

# On the Shoulders of Ants

You get the best results in business if you drop the word “performance” from your vocabulary.

Replace it with “contribution”.

- Peter Drucker

Employee-driven innovation: A case study of one organization in the digital payment sector.

Ida Martine Nordberg Jacobsen



Master`s Thesis ESST -  
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Replace it with “contribution”. - Peter Drucker (Edersheim 2008, 213, own translation)

Employee-Driven Innovation: A case study of one organization in the digital payment sector

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Ida Martine Nordberg Jacobsen

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## Abstract

There is no secret that organizations look for new sources of innovation. Previous research in innovation studies has long recognized the role of R&D and special departments as the source and drivers of innovation. At the same time, the increased trend of decentralisation in organizations creates spaces for employees to be drivers of innovation and has led to the concept of Employee-Driven Innovation (EDI). Placed within innovation studies focusing on micro-level activities and processes in organizations, the concept of EDI is based on the understanding that innovation occurs through the daily practice and culture amongst employees. Even though scholars treat the concept of EDI as incipient, previous research in innovation studies has focused on the individual-organization-innovation interaction through studies of creativity and innovative behaviour. In this thesis I combine two traditional theories extracted from innovation studies, namely creativity and the activation of innovation, with previous research regarding EDI. The purpose is to examine how to organise a work environment consisting of conditions beneficial to EDI, as well as how it affects the willingness of employees to be innovative.

The research is based on semi structured in-depth interviews with employees recruited from one of the leading organizations in the Norwegian digital payment industry. This will provide insight into how an organization facilitates a work environment which creates spaces for employees to drive innovation, and how it affects employees` willingness to be innovative. In addition, the combination of theory used in this thesis will provide insight into the distinction between creativity and innovation.

Even though several of the conditions serving as drivers to the practice of EDI are present in a work environment, this study shows that the conditions cannot exist alone. I have found that there is a need for a holistic approach, and thereby a need for cooperation and balance between the conditions present in order to best facilitate the practice of EDI. In addition, the latter reveals a certain distinction between creativity and innovation, as the presence of one condition alone might promote creativity but need the support from other conditions in order to create a space which positions employees as drivers to innovation.

## Acknowledgements

An era is now completed with this masters thesis, and there are several people that made this possible and therefore deserve special recognition.

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*Oslo, 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2018, Ida Martine Nordberg Jacobsen*

## Abbreviations

**EDI – Employee-Driven Innovation**

**STI – Science, Technology and Innovation mode (the production and use of codified scientific and technical knowledge)**

**DUI – Doing, Using and Interacting (experienced-based mode of learning)**

**LO – National organization in Norway (*Landsorganisasjonen* – the largest wage earner organization)**

**NHO – The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise**

**NAF – Norwegian Workers Union (management, construction and maintenance)**

**CS – Corporate Services (Department in Nets)**





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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Thesis background

It is no secret that organizations today continually look for new sources of innovation in order to sustain competitive advantage in the market. For a long time, innovation literature has emphasized the role of research and development (R&D), skilled scientists and engineers in successful innovation, especially within science-based sectors (Arundel et al. 2007, 1176). On the other hand, recognizing alternative sources for innovation, beside the traditional skilled scientists and engineers, may lead to an increase in innovative efforts.

In the search for new sources of innovation, scholars have emphasized how we need to improve our knowledge of why innovation must be recognized as practice-based in the organizational culture (Brandi & Hasse 2012, 127). Furthermore, Arundel et al. (2007, 1176) discuss how innovation performance is significantly enhanced when firms combine science-based learning (STI) with experience-based learning (DUI). The latter refers to how organizations innovate through *learning by doing*, exploiting new knowledge and changes introduced by employees (Jensen et al. 2016). Recognizing the employees as drivers for innovation, the concept of EDI emerges. Despite a growing acceptance of the importance of work organization there is still a need to further explore the linkages between workplace organization and the dynamics of innovation at the level of the firm (Arundel et al. 2007), namely the individual-organization-innovation interaction. In this matter, EDI can be tied to the mode of DUI as a part of innovation studies at the micro level. By doing so, it is possible to look at how innovation is produced and influenced by structure, relations, processes and daily practice among employees.

The concept of EDI has evolved along with an increasing trend in today's organizational development and structure. This trend is characterized by decentralisation and has the purpose of creating an organizational form that can respond to change in its environment more effectively (Boseman & Jones 1974; Høystrup 2012). This organizational form makes it possible to effectively hand over responsibility for continuous improvement to operative teams. Therefore, the traditional hierarchical authority becomes diminished (Boseman & Jones 1974; Høystrup 2012). As a result of the previous point, the relationship between worker

and organization has changed in terms of less hierarchical structures and greater autonomy (Price et al. 2012; Høyrup 2012).

Furthermore, employees are increasingly expected to take responsibility for additional work that was not initially assigned to their job. This development contributes to the creation of spaces for creative involvement, where employees can be positioned as drivers of innovation (Price et al. 2012).

With close ties to DUI in innovation studies, the concept of EDI underlines the organization-individual interaction where innovation is assumed to arise from the everyday practices of workers (Brandi & Hasse 2012; Høyrup 2012; Kesting & Ulhøi 2010). In this thesis, EDI is understood as embracing the whole innovation process in the perspective of employees, from idea generation to the implementation of those ideas.

Scholars tend to emphasize that research on EDI is still in its early phase. The existing research in the field can be divided into two main strands; conditions either beneficial or repressing to EDI and the general effects of EDI. It is pointed out by researchers that there is a need to, amongst other aspects, extend knowledge about organizational conditions that are beneficial to EDI practices (Aasen et al. 2012).

In this thesis I will examine how organizations build a work environment beneficial to EDI. Therefore, I am particularly interested in the facilitation of conditions favourable to EDI, and how this affects the willingness of employees to be innovative. This thereby concerns the facilitation of a work environment favourable to the unfolding of the practice itself.

Closely related objectives to employees' contribution to innovation are creativity studies and studies of activation of innovation. In this thesis, I will draw upon perspectives of Amabile (1988) and Kanter (1996) to complement EDI with creativity studies and studies of innovation activation. The combination of these two perspectives and EDI are relevant to this thesis because they similarly look at (1) conditions at work for idea generation (2) because of this similarity the concepts can help analyze a work environment beneficial to EDI. For this study, I have created an analytical framework based on the combination of the chosen theories and the concept of EDI. In addition to looking at how work environments beneficial to EDI are facilitated and the willingness for employees to be innovative, this analytical

framework will be used to provide insights into the distinction between creativity and innovation.

## 1.2 Nets: Corporate Services

To empirically investigate the research question put forth in this thesis, the Norwegian company Nets was chosen as the case study. Nets has been instrumental in developing a modern payment infrastructure over the last 50 years. The company is a leading provider of digital payment services and related technology solutions across the Nordic region. Being at the heart of the digital payment ecosystem, the company operates in a deeply entrenched network which connects merchants, corporate customers, financial institutions and consumers. In addition, Nets is increasingly utilizing value-added services in order to help improve the named network in respective activities (Nets).

The establishment of Nets occurred with the merger between Danish payments company PBS Holding A/S and the Norwegian payments company Nordito AS in 2010. Furthermore, Nets was acquired by the Advent Funds, the Bain Capital Funds and the ATP Investment Vehicles in July 2014 from the previous shareholders, consisting of 186 primarily Danish and Norwegian banks, through an acquisition of the parent operating company of the Nets group, Nets Holding A/S (Nets).

In terms of size and range, the organization employs approximately 2,400 employees, and is located in six countries (Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia). In 2016, the company processed more than 7.7 billion issuing and acquiring transactions and served a network of more than 300,000 merchants and 240 banks. Additionally, they maintained contracts with more than 240,000 corporate customers for payment services and managed over 8 million digital identities (Nets).

According to Nets, the digital payment industry is a highly competitive international industry that is experiencing a significant change. Furthermore, the company emphasizes how the payments sector is characterised by increasing competition, consolidation and regulation (Nets). Therefore, Nets functions as an appropriate case for the study in this master thesis, as the organization is dependent on finding effective solutions to stay competitive. To this extent, Nets points to six key success factors for payment companies in the current

environment: *Scale, efficiency, innovation, technology capabilities and customer focus*. To remain competitive, the company expresses how they, amongst other things, need an effective corporate governance structure and streamlined decision-making (Nets). These two points are related to the organizational changes pointed out in section 1.

Furthermore, Nets can be categorized as a firm offering knowledge-intensive services and products. Studies of this type of industry often concerns innovation at a firm or project level, neglecting innovation initiated at the level of employees (De Jong & Kemp 2003, 190). EDI concerns all types of innovation but are especially relevant to micro-scale innovation. Knowledge-intensive services are dependent on this type of innovation, as its nature implies that incremental adjustments must be made continuously to meet customer demands (De Jong & Kemp 2003, 191).

Nets does not focus on EDI explicitly, but organizations in general do not need to engage in EDI deliberately or systematically, but still have a work environment characterized by conditions beneficial to the practice of EDI (Amundsen et al. 2014; Teglberg-Lefèvre 2010). It will therefore be interesting to use Nets as a case for this study and look closer at how they facilitate a work environment beneficial to EDI, as well as how this affect the willingness of their employees to be innovative.

The company is organised into three business segments; *Merchant Services, Financial & Network Services, and Corporate Services*. As the time and scope of the thesis is limited I chose to delimit the case to one department of the company, *Corporate Services (CS)*. Access to the case is described further in section 3.2. Contextual information about the case in this section is extracted partly from their own website nets.no and from knowledge acquired from conversations with my contact in Nets.

### 1.3 Research question and purpose

In this thesis I seek to contribute to the conceptual understanding of EDI. Although not all organizations focus on EDI deliberately, it may be favourable to recognize what potential lies internal the organization. In the search of new sources of innovation, it may be possible to capture essential underlying mechanisms and issues explaining what positions employees as drivers for innovation. This can be achieved by exploring how one can organise a work

environment favourable to the practice of EDI. The research question for this master thesis is twofold:

*How does Nets facilitate a work environment beneficial for EDI, and how does that affect the willingness of employees to be innovative?*

As aforementioned, Nets as an organization, and its department CS, are not focusing on EDI deliberately in their work with innovation. The results of the study will therefore be characterized by this, as the study will be analysed from an EDI perspective.

In order to answer the research question, I will use an analytical framework made in respect of this thesis, based on different theories and literature presented in chapter 2. The analytical framework is presented in chapter 3 *Methodology* and visualizes conditions beneficial to the practice of EDI. The focus in this thesis lies on the perception of the individual employee, and the thesis will thereby be written in this perspective.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the conceptual understanding of EDI. Furthermore, it will contribute to implications in managing innovation and offer suggestions on how to create a work environment which positions employees as drivers for innovation, by highlighting conditions that are considered beneficial for EDI. In addition, an insight will be offered into how this work environment affects the willingness of being innovative amongst the employees and how its challenges can be overcome. The research also has the purpose of revealing what potential Nets work environment have to practice EDI.

#### 1.4 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of five chapters, with a classical structure, facilitated to explore and examine theory and empirical results to best answer the research question.

In chapter 2 I will clarify the terminologies and theories which I assess as relevant to contextualize my research question. The theoretical perspectives and previous research functions as the foundation for the analytical framework utilized in this thesis. Firstly, I position the concept of EDI in the field of innovation studies. Secondly, I offer a literature review regarding previous research focusing on conditions promotional to EDI. At the end of section 2.0, an insight will be given into the literature of creativity by Amabile (1988) and

activation of innovation by Kanter (1996), with a summary explaining the relation between the concept of EDI and the two named theories.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methods used to appropriately explore and answer the research question. Each step in the method is carefully explained. Additionally, the analytical approach will be presented, alongside the analytical framework developed. The analytical framework is a model, based on a combination of, as well as my elaboration of, earlier research in the field of EDI, creativity and activation of innovation.

Chapter 4 will present an analysis of the empirical findings of study, based on the analytical framework. The chapter is divided into conditions favorable to EDI, creativity and activation of innovation, and offers an analysis of the most prominent findings from the data collection. In chapter 5.0, the most prominent findings from the analysis will be discussed in light of the research question, theory, and earlier research regarding the field of EDI.

Chapter 6 serves as the conclusion of the thesis. In this chapter the research question will be answered. Additionally, it will be explored how the findings in my study contribute to the field of EDI. Finally, the recommendations to further research will be presented.

Furthermore, it will be offered suggestions on how to facilitate a work environment favorable to EDI in terms of implications in managing innovation. The thesis will conclude with the limitations of the study.

## 2.0 Literature and theoretical framework

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be presented. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section positions EDI literature within the field of innovation studies. In the second section I am offering a literature review regarding previous research in the field of EDI and its related aspects. The literature review will focus on conditions serving as drivers to the practice of EDI. In the third section insights from EDI will be complemented with insights from innovation studies, focusing primarily on the organizational-individual interaction. In this context, the work of two theorists will be explored, Amabile (1988) and Kanter (1996). The contribution by the named theorists is examined within creativity studies and studies of innovation activation. The two contributions are relevant to my study because they both look at organisational conditions favorable for idea generation. Additionally,



because of this similarity the concepts can help analyze a work environment beneficial for EDI. Therefore, a combination of previous research in the field of EDI, as well as the named theories will serve as the groundwork for the analytical frame used in the analysis later on in the thesis. The fourth section offers a summary of the previous sections, connecting the different theories and literature review.

## 2.1 Innovation and Employee-Driven Innovation

Innovation driven by employees is the focus of this thesis. In this section I will connect the concept of innovation to the concept of EDI, by showing how EDI can be understood as a sub-category of innovation. This will be followed by a literature review of previous research into EDI.

### 2.1.1 Innovation

One difficulty of managing innovation is attributed to the variety of ways that people understand the term. In its broadest sense, the term comes from Latin – *innovare* – meaning “to make something new” (Tidd & Bessant 2016, 19). Fagerberg (2005) pointed out an important distinction made in innovation and explains how one needs to distinguish between invention and innovation. The former refers to the first occurrence of an idea for a new product or process. The latter concerns the attempt to carry the idea out in practice (Fagerberg 2005, 4).

In this thesis the understanding of innovation as a phenomenon is shared by theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter (1934) Schmookler (1966) and Edquist et al. (2001) (referred to in Fagerberg 2005).

Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) referred to innovation as a non-static phenomenon and described it as an ongoing and dynamic activity put together by new combinations of existing resources, activities, and equipment (referred to in Fagerberg 2003, 7). The Schumpeterian understanding divides the concept of innovation into five types: new products, new methods of production, new sources of supply, the exploitation of new markets, and new ways to organize business (Fagerberg 2005, 6). In economic theory there has been a concentrated

focus into the first two of these types. Schmookler (1966) made a distinction between the two and theorized product technology as knowledge of how to create or improve products, versus production technology in terms of knowledge regarding how to produce technology (referred to in Fagerberg 2005, 7). These two distinctions reveal the terms of *product* and *process* innovation. Fagerberg (2005, 7) refers to Edquist et al. (2001) who have suggested dividing the category of process innovation into technological and organizational process innovation whereas the latter is related to new ways of organizing work.

As we can see, the named views and types of innovation are not limited to pure technical artefacts and products, but allows the inclusion of processes, routines, procedures, knowledge and learning in organizations. Therefore, innovation studies do not only concern innovation at a macro level but are increasingly acknowledging the importance of the micro level of the firm, and what conditions affect innovation at its different stages (Teece 2007). As Teece (2007) point out, executives seem to recognize new challenges in today`s competitive environments and understand how technological innovation is necessary, but not sufficient, for success. Simultaneously as focusing on R&D, develop and protect its intellectual property a firm must “generate and implement the complementary organizational and managerial innovations needed to achieve and sustain competitiveness” (Teece 2007, 1321).

Seen related to the distinction between invention and innovation, innovation can be considered as a process, involving the exploration and exploitation of opportunities for new or improved products, processes or services (Pavitt 2005, 88). Pavitt (2005) connects the process of innovation to the process of learning in terms of experimentation and an improved understanding of the innovation itself. The latter lends itself to the production and translation of knowledge. Jensen et al. (2016) stresses the translation of knowledge and learning in innovation by distinguishing between two modes of innovation; STI and DUI. The former refers to science, technology and innovation mode, based on the production and use of codified scientific and technical knowledge. The DUI-mode captures the micro-level of the firm through *Doing*, *Using* and *Interacting*. Furthermore, DUI rely on informal processes of learning and an experience-based know-how (Jensen et al. 2016; Høyrup 2010, 151).

Høyrup (2010, 151) connects the process of learning in organizations to workplace learning, arguing that EDI and workplace learning are embedded in everyday critical insight and reflective experiences at work. Connecting EDI to the mode of DUI allows for the inclusion of the employee as a driver for innovation. Furthermore, Høyrup (2010, 151) refers to how

innovation processes in organizations are fundamentally social processes and processes of human action. He similarly points to how the DUI-mode of innovation underlines informal processes of learning, where employee-driven innovation includes both formal and informal aspects of learning (Høystrup 2010, 151).

The next section illustrates how the concept of EDI capture activities and practices at the micro level of DUI and innovation activities in firms.

### 2.1.2 Employee-Driven Innovation

As pointed out earlier, the changed relationship between worker and organization, as well as new expectations to employees work responsibility, paves the way to a creative involvement in the organization. A situation thus opens up the possibility of positioning employees as drivers for innovation.

The concept of EDI is based on the understanding of employees being a hidden and overlooked source of innovative resources (Amundsen et al. 2014; Kesting & Ulhøi 2008; Kesting & Ulhøi 2010; Høystrup 2010). Furthermore, scholars in the field emphasize how employees possess invaluable skills and significant knowledge, based on experience and up-to-date information, due to their close contact with both internal and external organisational context (DUI) (Høystrup 2010; Amundsen et al. 2014; Amundsen et al. 2011; Kesting & Ulhøi 2008). As Kesting and Ulhøi (2010, 71) states, “employees typically acquire exclusive and in-depth and highly contextual dependent knowledge that managers often do not possess”.

EDI is mainly treated as a broad umbrella concept, the literature in the field is not unified by one clear definition (Høystrup 2012, 7). The definition of EDI chosen for this masters thesis is proposed by Høystrup (2012), and is an extension of the definition given by Kesting & Ulhøi (2008):

Employee-Driven Innovation refers to the generation and implementation of new ideas, products, and processes – including everyday remaking of jobs and organizational practices – originating from interaction of employees, who are not assigned to this task. The processes are unfolded in an organization and may be integrated in cooperative and managerial efforts of the organization. Employees are active and may initiate, support or even drive/lead the processes. (Høystrup 2012, 8)

Høyrup (2012, 8) clarifies *ordinary employees* as employees who are not formally assigned the task of being innovative. Additionally, as the definition of EDI reveals, the concept embraces the whole process of innovation, from idea generation to implementation. Furthermore, the aforementioned definition falls within the concept of classic innovation and permits the interpretation of EDI as both process, product and service innovation (Høyrup 2012; Høyrup 2010; Kesting & Ulhøi 2010; Amundsen et al. 2011; Amundsen et al. 2014). Therefore, EDI can be understood as any other kind of innovation. As Høyrup (2012, 7) states “the results may be substantive products, services and/or processes of an organization, and generation and/or implementation may be involved in the process”.

Nevertheless, the literature of EDI indicates a new dimension when compared to more classical innovation conceptualizations. EDI may contribute to innovation in informal ways and not as a part of the organizations overall ambitions in terms of goals and strategies. Therefore, it may be inaccessible to managers. In other words, the concept consists of practices and activities that “may not be initiated with a goal of innovation in mind, but nonetheless have it as a central outcome” (Høyrup 2012, 7; Price et al. 2012).

Despite scholars` tendency to treat the concept as in its infancy, this might not be the case after all. As already illustrated in the previous section, EDI is a concept which captures some dimensions of previous innovation studies, for example, the mode of DUI. In addition, there are several well-known concepts which touch upon aspects related to the concept of EDI. Related objectives are the microfoundations introduced by Teece (2007) which address the importance of micro processes and procedures operating at the micro level in the firm. Even though some of these studies could be relevant to the framework for the study in this thesis I chose the frame of EDI because it focuses explicitly on innovation driven by employees and not the organization-individual interaction indirectly.

Existing research related to EDI is quite homogenous and can be divided into two main strands of research; external and internal conditions for EDI, and the indirect and direct effects and consequences of EDI (Amundsen et al. 2011). Articles focusing explicitly on EDI have been most prominent in studies of innovation in firms during the last decade, characterized by Scandinavian research and scholars. One of the reasons for this seems to be the focus given to the Scandinavian traditional relationship between management and employee. The Norwegian work model rests on the tradition of including the employee in the

work of innovation and development. By supporting autonomy, idea generation and problem solving, the model have good prerequisites to the practice of EDI (Amundsen et al. 2011,11). Furthermore, Norway has long standing traditions for working actively with employee driven innovation. Through commitment to the development of industrial democracy, the LO / NAF cooperation project led to practices such as self-governing groups, job rotation, job extension and other alternative forms of workplace design (St.meld.nr.7 2008-2009). Ten years ago, the Norwegian government demonstrated a renewed focus for employees in their politics for innovation (Amundsen et al. 2011; St.meld.nr.7 2008-2009). The new venture is also a part of the collaboration with LO and NHO, and their “main agreement” for collaboration between employees and managers. This agreement commits employees and managers to collaborate on the firm`s development. With this collaboration agreement and political focus on contributions of employees in work with innovation, the conditions in the Norwegian labour market have all prerequisites to promote EDI (Amundsen et al. 2011; St.meld.nr.7 2008-2009).

It is communicated throughout the literature of EDI that a need for other sources of innovative resources in organisations is increasingly being recognized. It is highlighted within the literature that societies and firms should not restrict themselves to relying exclusively on experts and special departments like R&D (Høystrup 2010, 1; Kesting & Ulhøi 2010; 66). Due to organizational changes and new expectations to the employee, scholars in the field of EDI emphasize the changes in society and market demands regarding the emergence of new technology, need for expertise and competency, and the requirement for highly flexible business models due to rapid shifts in the market (Kesting & Ulhøi 2010, 68).

### 2.1.3 Summarizing Employee-Driven Innovation

As we can see, both the understandings of employee driven innovation, and innovation, emphasize the phenomena as something which leads to improvements of already existing elements and incremental changes. EDI can be interpreted as a sub-category and complementary to innovation as the named understandings of innovation allows the inclusion of the employee, who are to come up with innovative ideas and carry out activities underlying innovative results. Both EDI and the classical understanding of innovation are not limited to pure technical artefacts, but also processes, routines, procedures, knowledge and learning in organizations. In addition, as emphasized earlier in the previous section, the

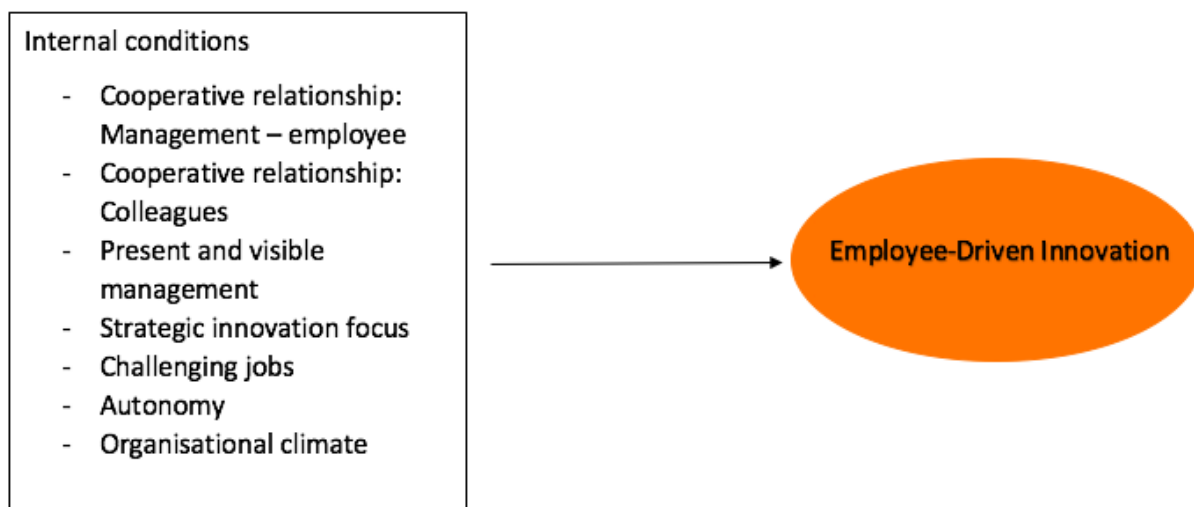
concept of EDI captures innovative activities at the micro level of the DUI-mode in innovation studies.

The understanding of EDI provided in this thesis also embrace the whole innovation process. Therefore, it can be drawn a distinction in the concept: the idea generation stage and the implementation of those ideas. Similarly, this connects the distinction between invention and innovation made by Fagerberg (2005). This thesis does not address the link to determinants of implementation and innovative output but focuses on the idea generation stage in terms of facilitation of a work environment beneficial to EDI.

## 2.2 Drivers to Employee-Driven Innovation

To explore the research question put forth in this thesis, conditions serving as drivers to EDI are of particular relevance. It is worth mentioning that these conditions can be divided into both internal and contextual. The focus in this thesis is delimited to concern internal conditions. Further, I will present a few examples of research focusing explicitly on conditions serving as drivers to the practice of EDI. This includes research regarding aspects of EDI itself in terms of promoting innovative behaviour and workplace innovation. The upcoming mentioned conditions are reflected and summarized in figure 1. Figure 1 is also an elaboration of a model presented in a literature review provided by Amundsen et al. (2011).

Figure 1. Drivers for Employee-driven Innovation



Source: Extracted from, and own elaboration of, Amundsen et al. (2011, 14)

### 2.2.1 Previous research focusing on drivers to EDI

Like the understanding of innovation proposed earlier in this chapter, Høyrup (2010) addresses the issue of knowledge transfer and stresses the concept of EDI and workplace learning. In his article, Høyrup (2010, 144) theorize on how employees can be in the centre of the flow of information in the firm. Furthermore, he points to how employees thereby lead to the exchange of practical knowledge and know-how in activities of informal internal networks. Hence, at the individual level, Høyrup (2010, 144) argue how learning and innovation possibilities embedded in work serves as preconditions and can lead to improved job satisfaction. In relation to the former, it is close ties between the practice of EDI and traditional theory regarding work psychology. Anyway, this thesis will not address the conditions favourable to improved job satisfaction, even though it can be recognized clear similarities to the conditions in figure 1.

Høyrup (2010, 149) emphasize how the practice of EDI is characterized by high involvement on the part of employees and recognized five important drivers: expertise, experience, ideas, creativity and skills of the firms' employees. Additionally, similar to how Fagerberg (2005) distinct invention from innovation, Høyrup (2010) addresses the distinction between innovative behaviour and innovation in EDI. He refers to innovative behaviour as being prior to innovation itself and something which can result both in innovation and in failure (Høyrup 2010, 152). Furthermore, Høyrup (2010, 152) refers to a paper by Lempiälä and Yli-Kauhaluoma who defined innovative behaviour as “all individual actions directed at the generation, introduction and application of beneficial novelty at any organizational level” (referred to in Høyrup 2010, 152), namely at the idea generation stage.

Similarly, to what Høyrup (2010) points out about involvement of employees, Kesting & Ulhøi (2010) refers to the importance of participation of employees. They connect the importance of employee participation to “firm's competition to attract and retain the best human talents” (Kesting & Ulhøi 2010, 66). Today's society is characterized by employees increasingly expecting to realize their potential at work and demand satisfying jobs (Kesting & Ulhøi 2010, 66). In relation to this, Kesting & Ulhøi (2010, 75) recognize five factors which are perceived as the most important drivers for employee participation: Management support, Creation of an environment for idea generation, Decision structure, Incentives, Corporate culture and climate.

As the previous paragraphs reveal, human capital is increasingly regarded as an important production factor at both management level and amongst shop-floor workers. Kesting & Ulhøi (2010) stress how employee participation function as a crucial element in this matter. Aasen et al. (2012, 57) theorize on how the implementation of EDI practices requires a successful interplay between dimensions of both management and employee: the interrelationship between professional role performance, cultural characteristics and supportive means and tools. Supplementary, they identify additional factors to those previously mentioned as drivers to the practice of EDI: commitment, cooperativeness, pride, trustfulness, autonomy, tolerance, feeling of security, learning orientation, openness (Aasen et al. 2012, 65).

In a study conducted by Amundsen et al. (2014, 28) it is suggested that EDI can be implemented and performed in different ways. Even so, independent of what way EDI is performed, or implemented, it has the potential of contributing to increased and improved overall innovation capacity. Their study revealed that companies successfully performing EDI in one way or another had some qualities in common. These qualities can be categorised in three interrelated domains (Amundsen et al. 2014, 28):

1. **Performance of specific organizational roles**, which are leaders, employees and (where present) union representatives
2. **Recognition of particular cultural characteristics** that guide employees into certain patterns of thought and action
3. **Use of specific structural mechanisms**, tools, to encourage and facilitate EDI-practices

In relation to the third domain listed, Amundsen et al. (2014, 28) point out how mechanisms and tools may “constitute the backbone of innovative work, given a productive interplay with the two other domains”. Furthermore, their study recognized nine interrelated cultural characteristics. This imply that by changing “the nature of one of them probably would affect one or more of the others” (Amundsen et al. 2014, 28). The cultural characteristics recognized in the study by Amundsen et al. (2014, 29) are: Commitment, Cooperative orientation, Pride, Trust, Tolerance, Feeling of security, Development Orientation, Openness, Autonomy. Following this, it is reasonable to believe that the interrelations between the



different named domains and characteristics indicate that they need to operate in balance and in collaboration with each other. This point is also reflected in the previous paragraphs in this literature review.

In Amundsen et al. (2011), it is further presented research which shed light on different conditions serving as drivers to EDI. Amundsen et al. (2011, 5) point out how innovation includes a set of activities which is dependent on the organizations ability to exploit available competence either internal or external to the organization. Furthermore, they offer a literature review on EDI, summarizing literature which considers conditions beneficial to EDI, as well as effects of EDI in organizations.

Amundsen et al. (2011) refer to, amongst others, De Jong and Kemp (2003), who address different conditions affecting employees' innovative behaviour in knowledge-intensive firms. The conditions recognised by De Jong and Kemp (2003) are: challenging jobs, autonomy, innovation as a strategic focus in the organization, supportive climate, external relations with a frequent contact, variation in market- and demand relations. In addition, Amundsen et al. (2011) refers to earlier research concerning the promotion of creativity amongst individuals in organizations, whereas a creativity study conducted by Amabile (1988) is mentioned. In her study, Amabile (1988) recognized similar factors closely related to those already named in this review. Her study will be explored further in section 2.4.1.

Another contribution to the concept of EDI is Smith et al. (2008), also referred to in Amundsen et al. (2011). Smith et al. (2008) mapped and identified those conditions which underlies and affects the development of EDI. In other words, a relatively similar study as this thesis. The four conditions recognized in their study are: supportive management, autonomy, cooperation and interaction, and standards for explorations (Smith et al. 2008; Amundsen et al. 2011).

As the previous paragraphs displays, the conditions named concern all social, structural and cultural conditions. Thus, it is clear that one can see EDI related to management. De Jong & Kemp (2003) and Amundsen et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of *strategic focus on innovation* as an important factor to the promotion of EDI. Hence, it needs to be balanced with other conditions such as cooperative culture and working climate (Amundsen et al. 2011). In addition, Teglberg-Lefèvre (2010) published a paper concerning modes of approach

to employee driven innovation in France, an empirical study of six cases. Similar to Amundsen et al. (2014), she demonstrates how EDI can mean very different things in different organizations and presents distinctive modes of structured approaches to EDI. In her study she identified five factors that sums up the strategic scope of approaches to EDI (Teglborg-Lefèvre 2010, 220):

- Whether the structured approach to EDI emphasizes employee involvement or the emergence of innovations
- The extent to which the structured approach to employee-driven innovation is articulated with the firms' overall strategy
- The type of innovation sought
- The population targeted by the approach
- The role of employee-driven innovation in the functions of individual employees

In an article two years later, Teglborg et al. (2012) stress the tensions and conflicts of organizational norms and traditional approaches when a firm systematical push the practice of EDI and formalize the work of innovation derived from the operative level of the firm. Based on the former paragraph it is reasonable to believe that EDI cannot be isolated to a pure bottom-up process and need to be understood in relation to management. This is also reflected in the conditions named in this literature review, and through the interrelationship which can be traced between the conditions and its organizational dimensions.

Brandi & Hasse (2012, 127) refers to how empirical examples show that EDI is dependent on either cultural context or factors in which the employees everyday creative abilities and actions are recognized as potential resources for innovation in the organization. In addition to the cultural context, other scholars' stresses how structural or managerial factors influence how EDI is promoted and facilitated in the workplace (Teglborg-Lefevre 2010; Høystrup 2010; Brandi & Hasse 2012). In their study, Hansen et al. (2017, 334) point out how EDI makes demands on both the employee conduct and management practices. They recognized nine cultural conditions which were considered as beneficial to the practice of EDI, similar to those already presented in this literature review. In addition, they emphasize how employees should be given autonomy combined with clear expectations regarding their contributions to innovation and improvement. Similar they theorize how management need to understand that

their extent of control decreases when the employees are given greater autonomy (Hansen et al. 2017, 334). In other words, conditions, such as autonomy and supportive management, need to be seen interrelated as they affect each other.

As already mentioned, one of the conditions recognized in this literature review are *strategic focus on innovation*. Connecting EDI to managerial factors such as the concept of strategy, the link appears as quite clear. Strategies can have a motivational effect by providing direction for activities that a company will develop in the future through goals and visions to the employee (de Jong & Kemp 2003, 194). Additionally, they can also function as guidelines and give purpose to the work being done (Jacobsen & Thorsvik 2007; de Jong & Kemp 2003). Therefore, as de Jong & Kemp (2003, 194) refer to, organizations can stimulate employees' "innovative behaviour directly by paying strategic attention to innovation".

Another concept which gives a picture of how managerial factors such as strategy influence work environment promotional to EDI, is the concept of workplace innovation. Workplace innovation is defined by Oeij et al. (2017a, 150) as:

A developed and implemented practice or combination of practices that structurally (divisions of labour) and/or culturally (empowerment) enable employees to participate in organizational change and renewal to improve quality of working life and organizational performance. (Oeij et al. 2015a: 8, 14, referred to in Oeij et al. 2017a, 150)

This definition implies that one need to look at the organization as a whole and connect strategy, structure and culture together in order to reveal the benefits associated with the concept of workplace innovation (Oeij et al. 2017a, 150). In other words, it is likely to interpret that strategic, structural and cultural conditions need to be interpreted as interrelated and operate in balance with each other.

## 2.3 Creativity and the activation of innovation

As the previous section reveals, EDI is closely related to studies regarding creativity and the activation of innovation. Both creativity and activation of innovation are considered linked to the idea generation stage of the innovation process. Therefore, I have chosen to combine the literature regarding EDI explicitly with the perspectives of two scholars within innovation studies regarding creativity studies and studies on activation of innovation/idea generation. These two perspectives in combination with previous research on EDI will help explore and create a picture of how Nets organise and facilitate a work environment beneficial to EDI. In addition, drawing on creativity studies and activation of innovation, it will help understand how the facilitation of an environment beneficial to EDI affects employees' willingness to be innovative.

### 2.3.1 Creativity

According to Amundsen et al. (2011) creativity itself plays a central part in the concept of EDI. This relies on the assumption of that all employees have a potential for creativity and can contribute in work with development at the workplace, assumed that it is facilitated (Amundsen et al. 2011, 5). Higher demands are placed on creativity in today's rapidly developing organizational environment, which require the absence of compulsive practices surrounding employees (Nordhaug 2002, 269). Hence, it is not possible to force or regulate someone to be creative. Therefore, innovation must be facilitated through various conditions, such as significant degree of freedom (Nordhaug 2002, 269).

Amabile (1988, 126) defines creativity as *“the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or small group of individuals working together”*. Additionally, she defines organizational innovation as *“the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization”* (Amabile 1988, 126). Additionally, she theorizes that *“the ideas in question can be anything from ideas for new products, processes, or services within the organizations line of business to ideas for new procedures or policies within the organization itself”* (Amabile 1988, 126). In the study by Amabile (1988) the definition of the term implementation is broadly understood, to encompass elements of developing ideas and putting them to use. Based on the former, it is appropriate to interpret the given

understanding of creativity and organizational innovation as closely linked to the practice of EDI.

Creativity can be interpreted as the result of, amongst other things, having an open mind by being curious and seeing relationships between apparently unrelated factors leading to new results, solutions and breakthroughs (Saaty 1998, referred to in Meusbürger 2009, 103). In other words, creativity can be seen related to the ability of being solution oriented and see context and solutions where others see limitations. The former is reflected by Meusbürger (2009, 103) who stresses how creativity is necessary in order to produce new ideas and alternatives to enhance problem solving. In other words, creativity have close relations to the phenomenon of innovation. By connecting creativity and innovation together, “creativity is related to the generation of new and valuable ideas, whereas innovation is more about the *implementation* of those ideas” (Meusbürger 2009, 103). As pointed out earlier in this chapter, most innovations begin at the idea generation stage.

Meusbürger (2009, 103) argue that there is no surprise that “the skills, personal traits, organizational structures, and styles of leadership needed for creativity are not the same as those needed for innovativeness”. He points out that creativity is linked to a more intuitive style of problem solving, while innovation is related to a more systematic style of problem solving. This underlines the fact that innovation is a greater concept than creativity alone. Drawing on Amabile (1988) and Staw (1990), Oldham and Cummings (1996, 608) apply these distinctions between creativity and innovation specifically to the realms of performance and organization (referred to in Meusbürger 2009, 104):

Creative performance refers to products, ideas, and so forth produced at the individual level, whereas innovation refers to the successful implementation of these products at the organizational level. (Oldham and Cummings 1996, 608, referred to in Meusbürger 2009, 194).

As the definition and former paragraph reveals, the named scholars look at creativity as a subset of the broader domain of innovation. Seen in relation to the given definitions of innovation in section 2.1, as well as in connection with the concept of EDI, some definitions of innovation are closer to creativity by focusing on the production of ideas rather than the implementation of them (Amabile 1988, 127). Anyway, as the previous paragraphs displays,

there is clear similarities between the distinction made between creativity and innovation, and how Fagerberg (2005) distinct invention and innovation.

Amabile (1988) presents a study examining factors influencing creativity and innovation in organizations. In this study she presents nine qualities of environments that influence creativity, resulting from the question about how environmental factors in organizations promote motivation and creativity. In her article, Amabile (1988, 147) presents the environmental factors found in her study, which are seen to influence the level of individual creativity:

- *Freedom*
- *Good Project Management*
- *Sufficient Resources*
- *Encouragement*
- *Various Organizational Characteristics*
- *Recognition*
- *Sufficient Time*
- *Challenge*
- *Pressure*

In considering how innovation happens in an organization, Amabile (1988, 150) emphasize that it is essential to understand how creativity happens in the individual. Furthermore, she argues that individuals, working alone or in groups, are the ones producing the new and useful ideas that may be implemented by the organization.

As we can see from the list of environmental factors, individual creativity can be powerfully influenced by elements of the organization. In addition, they can all be recognized as cultural and practice based environmental factors. The factors recognized in the study by Amabile (1988), have close relations to the ones found in previous research in the field of EDI. By looking at the chosen definition of employee driven innovation in section 2.2, it is clear that creativity and its given definition in this thesis have close relations to EDI.

### 2.3.2 Activation of innovation

Similar to the study presented by Amabile (1988), Kanter (1996) point to how innovation originates from individual talent and creativity. Furthermore, she emphasises how whether or not individual skills are activated, exercised, supported, and channelled into the production of a new model that can be used, is a function of organizational context (Kanter 1996, 125).

In her study Kanter (1996) concludes that innovation involves a set of processes carried out at the micro-level of the firm by individuals, either alone or in groups. Additionally, she argues how “these micro-processes are in turn stimulated, facilitated, and enhanced – or the opposite – by a set of macro-structural conditions” (Kanter 1996, 125). The latter implies a close relation to the understanding and definition of EDI. In her study, she points to the “common organizational threads” that innovation relies on. These are “breadth of reach, flexibility of action, and above all, integration between those with pieces to contribute, whether inside or outside a single organization” (Kanter 1996, 125).

According to Kanter (1996) the best way of understanding the structural and social conditions of innovation is if the innovation process is divided into three stages. These stages are: *Idea Generation* and activation of the drivers of innovation, *coalition building* and acquisition of the power necessary to move the idea into reality, *idea realization* and *transfer* or diffusion. The stage which applies to the topic of this thesis is *idea generation* and activation of the drivers of innovation.

Kanter (1996) argues that innovation begins with the activation of some person or persons to sense or seize a new opportunity. In addition, according to Amabile (1988), individual creativity has its major impact at the idea-production stage of the innovation process. The literature concerning the concept of EDI emphasize the inclusion of the employee and the activation of innovative behaviour (Høystrup 2010). Therefore, the theory presented by Kanter (1996) is closely related to both EDI and creativity studies, as it addresses different conditions facilitating the activation of innovation and idea generation. Seen in connection with the theory presented by Amabile (1988), these two scholars agree in the importance of the individual and its creativity at the *idea generation stage*.

According to Kanter (1996) innovation is triggered by recognition of a new opportunity. This exact point can be seen in relation to the conceptualization of creativity earlier in this section, as well as the concept of EDI. Nevertheless, Kanter (1996, 96) argues that a key problem in innovation management is how to get people to pay attention, and how to trigger the action thresholds of individuals to appreciate and pay attention to new ideas, needs, and opportunities. By drawing on Drucker's (1985) reflection about innovation being a result of incongruities and discontinuities, Kanter (1996, 97) applies this management challenge to structural conditions. As Drucker (1985) stated:

Unless we are to assume that innovation are purely individual cognitive abilities, it is important to look at the structural conditions that facilitate the ability to see new opportunities. (referred to in Kanter 1996, 97)

In her presentation of the first stage in the innovation process, Kanter (1996) point out how all conditions recognized in the stage, serving as innovation activators, can be characterized as either structural or social conditions. The stage of *idea generation* includes five conditions:

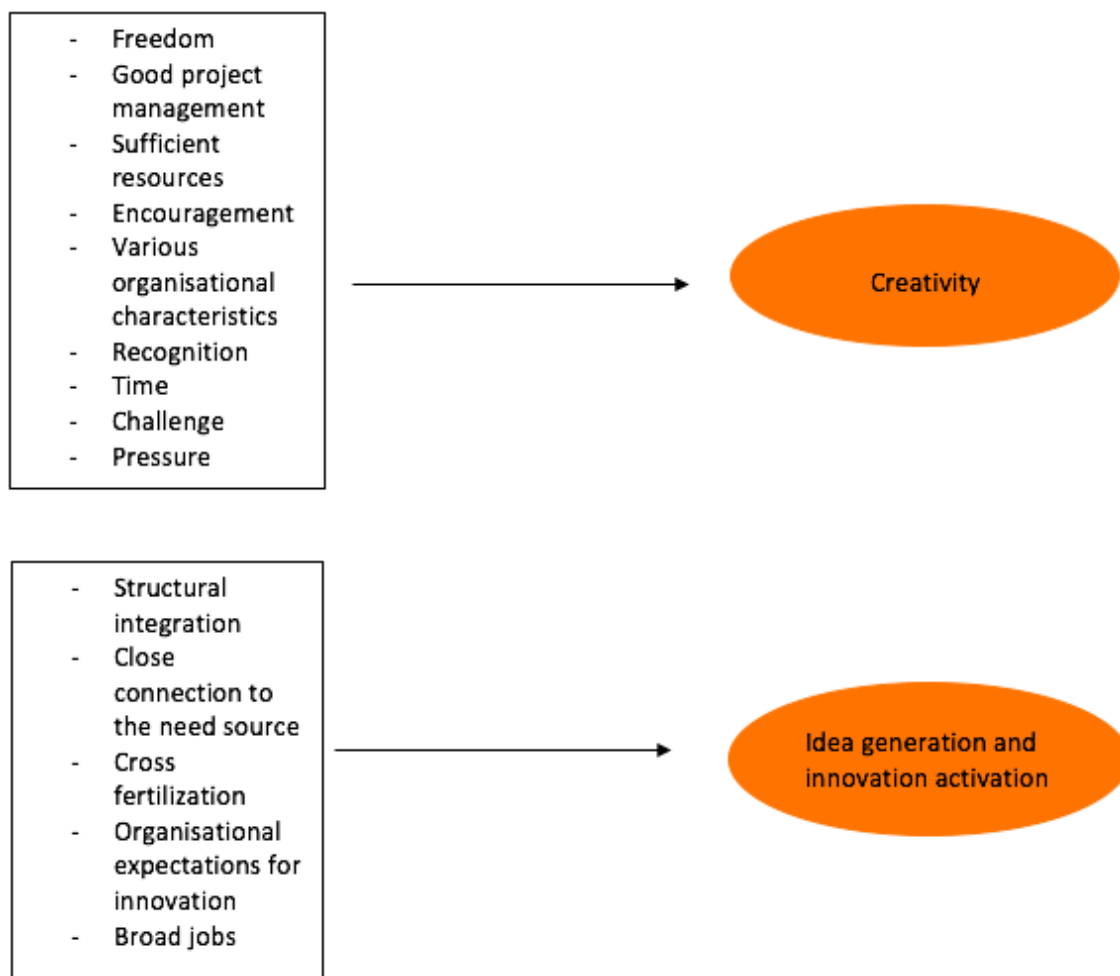
- **Close connection with need source.** Opportunity exists because need exists, so it is not surprising that close customer or user contact is an important innovation activator (Kanter 1996, 97).
- **“Kaleidoscopic thinking”:** **Cross Fertilization.** The ability to construct new ways to address the need. Shake reality into a new pattern in terms of cross-disciplinary contact (Kanter 1996, 98).
- **Structural Integration: Intersecting Territories.** Activation of innovation is encouraged by structural integration across fields. Communication integration is positively related to the innovation rate. Isolation of individuals tend to reduce innovation at the idea generation stage by limiting awareness of opportunity, alternative approaches, and the perspective of those functions who need to contribute to other parts. This to make the innovation add up to a “whole” (Kanter 1996, 100).
- **Broad Jobs.** Idea generation is also aided when jobs are defined broadly rather than narrowly, when people have range of skills to use and tasks to perform to give them a view of the whole organization, and when assignments focus on results to be achieved rather than rules or procedures to be followed (Kanter 1996, 101).



- **Organizational Expectations for Innovation.** Organizations may signal their expectations for innovation through allocated funds, given time, focus on tradition vs change, a culture of pride, the feeling of being valued and secured (Kanter 1996, 103).

As we can see, there is a similarity between both the environmental factors presented by Amabile (1988), and Kanter (1996), as well as the conditions recognized in the literature regarding EDI. The only distinction between them are the focus given to each condition, where Amabile (1988) focuses on environmental factors and thereby has a slightly more cultural and social approach than Kanter (1996). Anyway, by combining the two theories, it is possible to cover both cultural, practical, social and structural conditions by a broad range of factors/conditions which either activate innovation or promote creativity. Figure 2 visualize the conditions recognized by Amabile (1988) and Kanter (1996).

Figure 2. Summary of conditions recognized by Amabile (1988) and Kanter (1996)



Source: Own elaboration based on Amabile 1988, Kanter 1996

## 2.4 Summarizing EDI, creativity and the activation of innovation

In sum, we can see that the conditions recognized in research on EDI are very similar to those found in the perspectives of Amabile (1988) and Kanter (1996). All the factors can be categorized as either cultural, social or structural factors. It is therefore clear that the organizational context has a significant impact on how innovation driven by employees are facilitated. Some of the studies mentioned in section 2.2 also draw upon the perspective provided by Amabile (1988) regarding the promotion of creativity amongst individuals. Similar to the perspectives provided by Amabile (1988) and Kanter (1996) who emphasize the *idea generation* stage in innovation, major parts of the literature concerning EDI address the importance of participation of employees and activation of innovative behaviour at this stage. EDI helps grasping the micro level of innovation, focusing explicitly on the individual-organisational-innovation interaction. By combining EDI with the named theories in the two last sections, it helps examine and analyze how to facilitate a work environment which positions employees as drivers for innovation.

As there is a clear link and similarity between what Kanter (1996) refers to as activation of innovation and the idea generation stage, to what Amabile (1988) theorize as creativity, these two perspectives will be treated as the same concepts in the analysis and discussion offered in the thesis.

Additionally, it will be interesting to look at how the distinction between creativity and innovation unfolds in the study. As the literature review reveals, there is a distinction between the presence of conditions and the actual practice of EDI, as to how one can draw a distinctive line between innovative behaviour and innovation. Similarly, it has been clarified a distinction between creativity and innovation, as well as an invention and innovation.

## 3.0 Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological choices made in the research. First, I will describe the research design chosen for this thesis. Then the access to the case will be explained, and what significance this has had for the thesis. Further the chosen method for data collection will be presented. The data collection is done through a qualitative case study with a combination of semi structured interviews and document analysis. At the end of the chapter the process of analysis and a critical source review will be presented.

### 3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research method is well suited when the aim is to gain extensive knowledge, and a deeper understanding of, a phenomenon we know little about (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 32). By using a qualitative method in this study, it is possible to gain more detailed and nuanced information of the individual perception and experience of the facilitation of a work environment beneficial to EDI in Nets (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 32).

#### 3.1.1 Research design

Qualitative studies can be conducted in various ways and are characterized by the absence of one defined analytical approach (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 82). For this reason, transparency is an important factor and I have chosen a specific research design to ease the work of describing the phases in my research process (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 82).

This thesis is a part of the masters' programme ESST (Society, Science and Technology in Europe), which makes the scope of the thesis limited. Therefore, I am interested in collecting data from a refined scope of time and place, and I have chosen cross-sectional studies. A cross-sectional study will provide a snapshot of this study's phenomenon (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 74). To be able to answer the research question put forth in this thesis, I am interested in examining the employees' perception and experiences as the topic for the

thesis concerns employees being drivers to innovation. If we are to be on the shoulders of ants, we need to take their perspective.

A case can both be an object of study, and a research design (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 85). In this thesis, the case function as an object of study. This thesis operates with a single case, namely the department CS in Nets. Even though the definition of a case study has varied greatly during the past century, there is one definition which can be presented and is suited for the research in this thesis. This definition is referred to by Yin (2014):

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. (Yin 2014, 16)

In relation to the case in this thesis this definition is suited for two reasons. First, the thesis seeks to explore a contemporary phenomenon in terms of the concept of EDI in the present organizational context in Nets. Second, the boundaries between the phenomenon of EDI and the context is occasional absent and slightly visible as the organization is not focusing on the concept of EDI explicitly.

This thesis will be exploiting a single-case design to either confirm, challenge or extend the theory presented in the thesis by testing two well-formulated theories within innovation management in combination with previous research regarding EDI (Yin 2014, 51). As a single-case can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building (Yin 2014, 51), the case study of this thesis might contribute to a broader understanding of how EDI is organised within organizations. The combination of theory was pointed out in the introduction of this thesis. By systematically combining theories which are closely related to EDI, it will be interesting to look at the distinction between them through the study in addition to the results related to the research question.

Based on the former, the exploitation of a case in this study have led to the formulation of the research question in this thesis. Case studies are often characterized by questions about process and understanding, such as what, why, and how (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 86). Furthermore, the study is characterized by theoretical assumptions, which is the

foundation for the analysis and the reasons to why I have combined the chosen theories presented in chapter 2. As will be presented in section 3.4 the analysis is based on a theoretical assumption, visualized in the upcoming figure (figure 3).

Based on the former paragraphs I have chosen a phenomenological approach to be able to explore and describe the experiences, perceptions and understanding by employees, of how Nets facilitate conditions promotional to EDI and in what way this affects the willingness of employees to be innovative (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 82). Through the phenomenological approach I have prepared for the study by acquiring knowledge about the topic of the thesis, namely EDI, which provided a literature review to this thesis.

I have chosen to delimit the participants of study to what Kesting & Ulhøi (2010) defines as ordinary employees in relation to the concept of EDI. The objective of phenomenological research design is to gain greater understanding and insight into the life of others. In order to accomplish this, *meaning* stands as a keyword when trying to understand a phenomenon through the interviewees' eyes. Therefore, the phenomenon needs to be seen in light of the context which the phenomenon unfolds (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 82).

Nets serves as an appropriate case in this matter as they are not explicit focusing on EDI in their work with innovation but focuses on innovation itself. In addition, they have communicated a certain focus on people through their new strategy which is being implemented at the point of this study. It will therefore be possible to explore and investigate how Nets is facilitating conditions serving as drivers to EDI and how this affects the willingness of employees to be innovative. This without the influence of them focusing heavily on the concept which is being studied.

### 3.2 Access to case

On one occasion during the spring semester of the master, 2018, a representative from Nets held a guest lecture in the course: Innovation Management and Global Challenges. In this lecture the representative presented the innovation process in Nets and what challenges Nets experienced in relation to it. As I already had chosen the research area for my thesis, it was interesting to link EDI to the challenges they experienced. Little focus was given to the

individual employee in their innovation process, and I saw the opportunity to contribute in their work with the process from idea to implementation. This case study might give Nets, as well as other relatable organizations, a more comprehensive understanding of mechanisms and possible solutions for how to organize and manage their innovation process.

Some weeks after the guest lecture, I contacted the HR department of Nets and asked to come in contact with the representative, who gladly established contact and permission to use Nets as case in my study. The representative gave me access to the department CS, participants for my interviews as well as insight in their overall strategy: Nets Strategy 2018-2022, Excel and Explore. There was only needed insight in the overall strategy, as deeper information about products and services were not needed. This because the focus in this thesis lies on how work processes is conducted, facilitated and perceived by the employees.

The results from my thesis aims to contribute in Nets further work with innovation and the process from idea generation to implementation. The thesis is designed as a research project based on 8 interviews, plus 2 additional interviews, and a brief document analysis of the organization's strategy.

### 3.3 Data body

#### 3.3.1 Selection

In qualitative studies, the purpose is to gain as much knowledge as possible about one phenomenon. Therefore, the selection and recruitment of interviewees is rarely random (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 106). By drawing on purposeful sampling I first identified the target group for my study (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 106). The definition of EDI concerns the concept “ordinary employees”. Namely, the employees who are not formally given the task of engaging in innovative activity in their workday (Kesting & Ulhøi 2008). Therefore, my target group were limited to concern “ordinary employees”.

My selection of interviewees is characterized on a combination of the snowball sampling and theory-based selection. The latter refers to the selection of people based on theory (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011). The interviewees recruited for the interviews were selected on the basis of being considered as “ordinary employees”, and turned out to be

a fairly heterogenous group, extracted from different functions within the department CS. This is called theory-based selection, as the interviewees is characterized as being “ordinary employees” defined as in the literature of EDI. All the interviewees were picked out by my contact in Nets, who was given the task to find active “ordinary employees” who voluntarily wanted to contribute in my study. In other words, the interviewees were recruited by using the snowball sampling, where I as the researcher contacted my representative in Nets and asked if there were employees who could fit the category of “ordinary employees” that I could get in touch with (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 109).

As this master thesis is a part of a master program with an intensive duration, 14 months, it was considered as expediently to delimit the number of interviewees in my selection to be between 6 and 10. I got access to 8 interviewees who participated in the study, plus two additional interviews later on in the process. By covering the definition of “ordinary employees”, and simultaneously getting access to a great variation of employees representing the different functions in the department CS in Nets, the interviews accomplished to gain knowledge across the boundaries in the organization, from middle managers, HR staff and employees representing all underlying functions.

As a systematic process, the interviewees were recruited two weeks before the interviews were conducted. One week before the interviews, my contact in Nets booked date, time and location for all the interviews and clarified with each interviewee. As the interviews were noted in the interviewees’ calendar, they all got a reminder a day before the interviews (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 115).

### 3.3.2 Interview template

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. This is a type of interview that is located between the extremes of structured and open interviews. Semi-structured interviews are normally based on an interview template, and the template used in this study contained a list of topic related questions and related themes, with some specific follow-up questions that were reviewed in the interviews (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 139) (Appendix 1).

To preserve a good balance between structure and flexibility I chose to conduct semi structured interviews. These interviews were based upon 4 topics, and related follow-up questions. This made it easier to conduct the interviews almost equally all 10 times, but still operate with flexibility, thus managing the conversation in an appropriate direction. It made it possible to gain extended information and knowledge about the experiences and perceptions of the interviewees.

Before the interview, the purpose for my master thesis and interview was introduced to the interviewees. To eliminate the chance of disclose the topic of each part of the interview, and the possibility of influencing the reflections and answers of the interviewees, the information given about both the master thesis and the interview were rather general. In addition, before each new topic in the interview, they were informed about the related topic to trigger and slightly control the interview into the right direction.

The interview template started out with simple and introductory questions, to establish a relation and a form of trust with the interviewees (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 141). This was done with the simple task of describing a typical workday and associated specific aspects who the interviewee considered to be of importance in their work.

The key questions in the interview took up over half the time of the interview and concerned topics and questions that required further elaboration through follow-up questions. The purpose with the key questions was to secure that the interview produced information related to the research questions and purpose of the study and thesis (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 141).

### 3.3.3 Conducting interviews

As the premises of Nets were located nearby, I got the chance to conduct the interviews face to face. The first eight out of ten interviews took place at a conference room in the department CS.

I decided to conduct two follow-up interviews regarding the actual strategy and local processes that were conducted during the design and implementation of the new strategy. The



two interviews were conducted: one was conducted at one of the interviewees' office, the other one through phone. Information about the two additional interviews can be found in table 2. The aim with the named interviews were to gain extensive knowledge about the processes conducted in conjunction with the strategy. As already mentioned, strategy is not limited to being defined as a document, and as the study in this task seeks to reveal how EDI are facilitated in the organization, local processes initiated in the context of the strategy will be equally relevant.

The interviews were not disposed for any notable disturbances. In advance of the interviews, the interviewees were given information about the purpose of the interviews by my contact in Nets, who received information about the thesis and purpose of interviews. It was important for me that the interviewees had no in-depth knowledge about the topic in advance to avoid influencing their reflections and answers.

Before every interview, the interviewees were made aware of that all information would be anonymized. They were asked to be recorded and was given the choice to say no. All the interviewees agreed to be recorded. Further they were notified that the recordings would be deleted after the research was concluded. The interviewees were notified that they could stop the recording of the interview at any point during the conversation. If they perceived something as unclear during the interview, they were encouraged to ask for elaboration. The interviewees were informed that the interview would take approximately one hour.

The recordings of the interviews were done with my cell phone. The interviews amounted to 7 hours and 35 minutes in total. The longest duration of the interview was 1 hour and 1 minute, and the shortest were 25 minutes. The transcribed interviews constituted of 94 pages of raw data material. The interviews were transcribed exactly as spoken on the record. This was time-consuming but resulted in that all the interviews were documented and cited correctly.

A description of the interviews in terms of who, when, where and for how long can be found in table 1 and 2. The interviewees have been classified as either middle manager or floor-worker. Floor-worker in this study refers to employees at the operative level of the organization, with no specific given role of authority or special function.

Table 1. Overview table of the interviews

<b>Number</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Interview situation</b>	<b>Location</b>
1.	Floor-worker 1	21.06.2018	00:44:01	Face to face	Rommen
2.	Floor-worker 2	21.06.2018	00:58:29	Face to face	Rommen
3.	Middle manager 1	21.06.2018	00:51:26	Face to face	Rommen
4.	Floor-worker 3	21.06.2018	00:48:26	Face to face	Rommen
5.	Floor-worker 4	22.06.2018	00:54:25	Face to face	Rommen
6.	Floor-worker 5	22.06.2018	00:41:40	Face to face	Rommen
7.	Middle manager 2	22.06.2018	01:01:01	Face to face	Rommen
8.	Floor-worker 6	22.06.2018	01:00:23	Face to face	Rommen

Table 2. Overview table of the additional interviews

<b>Number</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Interview situation</b>	<b>Location</b>
9.	Floor-worker 7	23.08.2018	00:55:29	Face to face	Rommen
10.	Floor-worker 6	29.08.2018	00:25:00	Telephone	Telephone

### 3.4 Analytical approach

The theoretical framework utilized in this thesis will function as a foundation for the creation of an analytical framework for the study. The theoretical framework is chosen on the basis of clear similarities to the recognized factors in previous literature in the field of EDI and connects the literature on EDI to the field of innovation studies within innovation management. The analytical framework for this study are illustrated in figure 3 which represents a modification of figure 1 and figure 2. Figure 3 illustrates the relation between employee-driven innovation and the factors recognized in the studies conducted by Amabile (1988), and Kanter (1996).

When analysing the material drawn from the interviews I have chosen a model of four steps presented by Kirsti Malterud (2003), referred to in *Introduksjon til samfunnsvitenskapelig metode*, by Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen (2011, 173).

The first step includes the overall impression and summary of meaning. This phase started during the transcription. I read through the interviews several times, looking for interesting and central topics. Here I noted the main topics which could be recognized in the interviews (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 174). The second step and phase of the analysis intended to find meaningful elements in the material, which could be tied and related to the analytical framework in the study. This represents a deductive approach to the analysis, where the material is given codes which are theoretically derived (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 177). In this phase I gave the material codes which were drawn from the analytical framework made for the study (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 178). The codes can be identified in figure 3. attached to their respective categories.

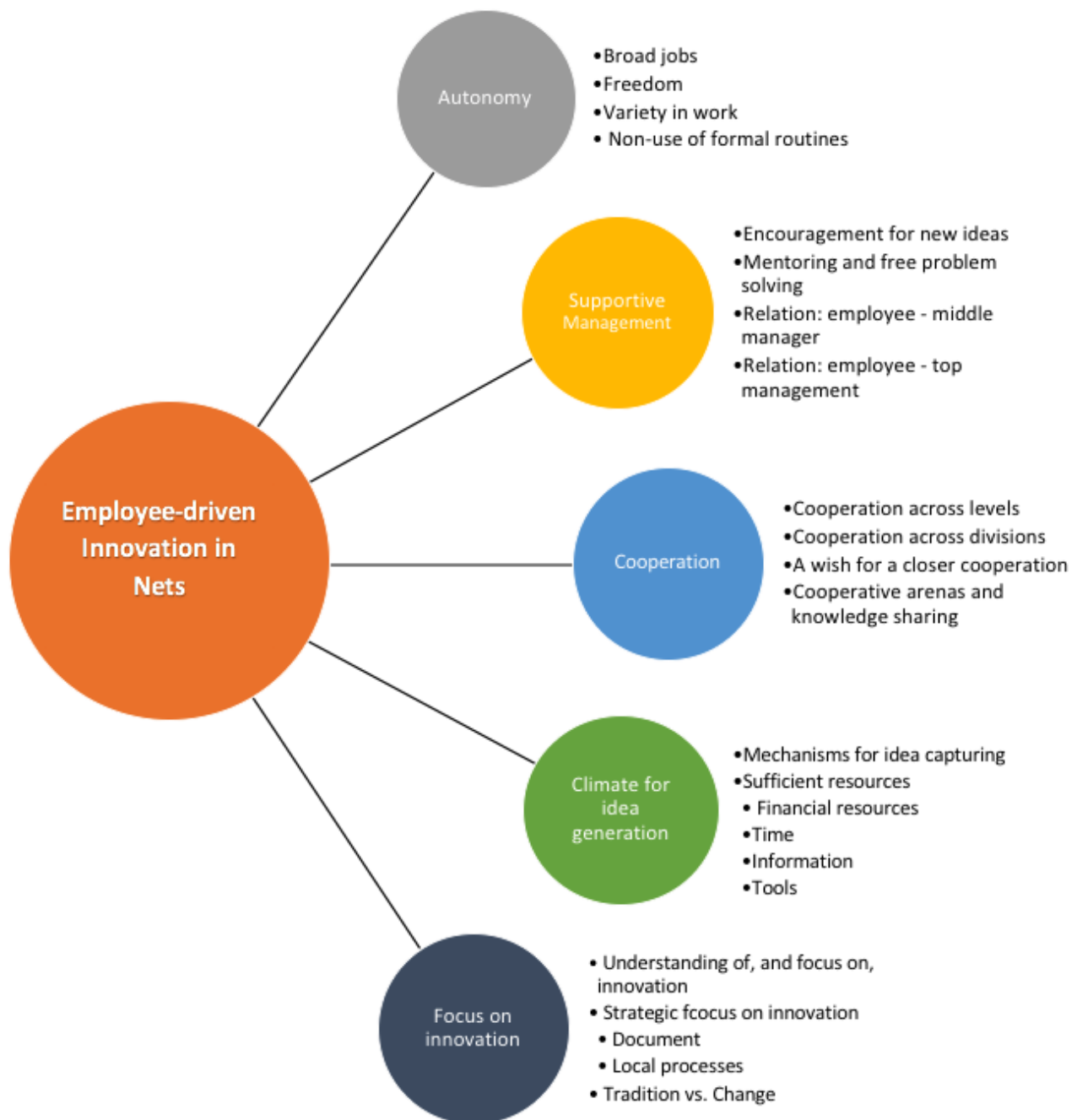
The third step and phase included the condensing of the material, where the material was sorted into related categories to reveal similar patterns and context, similarities or differences in the material. The purpose of condensing was to extract elements from the material which as seen as meaningful to the research problem. In this way the content of research is abstracted (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011). In other words, the codes were sorted under related categories. The categories specified which topics were included in the material. The categories can be identified in figure 3. All categories can also be recognized either in previous literature of EDI or the two theories regarding creativity and activation of innovation. In this phase, it was also considered whether some codes could merge, or act as sub codes. Some citations/statements were also picked out to function as examples, based on how they exemplified certain specific points and reflections meaningful to the research problem and analytical framework. The citations/statements were translated into English, as the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. I have provided a free translation from Norwegian to English and have tried my best to preserve and reproduce the exact content of each citation/statement which is used in the analysis.

The third step and phase resulted in a modification of the first two figures presented in this thesis. Therefore, figure 3 presents a modified version of figure 1 and 2 and illustrates the

most frequent conditions from the conducted interviews and its relation to how EDI is facilitated in Nets. Each factor in figure 3 represents the most prominent factors found in the condensing of the interviews. In addition, figure 3 illustrates what codes that were sorted under each factor. In figure 3 the factors have attached a set of codes which could be traced during the condensing of the interviews. All the codes can be recognized in earlier research in the field of EDI, and in the two theories explored in relation to the concept of EDI.

In chapter 4 *Analysis and Empirical Findings*, the results from my analytical process will be presented in light of already existing research and theories. This chapter represents the last phase, step four, involves a recontextualization of the material to design new concepts and descriptions at a higher level of abstraction (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 176). The analysis has focused both on the individual and personal experience and perception of the interviewees, a brief document analysis relevant to the last condition (further explained in section 3.5). These two approaches, combined with the theoretical outcome of the material, will be further explored in section 5 *Discussion*.

Figure 3.



### 3.5 Complementary data through document analysis

As the literature review revealed, one of the conditions recognized as beneficial to EDI is *Strategic focus on innovation*, and the relation to management is an important aspect about EDI. As Nets is experiencing the implementation of their new strategy at the point of this study, the implementation process opens up the possibility of looking at a broader set of processes and activities related to the facilitation of conditions promotional to EDI.

Initially I wanted to use a document analysis of Nets strategy to support the interviews in order to enhance credibility and verifiability. This would give me a combination of two qualitative methods in the study and could help answer the research question. In this case, the organization has a relatively new strategy in an implementation phase which was introduced in May/June 2018. By acknowledging strategy as an organizational element which influence the organizational context to a large extent, it is natural to look at how a given strategy allows the facilitation of EDI, through the factors recognized in the theories chosen for the thesis, as they all can be categorized as cultural, social and structural. Therefore, it was necessarily to access the overall strategy for Nets and the department CS.

I found it difficult to access sufficient information about the company`s strategy, which is understandable as part of the content is not wanted publicly. What I gained was the overall strategy for the entire organization, as well as the strategy reserved for CS. This made a document analysis challenging because there was little information available in the strategies, and they were received in the form of power points. Therefore, I have provided a brief document analysis in the last section of chapter 4 combined with the empirical findings from the interviews.

In addition, the brief document analysis is only one element in the concept of strategy in this thesis. This thesis operates with the interpretation of strategy as a concept concerning not just the strategy as a document, but also its related processes initiated in conjunction with the implementation and anchoring of the strategy itself. Common to most definitions of strategy is the notion that strategy is focused on achieving certain goals, that it involves allocating resources, and that it implies some consistency, integration, or cohesiveness of decisions and actions (Grant 2016, 15). This definition of strategy allows the interpretation of a strategy not

being limited to just a document, but to include the processes related to how to achieve the goals and visions communicated in the strategy itself. Namely the enactment of the strategy in practice. Therefore, the enactment of the strategy in practice has been given a attention in the conducted interviews.

The brief document analysis will serve as a supplement to the material that appears in the interviews. The reason I chose to do it this way is because it is the perception and experience of the employees that is the focus of this study. The analysis has used the same analytical framework as the interviews, of which I look for whether the strategy and its associated local processes open up the possibility for the factors that promote EDI to unfold.

### 3.6 Critical source reviews

I have chosen to offer an in-depth presentation of both case and research process to strengthen the reliability of this study. The reason for this is that in qualitative method, the conversation, personal experience and perception often controls data collection, and the method is dependent on context (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 229). Therefore, I have also chosen to use a semi-structured approach to the interviews, exploiting an interview guide based on topics and follow-up questions in order to easier present how the data collection was done during interviews.

In terms of validity, it is important to see a connection between the phenomenon which is studied, and the data collected (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 230). In this matter I asked my contact in Nets explicitly about representatives from the firm who could be characterized as “ordinary employees” in line with the definition of EDI, explaining that this was of importance for the study. In addition, there has been offered a literature review of previous research in the field of EDI which reflect the aspects studied in this thesis. Sovacool & Hess (2017, 743) refers to Stern (2014, 3) who argued that “nothing advances theory better than tackling a practical problem by integrating different perspectives”. Furthermore, they emphasize how one need to examine more nuanced ways of comparing and contrasting in order to capture a concept at a deeper level (Sovacool & Hess 2017, 743). Therefore, I have chosen to systematically draw upon two theories of creativity and activation of innovation in

combination of EDI, namely to be able to examine the concept of EDI in a more nuanced way than what has been done before.

The purpose of this study is to produce knowledge and explore a concept which is considered to be in its infancy, and thereby contribute with insight and a deeper understanding in the link between the individual, innovation and organization. In terms of generalisability and transferability, studies regarding EDI is dominated by Scandinavian scholars and cases. It is said that, amongst others, Norway have good prerequisites for facilitating EDI based on the traditional cooperative business model (Amundsen et al. 2011). Based on that this thesis concerns a Norwegian case, it cannot be guaranteed that the results in this study are transferable to other areas of research. On the other hand, the case exploited in this study represents a major industry, digitality and payments, and might be useful in other studies concerning this industry and innovation at a micro-level. In addition, in terms of generality, the establishment of descriptions and interpretations throughout a study might make the findings useful to other fields of research (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 231). In this matter, based on the combination of traditional research in creativity and activation of innovation from innovation studies and previous research in the field of EDI, I have sought to strengthen external validity. The latter in terms of making the study less dependent on one cultural and national context. If a study is dependent on namely one comprehensive context it may limit the transferable value (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 357).

### 3.7 Ethical aspects

As all other research projects carried out in connection with universities, this study is required to be reported to NSD (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 95). This was done in advance of the data collection and the research project was approved by NSD prior to the completion.

Before any of the data collection were started I signed a confidentiality agreement with Nets. Furthermore, as one of the methods exploited in this study concerns interviews, there are some important aspects that need to be considered in respect of the people participating in the study. One of these aspects are the informed consent (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 96). My contact in Nets received information about the master thesis and the interviews



in advance of the data collection. All interviewees participated voluntarily on behalf of Nets, and with Nets consent.

Another aspect which need to be considered is anonymity (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 96). The interviews are in this thesis treated as anonymous. This was informed to all interviewees in advance of the interviews. In the study, they are only marked by role (whether the interviewee function as a floor-worker or middle manager) in the department CS. It was not necessary to collect any personal data in order to conduct the interviews.

As the interviews were recorded, an important point for me was to inform the interviewees about that all data recorded and written down would be deleted straight after the completion of the study. In addition, the data collected only serves for the study in this thesis and will not be used in another setting. The interviewees were asked prior to the interview about being recorded, and got the chance to say no. They also got the chance to stop the interview and choose not to participate.

## 4.0 Analysis and Empirical Findings

The following sections explore the most prominent findings recognized in the empirical data (illustrated in figure 3, section 3.4); *Autonomy, Supportive Management, Cooperation and Collaboration, Climate for Idea Generation and Focus on Innovation*. The purpose is to analyse the data in light of the research question put forth in this thesis: *How does Nets facilitate a work environment beneficial for EDI, and how does that affect the willingness of employees to be innovative?* The aim is to reveal the existence of conditions serving as drivers to EDI, and how they are perceived by the employees.

The data is primarily extracted from the conducted interviews in the study. The last condition analysed in section 4.5 *focus on innovation* includes both data from the interviews and a brief document analysis of the Nets strategy 2018-2022 Excel and Explore, as it concerns both the strategy as a document, the enactment of the strategy in practice, as well as the perception of the employees.

### 4.1. Autonomy

#### ***Variety in work***

Initially in the interviews the interviewees were asked about describing a typical workday with emphasis on who they interacted with, what kind of tasks and operations they performed the most, and their own role in decision making and problem solving generally. In general, there were a common reflection amongst the interviewees that describing a typical workday was a hard task. According to the interviewees this did not exist. The only part of a workday which could be considered as typical were getting coffee, go through emails in the morning, and attend planned meetings. Beyond this, their workday usually differed from day to day, characterized by performing tasks varying in size and content. I interpret this extent of variety in work as an opportunity that gives the employees insight in different areas of work tasks, enabling the possibility of practice-based learning and interaction amongst employees to occur. This can be illustrated through following statement:

*The short answer is no, because it does not exist. It is very varied in relation to projects that comes up along the way and who is nearby when it comes to issues that need to be solved when they happen. It is a soft mix of administrative work and structural work that need follow up. (Interviewee 4, floor-worker 3)*

## ***Freedom***

There was a common understanding amongst the interviewees that they experienced a great proportion of freedom in their work in Nets. Their overall description of a “typical workday” was not only characterized by a large variety of work, but also by an impression of broad jobs, this in terms of focus given to results achieved rather than rules or procedures to be followed. A common perception amongst the interviewees were that how the overall goal in a project or a process in their daily work is carried out is completely up to the team and each employee. Apparently, dependent on what function you are working in, the team are responsible for the whole process underlying their part of the production. This illustrates a certain degree of freedom on behalf of the employees to solve problems on their own and individually decide how to reach their goals and deliver results. When asked whether the job was experienced as relatively free and autonomous, all the interviewees commonly answered YES. The impression of autonomous workday can be illustrated through the following statements made by one floor-worker and one of the middle managers:

*I decide very much over my own working day. (Interviewee 2, floor-worker 2)*

*I operate very flexibly. I do the same thing for my employees. We make sure that as long as you do what it takes, then it is extremely flexible. Simply. (Interviewee 3, middle manager 1)*

When asking the interviewees about evaluation of processes and practices, as well as improvements and ideas to how things can be done better, the interviewees expressed that the continuous improvement were seen as a natural part of their job. It was clear that it was not explicitly devoted time to evaluate routines and processes that were done, but rather the mindset of the work. I interpret that this was how they understood their job, always improve and develop their product, services and processes. To pursue continuous improvement and development of service and product were perceived as their job, either in dialog with customer to satisfy demands and wishes, or as a way to make work more effective.

The interviewees perception of the extent of freedom in their work were in general homogenous, and the common perception of an independent process of reaching the overall goal strengthens the impression of that the workday is highly autonomous and varied within CS in Nets.

### ***Formal routines and process descriptions***

Another factor that reflects the employee's freedom in performing their own work are the near non-use of formal routines and process descriptions in CS. All the interviewees mention and recognize the existence of routines and process descriptions, but they were rarely applied. Dependent on what type of work being conducted, there were in general perceived by the interviewees that formal routine and process descriptions did exist but were not in use. Due to rapid shifts in the market and development in general, the routines are rarely updated, evaluated and exploited. As interviewee 8 states; *things change quickly. So, you spend less time documenting. And more time thinking new and working more efficiently without necessarily having it described somewhere.*

Hence, best practice and a continuously evaluation of one's own daily work characterizes the workday of all interviewees, including their team and functions. I interpret the non-use of formal routines in a positively direction, as the interviewees expressed this as a minor problem. The majority of the interviewees stated that formal routines were not something they related their work to. Furthermore, the market and form of work shifts in such a tempo, that another responsibility of updating routines at all times would consume a lot of their core tasks at work. The non-use of formal routines can be illustrated through following statement:

*Yes, we have them in some areas, but I do not use them much. We have routines for how we are supposed to work in bidding processes, but I do not use them. (Interviewee 2, floor-worker 2)*

### ***Broad jobs***

Another point worth mentioning are the non-existence of narrowly defined job descriptions in Nets, resulting only in descriptions of responsibility areas. Interviewee 8 (floor-worker 6) pointed out that s/he did not have any job description and had never seen one either. The interviewees expressed their job as broadly defined. According to the HR-department in Nets, this have been conducted to make it easier for each employee to be forward minded, and not look backwards at a narrowly defined job description. The absence of defined job descriptions clearly extends each employees room for action. The presence of broad jobs can be illustrated through the following statement:

*I think the official is quite defined (the official job description), but there is a lot of flexibility and being involved in other types of work. (Interviewee 6, floor-worker 5)*

When asking the interviewees about how they would present a new idea, or a solution to a problem, they all described in basic the same process. None of them expressed the need to consult with their manager, as well as the majority put emphasis on collaboration with their colleagues. Therefore, the absence of a defined job description implied that the employees operated more freely and together within the teams, and more easily could engage in different areas of work. On the other hand, the emphasized collaboration only concerned their own team, and rarely across boundaries in the organization, a point which I will come back to in the section about cooperation and collaboration.

## 4.2 Supportive Management

### ***The relation to middle management***

Among the interviewed were two middle managers. To them the most important task was to ensure that their employees could conduct their tasks and perform their work in an environment and atmosphere free for constrains. The results from the interviews indicate that one of the most important characteristics about supportive management involves the openness towards change and the confidence in the delegation of responsibility. Based on the latter, a supportive management affects the overall impression of perceived autonomy amongst the interviewees.

When talking about problem solving and asking question about how the middle managers would carry out a solution to a challenge either with a process or product, both referred to how they most likely never would come up with the solution. This was usually left to the team, only with the participation of questions and urge to come up with an appropriate solution. As interviewee 3 stated; *Normally I would not have found the solution, typically the team would find the solution, so typically what I would have done is to encourage to devote time to look at the problem or challenge how it could be handled, and then let the team handle it by themselves. I would never go in and find in detail the answer or solution to the problem.* This gave the impression of that the middle managers were setting a clear direction without managing too tightly. I interpret from the interviews that the interviewees

experienced their closest manager as a kind of mentor, supporting employee initiative and free problem solving.

In line with the results mentioned above, it can also seem like the interviewees experience their relationship to the closest managers more as a colleague relationship rather than a manager-employee relation. The close relationship and openness to free problem solving in the teams underlying the middle managers are expressed both by the interviewees representing middle management and employees. This can be illustrated through the following statements:

*What you catch as a manager is to give your employees freedom and trust in that they are doing their job. He does it (gives freedom and trust) and he informs. If there is anything you are struggling with, you can also talk to him about it. (interviewee 1, floor-worker 1)*

*I find my closest leader to be very in place and engaging. (interviewee 3, middle manager 1)*

### ***The relation to top-management***

With regards to top management, the relation was diverse, distinguished by the perceived importance of a closer relation to management. Some interviewees referred to how they easily could talk and brainstorm with top management if they were available. As interviewee 6 stated; *I don't work a ton with them, but occasionally, we have discussions, grab a whiteboard and go through stuff with them.* Others pointed out how the top management could be more present and show a better understanding of daily operations in the organization. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*They say all the buzz words and such, but they may not fully understand what it will require from them too, referring to what I talked about regarding top-down management and demands, nor do I think they have dressed us to conduct their demands. Something that has been a little negative is that, let's say they have been in Silicon Valley," there they are doing it in this way, so we have to start working like that as well", but after that nothing is happening. (interviewee 5, floor-worker 4).*

As the statements reveals, there seems to be a certain distance between top management and the employees (floor-workers), and there is an indication of that top management lack the knowledge of Nets organizational culture as well as how their employees conduct their work.

The interviewees express that they rarely meet with the top management. One interesting aspect about this is the diverse perception of whether or not they want a closer relationship to the top management. The four of the interviewees expressed they didn't need any closer relationship to them and did not see the point of having any more contact with them either. The remaining interviewees, expressed that top management could be more present both socially and in organizational term, adapting the culture existing at employee level to get a more consistent corporate culture. These two different attitudes towards top management can be illustrated through the following statements:

*I don't see much of top management, and I don't see the need for it either. (interviewee 3, middle manager 1)*

*I miss that top management is a little bit more walk the talk. In this sense I mean referred to the customer, making changes in Nets, implement culture, our values, what is important is that everyone at all levels are taking part, if it is going to be a culture that everyone are living by it need to be anchored at all levels, so that you can recognize it all the way. (interviewee 8, floor-worker 6).*

### 4.3 Cooperation and Collaboration

#### ***Cooperation across levels***

The already mentioned close relation between middle manager and employee indicates a close corporate climate across the closest levels in Nets. On the other hand, due to the pressure on available time, there seems to be little interaction between middle managers and the employees. Even so, the pressure on time does not seem to affect the employees to a large extent as they express satisfaction with their interaction and contact with ones' closest manager. In addition, referring to the results regarding supportive management, the middle managers emphasize that by giving the employees freedom in problem solving have led to better collaboration within the teams, a feeling of responsibility for ones' own work, and increased autonomy.

The impression of the middle managers as mentors, as well as open to idea generation and free problem solving also indicates a certain loop of feedback between middle manager and employee/teams. This in terms of how the interviewees describes the process when coming up with a new idea or solving a problem in general. When asking about how a typical project

to capture ideas or implementing a new idea would be carried out, interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) expressed: *normally the managers facilitate, and the employees conducts.*

As an example, the interviewees explained how they would carry out a solution or an idea, giving the impression of that the collaboration across the levels within their own function worked well. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*The first step is, then, with the union representatives, it will be that the two managers must self-assess how they are to deliver. Also, with some sparring between them and me, and with union representatives during the process. Also, there will be a presentation for those in the function in the forefront of how to map better against that solution. (Interviewee 4, floor-worker 3)*

### ***Cooperation across divisions***

When asking the interviewees to tell about an occasion where they came up with an idea, or solved a problem, none of the interviewees mentioned being in contact with other departments and functions within Nets, except their own. Likewise, when asking directly about how often they were in collaboration with other functions in CS, the answer was in general *rarely* or *never*. It was expressed by, amongst others, Interviewee 2 (floor-worker 2) that there is a great need for more involvement across the departmentally boundaries. The impression of being in non-contact with other functions were also expressed through the following statement:

*Not as much as we should. We are very silo, especially when you look at the big business areas, but it is also a challenge when looking at the different functions and product areas. So, we are not very good at it. (Interviewee 5, floor-worker 4).*

Therefore, the interview results indicate a lack of both communication and cooperation, beside of what is absolutely necessary, across divisions within CS. This is even strengthened when the interviewees where asked about how often they were included in projects that crossed the boundaries in the organization, something they all expressed as rarely. There is worth mentioning that projects are used to a large extent within CS, thus the interviewees knowledge about them or inclusion in them seems to be rather poor. Even though Nets are organised as matrix, the formal cooperation across the boundaries in the firm only seem to exist when larger projects are conducted or is recognized as a high priority for the organization.



In line with the results from section 4.2.1 *Autonomy*, the narrowly defined functions within the department CS seem to constrain and hamper a close collaboration in terms of idea generation and knowledge sharing across the boundaries, unless the employees have relations to people working in other functions. What gives this impression is that several of the interviewees express uncertain phrases like *we are not as much involved in that, so you should talk to them instead*, or, *I don't know if other functions are doing the same as us, but it works in my function*.

On the other hand, the extent of collaboration seems to be dependent on relations. This is expressed by the majority of the interviewees. As interviewee 5 (Floor-worker 4) states, *I have been here in 5 to 6 years, also in Denmark, so I have the advantage of knowing what they are doing and who to ask*. Another interviewee also pointed out how this might make it difficult for new employees who have not established a network internally in the organization. In addition, there is also pointed out as a response to a question about idea generation that *you need to know the right people. You need to know who to talk to*.

### ***Cooperative arenas: sharing knowledge and experience***

Although it appears that the department is characterized by a lot of informal cooperation, this does not relate to the lending and sharing of expertise, knowledge and experience. As interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) states: *There is no planned competence sharing across the divisions*. It is stated in the interviews that there are several employees who work in the same areas of responsibility, even though they work in different departments and functions. Nevertheless, there is little expression that this is something the organization benefits from by facilitating sharing of experience in CS. It is only one interviewee who refers to how s/he came in contact with an experience sharing forum. Thus, this forum was in another department that s/he has had the opportunity to participate in by showing interest.

None of the other interviewees express knowledge about any arena for knowledge sharing or learning, except for the middle managers who has the management team they can relate to. The middle managers express that the management team provides a solid platform of knowledge sharing across the boundaries in the department but reserved for them only. Thus,

the empirical results indicate that employees have little or limited access to arenas for namely knowledge sharing, learning and experience transfer. In parallel, two of the interviewees expressed that they would benefit from sharing knowledge and experience with others in two ways; *their self confidence in what they do, and extended learning possibilities from others.*

One point that distinguished itself during the interviews was that several of the interviewees emphasized excessive use of meetings as being a challenge in the department. It was a common perception amongst the majority of the interviewees that this clearly stole time from their core tasks. In addition, occupied with daily business operation all of the workday, the excessive use of meetings also killed the opportunity of producing new ideas and solutions. Meetings in general were perceived negative by the employees.

### ***A wish for a closer cooperation***

On several occasions during the interviews the interviewees express a wish for closer cooperation and a more comprehensive image of the organization in terms of being organized as a value chain. As interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) states: *If we were organized as a value chain it would be easier to collaborate.*

Additionally, they express how this could open for closer cooperation in carrying out work processes across the boundaries of the functions in CS. This indicate a wish for a more integrative structure.

I perceive from the interviews that without work experience and close relations to employees working in other functions, the boundaries are not as easily crossed in the department as wished for. This exact point can also be seen related to the section about autonomy. Even though the individual employee has a broad job description, the interviewees express that each function in the value chain of Nets have its own area of production and processes. I therefore choose to interpret that the narrowly defined functions in CS might seem to constrain the individual autonomy in terms of poor communication between the functions. The defined functions and processes lead to a situation where one need to wait for a task or demand to be completed or delivered to be able to conduct your own job, rather than being able to work more loosely across the boundaries in the department. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*Then it is again a structured way of doing it. I also believe that it will ease the workload if you are better at saying that “I will take someone from that area to say something about this” and know that you get it right back and if you have clear expectations of what one gets back will give value, it will help ease what you do yourself. (Interviewee 5, floor-worker 4)*

#### 4.4 Climate for idea generation

##### ***Mechanisms for idea capturing***

When touching upon topics such as idea generation and capturing the interviewees did not know about any formal mechanism or program for this purpose that were currently running in CS. There was a common experience amongst the majority of the interviewees that there had been attempts in the form of an idea-box and a few programmes and projects, with the purpose of either to generate innovative activity or capture ideas. On the other hand, according to the majority of the interviewees, these projects and programmes did not exist at the point this study were conducted. Neither were the experience amongst the interviewees that these programmes and projects had generated any appreciable value in terms of new ideas. On the other hand, ideas that had created value for the organization had originated from the collaboration between customer, employee and team, either on behalf of management or from a project with a specific purpose.

There were also expressed a lack of information when it came to the possibilities surrounding innovative work. Even though several mechanisms for idea generation have been tried out, several of the interviewees knew little or nothing about these *tools*. In terms of sufficient resources, the interviewees pointed out that there were not economical resources that hampered innovative work the most. On the other hand, there were a common understanding amongst the interviewees that mindset, tools and competence were *resources* that the organization lack in order to be able to conduct innovative work at a higher level than what was currently done.

##### ***Sufficient Resources: Time***

A pressed resource was time. All the interviewees reviewed their workday as related to the daily operation of the organization, and for some of them, this occupied all of the work day.

During the interview both middle managers expressed a lack of time to actively drive intentional evaluation of work processes and the work with idea generation. It was also mentioned by one of the middle managers how his/her function, over time, lay behind in development of routines and systems, which also have led to limited capacity to work on, and search for, new solutions. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*We have worked with us a great deal of maintenance. It has been chosen faster solutions over a long time, so we have worked with us a great depth of work and a type of things that need to be solved. And what is what we are trying to focus on right now. (Interviewee 7, middle manager 2)*

Regardless of title and role in the organization, all interviewees expressed lack of time. Several projects have been tried completed in the department, with focus on innovation and idea emulation. In this case the employees have been working 50% with the project and 50% with core work tasks. Something which led to the domination of the latter, and in majority a failure of the project.

Even though the interviews reveal that the employees have a feeling of being constrained by lack of time to innovate, they are still conducting work characterized by innovative activities. The empirical results indicate that this is perceived by the interviewees as a natural and embedded part of their work day. On the other hand, it is not understood as being intentional as innovation.

#### 4.5 Focus on innovation

##### ***General understanding of - and focus on - innovation***

There is a certain individual variety amongst the interviewees when it comes to how much they focus on innovative work. The interviewees clearly expressed how the customer dominates the focus in their work and will be a high priority during the following years tied to the new overall business strategy. Furthermore, it did not seem like innovation explicitly have first priority, as interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) states: *It is not the highest on the agenda.*

Innovation itself seems to be embedded in the organizational culture in the department but unintentionally. Even though the general focus on innovation seems to be quite limited in Nets, all the interviewees were familiar with the phenomenon. By asking how each interviewee understood the phenomenon, they all reflected upon how their own work actually could be characterized by innovative behaviour and activities. As interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) stated: *I would think that if you ask a set of developers if they are good at innovation, most people will say no. But if the definition is so wide you will realize that you are very good at it. Then you will have a common understanding and shared pride and shared ownership and easier to drive it forward.*

Additionally, nearly all the interviewees had come up with an idea and presented it to either their team or the management. Interviewee 4 (floor-worker 3) had recently been involved in a project remaking work structures in one specific function to ease the communication and how the work processes were carried out in this specific function. The interviewee did not realise that this itself was innovation, before s/he got the chance to actually reflect upon it during the interview. Another example is interviewee 8 (floor-worker 6) who recently took part in the implementation of new systems regarding appraisals and mechanisms for follow-up of employees, related to the implementation of the newly introduced business strategy. The latter which was introduced as a new system to all employees in the organization. In this case, and in terms of the broader context of innovation, the interviewee did not only take part in reconstructing organizational practice related to the implementation of the overall strategy planning document; s/he also reconstructed the practices of employees involved in the organizational process.

The empirical results indicate a lack of common understanding and focus given to innovation, and that they wish for the term to be clearer communicated. This is expressed when asking the interviewees about what focus innovation is given strategically in Nets. The lack of focus and wish for a clearer communication of innovation can be illustrated through the following statement:

*We have our values, ACT, and it is not much innovation in those words. It is a bit more the good and safe Nets. I think you could observe effects by having a higher focus on innovation throughout the whole firm, and not just in the innovation labs and Smart Payments. (Interviewee 8, floor-worker 6)*

Another point which support this impression is how the interviewees at several occasions emphasize the role of Nets as being the engine below all other development in the market. Furthermore, some of the interviewees also pointed out how innovation itself is not one of Nets strongest cards.

### ***Strategic focus on innovation: Nets strategy as a document***

The content of the overall Nets strategy is a model for visualizing ambitions over the next five years. The model referred to is held together by four strategic pillars: *Create seamless customer experiences, drive commercial and product excellence, simplify processes and platforms, and win through people*. As an overall impression of the four pillars, the strategy seems to have a dominating focus on the market and their customers. This is also supported by two of the interviewees expressing that the strategy reflects a great focus on the customer of Nets. I interpret the focus on the customer as an indirectly focus on innovation, seeking to improve and develop their products and services to the customer satisfaction. This is also expressed by one of the interviewees as a dominating focus in the organization generally:

*We do not use the terms innovation a lot, but we focus to a high extent on how we can be able to improve and achieve a stronger voice and be a stronger player in the market. There is a lot focus given to how to make the customer experience better. In this it lies a lot of innovation and how to do things in new ways. Even though we do not hear the term as much, we do talk about the customer and how to simplify processes, where innovation lies implicit.*  
(interviewee 8, floor-worker 6)

There is only one pillar which points to innovation explicitly: the pillar *drive commercial and product excellence*. In addition, the pillar has one bullet point attached, *build strong product propositions and drive innovation*.

The strategy reserved for CS is perceived to me as more detailed and descriptive than the overall strategy. It offers a centred focus on strategic ambitions which is closely linked to the overall Nets vision and strategic pillars. Further, my impression of the CS strategy is that the ambitions and goals are translated down to a more tangible level, and thereby more identifiable to the department. The CS strategy reflects the Nets strategy well and is clearly a translation of how CS can contribute to reach the overall ambitions sat in the Nets strategy.

However, the CS strategy focuses on five key priorities in their strategic ambition. The priorities referred to concerns both a focus on improvement in already existing processes, products and services, as well as the development of new solutions. In order to meet their priorities, they state how they need to fully mobilise all their people across CS as their last key priority.

Based on the former three paragraphs, I perceive that the CS strategy and the overall strategy, communicates a certain focus given to both people and innovation. My impression is that they both indirectly and directly pushes change and innovation through the pillars and key priorities. This is also reflected in the title of the overall strategy *Excel and Explore*.

On the other hand, three of the interviewees express that the overall Nets strategy has been difficult to translate into practical use. The empirical results reveal that the strategy is perceived as quite superficial and lack a concrete translation into daily practice. As interviewee 6 (floor-worker 5) states when asked about s/he`s impression of the strategy and what`s missing: *more specificity, more translation of the lofty goals. Concrete examples of what we need to do and how we should do it. And what differentiate us from the competition, and what we should focus on to continue that. I do think it is missing a lot.*

The issue about translating the strategy is also reflected in the interviews when talking about the CS strategy. In order to achieve their ambitions, CS has developed what they call *Must win battles*. These *battles* are initiatives sought to bring CS towards achieving their ambition. The *must win battles* itself appears as high goals to the department. This is also perceived by three of the interviewees who express how the organizations internal processes are not ready to achieve the *battles* marked to, for example, 2018. My impression, based on the results from the interviews, is that the employees want to believe in the strategy, but find it difficult to be motivated by it, as they don`t really see how they are supposed to contribute to achieving the goals. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*We have a lot of things that we know we need to fix, and great steps to take... 20 must win battles for the whole company, it is clear on one hand, reflecting the composition of the company, on the other hand, 20 is terribly much must win battles. Especially when putting 2018 on them. And some say that they (the battles) are at a completely different stage than we actually are internally.... (Interviewee 9, floor-worker 7)*

Even though a strategy can function as guidance in the daily work, the strategy does not seem to be used as guidance in the daily operation of CS. The latter is expressed amongst the interviewees when discussing how they generally relate to the strategy, and their answer was that the strategy was not something they related to when conducting their daily work. In fact, four of the interviewees expressed that what was communicated in the new strategy was something they already did in their work. Therefore, it is likely to interpret that the interviewees look at what is being communicated as a matter of course. In addition, the interviewees asked *what is new* in the strategy? and it seems like what they are already doing, is communicated as new in the strategy. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*I think we are doing all the fluffy words, we are excelling and exploring. Simplifying platforms and processes, that goes within all what I am doing right now. And create seamless customer experiences etc. We are saying that this is what we need to do, and the things we say that we do fit within this. (Interviewee 6, floor-worker 5)*

In sum, the overall Nets strategy and the strategy reserved for CS does not appear to have articulated any explicit strategic plan. On the other hand, I perceive that both documents communicate clear ideas of what they want to achieve the years ahead.

### ***Strategic focus on innovation: enactment of the strategy in practice***

As mentioned in section 1.2, Nets is experiencing the implementation process of a new strategy. The strategy has been enacted in practice through local processes in terms of activities, practices and programmes in order to anchor and carry out the strategy at department and employee level. One action taken to anchor the strategy at employee level includes presentations of both the overall strategy and the strategy reserved each department. These presentations have been conducted for each department, with the purpose of reaching out to all employees. The results from the interviews indicate that the employees have given little attention to these presentations. One of the reasons for this seems to be, as already pointed out in the previous section, that the strategy is perceived as similar to previous strategies, and as one of the interviewees asked: *What is new?* According to a few of the interviewees, a major part of the workforce in the organization did not turn up to listen to the presentation of the strategy earlier this year. Even though they express how the implementation process is being conducted in a better way this time it is stated that *even so*,



*we have heard it before.* The perceived low enthusiasm and similarities from previous strategies might be the reason for that the document is rarely used as guidance by the employees.

In addition to the presentations, there has been developed and conducted workshops. These workshops have had the purpose of being conducted in each function within the department of CS, with the intent to let the different functions and its employees reflect upon what the strategy means to them, and how they can contribute to reach the overall goals. At the point of this study, the named workshops have been conducted in nearly all the functions within the department CS, and the results from the interviewees indicates that the workshops have given the strategy a better understanding amongst the functions and its employees. The middle managers have had the responsibility to make the strategy understandable to every employee in their function. Thereby, conducting these workshops with their respective employees. The implementation and anchoring of the strategy has gotten high priority this year, and as interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) states, *we received feedback last year that we were not good enough at linking the strategy to our employees. This year we have worked more with it (the strategy) regarding meetings and workshops.*

Unfortunately, the task of anchoring has been perceived as a challenging task amongst the middle managers, who find it difficult to translate the strategy into the daily practice of their employees. Another challenging matter has been to make the employees understand that what is communicated in the strategy is of importance to the development of the organization. Due to all the internal processes that needs to be improved before they can achieve the overall ambitions, they find it challenging to believe in the strategy from the perspective of the individual employee. As interviewee 7 (middle manager 2) states: *It is a lot of good things (in the strategy), but to explain it to my employees in a way so they believe in it is difficult. Because we are not there yet.*

Another action conducted in conjunction with the strategy are the programme ImpACT. The purpose of ImpACT is to achieve the ambition *Win through people*, strengthen their employees' capabilities and improve all work. The programme consists of different actions with the organizational values ACT: *Accountable, Customer driven and Together*; as its core focus. One of the actions which is a part of this programme is what they have chosen to call *check ins*. According to interviewee 8 *Check ins* have replaced the previous system of performance appraisal (in Norwegian: *medarbeidersamtalen*). This action is well known

amongst the interviewees and is being mentioned by all when talking about their relation to the management. An important aspect about the *Check ins* is that it is the individual employee who runs and owns the processes. *Check ins* seems to contribute in the relation between manager and employee in terms of building a closer relation. As interviewee 3 (middle manager 1) states, the *check ins* are characterized by shorter goals, and closer follow-up between employee and manager; *A much more agile approach to employee development. Check ins* provide a shift in focus when it comes to achieved results. It is not only about that goals and results are achieved, but also how they were achieved in order to improve processes along the way. It seems to me that the latter allows the inclusion of learning through practice, in terms of improving and evaluating their own working process. My impression from the interview is that there is a positive attitude towards the programme ImpACT. The shift in focus can be illustrated through the following statement:

*Today it is more about you setting short-term goals within one quarter of the year. You are supposed to develop your goals in collaboration with your manager and you take the initiative to set goals and invite your manager into meetings and into the status. A type of empowerment thinking. So, I guess that's positive. (interviewee 2, floor-worker 2)*

The results from the interviews reveals that the programme clearly has given the individual employee more room for action and the possibility of developing individual goals. ImpACT appears and gives an impression of giving the middle manager a mentoring role, guiding the employee to achieve results and individual development and learning. In addition, ImpACT seems to be one of the more tangible parts of the strategy, giving a clear direction of how the employees are supposed to conduct their daily work in order to achieve the overall ambitions in the strategy. Its tangible approach can be illustrated through the following statement:

*I have experienced ImpACT as more down to earth than the rest of the strategy, and it has become something that everyone has to deal with and given some very clear directions for how we should work. The other pillars of the strategy, if you want, have not had any similar deliveries yet, and maybe I only have expectations, talk of the win battles which are in relation with all four pillars, but there is no similar strategic tool I think like ImpACT, and of course, it affects all the pillars and not just win through people. (Interviewee 9, floor-worker 7)*

Furthermore, it has been conducted two different work methods with purpose of generating new solutions and ideas. These two methods are called *hackathons* and *sprint*. The named methods are the only two work methods which the interviewees commonly refer to when touching upon the topic of innovation during the interviews. I interpret both methods as being

actions initiated in conjunction with the overall ambitions in the strategy. Both *hackathons* and *sprint* appear as intended to include the employees to work together and in groups to develop and generate new ideas for products and services. The interviewees recognition of the two methods can be illustrated through the following statements:

*What I know is that there have been some ideas which has gone through this kind of fast track sprint, where you have for one week sat down with questions like, what is the idea? What are we going to get out of it? And then at the end of the week they are testing the idea in practice with some users to see how it works. (Interviewee 3, middle manager 1)*

*There has been conducted something called Hackathons. That means that it has been several variations of it, but it started out with IT people who sat down one day, divided into groups and came up with new ideas, and for one day they should come up with a prototype. (Interviewee 7, middle manager 2)*

### ***Tradition vs change***

When it comes to the organizational focus on tradition versus change, there are varied opinions amongst the interviewees, with a dominant slope towards tradition. In this sense the interviewees give an impression of that the organization is moving to a focus on change. On the other hand, this perception seems to concern the outer-directed organizational focus to adapt and change with customer demands, and less the inner-directed ability to drive and foster change internally. The tradition minded focus and outer-directed focus can be observed in the following two statements:

*Nets in general, in my impression is that it is a little rigid and a little stuck in old ways. (Interviewee 6, floor-worker 5)*

*On the paper we are very customer oriented, but in practice it does not look like this. It's probably a lot based on tradition, too, that it's a 50-year-old company. So that's probably not ... It's very traditional how we work on product development still, versus companies that are young and under 10 years old. Very different. We can see how they work across all departments. (Interviewee 2, floor-worker 2)*

It was only interviewee 6 (floor-worker 5) who expressed explicitly that the organization is going through a transition from tradition to change. In addition, several of the interviewees reflect upon how Nets in general have moved from being a traditional company characterised by monopoly to a company experiencing increased competition in the market, and thereby increasingly are focusing on change and actions to meet this competition. Therefore, the empirical results indicate that Nets have been moving towards a more change directed

development but as an old and well-established organization, it is difficult to complete such a transition. This is expressed through the following statement made by interviewee 4 (floor-worker 3): *a bit brutal, I would say that we have most focus on "this is how we do it here". But we want to take it the other way. It takes some time to turn a tanker. That's my assessment.*

Even so, as Nets is facing an increasingly growing competitive market, they need to think new. Moving away from a market characterized by monopoly, the requirements for a drastic change in mindset is emerging. The interviewees reflect upon how this is where the new strategy plays a central role with its title; *Excel and Explore*. The title itself do emphasize a focus on change, but as already mentioned, the strategy also has a dominated focus on an *outer-directed perspective*. On the other hand, it does clearly state the expectations for innovation through pushing focus on change. In line with this point, there seems to be a disconnection between what the strategy communicates and what is happening in practice, namely the translation of the strategy to practical operations. The latter in terms of how the employees find it difficult to relate the *must win battles* and the *fluffy* words to daily practice.

I chose to follow up by questioning how they thought that a more pronounced use of the word *innovation* and a common understanding of the phenomenon could affect the department's innovative capacity. As an answer to this, most of the interviewees expressed that the organization would benefit from a common understanding, and that the overall innovative capacity of the firm might increase. The empirical results thereby imply that innovation as a word is not translated into practical use in the organization and not given a purpose. Therefore, it seems like there is a lack of common understanding given to the word itself in the organization.

Furthermore, several of the interviewees point to how innovative work is left with those who have competence for it. One of the examples are *Smart Payments*, a department for innovation located in Denmark, and the function of development within the department CS. *Smart Payments* has the purpose of generate and produce innovation in collaboration with customers and users. At this point it looks like the innovative work and focus has been isolated from the ordinary employee, even though this concerns a type of radical innovation. The interviewees express how this isolation of innovative activities may result in the lack of a comprehensive picture of development in Nets. As interviewee 2 (floor-worker 2) states:

*I personally believe that making smart payments and putting people from nets in another company at another office and expecting it to create innovation, I do not think it necessarily happens so much for that reason. But if you open up for cocreation with your customers and partners, invite them and have an idea-lab where you can show some prototypes and present ideas that you have at an early stage, I think that' something.*

The majority of the interviewees stated that they wanted to work with generating new ideas as they saw this as a part of their job. On the other hand, the interviewees point out a lack of tools, competence, and resources to conduct that type of work. Even so, at this point in the interview the interviewees had not yet reflected upon how they already were conducting work which could be characterized as innovation. Thus, I chose to interpret this innovative work as being characterized as incremental. Nevertheless, important to the organization and its overall performance and innovative capacity.

The impression of being dominated by a focus on tradition and excelling rather than exploring is further strengthened through a closer look at the empirical results where nearly all the interviewees reflect upon how there is a certain focus given to keep being the engine below in the market. This can be illustrated through the following statement:

*So, in addition to taking a number of steps, there has also been realized that the disruptive innovations do not necessarily come from within the company, but we have to make sure that we agree and that they do not come as a surprise to us and that even where it disrupts the bulk of the market, we should lie like the engine below and as part of the infrastructure (talking about disruptive innovations emerging in the market). (Interviewee 9, floor-worker 7)*

## 4.6 Summary of analysis

### **Autonomy**

The interviewees experience a high degree of autonomy in their daily work. They perceive their work as varied and experience freedom and responsibility to achieve overall goals.

The perceived impression of broad jobs and the non-use of formal routine and process descriptions supports the impression of a highly autonomous working day.

<p><b>Supportive Management</b></p>	<p>The individual perception of the interviewees closest level of management is supportive and enthusiastic, characterized by a colleague relationship.</p> <p>The perception of top management is varied amongst the interviewees. The results are distinguished by that the interviewees wish for top management to be more present and that they don't feel the need for having a closer relation to them.</p>
<p><b>Cooperation</b></p>	<p>There is a close cooperation between middle managers and employees. The cooperation with top management is less.</p> <p>It is expressed a wish for a closer and more distinctly use of cooperation across the divisions in the department, hence it is perceived that the cooperative culture within the defined teams and functions in the department is good.</p> <p>The empirical results reveal that the interviewees wish for a closer cooperation across divisions in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the organization.</p> <p>There is an absent of cooperative arenas for knowledge and experience sharing.</p>
<p><b>Climate for idea generation</b></p>	<p>The climate for idea generation is characterized by openness to new ideas, but lack mechanisms to capture the ideas and exploit them. There is an uncertainty regarding the existence of mechanisms designed to generate and capture ideas.</p>

	<p>The empirical results indicate that it is not economic resources that hamper innovative work the most, but rather mindset, tools, time and competence.</p>
<p><b>Focus on innovation</b></p>	<p>Strategic focus on innovation is being pushed but has not been translated or anchored to the level of daily practice.</p> <p>The mindset of operative level not the same as strategic level. Furthermore, internal processes at the operative level are not effective in terms of strategic ambitions.</p> <p>The name of the strategy itself <i>Excel &amp; Explore</i> clearly stands as an example of what Nets want with their future, and the terms communicates modernity, development and innovation. On the other hand, it seems to be a mismatch between what the strategy communicates when it comes to innovation, and the mindset amongst the employees in the organization. The employees express how Nets in general is more about <i>Excel</i> rather than <i>Explore</i> and point out how the organization don't look at innovation as their strongest card.</p> <p>It is observed a dominant slope towards tradition as innovation as a word is rarely mentioned in the organization, and that focus is dominated of keep being the engine below in the market.</p>

## 5.0 Discussion

In this chapter the most prominent findings from the analysis will be discussed in relation to the research question of this thesis. The purpose of the thesis was to explore how Nets facilitate a work environment beneficial to EDI and how this affects the willingness of employees to be innovative, by highlighting conditions serving as drivers to the practice of EDI.

Even though Nets does not focus explicitly on fostering the concept of EDI in the organization, Nets facilitates the presence of several conditions and has a work environment with the potential of promoting EDI. As the analysis has revealed, the employees experience a high degree of autonomy, supportive middle management, close collaboration with their closest manager (middle manager) and teams, a climate open to new ideas and problem solving, and a certain strategic focus given to innovation. Even so, there are four prominent empirical findings that will be discussed in light of the research question in this chapter.

First, the tension between autonomy and cooperation and the need for a holistic approach of conditions will be discussed. Furthermore, strategic focus on innovation and the effects of the enactment of strategy in practice will be examined.

### 5.1 Tension between autonomy and lack of collaboration

My findings suggest that the absence of defined job descriptions, routine and process descriptions creates a work environment which promotes autonomy and room for action amongst the employees in Nets. This fact is also observed out by Kanter (1996, 103) who states that the more routinized and rules-bound a job is, the more it is likely to focus its performance on a few already-known variables and to inhibit attention to new factors. In addition, involving employees in decisions that affect day-to-day tasks helps create a culture of autonomy and responsibility (De Spiegelaere & Van Gyes 2012, 238). I found that the middle managers in Nets give their employees responsibility and foster empowerment within their team, which results in free problem solving and freedom in their employees' work. Allowing the employees freedom and opportunity to develop, carry out processes, and follow up ideas without excessive control have appeared to be fundamental in earlier research regarding both creativity and EDI (Amabile 1988; Aasen et al. 2012, 62). Furthermore, as my



findings indicate in the analysis, the relationship between manager and employee appears, with help from the programme ImpACT, as mentoring. Kesting & Ulhøi (2010, 75) refer to how supportive management in the form of mentoring of employee initiatives at the idea-generation and decision-making stage is singled out to be one of the most significant factors for employee initiatives. Contrary, the presence of the above-mentioned conditions does not necessarily mean that it fully positions employees as drivers for innovation.

My findings show that a certain tension between autonomy and lack of cooperation can be traced across departmental borders. A tension which makes it difficult to produce and carry out new ideas. Even though Kanter (1996) argued how broad jobs can lead to a higher degree of integration and engagement in activities across borders in the organization, this does not seem to apply to the situation in Nets. Despite a high degree of cooperation within the defined teams and functions in CS, I found that the boundaries in the firm are not easily crossed by everyone and are dependent on informal relations. In other words, you need to know who to talk to. As a result of this tension, my findings suggest that the production of new ideas relies on informal relations and how well you know the organization.

I interpret that the lack of cooperation across boundaries creates a type of segmentation between the functions in the department. Kanter (1996, 106) connects this segmentation to the isolation of innovation in firms. Nets has isolated a great deal of the innovative work to a single department located separately from the organization. I found that this action alone is expressed by a few of the interviewees as something which does not necessarily create any value for the organization as a whole. It was clear to me that the production of innovation separately from the daily operations of the firm were perceived as challenging amongst the interviewees. This concern is reflected in both previous literature of EDI, and by Kanter (1996) and Amabile (1988).

However, the segmental impression can be applied to the functions internal CS as well as it seems they are not collaborating and perceive themselves as silo. My findings suggest that the impression of being characterized as *silo* is a result of tradition and organizational norms. As Nets is an old and well-established company, it is likely to assume that this impression is not unnatural. In a study conducted by Teglberg et al. (2012, 44), a tension between autonomy provided and the mainstream advocates of the firms' traditional approaches is found to be one out of four major tensions when connecting EDI to management.

In addition, I found that the employees express a wish for more cooperation across the boundaries in the organization to be able to work more efficiently and effectively. This also applied to the desire of being able to gain a greater comprehensive idea of the organization in terms of a value chain. An integrative and cooperative climate marked by cooperation across levels and borders in the organization has been found to be a central environmental quality that promotes both creativity, innovative behaviour amongst employees as well as the practice of EDI (Kanter 1996; Amabile 1988; Amundsen et al. 2011). Even though my findings reveal great cooperation within the defined teams and functions, this does not apply to crossing departmental borders in the organization. I found that interviewees expressed concern at the lack of arenas and platforms reserved for knowledge and experience sharing. Kesting & Ulhøi (2008, 19) point to how providing platforms for inspiration and information exchange is important to “overcome blinders” and are suitable factors to support employee idea generation. One activity which is present in the department CS is the extensive use of meetings. I found that formal meetings are not considered as great platforms to support idea generation. As I point to in the analysis, formal meetings are perceived negative and time consuming by the interviewees.

Based on the analysis, I found that if no mechanism facilitating the ability to collaborate across the division is provided, there is no expectation for the organization to collaborate and exercise the given autonomy across the borders of the organization. As Kanter (1996, 104) emphasized, decentralization and autonomy make it easier to find people to assist in a project, or to mobilise subordinates for a particular activity without needing clearance from higher-level. The point made by Kanter (1996) can be applied to the concept of autonomy. Kanter (1996, 101) theorized how a more integrative structure encourages innovation in terms of looser boundaries and crosscutting access, open communication and multidisciplinary project teams.

## 5.2 Necessity for a holistic approach of conditions

As aforementioned, I found that there is a high extent of autonomy in the Nets work environment. Talking in a general theoretical sense, the absence of detailed job descriptions creates broad jobs and are beneficial in terms of encouraging freedom and autonomy in work (Kanter 1996). This also concerns the informal use of routines and process descriptions. On

the other hand, interpreted to the extreme, the absence of detailed job, routine and process descriptions and the presence of overall descriptions and responsibilities, might create a situation which gives less direction and inspiration to the individual employee. This also applies to the interviewees' impression of the strategy which they perceived as too general. As Hansen et al. (2017, 334) emphasize, employees with autonomy need to be given clear expectations to their contributions of innovation and improvements. In addition, as De Jong & Kemp (2003) stress, the vision concerning the role of innovation needs to be clear to the employees. I found that both the former arguments are absent in CS.

Using autonomy as an example, autonomy alone might be great for creativity, but not enough to be innovative. As already clarified in section 2.3.1 creativity is preliminary to innovation itself and might lead to innovative results. Creativity is closer related to the pure idea-generation stage and requires other conditions present in order to carry out the idea in practice, and thereby the remaining process of innovation. Innovation itself inhibits a more complex process of other activities and elements, which require a balance between conditions (De Jong & Kemp 2003). Several of the factors recognized by Amabile (1988) are present in Nets as well. On the other hand, seen in an EDI perspective, innovation driven by employees refers to the whole process, from generating ideas to implementing them, which again requires the presence of different conditions at the same time, in balance with each other. I found that CS has a supportive relationship between manager and employee and this is considered as an important factor to the practice of EDI (Hansen et al. 2017, 334). On the other hand, CS lacks a higher level of cooperation across the firm's departmental boundaries. As a result, the interviewees point out how it is difficult to gain a comprehensive image of the whole value chain. Therefore, it might not be enough to facilitate a high degree of autonomy, if it is not balanced with other conditions and approached in a more holistic manner.

As hitherto acknowledged in the previous section, a tension between autonomy and cooperation can be found. The different conditions promotional to EDI can be seen as interrelated when considering how they affect one and other (Amundsen et al. 2014; Hansen et al. 2017). In addition, Amundsen et al. (2014, 30) point out how the fundamentals of EDI can be defined by three interrelated elements: roles, tools and culture. Scholars within the field of workplace innovation emphasized the interrelated elements of strategy, structure and culture when revealing the success of workplace innovation (Oeij et al. 2017b). The two former arguments imply that once greater autonomy is given, mechanisms which give an

expectation and direction of how to exercise the autonomy may need to be provided. The latter in terms of allowing autonomy to be conducted in collaboration with other conditions such as: cooperation across divisions, supportive management, mechanisms and actions established to capture ideas and improvements to further foster development and effectivity. However, this would allow the employees to exercise their autonomy beyond the boundaries of their own function and teams. On the other hand, this does not mean that the employees in Nets are not allowed to operate their autonomy across the boundaries in the organization, but there is no platform provided to utilize their autonomy to a higher extent than what it is at the moment. Based on the former, it is likely to interpret that the organization does not communicate a clear expectation that they want their employees to cooperate across departmental boundaries, despite the fact that in reality they want the employees to do so. A possible solution to this challenge might be less defined boundaries in the organization, which is theorized to be beneficial to collaboration and innovative behaviour (Kanter 1996, 105). In addition, the organization may benefit from establishing platforms designed to cooperate and transfer of knowledge, information, experiences and so forth across the boundaries of the organization.

By using *Autonomy* as an example, the previous paragraphs exemplify how one condition promotional to either creativity or activation of innovation cannot exist alone but needs to be in balance and collaboration with other conditions. The latter implies that bridges must be provided between the conditions such as organizational mechanisms in terms of actions and programmes. As I pointed out in the literature review, Amundsen et al. (2014, 28) argued how mechanisms and tools designed to encourage and facilitate EDI-practices may constitute the “backbone” of innovation work. They further emphasized how these mechanisms and tools had to hold a productive interplay with roles and cultural characteristics. In other words, a holistic approach is required. The local processes initiated in conjunction with the strategy represent such mechanisms and give a greater comprehensive picture of the different conditions promotional to EDI.

### 5.3 Strategic focus on innovation

It is difficult to determine whether the strategy in the form of documents affects the way the employees work with innovation. Furthermore, I found that strategic focus on innovation in the strategy in general is not consistent with what is practiced at the operative level in the organization. A set of possible reasons for this can be traced in the analysis and will be explored further in this section.

Firstly, I found that the interviewees perceived the strategy as being too superficial and general. This led to the challenge of translating the strategy into practice. To employees, visions and goals can act as guidelines in daily decisions (De Jong & Kemp 2003, 194). I found that the interviewees expressed a desire for a more concrete translation of what the visions in the strategy mean in practice. Additionally, my findings reveal that the interviewees found it challenging to translate the strategy into practice due to its superficial words and high goals. Oeij et al. (2017b, 406) show that successful workplace innovation results from an interplay between management-driven business goals and employee-driven quality of work goals. One aspect that reflects the difficulties of translation in Nets, concerns the challenge of the so called *must win battles*. In the analysis I point to that the *battles* are conceived by the employees as being too ambitious as the internal processes are not ready to conduct and achieve these *battles*. The latter indicates that the goals communicated in the strategy are not matching the internal capacity of the organization. Therefore, I interpret that the management-driven business goals are not equivalent to the employee-driven quality of work goals. Furthermore, the list of *battles* might hamper employees' willingness of being innovative in terms of suppressing the motivation of the employees who are too occupied to develop internal processes in order to meet the *battles* defined in the strategy. Therefore, it is difficult to determine what effect the document has on innovative focus and work in general if the employees find the strategy too ambitious.

In line with the challenge of translation, a certain gap can be traced between the strategic level and the operative level in the organization when it comes to the understanding and focus on innovation. The latter in terms of not being a consistent strategic focus on innovation across every level in the organization. The strategy clearly communicates a focus on innovation, exemplified through focus on expenditure, development to the customer

satisfaction, the title *Excel & Explore*, and its high ambitions. On the other hand, I found that the interviewees perceived that the organization placed greater importance on *excelling* than *exploring*. My findings show that the interviewees even emphasize how innovation is not the major feature of the organization, and that instead their focus is to keep being the engine below. This is supported by some of the interviewees who expressed that they did not know that their work could be characterized as innovation.

Earlier research emphasizes the importance of strategic focus on innovation across all levels in the organization (Amundsen et al. 2011; de Jong & Kemp 2003). From a strategic point of view, I found that there may be a lack of articulation between the various sources of innovation. The latter is found by other scholars as a tension when connecting managerial factors to the practice of EDI (Teglborg et al. 2012, 44). Even though Nets does not focus explicitly on EDI, my findings indicate that their work and focus on innovation generally in the organization may seem to lack a considered way in which different sources of innovation, such as the operative level, R&D department, Smart Payments and so forth articulate and understand innovation. To stimulate innovative behaviour amongst employees, other theorists have stressed a need for a clear corporate vision concerning the role of innovation (De Jong & Kemp 2003, 194). In my study, the gap between the strategic and operative level in the organization may be a result of the fact that the firm`s vision of the role of innovation is not communicated down to employees clearly enough thus creating a non-consistent understanding of the phenomenon of innovation.

Additionally, my findings show that the documents have had little influence amongst the employees and are rarely or never used as material for guidance. One of the reasons for this might be the fact that the employees do not feel they have been given a new direction. I found that the interviewees have not acknowledged what are considered as “new” components of the strategy and saw the components of the strategy as something they were already doing in their work. When perceived relevant to the individual employee, strategies can have a motivational effect by giving the employee a description of how the overall goals are supposed to be reached, give direction and a purpose to the work of each employee (Jacobsen & Thorsvik 2007, 42; De Jong & Kemp 2003, 194). In Nets situation, it is difficult to determine whether the strategy affects the way the employees work with innovation, or how it affects their willingness to be innovative, if they are not using the document in daily practice.

Even though it may be difficult to determine whether the strategies as documents affect the way the employees work with innovation, I found that the daily practice of employees consists of innovative activities in Nets. Consequently, it may seem like the documents alone do not facilitate a work environment promotional to EDI. On the other hand, one needs to look at the organization as a whole. Therefore, the next part of the discussion concerns the enactment of the strategy in practice, and conditions promoting EDI in practice.

#### 5.4 Enactment of the strategy in practice

I found that the enactment of the strategy in practice has shown a greater effect on whether the employees are innovative or not, as well as an effect on how the organization has created a work environment promotional to EDI. Therefore, in the perspective of the employee, I find the documents less important compared to the local processes.

Local processes in terms of activities, practices and programmes have been initiated in conjunction with the strategy, and they represent important strategic elements. In addition, the local processes reflect the focus given to the employees in the strategy when it comes to *win through people* and *mobilise people*. The study has revealed that employees favoured *less words and more action* as they can recognize more easily the importance of their work through these processes. In addition, the processes were perceived as the most tangible part of the strategy providing direction of work to the employees. This is proved through their reflection of the programme ImpACT. The local processes apply well to the employee and fosters important factors relevant to the conditions promotional to employee driven innovation; supportive management in terms of creating a greater relation between middle manager and employee, and autonomy in terms of self-goal setting, self-problem solving, self-responsibility (Sims et al. 2009, referred to in Hansen et al. 2017, 328); as well as opening up the possibility of individual development and work place learning (Høystrup 2010). In addition, the local processes in Nets encourage the employees (floor-workers and middle management) to reflect on existing conditions for EDI and how to improve them.

Additionally, my findings show that the work methods of *Hackathons* and *Sprint* has had the purpose of producing new solutions and innovation by individuals in groups. Both methods are perceived in a positive manner by the interviewees.

As my findings show, it is important to consider the reciprocal effects of the strategy and practice, as the enactment of strategy in practice had a greater effect than the document alone. Oeij et al. (2017a, 150) pointed to how one needs to consider the mutual effects of all strategy, structure and culture if one is to reveal the benefits associated with workplace innovation (similar to innovation driven by employees). As this chapter has revealed, I argue that the conditions cannot exist alone, and need to be approached holistically by taking into account the reciprocal effects between each one, and at the level of strategy, structure and culture.

## 6.0 Conclusion

In the search for new sources to innovation, the practice of EDI has emerged emphasizing the organization-individual-innovation interaction at the micro-level of the firm. Innovation is thereby assumed to arise from the everyday practices of employees, and the chosen definition of the concept EDI is interpreted as embracing the whole innovation process.

This thesis has been refined to concern the facilitation of an environment beneficial to the practice of EDI, and the research has focused on conditions serving as drivers. Furthermore, the research has sought to shed light on how this environment affects the willingness of employees to be innovative. Closely linked objectives in this manner are perspectives given one creativity studies and activation of innovation.

Creativity and activation of innovation are often mentioned as relevant behaviours in the initiation stage of the innovation process (Kanter 1996; Amabile 1988), while other practices are necessary to implement and produce innovative results (De Jong & Kemp 2003).

Therefore, by exploiting theories regarding creativity studies and activation of innovation, in combination with EDI, this thesis stresses that the different conditions recognized in the named theories are important for innovation capacity and performance. As the literature review and discussion reveals, a certain balance between the conditions present is required as they all can be interpreted as interrelated. In other words, the conditions need to be treated with a holistic approach. Based on the former, this study does not directly link the conditions named in the study to innovative results.



I have operated with a twofold research question in this thesis. The first part of the question concerns organization of work. I have sought to explore how Nets, as a single case, facilitates a work environment consisting of conditions beneficial to the practice of EDI. The study has revealed that there are several conditions serving as drivers to EDI present in the department CS. Through supportive middle management which fosters empowerment in their teams and removal of defined job descriptions, defined routine and process descriptions, a work environment is created which promotes autonomy and room for action amongst employees. This is further enhanced through the programme ImpACT which lays the groundwork for closer cooperation between middle management and employees, individual development and learning. On the other hand, I interpret that this can only be applied to the defined teams and functions in the department. This means that there is an existing tension between autonomy and cooperation across the departmental borders in CS. This may mean that unresolved tension may affect innovativeness in a negative way. Innovation is considered a social process and scholars propose that innovation is not created by single individuals alone (Sundbo 2003, 101, referred to in Høystrup 2012, 8).

In the second part of my research question I have investigated how the facilitation of conditions promotional to EDI affects the willingness of employees to be innovative. The discussion has revealed that the employees experience willingness to produce ideas but lack a comprehensive picture of the organization due to the lack of cooperation across the borders in the department. In this manner, they wish for what Kanter (1996) theorizes as a more integrative culture. In addition, the gap between the strategic and operative level in the organization regarding focus on innovation creates a situation where some challenges can be observed. These challenges are related to motivation, time and understanding when it comes to the production of innovation and in what way the organization focuses on innovation generally.

Nets functioned as a great case in this thesis, demonstrating that a balance between conditions considered as drivers to the practice of EDI is required. EDI is a combination of idea generation and the implementation of those ideas. In other words, as understood in this thesis, EDI is a concept which embraces the whole process of innovation and represents a greater concept than creativity alone. Therefore, one condition present might promote creativity amongst employees, but does not necessarily reflect the practice of EDI without being supported by other conditions. It is therefore necessary to provide mechanisms and bridges

between the conditions in order to utilize each one to its fullest extent and to position employees as drivers for innovation. It is therefore possible to interpret that a distinction in EDI is created, consisting of two elements: creativity and actual innovation. Therefore, it is possible to believe that it is conceivable to identify a differentiation between the conditions alone, and the mechanisms needed to combine those conditions and let the practice of EDI unfold. This represents an analytical distinction and has been important in this study. Therefore, I propose that more studies regarding how these conditions are to collaborate are needed.

In the situation of CS, it does not appear that department are able to exploit the actual presence of each condition as they are not providing mechanisms which allow the different conditions to collaborate. This promotes potential for a high level of creativity but might hamper the innovative output in the organization. As this study does not focus on innovative output, the findings do not imply that the organization does not create employee-driven innovation. On the other hand, the study reveals that the department has a great potential to capture innovation driven by employees, as they already have conditions beneficial to the practice of EDI present. Furthermore, this point applies to previous research regarding EDI which theorizes how Norwegian organizations already have good prerequisites to practice EDI.

Initially in this thesis I wanted to look at the relation between strategy and practice in the perspective of EDI. Due to the scope of the thesis, this appeared too ambitious, and would require a greater study if one were to analyse all relevant elements to the concept of strategy. Even so, interesting aspects regarding strategy in the condition *focus on innovation* can be recognized. Given that Nets is experiencing the implementation process of a new strategy, it opened up the possibility of looking at a broader set of elements in the concept of strategy related to *strategic focus on innovation*. Both the program ImpACT and the work method of *Sprint* and *Hackathons* initiated in conjunction with the strategy proved to be of importance and functioned as a bridge between conditions promoting EDI. The latter in the facilitation of autonomy, individual development and supportive management. Therefore, a proposal to further research is to focus explicitly on the concept strategy and its associated elements in the perspective of EDI, to further explore the relation between management and innovation driven by employees.

## 6.1 Managerial implications

I will contribute to implications in managing innovation by offering suggestions on how to create a work environment which is favourable to the practice of EDI.

By highlighting conditions which are considered as drivers to EDI, this thesis has shown that it is possible for an organisation to have a work environment *favourable* to EDI, without focusing deliberately on the practice itself. On the other hand, if managers want to *practice* EDI, I would recommend not to focus only on conditions serving as drivers for creativity or innovation but combine it with other structural and cultural aspects. I find that a holistic approach is important when facilitating conditions serving as drivers to EDI.

As an example; you cannot give a department, group of people, or a single employee autonomy without providing any direction or expectation of how to exercise this autonomy. This also applies to cooperation. Even though the organisation expects the employees to collaborate across departmental borders, mechanisms to demonstrate this expectation needs to be provided. These mechanisms may be in the form of a platform where one can cooperate by sharing knowledge, experiences, information and so forth.

Innovation is after all considered to be a social process, not only by scholars in the field of EDI, but by well-known theorists in innovation studies generally. The recognition of collaboration as an important factor in innovation can be traced back to the first decades of twentieth century. At this time, it became clear to observers that innovation involves teamwork and takes place within larger organizations (Fagerberg 2005, 10).

## 6.2 Critical remarks and limitations

When considering the study, there are a few aspects that need to be taken into account. At first it must be observed that as a researcher I have used interpretive reading when analysing the data collected. Interpretive reading has been used in order to be able to understand how the interviewees interpret the phenomenon I have studied (Johanessen, Tufte & Christoffersen 2011, 168). In this sense it is worth mentioning that my interpretation might not apply to the interpretation of either the participating interviewees, or the case as a whole.

In addition, this study has been limited to the conduction of 10 interviews, with interviewees recruited from one department (out of three) in an organization employing 2,400 people in six countries. It is therefore necessary to emphasize that the study does not necessarily apply to the situation in the whole organization. Furthermore, as already indicated in the method section, this study has used a Norwegian case which is generally considered to have good prerequisites to practice EDI. On the other hand, by drawing on traditional theories regarding creativity and activation of innovation in combination with EDI, I have sought to make the study less dependent on one specific culture and nationality. Even so, the study does only concern one case, and the empirical findings may look different if including more cases or aspects of the chosen case itself.

A further point worth mentioning when discussing limitations is the choice of method. Due to the scope of this thesis, a qualitative method was the most preferable choice. It would be possible to produce quantitative data through the use of surveys and measures of innovative activities, but this was not relevant to this task, and would be too ambitious due to the scope of the thesis. Even so, it would be interesting to further research to take a quantitative approach to the study of EDI.

As I have pointed out in chapter 2, the concept of EDI can be tied to other theories within innovation studies. I have only chosen two out of a number of relevant theories which could be combined with the concept of EDI. In addition, this study does not take into account the effects of EDI, conditions preventing EDI or external conditions that may affect the overall situation that the case find themselves in. Therefore, it must be noted that there might be both an internal and external context and its related conditions that affect the findings in the study, as well as how the aforementioned conditions present in Nets unfold.

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# Appendix 1

## Interview template: Translated to English

### Interview template/List of topics

#### Phase 1: Introduction

##### *Informal*

- *Who am I/we*
- *Length of the interview*
- *What we are going to talk about*

«Hi, and **thanks for taking part in this study**. My name is Ida Nordberg and I am studying Technology, Innovation and Culture at the TIK-center, at the University of Oslo, Blindern. This interview, along with the remaining ones to be conducted these two days, is a part of the research for my master's thesis. It will be submitted in October this year.

The research you are now taking part in **have the purpose of mapping the employee's experience in different areas**, and you will be **informed about the topic of each phase of the interview**.

During the interview, I am interested in **all aspects that concern the situations you describe** when it comes to which people involved and other factors you regard as relevant and that have spelled into the working context of the situations. I do not need any personal information, **only what YOU experienced as influential in the situations** that the questions concentrate on.

A **recorder** will be used to make the interview more flexible both for you and for me, given that I do not have to continuously record notes along the way. We could rather focus on keeping the interview going as a conversation. The **recorder can be stopped, and the interview can be canceled at any time if you wish**.

All material extracted from the interview will be **processed anonymously**. You are now only

registered with department and which number you have in the interview. After the interview, it will be transcribed, and the audio **recording will be deleted** ».

- *Any questions to the study/interview?*
- *If you are wondering about anything during the interview, or do not understand my questions, please do not hesitate to stop the interview and ask*

## **Phase 2: Mapping a normal workday**

- **Can you describe a typical workday?**
  - *I am interested in the way you work*
    - *Formel job description*
    - *Varied work tasks*
    - *To what extent do you decide over your own work and how the overall goals in your work is supposed to be reached?*
    - *Flexibility*
- **Do you have descriptions of routines?** work descriptions, process descriptions
  - *To what extent have you participated in developing them?*
  - *How actively do you develop and work with efficiency improvements in these descriptions?*
  - *Do you use them?*
- **How close do you work with the need source?**
- **How close do you work with the management?**
  - *Do you have a project manager/middle manager?*
  - *How often are you in contact with them?*
  - *Can you tell me about your working relationship with this manager?*
  - *What characterizes your manager? (I do not need to know who this is)*
- **How often do you get the chance of individual and competence development?**
  - *Floor-worker: courses, follow-up, participation, challenges*

- *Middle manager: courses, focus, close to top management, what do you focus on as a manager*
- *Generally: transfer and exchange of information and experiences with other colleagues*
- **Can you tell me about how you use your competence in your workday?**
- **How much time do you use on evaluating your own work?**
  - *Do you ever think about how you can work more efficient?*
- **If you find a solution to a problem/challenge – what do you do?**
  - *Who do you talk to?*
  - *Would you get support for the new solution?*
  - *Climate in the department – possible to be a part of the organizational development*
- **To what extent are you in contact with other departments/functions – do you exchange advise and tips to improvements/solutions?**
  - *What kind of contact do you have with specialists and other disciplines?*
  - *What type of contact do you have with actors externally the organization?*
  - *How often do you conduct larger projects which you and your function/team are a part of?*
  - *How important do you think that cooperation in your department is?*
    - *Do you cooperate a lot with others? In what way?*
      - *Across divisions, roles, management, other institutions*

### **Phase 3: Topic is idea generation – you get an idea: what happens to it?**

- **Can you tell me about one time you had an idea?**
  - **If no, can you tell about a time one of your colleagues had an idea?**
  - *Who was involved?*
    - *cooperation*
  - *Where did the idea come from?*
  - *What happened after you came with the idea?*

- *Who had to be informed?*
  - *Did you have to give away the idea?*
  - *Did you experience support?*
    - *Tell me about how your management positioned themselves to the idea*
  - *Implementation process – your decision authority*
  - *Resources*
  - *Did anyone follow-up the idea later?*
  - *The experience of recognition*
- **If you never had any idea/or it was never excepted:**
    - *What was the reason?*
    - *Why did you not take it forward?*
    - *Who was involved?*
    - *Where did the idea come from?*

#### **Phase 4: Creativity and activation of innovation generally**

- **What is important to you when talking about generation of new ideas/promoting creativity at the workplace?**
  - *Do you experience that your own criteria are present in Nets?*
  - *Yes: What is Nets doing which is good?*
  - *No: Can you describe what is missing?*
- **What is needed for you to create new products or processes individually or in teams? Simplify working days / come up with ideas for new solutions?**
  - *Ceilings for creativity and ideas, new solutions both on products and work processes?*
  - *Do you experience an atmosphere where innovation and new ideas are appreciated?*
    - *Feedback, acknowledgment, recognition*
  - *Do you work free with problem solving?*
    - *Adequate time - could evaluate more perspectives*
  - *Can you make your decisions yourself?*

- *How is it made possible to get in touch with "needs" from their customers and the market?*
- *How do you maintain the relationship with their customers?*
- **Can you tell me about your access to resources in general?** Facilities, tools, knowledge, knowledge development, information, other employees, funds / financial resources
  - *Says something about the organization's expectations for innovation*
  - *Decentralization: local determination and small units*
  - *Problem solving*
- **Is there a focus on tradition or change?**
  - *How busy are you changing in their department?*
  - *How much focus do you perceive that management is changing?*
  - *Sales of standard / one particular item or customization to the customer?*
  - *Room for error*

#### **Phase 5: Topic is strategy and innovation**

- **What value does Nets give you? Mention three words you associate with your workplace**
- **How do you talk about innovation here in Nets?**
  - *Who's talking about it?*
  - *When do you talk about it?*
  - *Radical? Big*
  - *Incremental? Small*
  - *Do you talk about innovation and development daily in working days?*
  - *Is there anything you want to be good at? Is there anything you are good at?*
- **Do you know any documents / meetings / forums / plans that say something about how to work with development and innovation in your working day?**
  - *Do you have any guidelines to work for here?*

- *Do you ever get information / message to work with development / new solution /?*
  - *Is this expected by management / by you / of your department / implicit expectation?*
- *Do you have any platform / system that accepts new ideas?*
  - *How does this work?*
- *In what way do you understand innovation?*
- *How much of your work do you think is about creating something new / working with innovation / being innovative?*
- **Not a long time ago, a new strategy for 2018-2022 was presented here in Nets. Do you know what it means?**
  - *Do you have access to the strategy for innovation and development here in Nets?*
  - *If yes, do you work closely with this? In what way?*
  - *If no, could you imagine working after this?*
- **Show off the strategy you have received - it is said that the employees should have been sent / have access to.**
  - *Have you seen this before?*
    - *If yes: What does this document mean to you?*
    - *If no: would you like to look into it?*
  - *Regardless of yes and no: How does this reflect your work?*
  - *What do the different points mean to you?*
  - *Do you relate to what is stated in this document?*
  - *Extend it in detail*
- **Employee:**
  - *What do you think they mean about “building a stronger brand for the employees”?*
  - *Do you know what "Impact" is?*
  - *What is involved in developing better processes?*

- *What kind of work do you do to deliver in line with what is set as the focus in the strategy?*
- **Middle manager:**
  - *What does a continuous focus on building leadership skills mean?*
    - *How does this part of the strategy reflect your working day?*
- **Floor-worker: How has your manager facilitated to be able to solve your assignment and work tasks in line with the strategy?**
  - *To what extent do you feel involved in decisions taken in your department?*
  - *How much information about work and projects do you expect to receive?*
  - *How much do you put into the information that is being released?*
  - *If you had an unlimited amount of resources and the permission to do what you wanted, what would you do when it comes to innovation and development in Nets?*
- **Middle manager: How do you facilitate in your department the ability of solving the assignment in line with the strategy?**
  - *How active do you work with involving employees in decisions and information processes?*
  - *If you had an unlimited amount of resources and the permission to do what you wanted, what would you do when it comes to innovation and development in Nets?*
- **Do you have any opinion about how actively Nets is working with innovation internally in the organization?**
  - *What would you like the organization to put more emphasis on in Nets when it comes to innovation?*

### **Phase 6: Conclusion**

- *Review of the interview*
- *Thanks for the participation*

## Appendix 2

### Interview template: Norwegian

#### Intervjuguide/temaliste

(Unngå spørsmål med hvordan – dette kan gjøre intervjuobjektet usikker)

#### Fase 1: Introduksjon

*Uformell og løs prat*

- *Hvem er jeg/vi*
- *Lengden på intervjuet*
- *Hva skal vi gjennom*

«Hei, og **takk for at du deltar i denne studien**. Jeg heter Ida Nordberg og går master i Teknologi, Innovasjon og Kultur ved TIK-senteret, på universitetet i Oslo, Blinden. Dette intervjuet, sammen med de resterende som skal gjennomføres disse to dagene er en del av forskningen til min masteroppgave. Den skal leveres i Oktober nå i år.

Forskningen du nå tar del i **ønsker medarbeiderens erfaringer på ulike områder**, og du vil bli **informert om temaet til hver fase i intervjuet**.

Under intervjuet er jeg interessert i **alt som omhandler situasjonene du beskriver** når det kommer til hvilke personer som er involvert og andre faktorer du ser som relevante og som har spilt inn i arbeidskonteksten i situasjonene. Jeg trenger ingen personlig informasjon, kun **hva DU opplevde som påvirkende i situasjonene** som spørsmålene konsentrerer seg om.

Det vil bli benyttet **en lydopptaker** som gjør intervjuet mer fleksibelt både for deg og for meg, med tanke på at jeg da slipper å kontinuerlig ta notater underveis. Vi kan da heller fokusere på å holde intervjuet gående som en samtale. **Båndopptakeren kan stoppes og intervjuet kan avbrytes når som helst om du ønsker det**.



Alt materialet hentet ut i fra intervjuet vil **behandles anonymt**. Du er nå kun registrert med avdeling og hvilket nummer du har i intervjurekken. Etter endt intervju vil det bli transkribert og **lydopptaket vil bli slettet**».

- *Har du ellers noen spørsmål til studien/intervjuet?*
- *Om du lurer på noe underveis, eller ikke forstår spørsmålet så er det bare å stoppe opp og spørre.*

## **Fase 2: Kartlegging av din arbeidshverdag**

- **Kan du beskrive en typisk arbeidshverdag for deg?**
  - *Jeg er interessert i måten du jobber på*
    - *Formell arbeidsbeskrivelse*
    - *Variasjon i arbeidsoppgaver*
    - *Til hvilken grad opplever du at du har du muligheten til å bestemme over ditt daglige arbeid og hvordan det overordnede målet til prosjektet skal nås?*
    - *Fleksibilitet*
- **Har dere rutinebeskrivelser til arbeidet dere gjør?** Stillingsinstrukser, arbeidsinstrukser, prosessinstrukser, etc...
  - *I hvilken grad har du deltatt i utviklingen av disse?*
  - *Hvor aktivt jobber dere med effektivisering og utvikling av arbeidsrutiner?*
  - *I hvilken grad bruker du dem?*
- **Hvor tett jobber du med brukeren?**
- **Hvor tett jobber du med ledelsen?**
  - *Er du underlagt en prosjektleder/mellomleder?*
  - *Hvor ofte er du i kontakt med ledelsen?*
  - *Kan du fortelle litt om ditt arbeidsforhold til denne lederen?*
  - *Hva kjennetegner din leder? (Jeg trenger ikke vite hvem det er)*
- **Hvor ofte får du muligheten til å utvikle deg og din kompetanse?**

- Ansatt: kurs, oppfølging, deltakelse, utfordringer,
  - Mellomleder: kurs, satsning, tett på høyere ledelse, hva fokuserer du på som leder? Hva er viktig for deg?
  - Generelt: overføring og utveksling av informasjon og erfaring med andre kollegaer
- **Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan du får brukt din kompetanse i arbeidshverdagen din?**
  - **Hvor mye tid bruker du på å evaluere ditt eget arbeid?**
    - Tenker du noen gang på hvordan du kan jobbe mer effektivt og fremme bedre resultater i din jobb?
  - **Om du plutselig ser en løsning på en utfordring/problem – hva gjør du da? Kan være en løsning til effektivisering, kunderelasjon, forbedring av produkt...**
    - *Hvem snakker du med?*
    - *Har du tro på at du vil få støtte for denne nye løsningen? Slippe til?*
    - *Hva slags rom er det i bedriften for å kunne være en del av bedriftens utvikling?*
  - **I hvilken grad har dere kontakt med andre avdelinger/tar dere imot råd og tips til forbedringer/løsninger?**
    - *Hvilken type kontakt har dere med andre spesialister og fagdisipliner i organisasjonen?*
    - *Hvilken type kontakt har dere med andre aktører utenfor organisasjonen: distributører, kjøpere, offentlig sektor, partnere etc.*
    - *Hvor ofte gjennomfører dere større prosjekter som du, eller deler av din avdeling er en del av?*
    - *Hvor viktig mener du samarbeid er for arbeidet dere gjør i avdelingen deres?*
      - *Samarbeider du mye med andre? – i hvilken grad og på hvilken måte?*
        - *På tvers av avdelinger, roller, ledelsen, andre institusjoner ...*

### **Fase 3: Tema er idégenerasjon - Du får en idé: hva skjer med den?**

- **Kan du fortelle om en gang du fikk en idé?**
  - **Nei: kan du fortelle om en gang en kollega av deg fikk en idé?**
  - *Hvem var involvert i dette?*
    - *Samarbeid*
  - *Hvor kom denne ideen fra?*
    - *Var det i kontakt med kunden? Eller i kontakt med andre?*
  - *Hva skjedde etter at du fikk denne ideen?*
  - *Måtte den informeres om? Hvem måtte informeres?*
  - *Måtte du levere fra deg ideen?*
  - *Oppllevde du/dere støtte fra ledelsen til denne ideen?*
    - *Fortell om ledelsens posisjon til denne ideen – entusiasme, motstand, likegyldighet, oppfølging*
  - *Fortell om implementeringsprosessen? – Din beslutningsmyndighet*
  - *Hadde dere tilstrekkelig med ressurser? Hvilke ressurser fikk dere tildelt?*
  - *Ble ideen implementert?*
  - *Ble ideen fulgt opp av ledelsen/deg/dere?*
  - *Brukes denne nye løsningen/ideen/produktet i dag?*
    - *Oppllevde du anerkjennelse, gevinst, motivasjon når din idé ble brakt videre og tatt i bruk?*
  
- **Har aldri fått en idé/den ble aldri tatt videre:**
  - *Om du ikke har hatt noen idé, hva er da grunnen til dette?*
  - *Hva er grunnen til at du ikke gikk videre med ideen?*
  - *Hvem var involvert i dette?*
  - *Hvor kom denne ideen fra?*

#### **Fase 4: Kreativitet og innovasjonsaktivering generelt**

- **Hva er viktig for deg når det kommer til å generere nye ideer/fremme kreativitet på arbeidsplassen?**
  - *Oppllever du at dette er tilstede her i Nets?*
  - *Ja: Hva er det Nets i så tilfelle gjør som er bra?*

- *Nei: kan du beskrive hva du mener mangler?*
- **Hva skal til for at du alene eller i team kan skape nye produkter/prosesser?**  
**Forenkle arbeidshverdagen/komme med ideer til nye løsninger på hvordan det kan gjøres her hos dere?**
  - *Takhøyde for kreativitet og ideer, nye løsninger både på produkter og arbeidsprosesser?*
  - *Opplever du en atmosfære hvor innovasjon og nye ideer er verdsatt?*
    - *Tilbakemelding, annerkjennelse, gevinst*
  - *Får du arbeide fritt med problemløsning?*
    - *Tilstrekkelig med tid – kunne vurdere flere perspektiver*
  - *Får du ta beslutningene dine selv?*
  - *Hvordan er det lagt til rette for å komme i kontakt med «behov» fra deres kunder og markedet?*
  - *Hvordan opprettholder dere relasjonen med deres kunder?*
- **Kan du fortelle litt om tilgangen dere har på ressurser generelt – fasiliteter, verktøy, kunnskap, kunnskapsutvikling, informasjon, andre ansatte, fond/økonomiske ressurser**
  - *Sier noe om organisasjonens forventninger til innovasjon*
  - *Desentralisering: lokal bestemmelse og små enheter → problemløsning*
- **Er det fokus på tradisjon eller endring?**
  - *Hvor opptatte er dere av endring i deres avdeling?*
  - *Hvor mye fokus opplever du at ledelsen har til endring?*
  - *Salg av standard/én bestemt vare eller tilpasning til kunden?*
  - *Rom for feiling?*

## **Fase 5: Tema er strategi og innovasjon**

- **Hvilken verdi tilfører Nets deg? Nevn gjerne tre ord du forbinder med din arbeidsplass**

- **På hvilken måte snakker dere om innovasjon her i Nets?**
  - *Hvem snakker om det?*
  - *Når snakker dere om det?*
  - *Radikal? Store*
  - *Inkrementell? Små*
  - *Snakker dere om innovasjon og utvikling daglig i arbeidshverdagen?*
  - *Er det noe dere ønsker å være gode på? Er det noe dere er gode på?*
  
- **Kjenner du til noen dokumenter/møter/forum/planverk som sier noe om hvordan dere skal jobbe med utvikling og innovasjon i din arbeidshverdag?**
  - *Har du noen retningslinjer å jobbe etter her?*
  - *Får du noen gang informasjon/beskjed om å jobbe med utvikling/ny løsning/?*
    - *Er dette forventet av ledelsen/av deg/av din avdeling/implisitt forventning?*
  - *Har dere noen plattform/system som tar imot nye ideer?*
    - *Hvordan fungerer denne?*
  - *På hvilken måte forstår dere innovasjon?*
  - *Hvor mye av ditt arbeid tenker du at handler om å skape noe nytt/jobbe med innovasjon/være innovativ?*
  
- **Det ble for ikke så lenge siden presentert en ny strategi for 2018-2022 her i Nets. Vet du hva den innebærer?**
  - *Har du tilgang til strategien for innovasjon og utvikling her i Nets?*
  - *Hvis ja, jobber du tett med denne? På hvilken måte?*
  - *Hvis nei, kunne du tenke deg å jobbe etter dette?*

**Vis frem strategien du har fått tilsendt – den det er sagt at de ansatte skal ha fått tilsendt/ha innsyn i.**

- *Har du sett dette før?*
  - *Hvis ja: Hva betyr dette dokumentet for deg?*
  - *Hvis nei: vil du se nærmere på det?*
- *Uavhengig av ja og nei: Hvordan gjenspeiler dette seg i ditt arbeid?*

- *Hva betyr de ulike punktene for deg?*
- *Forholder du deg til det som står i dette dokumentet?*
- *Utdyp det i detalj*
  
- **Ansatt:**
  - *Hva tror du de legger i å bygge en sterkere merkevare for de ansatte?*
  - *Vet du hva «ImpACT» er?*
  - *Hva inngår i utvikling av bedre prosesser?*
  - *Hva slags arbeid gjør du for å levere i tråd med det som er satt som fokus i strategien?*
  
- **Mellomleder:**
  - *Hva innebærer et kontinuerlig fokus på å bygge lederegenskaper?*
    - *Hvordan gjenspeiler denne delen av strategien seg i din arbeidshverdag?*
  
- **Ansatt: Hvordan har din leder lagt til rette for at dere skal kunne være med å løse oppdraget i tråd med strategien?**
  - *Til hvilken grad føler du deg involvert i beslutninger som tas i din avdeling?*
  - *Hvor mye informasjon om arbeid og prosjekter forventer du å få?*
  - *Hvor mye setter du deg inn i informasjonen som blir utgitt?*
  - *Om dere hadde fått en ubegrenset mengde med ressurser, og tillatelsen til å gjøre hva dere ville, hva ville du gjort når det kommer til innovasjon og utvikling i Nets?*
  
- **Mellomleder: Hvordan legger du til rette for at din avdeling skal kunne være med å løse oppdraget i tråd med strategien?**
  - *Hvor aktivt jobber du med å involvere de ansatte i beslutninger og informasjonsprosesser?*
  - *Om dere hadde fått en ubegrenset mengde med ressurser, og tillatelsen til å gjøre hva dere ville, hva ville du gjort når det kommer til innovasjon og utvikling i Nets?*

- **Har du noen formening om hvor aktivt Nets jobber med innovasjon internt i organisasjonen?**
  - *Hva skulle du ønske at det ble lagt mer vekt på i organisasjonen når det kommer til innovasjon?*

#### **Fase 6: Avslutning**

- *Gjennomgang av intervjuet*
- *Takke for deltakelsen*