merely promoting job creation and economic growth are present.” (Karlsson & Picard, 2011a: 5). Accordingly, media clusters tend to be more dependent on political support than other industrial clusters. The management of cultural clusters is a more complex endeavour (Hitters & Richards, 2002; see also Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014), making media clusters an interesting and significant context for scholarly research on creative development and challenges in that work.

In conclusion, this study suggests that the media industry overall and media organisations in particular provide a fertile context for studying tensions to understand the respective dualities because these are fundamentally characteristic of the industry. The basic tension for the creative industries is between creative and commercial demands, i.e. creative freedom and commercial imperatives; content development and business operations; exploration and exploitation (Aris & Bughin, 2009; Caves, 2000; Jones et al., 2016; Lampel et al., 2000; Lowe, 2015). The former is characterised by slack, higher risk and individual expression, while the latter is focused on efficiency, structure and command (Redmond, 2006). Creative freedom and business imperatives need to exist simultaneously (e.g. Sydow, 2018), but tensions between them are not easily resolved – and actually trying to do so in any final sense might not be practical or even possible. This makes management of media organisations challenging. Managers need to navigate enduring tensions that inherently arise due to industry characteristics with the aim to reduce any dysfunctional impact while leveraging and channelling tensions’ creativity-enhancing potential (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009).

Although the media industry is the specific context for this study, the results should have wider applicability for managing knowledge-intensive organisations in VUCA environments. Media organisations have provided fruitful research contexts for other areas of management studies (Achtenhagen, 2016; Küng, 2007), and the particular characteristics of the media industry as a research context, combined with general management theories, offers great potential for
advancing knowledge about management and contributing to development of management theories (Achtenhagen, 2016; Banks, Calvey, Owen & Russell, 2002; Warhurst, 2010). This study aims to combine aspects from media and management studies, as Küng (2007: 24) suggests: “The goal of studying media management must be to build a bridge between the general discipline of management and the specificities of the media industry and media organizations.” Next, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study are reflected on.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

This section focuses on the ontological and epistemological approaches of this dissertation. The research focus is on creative content development work and its management, which is inherently relational and socially defined. It occurs between human beings and is characteristically situational, interpretative and context-dependent. I recognise the influence of personal experiences and background in the interpretation of the empirical data. Thus, my interpretation of social reality influences the knowledge this research produces. I have adopted certain ways of observing, seeing and thinking based on studying earlier research and theories, and based on practical experience related to the research context. I am fascinated with the richness of what the respondents of the case studies say and think, and I respect the complexity of social interaction in organisations (cf. Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). At the same time, I believe there is space for the possibility of “something out there” to exist separate from my or someone else’s subjective understandings, and “purely” socially constructed knowledge based on human interaction.

Thus, I am positioned most closely in the views of critical realism (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This stance understands reality as “both-and”, for example in linking empirical research with theorising or research philosophy with social science research practice (Danermark et al., 2002). This approach corresponds with my view that scientific evidence is not “out there” just waiting to be collected by positivist “scientific method” without the researcher’s intervention in interpretation, but without assuming that reality exists merely as a result of situational social constructions. The twin assumptions grounding critical realism make sense to me: 1) that reality cannot be directly observed as in the case of positivism, but 2) that knowledge is produced as construction through social exchange. This fits my understanding of organisational realities conditioning creative content development. I believe there are characteristic underlying mechanisms of creative content development work that can be anticipated and become apparent as tensions, and that the living environments and situations where this work happens make a real difference in the interpretation of their meanings.
In the seminal book on the realist account of science, Bhaskar (2008) considers scientific research as a social activity and process of creative work in itself, a practice where knowledge is a social product even as the objects of science exist and act independently of human beings. Thus, the philosophical stance of critical realism suggests a constructivist approach to epistemology combined with a realist approach to ontology (Maxwell, 2012a). Accordingly, Danermark et al. (2002: 200) explains critical realism as follows: “The realist element in critical realism indicates that it assumes that an external reality exists, independently of our conceptions of it. Consequently there exists a reality that can be subjected to analysis”. Mechanisms are at the core of analysis in the critical realist approach, and the world is seen as “structured, differentiated, stratified and changing” with simultaneous existence of “an external world independently of human consciousness, and … a dimension which includes our socially determined knowledge about reality” (Danermark et al., 2002: 5). Critical realist research asks, “how and why a phenomenon occurred”, striving to provide “empirically supported statements about causation” (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

Following this thinking, I consider scholarly research a way to examine reality by focusing on the mechanisms that underlie empirically observable events in the world, but without an assumption of absolute objectivity, neutrality or immediate access to reality. Even though reality exists independently of human beings or social interaction, the knowledge and understanding that research indirectly produces about reality is socially determined and conceptually mediated, and depends on the research problems, perspectives and questions asked. Thus, I agree with Maxwell (2012a: 5), who suggests that the realist approach to research denies the possibility of “any ‘objective’ or certain knowledge of the world, and accept the possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon. All theories about the world are seen as grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible.”

Although critical realism does not provide a uniform or homogenous perspective for the social sciences (Danermark et al., 2002; Jessop, 2005; Maxwell, 2012a), it offers useful perspectives that are utilised in this thesis. Importantly, the critical realist research tradition suggests that the role of practice is pivotal (Whittington, 2015). This philosophical stance reflects my initial motivation for this dissertation, which is based on a practical interest in the research topic (cf. Miles et al., 2014 discussion on pragmatic realist stance). I want to understand what might be going on below the surface and behind the observable events I earlier experienced in personal managerial practice in creative content development work, especially in relation to characteristic complexities (cf. Danermark et al., 2002). Further, my approach corresponds with critical realism’s view that scientific research is a social process involving other people with the researcher, done with the aim of creating explanations to understand the world and its phenomena (Bhaskar, 2008). Thus, I understand science as a practical activity among people living in changing social contexts.
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(Danermark et al., 2002). I have applied this approach to all three case studies included in this dissertation. I not only collected the empirical data from industry representatives for subsequent analysis and theorisation, but also reflected upon the findings with them during the research process to enrich elucidation of the phenomena of interest. I participated in various events and meetings with and of the industry representatives to gain deeper understandings of their activities in practice and the transforming context of the industry under investigation.

Understanding and appreciating the research context is crucial in studies of organisational phenomena, especially in the context of transforming operational environments in contemporary organisations and industries (Härtel & O’Connor, 2014). The context of this study is the media industry facing the VUCA environment, which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The critical realist approach is well suited for analysing change-resistant “structural obduracy” (Whittington, 2015: 152), which appropriately reflects the specific context of legacy media organisations chosen for this study. This context faces a struggle with tensions, especially related to power issues and conflicting interests, and these tensions emerge in efforts to combine the traditional organisational arrangements shaped by the more stable past with the requirements of explorative content innovation in the present environment of disruptive digital change (Ess, 2014; Küng, 2017c).

My understanding of the research context stems from practical experience in the media industry, and in relation to the three case studies. I have immersed myself in the target organisations to varying degrees, ranging from profound personal involvement as a manager, to longitudinal data collection and on-site observations. Through these arrangements and by this approach, I strived to identify and understand local causal explanations of events and processes leading to specific outcomes in the particular real-life context of my research and case studies (Maxwell, 2012b). This local causation – or “theory-in-use” – combines the critical realist ontological idea of causality as a real phenomenon with epistemology, which suggests that understanding the world and its causal relationships is “our own creation, incomplete and fallible, rather than an ‘objective’ perception of reality” (Maxwell, 2012b: 657).

3.3 Qualitative Research Approach and Study Design

Departing from the research purpose explained in Chapter 1.2, this study utilises a qualitative approach in exploring the research interest, with an aspiration to understand empirical phenomena in detail and thereby to produce relevant knowledge (see Morgan & Smircich, 1980). As Maxwell (2012b: 659) argues: “We need qualitative methods and approaches in order to understand ‘what works’ and why.” This study is designed to execute qualitative case studies, which typically address “why” and “how” questions (Miles et al., 2014; Yin,
2014, see also Wynn & Williams, 2012), and thus provide a tool for studying complex social phenomena in depth in their real-life contexts using various sources of research data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Accordingly, the research questions for this study ask why and what characteristic tensions emerge, and how they affect creative content development work, as well as how managers of creative industry organisations deal with these tensions.

In this study, I follow Yin (2015: 194), who defines a case study as an “empirical inquiry that closely examines contemporary phenomenon (the case) within its real-world context”. Accordingly, a case study is an “up-close and in-depth inquiry into a specific, complex, and real-world phenomenon” (Yin, 2015: 194). As the focus of the study, a case is defined as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (Miles et al., 2014: 28). Thus, a case has boundaries that define what will and will not be studied and in which context. Specifying these boundaries in line with research questions is a core task for the researcher, although the boundaries between the case and the context may not be altogether evident or clear (Yin, 2014). Accordingly, the study’s unit of analysis is the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014).

My choice of the case study approach is supported by Smith and Lewis (2011), who encourage using case studies to investigate organisational tensions in various dynamic contexts. The case study approach suits this dissertation well because it supports the utilisation of different lenses on the phenomena of research interest. This allows for multiple views which are necessary for enhanced understanding of organisational tensions as interrelationships between dual elements in content development work and its management (cf. Baxter & Jack, 2008; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Stake, 1995). As in case studies generally, the focus of this dissertation research is on studying phenomena of interest, as discussed earlier, which has been delineated and tightened during the research execution (Easton, 2010). As a methodological choice, qualitative case studies offer valuable and highly iterative opportunities to generate new insights on social processes, to build analytic generalisations and to improve theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014).

Accordingly, the three case studies in this dissertation project are employed to explore and explain complex phenomena embedded in organisational realities from different theoretical perspectives. Multiple frames are necessary because a single theory is too incomplete and unable to describe multiple aspects that comprise any complex phenomenon (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Further, in addition to understanding what might work in relation to organisational phenomena, this study also suggests that it is crucial to understand what does not work and why when striving to achieve innovative content development outcomes. Additionally, my research benefits from a longitudinal case study approach (e.g. Farjoun, 2010; Papachroni et al., 2015; Pettigrew, 1990; Warhurst, 2010), which enables exploring and tracking developmental processes for the emergence and management of persistent tensions in the case organisations over a longer period of time instead of a short-term momentary snapshot of organisational realities.
The choice of the case study approach is justified in relation to the critical realism stance adopted for this dissertation because the approach is considered as an appropriate, even primary, research design and method for studies building on critical realism philosophy (Easton, 2010; Wynn & Williams, 2012). Overall, case studies can be utilised across different ontological and epistemological assumptions, because the approach can be considered more as a choice of what is to be studied rather than a strict methodological selection (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 2005). However, a “case study” is not an unanimously agreed concept. Case study approaches differ in the suggested number of cases to be included in a study, and the uses for case research (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Eisenhardt, 1989; Siggelkow, 2007; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2014; Zucker, 2009).

When planning this dissertation research that is focused on studying real-life cases, extant categorisations of case study types and structuring guidelines were useful for designing the actual study (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Siggelkow, 2007; Yin, 2014). My thinking of the study design benefitted especially from the work of Stake (2005), who identifies three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and multiple/collective case study (although the types are not entirely mutually exclusive). My choice for this research is a multiple instrumental case study. This is because unlike the intrinsic choice where the particular case in itself is of core interest, instrumental case studies examine the case as a facilitating element to create insight or redraw a generalisation. The multiple or collective case study extends the instrumental version to several cases. In this case study type, “a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. … Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic, they may be similar or dissimilar, with redundancy and variety each important. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases.” (Stake, 2005: 445).

This dissertation research uses multiple cases to better capture the complex empirical phenomena of interest from several viewpoints to facilitate producing new knowledge. This does not emphasise a need for comparisons as such between the cases included in the study. The three different cases illustrate, and the case studies explore, the research interest from different perspectives and add to the understanding of it, which supports deriving solid conclusions from the multiple case study (Stake, 2005, 2006). The case studies were conducted in the real-life context of the media industry, which is facing complex change under the VUCA conditions, requiring the organisations – especially the legacy ones – to find ways to ensure continuous development of new content while simultaneously streamlining and optimising the current business. Thus, this study focuses on the practical realities of organisational efforts to combine exploration and exploitation, and especially on inherent tensions that are brought to light through in-depth empirical case studies.
The case study approach also has weaknesses. These especially include the requirement for theory building to reach the simplicity of an overall perspective beyond the rich empirical detail (Eisenhardt, 1989). In this regard, creating oversimplified universal prescriptions on the basis of case studies is certainly a danger (Küng, 2015). A further potential weakness is the generation of narrow and idiosyncratic theory, where the level of generality is lacking (Eisenhardt, 1989). Another threat concerns missing the context that is evident and central in the rich background for individual cases (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). This calls for in-depth approaches to case study research, as well as utilising cases to tell compelling stories with theoretical impact instead of focusing on building theoretical constructs (Stake, 2005). However, some of these valuable considerations imply that theoretical knowledge could outweigh the practical value, which is a core misunderstanding of case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As discussed, this dissertation regards both theoretical and practical knowledge development as crucial, and aspires to conduct the case studies in a manner that is transparent in all phases.

The qualitative data from the three case studies discussed in the following chapters enables well-grounded descriptions and explanations of the phenomena of interest (Miles et al., 2014). This makes qualitative research especially appealing to me because it provides a fruitful way to explore the complexity of real-life phenomena. In this case it allows the exploration of tensions in creative content development work and its management, as well as how to interpret them and draw conclusions for improved understandings of those phenomena in a more general sense with the aim of providing both theoretical and practical contributions. Also, the qualitative research setting supports flexibility in relation to research approaches, which enables serendipity in going beyond initial conceptions and original assumptions (Miles et al., 2014). This was illustrated in discussing the evolving process of the study from ideas on organisational creativity and moving towards exploring tensions in content development work in light of theorisations on ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations.

3.4 Case Selection and Access

Throughout this dissertation research project, my motivation has focused on building analytical understanding on an empirical basis regarding the complexities, especially tensions of content development work in creative industries. The specific research context is traditional legacy media organisations that face disruptive environmental changes to a severe degree due to their established ways of working and path-dependent thinking (Maijanen & Virta, 2017). However, recent research suggests that many of the challenges and opportunities, especially in relation to various tensions that need balancing, are reasonably similar between legacy organisations and digital-born media organisations (Nicholls, Shabbir & Nielsen, 2017). This broadens the
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applicability of the research results beyond legacy media organisations. Further, the realities of disruptive change caused by digitalisation are confronting many other sectors and industries. This makes the results of the study potentially useful for other knowledge-intensive industries where traditional, legacy organisations also struggle with adapting to VUCA environments.

Selection of cases to explore the research interest in a qualitative study is seldom simple and typically features compromise (Miles et al., 2014). For this dissertation, case selection can be characterised as purposeful because the focus is on each case’s unique context (Emmel, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2005). I agree with Patton (2015: 264; see also Flyvbjerg, 2006) who describes purposeful sampling as “Selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated”. This approach enables in-depth study of the empirical phenomena of interest to provide answers to the research questions.

In addition to the purposive approach to case sampling, this study benefitted from a convenience element in good access and suitable timing. These elements can be considered especially important in case selection for qualitative studies (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Stake, 1995), because accessibility is a real-life condition which should not be ignored or undervalued. In my research, both research-related contacts developed in the beginning of the dissertation process (for case 1) and my professional personal network developed over the years of practical work experience and involvement in the industry (for cases 2 and 3) were crucial to gain in-depth access to the case organisations, and thus to provide opportunities to produce empirical case study data. Thus, the three case organisations were extensively accessible with a reasonable amount of effort. In two of the three cases involving Yle, the access can be described as privileged in breadth and depth, and the case involving the private media company caused no specific problems after the initial negotiations that were needed to build trust between the research team and the case representatives. In this firm, the personal contacts of the collaborating researcher and co-author, Professor Malmelin from Aalto University, were decisive for gaining access to the organisation.

In light of the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2, the three cases are information-rich and reflect the three theoretical perspectives of the study – ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations. The cases feature the contextual ambidexterity approach in media content development, with one featuring the structural ambidexterity approach in media content development and another featuring the value network and hybrid organisation aspects of the study in the context of a media cluster aiming to develop shared value in content development and production. Each of the three theoretical perspectives is relevant for exploring and explaining the tensions in creative content development work, as discussed in Chapter 2. Although there are differences between the cases, they all share a key feature: in all cases, organisational creativity and constant production and development of creative content is strategically of core significance. I believe that this combination of similarities and differences across the cases is useful for building new knowledge about the
complex phenomena under investigation. Together, the cases illustrate and offer explanatory potential regarding tensions in media content development work and its management because any kind of innovation, including development in content, is typically arduous for big and established companies (Drucker, 2007).

The first case involves a new editorial unit and team in a commercial (private), multi-platform and multi-media company. The case organisation specialises in publishing magazines and magazine journalism, and is part of a larger international media corporation based in Finland. The magazine media sector is an attractive context for case study because its established products and ways of working are under rapid and extensive transition to a multi-platform and multi-media production system based on digital technologies. The data was collected within the new editorial unit among team members. The unit was established with an aspiration and commission to ideate, develop, produce and launch a new multi-platform media product and service concept. Simultaneously with the creation of the new content product, the new editorial team was expected to create and pilot new ways and processes of working to develop creative content in a new organisational setting, with the expectation that these ways of working could be taken into wider use in the company later. At the same time, the team members of the editorial unit were involved in the established on-going production of several magazines from the company. In this setting of contextual ambidexterity, the team and its managers attempted to balance the organisational requirements of on-going efficient production and development work with the aim of content innovation, grappling with related tensions.

The second case focuses on how content development work was planned, operated and discontinued in the Finnish Broadcasting Company, Yle (the public service broadcaster of Finland) between 2001-2005. During this period, a new unit called Yle Programme Development (“Yle Sämä” in Finnish) was operational. This approach featured structural ambidexterity in media content development and innovation, which is not common in the industry (Bleyen et al., 2014; Künng, 2013). Thus, the case provides a unique real-life example of the creation and attempt to establish a distinct but fundamentally collaborative product development unit inside a traditional legacy media organisation. As a particular feature of this case, I was employed as Projects Portfolio Manager (2002-2005) in a management team of two, under the direction of Mr Lowe. I was involved in the operations of the unit from the beginning of the planning phase until the unit’s discontinuation, and previously worked in the company for several years in training and development. Thus, my knowledge on this case is extensive and in-depth.

The third case investigates an on-going creative industry cluster development initiated by Yle, and operationalised as a public-private cooperation representing different interests. This case widens the perspective from an individual organisation to an inter-organisational arrangement with a case study.

2 The specific organisation details of the corporation cannot be revealed according to the agreement between the researchers and the company.
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in the context of a new media cluster, Mediapolis. Mediapolis can be conceptualised as a “media campus” located in the city of Tampere in Finland. On its website, Mediapolis is described as “a Finnish centre and network for content production and digital industries, offering customers both a wide variety of production services and a huge range of opportunities. Mediapolis is a growing media ecosystem operating on an international scale” (Mediapolis, 2018). The focus of Mediapolis is to cooperate in the development of content innovation in formats, programmes, media technology and operational models. I have followed the case since 2011, near its start. It illustrates the dynamics that a creative industry cluster faces in the early days of development, especially problems, obstacles and related tensions. In January 2016 the partners of Mediapolis founded a Co-operative company (legal entity, i.e. the “Mediapolis Co-operative”) between the main partnering organisations to handle the management and coordination purposes of the campus, especially in relation to realising content innovation and collaboration development. Thus, the Co-operative itself is a special feature of the collaboration development in Mediapolis. Accordingly, this case study elaborates on aspects of interest of the value networks and hybrid organisations in this dissertation.

From the beginning and throughout the research process, I have been positively surprised by the amount of effort and devotion the practitioners have invested in participating in the research. They have been eager to hear about the observations and results, which has been mutually useful for learning. Thus, the qualitative data available for this study was generated in close contact with the case organisations to address the research interest and to develop insights about the “real world” phenomena under investigation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Yin, 2014). This facilitated the necessary triangulation of evidence for case study analyses (Eisenhardt, 1989). The data collection and analysis approach for the study overall, as well as the individual case studies, are discussed next.

3.5 Case Studies: Data Collection and Analysis Approach

This dissertation research project was inspired by a practical professional interest in why creative content development work in media organisations is so complicated by problematic tensions despite the core strategic importance of guaranteeing a constant flow of new products in the development of creative content. Accordingly, data collection happened in collaboration with practitioners. This corresponds with the description of Miles and others (2014: 11) that qualitative research and data “focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings” to enable a “real life” perspective on what organisational life is like. Accordingly, the empirical data for this study was collected in close interaction with the case organisations, taking the real-life contexts into account to capture the complexity of focus of my research interest. I talked with people in order to co-create understandings of the research topic
and context and spent time observing everyday organisational life, especially in relation to cases 2 and 3.

This indicates the case organisations were not approached and considered merely as data collection sources and locations, but rather as collaboration partners in working together to produce new knowledge (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). I visited the organisations several times before and during data collection periods for planning discussions. I presented research results in feedback sessions, and in the most embedded case worked in the case organisation at the time when the research data was created, although analysing it in scholarly terms a decade later. My potentially problematic adjacent role as a researcher in relation to this case is elaborated in Chapter 3.6. Also, it is important to note that analysis of the collected multifaceted research data was performed independently from the case organisations by the researcher(s), either solely by myself or together with a co-author and research colleague, depending on the case study and paper. Thus, for maintaining the rigor of the scholarly enquiry, the analysis was not directly influenced by the research participants from the collaborating organisations.

The described data collection approach has enabled a study that is grounded in the practical realities of media organisations, which is essential for the production of relevant insights for scholarly and practical audiences alike on the complex real world issues of interest here (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). This approach supports my aspiration for developing both theoretical and practical knowledge through the results of the study, conforming to the commitment to the crucial importance of both aspects working in tandem. The gap between theory and practice, and the respective types of knowledge and research contributions, is often surprisingly wide in the field of management, but working to advance both together has great potential to better capture the complexities of uncertain contexts (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006; see also Corley & Gioia, 2011). As Powell (1990) concluded, qualitative research data is useful for both illustrating empirical cases and generating theory advances.

The combination of cases and collective research material in this study illustrates tensions in content development work and its management from different viewpoints and theoretical perspectives. This supports the creation of enhanced knowledge on the complex process of content creation and development in creative industries. The drive to combine theory and practice correlates with my research topic because the constructive management of characteristic tensions in content development work is crucial for benefitting from potential opportunities that can arise by integrating and balancing the poles of corresponding dualities.

### 3.5.1 Data Collection

As typical for qualitative case studies, this research utilises various types of empirical data from several respondents collected by using different procedures, which is important for data triangulation that strengthens research credibility
The individual case studies in the dissertation build on various types of qualitative research material: interviews, observation, documents and respondent diaries (see Table 1 below for details). The choice of empirical material collection for each study and across the studies has depended on several issues. These include co-designing the studies and negotiations with co-authors and research project leaders, having longitudinal case data based on professional experience in the industry, and having an opportunity to explore an emerging case where I was granted comprehensive access to documentation, on-site participation and interviews for data collection. As every dissertation process is also about learning to do sound scientific research, using multiple methods for collecting data offered valuable opportunities to gain experience in the craft.

The specific data collection methods and resulting empirical material for the case studies of this dissertation are summarised in Table 1 below. The multiple data types and sources, as well as the combination of analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives, support and facilitate a good quality analysis for the development of insightful explanations in the overall study (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Further, the data collection for all case studies happened over sustained periods of time instead of momentary snapshots, probing the everyday life of the case organisations. This was important to advance a useful set of understandings of “how and why things happen as they do” (Miles et al., 2014: 11). The choice of data collection methods and analytical approaches is discussed in connection to the individual case studies in Chapters 3.5.3-3.5.5, and of course in the individual papers included in Part II of this thesis. Two individual papers of the six in total are about each case study.

Table 1. Overview of empirical data collection and the resulting material by papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAPER</th>
<th>Case Study 1: Private Media Company</th>
<th>Case Study 2: Yle Programme Development</th>
<th>Case Study 3: Mediapolis Cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diary method: weekly diaries (Word or email) for seven weeks in late 2013 * 186 diary entries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Diary method: weekly diaries (Word or email) for seven weeks in late 2013 (shared with paper 1) and six weeks in early 2014 * 279 diary entries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 and 4</td>
<td>Documentation from managers’ personal archives (on paper and in digital form) on strategy, planning and operations of the Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5  | Development Unit  
* including personal notes and diaries of the two managers (Lowe and myself) separately: 918 + 557 handwritten A4 pages (the primary data for the study)  
“Participant observation” based on experience as a manager of the unit |
| 6  | 18 semi-structured interviews between March 2013 - March 2016  
* 21 hours of interview recordings  
Participant observation regularly at the Mediapolis campus since 2013 (including meetings, events, seminars, informal discussions, presentations)  
Supportive documentation (e.g. strategy documents, EU project reports, Mediapolis website) |
| 6  | 23 semi-structured interviews between March 2013 - February 2017 (18 interviews shared with paper 5)  
* 24 hours of interview recordings (21 hours shared with paper 5)  
Participant observation regularly at the Mediapolis campus since 2013 (including meetings, events, seminars, informal discussions, presentations)  
Supportive documentation (e.g. strategy documents, EU project reports, Mediapolis website) |
Alongside the collection of diverse data for the case studies, the empirical data must be interpreted for drawing conclusions and developing both theory and practical implications (Easton, 2010). In line with the critical realist approach (Danermark et al., 2002), I acknowledge the suggested differences between the empirical events that I have pursued for data collection and the actual events that happen irrespective of whether they are observed or not, and then the underlying or real mechanisms and structures, which produce the events of the world but cannot be directly accessed by observation. Thus, the explanations produced by analysing empirical observations of this stratified reality are inevitably interpretative in character, especially because I am partly using respondents’ interpretations of events as the basis for my interpretations that were created during and as a result of the analysis process (Easton, 2010; see also Danermark et al., 2002). In this regard, Emmel (2013: 6) summarises the critical realist analytical approach and analysis process in practice in a way that I relate with: “A realist investigation zigzags between ideas and evidence.”

3.5.2 Analysis Approach

In light of the above, the overall analysis approach of this research can be regarded as abductive. This choice suits the fundamental grounding of the study in real world organisations because “abduction assigns primacy to the empirical world, but in the service of theorizing” (Van Maanen, Sørensen & Mitchell, 2007: 1149). Thus, the abductive approach accepts extant theory as a strengthening element of case analysis, but at the same time allows for data-driven and observation-based generation of theory in the research process (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). Accordingly, the empirical data from the case studies in this thesis have been juxtaposed with previous studies and theorisations in the analysis process, with the aim of producing new knowledge. As illustrated by Siggelkow (2007: 21): “one wants to retain the capacity to be surprised, but it seems useful (and inevitable) that our observations be guided and influenced by some initial hunches and frames of reference”. This is an endeavour that also requires creativity and imagination to see something as something else, and to be surprised, which makes the process messy and intricate. In the end, we must acknowledge the nonexistence of ultimate truths (Danermark et al., 2002).

In the analysis of collected research data, I have utilised previous scholarly literature as a source of inspiration (Eisenhardt, 1989), because as indicated above, the role of theory is decisive in abductive analysis (Danermark et al., 2002). Familiarising myself with previous literature has been crucial for learning about this research field and enabling the focus on relevant issues in the data, the collection of which has been influenced by personal previous understandings and experiences. In abductive reasoning, one moves iteratively between theory and data. This is precisely what happened as this research process unfolded and in how this study was accomplished. The analysis process was also supported by
going back to the case organisations to collect additional data or to reflect on the findings over an extended period of time.

It is important to note that abductive reasoning does not mean simply mixing the inductive data-driven analysis approach with deduction derived from theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Abduction starts similarly to induction from an empirical basis, but also utilises theoretical preconceptions that resemble deduction. In abduction, the researcher is neither fully deductive using theoretically-derived hypotheses nor fully inductive letting the facts speak for themselves, as the latter is typically described. This concurs with my thinking, because I do not believe that facts can “speak” insightfully without the crucial theory-supported interpretation element that underpins the empirical analysis process. Neither do I believe that the richness of the empirical reality could be comprehensively captured by deductive propositions created in advance. The abductive analysis approach typically includes recording an occurrence of an event or an outcome, and then working to connect the dots with earlier happenings leading to the result, and may include further reflections with the research participants for follow-up (Patton, 2015). As Patton (2015: 562) concludes: “A qualitative inquirer is a detective, using both data and reasoning to solve the mystery of how a story has unfolded and why it has unfolded in the way documented.”

As characteristic of qualitative research and qualitative case studies, the analysis process of research material started during data collection. Due to the compilation nature of the dissertation, the analysis process has multiple layers. The data was analysed in detail at the level of the individual papers, but also at the level of the case studies, as well as at the overall level of the compilation as a thesis in order to develop comprehensive conclusions and contributions. Miles et al. (2014) suggest that the qualitative analysis process consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation (e.g. coding, developing themes and generating categories, or writing memos), data display (organising research data, e.g. by utilising graphs or charts) and conclusion drawing and verification, i.e. interpreting what the analysis results mean. These activities are intertwined parts of a continuous, iterative qualitative analysis that involves choices throughout the process. The first two activities aim especially at supporting and allowing conclusions to be drawn as the outcome of the research process. The analysis process of this study followed these basic principles. The more detailed approach to data collection and analysis in each case study is discussed next.

3.5.3 Case Study 1: Development Project in a Private Media Company (anonymous)

Data Collection. The data collection for the first case study utilised the diary method, where respondents wrote frequent reports on their experiences, views and reflections to real-life events and issues (Balogun, Huff & Johnson, 2003; Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003; Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen & Zapf, 2010). This approach was chosen because the respondents, all 10 members of the new team
for the content development project, were journalistic magazine production professionals. Diary writing suited this respondent group well because they are used to writing and typically good at it on a professional level. Also, the diary writing gave the research participants the opportunity of choosing the time for responding in the often hectic and rapidly changing schedules of journalistic work. Participation in the research was voluntary, but the management of the content development project encouraged and supported engagement. The managers were especially committed to the research because they saw the promptly shared preliminary results as potentially useful for developing the new team’s work, as well as spotting potential issues in the content development process at the organisational level.

The diary data was collected in two periods. The respondents kept a weekly diary for seven weeks in late 2013 and for six weeks in early 2014. The first data collection period coincided with the period when the new development team began their work on the project, and the second period with the start of the team’s actual assignment in new content development. In total, 279 diary entries were produced during the whole data collection period, out of which 186 were produced during the first period. During the break between data collection periods I met with the respondent group to discuss the initial observations. Email was used for sending the diary questions formulated by the research team and for collecting the answers, which happened Friday mornings prompting for reflections on the past week. The respondents were encouraged to write their answers to the diary questions personally, and specifically asked not to discuss the diary issues with other respondents to avoid external influence on their personal thinking.

The weekly form of diaries was chosen over, for example, daily diary writings, because the research interest focused on the overall content development project, not momentary periods of time, and also because the weekly diaries allowed more in-depth reflection. The formulation of the diary questions aimed at focusing the respondents’ thinking on key events of the past week in relation to the content development project. In planning the research approach and questions, the events of interest were conceptualised as critical incidents by the research team (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005; Flanagan, 1954). The diary questions were open-ended, allowing the research participants to choose their way of answering. Based on the questions, the respondents wrote about their personal views and thoughts on the content development project. The research participants were promised strict confidentiality. No one outside the research team had access to the diary responses, and the answers were anonymised for analysis and reporting.

Each weekly email contained two standard guiding questions formulated by the researchers and one additional open answering field for allowing any additional input the participants wished to provide on significant events, as well as short instructions for answering. The first question prompted the respondents to describe an event which had facilitated creative work over the past week, and the second question prompted descriptions on an event that had constrained
creative work regarding the content development project. During the first data collection period, a third question was included, which asked the research participants to reflect on the past week from a specific viewpoint currently important in the project, for example project preparation, ideation or concept development. However, as the data collection proceeded, we noted that the last type of question did not produce additional value for the research data and abandoned it for the second data collection period. The first diary questionnaire at the beginning of the first data collection period also included questions regarding background information on the respondents, like age and years of work experience in the industry. Average figures based on this kind of information were reported in analysis results to provide a more detailed description of the respondent group without compromising anonymity and confidentiality.

**Analysis Approach.** The diary questions formulation described above and the data analysis approach were guided by earlier theorisations and research processes developed by Amabile and Kramer (2011) in their work on organisational creativity and development projects. For the analysis, the diary writings were uploaded on Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. The software facilitates storing and organising large amounts of empirical material. Also, the software enables the researcher to create codes either inductively (emergent codes) on the basis of the empirical material or deductively by creating the codes before the analysis (a priori codes), or by combining both approaches. With the help of the software, the codes and the coded excerpts are handled, for example grouped or combined to support the analysis and for drawing insights for conclusions. Thus, although the researcher is always the actor conducting analysis, the software was a crucial support system in facilitating the process in practice.

In the first phase of analysing the diary material, both researchers read the diary data independently several times, making thorough notes. After familiarising ourselves with the data and based on the notes, we jointly identified a raw categorisation of emerging themes in the data guided by the theoretical research interest and created a general coding system for each individual paper focusing on the case, but with a similar approach. I then performed the first round of coding in practical terms by attaching the created code categories to respective excerpts of diary text by utilising Atlas.ti. The diary data was organised into categories of similarities, and emerging codes were added in the coding scheme based on the first coding cycle and in addition to the pre-defined codes. Moreover, comments regarding the coding process and empirical material were included in attached memos in Atlas.ti. Next, the researchers independently coded the data in the second analysis cycle, and emerging themes were collected in a matrix for displaying the research data in a more condensed form. This aided in drawing conclusions on the basis of several re-iterative rounds of analysis between the two researchers. The final aggregate themes were identified through an iterative process moving between theory and empirical data. These were analysed in depth for conclusions and to create
combined categories for reporting the analysis results in the respective articles included in this thesis.

The respondents of the first case study were journalistic professionals, which implies expert storytelling skills that support the quality of the diary writings as research data. At the same time, this creates a potential bias in the produced research data towards descriptions of the real-life issues in the form respondents may want to present and/or interpret them, not as they are (interpretation of interpretation by Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). To avoid the corresponding bias in the research material, all team members were included as diary respondents, which means all positions and aspects of magazine production, including for example graphic designers as well as managerial positions. The analysis revealed several respondents pointing to similar issues, which further strengthens the credibility of the analysis results. The preliminary findings were discussed with the respondents between the first and second diary collection periods, and they strongly agreed with the applicability of the presented insights from the practice point of view.

This case study features the most straightforward data collection approach of the three case studies in this dissertation, but the use of only one data collection method limits the triangulation possibilities here (Wynn & Williams, 2012). However, triangulation was supported by the involvement of the two cooperating researchers in the data collection, categorisation, analysis and interpretation process, by the inclusion of the whole team as respondents, and by participant-checking with the respondents in relation to preliminary findings of the analysis.

3.5.4 Case Study 2: Yle Programme Development (Yle Särmä)

Data Collection. The data collection approach for the second case study differed from the other two. In practical terms, the empirical data existed already before the dissertation research project started. This is because I was working in the case organisation, Yle Särmä, as half of the management team during its life cycle that ended several years before the start of the dissertation project. When Yle Särmä was discontinued, both myself, and the department manager Gregory Ferrell Lowe, archived the documentation and materials at our disposal from Särmä planning, operations and ending periods. The fact that Professor Lowe is an academic alongside his practical work career in the media industry inspired this choice. We believed the material would provide opportunities for research after the department’s closure, which has proven true.

The primary empirical material for this case study consists of the handwritten diaries in the notebooks of the two managers of Yle Särmä, i.e. Lowe and myself. I chose to concentrate especially on this material because the diary writings enable access to the writers’ experiences and immediate illustrations of organisational phenomena (Ohly et al., 2010). In practical terms, the managers’ A4 sized notebooks contain 918 (Lowe) + 557 (myself) pages of notes that
cover the time period of Yle Särmä from planning, through operations to discontinuation. Alongside this primary data, the supportive data utilised in this case study consists of documentation in both digital (several DVDs full of files) and paper formats (folders and binders containing around 5,000 pages in total, partly overlapping with the digital material), including Yle-internal and Särmä-internal documents concerning content development projects, Yle and Särmä strategy, yearly planning, personnel, finances and so on. Therefore, due to employment in this organisation, the Yle Särmä managers, myself included, had wide access to the company-internal documentation.

Similar to the data collection approach of the first case study, this study also included diary writings as described above. Similar to the third case study, participant observation was involved, in this case in an embedded form by virtue of being employed in the case organisation. However, it is important to note that the Särmä managers produced the diary writings during their practical work as notes without guiding questions or any other researcher involvement, because this happened around a decade before the analysis of the data. Thus, the material reflects the observations, experiences and feelings of the writers without external intervention. Such “authentic” data is rare in a research project because the conventional approach requires the researcher(s) to collect data, often retrospectively, rather than have it readily available from the experience of participants in real-life settings in organisations. However, it is crucial to note that this data represents interpretation of interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In particular, Lowe’s notes as research data are not only diary writings on real-life events, but also ongoing analyses of these events. This is an asset that supports the analysis, but it is also a potential threat to research credibility, because the views presented in the diary notes may be inaccurate or biased. Thus, additional documentation was a crucial support for the analysis to avoid potential problems or biases, because it offered opportunities for crosschecking events, facts and incidents.

The additional documentation explained above was used as supportive and supplementary data to reconstruct the flow of Yle Särmä events, as well as Yle organisational-level events during the time period of the study (Bowen, 2009; Olson, 2010). In analysing these kinds of documents, it is vital to remember that they represent second-hand data, which contain the writer’s interpretation of actual events. Thus, the purpose and target group for which the document was created needs to be considered and clarified, as well as the situation in which it was created. The principles of document analysis as a specific approach of case study research (Bowen, 2009; Olson, 2010) were applied in scrutinising the documents as research data, meaning a systematic procedure was used in reviewing, examining and evaluating the documents for interpretation. Accordingly, the documents had an important role in the triangulation of the analysis findings based primarily on the managers’ notes, because combining the issues or themes found in the diary notes with supportive documentation enabled a more comprehensive picture on the actual events and their relationships (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2014; Miles et al., 2014).
A third element of the data generation for this case study was my professional involvement in the case organisation. I have experienced and lived through tensions of creative content development work as a manager. From a research perspective, I regard this as participant observation, although it is based on my embedded experience and role in the organisation and thus differs from the “standard” approach to participant observation. Further, the observation occurred more than a decade ago, which represents a caveat for the accuracy of the observations. This is why the participant observations are considered only as secondary and supportive data in the case study, although the elapsed time enables taking critical distance on feelings that were confusing at the personal level, especially in relation to shutting down the unit. All in all, the personal involvement and participant observation in this case is important for in-depth understanding of the specific context of the case. This also supports an understanding of the context for the third case because Yle has been an integral participant in Mediapolis development since the beginning.

Analysis Approach. The analysis process of the case data followed the abductive approach explained earlier. In practice, the diaries and documentation were first skimmed through, then the selected parts and individual documents read more carefully for thorough examination, and finally through the coding and categorisation process, combined themes were used for interpretation (Bowen, 2009). Due to the central importance of creative professionals for content production and development work, a specific approach in this case study utilised theorisations on ambidextrous HRM (human resource management). This enabled a targeted focus on an important area and management tool in relation to ambidexterity, especially for elaborating on tensions and necessary boundary crossing in the case of structural ambidexterity. The qualitative research and abductive analysis approach relied on the empirical data while simultaneously drawing on theoretical considerations, and was especially suited in this case due to scarce previous research on ambidexterity in relation to HRM (Eisenhardt, 1989).

For the data analysis of this case study, I considered using the Atlas.ti software as a supportive tool, but the format of the material led me decide it was better to work in a more traditional way. Thus, in this case I used a manual approach. First, the empirical data was arranged according to temporal stages of the Yle Särmä lifecycle: planning (2001-2002), operations (2003-2004) and ending (2005) (cf. Langley, 1999). The empirical material was skimmed through, and the most relevant phases for the analysis of ambidextrous tensions as the research focus were identified. Following the initial sorting of the data, core material (i.e. the managers’ diary notes) was read through several times while making thorough notes. Following this phase, the core material was coded for pattern recognition in relation to the various tensions, and the emerging patterns combined to identify more general themes (Miles et al., 2014). To interpret analysis results, several iterative rounds between theory and practice were utilised. The analysis results were discussed with the co-manager and co-
3.5.5 Case Study 3: Mediapolis Cluster

Data Collection. The main data collection of the third case study, the Mediapolis cluster development, is comprised of semi-structured interviews. In general, interviews are a beneficial way of acquiring rich empirical data concerning the interviewees’ experiences, knowledge, ideas, and impressions (Alvesson, 2003). The interview data in this case study included 23 semi-structured interviews conducted between March 2013 and February 2017 in four phases. The first round of interviews happened in March-April 2013, the second took place in November 2015, the third in March 2016 and the last in February 2017. These periods correspond to important stages in Mediapolis development as discussed in the two papers (5 and 6) focused on this case study. The length of the interviews ranged between 20 minutes and 1 hour 51 minutes.

The interviewees were selected based on central involvement in Mediapolis development and included Mediapolis Co-operative Board members, Tampere city representatives, external consultants involved in Mediapolis development, and entrepreneurs on site. Thus, the interview sample was purposive (Patton, 2015; Reybold, Lammert & Stribling, 2012). The 23 interviews involved 15 individuals from 12 organisations, and each person was interviewed 1-3 times over the four rounds. The individual respondents were promised anonymity and confidentiality in reporting the research results.

I conducted all the interviews in Finnish, and they were digitally recorded. The total recording time amounted to 24 hours. The recordings were used to transcribe the interviews verbatim either by myself (the first round of interviews), or a professional transcribing agency (interview rounds 2-4). The transcriptions comprised a total of 389 pages of single-spaced, Verdana 8pt text. The transcription files were uploaded to the analysis-supporting software Atlas.ti, which was utilised in the analysis.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews means using an outline of issues of interest formulated as core questions to be covered in the interviews. The formulation of the interview questions was initially informed by theoretical ideas of the study focusing on creative industry cluster development and value networks, as well as ideas on potentially relevant issues to be explored in this regard. The questions were co-developed between the two researchers involved in the study. However, later in the process of the case study, theorisations on hybrid organisations became relevant. This is because the Mediapolis cluster decided to establish a Co-operative company as a legal entity for managing Mediapolis aspirations, especially in relation to collaborative content innovation and development of the content functions of the campus more generally. In addition to the standard questions across interviews, the semi-structured interview format allows flexibility to elaborate on an interesting issue, which an
interviewee might bring up or to include follow-up questions for clarifications or further insights.

The open-ended questions used in the interviews allowed the possibility for respondents to elaborate on their experiences or events in the context of the case study (Patton, 2015). This produced rich material concerning the respondents’ stories about the Mediapolis development, and the complexities in attempting to make the shared plan work in practice despite strategic-level commitment to the initial idea. Although the formulation of interview questions was informed by extant scholarly ideas, the language used in the questions and actual interviews was everyday and did not utilise theoretical constructs or direct the interview towards them in any manner.

The supportive empirical data collection for this case study included different types of documents provided by Mediapolis as well as my participative observation on the site. I had wide access to the Campus and spent several days there not only conducting the interviews but also participating in Mediapolis events and meetings (including the Board), as well as seminars and presentations. Additionally, documentation in the supportive data included, for example, Mediapolis strategy development documents and final reports of the EU-funded development projects instrumental to Mediapolis early development. Further, 10 regular discussion meetings lasting 1-3 hours were held with the Chair of the Mediapolis Co-operative Board between November 2014 and October 2017. These discussions provided extensive and crucial background information as support for understanding the research context and functioned as member checking for the credibility of the initial findings of the study (Creswell, 2014).

**Analysis Approach.** The analysis approach was again abductive, driven by the empirical data and at the same time theoretically informed as discussed earlier (see also Jay, 2013). The specific focus of this case study was the various emerging tensions in the Mediapolis development process, especially in relation to creating shared value and collaborative advantage for the participating organisations in content development pursuing innovation. Following the initial interpretations of the data in larger general sections and coding of the empirical interview material in Atlas.ti, emerging themes and patterns were identified in the analytical process of interpretation (Miles et al., 2014). The transcripts were read in detail and original interview recordings were utilised for capturing nuances when necessary. The analysis process included an iterative process of several rounds moving between theory and empirical data, resulting in composite themes used in reporting the study results.

The analysis results and interpretation were discussed with the co-author of the respective paper based on this case, and feedback was received on the overall analysis results from senior researchers not involved in the case study. This supported the triangulation of the study, and credibility was further supported by multiple sources and several types of empirical data (Miles et al., 2014).
3.6 Note on Credibility and Ethical Considerations

*Credibility* characterises good empirical research. Achieving this requires appropriate methods, thoroughness in conducting the research, and intellectual rigor in the analysis (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). According to Patton (2015), the credibility of qualitative inquiry depends on four elements: 1) systematic, in-depth fieldwork (resulting in high-quality data), 2) systematic and conscientious data analysis (attending to credibility), 3) credibility of the inquirer (e.g. experience and presentation of self) and 4) reader’s and user’s philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry.

All four elements are of crucial importance in qualitative research. In relation to the trustworthiness of the *inquirer*, this issue merits specific attention in my dissertation project. As illustrated in the preface of this thesis, my work experience as a manager in one of the case organisations (Yle Programme Development, “Särma”) triggered the research interest and initiation of the PhD research. I was motivated to better understand characteristic tensions in creative work for content development in a legacy media company. Thus, the research topic choice was influenced by personal interest, and I have first-hand knowledge about the case. As a positive aspect for the dissertation, my industry experience, background in the field and professional networks have been pivotal in securing access to the case organisations and creating trust among the respondents, resulting in extensive fieldwork and data collection. Thus, supported by close proximity to and intimate understanding of the field, I have been able to collect diverse material for this qualitative inquiry with potential to create new knowledge to contribute to theory and practice (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Creswell, 2014).

However, industry experience does not equal experience or skill in doing credible research (Silverman, 2006). Being “native” may actually have a distracting effect on data collection and analysis, and thus needs to be accounted for (Miles et al., 2014). My close and integral relationship with the research context and topic, especially one of the cases, could become a source of bias and lead to credibility problems if not handled appropriately (Creswell, 2014). Careful consideration was required and close attention was needed in various stages of the research process: defining the purpose, designing the case studies, collecting data, analysis and interpretation, as well as reporting the results. I have needed to be constantly aware and to remind myself – explicitly and honestly – of the potential for biased findings to see what I wish for or ignoring issues that do not support my pre-assumptions. It remains necessary to reflect on my choices as a researcher, to be reflexive and self-critical, and to ask for external evaluation to limit potential problems of bias. Distancing myself from the case in question is also supported by the time elapsed – over a decade has passed since the end of my time at Yle. Despite the fact that the ending was not personally desirable or pleasant, the time lapse has enhanced my credibility as a researcher because it has granted me time to reflect on the experiences and to consider the issue from several different angles and from a distance. At the
Methods

ending time for the unit, I reacted with personal emotions of disappointment and loss; currently I react with research curiosity seeking to understand and explain fairly on why it happened.

Credibility of qualitative research can be strengthened by triangulation (Creswell, 2014; Miles et al., 2014). According to Patton (2015: 652) “Triangulation in qualitative inquiry involves gathering and analysing multiple perspectives, using diverse sources of data, and during analysis, using alternative frameworks.” Various data collection methods and combinations of different empirical data types, multiple qualitative data sources, two or more researchers/analysts, or use of multiple perspectives/theories in interpretation support the credibility of qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). In this study, several data collection methods and resulting types of data are used in different combinations (interviews, participant observation, documentation, diary writings). These different data sources offer a possibility to illuminate aspects of the examined phenomena, and to compare the consistency of information derived from varied sources. Also, each case study utilises multiple individual data sources, e.g. interviewees or journalism professionals, who write the diaries, thus further supporting credibility.

The strategy of involving two or more researchers in the analysis is used in the three case studies in this dissertation, because it helps to reduce the potential bias of a single analyst by intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, many of the papers in Part II are co-authored, which has proven a fruitful way to learn the craft of research, thus supporting the trustworthiness of results. Further, the peer-review process for the manuscripts supports the quality and credibility of a compilation dissertation (Creswell, 2014). In this thesis, all of the individual papers have been peer-reviewed at least twice in different stages of paper development: as contributions to international academic conferences and as publications or manuscripts for scientific journals.

Additionally, I invited research participants to reflect on the accuracy of suggested findings, because this member checking is another way to support analytical triangulation and credibility for qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Involving the respondents in reviewing analysis results is ethical (Patton, 2015) because this opens a possibility for them to be convinced of fair treatment in the research material collected with their consent, as well as retention of their privacy. This approach has been applied in the case studies for this thesis. However, data analysis and interpretation were executed strictly unattached to research participants, because the researcher needs to prevent excess participant influence on the analysis results.

Ethical issues have been considered and attended to in all stages of the research process from planning to reporting (cf. Creswell, 2014). The empirical materials in this dissertation were collected by different methods: diaries, interviews, documents and participant observation. In all cases, participation of the respondents was voluntary, and they were thoroughly briefed about the research idea and procedures. The privacy of the respondents or identifiable individuals in original documentation data is protected by granting them strict
anonymity. This is important for protecting participants from potential harm (Creswell, 2014; Miles et al., 2014). Many of the issues raised in my research are related to tensions or potential conflicts and complexities between people or managerial problems and challenges. These kinds of topics are sensitive, and granting anonymity is a prerequisite for creating trust and getting the respondents to write (diaries) or speak (interviews) freely. Also, in relation to documentation or participant observation, it is necessary to respect the individuals in question by not unnecessarily revealing their identities. The interest is in the phenomena, not individuals as such.
4 Summary of the Papers

This chapter introduces and summarises the six papers included in this dissertation. Each one presents an empirical study drawing on research data and specific literature. This choice reflects my aspiration to link theory and practice, with the aim of contributing to both. In the following, the relations between the papers, the purpose of the study and the research questions are illustrated, as well as the relations between the papers, theoretical perspectives used in each, and the case studies they address.

The overarching purpose of this study is to explore organisational tensions and their management in creative content development work.

The overall research questions (RQs) of this study are:

- **RQ1**: What characteristic tensions emerge in content development work in creative industry organisations and their collaborations, and why?
- **RQ2**: How do these tensions affect creative content development work?
- **RQ3**: How does management of creative industry organisations and their collaborative arrangements deal with these tensions?

Each of the six papers provides an independent scholarly contribution. The independent papers are connected to constitute a coherent body of research in this dissertation and contribute to the combined conclusions. Two interconnected papers focus on each of the three case studies included in the thesis (see Table 2 in this chapter). These papers are also connected by the overarching research purpose and research questions grounding the study. At the same time, each paper features a specific research purpose and addresses particular questions, and thus contributes a perspective and generates insights on the overall study.

Together, the six papers elaborate on the purpose of this study as well as tackle the three research questions listed above from the three different theoretical perspectives utilised in the study – ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations. Two individual papers in particular make a contribution to each research question as illustrated in Figure 3 below. However, the division between the research questions and affiliated papers is not definite, because all papers contribute to more than one research question in certain aspects as described in the papers.
The core focus of this dissertation research is on organisational tensions and their management, which are explored and explained in the individual papers. In relation to the research purpose, the individual papers can be positioned in the overall study as follows:

- **Paper 1** introduces *organisational creativity* as a prerequisite for content development work which aims to achieve innovation in media products and services. The paper identifies key motivations and constraints of organisational creativity in the content development process for a new media product and organisational approach to content development work, implying the characteristic tensions in a contextual ambidexterity setting. Thus, Paper 1 sets the scene for the more detailed exploration of ambidextrous tensions in Paper 2.

- **Paper 2** focuses on ambidextrous organisational tensions between on-going production and content innovation in the development process of a multi-media and multi-platform media content product, continuing along the lines opened by Paper 1. The focus is on content development work pursued in close proximity and simultaneity to on-going production, i.e. contextual ambidexterity.

- **Paper 3** sets the scene for exploring issues of *structural ambidexterity* and related tensions in creative content development work. The focus is especially on challenges of boundary crossing between the on-going
operations and creative content development, featuring the complexities and complications of building, maintaining and managing a distinctive content development unit as an operation inside a traditional media organisation.

- **Paper 4** focuses on ambidextrous HRM (human resource management) as a specific managerial approach and requirement for supporting creative content development work in the context of *structural ambidexterity*. Content development depends on creative talent, which makes ambidextrous HRM a key aspect in managing interrelationships between on-going operations and content innovation. Accordingly, this is a useful perspective for illustrating tensions between creative content development work and established organisational functions.

- **Paper 5** introduces the viewpoint of collaborative arrangements (as an approach towards network ambidexterity) in striving for content development in creative industries. It links the theoretical perspective of *value networks* to media clusters and focuses on the dualities and respective organisational tensions of collaboration in developing shared operations in the new cluster.

- **Paper 6** builds on the case study and ideas introduced in Paper 5 on the development of collaboration in the Mediapolis cluster. It focuses on the dual nature of *hybrid organisations*, as well as complexities and tensions in developing a hybrid organisation between public and private organisations in the quest for cross-sector collaboration with the aim of content development.

As evident from the above, the six papers use specific theoretical perspectives in addressing the overall research purpose for answering the research questions. This approach has benefitted the empirical investigation of the research topic by enabling multiple viewpoints and their combination to explore and explain complex real-life phenomena. In relation to individual organisations, the relationship between on-going efficient production and content development can generally be arranged either in an integrated fashion, as illustrated by contextual ambidexterity, or in a separated fashion, as illustrated by structural ambidexterity. However, content development is not only pursued or achieved through intra-organisational settings, but typically involves collaboration between independent organisations. This approach can be conceptualised as network ambidexterity (see Chapter 2). This is why the perspectives of value networks as well as hybrid organisations have been included in the theoretical perspectives of the study. These perspectives illustrate the current realities of organisations in the creative industries aiming to develop content for achieving innovation with use of collaboration and shared organisational arrangements. The theoretical perspectives used in this study according to the individual papers are summarised in Table 2 below. Additionally, the papers are grouped according to the case study they address.
Table 2. Theoretical perspectives used in the individual papers, and the connection of the papers to the case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Theoretical Perspectives</th>
<th>Value Networks (Network Ambidexterity)</th>
<th>Hybrid Organisations (Network Ambidexterity)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ambidexterity (Contextual and Structural)</td>
<td>with special focus on organisational creativity as prerequisite for content development work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>with special focus on contextual ambidexterity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ambidexterity (Contextual and Structural)</td>
<td>with special focus on building a distinct content development initiative inside a legacy organisation (structural ambidexterity approach)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>with special focus on ambidextrous HRM as a tool for achieving structural ambidexterity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hybrid Organisations (Network Ambidexterity)</td>
<td>with special focus on media clusters as value networks to develop collaborative operations for shared value</td>
<td>with special focus on the dual (public-private) nature of a hybrid organisation for collaboration in a media cluster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the six individual papers included in this dissertation are summarised in relation to each paper’s title, objectives and research question(s), as well as main findings/results and contribution. The data collection and analysis approach are
explained in Chapter 3.5, and in the papers themselves. The papers are attached in their entirety in Part II of this thesis.

4.1  Paper 1 - “Managing Creativity in Change”

Paper 1 is concerned with motivations and constraints of organisational creativity in content development work. It focuses on the management of this work in the context of a private media organisation. Creative content development work depends fundamentally on the creative talent of professionals. This emphasises the importance of people management as a critical success factor (Aris & Bughin, 2009; Mierzejewska & Hollifield, 2006). The objective of the paper is to focus on how and under which organisational conditions creative content development work is supported and managed in an operational environment characterised by digital change. This aim is pursued by asking the following research question: “What kind of organisational conditions facilitate and constrain the creativity of a media company’s development team and its members in creating a new multi-platform media service?”

The analysis reveals key motivations and constraints (see also Lombardo & Kvålshaugen, 2014; Rosso, 2014) in creative content development work, and why they emerge in the content creation project. The opportunity of being involved in developing new content products and organisational practices generally motivates media professionals in doing creative content development work. However, managerial issues in project management, organising the work and communication are core constraining factors. The results of the analysis imply the fundamental importance of management skills in change management processes. This includes tolerating constant change, communication management and project management to support creative content development work.

The findings of the paper contribute to understanding the role of organisational creativity (e.g. Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Woodman et al., 1993) as a fundamental prerequisite for content development work. The study shows the core importance of managing the complexities of this work and attending to respective organisational tensions in a way that supports organisational creativity and enables handling inevitable constraints of organisational creativity in practice. Many of the constraints on the team level depend on organisational-level decisions, established ways of working, and managerial approaches. This implies that complexities and tensions of content development work are interrelated across levels in media organisations. Thus, supporting organisational creativity in content development work requires managerial attention, organisational practices and communication beyond individual development projects. These findings pave the way for exploring tensions in contextual ambidexterity in more detail in Paper 2.
4.2 Paper 2 - “Ambidextrous Tensions: Dynamics of Creative Work in the Media Innovation Process”

Paper 2 continues with the same case study as Paper 1, focusing on ambidextrous tensions involved with creative content development work. Relying on previous theorisations about contextual ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) combined with organisational creativity and media innovations, this paper explores the dynamics of new product development processes in a media organisation, with an emphasis on characteristic ambidextrous tensions. Traditional media organisations have rarely been utilised as research contexts for studies about this (Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2014), and thus the research question is formulated as: “What are the central tensions of the media innovation process in an ambidextrous organizational context that should be considered in media management?”

The contextual ambidexterity concept utilised in the paper is pertinent to the development of new multi-platform and multi-media content products and services, which happens simultaneously with established production of magazines (periodicals). This is a typical approach for the media industry in general (e.g. Küng, 2013). In practical terms, the individual team members in the case organisation were involved simultaneously in the production of existing magazines and the specific development project that was tasked with the creation and launch of the new media product, as well as a novel way of working, for potential wider adoption by the organisation in the future.

The paper contributes to improved understanding of contextual ambidexterity and the respective tensions in the context of creative content development work in a media organisation. It also contributes to the emerging research on media innovations (e.g. Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013b). The analysis identifies coexisting ambidextrous tensions between simultaneous on-going media production (exploitation) and content development striving for innovation (exploration) on three interrelated levels: the individual team member, the development team and the overall organisation. Two main tensions were discovered at each level: enthusiasm for development vs. discipline in production and current duties vs. new responsibilities (individual level), expected results vs. resource allocation and project planning vs. project execution (team level), and short term sales vs. long-term success and existing structures vs. innovation initiatives (organisation level).

The analysis indicates that ambidextrous tensions require management attention at each and all levels, which makes achieving ambidexterity especially challenging (cf. O’Reilly & Tushman, 2004). The paper argues that attention to these tensions is essential for managing practices and processes of work to develop creative ideas successfully into content innovations. The results suggest that without a specific focus, prioritisation and managerial attention, content development may easily be overruled due to pressures from on-going content production. Exploration and exploitation feature fundamentally different
organisational activities, and mature organisations are typically focused on ensuring the efficiency and viability of current production for exploitation. They have aligned the organisational support functions such as sales, technology or human resource management, accordingly. This emphasises the dominant role of exploitation over exploration.

Managerial support at each organisational level and across them is crucial for securing innovation potential in creative content development work, and especially for the required management of ambidextrous tensions between exploration and exploitation. However, managing tensions only as they emerge is not sufficient. It is vital to predict ambidextrous tensions at various levels before a development process starts in order to prepare the community and organisation and to handle hampering effects, including managers’ own workloads and pressures to cope with the various demands that are characteristic in doing creative content development projects.

4.3 Paper 3 - “Crossing Boundaries for Innovation: Content Development for PSM at Yle”

Paper 3 introduces the second case study of this dissertation (see Chapter 3.5.4). It shifts the focus from the contextual variant of ambidexterity to the structural perspective in the context of a large legacy media organisation. This paper explores why and how collaboration for exploration across organisational structures and boundaries is a complex task, and often politicised, requiring special managerial abilities and attention. In light of this aim, the paper asks the research question: “How can boundaries be crossed to achieve innovation within and for Public Service Media (PSM) content development?”

The analysis utilises previous literature on organisational creativity and media innovations, thus building a link to the first two papers in the dissertation. Findings highlight the complex nature of creative content development work, especially revealing complexities in building and maintaining a distinct but collaborative operational unit focused on content development work. Insurmountable complexities emerged despite the fact that there was a shared understanding by the executive management level of the unit’s necessity for supporting innovation until the end, although this is often resisted by mature companies (Drucker, 2007). Analysis results are presented on three interrelated levels: organisational, group (or team) and individual. However, the main emphasis is the organisational level for understanding complex relations in collaboration between the Yle Särma initiative and the on-going operations. The paper discusses the design of the unit, and organisational arrangements and tools required for supporting its establishment and maintenance, with a focus on characteristic complexities in moving from ideation to realisation in content development work.

The paper contributes to better understanding on managing tensions that emerge between content development and existing operations in a mature media
organisation. It explains the crucial importance of crossing various and complicated organisational boundaries in aspiration to support creative content development work, and of this approach as a potential response for dealing with inescapable tensions. The focus is especially on characteristic challenges and complications for managers in organisational boundary crossing, particularly in relation to internal politics and organisational resistance to an “independent” content development function despite a generally shared agreement on the core importance of content development and innovation. Accordingly, the paper argues that nurturing content development work to achieve innovation in a systematic, routine manner requires particular managerial skills and tools, especially in building bridges between organisational structures, arrangements and practices of work. This is necessary due to the inherent complexity of content development work, where boundaries not only exist, but also dynamically vary when organisations change and mature. As the paper implies, this requires continual alignment of processes, work practices and management between exploration and exploitation.

This paper sets the scene for Paper 4, discussed next. Both papers share the same case study and overall approach based on ideas and theorisations from the field of structural ambidexterity, specifically the structural separation of exploration and exploitation in an organisation. Paper 4, the findings from this paper are focused in more detail on HRM (human resource management), and specifically ambidextrous HRM.

4.4 Paper 4 - “Complexities and Tensions of Transformative Boundary-Crossing: Case Study on Ambidextrous HRM in a Creative Organization”

Paper 4 builds on extant theorisations of structural ambidexterity (e.g. O’Reilly & Tushman, 2011). The paper shifts the focus from general dynamics to a specific aspect of ambidextrous HRM that is considered necessary to support organisational ambidexterity in practice. This paper produces both theoretical and practical knowledge about features of ambidextrous HRM as an essential tool for transforming organisational creativity into content innovation in media organisations, a topic that lacks previous research attention. Thus, the research question of the paper asks: “How is HRM employed to manage ambidextrous tensions, and why and what kind of complexities hamper the establishment of an ambidextrous HRM system?”

The paper draws on recent theorisations of ambidextrous HRM (Garaus, Güttel, Konlechner, Koprax, Lackner, Link & Müller, 2016; Jørgensen & Becker, 2017; Junni, Sarala, Tarba, Liu & Cooper, 2015) as a potential response to managing tensions that are characteristic for creative content development work that deeply depends on professionals’ talent. The analysis focuses on
complexities of building and introducing an ambidextrous HRM system to facilitate managing content development work between the dedicated content innovation unit and the established operations of a traditional media company focused on exploitation. The analysis builds specifically on the first and last phases of the development initiative’s lifecycle, because this is when most tensions between exploration and exploitation emerged, requiring thorough negotiations between Särma and the ongoing Yle operations.

The findings indicate that ambidextrous HRM offers potential for dealing with management and respective tensions of content innovation initiatives alongside on-going production. Ambidextrous HRM is necessary, because traditional HRM approaches are too entrenched and rigid for sufficiently supporting content development work. The results also suggest that lack of ambidextrous HRM may seriously inhibit development initiatives. However, as the analysis identifies, the introduction of an ambidextrous HRM is in itself characterised by complications and coexisting tensions. Core challenges of implementing an ambidextrous HRM system in practice include different HRM approaches, varying evaluation criteria and managing both horizontal and vertical organisational relationships between exploration and exploitation. Accordingly, the paper offers managerial implications and practical suggestions for handling these challenges.

The paper argues that bridging ambidextrous and conventional HRM principles and practices is essential for achieving structural ambidexterity and correlating sustainable co-existence of organisational functions dedicated to exploration and exploitation. The results elaborate on the constraints, tensions and complications of the necessary boundary-crossing in this work, and thus on the challenging nature of integrating exploration and exploitation in structural ambidexterity.

Further, the paper provides new knowledge on organisational structure as a political instrument (see Morgan, 2006) in relation to structural ambidexterity in general and ambidextrous HRM in particular. Organisational politics that support the dominant role of exploitation at the cost of exploration may overrule ambidextrous HRM development. This hampers establishing ambidextrous HRM aiming at bridging exploration and exploitation by strengthening relationships between them. Thus, building ambidextrous HRM requires relinquishing control, re-negotiating power relations and crossing organisational boundaries in a legacy organisation.
4.5 Paper 5 - “Integrating Media Clusters and Value Networks: Insights for Management Theory and Research from a Case Study of Mediapolis in Finland”

Paper 5 shifts the main focus from internal organisations to their external collaborative arrangements. This is necessary because the changing operational contexts of creative industries call for inter-organisational collaboration to simultaneously achieve efficiency and innovation, which links the paper’s approach to previous papers discussing ambidexterity. Few individual organisations can maintain the required range of intellectual and capital resources for creative content development and production in diverse digital platforms of complex media markets today. Accordingly, the creative and media industries are becoming especially clustered (Davis et al., 2009).

Although creative industry clusters are expected to support innovation in product development, the process of collaborative creation is complicated and dynamic in practice. The paper sheds new light on management challenges, complications and practices in building a new cluster in the context of creative industries. The purpose and research question of the paper can be summarised as follows: “How can combining research on industry clusters and value networks in the context of creative industries develop insights for management theory and practice, and for managing media clusters as value networks?”

The paper connects theorisations on creative industry clusters (e.g. Karlsson & Picard, 2011a; Komorowski, 2017) and value networks (e.g. Allee, 2000, 2009) to explore a current case study of cluster development at Mediapolis in Finland. Analysis is based on connecting three interdependent levels – strategic, tactical and operational – of management practice (Coughlan, Coghlan, Lombard, Brennan, McNichols & Nolan, 2003) with three dualities – opportunities vs. limitations, influencing vs. being influenced, and controlling vs. release – connected to the levels that require integration in cluster development as value network.

The results elaborate on managerial challenges and tensions in Mediapolis development, and show that the core challenge lies in becoming a value network to achieve the operational goals of clustering. The findings illustrate tensions between elements in two of the dualities: the duality of opportunities and limitations in relation to strategic level integration, and the duality of influencing and being influenced regarding tactical level integration. The duality of control and release at the operational level of integration is discussed in relation to strategic and tactical levels of integration, because the analysis revealed that both strategy and tactics focused on operational issues in Mediapolis development and management. Thus, the levels need to be treated in tandem to untangle practical problems in cluster development. The results show that operational level management is decisive for cluster success, because integration on the strategic or tactical levels does not guarantee intended value creation.
strategic and tactical levels must be integrated through operational cluster management.

The paper contributes to management literature by linking two previously separate theoretical approaches to generate insights on managing clusters as value networks between independent organisations. The results suggest that value network cluster configurations make creative industry clusters more sustainable beyond mere colocation at shared premises, because collaborative network relationships are crucial for producing value and intended results in the cluster. Well-functioning collaboration does not depend on a cluster structure, but a cluster structure needs a functioning value network to be effective.

Also, the paper contributes to extant research by focusing on individual organisations and their relationships rather than the traditional approach of analysing clusters as spatial agglomerations of companies and institutions. This approach produces new knowledge on the characteristic complexities and coexisting tensions in establishing value-creating relationships between partnering organisations in creative industry clusters which aim to produce collaborative value by content innovation. Finally, the paper contributes to practical knowledge on creative industry cluster management as a whole, by illustrating its dynamic, multi-layered character and complex interdependencies in clusters (cf. Duysters et al., 1999).

4.6 Paper 6 - “Managing Tensions of Collaboration in a Hybrid Organisation: A Case Study of the Mediapolis Cluster in Finland”

Paper 6 continues the exploration of the Mediapolis case study and elaborates on the challenges of cross-sector collaboration in the context of creative industry clusters and their management. Cross-sector collaboration, which combines public and private organisational forms, is considered a potentially beneficial, flexible and dynamic approach to shared value creation in disruptive operational environments. However, it features inherent complexities and tensions due to the fundamental differences between public and private organisational orientations. Managing these tensions successfully is crucial for enhancing the value-creation opportunities of collaborative arrangements (Koschmann et al., 2012). Thus, the purpose of the paper is to explore management challenges and tensions of cross-sector collaboration in the development process of building a new media cluster, Mediapolis. The corresponding research question is: “What kind of tensions emerge in establishing cross-sector collaboration between creative industry organisations, and why?”

The paper utilises theorisations on collaborative dynamics and approaches, especially regarding hybrid organisations (e.g. Battilana & Lee, 2014; Jay, 2013) as the basis of analysis. Collaboration provides the means for managing tensions in inter-organisational settings; however, inherent tensions in hybrid
organisations (Battilana et al., 2015; Ramus et al., 2017) make their management challenging. Thus, the empirical analysis in this paper focuses on tensions that emerge in establishing a hybrid organisation in the context of a new creative industry cluster.

The analysis discloses complexities and tensions in implementing collaborative strategies in the hybrid organisation of Mediapolis. At Mediapolis, public and private organisations are combined in a hybrid organisation arrangement of a Co-operative company, which was established to manage shared operations of the cluster. The results reveal tensions between the elements of core dualities in developing Mediapolis as a collaborative arrangement between the participating organisations in practice, despite the strategic-level shared aspirations of the participants, and the legal entity of the Mediapolis Co-operative. The characteristic tensions reflect fundamental differences between public and private organisational orientations, discrepancies between ideal planning and practical actions in the Mediapolis development process, as well as divergence between self-interests of individual organisations and collective interest for collaboration. The coexisting tensions are also interrelated in practice, which means that managerial focus on individual tensions is insufficient. Instead, they need to be considered as a dynamic and interrelated package in developing hybrid organisations.

The paper contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge on the emergence of tensions in cross-sector collaboration in creative industry cluster development, as well as characteristics of those tensions. The results unfold distinct organisational orientations and business logics, discontinuity between strategic aims and practical results, and contending organisational interests as sources for organisational tensions. For example, public organisations typically focus on long-term viability and development, which collides with private partners’ short-term business and profit imperatives. Further, the paper offers new insights on the emerging theorisations on hybrid organisations and hybrid organising, especially from the viewpoint of tensions as a central feature. In hybrid organisations, tradeoffs between public and private organisations are essential (Battilana & Lee, 2014), which results in dynamic tensions that are prominent as a management challenge in hybrid organisations. Managing these tensions requires recognition of and practical action in combining different organisational orientations to shift the focus from individual interests to collaborative advantage. Finally, the paper widens the perspective of hybrid organisations to public-private collaboration in the creative industries, thus making a new contribution to scholarly literature. The results show that processes of hybrid organising need to be fluid, flexible, rapid in expedition and move across organisational boundaries both internally and across participating creative industry organisations.
5 Contributions and Conclusions

This dissertation project set out to explore the complex nature of creative content development work in the context of the creative industries facing disruptive change. The focus of the study is on organisational tensions and their management in creative content development work. This overall purpose was considered from different-but-interlinked perspectives to develop explanations in the search for answers to the three overarching research questions.

This chapter discusses the findings and contributions of the study as a whole. The overarching research questions are briefly answered first. This is followed by a discussion on the findings to clarify summative conclusions and contributions to theory and practice. Following this, a summary of limitations is provided, followed by suggestions for further research and some concluding remarks.

The first research question (RQ1) focuses on what characteristic tensions emerge in content development work in creative industry organisations and their collaborations, and why? The case studies in this dissertation disclose various organisational tensions that are inevitable consequences of combining development for future business (exploration) and efficient current production (exploitation). These tensions illustrate relationships between opposing but interdependent dual demands and forces in organisations and their collaborations. Thus, organisational tensions emerge between interrelated poles of dualities, when attention is required to both elements of a duality, as in combining exploration and exploitation. However, as the results of this study show, the relationships between duality poles are dynamic, creating tensions that are in constant flux.

This dissertation also argues that characteristic tensions in content development work are coexisting and interrelated. The study revealed both intra-organisational and inter-organisational tensions, where company-internal tensions are reflected in collaboration between organisations, and vice versa. Further, tensions emerge on all organisational levels and across them, from individual professionals of creative work to organisations engaged in collaborative arrangements. Thus, characteristic tensions transcend levels of organisational activity, as well as both internal and external organisational boundaries. For example, tensions between high strategic-level expectations and operational-level execution delivering results are evident in creative content development work both internal to and between collaborating organisations. Also, even if the dual public-private nature of hybrid organisations can be considered as a relatively stable feature of the arrangement, relationships between the involved organisations change, thus making the respective tensions dynamic.
As elaborated in this study, tensions in creative content development work are rooted in organisational structures, practices between people and functions in those structures, and the actual management work itself. Exploration and exploitation are fundamentally different but interdependent organisational approaches. Irrespective of the structural arrangements between them, tensions are inevitable in the combination for achieving ambidexterity. Further, exploitation is the focus of mature organisations. Organisational structures, tools and support functions are aligned accordingly, which requires attention to practices and their management in combining exploitation and exploration both internal to and across collaborating organisations. This requires negotiations between established decision-making practices and new approaches, and across organisational power structures, which is a core managerial task rife with tensions. Tensions typically arise in connection to organising work through structures, and managers are the actors who deal with this task.

The second research question (RQ2) is concerned with how do these tensions affect creative content development work? The findings of the study illustrate that organisational tensions have a fundamental impact on content development work, its practices and outcomes. Overall, organisational tensions challenge creative content development work in contextual, structural and network approaches to ambidexterity between on-going production (exploitation) and content development for the future (exploration), because these different functions feature opposing but interrelated characteristics, conceptualised as dualities in this study.

The results suggest that exploitation typically overrules exploration in legacy organisations, because short-term gains offered by exploitation seem more secure than potential long-term future benefits of exploration. Accordingly, organisational tensions prohibit crucial progress to reach targets in explorative content development work, which causes uncertainty and leads to deteriorating commitment to and support for this work. These effects are further intensified by established organisational practices and systems, which are primarily built to support on-going operations. Similarly, in collaborations the existing strategic focus of participating organisations easily overrules the shared vision to support exploration, thus impeding efforts to create shared value through collaborative content development work.

Various tensions not only affect the relationship between on-going production and creative content development work, but become evident also between organisational units or functions responsible for these endeavours. As suggested by the study, existing organisational practices, systems and tools entrenched in exploitation are not fully functional for exploration. However, organisational tensions hamper the introduction of new approaches, like ambidextrous HRM. Established structures and habits are also strong instruments of power and politics in organisations. Strategic agendas and existing power structures are typically aligned with exploitative organisational aims. Thus, they further amplify the impeding effects of organisational tensions between exploration and exploitation, and challenge their sustainable co-
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existence by creating an “us” versus “them” dynamic. Finally, organisational tensions endure over time, which emphasises the importance of tolerating tensions and change as integral features of creative content development work and its management.

Tensions as dynamic interrelationships between inseparable elements of dualities need to be constantly negotiated, because tensions do not stay the same and are never over. This is relevant, because as the results of this study indicate, tensions typically constrain creative content development work in both individual organisations and their collaborations. However, alongside these complexities, tensions may also offer facilitating effects and a source of energy to creative content development work, because organisational creativity is expected to build on and utilise creative tensions in practice. Thus, tensions can be unproductive and paralyse, or productive and energise, creative content development work. However, the latter is only possible when organisational tensions are managed in a manner that deals successfully with the inhibiting effects and strengthens the potential for supporting innovation as a result of creative content development work in practice.

The third research question (RQ3) prompted answers to how does management of creative industry organisations and their collaborative arrangements deal with these tensions? The study shows that managing creative content development work features a complex task due to diverse interdependencies that can be conceptualised as dualities as sources of tensions. The results indicate that management plays a crucial role in supporting the enhancing and restraining the hampering effects of organisational tensions on creative content development work. Managerial capability to anticipate, identify and evaluate organisational tensions is key, because this enables managers to perceive sources of each tension between interrelated elements of a duality. Accordingly, recognising the dual elements enables understanding and managing the respective tensions as dynamic interrelationships between the poles of dualities.

As the case studies illustrate, both building and maintaining content development functions and structures in the context of established media organisations and their collaborative arrangements is characterised by diverse organisational tensions. Dealing with these tensions requires managerial attention and effort. The findings suggest that developing practices and tools which support everyday operations of content development work are vital. This is because the established tools and practices of on-going operations need to be reconceptualised and renewed, even refused, to benefit the different nature of work for exploration. This work requires managerial approaches, systems, practices and tools that are flexible, reflexive and dynamic, and enable exchange between the poles of dualities to manage organisational tensions between them.

The results suggest that managing co-existing tensions necessitates collaboration across various organisational boundaries. To start with, interaction across and bridging organisational structures and functions, as well as management levels from strategic to operational, and vice versa, is necessary to
understand the interrelated organisational tensions and to manage them in content development work. Dealing with multi-level and complex tensions requires crossing both intra-organisational and inter-organisational boundaries, which means conscious effort to identify the boundaries and their limiting effects, and moving across them to enable new frames of reference for exploration. Collaborative cross-boundary relationships facilitate navigation between and across these boundaries, and thus mitigation of organisational tensions. Further, collaboration necessitates relinquishing self-interests and emphasising shared interests between functions (intra-organisational) or organisations (inter-organisational), where tensions created by, for example, organisational politics create a challenge. Structures, tools and practices are necessary as supportive mechanisms for boundary-crossing to happen in practice in a way that enables managing organisational tensions without yielding additional issues for example in relation to resource allocation, which would hamper creative content development work and its outcomes by creating additional organisational barriers.

In conclusion, this dissertation as a whole illustrates the vital importance of management in relation to structures, practices, and processes of creative content development work that aims for innovation, and especially the significance of focusing on organisational tensions characteristic for this endeavour. The dynamic, co-existing, changing and enduring tensions cannot be “solved” or managed “away”, but rather managed “with” than “against”, i.e. embraced by managerial efforts, because they are inescapable and instrumental in creative content development work. This study suggests that it is necessary to capture opposing but interrelated elements of dualities to understand their dynamic relationship that results in tensions. In practice, identifying tensions reflecting the interrelationship between duality poles is essential in this process, because tensions help managers to recognise the dual forces and demands in creative content development that require simultaneous attention for successfully managing the work. Accordingly, dynamic management of coexisting tensions promotes flexible and timely managerial responses to cope with changing environments characterised by VUCA realities.

This dissertation suggests that advancing theory and practice on the complex nature of creative content development work and its management depends greatly on understanding tensions through dualities as sources of these tensions, rather than (hopelessly) trying to prevent their emergence or to manage them “away”. The contributions to theory and implications for practice of this study are discussed next.

### 5.1 Contributions to Theory

This dissertation contributes to theory by providing new knowledge on organisational tensions and their management in creative content development work. The research context is the creative industries, specifically media. The
context in question, as suggested by previous research and demonstrated by this study, is a fruitful setting for theory development, especially due to inherent tensions between exploration and exploitation characteristic to the media industry (Achtenhagen & Mierzejewska, 2015; Knight & Paroutis, 2017). As the case studies in this thesis elucidate, established practices and routines pose obstacles for content development work in achieving innovation in media organisations (Ess, 2014; Küng, 2017c), illustrating the ambidextrous challenge for large legacy media companies especially. The results of this study are also potentially useful for other knowledge-intensive industries. This is because the general transformation towards digital knowledge-based economies is disrupting established management practices more broadly and requires new approaches, especially involving collaboration.

Extant research considers both ambidexterity and collaborative organisational arrangements, for example in creative industry clusters, as potentially fruitful and even necessary approaches for achieving innovation, especially in operational environments characterised by disruptive conditions (Junni et al., 2013; Karlsson & Picard, 2011a; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Ambidexterity as a combination of simultaneous exploration and exploitation, and clusters as spatial arrangements are concepts that have attracted considerable scholarly attention. The idea of exploration and exploitation as a core duality in organisations (see e.g. Karhu & Ritala, 2018) is useful and elegant, and even the alliteration makes it sound attractive and convincing. However, there is no intrinsic value in integrating exploration and exploitation as such, but the potential in doing this lies in achieving innovation suitable for certain markets (Kauppila, 2007). As the case studies in this dissertation illustrate, making these approaches work in practical terms entails more complexity than the theoretical and somewhat simplistic abstractions may suggest.

To explore interlinked tensions in creative content development work, and to capture the degree of complexity in combining current efficient business and development for future business, this study utilises a set of theoretical concepts, as discussed in Chapter 2. Alongside the importance of combining exploration and exploitation in practice, integrated approaches that connect theoretical perspectives in conceptualising ambidexterity as a duality are considered necessary for understanding the research interest of this study (see Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow, 2018). This is because developing “both-and” approaches to understanding and managing ambidexterity is expected to benefit from corresponding approach to empirical research. The combination of theoretical perspectives in this dissertation enables deepening the understanding of complexities in integrating exploration and exploitation in established organisations, and especially why creative content development work is challenged by organisational tensions despite the core strategic importance of content in media organisations (Küng, 2017a; Picard & Lowe, 2016).

Earlier research typically differentiates - sometimes rather strongly - between structural and contextual ambidexterity as types of organisational ambidexterity
(e.g. Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008). Ambidexterity in networked organisational contexts, labelled as network ambidexterity, is a useful addition because it introduces an inter-organisational aspect to the concept, although ambidexterity is considered primarily an organisation-level phenomenon also in this conceptualisation (Kauppila, 2007; Kauppila, 2010; see also Stadler et al., 2014). The division between types is useful for theoretical and analytical purposes, but connecting the theoretical ideas of ambidexterity to practical realities in this study has shown that the ambidextrous tensions across ambidexterity types share many similar characteristics and dynamics (cf. Kauppila, 2010). The tensions may differ regarding levels of analysis, but at the organisational level, the focus of this study, ambidextrous tensions between exploration and exploitation seem reasonably alike. These include, for example, tensions between long-term and short-term focus, self-interest and shared interest, efficiency and flexibility, planning and execution, innovation initiatives and existing structures or conventional approaches and agile solutions in administration. Thus, this dissertation research contributes to theory on ambidexterity by creating links between the different approaches on ambidexterity in relation to creative industries to indicate greater complexity to be managed than typically acknowledged.

Previous research suggests that overemphasis on either on-going business, i.e. exploitation, or innovative development, i.e. exploration, hampers long-term business success, and even survival (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; March, 1991). This thinking implies a characteristic ambidextrous ideal of striving for balance between the two domains. However, the findings of this dissertation research implicate that exploration for creative content development is easily hampered by established organisational realities across ambidexterity types. Thus, exploration requires specific organisational and managerial support for coping with the overwhelming pressures of current production. In this regard, ambidextrous tensions are of crucial importance, because they can both fuel and frustrate development (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010). Thus, and in accordance with earlier studies (e.g. Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a, O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013), the case studies of this dissertation emphasise the decisive importance of managerial attention to organisational tensions, especially in relation to endorsing exploration alongside the efficiency pretensions of on-going exploitation.

In relation to organisational ambidexterity, this dissertation research shows that supportive organisational tools and approaches for crossing organisational boundaries between exploration and exploitation as the core duality are especially salient for practices of structural ambidexterity and creating network ambidexterity, and also important for supporting the contextual variant. Boundary-crossing is necessary both internally to organisations as well as between them in collaborations, including horizontal and vertical organisational boundaries, as evident in the case studies. Managing countervailing demands between on-going production and future-oriented content development requires mechanisms for boundary-crossing to handle tensions between the
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fundamentally different aspects of organisational performance (cf. Jansen, Tempelaar, Van Den Bosch & Volberda, 2009). These integration mechanisms support the necessary collaboration between functional units and inter-organisational arrangements in value networks and hybrid organisations. Building and maintaining relationships across company-internal and inter-organisational boundaries are suggested to support collaboration by previous research (e.g. Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Stadler et al., 2014), which is supported by the case study results in this dissertation. The results also suggest that the lack of such tools may have a detrimental effect by aggravating characteristic tensions. This dissertation makes a contribution by showing that the tools and mechanisms of support must extend to various organisational aspects beyond the actual creative content development work, for example to the area of HRM or financial reporting, in order to enable necessary support for development initiatives.

In this study, theorisations on value networks and hybrid organisations are utilised as approaches to network ambidexterity. These research streams have developed mainly separately, but this study suggests useful connections between them, and thus offers a scholarly contribution. The concept of hybrid organisations connects with structural ambidexterity, because both approaches consider structure as a key organisational aspect in achieving specific targets in integrating exploration and exploitation or organisational forms (cf. Battilana & Lee, 2014). Conceptualisations on value networks reflect the core importance of context as supportive infrastructure for simultaneous exploration and exploitation to achieve value, which connects to the contextual ambidexterity perspective (cf. Lavie et al., 2010). Together, these approaches are utilised to explore tensions between current business and future development in relation to network ambidexterity. Thus, this study contributes to theory by exploring connections and boundary-crossing not only in relation to the empirical phenomena under study, but also between the theoretical concepts utilised in the research process.

This study draws on theorisations of value networks and hybrid organisations for creating new knowledge about creative industry clusters as inter-organisational collaborative arrangements. Utilising these theoretical perspectives in the context of media clusters has been lacking in previous scholarly attention, and is especially significant for new knowledge creation. This is because, as this study shows, mere co-location in clusters does not suffice for favourable outcomes in producing content innovation and shared value creation. The role of collaborative value-creating relationships and organisational arrangements is crucial. Despite this, most previous research focuses on the cluster as such, not on the organisations and their relationships in the cluster. Accordingly, inter-organisational tensions are not emphasised as a characteristic feature of clusters due to the typical conceptualisations of clusters as spatial arrangements (e.g. Karlsson & Picard, 2011a, Picard, 2008). In this regard, this dissertation produces new knowledge and breaks new ground by
changing the level of analysis and combining extant theorisations for creating a more comprehensive illustration of the multifaceted phenomena of interest.

If the focus is shifted to collaboration between individual organisations in clusters, as is done in this study, new knowledge on the potential of clusters for creating value through enhancing content innovation can be produced. Creative industry clusters are typically expected to support exploration for innovation and offer possibilities for shared value creation. However, achieving these objectives requires other approaches than the traditional spatial viewpoint. Applying the perspectives of value networks and hybrid organisations on clusters in this dissertation provides new knowledge about why creative industry clusters often do not work as expected and undermine anticipated advantages. Thus, this dissertation contributes to theorisations on creative industry clusters by offering new understanding to why collaborative content development in clusters is more complex than expected and why they sometimes fail to achieve the anticipated results.

This dissertation contributes to the evolving scholarly field of media management (Achtenhagen & Mierzejewska, 2015; Lowe, 2015; Picard & Lowe, 2016), especially from the sought-after viewpoint of management issues (Achtenhagen & Mierzejewska, 2015; Küng, 2007). For media organisations, constant creative content development alongside efficient current production is regarded as a key strategic success factor, the value of which is growing given current realities of disruptive technological changes (Küng, 2017a). Although “integrate or separate” is a central question in media organisations in relation to content production and development (Küng, 2017a), the results of this study suggest that this choice does not suffice in untangling the challenges of creative content development work in legacy media organisations. As illustrated by the case studies, integration and separation are not clear-cut or stable choices. Their relationship is dynamic and complex. Media managers need to handle both approaches through a duality emphasis, attending to respective interdependent tensions. This requirement corresponds with the theoretical idea of ambidexterity in both intra-organisational and inter-organisational senses (e.g. Kauppila, 2010; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013). This dissertation contributes to scholarly knowledge on ambidexterity in creative industries, especially media (see Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2014), by showing the usefulness of focusing on the management of organisational tensions from the viewpoint of dualities as a potential way for achieving ambidexterity in practice. By doing this, the study answers to calls for an advanced understanding and knowledge on managerial challenges created by various interlinked tensions in media organisations striving for renewal and content innovation (e.g. Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009).

In addition to the specific viewpoints regarding creative content development work and the creative industries, especially media, this dissertation contributes to knowledge on organisational tensions and their management in relation to two emerging areas of theorisation. First, ambidextrous HRM (human resource management) is a crucial feature for knowledge-intensive “people businesses” (e.g. Aris & Bughin, 2009), as considered on the basis of one empirical case
study. Second, theorisations on hybrid organisations, which have largely focused on combining the social and commercial aims of single organisations (Battilana et al., 2012; Battilana & Lee, 2014), is extended by applying the hybrid organisation concept to collaboration between public and private organisations in creative industry clusters. This is important because collaborative arrangements are increasingly required for success in VUCA environments, where most organisations cannot solely maintain the developmental intra-organisational resources required to cope with disruptive change. External expert resources may not be readily available without prior trusted relationships in value networks aiming at collaborative value production (see Allee, 2000, 2008).

In conclusion, this dissertation builds on the suggested usefulness of approaching organisational phenomena as tensions from the perspective of dualities, following propositions from previous research positing the two essential dual elements or forces mutually enabling and supplementary (Farjoun, 2010; Papachroni et al., 2015). At the same time, this study emphasises the importance of recognising and managing the tensions between the duality poles to achieve outcomes. Further, the study illustrates the usefulness of ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations as concepts for exploring organisational tensions, and especially by using them as a combined set of perspectives. As illustrated by the results of this study, various organisational tensions may severely hamper content development processes internally in independent organisations and inter-organisationally in their cross-sector collaborations. Thus, the case studies in this dissertation advance knowledge in understanding organisational tensions and their management, thus supporting aspirations to understand and improve handling inherent tensions in creative content development work (cf. Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009).

Tensions manifest at different levels of organisational activity (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Lavie et al., 2010). Although the overall focus of this study is on the organisational level, the case studies also illustrate the importance of attending to tensions on different levels – individual, group, organisational, and inter-organisational – in aspirations to manage organisational tensions in creative content development work in practice. This is because tensions surface on all levels, and the levels are interrelated and mutually influencing in practice. For example, if strategic level encouragement for innovation and inter-organisational collaboration collides with internal focus on streamlining production for immediate gains, exploration on the operational level and in collaborative arrangements suffers due to tensions between expected results and resource allocation. Overall, the results of this study support extant research stating that transitioning across tensions conceptualised as dynamic interrelationships between the poles of dualities is where the toolkit for managing dualities can be developed (Papachroni et al., 2015; Sydow 2018). Next, the implications of the study for practice are discussed.
5.2 Implications for Practice

From the inception, this dissertation project has pursued combining theoretical and practical viewpoints and elements to build knowledge for both domains. The theoretical contributions of the study were elaborated above. This section concentrates on implications of the research for practice, especially management.

The three empirical case studies can be viewed as practical, differing structural approaches to creative content development work: integration (in contextual ambidexterity), separation (in structural ambidexterity) and networked (in value networks and hybrid organisations as network ambidexterity). Each represents a distinctive way of dealing with tensions as complexities of creative content development work. The case studies in this dissertation illustrate various tensions in each case, but also across them as illustrated, for example, in the internal and collaborative approaches concerning Yle. Accordingly, this study suggests that identifying organisational tensions and respective dualities inherent to creative content development work is relevant, if not crucial, for considering which structural approach(es) to utilise in practice. The choice of a specific arrangement is reflected in the characteristic tensions that inevitably emerge. Thus, only a structural choice, for instance joining a creative industry cluster, dedicating a content innovation project or forming a distinct content development function, does not as such solve the complexities of creative content development work. In other words, focusing on the organisational or structural arrangements separately does not guarantee content development success. The respective tensions merit central attention in the process of the work.

The focus of content development work is typically on content as such because that is a core strategic resource and output of media companies (Küng, 2017a). However, it is crucial to distinguish between the process and substance of content development. In other words, how to achieve content innovation is at least as important a question as what to develop, especially in relation to collaborative aspirations (see Huxham & Vangen 2005). Inherent tensions caused by the dual nature of ambidexterity between existing business and new development, by complex relationships in value networks or by differing focuses combined in hybrid organisations require active management. This fundamentally builds on accepting organisational tensions as a starting point for development, not ignoring or denying them, and thus pursuing the different aims simultaneously (Battilana et al., 2015; Hahn et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Tensions can serve as both an invitation and inhibitor to organisational creativity and development opportunities - they can spur both vicious and virtuous cycles in this regard (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Thus, awareness in identifying and understanding inherent tensions in creative content development work, and being able to find synergies in these tensions is necessary in order to respond to the tensions and reduce their negative effects (cf. Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Putnam et al., 2016). However, specific
support for the development work is crucial in relation to tensions because exploitation of current business typically overrules exploration for content development.

As discussed throughout this thesis, organisational tensions are inherent to creative work in content development, and these tensions often seem to inhibit the endeavour. Management’s central role is to identify and manage, in real terms, various tensions characteristic to media content development work in practice (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009). This is why anticipating, recognising, handling, and being conscious about tensions represent a key managerial challenge and responsibility in supporting creative content development work. Further, managers at all levels of creative organisations have an essential role in securing a beneficial environment for the work in content development. Attendance to tensions as interrelationships between poles of dualities and thus building a “both-and” managerial emphasis are crucial elements in this complex process of “duality management” aiming to deal with sets of dualities and respective co-existing tensions (see Birkinshaw, Crilly, Bouquet & Lee, 2016).

Managers in media organisations and their collaborations need to live with and cope with, to actually embrace, ambiguities reflected in organisational tensions. These should be seen not as hindrances but as enablers of creative content development. In a real sense, managing tensions is the solution, and this requires identifying elements and opposing forces in dualities as sources of tensions. This suggests a perspective that differs from traditional managerial ideas in rigidly defined, efficient processes or explicitly fixed strategic goals and choices. Instead, this thinking correlates with the idea of dualities as striving for “both-and” instead of “either-or” managerial approaches and organisational solutions. This is also where creative industry organisations can offer knowledge for other industries coping with disruptive change that requires combining diminishing resources with increased requirements for innovative development, which is typical for current VUCA environments.

As previous research suggests, ambidextrous and other types of organisational tensions need to be managed as an interdependent package (Andriopoulos, 2003). Further, specific tensions change and shift, making their management a dynamic, on-going concern (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Schad et al., 2016). This dissertation suggests that an overall managerial ability and capacity to deal with the idea of tensions provides tools for handling various changing situations and demands of creative content development work in practice. Tensions should be understood as an inherent element of creative work to avoid potential negative implications of tensions as unsolvable contradictions to be “gotten rid of” in managing creative content development work. Content development is not about either-or choices between current business and future innovation, or traditional change management understandings of selecting between planned or emergent processes, or between internally or externally oriented approaches (see Putnam et al., 2016). That dichotomous thinking is not sufficient for managing this complex endeavour. Instead, the duality approach
offers an alternative to see content development tensions as interdependent dynamics reflecting everyday, persistent managerial realities.

This study offers new ideas also for cluster management as a collaborative arrangement in practice, which needs to take various interdependencies and tensions into account. More collaborative projects fail than succeed. This is why it may be more useful to learn from complexities to handle in collaborative arrangements rather than to benchmark successful examples elsewhere with different conditions, despite their attractiveness. According to this study, value networks offer potential for achieving exploration, but collaboration is not easy to manage in practice. Similarly, participation in creative industry clusters as such does not guarantee content development results and innovation. Considering the cluster as a context for value-creating networks to produce innovative outcomes is necessary. This emphasises the role and importance of value networks as potential enablers of collaborative projects aiming for content development. If the tensions can be identified, handled, and managed, the success rate of collaboration may increase as less effort will be used for overcoming frustration and confusion.

Although content development work in practice often utilises a project approach, it obviously requires not only abilities to manage individual projects but also management of the development process overall. As indicated by the case studies and papers in this dissertation, managing ambidextrous tensions between exploration and exploitation requires constant boundary crossing, as well as dynamic balancing and bridging between different organisational needs, objectives and realities in practical terms. Along the same lines, collaborative arrangements in value networks or hybrid organisations typically start with shared enthusiasm between the partners. However, maintaining the shared mission and commitment over time challenges the premises of collaboration (Battilana et al., 2012) and calls for practical efforts to bridge between organisational orientations, individual interests and concrete actions. This study suggests that one of the core issues in this process is the identification and management of various coexisting tensions embedded in dualities, which threaten to constrain or inhibit creative content development work if unmanaged. Tensions are important, because they reflect interrelationships between the competing elements and forces conceptualised as dualities. In this regard, a core managerial implication is that the understanding and knowledge of tensions should be applied to practice in the everyday life of organisations at work. For example, tensions may point to two poles of a duality, which indicate organisational boundaries to be crossed between them to manage the relationship for achieving content innovation and creating shared value. Thus, tensions management requires a flexible approach and creativity in management itself, building on cross-boundary collaboration in a single organisation setting and between organisations engaged in collaboration.

This dissertation illustrates that managers of media organisations as part of the wider creative industries facing the VUCA environment, need to manage both internal tensions in relation to content development and external tensions
deriving, for example, from collaborative arrangements. I hope that the elaborations of the study on both aspects can provide managers with tools for being aware of the importance of organisational tensions in the multifaceted realities of creative content development work. This study does not suggest that it would be necessary, or even possible, to “solve” the tensions, but instead that it is crucial to manage them from the viewpoint of dualities, as interrelationships between dual organisational forces or elements. In other words, trying to manage the inescapable and instrumental tensions “away” is fruitless as a pursuit. Thus, managers need to tolerate the frustration of having to constantly navigate organisational tensions and to negotiate a shifting “balance” between competing demands of exploration and exploitation, which is never final or stable (Lewis, Andriopoulos & Smith, 2014; Papachroni et al., 2015).

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any research, this study has limitations because making specific decisions and choices along the research process has excluded other available choices. The particular limitations of the individual papers have been discussed within each of them. Also, Chapter 3.6 emphasises ethical considerations in my personal involvement in one of the case organisations, which could be considered as a limitation too.

This dissertation has discussed organisational tensions and their management in the context of creative industries from several theoretical perspectives. Despite the fact that other research streams could have been potentially valuable as well, I believe that all the chosen perspectives are important and necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. I have carefully considered this choice and based it on personal experience and research interest to address the questions. These viewpoints emerged in the research process, which may be considered as a limitation of the study. Further, utilising several theoretical perspectives provides breadth in exploring the research topic, but at the same time focusing on one theoretical approach may have facilitated digging deeper.

Combining different theoretical perspectives also adds to the complexity of the research setting. During the dissertation process, I regularly considered the choice of concentrating on a specific theoretical framework for the sake of clarity and consistency. However, I stuck with the choice to draw on various perspectives because they are relevant for organisational arrangements and issues of creative content development work. This option seemed to enable a more comprehensive set of explanations of the complex realities of managing content development work. Various inherent tensions cannot be dialled back to a single, unambiguous source because they reflect many realities and sides of complex phenomena and respective dualities in practice. I hope to have succeeded in painting a multifaceted picture of the focus of research interest in
this study by including several case studies, various empirical data types and sources, analysis approaches and theoretical perspectives. However, I do recognise the potential danger of getting lost in too many aspects and approaches, and thus possibly endangering drawing generalisable conclusions.

The choice of any research method, in this dissertation the qualitative case study approach, has potential for new knowledge creation and inherent limitations (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Chapter 3.3 includes discussion on weaknesses of the case study method. In addition to those points, sampling of cases in qualitative research is challenging, and the choice - in this dissertation especially built on access - has fundamental consequences for the generalisability of research results. I am aware that targeting only three case studies challenges the empirical generalisability of the research results. However, my research emphasises the importance of analytic generalisations, which is typical for qualitative case studies (Yin, 2014). Further, one of the case studies dates back about a decade, which may be considered a limitation due to the rapidly changing character of the creative industries and media organisations. However, the same organisation is involved in the most recent case study, which has given me the opportunity to compare the findings between the separate time periods. To attend to these and other potential limitations, this dissertation research is built on multiple cases from different time periods and varying contexts, as well as several respondents included in interviews and diaries as data collection methods. The research process has also been described in a transparent manner and in detail in the introductory part (i.e. this “Kappa” explaining the research as a whole) and in the individual papers included in the dissertation (i.e. Part II of this thesis).

Although I believe the real world exists according to the critical realist ontology, our human access to it is always fallible (Danermark et al., 2002; Wynn & Williams, 2012). Because of the researchers’ (or anyone else’s) inability to directly access the “real world”, we must rely on observations and interpretations of the empirical events. Thus, despite sincere attempts to ensure the rigor and quality of this dissertation research process, I may – and most certainly have – missed something important, perhaps drawn out hasty conclusions or over-relied on the results of previous research and theorisations, or been over-confident of my own professional understandings of the research contexts in practice. However, being aware of and attending to these issues throughout the research process has hopefully helped to avoid them sufficiently to not endanger research credibility. In addition, I put significant effort in testing the findings with the respondents, who confirmed my results and conclusions as accurate.

There are many issues as already noted in the individual papers that merit further research. In addition to those suggestions, there are broader needs for further work on the general research interest and topic of this study. To begin with, I believe the general approach of focusing on complexities and challenges instead of successes and opportunities merits further attention in research on creative industries and creative content development, and in other areas of
management studies as social science. This is because past success does not
directly correlate with future success in the contexts of disruptive change and
VUCA environments. Focusing on obstacles and difficulties can open
opportunities for more general approaches that help managers tackle difficult
situations and advance theory. In relation to this, focused attention on the aspect
of risk could be fruitful. For example, earlier studies have suggested that over-
reliance on either exploration or exploitation entails risks for success, but the
detailed character and antecedents of these risks would offer an interesting area
of study. Along the same lines, engagement in collaboration in its different
forms is risky, because it requires significant inputs with uncertain benefits and
outputs. Thus, devoting future interest on, for example, the dynamics of
decision-making and risk-assessment in relation to involvement in value
networks or hybrid organisations would offer potential opportunities for fruitful
inquiry.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the media industry is particularly clustered
(Davis et al. 2009). Clusters aim to join organisations together, which is
considered an important tool for achieving organisational development and
content innovation. However, this requires shifting the approach and core
interest from cluster creation as a spatial arrangement and an objective per se, to
the organising of the cluster and organisations within and associated with the
cluster. The Mediapolis case study, featuring the theoretical perspectives of
value networks and hybrid organisations in the development of a new creative
industry cluster begins addressing these aspects. More research is needed
concerning the relationships, power and negotiations between organisations in
clusters aiming to achieve shared value creation and collaborative advantage.
Also, further research on how tensions, organisational dynamics and aspects of
integration change over the cluster development process and lifecycle is needed
to improve understandings of the dynamic nature of clusters, the specific and
changing challenges in different phases, as well as the overall pros and cons of
cluster involvement as well as cluster successes and failures in a more detailed
manner. With the support of my comprehensive access and continual
cooperation with the Mediapolis cluster, I aim to revisit these aspects in later
studies.

Overall, this study focused on the organisational level of analysis because it
is typically individual organisations that aim for content development even in
collaborative arrangements. However, as evident in the case studies, the
different levels of organisational life and operations are interdependent because
decisions and actions on one level affect the operations – and tensions – on other
levels. Thus, in future studies aiming to advance knowledge on creative content
development work, and especially on the complexities and tensions, it would be
useful to take a more encompassing approach including multiple levels of
analysis for creating a more comprehensive picture of this multifaceted research
interest. For example, analysing different types of ambidexterity (contextual,
structural, network) across levels of intra-organisational functions, overall
structure of a hybrid organisation and value networks between organisations more in detail would offer future research opportunities.

This dissertation demonstrates the usefulness of creative industries in general, and the media industry and organisations specifically, as a research context in relation to ambidexterity. This context merits further research attention in relation to radical ambidexterity (see Kauppila, 2010). Media companies typically combine exploration and exploitation in their daily operations (Bleyen et al., 2014; Küng, 2013), which is an approach corresponding to contextual ambidexterity (e.g. Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). But most radical innovation originates from outside the traditional media organisations (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013a). Thus, ambidextrous arrangements for content creation and innovation in media companies in relation to radical innovation would be a fruitful area for further research, especially in relation to advancing studies in media management. For instance, focusing research interest on if and how the typical approaches to ambidexterity in media organisations potentially inhibit radical innovation would be worthwhile. Further, it is worth merit ing future research effort on clarifying connections, dynamics and the interplay between theories of hybrid organising and ambidexterity. That would offer opportunities for advancing knowledge about ways to develop organisations facing the need to combine different organisational logics and identities as approaches to maintaining current efficient business, and at the same time trying to secure future prosperity and innovativeness.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

This dissertation research project began with an interest in exploring complexities of creative content development work based on practical experience by means of academic research. Accordingly, compiling the study has been both a scholarly process and a personal journey. As I understand it, an important purpose of a dissertation, in addition to new knowledge creation, is learning academic research as a craft and professional practice. I hope that my endeavours in this regard indicated in this Kappa and the six individual papers provide evidence of accomplishment. At the personal level, this journey has had a dual nature – corresponding with my research topic – featuring simultaneous elements of enthusiasm and frustration, theory and practice, difficulties and successes, as well as confidence and insecurity, to mention a few of the most prominent. The tensions in the thesis work process have required a similar managerial attention and skills that I remember being necessary in media management work for content development in practice. As happened with my industry experience, the dissertation research process leaves me wondering about many issues. At the same time, it has satisfied a need to develop better understandings about the importance of managing tensions in media organisations and their collaborative arrangements facing disruptive change in
the VUCA environment. There is much that remains to be investigated, but the journey and results accomplished so far have been worth doing.

The main idea of the dissertation project remained reasonably similar throughout the process, although the details have become clearer along the journey. As with content development work, this project has also featured the process of progressive elaboration. Especially in the beginning of the research process, I read scholarly literature with largely practical eyes, concentrating on organisational creativity in media content development work. This was strongly conditioned by my personal managerial experience in the industry. However, as the planning and execution of the research project progressed, I realised the need for a more comprehensive theoretical approach to understand what I was seeing and learning about the complex research topic. This is why the scholarly perspectives and theorisations on ambidexterity, value networks and hybrid organisations have been so valuable in this study. They were used in the individual case studies of the dissertation, as discussed in this thesis. The dualities and tensions that characterise the chosen theoretical perspectives and respective concrete phenomena became the central focus due to their existence in creative work, and their analytical and explanatory power in relation to the research interest.

This thesis highlights various sides of aspirations towards and approaches on creative content development work in the creative industries, and especially the complexities and tensions involved in the process of its management. I believe this context has been a productive terrain for fruitfully examining managerial challenges in this regard, and offers insights for other knowledge-intensive industries and organisations coping with disruptive digital transformation. I have found and analysed certain tensions of creative content development work and discussed their importance as managerial challenges. I have chosen perspectives that I found valid for exploring the phenomena. However, there are more aspects to be identified and scrutinised. I hope my study inspires media management researchers to continue elaborating upon the complexities of developing the core strategic resource – content – in the creative industries.

This dissertation results from combining studies within several extant theorisations and disciplines. These have been applied to empirical case studies to develop new understandings on the focal interest – tensions in creative content development work. The study focused on cases from traditional, legacy media companies, which have experienced severe struggles in coping with the digital change, as well as their collaboration. The initial motivation for the dissertation research arose from a desire to understand the complexities of supporting and maintaining creative content development function in a traditional company, thus focusing on difficulties and obstacles instead of successes and best practices. I hope this underrepresented approach has led to interesting observations and useful new knowledge - both in theoretical and practical terms.

As important aspects, this dissertation project has combined ideas from media studies and business studies, and connected two universities in an
agreement to co-produce my joint-degree PhD studies in collaboration. Thus, the practical setting of the research process can also be characterised as having a dual character alongside the research interest. This reflects one of the underlying ideas of the dissertation project, which is to enhance dialogue between media studies and management studies for the practical benefit of the maturing scholarly field of media management. This approach has been both extremely satisfying and sometimes somewhat complicated, but I can sincerely recommend it to others considering research in multidisciplinary issues. Combining research organisations, disciplinary approaches as well as practice and theory has opened multiple aspects on the research topic, and challenges established ways of thinking and acting, not least those of my own. I believe combining sometimes conflicting aspects is not only important for creative content development work, but also for social science research in the current environment of constant change.

My genuine intent has been to carry the dissertation research project out to the best of my ability for learning the scholarly craft. Despite the primacy of this scholarly emphasis throughout the dissertation process, I have also strived to maintain my professional identity stemming from practical work in the media industry. I think this is especially important for reflecting on the ideas and implications of the research project for media managers who must navigate the transforming of their business. I can hopefully contribute some ideas that can be useful for creating new understandings of the difficulties managers need to identify, navigate, tolerate, and potentially overcome to varying degrees. As Emmel (2013: 6) states: “Interpretation and explanations - the insiders’ perspectives and the outsiders’ understandings - cannot be separated and are always provisional.”

As stated several times in the preceding chapters, both theory and practice are of core importance to me in relation to knowledge creation. During the dissertation process, I have moved from a dominantly practice-based knowledge sphere to appreciate and build more comprehensive understandings of scholarly knowledge creation. I hope the results of this study will benefit both theory and practice, and thus be considered to have reasonably achieved the dual objective of usefulness for both advancing scholarly knowledge and offering potential for applied use. Towards the end of the dissertation process, I found a quote by Kilduff (2006: 252), which reflects my thoughts at this point, and hopefully also the results of this dissertation process – it certainly corresponds to my starting point in the journey with real-life experience: “The route to good theory leads not through gaps in the literature but through an engagement with problems in the world that you find personally interesting.”
References


References


References


References


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References


Part II: Collection of Papers

Paper 1
Managing Creativity in Change
Nando Malmelin & Sari Virta

3Summarised the core theoretical literature for the article. Conducted the empirical analysis. Coded the empirical material in total according to the co-created coding scheme. Interpreted the results. Wrote the full draft of the empirical analysis. Contributed to the paper idea, execution plan, analysis approach, and discussion & conclusions. Co-created the categories for the analysis.

Paper 2
Ambidextrous Tensions: Dynamics of Creative Work in the Media Innovation Process
Sari Virta & Nando Malmelin

Created the research plan with the co-author. Collected the literature and wrote the first version of the theoretical background. Conducted the empirical analysis and interpreted the results. Wrote the manuscript.

Paper 3
Crossing Boundaries for Innovation: Content Development for PSM at Yle
Sari Virta & Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Created the research plan with the co-author. Wrote the manuscript draft and edited it according to the suggestions and contributions from the co-author.

Paper 4
Complexities and Tensions of Transformative Boundary-Crossing: Case Study on Ambidextrous HRM in a Creative Organization
Sari Virta

Sole author.

3 My contribution to individual papers is specified here
Paper 5
Integrating Media Clusters and Value Networks: Insights for Management Theory and Research from a Case Study of Mediapolis in Finland
*Sari Virta & Gregory Ferrell Lowe*

Created the research plan with the co-author. Collected the literature and the research material, conducted the empirical analysis and interpreted the results. Wrote most of the manuscript.

Paper 6
Managing Tensions of Collaboration in a Hybrid Organisation: A Case Study of the Mediapolis Cluster in Finland.
*Sari Virta*

Sole author.
Paper 1
Managing Creativity in Change

Nando Malmelin and Sari Virta

Published in Journalism Practice 10(8), pp. 1041-1054
Managing Creativity in Change

Nando Malmelin and Sari Virta

ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the management of creative journalistic work in a media organisation. It reports and analyses a case study conducted in one of Europe’s largest media corporations: the focus of the study was a development team of journalists set up and charged with creating and producing a new multi-platform media service and its content. The article discusses the ways in which the creativity of media professionals is supported and managed under the constantly changing conditions of media work and journalistic practices. The study contributes to research on creativity in the media industry, particularly the management of creativity in journalism and media work. The findings identify the key motivations and constraints in relation to creative journalistic work in the media industries under digital transformation. Specifically, media professionals are motivated by the opportunity for developing new skills and competencies as well as chances to create new journalistic products and practices. The article suggests that the skills of change management, communication management and project management are crucial for creative media work.
MANAGING CREATIVITY IN CHANGE
Motivations and constraints of creative work in a media organisation

Nando Malmelin and Sari Virta

This article is concerned with the management of creative journalistic work in a media organisation. It reports and analyses a case study conducted in one of Europe’s largest media corporations: the focus of the study was a development team of journalists set up and charged with creating and producing a new multi-platform media service and its content. The article discusses the ways in which the creativity of media professionals is supported and managed under the constantly changing conditions of media work and journalistic practices. The study contributes to research on creativity in the media industry, particularly the management of creativity in journalism and media work. The findings identify the key motivations and constraints in relation to creative journalistic work in the media industries under digital transformation. Specifically, media professionals are motivated by the opportunity for developing new skills and competencies as well as chances to create new journalistic products and practices. The article suggests that the skills of change management, communication management and project management are crucial for creative media work.

KEYWORDS creative work; creativity; creativity management; journalism practices; media management; media work

Introduction

In the media industries, one of the organisation’s most important assets is their creative professionals, such as journalists, since the quality of media products is largely dependent on the knowledge, skills and creativity of the people who design and produce them (e.g. Mierzjewska and Hollifeld 2006). The competitiveness of media companies depends on an exceptionally high degree of day-to-day management of creative professionals, because the design and production of media content and products is an ongoing process of creation. As media products and services depend so heavily on creative processes, the leadership and management of creative people is a strategically more critical factor in media corporations than it is in many other industries (e.g. Aris and Bughin 2005, 373). Küng (2008, 144–147; 2011, 47) suggests that media organisations need to work constantly and systematically to develop creativity and the management of creativity. The more effectively they put to use and enhance the creativity of journalists and their networks for producing creative content, the better placed they will be to develop interesting and innovative products and to improve their competitiveness.

In this article, we analyse how the creativity of professional journalists is supported and managed in the process of continuous change towards the digitised media environment. We pursue this aim through the research question:
What kind of organisational conditions facilitate and constrain the creativity of a media company’s development team and its members in creating a new multi-platform media service?

In relation to that, we analyse how media managers can contribute to supporting the creativity of journalists striving to create innovation. We address the research question by analysing the diary materials, in which the media professionals involved in the development project describe their experiences and views of events and situations they consider important for creative work.

This study contributes especially to research on creativity and creative work in journalistic contexts of the media industries. It also contributes to the field of media management research, where creative journalistic work and its management are important areas that require much more scholarly attention. The case study reported in this article is concerned with the work of a new development team in an international media corporation specialising in magazine publishing. This is an interesting sector to explore, particularly in view of how quickly and dramatically it is departing from its deep-seated traditions, including journalistic practices, towards new digital media. Magazine companies are evolving from producers of printed publications into producers of multi-platform multimedia contents and services. This requires new concepts, new strategies and new business models, as well as new approaches to managing creative journalistic work.

The article is structured as follows. First, we describe the theoretical context of the study, which is based on the creativity research and creativity management literature, and particularly on research concerned with creativity in media organisations. Second, we explain the case material and methods of our empirical study. Third, we present the analysis of the research data. The analysis is divided into two categories: the motivations and the constraints of creative work. Finally, the results of the analysis are assessed and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Context

This article draws on the literature and research about creativity management, particularly on theories of creativity in the organisational environment and workplaces (e.g. Amabile 1996; Mumford and Simonton 1997; Amabile and Kramer 2011). We focus especially on factors that motivate or constrain creativity within media organisations and the context of journalism and media work (see Deuze 2007). The article contributes especially to growing literature on the role of various constraints in creativity and innovation (Rosso 2014). In the research literature on creativity, the concept of constraint is understood as a factor that can both enable and restrain creative work. In this article, we use the concept of constraint in the meaning that it is limiting or impeding creative action (Lombardo and Kvålshaugen 2014).

Creativity research has traditionally emphasised individual talent over collective processes and contexts. However, collective approaches that also take account of organisational and interactional factors have gained increasing momentum (e.g. Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin 1993; Amabile 1996). This phenomenon of organisational creativity refers both to creativity occurring in the organisational environment and to the creativity of people and teams working in organisations. Organisational creativity is defined as the creation of new and useful (or significant and valuable) ideas for purposes of developing
new products, services, processes and strategies in the context of work organisations (Fisher and Amabile 2009, 13). When creativity is approached from the organisational perspective, the management of creativity gets emphasised. As creative work is more and more based on co-operation, leadership becomes a key factor in securing the success of creative effort (Mumford, Byrne, and Shipman 2009, 279–280).

Despite the extensive discussion and debate about creativity in general, the in-depth academic research into the management of creativity is not an established area of research or literature (e.g. Davis and Scase 2000; Bilton 2006; Amabile and Kramer 2011). Research on creativity as well as innovation is also scarce at the group level (Rosso 2014, 552–553). Similarly, creativity in media organisations is an overlooked research area and a significant gap in existing literature (see Sandberg and Alvesson 2011), making new research necessary to develop existing knowledge. There has been only limited research into creative media organisations, and the same goes for case studies of creative work and journalistic practices (e.g. Banks et al. 2002; Mierzewska and Hollifield 2006; Küng 2008; Berglez 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Mierzewska 2011; Markham 2012). Media industry research does recognise the exceptional value of creativity to media organisations, but there is still a scarcity of in-depth research evidence on processes of creativity management (see e.g. Nylund 2013) and their impact on the media branch and the performance of media companies (see e.g. Aris and Bughin 2005; Deuze 2007; Küng 2007). More empirical research is needed also on the organisational dynamics in the media industries for an improved understanding of collaboration between people working in these organisations as well as in content production (Küng 2007, 2008; Mierzewska 2011).

In relation to research on creativity in the media industry, this study also contributes to research on media innovations, especially from the points of view of product innovation and process development (see e.g. Storsul and Krumsvik 2013; Dogruel 2014). The research on media innovations includes, for instance, the creation of new media services, formats and content products, as well as the development of working processes and organisational arrangements of media organisations, which are the focus of this study. Further, research on the practices of media work (e.g. Deuze 2007) in media innovation processes and content development is needed. The constraints of innovation are deeply rooted in established practices and preferred patterns of media work (Ess 2014). Thus, the approach to analyse media work in its everyday organisational settings is highly needed and has a potential to make valuable additions to both theoretical and practical knowledge.

Creating organisational conditions that simultaneously support both the objective of business profitability and the objective of creativity requires an understanding of what kind of management processes promote creativity and what kind of processes constrain it (Amabile 1998, 77–78). This is also a topical and significant question for media companies, and it forms the starting point of our empirical analysis. In discussing the findings, our article draws especially on the theories of Amabile (Amabile 1996, 1998; Amabile and Kramer 2011) about the conditions for creativity, such as the components of creativity and the concept of the progress principle. Amabile (1996, 1998; Amabile and Kramer 2011; see also Küng 2008, 150–151) identifies three components of creativity: creative thinking skills, industry knowledge (expertise) and inner motivation. Firstly, creativity requires the skills and ability to think creatively and to look for and to find alternative solutions. Secondly, creativity requires knowledge and expertise of the branch or industry concerned, i.e. the skills, competencies or knowledge that are needed to perform successfully in a certain professional field. Thirdly, creativity is based on the individual’s inner
motivation. People are more creative and more productive when they value and appreciate the work they are doing and when they are committed to their job.

Our work reflects Amabile’s empirically grounded, theoretical framework to discuss creativity and the management of creativity in media organisations. Although we recognise that the framework based on Amabile’s research is only one of the possible starting points for discussing the findings (see e.g. Hunter, Bedell, and Mumford 2007), we find it useful in this case. Amabile’s research has heavily influenced the literature on creativity in organisations (e.g. Rosso 2014, 553; see also Styhre and Sundgren 2005) and it is based on a practical approach analysing creative workers in developmental teams. Amabile’s studies place emphasis on practical and applicable knowledge, which is important from the point of view of developing practices for creative work and creativity management in media industries. Further, this approach allows us to examine the results of our study in the context of the research tradition on creativity (see also Yin 2009, 18), and to place the former research in dialogue with this under-researched field of management of creative media work. By setting our case study results against the existing research literature, we can see to what extent the observations support current notions of creativity and to what extent they depart from those notions. At the same time, this will allow us to open up new perspectives for a deeper understanding of creative media work and its management.

Methodology

After framing the theoretical context of our study, we move next to the empirical component of the article. Before presenting the findings of the empirical analysis, we explain the case study setting and details as well as the research methods and the empirical data collection.

Case Study

This article is based on a case study that followed the work of a new development team set up in an international media corporation. The case study is an empirical investigation that explores the phenomenon concerned in its native environment (Yin 2009). The strength of a case study data-set is that it allows for a detailed and in-depth analysis (Hollifield and Coffey 2006, 582). The aim of the case study analysis is to increase understanding of the case under investigation and its underlying circumstances. The case study approach was considered especially applicable in the situation in which the development project was presumably constantly evolving and required continuous investigation. Deriving the research data from practical media work opens opportunities for developing relevant knowledge about the under-researched topic of creativity in the media industry.

The subject of our study is a newly established development team, an editorial organisation tasked with designing, producing and launching a new multi-platform media service. At the same time, the team was charged with developing a new business approach and a new model of organisation within the corporation. The team is part of a Finnish-based organisation that specialises in magazine journalism and publishing within a major international media corporation. The media organisation studied provides a timely and relevant case for a media industry sector that faces the challenges of media convergence and is striving to create new ways of journalistic work, business models and content innovations.
The respondents of the study comprised the whole development team, 10 media and magazine professionals. Their job titles included all the main positions in magazine publishing: editor-in-chief, managing editor, copy editor, journalist, producer, art director and graphic designer. In addition, the editorial staff included a project manager with a background in journalism as well as a concept designer who was recruited from the company's marketing unit. All the participants were specifically selected to join the team and they were motivated to do so. They were seasoned media professionals: their mean age was 43 years and they had been in the business on average for 16 years. All the team members had studied in higher education institutions.

Methods and Data

The empirical data were collected using the diary method (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli 2003; Ohly et al. 2010). The participants kept a weekly diary in which they entered their personal views and thoughts on the subject of the study. Weekly diaries are well suited for studying events and series of events that are not momentary or limited to a short time period, such as one day. They are also useful for studying processes that require more in-depth reflection. For the participants to be able to provide as detailed an account of events as possible, they were encouraged to take notes of situations when and as they happened during the week.

The participants were informed that all the research data would be handled confidentially and that no one outside the research team would have access to the responses. The participants e-mailed their answers directly to the head of the research project, who for purposes of data analysis compiled a document that concealed the respondents' identity. The study lasted for seven weeks, during which 52 response messages were sent, including a total of 186 diary entries. The response rate was 74 per cent, indicating a very high level of interest, especially in view of the fact that some of the participants were on holiday during part of the research period and therefore unable to answer the questions. Participation in the study was voluntary for the team members, but both the researchers and the managers of the team encouraged the participants to be active in answering the diary questions, because the aim was to study the team as a creative organisation as comprehensively as possible.

The diary entries were answers to questions formulated by the research team. The questions were designed to prompt responses about key events of the past week and so to collect data about critical incidents that the respondents felt were particularly significant in view of achieving the project's objectives. With highlighting the meaning of critical incidents, we were able to ensure that the answers would be focused on the case under consideration, instead of the organisation's other projects or activities in which the participants may have been involved. The critical incident technique is a qualitative research method that is particularly well suited for analysing human activity and organisational practices, including creativity and innovation (e.g. Flanagan 1954; Butterfield et al. 2005; see also McGourty, Tarshis, and Dominick 1996). All the questions were open-ended, allowing the respondents to answer freely in a personal manner they felt was most appropriate.

The collection of the diary material started the same week that the new development team began work, so from the very start of the project. This offered the research team a unique opportunity to follow the process from the start as it was evolving. The weekly diary questions were sent to the participants by e-mail, an ideal method of communication.
with media professionals who spend most of their working day in front of a computer. The participants received an e-mail every Friday morning, and it presented three guiding questions together with instructions on how to respond. Two standard questions were repeated every week, in which the participants were asked to describe one event that had facilitated creative work and one event that had constrained creative work during the past week. The third question prompted the participants to review the past week from the point of view of a specific theme. These themes covered areas of current focus in the project, such as project preparation, strategy work, idea generation, concept development and planning, teamwork, as well as management and supervision. In addition, the participants were encouraged each week to add comments on any events that they felt had been important. They were urged to answer the questions during the same day, or by the following Monday latest. Reminders were sent out to those participants who had not replied by Monday.

Each participant answered the diary questions personally, reflecting on their own thoughts and experiences. They were specifically prompted to provide their own personal accounts of events and to describe their own thoughts, views and feelings. In addition, they were urged not to discuss their responses with other participants to prevent any direct influence on their answers (see also Amabile and Kramer 2011).

The case study analysis relied primarily on a corresponding process of empirical research that Amabile and Kramer (2011) used in their extensive diary study of creativity in organisational contexts. First, the researchers independently read through the diary responses several times, taking extensive notes, and then comparing their notes. Second, the researchers developed a general coding system on the basis of a content analysis of the material to help classify the most significant event categories. The data were coded using 10 events categories formulated by the research team, and these were skills and competencies, development, working together, communications, inclusion, change, project organisation, time use, aims and risks. Third, the researchers coded the data independently, after which the coding was reviewed by the research group and the coding differences discussed and untangled. Fourth, the researchers refined the research design and identified the most important themes, which were analysed in depth, and created combined categories based on the themes. In the next section, the results are reported based on these categories.

Findings

The aim of this article is to analyse what kind of conditions facilitate and constrain the creativity of the development team and its members in a media organisation. In order to answer the research question, we set out to identify the most significant motivations and constraints of creative work in the start-up stages of the new development team. Our analysis is divided into these two overarching categories, with each breaking down further into two themes. The category of “Motivations to creative work” includes the themes “Developing new personal competencies and skills” and “Creating new things, practices and processes”. The category of “Constraints on creative work” includes the themes “Project management and organising of the team” and “Communication and information management”. The following describes our analyses of these themes in closer detail.
Motivations to Creative Work

Developing new personal competencies and skills is a hugely important factor in the work of journalism professionals in the media organisation studied. Given the changing knowledge and skills requirements in converging media work, it is increasingly important to improve constantly one’s skills and competencies. Many journalists participating in the study felt that developing their personal skills and keeping an open mind towards change in media work is crucial.

The development project provided such an opportunity for personal development through learning as well as knowledge and skill improvement. Since the development project was focused on digital publishing platforms, the media professionals were especially interested in improving their knowledge of digital technology and digital publishing skills: “I have felt particularly inspired by the chance to improve my technology skills.” Technology skills and an understanding of technology were considered particularly important because traditionally the main focus in journalistic work has been on content production rather than on the development of distribution channels, for instance.

New challenges were welcomed as motivating: “My job description is a completely new one and I’m excited because I have to learn and assimilate new things.” Journalists were motivated by wider job descriptions, which translated into more diverse and more interesting tasks. The development of new skills also involved instrumental objectives. Journalists thought it important for them to develop new skills and expertise to improve their future job prospects. The knowledge and skills picked up in the development project about digital media were considered to be an opportunity to open up completely new avenues professionally: “I’ve been given the chance to be involved in pioneering work and get the kind of experience that will be useful for future job opportunities.”

It was considered crucial that professionals in the team contribute their views to the entire process of developing media products and services. This also applied to such areas as commercialisation and technology, which are not part of the traditional journalistic job description:

It would be a luxury indeed to exempt oneself from all else and to stick to the role of content producer, but the reality is that you must be alert and awake, ask questions and to express your own views on these issues, too.

Likewise, the skills of interaction needed in teamwork were found important because creative work is increasingly based on collaboration and doing things together.

Creating new things, practices and processes inspired and motivated the journalists. This was considered an integral and important part of media work. It was not just about improving one’s personal professional skills, but also about developing the organisation’s practices and processes: “The changes that are sweeping across the media industry make you think that we could go about content production in a completely different way than we’re used to.”

Journalism professionals were particularly keen to improve and develop their own work, for instance by innovating new ways of content production: “I personally can see opportunities here to learn new ways of working.” This is typical of the media industry in general. In our case, the media professionals were particularly interested in how to move forward and to develop: “This is an opportunity to work together to influence the content of our jobs and the future of the industry.”
Collaboration in ideation and production with other media professionals was understood as an important part of meaningful work. The opportunity of mutual learning and support among colleagues working in the same area was considered inspiring. It was felt that it can lead to better results: “You get a better end quality because there are many experts in the unit and no one has to work alone any more.” Having the support of other professionals, both in generating new ideas and in actual content production, was regarded crucial to success on the job.

One of the changes in the field of journalism has been the growing importance of cooperation and teamwork. Editorial team members in our study felt that for the purposes of their creativity, it is important that they have “face-to-face” meetings, “inspirational” and “fun” gatherings as well as “informal” and “relaxed” social events. Team meetings around idea generation and getting to know one another created a positive atmosphere and a sense of team engagement: “Working together to generate new ideas has been really inspiring and rewarding.”

The digitisation of consumer media use and the publication of media contents via multiple channels were underscoring the need to develop new practices. However, it was emphasised that the magazine business has deeply rooted practices that are highly resistant to change:

We’ve found this together that it’s not unproblematic to make the change in thinking from print to digital simply by putting out a digital version of the print magazine, but by creating a genuinely new digital publication that makes innovative and cost effective use of the new publishing platform.

For the purposes of developing digital multichannel content, it was considered useful to look at what other branches of the media industries have been doing: “We must build new ways of working and look at what we can learn from film production, for instance.” Developing processes of content production and new ways of working were also considered to pave the way to more systematic, efficient and synergic ways of working as the project team and the company as a whole seek to identify best practices.

Constraints on Creative Work

Project management and organising of the team were considered important factors from the point of view of creative work. In the early stages of the project the idea was that project members would be involved in the development team alongside their other duties. Since the team was comprised of professionals from different units and the project started up with a tight schedule, many team members continued to work in their previous jobs while contributing to the development team simultaneously.

Organising work and reconciling earlier and existing jobs with the development project proved to be a major challenge. This duality and the resulting time pressures made it difficult for the team members to concentrate on the work of the development team and on developing novel ideas: “There’s so much time pressure in other jobs that it’s really been hard to find enough time for the project. You have to prioritise. The biggest obstacle to orienting to new ideas is the time pressure here and now.” Working simultaneously on different jobs made it harder for people to concentrate on creative work and adversely affected their prospects of success. It was stated increasingly frequently that
media professionals’ jobs are fragmented: “Our working days are almost always fragmented. It’s not exceptional but normal routine.”

Many team members prioritised their existing production roles over the work of the development team: “Our people are constantly on the move and it’s very difficult to find a moment when we’re all here together.” Shared, collective generation of ideas and planning together required that enough time would have been made available:

This does not mean that I’m not interested in developing for the future, but my main job has kept me busy and often I haven’t been able to get to these meetings because of overlapping commitments or because they’ve been cancelled.

In practice this meant that at the project planning stage, a significant proportion of the team’s creative and innovative resources remained untapped, even though the members were nominally part of the development team. For example, the team’s brainstorming sessions did not appear as successful as planned, because only very few team members were able to attend.

As the development team’s plans were still in the making when the project started up, things got generally off to a slow start, and team members reported a sense of uncertainty and anxiety: “Perhaps we might have been a bit more prepared before we started.” Some team members were eager to get started, but did not feel they were sufficiently involved by the team management: “I’ve been pretty much kept in the dark about the preparation of this project and strategy work, it would be nice to be more actively involved.” On the other hand, some team members felt that despite the sense of uncertainty, it was better that they were involved from the outset: “It’s good to have had the chance to be involved in the project from the start, albeit in a rather marginal role.”

A project organisation that was undeveloped impeded creative work and the setting of targets in many ways. For instance, vague job descriptions hampered the practical organisation of development work and undermined team members’ motivation: “I hope we can gain at least some clarity about my role in all of this.” Clear roles and job descriptions as well as the team management communicating them explicitly to the team members were paramount to creative work, because lack of clarity created frustration that hindered creative endeavours.

From the point of view of journalists’ job satisfaction and well-being in the workplace, it was important that they felt they had control over their jobs and that they could devote their working time to the main duties. Journalism professionals have traditionally had a lot of freedom to decide how to perform their jobs. Since the project worked to a very tight schedule and its team members had other simultaneous responsibilities, team members expressed concerns that this might lead to overwork and burnout, having negative effects on the success of the whole project.

Communication and information management were significant factors in the team’s creative processes, both from the point of view of personal motivation and the ability of the team to collaborate effectively. The lack of clarity about the project’s direction and objectives were considered a communication problem: “Communication should have been given more thought at the start-up phase, to make sure that editorial staff are kept up-to-date. As it is I think many people have felt they just don’t know what’s going to happen.” The lack of information caused a sense of uncertainty and negative emotions among many team members. “I’ve received no information at all about how the project has progressed. I’m beginning to think that I’m not involved anymore.”
Uncertainty about the project’s progress made it harder for the team members to work in their expected roles. Due to the uncertainties, their commitment was compromised and their motivation started to waver: “There’s not enough information, and I don’t feel I’m really involved. My position is uncertain and changing. My professional self-esteem is wavering. Can I hang on and be part of this?”

Progress was one of the most critical factors in creative project work. In the early stages of the development project it was difficult for the team members to plan ahead because the project plans were vague. When the team members had difficulty following and anticipating where the project is heading, this uncertainty detracted their motivation. Clearly communicated goals and the attainment of those goals were important to individual motivation: “From the start we should have drawn up clear goals together and monitored progress and analysed outcomes.”

Given this ambiguity about the project’s plans and ways forward, the team members lacked a sense of commitment to the project and to pushing ahead. They did not have enough information about what would change and in which direction. There were also concerns that things were changing too slowly, or not changing at all. When expectations failed to materialise, creative workers’ commitment to the project and to creative work were bound to suffer: “Creativity is hampered by general uncertainty about progress in the project.”

The team members’ work was also obstructed by slow and indecisive decision-making. When the assumptions of project objectives and timetables kept shifting and changing, it was very difficult for the team members to commit themselves: “I’ll remain focused on my previous jobs until such time as we get some firm decisions made and I’m given a clear set of tasks.”

Discussion

Media convergence and digitisation have profoundly affected journalism and the management of media work (e.g. Deuze 2007). Consequently, media organisations are operating under continuous transformation and media professionals are in constantly changing work environments. In this article, with a case study on a development team in a media organisation, we have studied what organisational conditions facilitate and constrain the creativity of professional journalists. Based on the findings of our empirical analysis, we continue by discussing how creativity can be supported and managed in change. The results of the study are also discussed in relation to Amabile’s (1996, 1998; Amabile and Kramer 2011) frameworks of creativity. On the general level, our findings support Amabile’s theories, especially about the meaning of industry knowledge and expertise, inner motivation and progression of creative work.

Media professionals have traditionally needed a good knowledge of the media industries as well as knowledge and skills about journalistic work and content production. For example, Picard (2005, 67) has suggested that in order to act as a successful media manager, the person should possess extensive knowledge and experience regarding media and the media industry. Knowledge and experience of the industry are also central requirements for the development of new and useful practices in a media organisation. Further, collaboration with team members and other units in the company requires strong understanding about the various fields and functions of the industry.

The management of creative media work and journalistic practices requires not only the skills and competencies typically and traditionally associated with the media industries.
The media industry has previously placed a high premium on the skills needed in content creation and production, i.e. industry-specific expertise, but media companies must also pay increasing attention to organisational skills and professional people management (e.g. Küng 2011, 53). Our findings suggest that an increasingly diverse range of management competence is necessary in media organisations, especially in relation to managing change, projects and communication.

Journalistic work and media work today are increasingly characterised by constant change. Only very few professionals are in a position where they can concentrate on one single job and on performing that job. Thus, journalists have also had to come to terms with an increasing sense of uncertainty caused by the changing conditions of their work. Given this reality, managing change is becoming an integral part of project management and organising in the media industry (see also Townley, Beech, and McKinlay 2009, 940–941). Based on our empirical analysis, tolerating and managing change and uncertainty is a fundamental skill requirement in journalism and media work.

One of the key roles of media managers (both editorial managers and other executives in media organisations) in the conditions of continuous change is to reduce uncertainty. This implies good project management, clear objectives and consistent plans. Another key aspect of managing creative media work is appreciating the importance of ongoing and inclusive communication. As well as keeping team members informed about goals, objectives and strategies, team leaders must importantly keep them up-to-date on progress. Communication and interaction skills are crucial in media organisations, because creative work is increasingly based on collaboration and doing things together.

According to Amabile and Kramer’s (2011) progress principle, staff are more motivated and more productive when they feel they are making headway in their job. When a project makes good progress, it creates commitment among team members. This is an important factor in regard to creative thinking and creative activity: that people feel they are making progress in work that is meaningful to them personally. As our study suggests, the progress principle is crucial for management also in the media industry: creative media work benefits from conditions where individuals feel they are making progress in their jobs and closing on the targets set, no matter how gradually. Professional and skilful project management as well as sufficient and timely communication are required for building and maintaining organisational conditions that facilitate the sense of progression in creative teamwork.

Creating new ideas and innovating new things is motivating to journalists and important to media companies. At the same time, however, fragmentation and time pressure continue to increase in the media industry, constraining opportunities to collaborate in generating new ideas. The sense of urgency may momentarily support creativity, but putting too much time pressure on creative workers seldom produces positive results (see also Amabile, Hadley, and Kramer 2002). It is crucial that in the situations of change, management provides the necessary conditions for creativity that facilitate, even demand, interaction and allow for enough time to generate and discuss new ideas together.

A key factor in creative media work and its management is creative workers’ inner motivation. People work creatively if they are motivated by their job, i.e. by the work itself, not because of external incentives or pressures. Improving one’s professional skills and competencies as well as collectively developing new ideas and practices are examples of this kind of meaningful work. Media managers should focus on creating work
environments, conditions and processes that support the media professionals’ inner motivation in concrete terms, especially regarding the growth of individual competence and the inspiration of team collaboration.

Conclusion

In this article, we have used empirical research to open up perspectives on developing the management of creative media work in a media organisation under change. Our study suggests that developing new competencies and skills as well as creating new practices and processes are the key motivating factors for the creative work of journalism professionals. We also argue that problems with project management, organising and communication are central constraints of creative media work. Consequently, we propose that management of a creative media organisation under changing circumstances requires, above all, competence in project management and communication management. These factors of managing creativity and change are closely associated with the transformation sweeping the media industry. It is reasonable to assume that these factors will become increasingly prominent and pervasive in the media industry more generally, where journalism and media work are becoming ever more target-minded and organised in the framework of projects. Since the media industry and media companies are changing rapidly, further research and new understanding is needed about the management of change and development in media organisations and journalistic work.

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Paper 2
Ambidextrous Tensions: Dynamics of Creative Work in the Media Innovation Process

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Ambidextrous Tensions: Dynamics of Creative Work in the Media Innovation Process

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes creative work in one of Europe’s largest media organizations, in which a newly formed development team was tasked with creating a new multi-platform media product. The objective of this article is to explore the dynamics of team creativity in the process of developing and managing media content innovation. To do this, this study utilizes the concept of ambidexterity for understanding multi-level tensions between ongoing media production work and innovation processes that typically co-exist in media operations. The results of analysis indicate that due to pressures created by routine media production, media innovations require specific focus and prioritization to succeed. This requires recognizing, balancing and managing the ambidextrous tensions between exploration and exploitation in creative media work. In addition to practical implications for the management of media innovations, this study contributes to research on media innovations, particularly from the perspectives of creative work and organizational creativity.
Ambidextrous tensions: Dynamics of creative work in the media innovation process

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Keywords
ambidexterity, creativity, media innovation, media management, media work, tensions

INTRODUCTION

In the current conversion to a digital operating environment, media organizations struggle with the need to create and innovate new content, products and services as well as new organizational practices. However, research on creative work that focuses on media content innovation has been scarce; similarly, there are few case studies regarding creative work practices, including in media management research and media studies (e.g., Banks, Calvey, Owen & Russell, 2002; Berglez, 2011; Deuze, 2007; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Küng, 2008a; Malmelin & Virta, 2016; Mierzejewska, 2011; Mierzejewska & Hollifield, 2006, Nylund, 2013). There is both a theoretical and a practical need for research into creative industry organizations.
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For instance, a deeper theoretical understanding is necessary for the management and governance of the creative production process (Davis & Scase, 2000; Townley & Beech, 2010; Townley, Beech & McKinlay, 2009). Further, empirical research on the internal dynamics and interactions in media organizations and teams is needed (Küng, 2008b; Mierzejewska, 2011). These are significant themes for understanding the meaning of creativity and innovativeness in media production and in media organization operations. There is a strategic need for organizational development, specifically among traditional media companies or “legacy media,” which is mainly due to the digital transformation of the industry.

The purpose of this article is to empirically explore the creative work of media professionals in the development process of a new media product. Our objective is to create understanding of the dynamics of team creativity in the process of developing and managing media content innovation. This study contributes to the evolving research on media innovations, particularly from the perspectives of creative teams and organizations as well as their management in the changing media industry. The theoretical basis of this article draws on research into both organizational creativity (as the prerequisite for innovation) and media innovation (as the outcome of the creative process).

This study focuses on a creative team working on media product innovation in an ambidextrous operational setting. In this setting, the creative media work requires concurrent completion of both routinized production tasks and new assignments to generate innovation. Our aim is to identify ambidextrous tensions between simultaneous exploitation and exploration in an individual team member and the development team as well as at organizational levels. Based on the findings of the empirical study, we suggest that balancing the ambidextrous tensions of media work is crucial for media organizations. This perspective is highly relevant for media companies and media management aimed at supporting organizational creativity for innovation (Deuze & Steward, 2011; see also e.g., Mumford, Hester & Robledo, 2012; Styhre & Sundgren, 2005).

The article is structured as follows. First, we discuss our theoretical framework and the key concepts of media innovation, team creativity and organizational ambidexterity. Second, we describe the research context, empirical material and our methodological approach. Next, we turn to our case study focusing on ambidextrous tensions in the creative work of the media organization’s development team. This is followed by a concluding discussion of the findings within the theoretical landscape of this study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: MEDIA INNOVATION, ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY AND AMBIDEXTERY

The innovation scene in the media industry has specific features that emphasize the distinctiveness of media innovations. The research on media innovations has stressed the importance of defining the main characteristics of media innovations, including distinguishing the concept of media innovation from the traditional definitions of innovation and innovations related to other fields and industries (Bleyen, Lindmark, Ranaivoson & Ballon, 2014; Bruns, 2014; Dogruel, 2013; Dogruel, 2014; Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013). Innovation endeavors in the media are also typically organized differently from many other industries, and the absence of separate research and development departments or units is characteristic (Küng, 2013). Thus, innovations in media content are often pursued simultaneously while working on everyday production. This rela-
tionship between ongoing operations and innovation inevitably creates tension (Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010a) and requires the versatile creative capabilities of journalists and editorial teams.

In this article, we focus on creative work in media innovation processes. Although the concepts of innovation and creativity are occasionally interchangeably used in the context of the media industry, these concepts are grounded in separate schools of thought (e.g., Küng, 2008b). Innovation fundamentally concerns change (Christensen, 1997; Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010b), and it is classically defined as the introduction of something new or a novel combination of existing ideas, knowledge, competences or resources that has economic value (Schumpeter, 1934; Schumpeter, 1943). Creativity refers to the creation of something novel and unique, commonly used to describe new ideas (e.g., Amabile, 1996; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). The concept of creativity has traditionally highlighted the imagination and inner motives of individuals involved in the creative process (Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Styhre & Sundgren, 2005).

We understand creativity as emphasizing novel thinking as well as idea development, whereas innovation focuses on transforming the results of creativity into the form of concepts, processes or products (Bilton, 2007; Küng, 2008b). It is critical to understand the impact of the connection that these two phenomena have on the performance of media organizations (Küng, 2008b). Media organizations traditionally survived through content creation and production and typically needed a constant supply of creative ideas for new content innovation (Küng, 2007; see also Caves, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). The continuous need for novelty is also one of the main characteristics of media content innovation (Dogruel, 2014). Media content and product innovation include elements of novelty (or change) and usefulness (e.g., having commercial or social utility or added value) that embody the results of creative work.

In this article, our objective is studying media innovations from the perspective of creative work in media organizations and teams. Organizational creativity refers to “the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system” (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993, p. 293). The organizational approach to creativity is particularly useful in analyzing work on media innovations because it emphasizes factors (e.g., processes, work environments or management practices) that facilitate creative work in organizations, groups and teams striving for innovative results.

To explore the dynamics and interplay of organizational creativity and innovation in a case of simultaneous routine media content production and new product development, we utilize the concept and theories of ambidexterity. Ambidextrous organizations are able to combine exploitation – i.e., efficiency in operations and successful competition in current mature markets – and exploration, which means developing new products and services as well as flexibly responding to environmental changes (Lavie, Stettner & Tushman, 2010; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Raisch, Birkinshaw, 2008; Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst & Tushman, 2009; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). Specifically, we draw on the research on contextual ambidexterity as “the capacity to simultaneously achieve alignment and adaptability at a business-unit level” (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004, p. 209; see also Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004). These dimensions of ambidexterity define the organizational settings of our empirical study, in which the members of the development team are simultaneously responsible for innovating and developing new media products.
Achieving ambidexterity in any organization is laborious (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2004). Pursuing simultaneous exploration and exploitation characteristically entails and creates various tensions that are challenging to management (Andriopoulos, 2003; Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009, Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010). Managing and balancing the contradictions in organizational units that are tasked with both exploration and exploitation is vital at the individual, group and organizational levels; however, it is an arduous and often contradictory endeavour (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Lavie et al., 2010; see also Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). The nature of the activities of exploration and exploitation is fundamentally different. Exploration aims at flexible adaptation to the demands of the changing surroundings, whereas exploitation focuses on the alignment of the present operations. The simultaneous need to optimize and innovate creates several types of tensions in the everyday practices of media companies (Küng, 2007). Media organizations need a constant flow of creativity for innovative content and products. At the same time, they are faced with diminishing resources and requirements for restructuring, streamlining, and increasing the efficiency of their operations. Creative work for media innovations clashes with the constraints of everyday production. The development of new media products competes with the same resources that are needed for the current operations. Paradoxically, the main obstacles in achieving innovation often stem from the established practices and routinized work patterns of media organizations (Ess, 2014).

Although there is a branch of research on ambidexterity in innovation studies, studies utilizing the concept of ambidexterity in the context of research on media innovations and media management are scarce (see Järvente-Theseff, Moisander & Villi, 2014). Our objective is to approach this gap by examining the following research question: What are the central tensions of the media innovation process in an ambidextrous organizational context that should be considered in media management? We base our analysis on the development team members’ personal diary responses, in which they describe their work on media production and innovation and the complexities of balancing the two. In light of the theoretical background discussed above, this question is particularly relevant in relation to the specifics of media innovation interconnection to everyday media production. To begin, we describe the empirical context and material of the research as well as our approach to the analysis of the material. We then present the empirical findings based on the analysis. To conclude, we discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical background and suggest ideas for future research.

RESEARCH CONTEXT, EMPIRICAL MATERIAL AND METHODS

This article presents a case study on the creative work of a development project team in a media organization. A case study approach (Stake, 1995) utilizes a real-life case to explore and understand a phenomenon as a research object by focusing on observations. Our exploration of the dynamics and ambidextrous tensions of creative media work benefits from a qualitative analysis on the empiri-
The empirical analysis focused on a Nordic media organization that is part of a major international media corporation and specializes in magazine journalism and publishing. In the organization, a new editorial team was established to create, produce and launch a new multi-platform media product and service, i.e., media innovation. The media sector in question, magazine publishing, is a compelling environment for the analysis because of its rapid transition from traditional products and methods of working to produce a multi-platform service utilizing digital technologies.

The team under study was facing the challenge of creating new methods of working to produce innovation in a new organizational setting, in which they attempt to balance the requirements of routine production and media innovation. The team members were specifically selected from among the existing company employees to work on developing and launching a new multi-platform media product around a specific theme. Certain types of content expertise related to the new product were emphasized. These employees were invited to express their interest in working for the new development project. They were evaluated for suitability for the project, and the team was created accordingly. This was a novel organizational approach in the company. Previously, these media professionals had worked in traditional editorial units in the company’s various magazines. At the beginning of the development project, the team members continued to work on their previous editorial tasks in addition to the media innovation development project with the development team.

The respondents in the study included all members of the newly established editorial team, comprising 10 media professionals. The team’s job titles covered the major positions in magazine publishing: editor-in-chief, managing editor, copy editor, journalist, producer, art director and graphic designer. The mean age of the respondents was 43, and their professional experience in the media business averaged 16 years. All of the respondents had studied in higher education programs.

In our qualitative research, we used the diary method and the critical incident technique to collect the empirical research material. The diary method is particularly useful in capturing real-time, detailed experiences of organizational daily life and the respondents’ reflections on these incidents. Over a specific time frame, the diary study participants produce their personal views and thoughts on the research subject individually and without the presence of the researcher. Diaries allow the researchers to access the personal views of the respondents in their own words, e.g., concerning their work in the context of organizations. (Balogun, Huff & Johnson, 2003; Bolger, Davis & Rafaelli, 2003; Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen & Zapf, 2010; see also Amabile & Kramer, 2011). In addition to the diary method, we used the critical incident technique in our research design. The critical incident technique is an empirical method that is effective in exploring organizational life (Flanagan, 1954; see also Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Malio, 2005). The collected research material reflects the specific critical incidents in relation to media production and innovation that the respondents found particularly significant in the context of their daily work and tasks.

The empirical material was collected in two phases: at the beginning of the content development project (seven weeks in late 2013) and at the beginning of the new editorial team’s actual assignment (six weeks in early 2014). The respondents were asked to focus on the most significant...
incidents of the week in the development project by writing personal and subjective weekly diary entries. Open-ended questions used to guide the diary writing were sent to the respondents by email once a week during both research periods. The questions were standard and repeated, asking that the respondents describe one event that had facilitated creative work and one event that had constrained creative work during the week in question. The respondents were also encouraged to freely describe any other incident they found significant from the past week. In addition to the questions, the emails contained instructions for answering.

In the first research phase, the material included 52 responses containing 186 diary entries (response rate: 74%); the second phase included 34 responses and 93 diary entries (response rate: 57%). In total, the entire period of empirical material collection produced 86 responses and 279 diary entries (total response rate: 66%). The response rate is considered satisfactory, particularly considering illness and other absences by certain respondents during the research period. Strict confidentiality was guaranteed to the respondents by promising that no one outside the research team would have access to the diary responses. The responses were sent solely to the research team leader, who anonymized them prior to the analysis.

The research team met the members of the editorial team before the start of the first research period to present the research objectives, methods and practices and to answer the participants’ questions. Additionally, between the research periods, i.e., before the start of the second phase, the first author met the editorial team to discuss the initial findings of the research and to motivate and instruct the respondents for the second research period. Participation in the research was voluntary but was recommended by the researchers and the managers of the team.

Our objective was to explore and generate understanding of the dynamics of team creativity in the course of media content innovation, focusing particularly on the ambidextrous tensions between routine production and a development project. Based on this goal, we started the qualitative analysis of the empirical research material by reading the diary responses several times, making extensive notes and memos. Thereafter, we discussed the initial observations and findings of the two researchers for comparison. In the second phase of the analysis, an emergent coding system was developed based on the empirical material, resulting in 20 initial categories. Thereafter, the first author coded the empirical material according to the categories to capture significant incidents in relation to the team’s creative work. On the basis of this initial analysis and the respective discussions among the research team, a further emergent perspective was derived and added to the analysis. Accordingly, team creativity was itemized on three levels: the individual team members, the development team and the organization. In the third phase of the analysis, the research team further elaborated the coding results. Redundant categories were deleted, and the remaining categories were combined to form consistent entities, particularly focusing on the ambidextrous tensions. The final analysis phase included crosschecking the results among the research team and recording the findings according to the most prominent themes resulting from the categorization of the empirical material. The results are presented in the following section.
FINDINGS: AMBIDEXTROUS TENSIONS IN THE MEDIA INNOVATION PROCESS

In the following section, we present our findings by illustrating the tensions that the development team encountered in attempting to find a balance between the continuous production tasks and assignment to innovate. We structure the findings according to the levels of the individual team members, the development team and the organization. On each level, two main tensions were identified, as depicted in Table 1.

**Individual level**
At the individual team member level, two main ambidextrous tensions were identified: first, *enthusiasm for development/discipline in production* and second, *current duties/new responsibilities*. The first tension between development and production specifically concerned the allocation of individual resources between the routine production and the development project. The second tension, between current duties and new responsibilities, focused on how the team members experienced the change and contradictions in their existing and new roles.

The team members were specifically selected for the development team, and they felt eager to participate in the creative work of the development project. Experiencing involvement in the development work supported and maintained the enthusiasm and commitment of the team members. However, with the obligation to simultaneously work in the development team and continue with the ongoing production of the existing magazines, the allocation of individual resources and time became problematic and created tension. As one team member described, “This does not mean that I would not willingly work for future development, but my basic duties have kept me busy, and I have not been able to attend many meetings because of overlapping schedules or because the meetings have been cancelled” (Respondent 5; the respondents are labelled 1-10). The routine production pressures often outweighed the opportunities for creative work in the development team. This led to feelings of disappointment: “The complication of advancing the development project depends on

| Table 1. |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| **Ambidextrous tensions in the media innovation process** |
| **Individual level** | Enthusiasm for development vs. Discipline in production |
| | Current duties vs. New responsibilities |
| **Team level** | Expected results vs. Resource allocation |
| | Project planning vs. Project execution |
| **Organizational level** | Short-term sales vs. Long-term success |
| | Existing structures vs. Innovation initiatives |
my other projects. I am firmly tied to other duties until decisions are made concerning the development project and until I am assigned clear tasks. I do not have the opportunity now to participate in development and exploration” (Respondent 9).

The team members felt a greater sense of responsibility toward their existing duties than to the development project. The team members wanted to be involved, informed and consulted in relation to the development work but did not always put the necessary effort into participating in the new team's activities. In addition to the time pressures, the team members did not prioritize the development project tasks, and this added to the tensions between development and production: “The others had to prioritize their tasks differently. They cannot clear their calendars on short notice. They do not feel that it is a priority either, even if they were in the office” (Respondent 2).

The second individual-level tension comprised current and new work roles. Changes were essential in relation to the development project responsibilities; however, at the same time, the team members concentrated mainly on their current duties, as described by one, “...I haven’t experienced any differences yet. I’m working on two magazines, just as before” (Respondent 5). Clarity on the new responsibilities was lacking, and extensive tension was detrimental to the advancement of the development project. One respondent explained, “The fragmentation of work and transition from the old to new duties is awkward and is creating pressure at the moment. I get surprisingly restless when my thoughts bounce around. I hope that the division of duties will become clearer later” (Respondent 3). The imbalance between the expected transition to the new responsibilities and the lack of clarity of these expectations hindered the development project’s progress, thus obstructing innovation.

A successful shift from current production to new innovation work was a crucial element for the success of the development project. However, the shift was complicated and laborious. A team member stated, “I do not always understand how stuck we are in old habits. We produce tablet magazines with our ‘print hats’ on when we could do something totally different and thrilling” (Respondent 2). Individual effort and willingness was required to move outside the traditional areas of journalistic work. This was described as follows: “As content producers, we cannot give up and withdraw from discussions about business, and especially not in relation to technological platforms and solutions” (Respondent 2).

Development team level
At the team level, creative work encountered ambidextrous tensions in relation to expected results/resource allocation and project planning/project execution. The tension between result expectations and resource allocation originated from the discrepancies felt between the objectives set for the development project by the company and the actual resources available for the work. The second tension between project planning and execution stemmed from experiences indicating that creative ideation was not leading to concrete decisions and deliverable results in the development project.

The upper management of the company defined the development project objectives and resources according to the company’s strategy. The development team leaders were responsible for balancing the expectations with the resources available for the project. The goals established were ambitious, and the development team was aware of this: “If this flops, this is not a small or even a medium-sized problem. A lot of money is involved, and the expectations for revenue are high” (Respondent 2). Thus, the imbalance experienced between the expected result and the resource allocation created tension and anxiety within the development team: “I feel irritated that numerous inspiring things,
digital and print, are planned in this company, but if someone asks who is going to do all this work, the one asking the question is considered a difficult, change-resistant person” (Respondent 7). The different perspectives and priorities concerning development project resources and organizational level objectives collided at the project level, creating energy-consuming ambidextrous tensions. The coordination of the development work was tied to the schedules of other ongoing productions, which complicated the planning of the development team’s work.

The target schedule for the launch of the new multi-platform media product was considered to be extremely tight by the development team. The complexity lies not only in combining the development work with the existing production schedules but also in developing the project team organization and resolving its resource and coordination issues. Thorough consideration to balance the expectations of and resources for the development team’s work was important: “After the planning stage, it would be useful to map out all the tasks expected of the team and be realistic about resources and expectations” (Respondent 5). Many team members felt that they were not sufficiently involved in planning and design of the work they were expected to do. It was also excessively easy for them to use the requirements of the familiar, ongoing production work as an excuse to avoid the tensions in relation to the development project.

The second team-level tension between planning and execution concerned the development project itself. Many team members were bound to the ongoing production tasks as discussed above, and the development team management spent a significant quantity of time and effort addressing resource questions at the company level. This led to the development team doubting the possibility of the project’s success. One respondent summarized the situation as follows: “Rushing and the shortage of personnel constantly hamper future success. The budget for the web portion of the project is scarce. The biggest worry now is who has time to take care of everything. The workload is enormous” (Respondent 6). The procedures for supporting the development work in addition to the routine production appeared to be deficient, as described by a team member: “The starting point of the project, that the concept will be clarified when doing it, is quite laborious” (Respondent 7). Conversely, the team members also had moderately unrealistic expectations regarding the speed at which the various questions and open issues could be addressed and settled by the development team.

A certain quantity of slack as well as “trial and error” is typical and necessary for creative work striving for innovation. However, an extensive lack of clarity shifts the focus away from the actual development work, as illustrated by a respondent: “We come across these kind of unclear and imperfectly prepared issues. This is why we do a lot of redundant work. There is a frustrating number of open issues” (Respondent 8). If ideas and plans do not lead to decisions and, particularly, to action, the ambidextrous tensions between planning and execution are notable, “The meeting was energizing; our team is good at creating ideas. However, the weakness of the editorial unit was noticeable in the meeting. We talk a lot and throw out ideas but cannot really make decisions” (Respondent 7). Ideation without concrete deliverables can easily turn against itself. This was particularly characteristic of the ambidextrous situation that demanded that team members balance their work between the development project and the existing production.

Organizational level
The third level of analysis concentrated on the organizational level. The two main tensions discovered here were short-term sales/long-term success and
existing structures/innovation initiatives. The former focused on the ambidextrous tensions between a rapid market launch of the new media product to generate income and having sufficient resources to develop the product so as to be sufficiently finalized before the launch. The latter tension between existing organizational structures and the innovation initiative, the development project, became evident in the efforts to balance the needs of the development project with the existing realities of various units and functions in the company.

A typical ambidextrous tension can be identified between efficient short-term exploitation and innovative long-term exploration. This finding was also significant in our case analysis. The pressure for launching the new media product as soon as possible was high, particularly for beginning sales: “In some meetings, there has been a slight tension in the air. This is due to the very tight schedule. For example, media and consumer sales expect to have the information regarding what they can and cannot sell. They press us about this for good reason; however, it is not in any way realistic for us to have a finalized concept within the time available” (Respondent 2). Another respondent stated the following: “Selling the new service to customers and potential partners is difficult at this stage, as the service has not yet been launched and we do not have a clear vision of the user quantities” (Respondent 1). However, it was not only the requirements from the sales perspective for the development project that created tension but also vice versa. The new multi-platform service differed significantly from the traditional products offered by the company, and the mismatch between current skills and new demands for the sales organization was described as follows, “It also became evident that the sales organization is not in shape to sell a digital product” (Respondent 1). The development team considered the traditional demographic principles for magazine sales unsuitable for the selling of the new digital service.

The divergence between short-term sales and long-term success is easily ignored in the everyday work of media organizations, and this also occurred in the media organization studied. A respondent described the tension between the internally competing business units of the company as follows: “Everyone has fierce growth targets and feels pressure to attract users and have a profitable business. Yes, we want cooperation. We keep repeating that, and we agree that it is the only way and is mutually beneficial. However, this is as far as we get because we do not make the decisions” (Respondent 2). In situations such as this, the potential synergies between organizational units vanish in the ambidextrous tensions between short- and long-term goals, and possibilities for future success may be lost.

The final ambidextrous tension of our analysis was observed between existing structures and the innovation initiative of the media company. Every production unit in the company did not consider the formation of the new development team to be a welcome solution. One respondent wrote, “In a magazine editorial unit, the news about our development team is not necessarily positive” (Respondent 1). This led to conflicting expectations being put on the team members simultaneously working on the development team and the ongoing production. The tension limited creative cooperation because ongoing production and the development project were considered to be competing or rival operations, not adjacent endeavours with distinctive characteristics that would both benefit the company overall.

The tensions between existing structures and the innovation initiative existed not only in relation to other editorial units but also between the development team and the support functions of the company. This tension was particularly re-
lated to problems with technology. The corporate functions responsible for providing technological services could not sufficiently meet the requests of the development team because the units were mainly trained to meet the demands of traditional print production. One respondent stated, “Every single week, I get irritated by the technical systems that are light-years apart from our needs. The aims of the project or the new ways of working are stuck” (Respondent 2). The frustrating tensions caused by technological incompatibilities severely restricted the creative work on media innovation, particularly because the complexities remained unsolved for a long time.

Above, we have discussed the ambidextrous tensions in the creative work of the development team in our case at the level of individual team members, the development team and the organization. The findings are based on the empirical analysis of team creativity in the media innovation process. Parallel to the tensions, the development team members had various means of coping with the pressures between production and innovation. These included a positive and constructive attitude regarding the development project, recognition and acceptance of the inevitable insecurities involved in development, an effort to commit to participate in team meetings and gatherings, as well as an eagerness to learn new skills, particularly in relation to digital technology. Loosely structured, inspirational encounters with other team members or managers were particularly useful for fostering creativity. This type of situation characterized by collaboration supported individual and team creativity, thus enhancing the exploration for innovation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article, our objective was to explore the dynamics of creative work based on an empirical case of media innovation. In particular, we focused on the ambidextrous tensions of creative work in the media innovation process and analyzed the tensions experienced by individual team members, and at the development team and organizational levels. Our case offered unique access to an ambidextrous media innovation process that occurred parallel to ongoing production with shared personnel resources, but simultaneously operated as a distinctive development project aimed at creating a new multi-platform media product.

As the previous research suggests, media innovations are primarily pursued in close connection with routine media production (Küng, 2013). Thus, it is crucial to identify and evaluate the dynamics of exploration and exploitation in creative media work that strives to develop media innovations. We argue that it is essential to balance the efforts of exploration and exploitation at the individual, team and organizational levels to achieve contextual ambidexterity in media organizations. The ability to innovate is related to the goals and practices of creative team work in media organizations (Ess, 2014; van der Wurff & Leenders, 2008). Thus, it is central for media organizations to be capable of productively managing the practices and processes of developing creative ideas into innovations (Dal Zotto & van Kranenburg, 2008) in ambidextrous organizational settings. The role of management in providing supportive conditions for this and balancing the ambidextrous tensions is of vital importance (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Lavie et al., 2010; Rosing, Frese & Bausch, 2011; Rosing, Rosenbusch & Frese, 2010; Zacher & Rosing, 2015).

As Govindarajan & Trimble (2010a) have stated, tensions between innovation initiatives and ongoing operations are unavoidable in most organizational settings. Tensions were also an inevitable consequence of the ambidextrous situation that combined exploration with exploitation in the media organization discussed in this article. On the basis of our analysis, we suggest that the pressures...
of routine production have a tendency toward defeating innovation efforts in an ambidextrous situation in media organizations unless they are accorded special focus by management at all levels. Managing ambidexterity, particularly the ambidextrous tensions analyzed above, is a fundamental requirement for media management to secure the innovation potential in media organizations.

As we have argued, ambidextrous tensions characterized the dynamics between the ongoing production work (understood as exploitation) and creative content development for innovations (understood as exploration) in the media organization studied. These tensions were evident at three levels: (I) the individual team members, (II) the development team and (III) the organization. Two main ambidextrous tensions were identified at each of the three levels as follows: (I) the individual team member level – (1) enthusiasm for development vs. discipline in production and (2) current duties vs. new responsibilities; (II) development team level – (3) expected results vs. resource allocation and (4) project planning vs. project execution; and (III) organizational level – (5) short-term sales vs. long-term success and (6) existing structures vs. innovation initiatives.

In accordance with these results, there is a need for balancing the ambidextrous tensions in media innovation. Thus, our study suggests several practical implications for media management. In balancing the ambidexterity between ongoing routine production and work towards media innovation, the team leaders are confronted with the multi-level tensions explored and discussed in this article. In planning for media innovation, it is vital for media management to anticipate the various ambidextrous tensions at different levels and consciously focus on balancing them before and during the innovation process. In accordance with the previous research on ambidexterity, the ambidextrous tensions in media organizations require specific management efforts, i.e., ambidextrous leadership (Rosing et al., 2011; Rosing et al., 2010; Zacher & Rosing, 2015). This enables the ideation for exploration and efficient operations for exploitation to occur simultaneously or in close proximity, giving both sufficient emphasis but being clear regarding the objectives of the two approaches. Without considering the ambidextrous tensions characteristic of creative work, even the largest companies with affluent resources face an increased risk of failure in striving for media innovation, particularly due to the management work overload and the volatility of the innovation processes.

However, in relation to practical management procedures, further empirical research is needed in media organizations to improve the understanding of media innovation in ambidextrous contexts, particularly the management thereof. Focusing at the middle management level would be significant because creative work that aims for innovation in media organizations is often team-based, and the role of team leaders is central in managing the work and tensions in practice. Team-level leaders are also required to balance the ambidextrous tensions between the interests of individual creative professionals and the organizations’ top management. Another interesting approach would be to analyze the way in which the various ambidextrous tensions in media work are interrelated. In media organizations, this is further complicated by the tensions between journalistic ideals and business targets.

We want to finally note that, despite the natural tendency of understanding “tension” as something that creates difficulties and is thus negative, in the analyzed case, the ambidextrous environment of the new production team also reflected positive potential. For example, the respondents were able to
apply their recently acquired new technology skills especially in the development project tasks, but also in the day-to-day production. When this behavior occurred, it enhanced the team members’ creativity and ability to ambidextrously balance the requirements of both the routine production work and the innovative new content of the development project. Thus, the positive potential of ambidextrous tensions for media innovation would be worthy of future research interest.

Our empirical research contributes to the media innovation literature by exploring the creative work process of a development team aiming at innovation in a media company. In particular, we complement earlier studies on media innovations by identifying and construing the role of ambidextrous tensions between ongoing routine production and creative media innovation processes, thus breaking new ground in the emerging research of media innovations. Despite the prospect of the resulting categorization of ambidextrous tensions for future media innovation research, it has to be taken into consideration that the analysis is limited to a single case study. Thus, the results of the study may need further elaboration to represent media innovation projects more generally. Although this study is an auspicious effort to explore and explain the ambidextrous character of a media innovation process, more empirical as well as theoretical research on ambidexterity in media organizations is necessary to extend the comprehension of this complex phenomenon.

REFERENCES


Paper 3
Crossing Boundaries for Innovation: Content Development for PSM at Yle

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Crossing Boundaries for Innovation: Content Development for PSM at Yle

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ABSTRACT

The authors explain the crucial importance of crossing boundaries to achieve innovation in PSM content development. The reasons are explained with reference to creative organisation and innovation theories, and demonstrated in practice via analysis of an empirical case from Yle, the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation. The chapter focuses on characteristic challenges and practices in boundary crossing at three levels: organisational, group (or team) and individual. Key findings include lessons about the complexity of building and maintaining a creative media organisation in practice, especially in relation to designing structures, organisational arrangements and tools to make it happen, i.e. the move from ideation to realisation. Internal politics, organisational resistance, and managerial complications are confounding factors. The chapter demonstrates how and why nurturing collaboration across boundaries is a complex task that requires a particular and special skills set for media managers.
Crossing Boundaries for Innovation

Content Development for PSM at Yle

Sari Virta & Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Abstract

The authors explain the crucial importance of crossing boundaries to achieve innovation in PSM content development. The reasons are explained with reference to creative organisation and innovation theories, and demonstrated in practice via analysis of an empirical case from Yle, the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation. The chapter focuses on characteristic challenges and practices in boundary crossing at three levels: organisational, group (or team) and individual. Key findings include lessons about the complexity of building and maintaining a creative media organisation in practice, especially in relation to designing structures, organisational arrangements and tools to make it happen, i.e. the move from ideation to realisation. Internal politics, organisational resistance, and managerial complications are confounding factors. The chapter demonstrates how and why nurturing collaboration across boundaries is a complex task that requires a particular and special skills set for media managers.

Keywords: content development, creative organisation, Yleisradio (Yle), innovation management, media innovation, work culture

Introduction

In the turbulent environment of media convergence public service broadcasting (PSB) organisations are expected to produce quality content and lead in the pursuit of innovation (Lund & Lowe 2013), which is considered imperative in Pulic Service core values (Fernández-Quijada et al. 2015; EBU 2012). This poses a significant challenge in the convergence of public service media (PSM) (Lowe & Bardoel 2007). Convergence is about crossing boundaries between media platforms, sectors, firms and industries. This requires learning new ways of thinking and that is not easy for organisations that are typically big and old in Western Europe.

Inability to innovate is the most common cause of organisational failure among older companies (Drucker 2007). This is pertinent because PSM is deeply rooted in PSB legacies. Creativity is a vital strategic resource for media companies, thus also for
PSM organisations, and innovation is critical to competitive advantage (Gershon 2013; Küng 2013; Küng 2008a). Given the centrality of these issues, this chapter focuses on crossing boundaries to achieve innovation within and for PSM content development. Three aspects legitimate this focus.

Firstly, to achieve innovation in output requires content development. Secondly, content development work requires creative organisation capabilities that can be constrained by the divisional structure of PSB heritage. As creativity and innovation theories suggest, what's new often originates from differences that ‘collide’ (Amabile et al. 2005). That encompasses ways of thinking, varied specialisations, diverse personalities, and multiple platforms. With the growth of outsourcing and commissioning, it also goes beyond internal organisations and depends on creative networks. Thirdly, sustaining innovation and the creative organisation requires systematic practices. Managing for creativity is a complex task because success depends on tools, processes and practices that are particular to the purpose.

Innovation can be achieved in various elements: product, process, position or paradigm (Dogruel 2015). We focus on product innovation in a PSM firm. Content creation is the backbone of media organisations. Thus, the need for creativity in content innovation is continuous (Küng 2007; Caves 2000). In most media firms product development is pursued as part of everyday production work and R&D investment is comparatively low – a few percentage points at best, often some fraction of 1 per cent (Bleyen et al. 2014; Küng 2013). Thus, studying the concepts, practices and experiences of a project dedicated to content development is important.

In exploring these issues our chapter works to generate insight about media innovation on the basis of an empirical case study in which an innovation initiative was developed as a distinct operational unit in a legacy PSB company: Yleisradio [Yle] in Finland (2001–2005). At this historic remove it’s possible to see more clearly what worked well in achieving the objectives, and why it wasn’t possible to sustain the initiative. We integrate creative organisation and innovation theories to analyse the case and focus on creativity for innovation capability as a core success factor. We begin with the theoretical framework, then analyse the case, and conclude with some important lessons learned.

**Content development in media**

Creativity that leads to product innovation is a primary strategic resource for media because product success or failure determines the firm’s competitive position in a market and therefore its sustainability. But anything novel is by definition unfamiliar, and therefore risky. Moreover, the costs can be high because content quality affects performance (Küng 2008b). That means product development can be a high stakes ‘game’. Calculated risk must be accepted because continuous product development is essential for PSM social legitimacy and competitive success. This suggests that facil-
Itating product development hinges on competence in the management of creativity for innovation. Being creative isn’t the goal; for organisational interests the focus must be on achieving results that matter – i.e. innovation.

**Creativity in media**

Today media are commonly classified as creative industries (Deuze 2011; Bilton 2007). Creativity is variously defined and has roots in diverse disciplines, especially psychology (Kaufman & Sternberg 2010; Amabile 1996a; Csikszentmihalyi 1996). Traditional views emphasise the creative individual and privilege artistic and ‘mystical’ aspects, suggesting creativity is innate talent (Styhre & Sundgren 2005). Creative people are presumed to possess a natural ability keyed to individual combinations of creative thinking skills and developed expertise (often tacit) – two of the three core components in the seminal model advanced by Teresa Amabile (1998). The third element in her model is intrinsic motivation. Talent can’t be ‘taught’ and creativity as such is unmanageable. Media managers can foster environments that stimulate creative thinking (Amabile 1996b) and create systems that produce innovative results.

Individuals are creative – not organisations as such. However, novel results most often happen when individuals with different skills, talents, perspectives and experiences interact and even collide. That is when new things emerge. Groups working as teams facilitate this more often than individuals working alone (Amabile et al. 2005). That is especially relevant to PSM because production is a complex process that happens in complicated organisational and social contexts. Media production is usually a collaborative undertaking that requires diverse talents and skills of varied professionals that must work together to achieve a shared (or at least mandated) goal. Management competence is crucial for crafting and handling processes that facilitate environments to facilitate such work (Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a; Amabile 1998). Success depends on fruitfully combining specialist talents with different ways of thinking and perceiving. From an operational perspective, the concept of organisational creativity is therefore especially useful because it focuses on the everyday environment of creative work (e.g. Mumford 2012; Zhou & Shalley 2009; Styhre & Sundgren 2005). This has been described as an interactionist or social-constructivist approach because it assumes most people are capable of creativity in variable degrees if assigned the right tasks under the right circumstances (Küng 2008b).

For organisational creativity to happen, managers should focus on social influences that facilitate or inhibit creative work by individuals in groups. Key factors include work structures, processes and environments. All of this depends on management practice because that encourages or constrains the creative work that is instrumental for achieving innovative results. This understanding links creativity and innovation as a contextual feature of any work community and is highly pertinent to media industries where creativity is such a vital strategic resource. Creative talent must be ‘harnessed’ to achieve results that are useful for the organisation, which highlights the need for
managers to give direction, establish objectives, clarify concepts, and allocate scarce resources (Drucker 2007; Buckingham & Coffman 1999). Emphasising results that are ‘useful’ to the firm underlines the importance of success as a practical concern. Creativity is not a product; an innovation can be. Treating both as organisational phenomena is crucial for managing media operations (Küng 2008a).

**Media innovations**

Innovation is generally used in connection to product development. Research on innovation management is extensive (e.g. Hamel 2012; Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a; Govindarajan & Trimble 2010b; Hamel 2007; Christensen & Raynor 2003; Christensen 1997). Innovation in media content is less elaborated (Bleyen et al. 2014; Dogruel 2014) and useful for improved understandings about change in media industries, a point generally conceded but not yet sufficiently developed on the basis of empirical research.

A common classification schema hinges on the scope or degree of newness. This helps distinguish types of innovation: 1) incremental (or adaptive), which implies gradual improvements of existing products or services, or 2) radical, meaning “breakthrough” innovations that alter the fundamentals of a market or industry (Storsul & Krumsvik 2013; Dal Zotto & van Kranenburg 2008). With regard to innovation in media, developing something entirely new and original is rare. So breakthrough innovations are not routine and happen mainly in relation to technology advances that typically originate outside media industries (Storsul & Krumsvik 2013). There are numerous ways to connect pre-existing ideas, formats, visuals, and the like, to produce media products that are innovative. Thus, media innovation is mostly incremental.

Our perspective encompasses innovation both as a process of exploration in developing something new and as a practice of exploitation with value-creating consequences (Storsul & Krumsvik 2013; see also Dogruel 2013). Innovation in management is a third crucial aspect (Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a; Hamel 2007). Case Särmä at Yle highlights interdependencies between these three aspects and is therefore a useful case for analysis.

**Managing product development in a creative media organisation**

Media managers are responsible for bridging ideation and realisation in content development. That requires competence to enable good ideas and accomplish skilful work that produces successful products which, in turn, inspire new ideas (Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a). Media professionals need encouragement to seek out new connections, to pursue new experiences and to work at developing new understandings of familiar things. As Lucy Küng (2008b: 149) observes, “The successful introduction of new programmes, products and services depends on a person or team having a good idea (the creative spark) and then being able to develop that idea further.” Traditional ‘command and control’ hierarchies are not conducive to success (Hamel 2007). On the contrary, creative workers experience this as threatening (Baumann 2013).
The goal is for creativity to be ‘nothing special’ in the sense that it is routine, everyday practice. To achieve that it is not enough to ‘tolerate’ diversity; the interaction of difference is required. Media managers are challenged to create structures, procedures and intersections that make interaction a routine occurrence that is necessary for getting work done. That is the surest way to facilitate new ways of thinking, but it inherently fosters critical challenges to characteristic views and practices (Drucker 2011).

Organisational creativity that produces innovation requires robust alignment. That is the managerial work of crafting organisational processes to co-ordinate everything from HR management to financial planning, strategic management, and even real estate and facilities management. Crossing boundaries is a pre-requisite for success in achieving innovation. Although typically considered bureaucratic work by content makers, these functions play crucial roles in enabling or inhibiting the potential for creative talent to emerge, to work productively, and to achieve innovative results (Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a).

Developing management structures and operational tools are crucial for persistence and consistency in moving from ideation to realisation in daily work. Here ‘tools’ are understood to encompass the widest range of processes, techniques, working methods, principles of development, leadership, organisational structures and evaluation measures. As Jeff Dyer (et al. 2011: 3) concluded, “one's ability to generate innovative ideas is not merely a function of the mind, but also a function of behaviours”.

In media production and content development practice the work is characteristically project-based. Thus, the importance of project management is increasingly recognised in media operations today (Lundin & Norbäck 2015; Baumann 2013; Reca 2006). Project-based networks are partly internal and partly external to media organisations. They overlap and often collide with traditional, hierarchical and fixed structures. Co-ordination and boundary crossing are therefore essential managerial competences (Baumann 2013).

A further challenge lies in requirements for networked co-operation. There are inherently more ideas, knowledge and skills outside a particular organisation or team than are internal to it. Integrating external creative professionals into content development projects demands greater flexibility than traditional PSB organisations have historically accommodated, and a higher dependence on relationship networks than many have been structured to facilitate.

Creative organisation in practice:
Case Yle programme development

In treating the empirical case, we analyse key challenges associated with translating theoretical knowledge about creative organisations into routine practices that can be managed and will produce innovative results. Various aspects related to crossing boundaries are discussed. Many of the practices and tools were developed expressly
for crossing boundaries with the aim of nurturing creativity to facilitate innovation as a routine result.

We focus on how one content development initiative was operationalised. Analysis benefits from ready access to all data about the project, from the planning and creation phase to the shutting down of operations. Analysis is categorised in organisational, team and individual levels for clarity, although the different levels were not separate in practice but, on the contrary, were strongly intertwined and interdependent.

The case is from the early 2000’s in the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation, Yleisradio. At the time Yle was a media-centric organisation comprised of a TV Division, a Radio Division, and a Svenska Division. The formal name for our case was Yle Ohjelmakehitys, translated Yle Programme Development, but it was more commonly referred to by a nickname – Särma (or YleEdge in English). Planning started with research in 2001 and was finalised in 2002. Arne Wessberg, the Director General, saw the need to create a systematic product development process for Yle, something that had never existed in any formal sense although programme development was always part of production practice. The second author led the process of developing the unit’s strategy, structure and operational model, and was responsible for the operation. The Yle Board of Directors approved the proposal, with a few significant modifications as later discussed, in February 2003. Särma launched in May 2003.

The first author was employed as Projects Portfolio Manager (2002-2005) and was involved in the planning phase. She worked as part of the unit’s management team with the second author, who was the main designer and Head. The management team was unusual in itself at Yle then and was mandated to build a creative organisation and achieve innovation in Yle content.

**Organisational level**

Older traditional organisations, which characterise PSB corporations in Western Europe, have historically been internally conflicted, competitive and hierarchical (Küng-Schankleman 2000). At Yle in the late 1990s, there was considerable organisational redundancy and resistance to change. This was rooted partly in traditional thinking and ways of working and partly in the diverse vested self-interests of various managers and makers to maintain the status quo. The divisions, channels and media were separate entities and each had their own management, support services like HR, and production personnel. It was a classical ‘siló’ or ‘stovepipe’ structure. The Swedish-language division added to operational overlap. Boundaries were strong not only between divisions on which the power structure was based, but also between skill centres where production was done, and channels where commissioning and transmission were located.

In creating the design for Särma, the second author began with internal research to identify development needs in Yle. The results showed that many development obstacles were associated with difficulties in working across boundaries between me-
dia (radio vs. television, and at that time emerging new media), genres (e.g. news vs. entertainment), organisation levels (strategic management vs. operational practice), profession perspectives (mass media vs. new media) and boundaries between Yle and independent production firms (external). Executive managers were keenly concerned due to complications and dysfunctions in the early period of Yle’s efforts to build a matrix structure to end the silo system. Softening boundaries to enhance synergy in a matrix organisation was an essential task for the new unit. Thus, the mandate was not only to facilitate development in content, but also crucially in context.

Figure 1 from the Särmä proposal materials5 illustrates how this was conceived. The aim was to achieve collaboration, which was assumed to be much harder and more demanding than the alternatives.

Figure 1.5 The model illustrating the challenge of building a collaborative organizational practice

What’s the Difference?

Cooperate
Weakest
Easiest
Shorter term
Narrowest
Highly independent

Coordinate

Collaborate
Strongest
Hardest
Longer term
Broadest
Very interdependent

Source: Gregory Ferrell Lowe, 2003

Collaboration requires not simply crossing but in key respects collapsing boundaries. This was a persistent challenge for Särmä’s managers and creative workers. Crossing boundaries between departments and functions was a continuous exercise for resolving conflicts between programme makers in different genres, channels and media, between producers and managers, or within a maker team that can’t agree. Resolution required dealing with often unhelpful policies preferred by HR or the financial department, for example, which had their own systems and ways of doing things. Colleagues in these areas were often themselves tangled with legal requirements and rigid labour
structures that made flexibility difficult. Thus, a lot of what the management team had to work with and on was essentially political.

Concrete tools were developed to ensure working across boundaries. One example can illustrate. The Särmä management team had the invaluable support of a financial controller who offered advice and insight that led to the creation of a financial tool to simultaneously facilitate project planning and reporting. Each development project was assigned a production code, which was always required but earlier assigned on a largely random basis. In Särmä the code had practical meaning because each number in the series (by column orientation) described a particular feature (media, channel, type of project, etc.). The production number schema was crafted to facilitate rapid and detailed analysis on-demand but was important for assessing the degrees to which the project portfolio and individual projects were working across boundaries. Using Excel, all project elements were distinguished and could be integrated in a schema that answered every financial need for reporting, enabled constant tracking of the project portfolio and calculating the comparative proportion of work for all “clients”, and for the firm as a whole. This answered the managerial challenge of guaranteeing transparency in resource allocation and making sure the work followed Yle’s strategic aims.

The organisational silos were lowered but remained problematic when Särmä was operational. The original idea was to welcome all proposals for product development projects and select the most promising based on their intrinsic potential value for the firm’s competitive situation and fulfilment of the public service mandate. The Board of Directors approved this. But in practice the divisions were jealous to secure proportionate shares of Särmä’s resources, i.e. relative equality in the allocation of time, money and effort on projects. This required a revised proposal that resulted in creating a Development Steering Group with representatives from each of the divisions, nominated and given authority to decide between themselves about which projects Särmä could accept. A 20% share was reserved for strategic projects that could benefit Yle as a whole, and another 20% for Särmä internal development.

The latter was unusually high in media firms overall and within Yle, but was accepted because it was essential for the development unit to constantly develop its self. Although this silo-based structure for selecting projects satisfied the divisions’ internal interests, it created a bottleneck that hampered being able to quickly, consistently and effectively achieve the main targets for Särmä work. The structure became a burden for managers both inside Särmä and across the firm due to the need for constant and often frustrating negotiations between parts of the organisation. Unclear development targets and inappropriate projects also played debilitating roles.

**Group level**

Särmä’s essential resource was the personnel, a team of 14 people devoted to content development. The unit structure was designed to nurture an innovation team as mandated to support Yle programme makers in their efforts to make better, more innovative
content attuned with Yle programming strategies and public service requirements. Thus, Särmä was about facilitating the creative processes and helping makers improve programmes, not making programmes.

Figure 2 presents the conceptual model that was crafted as a basis for the operation. Six central elements of content and programming were identified in the research and were the focus of proposed work. These are specified on the left side, beginning with technology and tools. Three content development functions are specified across the top beginning with investigation and innovation. The third function, analysis and evaluation, proved to be a core element and consumed the lion’s share of Särmä work. As theory suggests, most media innovations are incremental and therefore adaptions. Särmä was tasked with producing insightful evaluations with practical recommendations for product development. Two value-added services are featured: Networking to secure ‘fresh blood’ and cumulative growth in collaboration, and Diffusion to ensure the results of development work on each project would be available for everyone’s benefit at Yle. All of these functions are fundamentally about crossing boundaries.

![Figure 2. The operational concept for Yle Särma, in English YLEdge](image)

The model was applied in defining the areas of competence and specialisations needed to handle content development practice as an operation. The areas of required competence were identified according to the elements and intersections in the model to support crossing boundaries within and across Särma teamwork. The result is represented in Figure 3.
The uppermost box on the left and lowest box on the right are areas where other internal departments or external agencies were expert. Trying to replicate them would have been redundant. The idea was to collaborate with internal and external experts for handling those functions (tools innovation and audience evaluation, especially). The chequered boxes made no sense as specific job areas or roles and were deleted.

Employment positions were crafted on this basis and are pictured in Figure 4. The resulting job definitions were keyed to the types of work required in each case, derived from the conceptual model (Figure 2). The employees hired for the various jobs were strongly involved in the role defining process. They were given group tasks to figure this out and to propose co-related work processes. This was crucial in two ways: 1) the employees’ creative knowledge and professional experience were harnessed and 2) they were highly motivated in the work. The aims and mission of Särma were translated in concrete terms by involving the employees in deciding about their work and futures.

This was a novel approach to establishing positions for personnel and developing job descriptions in the company, and was resisted by the HR department. Building the organisation required considerable negotiation with personnel there and involved the Journalist’s Union. HR was challenged with creating legal (rather than conceptual) positions that were not part of agreed posts defined by the company. They were opposed to unique job titles like Format Analyst or Networking Designer, largely due to pre-defined structures for job titles with related benefits arranged as scales. Further,
HR considered it problematic and burdensome to synchronise peculiar employee positions, titles and task-based requirements with existing wage-definition procedures.

In the end, direct support from the Board of Directors was required and some compromises were necessary. For example, the idea of a managing ‘chair’ for the unit head, borrowed from the academic world, was rejected. Two particular positions were prescribed that were linked especially with then current challenges facing the company, i.e. New Media expertise and the historic and continuing emphasis on Journalistic Specialisation, Evaluation and Development. Finally, the two fellowships are worth noting especially for their importance in crossing boundaries, one from within Yle to ensure rotation of talent and to build up internal networking and diffusion, and the second being an external fellow brought in for 3-6 months each year to help with particular projects and contribute to the learning and development of the personnel.

The Särmä structure and positions evolved on the basis of experience and results, i.e. learning. The structure in 2005 when Särmä was shut down is pictured in Figure 5. By then it had become clear that the essential work was piloting new productions and keyed to supporting development in commissioning, of paramount practice in the matrix organisation overall.

Särmä work was organised according to project management principles, which was not typical in 2002. The governing principle was: Uniformity in procedure; Consistency in practice; Diversity in personnel. This reflected the importance of balancing collective and individual needs in the organisational context. Employees were expected to exercise individuality and leadership in creative project work (exploration), but to do...
Figure 5. The organizational design of specialist employment in 2005

Särmä 2005 Organisational Structure

This work with standardised procedures (exploitation). Lessons-learned reviews were a required aspect of each completed project, as discussed below, so that procedures were continually refined.

Best practices were a priority and the emphasis was on developing concrete tools to cultivate creative capabilities and share results. These included “Oppi” sessions, monthly events to learn about new things through presentations prepared by guest experts, with critical discussion about the practical implications. Another learning tool was called “Siperia Akatemia”. This required investment and significant preparation by the Särmä management team. Selected content development projects were analysed and compared by the community with a focus on generating insights about generalizable phenomena and how to improve handling processes and practices that produce good results. Issues for Särmä internal development projects were identified and consistently followed up by the management team.

Further, weekly content meetings concentrated only on content development projects, i.e. creative work. Administrative issues were dealt with separately in short and focused business meetings each month. Creative successes were celebrated in the community and those responsible were rewarded. Annual retreats were planned to encourage employee wellbeing and to support the social aspects of creative organisation culture. Employees were encouraged to apply for grants to participate in seminars and various events outside Yle, and outside Finland.

The governing aim was to support organisational creativity in every element of arrangements and actions to ensure as far as possible the good mental and emotional
health of employees engaged with work that was frequently difficult and stressful. Organising the events, maintaining the balance, and running the operational system was the focus of work for the management team.

**Individual level**

Managing development work and creative professionals are challenging tasks, especially when combined. Särnä was a collective of individuals with diverse backgrounds, personalities, skills and interests. The community was a cross-generational, cross-cultural, multidisciplinary and multi-lingual group. Diversity was pursued when recruiting personnel and selecting fellows, intentionally encouraging differences that collide in practice. Managers needed to weld the individuals into a community with a shared mission that was clear, concrete and multilingual, with collaboration as a constant. Both leadership (showing the way and inspiring) and management (handling administrative tasks) were therefore essential. The community participated in defining the mission statement: “To help programme makers make better programmes”. This specified their role as content development professionals – not to own, control or command, but to facilitate the success of Yle programme makers and their programmes.

In the beginning, employees felt overwhelmed. A common description was the phrase, “I’m walking in boots that are too big”. The work was demanding and the situation was very challenging. This work was not entirely new because most personnel had worked in internal training earlier, but the role and responsibilities were unfamiliar and largely created from scratch on the basis of creative organisation theory. The unfamiliarity and uncertainty created anxiety. Learning project management skills and tools was difficult. Facing the hopes and complaints of demanding programme makers, who were often suspicious of ‘development experts’ who were not themselves making programmes, was also stressful and often frustrating. Everyone was not equally able to tolerate the pressures, handle conflicts and cope with uncertainties.

Such feelings are typical for creative work in a professional and organisational setting, and to some degree they are useful for focusing the work. Managers of such operations need ways to support creative workers so they can tolerate ambiguities and overcome emotional difficulties when these are too strong, too personal or persist for too long. Maintaining a healthy balance between positive challenge and overwhelming demands is crucial. Continually resolving this dilemma is a characteristic requirement for managers, and clarity is of central importance. Workers need to know what the work is about, what the job requires, how to do it, the procedures and rules must be defined, and they need to feel secure in knowing what to do about various kinds of problems. They also need to know that failures are tolerated and the important thing is what the team and community learns from them. These are part and parcel of the working conditions in a creative organisation and directly support a worker’s intrinsic motivation to be creative and achieve innovation.
Each Särmä employee had an individual job description that he or she helped formulate. Everyone was assigned a primary responsibility, but also a secondary developmental area. This ensured higher degrees of bonding across boundaries with colleagues. Personnel participated intensively in developing ways of working and evaluation protocols. They had opportunities to exercise creativity and achieve innovation in how the professional practice was managed. All of this focused on instilling self-confidence and teamwork.

Conclusions and further research

“Särmä” was experimental in practice. The original proposal defined the unit as a fixed-term endeavour. This was seen as a good way to guarantee development as a result of ‘positive pressure’. Applying for continuation from the Yle Executive Board would require routine development, thorough evaluation, and demonstrated innovation successes. In practice this idea was turned against the community due to a change in executive management in 2005, complex internal politics that were a legacy of the silo organisation, the bureaucracy of the project in-take system alluded to earlier, and due to corporate deficits that required cutting costs and personnel.

In this context it proved impossible to advance to the next developmental stage. The new Director General of Yle, Mikael Jungner, decided to end the operation due to a tight financial situation combined with what appears to have been a lack of leadership willing to take over responsibility for the unit and its functions. The executive management board had internal politics to deal with in this period and competition for resources was intense. The new administration was focused on Yle strategy development. The replacement idea for Särmä as formulated by the Director of Strategy, was to convert content development into “a distributed function”. To our knowledge that wasn’t defined in any detail and in practice it meant returning to the old way of doing product development work at Yle, a typical approach for media companies (Küng 2013) – i.e. makers trying to do this while doing their routine work, although with some additional support from the firm. A fruitful area for further research is exploring how content development at Yle has worked as a distributed function, and weighing the benefits and losses in comparison to the earlier dedicated unit. But there are lessons already learned that should be noted.

One obvious lesson is that it’s much easier to say a media firm should be a creative organisation than to devise the structures, organisational arrangements and practical tools necessary to make that happen as a routine, cumulative operation. Content development work is stressful, complex and ridden with conflict. A lot is pre-requisite to consistently move from ideation to realisation. Innovation in media products requires innovation in processes and management, not only content, and the various types of media innovation (see Dogruel 2014; Dogruel 2013) need to be considered as complementary elements in the process.
A second lesson is apparent in the degree of challenge involved with maintaining development in the face of organisational resistance and internal politics (Govindarajan & Trimble 2010a). The managers of Yle Särmax needed to navigate between and across boundaries that were plentiful, complicated, diverse, stubborn and self-interested. This is characteristic to traditional legacy media organisations. Success and failure in this aspect had decisive impact. It is quite likely that the management team had some role in the decision to end the experiment, mostly due to stubborn effort to keep faith with previous promises and failing to properly navigate across new boundaries carefully enough and to modify plans accordingly. In short, the managers themselves were quickly invested in their ‘own’ organisation.

A third lesson is that creative work must be managed with tools derived from diverse fields of management expertise, especially creative organisation, learning organisation and organisational creativity (e.g. Mumford 2012, Zhou & Shalley 2009), project management (e.g. Lundin & Norbäck 2015; Reca 2006) and innovation management (e.g. Drucker 2011; Hamel 2007). Despite the traditional non-division of production and innovation in media organisations (Bleyen et al. 2014; Küng 2013), we are doubtful of the ‘distributed function’ approach, because it means such work must be done as yet another chore in the context of increasingly high demands on workers engaged with daily practice, and because this kind of work and its management depends on specialised skills and facilitation. Media content development work can happen without specialist support, but not as constantly, professionally or comprehensively, and the results are not as likely to be analysed or shared in the organisation and with external network partners.

Nurturing collaboration across boundaries was the core challenge at Yle, internally but also with external partners. Särmax pioneered this work in the organisation. Achieving collaboration, even to this degree, required aligning the routines, procedures, tools, processes and systems between the innovation initiative and ongoing operations (Govindarajan & Trimble 2010b), in this case with the unit’s mission and Yle’s public service mission combined. Särmax worked in partnership with programme makers. This highlights the fact that content development must be facilitated but it can’t be forced. Makers’ will to achieve development is crucial, and they require the resources and support to take the risks and deal with the necessary stress this kind of work entails (see Amabile et al. 2005).

Judging on the basis of feedback from programme makers involved in the dozens of Särmax projects large and small during the experiment, collaboration was fruitful and the key to realising innovation in content. Many former Särmax employees have gone on to managerial positions at various levels – some outside the firm and others within Yle. This also has potential for future research. The career development of former employees could shed light on the characteristics that merit promotion to leadership among creative media workers.

There were problems, of course. The diffusion of results was never realised in a mature way. Costs involved in effective diffusion easily rise to high levels and com-
munication is challenging given the need to translate everything into terms that have meaning for diverse professionals and varied organisational levels. The bureaucratic obstacles mentioned in our analysis proved a serious hindrance for Yle programme makers in relation to Säröma. Mistakes were seized and ridiculed by some middle managers that felt threatened by Säröma successes. There were accusations of too much resource being ‘wasted’, which could be true but expenditures were approved because they were considered instrumental to internal development in a period when the initiative was new and there were few good models to follow. The problems, constraints, contradictions and conflicts could be analysed in detail in future research, given the rich and complete material that is available.

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, innovation is a crucial task and requirement for PSM organisations (Fernández-Quijada et al. 2015; Lowe & Bardoel 2007). However, in both accomplishment and problems, it’s clear that creativity in media and media innovation are complex. Success comes from a lot of hard work and of peculiar types. Content development cannot happen efficiently or consistently without organisational development and innovative management. Crossing boundaries for enhanced value-creation in complex networks is a defining challenge for all media firms, and especially relevant for PSM organisations that are expected to perform as engines of innovation and development in the provision of media goods as services.

Notes
1. The first author (Virta) was able to do the research and analysis on the basis of funding provided by The Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland (VTS in Finnish). The analysis section benefits from a conference paper by the second author (Lowe) on the development, performance and end of Säröma presented after the unit was dissolved in 2005 (Lowe 2005). Further, a paper presented in Sydney, Australia at the RIPE@2012 conference by the first author (Virta 2012) was partly used for the background to the case.
2. Swedish-language programming with both radio and TV sections.
3. Säröma / YleEdge had two meanings: working across boundaries and the leading edge for developing programme development. Something that is “säröma” is cool and edgy.
4. Minority-language service, required by law, is a political issue in Finland.
5. February 2002.
6. Figures 1-4 were constructed by Lowe for an unpublished, YLE internal proposal presented to the Yle Executive Board. The figures illustrated key concepts for the proposed Department for Programme Development, and also the structure and arrangements for the unit as an organisation. Figure 5 was constructed by Lowe in late 2004 in an unpublished, Yle internal proposal for restructuring the unit. The new structure was implemented at the start of 2005, the last year of Säröma operation.
7. Ms. Sirpa Österberg.
8. For instance, projects that were supposed to be about developing programmes but were actually about trying to fix relationship problems within the makers’ team or between the makers and the producer.
9. By Lowe, with the help and support of others, especially Virta.
10. Naturally, the actual titles were in Finnish.
11. Here including the first names of employees.
12. Usually an academic or entrepreneur.
13. “Siberia Academy”, intentionally tongue-in-cheek, and originally called “breathing week.” It was soon clear that a full week was too heavy, so the tool was concentrated in two days of intensive shared self-reflection and unit development work.
14. As examples: the age difference from youngest to oldest was about 30 years and three languages were in use as mother tongues (Finnish, Swedish and English).

15. Two colleagues involved with the development phase decided they could not do the actual work. Being older Yle employees, they decided to retire.

References


Paper 4
Complexities and Tensions of Transformative Boundary-Crossing: Case Study on Ambidextrous HRM in a Creative Organization

Sari Virta

Earlier version presented at the Annual Meeting of Academy of Management Conference in 2017

Paper 4 is not included in the electronic version of the thesis.
Complexities and Tensions of Transformative Boundary-Crossing: Case Study on Ambidextrous HRM in a Creative Organization

Sari Virta

ABSTRACT

This article aims to inform theory and practice on the features of ambidextrous HRM that are required to transform creativity into content innovation within the rapidly changing context of creative media organizations. An empirical, qualitative case study is utilized to examine ambidextrous HRM as a response to dual tensions that are characteristic of media content development work, especially in relation to exploration and exploitation. The analysis focuses on issues that hamper the establishment of an ambidextrous HRM system in a traditional and established media organization, thus shedding light on the development of an ambidextrous HRM system more generally in knowledge-intensive industries facing disruptive change. The findings suggest that creative content development work, which is deeply dependent on individual creative talent, requires an ambidextrous approach to HRM for the successful management of innovation initiatives (i.e. exploration) alongside on-going production processes (i.e. exploitation), including that the lack of ambidextrous HRM may severely harm development initiatives. The results of the analysis indicate that bridging conventional and ambidextrous HRM principles is essential for sustainable co-existence of production and innovation in organizational contexts characterized by tensions. The qualitative case study offers new understanding regarding managing development work and organizational creativity for innovation in a traditional company in turbulent change, and elaborates especially on the constraints, conflicts, tensions and complications of the necessary boundary-crossing for integrating exploration and exploitation.
Paper 5
Integrating Media Clusters and Value Networks: Insights for Management Theory and Research from a Case Study of Mediapolis in Finland

Sari Virta and Gregory Ferrell Lowe

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We argue that there is scholarly potential in linking theory on industry clusters with theory on value networks. To date, these two theoretical streams have developed largely in parallel, limiting understanding of how the two are integrated in practice. By considering these theories in combination and the unique context of creative industries, we generate insight on the management of clusters as value networks. Our ongoing longitudinal empirical case is a new media cluster called ‘Mediapolis’ in the city of Tampere, Finland. The case study commenced at the time the cluster was in the planning and early operational stage. Results demonstrate the usefulness of linking the two theories, and support a future research agenda examining the types of cluster configurations meeting the criteria of value networks, and the conditions under which value network cluster configurations are more sustainable than simply a spatial agglomeration of clusters.
INVITED ARTICLE

Integrating media clusters and value networks: Insights for management theory and research from a case study of Mediapolis in Finland

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Abstract
We argue that there is scholarly potential in linking theory on industry clusters with theory on value networks. To date, these two theoretical streams have developed largely in parallel, limiting understanding of how the two are integrated in practice. By considering these theories in combination and the unique context of creative industries, we generate insight on the management of clusters as value networks. Our ongoing longitudinal empirical case is a new media cluster called ‘Mediapolis’ in the city of Tampere, Finland. The case study commenced at the time the cluster was in the planning and early operational stage. Results demonstrate the usefulness of linking the two theories, and support a future research agenda examining the types of cluster configurations meeting the criteria of value networks, and the conditions under which value network cluster configurations are more sustainable than simply a spatial agglomeration of clusters.

Keywords: cluster configurations, creative industries, media innovation management, management paradoxes, value networks

INTRODUCTION

Managers in most industries are coping with rapid change (Ghezzi, 2013) and environmental complexity (Allee, 2009). Finding the strategic fit between a firm and its markets requires continual adaption to evolving conditions. Transformation is context driven and keyed to the development of new technologies that open opportunities but also cause instability. Companies seek to lower costs and increase innovation, and thus co-operative arrangements are evident in today’s emphasis on industrial clusters and value networks. The respective co-operative focus of urban renewal and regional development often prioritises creative industries (Lowe & Brown, 2015).

Allee (2003, 2009) understands value networks as purposeful configurations of interdependent relationships between multiple organisations that work collaboratively to generate value, mainly economic, but also less tangible forms such as brand prestige. This is done to the mutual benefit of network members through organisational processes and management practices that are complex and dynamic. It is crucial to manage the network as a whole in order to realise its value potential (Duysters, de Man, & Wildeman, 1999; see also Ritter, Wilkinson, & Johnston, 2004).
Karlsson and Picard (2011) define industry clusters as spatial agglomeration of firms in a particular industry, along with important adjacent industries, where firms collocate to facilitate ongoing interaction that is integral to production. In other words, clusters are advantageous geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions (see e.g., Porter, 1998, 2000; Davis, Creutzberg, & Arthurs, 2009; Díez-Vial & Fernández-Olmos, 2013; Connell, Kriz, & Thorpe, 2014). Industry clusters can share resources that include labour, contract services, information and know-how. Much of this interaction between firms is informal and can be unintentional. In the creative industries, especially, cluster building has exploded (see e.g., Hitters & Richards, 2002, Davis, Creutzberg, & Arthurs, 2009, Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014). This is because competition has gone global, innovation has become a priority, economic resources have become insufficient for most firms to pay for everything, and specialised knowledge has grown but also become fragmented.

Both cluster building and network development are about producing value, which depends on the quality and quantity of collaboration within (internal) and across (external) organisational boundaries (Lowe & Yamamoto, 2016). Whereas a cluster must be geographically colocated, a network does not require colocation, and depends primarily on the quality of relationships that comprise its members. However, a cluster that is not internally and externally networked stands little chance of accomplishing its intended purposes. Both phenomena emphasise the importance of collaboration, often in public–private partnerships, as being vital for sustaining competitive advantage. This is because companies cannot afford an expanding range of knowledge and skills that are necessary to manage a growing assortment of digital platforms in diverse markets.

Research on clusters and networks has developed largely as two parallel streams, limiting theory development and the possibilities an integrated perspective may hold for enlightening management practice. Given the growth of media convergence brought on by digitalisation (Jenkins, 2008) and contemporary interest in cross-platform (or 360°) production (Dwyer, 2016), collaboration that produces value in creative industries cannot depend purely on colocation—although that remains important. Networks are equally important, both for the utilisation of ‘global pipelines’ and the benefits of ‘local buzz’, to use Bathelt’s (2005) terms.

Our research addresses the gap in theory on industry clusters and value networks. We approach this with a focus on creative industries, because in this context, linking clusters and value networks is important for theory development and management practices due to rapid transformation caused by digitalisation. This requires creative organisations to rely on networked collaboration for development and innovation, and makes clustering a typical feature (Davis, Creutzberg, & Arthurs, 2009). We adopt a managerial perspective, which assumes that value production requires both management of business networks and in business networks (Ripollés & Blesa, 2016; see also Ritter, Wilkinson, & Johnston, 2004).

The research is pertinent to policy making in Europe (especially but not only) because there is significant interest in the potential for creative industries to revitalise national and regional economies by stimulating innovation. The Horizon 2020 project is a relevant and current example of policy interest. Horizon 2020 is an EU programme that promotes research and innovation, offering in total nearly €80 billion euros of funding over a 7-year period (from 2014 through 2020), making it the biggest EU research and innovation programme of all times. The European Commission (2016) describes Horizon 2020 as ‘the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe’s global competitiveness’.

Following from the above, the aim of this article is to develop insights for management theory and practice by combining research on industry clusters and value networks in the context of creative industries. We structure the remainder of the article by first clarifying the theoretical framework on clusters and value networks. Next, we describe the empirical case, Mediapolis, the methodology and analysis strategy. Following this, we present our findings, and finally, we conclude with discussion and suggestions for further research. We approached the empirical analysis by focussing on three
interdependent levels of management practice: strategic, tactical and operational (Coughlan, Coughlan, Lombard, Brennan, McNichols, & Nolan, 2003), in connection with three dualities that Håkansson and Ford (2002) treated as paradoxes: (1) opportunities and limitations (strategic level), (2) influencing and being influenced (tactical level) and (3) controlling and release (operational level). The results demonstrate the usefulness of linking theory on creative clusters and value networks to advance management theory and improve management practice.

CLUSTERS AND VALUE NETWORKS

As noted, we adopt Karlsson and Picard’s (2011) definition in our understanding of clusters in the creative industries, focussing on the media industry. According to these authors, ‘Media clusters include many small, specialized firms as establishments of large media corporations with a potential to generate external economies of scale. They facilitate a fast spread of new ideas and of creative impulses between the media firms and establishments co-located in the cluster’ (Karlsson & Picard, 2011: 11). For media especially, one or very few large client-firms typically ‘anchor’ each cluster (Noam, 2009). Most agglomerated firms are small, entrepreneurial companies or self-employed freelancers. Anchor companies are the primary buyers of products produced by firms in media clusters unlike other types where sales are often to the external buyers. The anchors establish the credibility of the cluster and facilitate economic stability (Huggins, 2008). For example, the BBC anchors MediaCity in Salford (United Kingdom) and Electronic Arts anchors the video game cluster in Vancouver (Canada).

Companies in any industry colocate to both benefit from lower transaction costs and enjoy higher potential for innovation in product development. The local cultural milieu is an especially important factor for cluster success in creative industries (Bathelt, Malmberg, & Maskell, 2004; Krätk & Taylor, 2004; Bathelt, 2005). Vibrant cosmopolitan environments attract young talent from home and abroad who colocate to enjoy lifestyle benefits and professional opportunities (Florida, 2012). Clusters thrive on the local buzz, but success also depends on connections with translocal or global pipelines:

The effects of local interaction and learning are much stronger and durable if they are constantly supported by feedback and new impulses from outside. The point here is that local interaction of ‘buzz’ and interaction through global or trans-local ‘pipelines’ create a dynamic process of knowledge creation which is key to understanding a cluster’s continued economic success (Bathelt, 2005: 106). Such pipelines enable the cluster to monitor international developments, explore opportunities to open new markets and to develop the cluster as an international brand. Moreover, the majority of disruptive innovations originate outside the local environment, and often outside the ‘home’ industry (Drucker, 2007). This explains the simultaneous importance of building value networks to extend collaboration within clusters as communities and beyond the confines of a particular location.

The value network concept is rooted in Porter’s (1985) concept of a value chain, an analytical device for assessing a production and distribution process as ‘a neat sequence of value-enhancing activities’ (Pil & Holweg, 2006: 72). There are two relevant weaknesses in applying the value chain concept to collaborative configurations. First, it presumes production and distribution are largely internal to a firm. This is less and less the case for media companies. Commissioning content production from independent producers and outsourcing specialised skills (software coding, as an example) are increasingly common. Second, it encourages a managerial focus on control (Peppard & Rylander, 2006). Porter’s (1985) focus was not on creativity and innovation, but on controlling production processes to ensure both higher degrees of efficiency, that is, less waste, and more consistent quality, that is, standardisation at a high level. Developing media products, however, increasingly depends on ‘coopetitive’ relationships. Coopetition refers to relationships that are simultaneously competitive and collaborative, and cannot be directly controlled (Bilton, 2007; Doyle, 2013). The value chain concept is still useful for assessing internal
processes but not as much for those that rely on external dependencies. Thus, the value network concept is a beneficial supplement to cluster theory because it is not so tightly linked with spatial agglomeration, but it does not rule it out. Accordingly, we believe practical success in media cluster development requires the corelated development of networks to produce shared value.

Christensen (1997) highlighted the potential importance of value networks for established companies because they often struggle to achieve breakthrough innovation. In his view, ‘the value network in which a firm competes has a profound influence on its ability to marshal and focus the necessary resources and capabilities to overcome the technological and organizational hurdles that impede innovation’ (Christensen, 1997: 54). This supports De Rose’s understanding of a value network as ‘an interconnecting web of value-creating and value-adding processes’ (1994: 16). In this connotation, management practice is about the social production of value in a network economy (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2010; see also Allee, 2009), which is characterised by ‘complex and shifting patterns of rivalry and cooperation’ (Powell, Koput, & Smith-Doerr, 1996: 122) – typically characterised as coopetition.

The notion of disruptive innovation was first proposed in research on why many older firms find it difficult to develop game-changing products, and on the need for growth that is innovation driven (see Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2015 for an overview; also Christensen, 1997; Christensen, 2006). In media industries, the pivotal disruption that began in the early 1990s and is today the focus of adaptation and change is the transition to digital platforms. This is usefully conceived as digital disruption, which ‘refers to changes enabled by digital technologies that occur at a pace and magnitude that disrupt established ways of value creation, social interactions, doing business and more generally our thinking’ (Riemer & Johnston, 2013; see also Danneels, 2004). Due to digital disruption, media company strategies increasingly emphasise partnerships, collaboration, alliances, joint ventures, coproduction and networks. This pertains to public and private sectors alike (Lowe, 2016). All of that points to an aggregate level of organisation that is purposeful and clearly important for industry success today (Håkansson & Ford, 2002). Although a value network is comprised of relationships that cannot be directly controlled, they must be managed. This is challenging because networks are fluid, complex and multidirectional rather than linear – in short, they are reflexive (Allee, 2000, 2009). Value networks are therefore more volatile and more dynamic than value chains, because they are continually evolving, and devolving. Allee and Taug (2006: 570) suggest the value of a network hinges on (1) its connectivity (who can be reached) and (2) its conductivity (what can be transacted).

In a cluster configuration, the degree of density is a function of the number of colocated firms, while intensity is a function of the frequency and range of interactions among them (Picard, 2008). However, in our view, density is a phenomenon of colocation, while intensity prioritises the scale and scope of purposeful interactions – that is, the network. Colocation in a cluster can guarantee higher degrees of density, because a clutch of firms is spatially agglomerated. The potential degree of interaction is certainly higher on average than for any individual firm located at some distance from other firms in the industry. But despite higher density, being colocated does not guarantee intensity of interaction. In other words, interaction happens partly as a consequence of density, because interpersonal meetings and activities are inevitable. Being located in the same place naturally facilitates bumping into people from other firms and sharing social spaces, but because much of that is informal, the outcomes are often not relevant for business. Thus, the intensity of interactions is not guaranteed by colocation in a cluster, and neither are actionable results for a firm. Achieving that depends on managing the network; even more, to manage the cluster as a value network that is both situated in geographic location and positioned in translocal configuration. The cluster is ‘here’; the network is both here and ‘there’, but it is not everywhere.

A network structure is comprised of nodes and threads (Peppard & Rylander, 2006; see also Håkansson & Ford, 2002). The terminology is rooted in technical networks where each computer in a system is referred to as a ‘node’ and the links between nodes are referred to as ‘threads’. The concept
has been applied to social networks as a way to conceptualise relationships. A node in the network can be, for example, an individual or an organisation, depending on the level of analysis. The connection, essentially a relationship, can be assessed as the complexity and thickness of the thread. A thread becomes thicker as interactions and coinvestment increase. As networks collaborate, structural interdependencies become complex. Most managers are accustomed to focussing on the firm, and that continues to be essential, but in a network structure the firm’s relative position must also be managed (Håkansson & Ford, 2002; see also Lee & Yan, 2014). Mutual adjustment is rarely straightforward due to multiple dependencies. Weakening or severing one relationship can affect other relationships. To illustrate, imagine a media cluster with 25 firms that rarely interact. The density is high because there are many nodes, but the intensity is low because the threads are thin. Thus, colocation is not adding much value for each participant in the cluster. In principle, the connectivity is high (who can be reached), but in practice, the conductivity is low (what is transacted). In contrast, a media cluster in which participants routinely collaborate has higher intensity (thicker threads) and better conductivity. This ideal scenario is not likely to happen or persist without management.

Although interdependence is a key feature of value networks, the implications are sometimes underemphasised. In a network configuration, actions taken or not taken by one node affect other nodes, due to the dynamic nature of networks. It is vital to understand that value creation includes not only partners, but also customers, competitors, suppliers and regulators. This complexity and lack of amenability to direct control means that managers need to deeply consider how the network cocreates value, how their firm’s activities affect the network, and how the network affects the firm.

Managing networks poses distinct challenges, which Håkansson and Ford (2002) treated as three paradoxes. We prefer to conceptualise these as dualities. A paradox is comprised of two things that do not make sense separately but make sense when connected, or the reverse (see e.g., Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011; for paradoxes in management see Clegg, Vieira de Cunha, & Cunha, 2002; Poole & van de Ven, 1989). Whereas, a duality is a tension between two contrasting aspects that are conjoined in practice (see e.g., Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009; Sutherland & Smith, 2011).

The first duality is conditional: opportunities and limitations. Each network relationship provides opportunities for interaction and the benefits that can accrue from that, but also creates dependencies that limit a node’s scope for unilateral action. The second duality is relational: the network has an influence on each node, and each node can influence the network. Both happen simultaneously in network interactions. The least committed node has a dampening influence on the network as a whole, while the most active can exert decisive influence. The third duality is primarily managerial: the more one node is able to control the network, the less effective the network becomes. For example, companies that succeed in forcing their thinking on the network lessen the probability of anything innovative coming from it. This duality is the closest to a paradox in our view. Taken together, the three dualities are analytically useful for capturing the complexity of value network management. In the analysis that follows later, we connect the three dualities with three levels of integration that equally pertain to each organisation and to any configuration of organisations.

Productivity in collaborative relationships hinges on levels of integration or alignment (Coughlan et al., 2003 following Kanter, 1994). This certainly applies to analyses of cluster dynamics and network management. Three levels out of the original five of Coughlan et al. (2003) are important for our research to date: (1) strategic integration focussing on goals among top leaders in the cluster firms or network nodes, (2) tactical integration focussing on professionals engaged with projects and (3) operational integration focussing on managing the work. The other two of their levels, interpersonal integration and cultural integration, emerge later in the practice of collaboration due to the time required to build mature relationships and cultivate culture(s) based on those relationships (Kanter, 1994). Because we can only so far investigate the early stage of Mediapolis development, the first three levels of integration are the most relevant for our analysis.

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For the analysis, we connect the three dualities with these levels in the following way. The strategic level is about opportunities and limitations that are incumbent with network participation. The tactical level is about relationships that are influenced on every node and can be influenced by each node. The operational level is about managing the production of collaborative projects (control) without dampening the network’s capacity to produce innovation (release).

We do not imply that integration is absolute, or that the levels are isolated or separate. Instead, our analysis aims to demonstrate how the levels are interconnected in practice. Deciding the degrees of integration is a key managerial task, which is fundamentally, ‘a process of decision-making among independent organisations involving joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibilities for outcomes’ (Coughlan et al., 2003: 1248). It is therefore vital that managers of companies in a cluster become adept at developing ‘purposeful networks’ where both tangible and intangible value exchanges support the achievement of specific outcomes (Jørgensen, Bergenhotz, Goduscheit, & Rasmussen, 2011: 428, italics for emphasis added). This goes to the heart of our research interest – the degree to which a cluster, in the context of media in the creative industries, is a purposeful network that produces value.

THE CASE, METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Key to the advancement of management and organisation theory and practice is careful consideration of context (Härtel, 2014; Härtel & O’Connor, 2014). Context is an essential consideration in the choice of sample and methodology, and contextualisation is a critical aspect of analysis and meaningful interpretation (Härtel, 2014; Härtel & O’Connor, 2014). The unique features of the creative industries generally, and media industries specifically, provide a valuable context for advancing management and organisation theory on networks and paradox management.

Media industries are struggling to cope with the rapid environmental change caused by explosive growth in nonlinear, digital platforms (Lowe & Stavitsky, 2016). This growth has undermined the 20th century mass media system so thoroughly that disruption is the defining feature of networked communications in the 21st century. Media companies must develop new business models, integrate cross-platform publishing, master convergence and achieve organisational renewal (Küng, Picard, & Towse, 2008). As discussed, innovation is essential and depends on the vitality of collaboration in clusters and through networks.

Media production is highly collaborative, and media industries therefore tend to feature comparatively higher levels of geographic clustering (Davis, Creutzberg, & Arthurs, 2009). Traditional understandings of cluster development are useful, but insufficient to understand media clusters in particular, because they largely produce intangible products – that is, content and media services (Davis, Creutzberg, & Arthurs, 2009; Achtenhagen & Picard, 2014) that depend in part on global trends in popularity. Also, the objectives for media clusters are more complex than for most industries because there is a high degree of reflexivity in cultural, political and economic aims, that is, they are highly contextualised (Karlsson & Picard, 2011). Thus, media clusters and networks offer an especially relevant focus for research on management theory about collaborative arrangements, dynamics and peculiarities. Particularly, when linked with the value network perspective, the potential is higher than usual for fruitful investigation of the interconnectedness of management theory and practice (see Galvin, 2014).

Case description

Our empirical case is a young media cluster called Mediapolis that is located in Tampere, Finland. A case is understood as ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context’
We used a longitudinal, qualitative case study approach because of the potential this methodology offers to develop deep understandings through detailed investigation of a unique case in a relevant context (Stake, 1995). We began investigation when Mediapolis was ‘only an idea’ in 2011. In this initial period of establishment and early operations, our research focus was on management challenges and practices for the cluster. We explored the dualities in relation to the levels of integration discussed earlier. The case was relevant to our research question because the cluster’s viability depended on success in managing the development of a value network in the context of a media cluster.

On its website, Mediapolis is described as ‘… a centre for storytelling and digital industries, where interdisciplinary innovations are born’ (Mediapolis, 2016). The media cluster is the result of intersecting interests. One set of interests is keyed to creative Tampere, a regional industrial development plan for the city that was operational in 2006–2011. Tampere is the main city of the Pirkanmaa region and the third largest city in Finland. It is not a typical international city for a media cluster location, but it is historically important to broadcasting operations and production for the country.

The second set of interests was of the national public service broadcaster, Yleisradio Oy (Yle). Yle’s management considered ending operations in Toholoppi, a neighbourhood of Tampere located about 7 km west of the city centre. The aim was to save costs by consolidating production in Helsinki, where the headquarters and primary production facilities are located. Yle’s intention to leave Toholoppi stirred great concern among Tampere city and Pirkanmaa regional authorities, as well as local independent media companies that are content producers for Yle. A solution was needed to satisfy the concerns of these diverse interests. Yle was able to legitimate a continuing presence in Toholoppi without owning the real estate, and financially benefiting from its sale. A crucial factor for the success of this was framing the cluster development project in relation to a new corporate strategic focus on greater ‘openness’, and building public–private partnerships as the best means to achieve innovation in Yle’s media content and services. Toholoppi was considered an ideal test bed for operationalising this strategic objective of Yle opening up and increasing collaboration in partnerships. The local authorities believed a media cluster could be economically advantageous for the city and region, and this continues to date. This was reflected in policy, which emphasised developing creative industries and innovations as a means for revitalising the economy. Securing Yle’s continuing presence in Tampere was the key objective for the City, which provided a start-up grant of €750,000 of EU funding to cofinance the initial period of Mediapolis development.

Negotiations with a third partner, started in 2011, were crucial to the start-up of Mediapolis. This third party was Technopolis, an international real estate development company whose core business was leasing real estate. This firm bought the premises from Yle in October 2012. Long-term rental contracts with Yle (20 years) and the Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK, owned by the city of Tampere and in need of new operational premises) were prerequisites for making the deal. After the deal was agreed upon in 2012, Yle vacated ~7,000 m² of facility space, however, Yle remains a big renter with an active production and administrative presence.

Technopolis undertook extensive renovation of the premises in 2013–2014. During this period, the partners formed an unofficial board comprised of Technopolis (as Chair), Yle, TAMK, Tampere City through Tredea (Tampere Region Economic Development Agency) and an external consultant to handle Mediapolis development. The Board collaborated in developing the vision and aims for Mediapolis. It was widened in 2014 to include Aito Media (founded in 2003 and part of Content Media Group since 2013), which is an independent media production firm located in Tampere and Helsinki. The Mediapolis ‘campus’ launched in autumn 2014, when TAMK and the first private companies moved there.

In January 2016, a new phase of Mediapolis development began, and a new partner was added: Aito Tehdas, a joint enterprise between Aito Media and a Tampere-based event production company, Akun
Tehdas. It operates a new studio and production facility built in Mediapolis in 2015. The partners founded a Co-operative company as a legal entity to manage Mediapolis. This is an effort to solve a range of tensions and problems caused by uncertain management that characterised the formation and early establishment phase. The Yle representative to the board was nominated Chair for this Co-operative. Tampere City considered its role as ‘an incubator’ of the project, and was active in the beginning, but did not need to join the Co-operative.

As a cluster per se, Mediapolis has exceeded expectations. In 2012 when Technopolis bought the premises, the goal was to have 1,000 people located at Mediapolis by 2015 (in various roles – as employees, freelancers, entrepreneurs, students or teachers). This aim was considered ambitious, but the goal has been far surpassed. As of 10 March 2016, a total of 1,888 individual access passes had been activated for Mediapolis. A total of 35 organisations were colocated on the premises, meeting the high end of the projected goal that was set for 2020. In March 2016, only one office was vacant. The first organisations moved to Mediapolis in late 2014 (Yle was already located there), and none had left at the time of this study. Thus, as a spatial agglomeration project, the cluster has been successful.

Methodology

The first author has close relations with Yle due to her personal history as a previous employee and manager in the company (1995–2006). She has maintained professional relations with company representatives. Discussions on Yle strategy, leaving Toholppi and subsequent plans to establish a media cluster in the premises, awakened her research interest, together with the second author, also a former manager at Yle (1997–2007). Owing to previously developed contacts, the first author had comprehensive access to Mediapolis decision makers, partners and documentation, producing a wealth of qualitative data. Because both authors previously worked as managers for the Mediapolis anchor firm, Yle, but have no current direct or formal ties to the firm, the case offered a rare opportunity to gain access to information that can result in deeper understandings, made more unique with the possibility to conduct research from the start of the project.

Data collection was conducted in the various stages of Mediapolis development. The first round of interviews was done in March–April 2013, the second in November 2015 and the latest in March 2016. This comprised the main empirical data for analysis and consisted of 18 semi-structured interviews with 15 individuals from 12 organisations involved in Mediapolis. The sample was purposive (Patton, 2015), specifically targeting the core partners responsible for Mediapolis early development and management (the Board and the Co-operative), as well as each of the contracted external expert consultants deeply involved in the project. The sampling approach aligned with the research objective to deepen understanding about value network management in the media cluster. The first round interviewees included representatives with management-level responsibilities from each of the unofficial Board member organisations and an external consultant who was involved in the initial development of the Mediapolis operational model. The second interview round involved three external consultants working on Mediapolis development (in relation to management and operations, communication and marketing), and one Yle representative. The latest interviewees included managerial representative(s) from each of the newly established Co-operative partner organisations, two independent media entrepreneurs located in Mediapolis for widening the perspective on practice, and one representative from Tredu, a Vocational College for the Pirkanmaa region. Tredu is owned by Tampere City and was required to move its media-based education to Mediapolis in autumn 2014.

The first author recruited the participants by email or phone. All but one agreed to participate, and in that instance she was directed to another respondent from the same organisation. The interview questions were collaboratively developed by the two authors in English and translated into Finnish by the first author, who is fluent in both languages. Questions in the first round of interviews focussed on thematic
issues related to the rationale for Mediapolis for the respondents’ respective organisations, especially the vision and aims for the cluster, its management and operational structure, problems or tensions encountered or anticipated, Tohloppi as a location, the role of Tampere city and Pirkanmaa region, Mediapolis financing, and future expectations. The second and third rounds of interviewing focused on the development process, including the management procedures and model, the experienced benefits and successes of being colocated, and potential problems and expectations of Mediapolis partners.

The first author met the interviewees in their personal offices or at Mediapolis, whichever was most convenient for each. The order of questioning varied, being attuned to the flow of discussion. Interview length varied from 38 min to 1 hr 46 mins. The average interview length was 1:07. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and digitally recorded. The first author transcribed the first round of interviews, and the rest of the interviews were transcribed by a professional transcribing firm and checked by the first author for accuracy.

Supplementary research materials included Mediapolis documentation and project reports from the start of the project in 2011, frequent informal unrecorded discussions with the Chair of the Mediapolis Co-operative Board (five times between June 2015 and September 2016 to gather background information, check details and follow ongoing development), as well as participating in the Mediapolis board meeting on 22 February 2013, a presentation of the Mediapolis management and operational model development by a project consultant in August 2014 (when the EU-funded project was approaching the final reporting stage), and the first author’s observations at Mediapolis and participation in the following events and presentations:

• An information event presenting Mediapolis to stakeholders and potential future partners (i.e., tenants) at Technopolis premises on 30 May 2013.
• ‘Knocking down the Tohloppi fences’ event that celebrated the opening of the Mediapolis area for visitors on 29 August 2013.
• Yle openness happening at Mediapolis on 19 August 2014.

Analysis strategy

Analysis of the research material explored the Mediapolis development process and the interviewees’ interpretations and conclusions about that. Thus, the approach towards the interviews was ‘factual’ (Koskinen, Alasuutari, & Peltonen, 2005; Alastalo & Åkerman, 2010). The interviewees were considered expert informants of Mediapolis development. The author relied on the data she collected through the interviews, supporting documentation and participatory observation described above. As typical for qualitative research, the preliminary analysis started during the interviews and continued immediately after each interview meeting, when the author made notes of personal observations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Patton, 2015).

Before coding, the first author reviewed and read the interview transcripts several times to ensure familiarity with the material. She repeatedly listened to the recorded interviews to capture nuances. During this process, she took extensive notes and used those to facilitate coding and analysis of the transcribed interviews. Qualitative thematic coding was used to discover connections and patterns of similarities and differences in the empirical material. This was necessary to build understanding of the structures and themes in relation to the theoretical framework (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Patton, 2015). Atlas.ti software was used for the analysis.

Detailed analysis employed the dualities and integrative levels discussed in the theory section as analytical tools. However, in developing the analysis we realised that strategy and tactics were focussed on operational issues. Because Mediapolis is a new cluster, participants have been concentrated on developing practices at the operational level. The issues discussed by respondents with regard to
strategic and tactical levels were therefore ultimately focussed on operational level needs, problems and ambitions. Thus, we decided to focus the analysis of strategy and tactics on the operational level, instead of treating the latter as a separate focus. This facilitated fresh insights, as shown in the findings and discussed at the end of the article.

The respondents were promised full anonymity. For the analysis and reporting purposes, they were numbered 1–15. In reporting results, we offer no indication of the organisation each respondent represents. However, we can analyse what the partners said in relation to other partners to develop understanding of Mediapolis network relationships. We can also differentiate between public and private/commercial organisations, and between big and small organisations. Preliminary results were summarised in English and the two authors worked together to refine and critically examine the understandings presented next.

FINDINGS

The Mediapolis case illustrates managerial challenges and tensions in the creation of a media cluster, most of which hinge on the need to become a value network in order to achieve operational goals. Findings are treated as (1) opportunities and limitations for Mediapolis as a strategic integration issue, and (2) influencing and being influenced between Mediapolis partners as a tactical integration issue. Control and release at the operational level of integration are discussed in relation to strategy and tactics, as earlier explained. Quotes illustrate the findings and have been translated from Finnish.

Strategic integration: managing the duality between opportunities and limitations

On the strategic level of integration, Mediapolis is expected to enrich opportunities for growth, entrepreneurial action, employment and innovation in digital Finnish media production. As one respondent described this in 2013:

If we are brave to think big enough there are many kinds of possibilities, as we have talked about with a few of the companies that are planning to locate there. (Respondent 7)

In 2013 there were differences of opinion about the cluster strategy, but they were considered minor. Some saw the differences as a potential asset:

This type of project is considered relevant because we collect the different views and hopefully make a reasonable synthesis of them. (Respondent 1)

In time, however, a lack of alignment between strategic aims and operational requirements for managing a cluster created tensions. A 2016 comment illustrates:

We have to aim high, that’s self-evident. This cannot be regional but has to be national and international, we need to keep the big visions in mind. But to get there, one needs to understand that everything is built on the grassroots level, in day-to-day operations and small things that build the big picture. And these need to be fluent, correctly priced, well accomplished and rightly organised. (Respondent 13)

Opportunities for achieving cluster ambitions were constrained by high degrees of uncertainty and lack of operational experience in managing the cluster. This problem persisted for longer than perhaps necessary due to lack of managerial cohesiveness among the partners, each of which was accustomed to managing an independent organisation rather than an interdependent network. The Mediapolis Board benchmarked the Salford cluster in the United Kingdom, but soon realised it is not possible to copy a cluster ‘model’. This is because each cluster depends so heavily on the contexts, which inscribe the strategy and prescribe the aims, and are keyed to the respective interests of cluster partners.
Strategic-level tensions are partly accounted for by variation in priorities across the partners, despite general agreement on long-term aims for the cluster. Differences in priorities were especially noticeable when comparing perspectives from representatives in public service and private commercial firms. The strategic level of integration requires a business model for the cluster, but this was complicated by Yle’s noncommercial and not-for-profit charter. Yle is not a business, but it is the main buyer for the business partners in the cluster. Strategic priorities were not aligned. Yle wants to open its production resources for others to utilise – at a price – but those resources are derived from public funding and pricing services requires business logic. Yle has little experience in this, and therefore limited expertise. Opportunities for the cluster as a value network have been constrained by limitations inherent to a core partner – Yle as the anchor of Mediapolis.

For its part, Yle seems uncertain how to operate in the cluster context, indicating their corporate strategic priority of collaborating and greater ‘openness’ is at odds with their strategic position as a unique media operator in the Finnish media system. This has been the source of paralysis that commercial partners find frustrating. As one respondent explained about Yle in 2016:

It is not tuned to a similar timing as the commercial operators where you must react rather quickly and make a decision, which can be good or bad, but above all they have to make a decision. They cannot stay in a state of indecisiveness because the business goes down if no decisions are made, and that is the worst scenario. (Respondent 13)

Another respondent exclaimed:

Hey, c’mon, if we want to get something done, we have to make decisions and start doing. (Respondent 14)

Thus, by 2015 differences in perspective were no longer seen as strategic opportunities but experienced as operational problems. As described by respondents, strategic-level aims were not aligned with operational level realities. As one respondent said in 2016:

There is kind of an agreement about the big vision, but not about the concrete steps. The Mediapolis vision is not really relevant for the daily priorities of the partners. (Respondent 6)

The focus today is defining Mediapolis at the level of concrete operations, with emphasis on management requirements to achieve cluster ambitions. In short, the focus is on operationalising a value producing network. This is reflected in a remark from one respondent in 2016:

There is a paradox here that since 2011 we have tried to build the operational model, but the truth and practice has shown that it is more useful to just do things and build models afterwards based on the action. (Respondent 11)

At the strategic level there was a rational, planned approach to Mediapolis as a real estate development project, but not for the managerial aspect that is a critical success factor at the operational level as a cluster. In the past 18 months, developing the management model and practices has become a top priority, as evident in establishing the Co-operative company as a tool for clarifying roles and responsibilities.

Despite noted problems, it is important to acknowledge enormous contributions from the anchor, Yle, which have been crucial for what Mediapolis has achieved to date. As one respondent said:

Yle’s commitment to this has been extremely good, and without it this process would not have moved ahead this way. (Respondent 14)

The degree of commitment is affected by external factors that are often crucial in media industries where policy and politics play a powerful role (like the Tampere City and Pirkanmaa Region support) – especially for firms in the public sector, like Yle.
Yle’s situation in Finland was recently reevaluated by a parliamentary committee. Commercial media operators have been loudly questioning Yle’s position in the Finnish media market, especially in web-based content and services. This renders Yle an unpredictable anchor. Given its comparative size and importance as a buyer in this media market, it is likely the irreplaceable client firm for Mediapolis success. Thus, on the one hand Yle’s corporate strategy continues to emphasise openness and partnerships, which bodes well for developing the cluster as a value network. On the other hand, the political pressures and potential regulatory demands typical for public service media may hamper the development of Mediapolis as a value network. As one respondent observed:

Yle as a partner is so big and so unpredictable that if your operations would only depend on Yle, your company might fall or succeed. [So] it’s totally coincidental. (Respondent 10)

Tactical integration: managing the duality between influencing and being influenced

As stated, Yle has a role of central importance as the client-firm anchoring the Mediapolis cluster. A critical success factor for Yle’s participation in the Mediapolis development is the capability of the cluster to offer possibilities for Yle to realise its corporate strategic intentions of achieving greater openness and building partnerships. Problems noted in discussion of strategic-level integration were also manifested at the tactical level, where the tensions hinge on the duality of each partner being simultaneously an influence and influenced. Mediapolis partners considered potential collaboration with Yle as a crucial influence and success factor for both the cluster development and their own business opportunities. However, at the same time they feared that Yle’s strategic objective of opening up and developing partnerships might not actualise in practical terms, as one respondent observed in 2013:

The most essential point is that Yle really opens up rather than fancy talk about that. (Respondent 8)

After the EU-funded phase ended in January 2015, the Mediapolis project was at a crossroads. The initial ‘meeting of the minds’ and respective commitments that were agreed at the strategic level early on were waning. The flames of enthusiasm burned much lower. The decisive challenge has been in building the management model for operations as a value network, rather than a disparate assortment of colocated organisations. In other words, the cluster was not sufficient to realise the partners’ ambitions for its creation. In November 2015, the main partners held a pivotal meeting in which the situation was frankly discussed and the decision was taken to found a Co-operative as the best option for the Mediapolis ‘business model’. At the time of this writing, the Co-operative’s functions are not yet firmly defined and there are varying perspectives between partners regarding its future role, but this is clearly a step forward in the development of cluster management.

Since 2013, it had become increasingly clear to the partners that interorganisational relationships must be managed, and that it is something of shared importance, as value network theory suggests. Being colocated as a cluster has not met expectations and produced success in relation to Mediapolis aims to become a network and a seedbed for innovations. Further, Mediapolis is not well known internationally and is not a benchmark, due to slow development of global pipelines. The cluster must become more than a successful real estate redevelopment project for the partners to realise sufficient value for the costs of agglomeration. There was growing recognition among the partners of the need for managed routines, processes and roles to facilitate collaborative practice. This was described by a respondent in the second interview round in 2015:

The unsolved, shared area of responsibilities has been too big and unclear, and it has hindered the development of concrete small things. Many partners have wondered what is done here because nothing happens … It’s a cruel truth in the background that when there are no process functions or supporting machinery that could create co-operation or new business. This exists on paper. But you cannot build them only on paper. (Respondent 5)
The partners consider the Co-operative a solution to facilitate making advances in content innovation and production. As noted in the literature review, there are frequently complications in network relationships because each node is relatively independent, but at the same time must be interdependent – each node is an influence and is also influenced. The weakest link in the Mediapolis chain of interdependent relationships was the lack of a productive partnership at the operational level, including the roles and responsibilities, which caused serious difficulties at the tactical level. What Yle did and did not do was a significant influence on the cluster as a network, and at the same time, the growing realisation that the cluster was not working influenced Yle to support the Co-operative solution.

The interests of organisations as such matter greatly, and this is complicated because, as a respondent explained:

…we are open but cannot be [that] in certain issues … we play towards the same goal but nonetheless everyone has their own games in the background with their own objectives. (Respondent 11)

The duality of being an influence and being influenced will persist and is therefore a crucial management need for the cluster. At issue is the degree to which the influence dynamic is mutually beneficial or contributes to shared failure – a virtuous circle or vicious spiral. This highlights the importance of the network within and beyond the cluster.

The expectations and needs of small independent entrepreneurs and the big operators differ significantly. As one of the ‘small’ interviewees said:

I don’t expect Mediapolis to create anything because I have to create everything myself … I think it is unthinkable that I would come here and expect them to do or bring something for me. How can they know what I need because I myself do not know? (Respondent 4)

This implies the need to recognise not only mutual interests and influences, but also differences between organisations. The weakest node affects the network as a whole and this is especially problematic if weaknesses are evident in the client-firm that anchors the cluster. Large public operators have ample resources to enable their employees to spend time on Mediapolis development, while small companies (not to mention freelancers) find this difficult or impossible due to opportunity costs – that is, lost time in revenue-generating work. Their motivation to participate in cluster development would require either external funding or high (and often immediate) prospects for new business creation. Thus, the capacity to influence is not easily balanced. But if the ‘small’ group is not able to exert sufficient influence on the network to ensure a reasonable livelihood, they might have considerable influence by pulling out of the project – which would certainly pose an existential dilemma for the ‘bigs’.

The necessary next step is to operationalise the cluster as a value-producing network. This is demanding because of variation in motivations among the partners. As one respondent explained:

The root reason is a positive problem that no one’s business is directly dependent on the co-operation. This makes the motivational level and drivers rather feeble. It is already a success because it is up and running, works and is full of people. It’s a won case. [But] now when we try to move from this basic level to the ideal level that is pursued, the motivations are not strong – there are no imperative reasons for action. (Respondent 5)

This points to problems caused by a lack of leadership, which is a cluster management problem. The operational duality between control and release highlights the problem of one firm exerting too much control over a network, thereby threatening to destroy its potential to create unique value as a network. But in the case of Mediapolis, we see a problem is caused by the lack of sufficient control (too much release) in managing the cluster. The degrees of independence are too high for the cluster to realise sufficient value from colocation because there is insufficient networked collaboration among the partners. They have been colocated, but not coordinated; here is density, but not enough intensity; there is high potential for connectivity, but not enough conductivity in practice.
DISCUSSION

Although industry clusters and value networks have separately been the focus of considerable research interest, the possible gains from combining these theoretical approaches with clear links to practice has yet to be explored. Linking them in this project has proven useful for deepening understanding of how the development of both depends heavily on the quality of management policy and practice. We have analysed the Mediapolis case on that basis in the context of creative industries with an emphasis on three dualities (Håkansson & Ford, 2002) at two levels (strategic and tactical) of needed integration with a focus on their implications for the third level (operational) (see Coughlan et al., 2003).

Based on our analysis, we note that managerial challenges in establishing and developing Mediapolis as a cluster are typical in the media industry context (cf. Karlsson & Picard, 2011). What is also evident from our case study is a correlated set of challenges keyed to difficulties in realising sufficient value from colocation in a cluster alone, which points to the need to build a value network across and beyond cluster boundaries. In our empirical case, the cluster and network for Mediapolis overlap and are clearly interdependent. A key finding of our study was that network relationships were the most essential factor for producing value in the Mediapolis cluster. Achieving this depends on routine collaboration, which in our case was not happening sufficiently despite the density of the Mediapolis cluster as a spatial agglomeration of firms (see Picard, 2008). Thus, the density of companies in a cluster is no substitute for the intensity of interactions between them, suggesting that mere colocation does not guarantee benefits expected from the cluster participation (cf. Achtenhagen & Picard, 2011). Our findings demonstrate that networked interactions in the cluster context merit close consideration, and that linking the theories of clusters and value networks provides a useful theoretical framework to do so. We expand further on this point in the next section.

Theoretical contributions

For its part, a network perspective on cluster management is helpful because the interdependencies are complex and diverse (Duysters, de Man, & Wildeman, 1999; Peppard & Rylander, 2006). Differences create tension, disagreement and conflict. This can be healthy when the issues are substantively important and resolved amicably, or can cause dysfunctional problems if not handled well. In the end, this is a job for managers. If the cluster is not focussed on creating value in and through the substance of what participants are doing, then it cannot be much more than a real estate development project. Once that is achieved, however successfully for the real estate owner, it has limited possibilities for adding value to justify the cost to participants for colocation. The media cluster is a platform, like Mediapolis is expected to become, for sharing knowledge, developing innovation and creating value that is shared. Thus, ‘the exchange is what is really important’ (Allee, 2000: 38). Our analysis of the Mediapolis case extends theory on industry clusters by demonstrating that effective cluster management conforms to the criteria associated with the value creation logic and development of a value network across and beyond cluster boundaries. Such management is dynamic, ongoing and strategically driven by the goal of shared value creation. Moreover, value networks purposefully configure interdependent relationships between organisations that collaboratively aim at creating value. Put another way, the cluster concept of colocation falls short of solving the need for actual interactions focussed on achieving intended results; bringing theory on value networks to bear on this question, provides novel theoretical ground to advance research on industry cluster management.

The potential for value creation in collaborative value networks is based on interaction at strategic, tactical and operational levels, as suggested by previous research (Kanter, 1994; Coughlan et al., 2003). However, our analysis found that treating these levels separately, although conceptually useful, does not untangle the problems with practice, and we can conclude that everything ultimately comes down
to operational management. We thus extend theory relating to the role of strategy in cluster success by showing that strategic-level integration does not guarantee cluster success as a value network, even when there is general agreement on the vision among cluster partners. Issues highlighted by our respondents regarding strategic and tactical level dualities were linked to frustrations and opportunities in operational terms. At the operational level, the cluster was not integrated, and thus the management challenge was about the relative imbalance and duality between control and release. Accordingly, our findings extend value network theory by showing that simultaneous integration of the strategic and tactical levels through operational management are essential conditions for success.

Based on our analysis, and as illustrated in the empirical quotes in the findings section of this article, integration at the strategic level has been reasonably successful in Mediapolis. The main partners are ‘on the same page’ regarding the vision and general ambitions for the cluster. The opportunities that should be opened by colocation in theory are limited, however, by lack of integration at the operational level. This is a key managerial challenge that hinges on developing the cluster as a network to realise sufficient value from its operation to justify the costs involved in agglomeration.

Limitations and opportunities for future research

As with all studies, our study has important limitations. We concentrate on a single case study, which means the findings may not be fully generalisable. Triangulation between the authors in relation to the original data was constrained by language issues, leading to potential researcher bias. However, multiple interviews with multiple interviewees as well as multiple sources of empirical research material support the trustworthiness of the results. We have been able to follow the case from the start of Mediapolis development, which is not only a rare opportunity to achieve a longitudinal case study over the cluster’s lifecycle, but also enabled us to obtain respondents’ reactions to our findings and correct our understandings as the research developed along with the cluster.

The Mediapolis project reached its goals as a real estate development project well ahead of schedule, and its goals for populating the cluster were admirably exceeded. This may be surprising in the light of cluster theory because Tampere has comparative liabilities. It is not a major international city or urban area that is typical for creative cluster locations (Davis, Creutzberg, & Arthurs, 2009), and Toholppi is on Tampere’s periphery. The potential for local buzz and global pipelines is not as great as for many media clusters (Bathelt, Malmberg, & Maskell, 2004; Bathelt, 2005). Mediapolis is therefore an interesting case in the light of earlier media cluster research (e.g., Karlsson & Picard, 2011) and merits further investigation in relation to the location aspect.

Further research on Mediapolis is needed about the two other levels of integration proposed by Coughlan et al. (2003), that is, the interpersonal and the cultural levels. On the face of it, the interpersonal advantages to be gained from clustering do not inherently result in the realisation of sufficient value in operational practice, without management policies and practices to capitalise on that. Regarding the latter, an uncertain period of time is always required to accumulate the experiences that are necessary to build trust, develop routines, embed rituals and tacit knowledge that are prerequisites for an interorganisational culture. That is to say, a cluster culture that is shared enough and durable enough to ensure sustainability.

In future research, it would be useful to dig deeper into the nature of the suggested integration levels: strategic, tactical, operational, interpersonal and cultural (see Coughlan et al., 2003). Our analysis demonstrates the utility of linking strategic and tactical levels with a focus on the operational level. We suspect more insights could be generated by working backwards from the operational to the other two levels as the cluster becomes firmly established. At some point, operations may become misaligned with strategy, for example. This is likely the period when focusing on the cultural level would also become fruitful. On the basis of our analysis, the Mediapolis cluster’s success depends on the degree to which
the levels are not treated as separate layers, but as intersecting arenas of management practice. Thus, the different levels in general may be more usefully conceptualised as the complex interplay between interdependent arenas of management activity and context in further research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Mediapolis case demonstrates why it is crucial to consider the types of integration at different levels as a dynamic structure. This is a pivotal issue for the management of a media cluster as a value network. If strategic integration is incoherent, it is difficult to develop practical solutions that ensure tactical and operational integration. If operational integration is not accomplished, the strategy is likely to be untethered and the tactics confused and at cross-purposes. In this view, building a value network is as important for mutual success as cluster development. That is why it seems useful to integrate theories of industrial clusters and value networks. Doing so has potential to advance theory and improve managerial understandings, and thereby practices. We conclude that functioning, effective collaboration is possible without a cluster, but a cluster cannot be effective without a functioning value network.

In future research, we want to compare the case of Mediapolis, which is a brownstone project, with Malmö in Sweden and Salford (near Manchester) in the United Kingdom, which are greenfield projects. Each of these cluster configurations represents a different approach to developing a media cluster and comparative research should be fruitful for coming better to grips with the expectedly decisive role of context. This would contribute to advancing management theory and practice in relation to clusters, especially those that are not situated in major international cities like creative cluster theory generally suggests. This seems especially important given the growth of interest to develop clusters in regions suffering economic decline as a presumed means for facilitating economic revitalisation.

To conclude, we concur with Duysters, de Man, and Wildeman that ‘the real strategic potential of alliances can only be realised when the network as a whole is managed’ (1999: 199). Development seems to be always hostage to circumstances, which emphasises the importance of considering contextual features in developing both management theory and practice in relation to value networks in creative industry clusters.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

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Clusters and value networks in creative industries


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Paper 6
Managing Tensions of Collaboration in a Hybrid Organisation: A Case study of the Mediapolis Cluster in Finland

Sari Virta

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Paper 6 is not included in the electronic version of the thesis.
Managing Tensions of Collaboration in a Hybrid Organisation: A Case Study of the Mediapolis Cluster in Finland

Sari Virta

ABSTRACT

Cross-sector collaboration combining public (noncommercial) and private (commercial) organisational orientations is expected to provide support for the flexible and dynamic responses required in the disruptive operational environments, which challenge the performance and survival of creative industry organisations. However, such collaboration features complexity and tensions. This article explores inherent tensions of cross-sector collaboration by utilising theorisations on hybrid organisations. A qualitative case study of a hybrid organisation, which was created to manage a creative industry cluster, is used as means to explore and analyse the tensions. The focus is on tensions because their successful management increases the value-creation potential of cross-sector collaborations. The results contribute to emergent scholarly discussions on hybrid organisations and hybrid organising, focusing on the central role of tensions as a management challenge. In addition to the theoretical contributions, the results have implications for managers aiming to cope with collaborative tensions in practice.
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