

Paradox As the New Normal

Essays on framing, managing and sustaining
organizational tensions

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To Maya

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Appended papers

Paper 1:

Towards a nuanced understanding of tensions in organizations: a reconceptualization and systematic comparison

Paper 2:

In search of a creative space: A conceptual framework of synthesizing paradoxical tensions.

Paper 3:

On the emergence and management of paradoxical tensions: The case of architectural firms

Paper 4:

The role of space for a paradoxical way of thinking and doing: Case studies on idea work in architectural firms

Paper 5:

Embracing Paradoxes: A Dialogical Perspective

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Medhanie Gaim
Umea, January 2017.

Abstract

Metaphorically, the idiom “you cannot have your cake and eat it too” describes fundamental tensions at the heart of today’s organizations. Engaging tensions may seem implausible or even impossible. However, there exists evidence, given the increasingly complex environment, that both are vital to organizational success. To succeed, therefore, requires that organizations be able to manage, embrace, and transcend tensions. Consequently, the overall purpose of this thesis is to advance our understanding of tensions in general, and in creativity-based contexts in particular.

The purpose is achieved through five self-contained yet complementary papers. The conceptual parts, which resulted in three papers, include a literature review on tensions, from which inspirations and ideas from different disciplines have been drawn in order to add value to the literature specifically addressing tensions. In parallel with this conceptual work, I explore tensions (a paradox, to be specific) in a specific context (architecture), an effort that results in two papers. Consequently, in the conceptual work, I focus on what “could be,” while in the empirical work I focus on “what is.”

The findings highlight that first, theorizing about tensions calls for conceptual clarity. This was accomplished by identifying and then assembling core features that scholars use to conceptualize tensions. In doing so, the thesis contributes to the ways in which tensions are “represented” by reducing confusion and by making the assumptions behind tensions clear. Second, the thesis establishes that dealing with tensions productively requires a shift from thinking (and doing) based on a contingency approach towards contemporary approaches. Given the nature of the empirical context and the challenges therein, a true shift of this order necessitates framing tensions as paradoxes. In the same vein, the thesis indicates the need to rethink the central question; currently, that question is predominantly “how can we accommodate both A and B?” Given the nature of the empirical context, the question can be shifted to “why not C?” Doing so breaks away from focusing on the existing competing options and turns the focus towards something new. Moreover, dealing with tensions through this lens prevents neutralizing them and settling for a bland halfway point between one extreme and the other. Third, the thesis challenges the taken-for-granted assumption in the literature that dealing with tensions as paradoxes necessitates temporal compromise, separation, or resolution. In the thesis, I argue that dealing with paradoxes is possible without separating. This is so

because simultaneously engaging paradoxes allows organizations to tap their energy and opens up new possibilities. In this case, the thesis contributes to the literature by empirically studying architectural firms. This empirical study shows that dealing with paradoxes requires an intricate interplay between what I call paradoxical mindsets and practices—which comprise organization members’ emotions, cognition, and behaviors—and organizational conditions that embed such mindsets and practices into the organization’s system. Fourth, the thesis makes a point that not all tensions require an action move. Accordingly, the thesis establishes that dealing with paradoxes may not necessarily entail action moves but rather a space to engage in dialogue so as to connect opposites, move outside of them, and situate them in a new relationship. In doing so, the presence of tension is appreciated and complementarity is sought. That is, the challenge is to be able to embrace paradoxes and not to resolve them.

The thesis concludes that although it is challenging to tap the power of paradoxes, it is not impossible. This thesis shows that this goal can be accomplished by accepting that paradoxes are normal, and then seeking to transcend them. In so doing, organizations can unleash the “slices of genius” in their members.

Sammanfattning (Swedish abstract)

Talesättet "att äta kakan och ha den kvar" kan metaforiskt sägas beskriva en grundläggande spänning i hjärtat av moderna organisationer. Att hantera denna spänning kan verka svårt eller till och med omöjligt. Det finns dock stöd för, givet dagens alltmer komplexa organisationsmiljöer, att hantering av spänningar är av stor vikt för organisatorisk framgång. Mot denna bakgrund, är det övergripande syftet med denna avhandling att öka vår förståelse för organisatoriska spänningar i allmänhet och hur de framträder i kreativa näringar i synnerhet.

Syftet uppnås genom fem självständiga men likväl inbördes kompletterande artiklar. De konceptuella delarna, som resulterat i tre artiklar, inkluderar en litteraturgenomgång av forskning om spänningar, där tankar och idéer från ett flertal discipliner har integrerats för att addera värde till den litteratur som specifikt adresserar spänningar. Parallellt med detta konceptuella arbete, utforskas spänningar (i synnerhet paradoxer) i en specifik kontext (arkitekter) i två empiriskt baserade artiklar. De konceptuella artiklarna kan sägas fokusera på det som "kan vara" medan de empiriska artiklarna fokuserar på "vad är".

Resultaten visar för det första att teori om spänningar kräver konceptuell klarhet. Genom att identifiera och sedan systematisera tidigare forskning bidrar avhandlingen till att klargöra skillnader mellan olika definitioner. De olika definitionerna är grundade på olika antaganden och därför betonas vikten av klargöra grunderna för dessa antaganden i syfte att undvika sammanblandning. För det andra bidrar avhandlingen till att beskriva vad som krävs för att konstruktivt hantera spänningar. Behovet av ett skifte från "situationsanpassade" till "samtida" angreppssätt understryks samtidigt som vikten av att framställa spänningar som paradoxer betonas för att kunna hantera de utmaningar som samtida organisationer ställs inför. I linje med detta argumenteras för behovet av att tänka om kring den centrala frågan som ofta formuleras i termer av hur vi ska välja mellan A eller B, för att i stället resa frågan "varför inte C?". Den frågeställningen bryter ny mark, där man går från att fokusera på existerande och inbördes konkurrerande alternativ, till något nytt. Vidare, genom att hantera spänningar på det sättet, förhindras att spänningarna reduceras till en blek kompromiss mellan två ytterligheter.

Avhandlingen utmanar på så sätt den etablerade synen i tidigare forskning innebärande att hantering av spänningar som paradoxer nödvändiggör temporär kompromiss, separation eller upplösning. I kontrast till detta argumenteras istället för att hantering av paradoxer är möjligt utan separering. Detta tack vare att energin från paradoxen

fångas upp och öppnar upp för nya möjligheter. I det här avseendet bidrar avhandlingen till tidigare forskning genom att empiriskt studera arkitektföretag som åskådliggörande exempel. Den empiriska studien visar att hantering paradoxer kräver ett intrikat samspel mellan paradoxala tankesätt och praktiker – vilka innefattar organisationsmedlemmars emotioner, kognitioner och beteenden – samt organisatoriska förutsättningar som inbäddar sådana tankesätt och praktiker i organisationens system. Slutligen poängterar avhandlingen att alla spänningar inte kräver handling utan snarare ett utrymme (space) för att kunna öppna upp för en dialog med syfte att knyta samman motsatser, gå bortom dessa och placera dessa i nya sammanhang. Genom att göra detta, är närvaron av spänningar välkomna samtidigt som komplementära egenskaper och kvaliteter eftersöks. Detta innebär att utmaningen består i att omfamna paradoxer, inte att upplösa dem.

För att summera så betonar denna avhandling vikten av att ta till vara på kraften hos paradoxer. Även om det är krävande så är det inte omöjligt. Genom att acceptera paradoxer som något normalt och ta vara på den utvecklingspotential som ett paradoxalt angreppssätt möjliggör kan ”bitar av genialitet” frigöras hos organisationens medlemmar.

1. Introduction

Competing demands are a pervasive and inherent feature of contemporary organizational life (Beech, Burns, Caestecker, MacIntosh, & MacLean, 2004; Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013; Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). The fact that organizations and their members face competing demands is well established (see, for example, Smith & Lewis, 2011). By definition, because the demands in competition are both equally important to the organization, organization members acutely feel the tension associated with engaging such demands in their day-to-day work which necessitate a response (Cunha, Clegg, & Cunha, 2002; Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). This tension pushes and pulls organization members in different directions as they are torn between competing demands.

Today's organizations are increasingly complex and confront fast-paced competition in global settings, and their members face growing tension from the struggles between novelty and tradition, present and future, or exploration and exploitation, to name some examples (Schad et al., 2016). These tensions are even more prevalent in organizations within the creativity-based context such as the visual arts, music, theater, artisanal crafts, and or design. This thesis focuses on one of these creative fields: architecture. According to DeFillippi, Grabher, and Jones (2007, p. 513), firms in such contexts must deal with “the relentless creation of the new genres, formats, and products” on the one hand, and “economic viability” on the other hand. In a similar context, Glynn (2000) discussed the tension of engaging artistic values and commercial imperatives. Knight and Harvey (2015, pp. 821-822) also argue that organizations in the creativity-based context “seek to produce novel, innovative conceptions, yet they are simultaneously called on to be efficient, repetitive, and exploitative.” Hence, organizations in creative fields, such as architectural firms, are a suitable site to study the tensions arising from competing demands and how such organizations deal with them (DeFillippi et al., 2007).

Organizational tensions are not only an inescapable challenge in practice but also a topic of growing interest in management and organization studies (Briscoe, 2016; Hill, Brandeau, Truelove, & Lineback, 2014; Schad et al., 2016; Smith, Lewis, & Tushman, 2016). One main reason—as noted by Jules and Good (2014), Lampel, Lant, and Shamsie (2000), and Schad et al. (2016)—is that successfully engaging tensions is linked with innovation, survival, improved performance and increased organizational functioning. Consequently, organizations that pursue competing demands simultaneously and manage their associated tension

are more likely to be successful in dynamic environments (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Tushman, Smith, Wood, Westerman, & O'Reilly, 2010). Smith and Lewis (2011), for example, claim that effectively dealing with tensions lead to superior performance in the short run while simultaneously forging the conditions for long-term success. Hence, following the general trend in contemporary society, organizations and the environments they operate in will continue to increase in complexity and ambiguity. This means that over time organizations will increasingly need to adopt ways to accommodate these complexities and ambiguities, and their resulting tensions (Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, & Pradies, 2014; Fairhurst et al., 2016; Jules & Good, 2014; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Schad et al., 2016). Studies (such as this thesis) that examine this topic are therefore of significant value.

When faced with tensions, organization members inevitably make sense of them; the tendency, traditionally, has been to make a choice, to compromise, or attempt reconciliation, all based on viewing the choice as “either/or” (Andriopoulos, 2003; Chen, 2008). Organization members make sense of tension in this way for many reasons, such as their individual need to produce consistent and reliable outcomes (Martin, 2007). Other reasons might be organization member’s cognitive disposition and imagination, which induces them to seek certainty as they attempt to simplify a complex reality (Bartunek, 1988; Farjoun, 2010; Tse, 2013). And we cannot overlook the general human tendency to see the world as black and white (Cooper, 1986). In this regard, research suggests that organization members’ responses to the tensions are linked to how tensions are experienced and understood (see Beech et al., 2004; Gaim & Wåhlin, 2016; Tracy, 2004).

In the specific empirical context of the thesis, as tensions surface at architectural firms, the organization and its members attempt to simultaneously engage different domains: for example, the artistic and the commercial. In this case, it is critical to understand how the way tensions are made sense of. The difference in sensemaking implies a difference in the reaction to the tension and in the abstract representation of that tension, which ultimately leads to different sets of responses. More specifically, an organization member’s emotional reaction to the tension could be one of anxiety and discomfort (i.e., a problem to be fixed); conversely, they could find it an opportunity to think and to create, and hence feel energized (Carlson, Poole, Lambert, & Lammers, 2016; Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Tracy, 2004). In this case, we can reasonably argue that reactions to tensions reflect and are informed by how organization members frame the tension, and that this ultimately influences their responses (Smith & Tushman, 2005).

1.1. Framing (and conceptualizing) tensions

As management and organization studies have devoted increasing attention to tensions (Pache & Santos, 2010) they have come to be conceptualized and theorized in greater detail and using a variety of conceptual schemes, leading to certain inconsistencies in how they are treated in the literature (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007). Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 385) claim that the “lack of conceptual clarity in this field is evident in the varying language adopted to describe tensions,” while Putnam et al. (2016, p. 68) identify a “conceptual malaise” in the organizational literature on tensions and urge researchers to “sharpen their definitions.” Quinn and Cameron (1988) argue that, in theory, actors often impose an “either/or” understanding as they approach tensions as dilemmas, even if these tensions could more fruitfully be approached from “both/and” perspective. In practice, this can be translated to mean that, for example what one organization member may frame¹ as a tradeoff may be experienced by others as a paradox (Stoltzfus, Stohl, & Seibold, 2011). The literature has not adequately delineated these various conceptual schemes (and framings) of tensions (for example as tradeoffs, dilemmas or paradoxes) and their implication. The first paper in this thesis (Paper 1) starts by addressing this gap as the starting point for the rest of the research endeavor.

Regardless of the inconsistencies that exist in the literature on tensions, there has been a general shift in researchers’ views of tensions, and in organizational practices with respect to them, a move away from focusing on one side of the tension or finding middle ground, and a move toward engaging both sides (see Schad et al., 2016 for a recent review of the field). This implies that the emphasis has shifted from seeing tensions as problems to be solved and towards a vision of tensions as a potentially energizing phenomenon that can or should be embraced. This change in how researchers and organizational practitioners view tensions is taking us in a new direction, in which engaging tensions are becoming the new normal. In this regard, Jules and Good (2014) argue that looking at tensions as energizing (as paradoxes, for example) may help in creating a new set of practices that might ultimately improve organizational functioning.

¹ I use ‘framing’ and ‘conceptualizing’ tensions in different ways to separate what researchers write about tension conceptually (hence conceptualization) and how tension is treated in practice (hence framing).

1.2. Managing tensions

I argue that there are different ways of making sense of the tensions, stemming from differences in emotional experiences and framings and resulting in differing responses to tensions. Although scholars do not dispute the benefit of engaging competing demands and embracing their tensions, it is still puzzling and not entirely clear how to achieve such a state of engaging with both demands (i.e., the state of both/and). In this case, Ashforth et al. (2014, p. 1453) ask, “how do actors accomplish this difficult feat?” and “how do they respond to the vexing mixed feelings and thoughts?” Similarly, as Cantarello, Martini, and Nosella (2012) observe, regardless of how the state of “both/and” is conceived; the central question of “how” remains perplexing.

The above mentioned trends in theory and practice have led to a growing call for research on how to achieve the state of “both/and” (Carlson et al., 2016, p. 22). At this point, we have limited empirical data on how organization members react to tensions and why some individual and organizational practices allow organization members to manage such tensions better than others (Tracy, 2004, p. 120). Ashforth and Reingen (2014) share this concern and argue that we have too few empirical studies that explore how tensions play out and are managed. More specific to the empirical context of architecture, DeFillippi et al. (2007) note that very little is known about how such tensions might be explored in a creativity-based context such as an architectural firm. More specifically, although it has been deemed essential for creativity-based contexts to engage tensions, suggestions of how they might do so fall short in terms of specifics (Lampel et al., 2000). Thus, the first question I pose is the following: **how do organizations and their members in a creativity-based context achieve a state of “both/and”?** Here I am interested both in how members experience and frame tensions and in how they respond to tensions.

1.3. Sustaining tensions

While the question of how to achieve the state of “both/and” remains to be answered, there is also another related and puzzling question that has yet to be explored. It is: how is the tension or the state of “both/and” sustained over time? This is important, because it may be that the state of “both/and” is short-lived, and organization members may tend to return to emphasizing one demand over the other, especially in times of crisis or when there is a shortage of resources (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Glynn, 2000). In this case, Smith (2014) argues that even when a “both/and” state is achieved, sustaining this tension over time proves to be difficult. Similarly, Andriopoulos and Lewis (2010) draw our

attention to the precarious nature of the “both/and” state and ask how it is that organizations can sustain it, noting that it might be abandoned in tough times, for example. In this case, maintaining the “both/and” state beyond a fleeting conjuncture necessitates organizational conditions that institutionalize the management of tensions (for example, see Stroh & Miller, 1994). These conditions facilitate individuals to make sense of tensions in a way that makes it possible to engage them. Accordingly, here I pose this second question as well: **how can organizations in the creativity-based context and their members sustain tensions and thus the state of “both/and”?**

1.4. Space for tension

The gap in the research and the two questions posed above concern how to frame tensions and how to achieve and sustain the state of “both/and.” More specifically, research addresses how tensions are experienced and framed, and how organizations and their members manage and sustain them. Reviewing the body of literature on tensions, Schad et al. (2016) recently consolidated research approaches into three streams: the first concerns the framing of organizational tension, the second focuses on individual and organizational practices to deal with tensions, and the third focuses on the impact of responses in the form of outcomes—desirable or otherwise. We see a gap on the issue of how organizational conditions evoke (i.e. help or hinder members from) engaging tensions. On this question, several studies have examined how space affects patterns of useful interaction among organizational members (for example, Hillier & Penn, 1991). More specifically, Penn, Desyllas, and Vaughan (1999, pp. 195-196) argue that “spatial layout could play a key role in facilitating or inhibiting the effective use of human resources in innovation-based organizations.” So, in addition to the three streams, this thesis suggests another stream related to the role of space (spatial conditions, to be specific) and how it evokes certain emotional, cognitive and behavioral features that facilitate engaging tensions. Building on the notion that space—as an organizational condition—evokes certain events and processes (Kornberger & Clegg, 2003, p. 83) and in the spirit of exploring an additional stream in the literature on tensions, I explore the intersection of organizational studies of space and organizational studies of tensions to pose a third question: **how do spaces elicit emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions that make engaging tensions possible?**

1.5. Purpose of the study

In light of the gaps identified and the three research questions posed, the overall purpose of this thesis is to advance our understanding of tensions in general, and in creativity-based contexts in particular. This general purpose is divided into two specific objectives. Consequently, my thesis specifically aims to:

- Explore how tensions in a creativity-based context are framed, managed, and sustained.
- Explore how organizational conditions facilitate and evoke individual's emotion, cognition, and behavior as they relate to dealing with tensions.

I pursue this objective through five self-contained papers: three theoretical and two empirical. Although there is an overlap between them, they are distinct in their foci but complementary in their treatment of tensions. The major focus of each paper, as well as how they are related to one another, work together to achieve the general and specific goals of this thesis, is depicted in the conceptual framework (see figure 1) and further explained in the text that follows.

Before going into the specifics and introducing the papers, it is important to first explain how the conceptual framework is formulated and how it should be understood. The outer layer depicts how the salient tension is framed into tensions as paradoxes, how it is managed to achieve a state of “both/and,” and how it is sustained to maintain the dynamics of the tension alive. The middle layer depicts the sensemaking vortex, which signifies the interplay among the emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions at the individual level. This process is activated when individuals are faced with the salient tensions. An individual's sensemaking vortex is thus in play when framing, managing, and sustaining the tension. The inner layer represents organizational conditions: what the organization is or has to offer that both facilitate (e.g. structure, process) and elicit (e.g. spatial conditions) individuals' sensemaking.

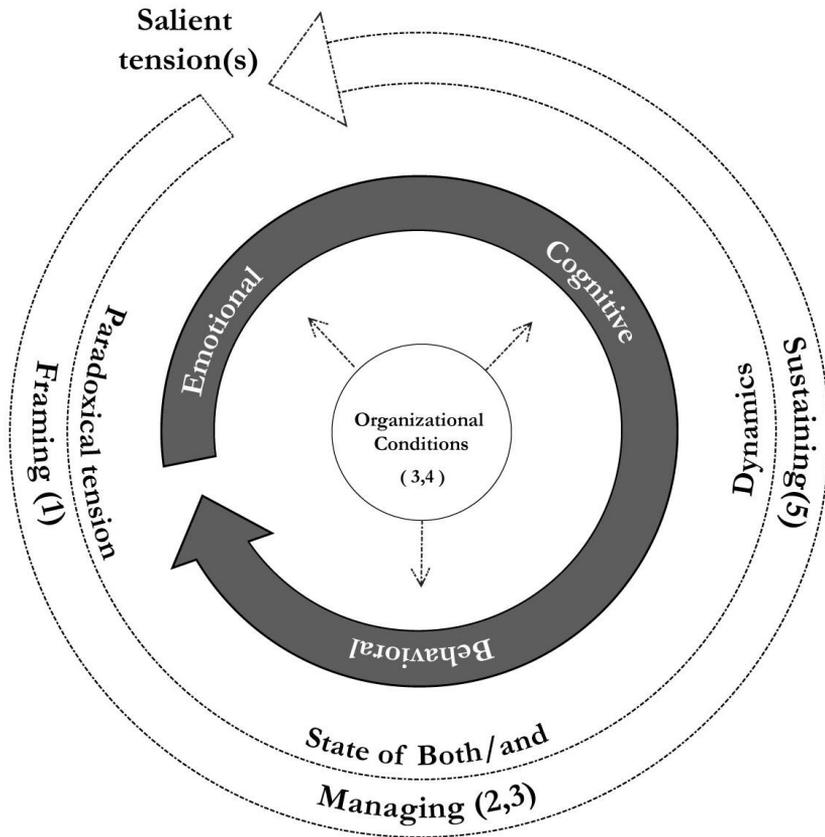


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

1.6. Overview of the papers

I will now briefly introduce the five papers in relation to the conceptual framework and show how they are related to each other. In doing so, I will also explain the specific contribution of each, along with the general contribution of the thesis as a whole.

Given the observed inconsistencies in the conceptual indistinctiveness of tensions, Paper 1—conceptual in its nature—aims to achieve conceptual clarity regarding tensions. To do so it identifies relevant features of tensions—the existence of a dyad, contradiction, interrelatedness, complementarity, compatibility, simultaneity, and a push-pull dynamic—to show similarities and differences in the various ways in which tensions have been conceptualized. It also outlines how these features can be used to differentiate types of tensions and their theoretical (conceptual clarity) and practical (in relation to responses) implications.

Using these features, the paper shows how these conceptualizations can be translated into practice to frame tensions as sources of anxiety (paralyzing) or as calls to creativity (energizing) and how this is related to responses. The Paper 1 (as indicated in the conceptual framework) focuses on the framing of salient tensions: the class of tension that is of importance to organization members (later in section 3.2.1 I will distinguish salient tensions from latent tensions). So, the framing of salient tension leads to a specific kind of tension (for example paradox in this case).

Paper 2 is also conceptual in nature and aims at increasing awareness of paradoxical tensions specifically and offers an approach to managing them. Here I map out a means to achieve the “both/and” state through a specific active response called *synthesis*. I argue that synthesis occurs when both demands (framed as paradoxical tensions) are simultaneously fulfilled to their full potential. I detail the concepts of integrative thinking, the open-minded mindset, symmetrical structures, and abduction and reframing as processes that can lead to a synthesis of paradoxical tensions. In the conceptual framework (see Figure 1), Paper 2 resides, mainly, in the section where paradoxical tensions are managed to achieve the state of “both/and.”

Paper 3 is empirical in nature and addresses the growing interest in how to manage and sustain tensions in creativity-based contexts, using the specific empirical case of architectural firms. The existing literature on such tensions has focused on collective approaches at the organizational level and paid less attention to organization members. Moreover, research that does address the individual level has focused on leaders and managers. This paper thus starts with the premise that despite the importance of engaging tensions at the individual level, existing analyses have so far proven inadequate to explain how this is done, especially in creativity-based contexts. In addition, we lack studies on how individuals in creativity-based contexts sustain tensions over time. To address this concern, I first explore the triggers that render latent tensions salient and then explain how firms and their members in such contexts cope with and sustain the resulting tensions. I specifically explore paradoxical tensions in the creativity-based context using architectural firms as an example. I identify three paradoxical tensions inherent to this context: artistic vs. commercial, aesthetics vs. performance, and passion vs. discipline. In addition, I describe four triggers for these tensions: increased organizational professionalization, introduced constraint, the firm's *raison d'être*, and professional ethos. These triggers potentiate tensions as firms strive for both creative and commercial success, and as individuals attempt to comply with both professional ethos and financial

demands. Finally, I explain the paradoxical mindsets and paradoxical practices that help organization members manage tensions and the organizational arrangements that help sustain them. In the conceptual framework, Paper 3 primarily addresses the management and maintenance of paradoxical tensions in the context of architectural firms. Moreover, it focuses on the inner circle of the conceptual framework (Figure 1) to explain the role of the organizational arrangements that are in play when managing and sustaining tensions.

Starting from the assumption that spaces play an important role in individual (and group) behavior and organizational processes, Paper 4 empirically explores spaces that elicit organization members' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses as they engage tensions, using case studies conducted at three Scandinavian architectural firms. I use inductive theorizing to identify four spatial conditions which are reflected in the organization's mental, social, and physical spaces: organized chaos, boundary(less)ness, premeditated spontaneity, and (re)framing. This paper explains the inner layer of the general conceptual framework (figure 1) as part of the organizational conditions that elicit individual's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions as they engage tensions.

Given the challenges of sustaining tensions that are paradoxical, in Paper 5 I draw from a dialogical perspective to elaborate how things unfold when paradoxes are embraced and tensions are kept in play. Dialogue is critical in accomplishing this, I argue, and I introduce the concept of third space as a sanctuary for dialogue. Third space is presented as a way of connecting oppositional pairs, moving outside of them, and situating them in a new relationship (Putnam et al., 2016) and thus keep the dynamics of opposition alive. In the dialogical perspective, distinctiveness is valued so long as there is a constant search for synergetic moments, which requires interplay between two opposites. Despite this, the general understanding of managing tensions in the literature on paradoxes assumes a "both/and" approach as an apposite alternative to the "either/or" approach, at least conceptually. This precludes further alternatives beyond "both/and" and might lead to closure, albeit temporarily. Accordingly, in this paper, I outline how paradoxes can be embraced from a perspective that allows for a "more-than" response. In the conceptual framework (figure 1), Paper 5 mainly focuses on the dynamics.

1.7. Outline of the thesis

Having introduced the gaps in the research that have shaped my goals in this the thesis, I have outlined the general objectives of this thesis and the specific objectives of each of the five papers, as well as how they are linked together through the conceptual framework. In the coming sections, I outline the theoretical framework and present core concepts, such as the nature of tensions, how tensions are framed (and conceptualized), and how tensions have been approached over time. Next, I outline the research design and present the empirical setting, the philosophical underpinnings, and method related choices made in the research process, including sampling, how empirical materials has been collected and analyzed. In the section that follows, I present extended abstracts for each of the five papers, followed by the aggregate results of the study and the contribution of each paper and the thesis as a whole. In the last section, I discuss the theoretical and practical implication of the thesis and offer suggestions for further research.

Before moving on to the background and theoretical framework, it is of central importance to introduce the key concepts and how they are used and defined in the thesis.

2. Key concepts

A number of concepts are used in this introductory chapter and the appended papers. For the sake of clarity, here I focus on defining and describing how they are used and how they are related to each other.

Competing demands normally refer to two opposing demands that originate due to limited resources or attention. Because they are equally important to the organization, they create tension in the organization and for its members (see Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; DeFillippi et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

Tension refers to the push-pull force that splits individuals between two competing demands (see Engeström & Sannino, 2011; Lewis, 2000). The mere existence of competing demands within the organization implies the existence of a latent tension that may surface at one point in time. When triggers cause this latent tension to surface it is said to become salient. A distinction is therefore made between latent and salient tensions.

Latent tensions are tensions that are embedded in the organization (i.e. not yet surfaced) and as such are not experienced by organization members (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Salient tensions are tensions that have surfaced and thus materialized at some level (such as individual, group, or organizational) and that necessitate a response (see Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Putnam et al. (2016, p. 4) imply that it is the salient tension that organization members “see, feel, cognitively process, and even communicate about as they experience them.” When I refer to tensions I am referring to this salient tension, unless I explicitly qualify the tension as latent or embedded.

Paradox is one kind of salient tension (also called paradoxical tension) and refers to contradictory yet interrelated demands that exist simultaneously and persist over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Sensemaking describes the process individuals go through when arriving at awareness about a situation and acting upon it (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Sensemaking, therefore, signifies a way of making something sensible. I specifically use sensemaking to describe the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions that come into play when organization members confront tensions.

The sensemaking vortex is the interplay among the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions in the process of creating awareness and making something (in this case, the tension) sensible. In the thesis, I describe these three dimensions (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) separately for analytical purposes.

The **emotional** dimension of the sensemaking vortex refers to the initial reaction or experience of organization members in response to the tension (see Beech et al., 2004; Smith & Lewis, 2011).

The **cognitive** dimension of the sensemaking vortex refers to the internal and self-conscious process which involves framing (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). In relation to the thesis, this cognitive dimension therefore implies the abstract representation of tensions, which affects organization members' way of understanding the tension (Smith & Tushman, 2005).

The **behavioral** dimension of the sensemaking vortex refers to the response that organization members exhibit when dealing with a tension (see Denison, Hooijberg, & Quinn, 1995).

Organizational conditions, in this thesis, refer to what the organization "is" or "has" and that serve to either facilitate or elicit individual emotions, cognition, and behaviors. By *facilitate*, I refer to the conditions (i.e. process, structure) that support the individual's effort of making sense of the tensions. By *elicit*—as specifically used in Paper 4—I refer to the condition (space) that brings out the emotions, cognition, and behaviors that make it possible for the individual to engage tensions (see Kornberger & Clegg, 2004). Therefore, the interplay between the three dimensions of the sensemaking vortex occurs in relation to organizational conditions.

Framing refers to a way of seeing and understanding a tension. Relatedly, in this thesis, specifically in Paper 1; I discuss how the researcher's framing (i.e. conceptualization) leads to the identification of different types of tensions: for example, tradeoffs or paradoxes. Conceptualization, therefore, is analytical and does not refer to organization members dealing with the tension (which is what I refer to as framing) but rather the analyst writing about it.

Managing refers to the way organizational members engage tension to achieve the state of "both/and" (see Eisenhardt, 2000; Jules & Good, 2014). Reaching the state of "both/and" implies that the organization and its members have successfully engaged the tensions present. The

outcome, in this case, could be *synthesis* which means meeting the competing demands simultaneously and to their full extent (see Clegg, Cunha, & Cunha, 2002; Gaim & Wählin, 2016)

Sustaining refers to how organizations and their members maintain the state of both-and. By sustaining the tension, organizational members continuously engage it so that there is no favoring of one demand at the expense of the other over the long run (see Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Luscher & Lewis, 2008). The result of sustaining could be an ongoing and iterative *dynamic process* where the interplay between contradictory and interrelated demands is kept alive (Schad et al., 2016).

3. Background and theoretical framework

This section is divided into four parts. The first part discusses how tensions have been treated through time, including changes in epistemological assumptions about tensions, the central questions that governed research and practice, the general theoretical and practical positions of actors regarding tensions, and general responses. In the realm of theory, I discuss early organizational approaches, the contingency approach, and contemporary approaches. I then discuss how latent tensions become salient through triggers. In the third part I discuss how the salient tensions are treated. This section introduces the sensemaking vortex, which illustrates how organization members make sense of tensions. The sensemaking vortex is seen as the interplay between the emotional and cognitive dimensions, which give way to behavior as organization members face tensions. In the fourth and final section, I address responses, which I classify into two general categories: defensive and active.

3.1. Organizational tensions over time

In management and organization studies, the challenge of tensions can be traced back to Adam Smith's pin factory, where competing demands for differentiation and integration surface as one of the major tensions that organizations had to deal with (Cunha et al., 2002). The same tensions were also central to Fredrik Winslow Taylor's scientific management theory. Classical theorists such as Taylor sought the "one best" way of doing things within an organization. They saw the challenge, therefore, as choosing either "A" or "B" and therefore focused on the idea that for every organizational phenomenon there is one universal best way to do it. The classical approaches were flawed, however, in that their focus on the best way of doing things disregarded the influence of the environment. Seeking to rectify this flaw, an alternative approach emerged in the 1960s: the contingency approach. Here, instead of looking for the one best way, the focus turned to searching for "the right fit" based on contingent factors such as technology (Woodward, 1965), environment (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), and size (Blau & Schoenherr, 1971). Compared to the either/or, "A" or "B" approach to tensions of classical theorists, the contingency approach focuses on when and where each alternative should be chosen in the search for the right fit to deal with the situation. Hence, the tension was resolved by separating competing demands and understanding them in time and space (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

In both the early organizational and contingency approaches, tensions were to be resolved, either through an organization focus on one over the

other, or through attempt to find the right solution to fit the situation at hand. Tension was not embraced as such but rather seen as a problem to be solved. In other words, as indicated in the introduction, tensions were not viewed as energizing or as opportunities to stimulate creativity. Hence, both approaches were far from appreciating the tensions inherent in the nature of people and organizations. Van de Ven (1983, p. 622) opined that the realization that tensions could be energizing should begin by directly addressing the tension inherent in humans and organizations. In view of this observation, contemporary approaches now emphasize an explicit appreciation and embracing of tensions. These approaches are increasingly popular in management and organization studies and have oriented influential works such as Smith and Berg (1987), Quinn and Cameron (1988), and Lewis (2000). My thesis here is positioned within this trend, which has revived and solidified the field in light of growing pressure on current organizations to accommodate the tensions that emanate from competing yet equally worthwhile organizational demands.

Table 1 (developed based on Lewis and Smith (2014)) summarizes the shift from early organizational approaches to the contemporary approaches as regards the assumptions they make about tensions and their central question regarding competing A/B demands. In addition, it also summarizes their general position with respect to tensions and general responses.

Table 1: Theoretical approaches to organizational tensions

Theoretical approaches	Early organizational approaches	Contingency approach	Contemporary approaches
Epistemological assumptions	There is one best way of doing things. Compare and chose one demand over the other	Alignment, consistency, and fit Focus on fit with the situation	Tensions are inherent and can be engaged Engage competing demands and associated tensions
Central questions	Which one is the best? A or B?	Under what condition does A or B fit? With which is it consistent?	How can A and B be simultaneously engaged? Why not C?
General managerial position concerning organizational tension	Resolving		Managing
General responses	Defensive		Active

3.2. The study of organizational tensions

In management and organization studies, the shift from the early to the contemporary approaches implies not only a shift in the assumed nature and understanding of tensions but also in how they are studied (Keller & Lewis, 2016; Lewis & Smith, 2014). Following this shift, scholars influenced by contemporary approaches began studying tension in different ways, such as dialectics (see Benson, 1977; Benson, 2013), dualities (see Farjoun, 2010) and paradoxes (see Lewis, 2000). These three concepts all understand tensions as energizing, as something that could (or should) be accommodated.

The dialectical approach focuses on natural contradictions in a relationship and the outcomes that result from interactions between the two demands in the relationship (Benson, 1977). Thus, dialectics bring together contradictory ideas and through an exchange of logical argumentation use it is used to build a new ideal truth. In Hegelian dialectics, we start with a thesis, which gives rise to the antithesis, and finally, tension is resolved via synthesis. The thesis could represent “what is” or “the old,” while the antithesis represents “what could be” or “the new”; the synthesis, then, is the combination that the contradiction

creates. Studying tensions through a dialectical lens—where thesis and antithesis are combined into synthesis—is a potentially useful way to address the challenge of integrating opposites (Cunha et al. (2002, p. 14).

Duality is defined as the “twofold character of an object of study without separation” (Farjoun, 2010, p. 203). Duality, according to Farjoun (2010), implies a positive sum and a synergistic relationship between competing demands and views the demands as interdependent rather than separate and merely opposed. Studying tensions as dualities highlights “the coexistence of competing demands in that, although conceptually distinct, ... are mutually enabling and a constituent of one another” (Farjoun, 2010, p. 203). The two demands are also viewed as potentially compatible and mutually enabling. Therefore, the study of tensions as dualities moves away from a one-dimensional representation to uncover the double-sided nature of practices and their conjoint operation and contributes to identifying a broader range of complementarities (Farjoun, 2010, p. 216).

Researchers who study tensions as paradoxes view them as contradictory and interrelated and see tensions as persistent (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Peculiar to a paradox—since the tension is persistent—responses to tension must be based on accepting, engaging and embracing competing demands (see Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). This is to say that tensions are persistent and should not be, as presented conceptually, resolved.

Researchers in each of these three camps (dialectics, dualities, and paradox) agrees on the basic principles of the opposition, the coexistence of tensions as natural, but there are two subtle differences in these conceptualizations worth noting. A first and most important distinction among the three lies in the fact that in the case of paradox, the tension is persistent and cannot be resolved, whereas dualistic and dialectic approaches imply, according to Smith (2014, p. 1593), that tensions can be resolved by identifying a synergy at some point in time. In dialectics, the ultimate outcome is reached by bringing together contradictory ideas and using them to build a new ideal outcome in the form of a synthesis. In contrast, in the paradox understanding the idea is not that if contradictory ideas are brought together it will lead to ultimate and ideal outcomes but rather that the outcome is multifaceted, meaning that both A and B are real and true in relation to one another. With dialectics, as soon as the synthesis is achieved, the thesis and the antithesis evaporate. In contrast, in a paradox both A and B do not go away, but rather persist over time. For example, in the case of exploration and exploitation, the

need to do both will persist over time. The same is true for social and financial demands at social enterprises.

Second, there is a difference in the level of presence of the demands. Even though all accept tensions as inherent, paradox researchers embrace tensions in their *full strength* (Clegg et al., 2002, p. 494, my emphasis), unlike their minimal presence in dualistic approaches and sufficient level in dialectics. This also supports one notion held by paradox researchers that accepting the tension is necessary but not sufficient. For example, in the case of exploration and exploitation, although it difficult to engage both (March, 1991), organizations must ensure, if we understand tensions as dualities, both sufficient exploitation and efficiency in the short run and attention to long-term exploration and reliability (Farjoun, 2010). In the paradox approach, the two poles are present in their full strength, and not just in an amount sufficient to keep members satisfied (Clegg et al., 2002). For example, studying tensions as dualities, Ashforth and Reingen (2014) identify a cyclical zigzag in which organizations move from one to the other as a way to deal with competing demands (i.e. moral and pragmatic demands) at a cooperative. This zigzag pattern is essentially based on splitting (Smith & Berg, 1987), or more specifically on what Poole and de Ven (1989) call temporal separation, where in this case pragmatists dominate when resources are limited while idealists dominate when resources are plentiful. This is supported by the actions of a shifting leadership that explicitly favors one over the other at different times. This is similar to what others call being consistently inconsistent (Smith & Lewis, 2011), a concept Ashforth and Reingen (2014) used to explain the approach present in the cooperatives. This approach, however, fails to show how organizations can capitalize on the possibilities of interdependence, because there is a constant separation and they are continually dealing with one at the expense of the other. According to Ashforth and Reingen (2014), the oscillating or zigzag pattern represents “a momentary and expedient resolution of a current manifestation of the duality, in which who wins appears to depend on a tacit reciprocity of turn-taking along with environmental demands (for example financial needs) with power flowing to the side that can best address current concerns.” This fits with the tenets of the contingency approach in relation to dealing with tension, as Lewis and Smith (2014) describe. So, what is distinctive about the paradox perspective is that instead of a minimal presence of each quality (as in duality) or a sufficient level of each (as in dialectics), in a paradox organization members attempt to achieve the simultaneous presence of competing demands in their full strength (Clegg et al., 2002).

To summarize, the way tensions have been treated within the contemporary approach has implication when trying to understand the nature of tensions and arrive at suggestions for how to deal with them. These differences could also have implication for both researchers and practitioners in how, for example, the later make sense of tensions and respond to them. As I will discuss in the coming sections, the presence of competing demands in their full strength, in comparison with their minimal presence, can explain the difference between “compromising” and “accepting and engaging.” However, before we discuss how organization members make sense of tensions and their general responses to them, we will first discuss how tensions surface and what is meant by tensions characterized as paradoxes.

3.2.1. Latent tensions, triggers, and salient tensions

So far, I have put forth the notion that organizations are typically the scene of competing demands. The fact that competing demands are pervasive in organizational life implies that tensions are embedded in the organizational system, i.e. latent. However, when they are triggered, these previously latent tensions become salient, at which point organization members engage in making sense of them. In other words, triggers activate latent tension and bring them to the awareness of organization members, and then these members react in a certain way.

The triggers that activate latent tensions can be external, such as financial crises, pluralistic constraints imposed by clients (such as achieving an aesthetically pleasing and functional design), or contradictory goals (tradition versus novelty). Triggers can also emanate from within the organization: for example, senior management’s dual strategic commitments, functional interdependence, or scarcity (Ashforth et al., 2014; Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2016; Smith, 2014). Alternatively, organization-level factors (empirically explored in Paper 3) such as an increase in size or professionalization, or individual factors such as the cognitive disposition (Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011) can trigger the shift from latent to salient tension. Thus, it is the salient tension that organization members experience and that compels them to respond in one way or another.

As can be seen in the conceptual framework (see figure 1), it is the salient tension that organization members frame, manage and sustain as they engage in sensemaking, supported or hindered by organizational conditions. Since paradox (as the salient tension) is central to my thesis, before we discuss how organization members generally make sense of tensions, I will illustrate what this paradoxical tension consists of, and how it is different from the lay sense of the term *paradox*.

As a type of tension, paradox, in its simplest lay sense, can be understood as two demands or ideas that are contradictory and present inconsistent prescriptions for action. In most cases, the general notion of paradox only addresses the contradictory, oppositional, and conflicting nature of competing demands. People generally use the word *paradox* to highlight the contradictions, inconsistencies, irreconcilable and conflicting nature of ideas or demands. Here, however, I employ a notion of paradox that goes beyond the contradictory nature of demands to focus equally on the interrelatedness and the intertwined nature of such demands. In a paradox, as I am using it, two demands define one another mutually and are critical to the “big picture”; they are mutually enabling and a constituent of one another (Farjoun, 2010; Smith & Lewis, 2011). In a paradoxical tension, therefore, one demand cannot exist without the other, and the tension associated with the competing demands is sustained over time. That is, if one demand is subdued, the tension ceases to be paradoxical (see Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003). In other words, there are four points to take into account when describing what constitutes a paradoxical tension. First, actors are aware that the opposing or contradictory demands exist. Second, actors accept that the existence of opposing or conflicting demands is natural and inevitable. Third, they explicitly assert that the opposing or conflicting demands are also interrelated (Smith & Berg, 1987, p. 45). Fourth, we see an unceasing push-pull in accommodating the demands (Lewis, 2000). Accordingly, paradoxes can be understood to exist where simultaneously existing and interrelated demands produce tension and where engaging the demands persists over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

As will be further explained in the section on responses to tensions, when there is a pressure to attend both demands, the response of favoring one over the other is momentary. This is because attending to one of the demands exacerbates the need for the other (Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003). In other words, when one demand is favored, the tension resurfaces and even intensifies over time (Smith, 2014). Paradoxical tensions, therefore, call for a more all-inclusive, dynamic, and “both/and” response. In practice, this means that when dealing with paradoxical tensions, organization members need to recognize and accept the tension and feel comfortable with the unceasing push-pull. This is why Smith (2014), for example, argues that organization members do not resolve paradoxical tensions but rather live with, engage, and sustain them.

3.2.2. Making sense of organizational tensions

Having introduced paradox as a type of tension that organization member experience and deal with, we will now explore how

organization members make sense of tensions. Sensemaking describes the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions that come into play when organization members face salient tensions.

When faced with salient tensions, organization members inevitably make sense of them. Sensemaking, in general, can be understood as making something sensible (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). I use sensemaking to refer to how organization members make sense of the salient tensions, or more specifically the emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions that come into play when organization members face tensions. Weick et al. (2005) used three questions to untangle the sensemaking process: “How does something come to be an event for organization members?” “What does that event mean?” and “Now what should I, as an actor, do?”

Once salient tensions are brought into awareness by triggers, they are, like events, experienced and generate curiosity about how an organization member should or could frame them. This framing of the tension is followed by a response, leading to some sort of action or behavior (which may be at the level of the individual, group, or the organization). More specific to this thesis, sensemaking (in the face of tensions) comprises the emotional and cognitive dimensions that give rise to a behavior or action.

These emotional and cognitive elements are intertwined, and one cannot exist without the other. Therefore, they can only be separated for analytical purposes. Although here I outline them separately for the sake of analysis, they interact with one another and in practice are interdependent. A suitable metaphor to describe the intricate interdependence of these dimensions while making sense of the salient tension is a sensemaking vortex, a concept inspired by Coget and Keller (2010). The metaphor of a vortex attempts to reflect the “relentless shifting that occurs among processes and the lack of apparent order in which the shifts happen” (Coget & Keller, 2010, p. 57). The sensemaking vortex is a springboard for action, where a series of overlapping and interacting emotional and cognitive states inform behavior in the form of action (Coget & Keller, 2010; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick et al., 2005).

On a conceptual level, the emotional element describes the organization member’s reaction to or feeling about the tension. As explained in the introduction, organization members’ first reactions to a tension may be defensiveness, in which they see it as a source of anxiety and discomfort. On the other hand, they may see tension as a source of new opportunity

and a call for creativity. Hence, the feeling about the tension can be placed on a spectrum from positive to negative. Those whose emotional response to the tension is more positive could, for example, experience a calmness that fosters embracing the paradoxical tension and reduces anxiety and fear spurred by inconsistencies (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 392). When an organization member's reaction to the tension falls on the positive end of the spectrum, they are emotionally comfortable with the tension and are able to embrace the opposition and interdependence that characterize the tension. When the reaction leans towards negative, however, it is seen as a conflict to be minimized.

When tensions are felt, Miron-Spektor, Gino, and Argote (2011) argue that organization members draw on typical patterns of cognition, implicit assumptions, and prior experience to deal with it. The cognitive dimension consists of those stable constructs that provide a frame to understand a situation, in this case, the tensions (Smith & Tushman, 2005). The cognitive dimension, in the sensemaking vortex, denotes the abstract representation of tensions and is an internal and self-conscious process that organization members undertake as they frame the tension (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). In this cognitive dimension, organization members frame tensions in either an “either/or” or “both/and” perspective. In general, the cognitive dimension “influences what cues organization members notice and extract, how they combine them and create a more coherent interpretation of activity and act accordingly” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, pp. 16-17). Unlike the “either/or” framing, the “both/and” framing encourages cognitive juxtaposition of inconsistent demands (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011, p. 230). The cognitive dimension, therefore, creates a frame through which organization members filter knowledge and direct action. More specific to tensions, as organization members make sense of them, these frames serve as mental templates that help them recognize and accept the simultaneous existence of contradictory demands (Smith & Tushman, 2005, p. 526).

As shown in the conceptual framework (see figure 1), apart from the emotional and cognitive dimensions, sensemaking also includes a behavioral dimension. Thus, dealing with the tension is associated with outward manifestation of behaviors or actions. If one of the questions of sensemaking is “what is going on here?” the other, equally important, question is “what do I do next?”—a question linked to action (Weick et al., 2005, p. 412). In the case of organizational tensions, this action is the manifestation of the response to the tension and can be either active or defensive (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Lewis & Smith, 2014). Behavior is therefore exhibited and informed by the interplay between the emotional and cognitive dimensions. Denison et al. (1995) have discussed

behavioral complexity, which implies that organization members are capable of engaging in contradictory and oppositional behaviors. Exhibiting behaviors that engage tensions can be exemplified by how organization members show differentiation (e.g. allocating domain specific roles) and integration (e.g. allocating responsibilities for the general manager to consider the overall organization) (Smith, 2014). Thus, the ‘action’ is as important as the ‘thinking’ and the ‘feeling’. This also means that in sensemaking, emotion, cognition, and behavior are interwoven and must be examined together (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), hence the “sensemaking vortex.” This sensemaking vortex can spawn either a vicious cycle or virtuous cycle of organizational tensions, depending on the content of each of these three dimensions. For instance, an emotional response of anxiety, a cognitive framing of “either/or,” and a choice as behavioral response or as an action leads to vicious cycles, while an emotional response of equanimity, a cognitive framing of “both/and,” and integrating as an action leads to virtuous cycles. This also explains the notion that whether a particular action has one effect or another is likely to depend on individual’s experience with and thinking about it, in that “a rigid restraint to one may be another’s license to be creative” (Farjoun, 2010, p. 215).

3.3. Organizational conditions

The individual’s sensemaking of the tension—these emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions—are constituted within an organizational context. How individuals feel, think and act when dealing with tensions are affected by what the organization *is* or what resources the organization *has* (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008); here I refer to these aspects as organizational conditions. Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 393) claim that when organization members engage tensions, they seek strategies that support this, and thus in order for members to engage tensions this option must be embedded “within the system’s strategies, structures, rules, processes, and identities.” These conditions can take different forms: for example, structures and processes that facilitate individuals’ sensemaking, or spatial conditions that elicit emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions that make engaging tensions possible. These organizational conditions can therefore potentially institutionalize engaging paradoxes (Stroh & Miller, 1994) by eliciting or facilitating in the sustainment of tensions.

3.4. Responses to organizational tensions

As organization members face tensions, their individual sensemaking combines with organizational conditions in the form of a response. The existing literature categorizes responses to organizational tensions as

either defensive or active (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Defensive responses, such as choosing one demand over the other (for example, focusing on artistic excellence at the expense of the economic utility) provide short-term relief, while active responses, (integrating artistic excellence and economic utility) provide long-term relief (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), or, according to Smith and Lewis (2011), peak performance in the present that bolsters long-term success. Active responses involve adopting a “both/and” framing, seeing the tension as necessary, and seeing the competing demands as complementary and not just contradictory (Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

The two general categories cover repertoires of responses that include avoidance, choice and dominance, compromise, and acceptance and engagement, as summarized in Table 2 (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Lewis, 2000; Smith & Berg, 1987). The movement from defensive to active indicates an increased level of acceptance by the organization member and their engagement of competing demands. Table 2 presents the hierarchy and a range of responses. Within the category of defensive responses, those based on compromise are closer to being sustainable than those based on avoidance, (although not as sustainable as synthesis, for example). Accordingly, the specific responses under the general category of *active* are based on acceptance and engagement, in which organization members truly embrace the opposition and capitalize on the interrelatedness of tensions.

Table 2: Responses to organizational tensions

General category of responses	Defensive			Active
	Action	Choice or dominance	Compromise	
Definition	Avoidance entails blocking the awareness that tensions exist or refusing to recognize the tension	Choosing or dominance entails favoring one demand at the expense of the other based on one-sided power dynamics	Compromise entails recognizing tensions and attempting to accommodate competing demands but not in their full strength	Acceptance and engagement entail understanding contradiction, tension, and ambiguity as natural conditions of work
Repertoire of responses	<i>Repression and Denial</i> (Lewis, 2000)	<i>Suppression</i> (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) <i>Reaction formation</i> (Lewis, 2000) <i>Opposition</i> (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) <i>Spatial and temporal separation</i> (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989)	<i>Ambivalence</i> (Lewis, 2000) <i>Adjusting</i> (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013)	<i>Synthesis</i> (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989) <i>Transcendence</i> (Lewis, 2000)

3.4.1. Defensive responses

This section discusses the repertoire of responses within the general *defensive* and *active* categories. In a defensive response, avoiding the tension means blocking awareness that tensions exist or to refusing to recognize them (Ashforth et al., 2014; Lewis, 2000). Specific avoidant responses include denial or repression. Defensive responses also include those where organization members recognize the tension and respond but in ways that might not give long-term relief. Such responses include choosing one over the other, or splitting the tension, and attempting to find a middle ground for compromise. In *choice and dominance* one demand is favored over the other (Clegg et al., 2002). Here, *suppression* of one alternative entails overriding one element of the tension and fostering the other (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Similarly, *reaction formation* signifies focusing on only one element by excessively engaging

in practices aligned with that element and opposing the other element (Lewis, 2000). *Opposing* also involves members working on each side of the tension, asserting their own needs despite evidence that such needs stand in opposition to the needs of the other party, leading occasionally to head-on confrontation (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). These responses are not sustainable because, as Ashforth et al. (2014) argue, they are based on one-sided power dynamics. Similarly, Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) argue that when organization members choose to oppose tensions, although they recognize the importance of dealing with both demands, in pursuing their own needs they fail to capitalize on the interdependence of demands. Similarly, some organization and their members deal with tensions through separation (Pache & Santos, 2010; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). This response may entail spatial separation, in which competing demands are dealt with at different locations (for example, different units), or temporal separation, in which competing demands are satisfied one at a time (for example, a focus on exploration followed by a focus on exploitation (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

The repertoire of defensive responses also includes other responses that recognize tensions and attempt to accommodate competing demands, albeit not in their full strength. These responses focus on compromising and trying to find a middle ground (Cunha et al., 2002; Jay, 2013), along with ambivalence (Lewis & Smith, 2014). In these cases, there is a tendency to reconcile and sacrifice some of the organization member's own needs. This resonates with the notion of framing the tension as a trade-off, in which one party's gain is another party's loss, or where greater satisfaction of one demand means lesser satisfaction of the other. Similarly, *adjustment*, according to Jarzabkowski et al. (2013, p. 254) involves a "recognition that the needs of both parties were important and interdependent, and thus that both had to be achieved"; here the core focus is on compromising. Although Jarzabkowski et al. (2013, p. 254) present it as an active response, the focus on changing the focus implies less emphasis on the benefits of interdependence among competing demands.

3.4.2. Active responses

As discussed above, defensive responses do not truly engage the tension; they provide short-term relief and attempt to deal with competing demands contingent on "when" and "where." As a result, scholars such as Smith and Lewis (2011) argue for active responses, and specifically repertoires of responses based on accepting and engaging tensions. To accept and engage implies understanding the tension and the likely ambiguity that it entails as natural conditions of the working environment (Lewis, 2000). More specifically, accepting and engaging

tensions could mean embracing active responses as organizations and their members transcend the opposition in the tension. To transcend, according to Lewis (2000), involves critically examining entrenched assumptions in order to construct a more accommodating view of the opposite poles that characterize the tension. Similarly, Abdallah, Denis, and Langley (2011, p. 335) argue that to transcend is to reframe the tension in a novel way so that organizational members can enact responses to tensions which have previously seemed intractable. This involves accepting the tension and attempting to work out a creative response (Carlson et al., 2016). Other scholars also suggest responses that lead to responses based on accepting and engaging tensions, such as synthesis. Synthesis seeks to achieve a perspective that accommodates the opposing poles, introduces new concepts, or offers a new perspective that questions assumptions and processes (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 385).

Some studies have moved beyond discussing responses in isolation to focus on the dynamic and constant shift between different tensions that inform one another (for example, see Smith, 2014). Moreover, given the nested nature of tensions, we can also examine how responses at one level cascade down to another level (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009); this implies that responses are nested. Similarly, Luscher and Lewis (2008) show how the nature of tensions varies when organization members look for workable certainty, in that they shift from one response to another by changing the way they frame the tension. They claim that this shift helps middle managers move forward rather than become stuck in the face of tensions. Smith & Lewis (2011), meanwhile, explain the notion of living with or coping with tensions, arguing that as the tensions persist, the process includes an ongoing and iterative shifting between different responses (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

In this part of the introductory chapter I introduced the concept of organizational tensions and how they have been analyzed over time. I then explained how latent tensions become salient as a result of triggers. I explained how salient tensions are made sense of in relation to the individual's emotional, cognitive and behavioral reactions. I used the concept of the sensemaking vortex to account for the interplay between these dimensions. In the final section I examined different coping mechanisms and general responses, which can be categorized as active and passive.

In the next section of the introductory chapter I present the research design used in the thesis. Here I will outline my philosophical underpinning, empirical setting, methodology, and method related

choices including sampling, and how the empirical material was collected and analyzed.

4. Research methodology and design

In this thesis, I have sought to advance the understanding of tensions in general and tensions in creativity-based contexts in particular. I have therefore opted to construct a thesis consisting of an introductory chapter and a series of separate but interrelated papers, which will allow me to pursue theoretically and empirically separate routes that nevertheless lead toward the general and specific objectives I have laid out.

The conceptual aspect of this thesis forms part of a dialogue, with the wider community studying tensions, on tensions by proposing how different tensions can be conceptualized, along with the implications of doing so and how this is related to the framing of tensions in practice. Taking inspiration from other areas of study (for example, design thinking or dialogical perspective); I show how organization members can make sense of tensions. My focus in the conceptual works, papers without data as Gilson and Goldberg (2015) would describe it, has been on addressing inconsistencies around an issue, in my case tensions (see Van de Ven, 1989). Here I also engage in “bridging existing disciplines to broaden the scope of our thinking” (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015, p. 128), specifically with regard to tensions and how to deal with them. The conceptual portions, which resulted in three papers, include a literature review on tensions, from which inspirations and ideas from different areas have been drawn in order to add value to the literature specifically addressing tensions.

In parallel with this conceptual work, I explored tensions in a specific context (architecture), an effort that results in two papers. Tensions are inherent and ubiquitous in this context, and it is, therefore, important to understand how context-specific tensions emerge and how organization members make sense of them. In this case, making sense of tensions involves emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Within the same context, I also examined how space elicits emotional, cognitive, and behavior dimensions that enable individuals to live with tensions. Consequently, in the conceptual work, I focus on what “could be,” while in the empirical work I focus on “what is.”

In this section, I will focus on the empirical portions of the thesis and discuss my philosophical underpinning, the rationale behind my choice of architectural firms as the empirical context, the rationale behind my sampling method and the techniques used to collect the empirical material. I then explain how the empirical material has been analyzed.

4.1. Philosophical underpinnings

Taking their objective into consideration, researchers' philosophical underpinnings guide their methodological choices. This thesis was written from the perspective that reality is the product of social and cognitive processes in which the knower and known cannot be separated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). More specific to my central theme, although the tensions I study are embedded in organizational systems, my focus is on how the tensions are manifested or made salient, and how actors in this context make sense of them. This perspective orients the thesis towards a subjectivist approach to social science, and more specifically to the constructivist view (Creswell, 2009; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Accordingly, my ontological assumption about reality is that it consists of local and specific mental and social constructions that depend on individuals holding the construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this view, a meaningful reality is "contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Thus, the reality I am interested in studying is socially constructed. This is so because I believe it is this social and mental construction of tensions that informs organization members' sensemaking. With this in mind, my thesis focuses on highlighting the diversity and richness of human experience and looking at what is going on regarding tensions, together with my research subjects' perspectives in their specific setting. This also means that I see truth as multiple and socially constructed.

In the social constructivist perspective, knowing is active; this implies that the mind does something with the impressions that arrive, such as forming abstractions or concepts. As highlighted above, adopting a social constructivist perspective means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as they construct or make it. This implies that the researcher is active in the construction (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Similarly, Schwandt (2000, p. 197) claims "we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge." This aligns with the claim that knowledge is available through social actors and that understanding constitutes something produced in dialogue (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Schwandt, 2000). In other words, as a researcher, I develop an intersubjective meaning together with my respondents. Thus, "knowing" takes place not in isolation but through continuous interaction and shared understanding through the course of the research (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2000). To me, this means that as a researcher I am a part of the construction regarding what constitutes a tension and how it is experienced and managed, through my interaction with and

understanding of my interviewees and the specific context they operate in.

These continuous interactions included various phases of interviews, observations, and archival consultation that took place during the research process. My epistemological stance—which deals with the nature of knowledge—is therefore transactional (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). That is, *how* I know *what* I know emerge incrementally in the process as I interact with my interviewees, as I study their context, and as I think and generate impressions throughout the process. Thus, in a sense, my findings on the tensions that are prevalent in this specific empirical context, and how organization members make sense of them, emerged as the research progressed. This also explains one tenet of transactional epistemology: that we, as researchers, cannot separate ourselves from what we are researching (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This also means that my epistemological underpinning influenced my method for collecting the empirical material in the course of my empirical work. The “interaction” that led to “knowing” must take place with human subjects in their specific context. As I will discuss later on this section, this situates the interview as the primary source of my empirical materials. Hence, engaging in dialogue with my interviewees enabled me to jointly co-construct meaningful knowledge of tensions in a creativity-based context, and of how members make sense of these tensions.

4.2. Strategy of inquiry

Given the exploratory nature of my research questions, I used multiple case studies as my strategy of inquiry (Creswell, 2009) employing both abductive and inductive inferences in theorizing about the empirical work.

Case studies allow researchers to examine phenomena within their real-life context and enable interaction between the empirical material and theory (Yin, 2003). Moreover, they help researchers “explore in depth a program, event, activity, a process or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 17). In my case, using case studies helped me to explore architectural offices, individuals in the firms, the firms themselves, their process, routines, and ways of organizing, and events that led to (or shaped) different ways of organizing. Although I used the same cases for both empirical papers, my execution of the two papers was slightly different. It is also important to highlight that the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis were undertaken in tandem.

In Paper 3, I started with an abstract idea of a platform that developed while I was working on the conceptual papers. I was interested in what Thomas, Autio, and Gann (2014) conceptualize as a *platform*, which signifies a structure of social life that stores an organization's resources and in which tensions could develop. Taking this idea, I went to the field looking for details on what such a platform might look like in the specific context, in relation to tensions. The association of empirical material with concepts is what makes the form of inference used in this paper abductive (Richardson & Kramer, 2006). Abductive inference seeks to generate knowledge and bring together features—drawn from the researcher's interpretation of the empirical material—for which the literature offers no adequate explanation (Reichert, 2010). During the process, my theoretical insight and preconceptions of the notion of *platform* served as “heuristic tools for the construction of concepts,” which I “elaborated and modified” on the basis of empirical material (Kelle, 1995, p. 34).

In Paper 4, the idea of studying space emerged while collecting empirical material for Paper 3. During interviews at two architectural offices (the White firm offices in Umeå and Stockholm, which I visited on four occasions), their similarity in terms of space (especially physical space), coupled with an office manager's description of what keeps the office together (especially the social space), prompted the idea of exploring space and how it elicits certain emotions and behaviors in relation to tensions. After that idea had emerged, I looked for archival materials about the architectural firms and their offices and started to focus my observations as I continued with my interviews. In addition, I reviewed the literature on organizational spaces and defined my research objective in relation to exploring space as something that could evoke emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions that engage tensions. So although there was an iteration between the empirical material and theory, I mainly employed inductive inference. Before turning to how the empirical materials were gathered, I will explain why I selected architectural firms as a suitable empirical setting and why I selected these specific firms and projects for my case studies.

4.3. Architectural firms as an empirical setting

I use architectural firms as an empirical setting and the specific architectural firms and projects as cases for four reasons: theoretical relevance, empirical suitability, novelty, and practicality.

Theoretically, in studies that center on competing demands and tensions, Farjoun (2010) has invited researchers to explore carefully selected

empirical settings where pressures for competing demands are strong, meaning that there is pressure to attend to competing demands simultaneously. In this regard, the setting is relevant and suitable for studying tensions, because architectural work involves a constant clash of both symbolic and practical demands. More specifically, architectural firms were chosen because they are rife with tensions (DeFillippi et al., 2007, p. 512)—between, for example, aesthetics and functionality or form and function—making the setting theoretically relevant to the study of tensions. Moreover, since architectural firms are rife with tensions, they would be the place where space is most likely to support engaging paradoxes. That is, engaging with paradoxes has been shown to facilitate innovation, and who is more innovative than top architects?

Furthermore, in relation to competing demands and tensions, what makes the setting empirically interesting is that firms cannot hide behind what Eisenhardt (2000) calls the bland halfway point between one extreme to the other, in the form of compromise or choosing one demand over the other. On top of that, firms do not usually get to work with clients with unlimited resources, nor with clients who present merely functional demands. Most projects involve competing demands, such as those between ambitious aesthetic requirements and budget limitations, or between ambitious aesthetic requirements and complex user needs. Therefore, apart from the theoretical relevance of this setting, architectural firms are a rich source for data on tensions, a rich environment for observing how organization members make sense of the tensions, and a fruitful context to explore how space evokes a particular individual's cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses. What's more, the setting is to my knowledge a novel and unexplored one within the literature on tensions. The specific architectural firms and projects were selected based on practical reasons related to access, closeness of the sites, and the willingness of project participants.

4.3.1. Selection of architectural firms

Having chosen to study architectural firms as an empirical setting for the reasons I lay out above, I focused on three Scandinavian architectural firms as specific cases: Snøhetta in Norway, Henning Larsen Architects in Denmark, and White Architects in Sweden. Snøhetta, headquartered in Oslo, is a leading firm in architecture, landscape, interior, and brand design. It is known for the design of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt, the Oslo Opera House in Norway, the Gateway Project in Ras Al-Khaimah, Dubai, and the reconstruction of Times Square in New York, among other projects. Henning Larsen is one of the leading architectural companies based in Copenhagen. This firm has garnered several prestigious awards recently, including the European Union Prize for

Contemporary Architecture and it is also well known for its work on the Opera House in Copenhagen. White Architects, based in Gothenburg, Sweden, was the winner of the Kasper Salin Prize in 2003 and 2014; its notable works include the Gothia Towers in Gothenburg.

Within these architectural firms, I utilized three architectural projects—in Umeå, Sweden (Cultural Weave and Arts Campus) and Oslo, Norway (the Oslo Opera)—as they were suitable contexts within which to investigate the central themes of my thesis. In addition to using the projects as icebreakers during the interviews, they were also used to contextualize my findings. By contextualizing the findings, I refer to drawing upon the social experiences and processes related to tensions using the specific architectural works as a basis (Manson, 2002). More specifically, contextualizing the findings refers to arriving at a thorough understanding of the projects and their context, rather than studying random projects that were undergoing the design process in the selected firms and achieving only a superficial understanding of their specifics. Thus, by focusing on specific projects I was able to exemplify the different themes of the thesis. However, at times the interviewees referred to other projects to illustrate different aspects of their work.

According to Manson (2002, p. 62), focusing on real projects enables researchers to give maximum opportunity for the construction of contextualized knowledge, which involves asking interviewees about their specific experiences rather than what they *would* do or have *generally* done. It also allows them to focus on events and situations that have taken place in their lives. Moreover, the projects were also appropriate to exploring tensions, since they themselves were characterized by one. A closer look at the design briefs and project descriptions indicates competing demands as a central theme. For example, due to its ownership structure, the Cultural Weave in Umeå, Sweden, was associated with a vision of engaging both cultural and commercial demands. Hence, it had to satisfy both private (the investor) and public (the municipality) demands. The Arts Campus (also in Umeå) was an initiative bringing together three schools within a university, namely the School of Fine Arts, the Design School, and the School of Architecture, and includes requirements for distinctiveness and synergy in its design brief. The sponsor required the design of the Arts Campus to preserve the distinctive spatial character and identity of each of the schools, while enabling synergetic activities stemming from their interdependence. The design of the Oslo Opera was commissioned to manifest both the past and the future in the public space by embodying the surrounding culture and envisioning the future. During the design competition, the most identifiable theme, as stated in the project description, was to “tie the

building to its culture and place while also presenting an unusual and unique expression that was in many ways new and innovative.” Thus, focusing on specific projects and interviewing people who worked in the design and execution of these projects was a means to achieve an in-depth understanding of their work rather than simply talking about tensions in general. Table 3 presents the basic information about the three projects.

Table 3: Overview of the three projects

Project	Architectural firms	Owner	Funding	Time	Size (m ²)	Cost
Arts Campus	Henning Larsen Architects & White Architects	Umeå University	Baltic Group	2009-2012	15,000	350 MSEK
The Cultural Weave	Snøhetta & White Architects	Weave i Umeå AB (Baltic Group/City of Umeå)	Baltic Group/City of Umeå	2011-2014	24,000	700 MSEK
Oslo Opera House	Snøhetta	Statsbygg, The Governmental Building Agency	Norwegian State	2000-2008	38,500	4.4 billion NOK

4.4. Collection of empirical material

As highlighted above, together with the research objectives, researchers’ philosophical underpinnings guide their choice of methods for collecting empirical material. In my case, I adopted a transactional epistemology—where the finding arises from and is the product of interaction—which meant that the data collection method would allow for more interaction between me, the researcher, and my interviewees. This is because knowledge is “situated and contextual” and “meaning and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving a researcher and interviewees” (Manson, 2002, pp. 62-63). Accordingly, using interview as the primary method for collecting my empirical material would ensure that “the relevant contexts [were] brought to into focus so that situated knowledge [could] be produced” (Manson, 2002, p. 62). Interview data was supplemented by observations and by archival materials.

In practice, empirical materials collection began with a review of archival materials, such as the case firms’ websites, project descriptions,

news articles about the firms and about the specific projects, both in print and online, and presentations and speeches by the firm's partners and other senior personnel. These archival materials were used to select the specific projects that would best theoretically fit a study of tensions in this setting. The archival materials were also used to understand the context in which the projects were carried out, the firms' values, philosophies, unique processes, organizational logic, routines, physical spaces, and how their work processes unfold as presented on their websites and in printed publications. In addition, these archival materials served as preparation for the interviews, which were conducted over three phases. Since the projects were renowned (and some also contested or challenged) in their particular contexts, the Web proved to be a rich source of information; these projects had also enjoyed extensive media coverage, which widened the breadth of available archival material and significantly enhanced my understanding of the projects.

After selecting the projects through the help of these archival materials, I contacted the office manager for White, the communications director at Henning Larsen, and the human resources manager at Snøhetta to find out the individuals who were responsible for the projects (the project architects), along with a list of staff who were directly involved in the projects, so I could arrange interviews. I sent email invitations to those on the list, and almost all those invited were willing to be interviewed, except for two non-responses, one person who declined, and one person who did not show up for the interview. In a manner similar to the choice of the empirical setting and specific projects, interviewees were selected based on the purpose of the study and their theoretical relevance to those objectives, i.e. a purposive sampling methodology in which only those who directly participated in the projects were invited to conduct interviews (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Table 4 presents the overview of the three organizations used for the case study, and the specific projects covered, along with the type of empirical materials that were collected. The details of the empirical materials collection methods will be thoroughly reviewed in the coming sections. Since I use interviews as the main data collection method, I will first elaborate on the rationale followed during the three phases of collecting the empirical material.

Table 4: Overview of case firms and collected empirical material

Case organizations (head office)	White (Gothenburg, Sweden)	Henning Larsen (Copenhagen, Denmark)	Snøhetta (Oslo, Norway)
Project and location	Arts Campus (Umeå, Sweden), Cultural Weave (Umeå, Sweden)	Arts Campus (Umeå, Sweden)	Oslo Opera (Oslo, Norway), Cultural Weave (Umeå, Sweden)
No. of interviews; No. of interviewees; Total duration	7 interviews; 9 interviewees ² ; 411 min	3 interviews; 3 interviewees; 198 min	11 interviews; 10 interviewees ³ ; 742 min
No. of visits Total time of visits	5 visits ~5 hours	2 visits ~4 hours	3 visits ~6 hours
Archival materials used	- company website - online sources on company and projects	- company website - online sources on company and projects	- company website - online sources on company and projects - books about Snøhetta's work - presentations and speeches

4.4.1. The interviews

Interviews, according to Goulding (2002), generate rich and detailed accounts of interviewees' experiences. Hence, in order to uncover these experiences more thoroughly I used direct interaction at the interviewee's workplaces to produce more local and contextual empirical findings (Creswell, 2009; Manson, 2002). To increase the richness of the interviews, to help me engage in a productive dialogue, and to ask specific questions associated with the buildings/projects, I visited all the architectural works and reviewed archival materials such as project descriptions and news articles. Thus, through both open-ended and semi-structured questions I was able to get a better understanding of the interviewees' insight. In this manner, I talked to the interviewees about their passion, their creative journey, their inspiration, the pain and pleasure in their work. As will be outlined in the different phases, the interviews also involve discussing their philosophical viewpoints, including what they consider as art, how they work with form and function, and so on. In the qualitative research literature this is called an *emotionalist* interview (see Silverman, 2011). In my case, I used

² Two interviewees participated in a single interview session.

³ Two interviewees were interviewed twice.

emotionalist interviews as a pathway to the interviewee's natural experience to help me focus on their perception, understanding, and viewpoints (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). More importantly, such discussion indirectly helped me understand how they experience tensions.

In addition to the emotionalist interviews based on free dialogue, the interviews were also focused. By focused, I refer to the relatively structured questions that I used to initiate conversations. In doing so, I try to engage in free dialogue, but with purpose, so that I obtain focused empirical materials on not only their passions, their views about art and architecture, and how they experience tensions but also empirical materials to help me understand (especially in the later phases) how they make sense of tensions. Silverman (2011) labels this kind of interview *constructivist*. Constructivist interviews focus on the construction of meaning, in which both parties are always engaged in constructing meaning. Such interviews focus on how meanings are introduced through interaction between the researcher and the respondent (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The interviews about each project started with the people I deemed most knowledgeable and who would be able to provide well-informed and broader responses about the projects and case firms. The interviewees include the project owner, the three project architects who were responsible for the projects from their firm's side, and a deputy managing director who was responsible for the Oslo office. Four of them also happens to be senior architects. Hence, these were considered "highly knowledgeable informants" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 28) by virtue of their position and their seniority. Since they were responsible for the projects (and two of them for their respective offices), they were believed to have a strong overall picture of the projects in particular and the case firms in general. The interviews with other project participants continued along with the preliminary analysis. The list of interviewees is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: List of Interviewees

#	Name (Position)	Affiliation, Location (Projects)	Date (Duration, minutes)
1.	Krister Olsson (Entrepreneur and project owner)	Baltic Group, Umeå, Sweden (Cultural Weave and Arts Campus)	April 22, 2013 (90)
2.	Maria Olsson (Project architect, senior architect)	White Architects, Umeå, Sweden (Cultural Weave and Arts Campus)	April 24, 2013 (66)
3.	Katharina Björölin Wiklund (3D graphic designer)	White Architects, Stockholm, Sweden (The Cultural Weave)	May 27, 2013 (35)
4.	Anna-Carin Dahlberg (Architect)	White Architects, Umeå, Sweden (The Cultural Weave)	May 31, 2013 (46)
5.	Mirja Westling (Architectural building engineer)	White Architects, Umeå, Sweden (Cultural Weave and Arts Campus)	July 2, 2013 (51)
6.	Per Ebbe Hansson (Project architect, senior architect)	Henning Larsen Architects, Copenhagen, Denmark (Arts Campus)	September 2, 2013 (77)
7.	Niels Gravergaard (Senior architect)	Henning Larsen Architects, Copenhagen, Denmark (Arts Campus)	September 2, 2013 (71)
8.	Nilda Pulga (Interior designer)	White architects, Malmö, Sweden (Cultural Weave)	September 3, 2013 (85)
9.	Maeva Chardon (Architect)	White architects, Malmö, Sweden (Cultural Weave)	
10.	Malin Ericson (Architect, technical assistant)	White architects, Malmö, Sweden (Cultural Weave)	September 3, 2013 (38)
11.	Anders Nielson (Construction Architect)	Henning Larsen Architects, Copenhagen, Denmark (Cultural Weave)	September 6, 2013 (50)
12.	Rune Grasdäl (Project architect, senior architect)	Snøhetta, Umeå, Sweden (Cultural Weave)	September 11, 2013 (90)
13.	Markus Schwarz (Senior architect)	Snøhetta, Umeå, Sweden (Cultural Weave)	
14.	Simon Ewings (Deputy managing director, Senior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 6, 2014 (76)
15.	Rune Grasdäl (Project architect, senior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Cultural Weave and Oslo Opera House)	October 6, 2014 (90)
16.	Markus Schwarz (Senior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Cultural Weave and Oslo Opera House)	October 6, 2014 (64)
17.	Øystein Tveter (Senior interior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 6, 2014 (50)
18.	Björg Aabø (Senior interior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 7, 2014 (50)
19.	Zenul Kahn (Senior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 7, 2014 (59)
20.	Romana Suitner (Senior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 7, 2014 (76)
21.	Christopher Oh (Landscape architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 7, 2014 (62)
22.	Peter Girgis (Senior interior architect)	Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 8, 2014 (73)
23.	Jorunn Sannes (Artist)	(Snøhetta, Oslo, Norway (Oslo Opera House)	October 8, 2014 (52)

To summarize, the interviews—as the primary source of data—involved 21 interviewees (two interviewees were interviewed together and two interviewees were interviewed twice). As indicated in Table 6, the interviews ranged from 35 to 90 minutes in duration, together totaling 1,351 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the firms’ offices in Umeå, Malmö, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Oslo, from April 2013 to October 2014. All interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed (except for one interview on which I made detailed notes as soon after the interview as possible). In total, the transcribed interview material corresponds to approximately 250 pages.

4.4.2. Phases of collecting the empirical materials

The collection of empirical material was undertaken in three phases. The first phase of interviews (1–5 in Table 5) was conducted with the project owner and project architect of the Arts Campus and Cultural Weave at White Architects, followed by three interviews with three other staff members who participated in the Cultural Weave project in the Umeå and Stockholm offices. The interview with the project architect (also a partner) at White Architects was relatively unstructured, using open-ended questions prepared to touch upon the nature of the architectural problems in general and those specific to the projects, along with the architectural vision for the projects and how it all started, the creative process at the firm, and the organization of the projects specifically and the firm in general. Based on the first interview and further review on the firm and the project from archival materials, the three interviews that followed touched upon the creative process, what it means to be an architect, the kind of projects that the interviewees enjoyed working in and why, what made the Cultural Weave special, how the project brief was translated and modified over time, what it meant for White to collaborate with Snøhetta, and how it affected their work. [See Appendix 1, Interview guide]

The second phase of the interviews (6–13 in Table 5) included an interview with the project architect for the Arts Campus at Henning Larsen in the Copenhagen office, and the project architect of for the Cultural Weave from Snøhetta in Umeå. Similar to the interview with the project architect in Umeå, the questions were general and relatively open-ended and addressed the firm in general and the project specifically, addressing issues such as architectural vision, the creative process at the firm, and the organization of projects specifically and the firm in general. Subsequent interviews with other staff became gradually more structured and specific to the project they participated in. The interviewees were asked to describe and discuss issues related to the nature of architecture, how their process and the organization of that

process changed over time, and why. Interviews also touched on issues related to the involvement of different stakeholders and how that affects the work, how project briefs were streamlined and that affected their work, along with the interviewees' interests in and passion for architecture, how they control progress, who is responsible for this control, how they feel about control, the management of architectural projects and so on. [See Appendix 1, Interview Guide]

After the idea of space took root in the initial phase, non-participant observation continued during this stage in my visits to the Henning Larsen Copenhagen office and the White Architects Malmö office. Coupled with archival materials on how architectural firms are configured and referring to literature on how space affects behavior and organizational processes, the idea of exploring the relationship between space and tensions was the motivation for Paper 4. Unlike the observations in the previous phase, which had a broader scope and sought an overview of the empirical setting and the firms' physical space, in this stage observations were more focused and included examining work and non-work boundaries, relationship of domination in relation to status and occupation of certain spaces, aesthetics, the communication of moods⁴ and so on. This phase concluded the interview phases for the Cultural Weave and the Arts Campus projects.

The third phase of interviews (14–23 in Table 5) focused mainly on the third project (the Oslo Opera). In it, I started the interviews with the deputy managing director at Snøhetta and then interviewed the Oslo Opera project architect. The other eight interviewees include three interior architects, three architects, one landscape architect, and one artist. The artist was involved in the design of the façade and rooftop of the Oslo Opera. As with the previous interviews, this round started with open-ended and semi-structured questions that gradually become more structured and focused. In this phase I discussed issues regarding the architects' passion for architecture and art, how Snøhetta works and the specifics of its process, what makes Snøhetta unique, how Snøhetta is organized, how this organization has changed over time and why, how the workspace was designed, how it has changed over time, and why. By taking input from the earlier non-participant observations in the workspaces in Umeå, Malmö, Stockholm, and Copenhagen, the interviews also focused on social and spatial arrangements, how they work, how the workplace is configured, and how all this affects their

⁴ In relation to communication, a technical assistant at White explained how REVIT (the message board used at all of the firms) works and how project members communicate with each other over the course of a project.

work. Interviews also touched on how staff members view their workspace and their surroundings, the value they give to the specific spaces in the office, discussions about private and common spaces, private and group spaces, etc. [See Appendix 1, Interview Guide]

Accompanied by a review of the literature on organizational spaces, my observations at this stage were even more focused on particularly observing the physical and social setting and how these are related to the behaviors that were of interest to me. During the observations I specifically focused on meetings in progress, interaction at and around workstations, coffee stations, lunch tables, and the configuration of the workspace, the work, and non-work spaces, the aesthetics and how they are viewed by occupants, and so on. One interviewee demonstrated the use of 2D and 3D modeling and 3D printing, and how these tools are used to translate ideas into material objects. These observations, demonstrations, informal talks during coffee breaks and lunches with Snøhetta staff were helpful, as they gave me valuable material about the settings and the work carried out at architectural firms. Using multiple methods to collect the empirical materials enhanced my understanding of the setting. According to Eisenhardt (1989), this strengthens the grounding of theoretical concepts through triangulation of data. Table 6 summarizes the three phases of collecting the empirical materials.

Table 6: Phases of collecting empirical materials

Phases	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Period	April 22–July 2, 2013	September 2–11, 2013	October 6–8, 2014
Case firm in focus	White	White, Snøhetta and Henning Larsen	Snøhetta
Projects in focus	Cultural Weave (Umeå, Sweden), Arts Campus (Umeå, Sweden)	Arts Campus (Umeå, Sweden), Cultural Weave (Umeå, Sweden)	Oslo Opera (Oslo, Norway)
Interviews ⁵ (duration)	5 interviewees (288 min)	8 interviewees (411 min)	10 interviewees (652 min)
Main focus of interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A general understanding of White and the projects ▪ The architectural vision of the projects ▪ The innovation process and organization of the firm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased understanding of the projects ▪ The nature of architectural problems in general and the projects specifically ▪ The architectural vision ▪ The creative process ▪ The organization of projects and the firms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To develop a general understanding of the Oslo Opera and Snøhetta ▪ To understand the nature of architectural problems in general and the projects in specific ▪ The architectural vision of the Oslo Opera ▪ The innovation process in Snøhetta
Firm Location Focus	White Umeå and Stockholm offices. Unintentional but focused on the general layout of the workspace	Henning Larsen Copenhagen White Malmö office Focused on the logic behind the spatial arrangement. The boundary, relation of domination and how it was made material	Snøhetta, Oslo office Focused on the social and spatial arrangements, work and non-work spaces, space and social dynamics.
Document collection	Project descriptions, company value, philosophy, and the White Innovation Process	Project descriptions, the unique processes of each firm	Project descriptions, articles/book on Snøhetta and the project

In summary, after the initial empirical material collection using archival materials, the 23 interviewees and observations—spread out over 10 occasions—were undertaken in the three phases as indicated above. Archival materials were collected continuously throughout the research process. As summarized in Table 6, each phase had a specific focus and scope.

⁵ See table 5 for full list of interviewees

4.5. Analysis of empirical materials

So far I have outlined how the empirical materials were collected; this section presents how the materials were analyzed. The research process generally consisted of an iterative procedure of collecting and analyzing empirical materials. In this thesis analysis involved several phases of coding, which essentially breaks the materials (transcribed interviews, archival materials, observation notes) into pieces and reconstructs these pieces into meaningful categories and relations (Charmaz, 2011).

As highlighted above, the conceptual and empirical portions of the thesis were carried out in tandem, and so was the collection and analysis of the empirical work. The empirical portion resulted in two papers in which the analysis for each paper was carried out separately. Since the analytical method was slightly different in each paper, it will be presented separately.

In general, analysis of empirical materials included three iterative steps of open, focused, and axial coding (Charmaz, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was done first by coding the data to generate the first-order concepts, and then by generating—using a mind map—second-order themes across projects, offices, and case firms. Finally, third-order analysis organized the second-order themes into aggregate dimensions and sensible relationships using a mind map. The analysis was not as linear as it is presented here; it was instead iterative, a process that continued until a comprehensible relationship emerged. Below I describe how I used the empirical material and how the analysis was conducted more specifically for each empirical paper.

4.6. Analysis of Paper 3

In the first empirical paper (Paper 3), analysis of the empirical material started with the archival materials and the transcribed interviews from the first phase (1–5). The coding resulted in first-order concepts in relation to the architectural problem; the creative process, how it was organized, and how it changed through time; architects view about art and architecture; their view about what constitutes a unique and successful project, etc. As the analysis generated first-order concepts; the second phase of the interviews (6–13) was conducted and completed the interview materials for the first two projects (the Cultural Weave and the Arts Campus). The analysis generated additional first-order concepts while at the same time streamlining the previous ones. The first-order concepts that emerged in this phase included constraints and how such constraints affect the work of organization members, the notion of financial objectives and how these have affected the creative work, the

growth and professionalization of firms and how these have affected the creative process, the unique organizational structure, collaboration, team formation, workplace arrangements, etc. At this stage, the analysis revealed the presence of tensions in the architectural firms. In addition, the analysis revealed the processes, structures, and perspectives that the organization and its members used to deal with the tension. The preliminary results from the two projects were analyzed and presented during my midterm seminar in October 2013. After reworking the analysis, the results were again presented at the EGOS (European Group of Organization Studies) research conference in July 2014. However, the details of how and why tensions surface were not apparent at this stage in the analysis. Moreover, the specific tensions prevalent in architectural firms and the coping mechanisms that members employed were not well developed. For that reason, I continued collecting additional empirical material for the third project (i.e., the Oslo Opera) in Snøhetta's Oslo office.

The interviews in the third phase (14-23) were also used to clarify and streamline the themes that emerged from the previous phases and their relationships. Accordingly, after transcribing the interviews, the analysis was done for the project in relation to the existing themes from the last two projects. In the process, a pattern emerged regarding tensions, and how members experience these tensions and deal with them. Integrating the second-order themes across the three projects and the three firms, I then looked for logical relationships among tensions that were prevalent, the triggers for these tensions, and how they were dealt with. Although the analysis is presented in three phases, as shown in Table 7, there were multiple iterations within the three and across the phases.

In any case, after a pattern was identified, using the existing paradox theory literature I organized the relationships between the second-order themes into aggregated dimensions, which included (1) triggers that render latent tensions salient (2) salient paradoxical tensions prevalent in the empirical setting, and (3) how organization members across firms make sense of tensions, and the organizational arrangements that help sustain the management of tensions. Table 7 presents which empirical materials were used and when in the first empirical paper.

Table 7: Use of empirical material for paper 3

Analytical stages	Case firms	Projects in focus	Interviewees		
Stage I	White	Cultural Weave	1-5		
		Arts Campus			
Stage II	White Snøhetta Henning Larsen	Arts Campus	1-5	6-13	
		Cultural Weave			
Stage III	Snøhetta	Oslo Opera	1-5	6-13	14-23

4.7. Analysis of Paper 4

In the second empirical work (i.e. Paper 4 in this thesis), the idea of which emerged during the first round of interviews for the first empirical work and from impromptu observations, analysis started after the 10th interview. That is after conducting non-participant observation at three White offices and the office of Henning Larsen in Copenhagen. The analysis followed the same procedure as paper 3; iteratively coding the data (interviews, observation, and archival materials) into first-order concepts then into the second-order themes, the organizing the second-order themes into aggregate dimensions and sensible relationships across offices, and finally across firms (Charmaz, 2003, 2011). In this paper my observations, interviews, and search for additional archival materials were guided by the literature on organizational spaces: more specifically Kornberger and Clegg's (2004) description of generative buildings, the three categories of space recapped by Hernes (2004), and Taylor and Spicer's (2007) formations of spaces. This was followed by another round of non-participant observation and ten additional interviews at the main offices of Snøhetta in Oslo. Although the idea emerged later in the process, the analysis utilized the already-collected empirical materials including interviews, archival materials, and prior observations.

During the analysis, the empirical materials were first coded to generate first-order concepts across offices and firms. The first-order concepts were organized into second-order themes, including anarchy and hierarchy, freedom and control, productive and socializing spaces, private and communal spaces, boundary and sensible intrusions, shuffling, rotation, crossing boundaries, movement, stability, open spaces, predictability, and randomness. Informed by theory, these second-order themes were then organized into aggregate dimensions labeled as organized chaos, boundary(less)ness, premeditated spontaneity, and (re)framing. I discuss the interplay among these conditions using the notion of generative space, a space that elicits some sort of feeling, thinking, and doing related to tensions. The early analyses for this paper were presented in a research conference titled "Spaces, constraints, creativities: Organization and disorganization," held in

Sydney, Australia, in December 2015. Table 8 shows which data were used in the second empirical paper.

Table 8: Use of empirical material for paper 4

Case firms	Offices	Interviewees	Observations (occasions)	Archival materials
White	Umeå	2, 4, 5	✓✓✓	✓
	Stockholm	3	✓	✓
	Malmö	8, 9, 10	✓	✓
Henning Larsen	Copenhagen	6, 7, 11	✓✓	✓
Snøhetta	Oslo	14-23	✓✓✓	✓

To enhance the clarity of the analysis of the empirical materials in both papers and show connection between empirical material and analysis, the results section includes tables (see Appendices 1–4 for Paper 3 and Appendix 1 for Paper 4) that show how I derived the second-order themes from the first-order concepts. In addition, the analysis also included illustrative vignettes that show the movement from raw empirical material to interpretation (Pratt, 2009). The organized and iterative comparison of empirical materials, first-order concepts, and the literature on paradox theory and organizational spaces resulted in theoretical frameworks (figure 1 in Paper 3 and figure 1 in Paper 4) that summarize the findings of both papers.

To summarize, this section has highlighted social constructivism as an ontological perspective, followed by the epistemological underpinnings of how the knowledge in the thesis was generated through a transactional process. After explaining the empirical setting, in order to achieve the general and specific objectives and in line with the philosophical underpinnings, this section has also highlighted my method related choices, such as sampling, and how the empirical materials were collected, finally concluding the section with an explanation of how the empirical materials were analyzed. The next section will present an extended abstract of each paper, followed by synthesis of the findings and how they related to one another to comprise the thesis as a whole.

5. Summary of the papers

This section of the introductory chapter provides a summary of the five individual papers in the thesis.

5.1. Extended Abstract, Paper 1

Increasing interest in tensions from management and organization studies has meant that such tensions are conceptualized in more varied and detailed manners, but at the same time has led to inconsistencies (Denis et al., 2007; Pache & Santos, 2010). In the literature, tensions have been conceptualized as, for example, tradeoffs, pluralities, dualities, dilemmas, dialectics, ambivalences, and paradoxes, to mention but few (Ashforth et al., 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Such diversity of conceptualizations results in what Smith and Lewis (2011) consider a lack of conceptual clarity, as different terms are used to describe tensions without a thorough description of their differences and the corresponding implications. Similarly, Putnam et al. (2016) describe the state of the literature as one of “conceptual malaise”; they call for researchers to sharpen their definitions. The need for conceptual clarity and careful delineation emanates from the fact that how tensions are conceptualized has implications on for how they are theoretically addressed (Gaim & Wählin, 2016).

Given this conceptual confusion or malaise, Paper 1 aims at providing increased conceptual clarity for tensions by identifying core features and offering a comparative classification of tensions. Based on a review of key bibliographic references that attempts to arrive at conceptual clarity, the paper identifies seven distinctive features that explicate conceptualization. The paper also uses these features to illustrate the ways in which different types of tensions are similar and different from one another. Accordingly, the paper contributes to increased conceptual clarity concerning tensions by using relevant features: the existence of dyads, contradiction, interrelatedness, complementarity, compatibility, simultaneity, and push-pull forces. Doing so complements the mere definition of different tensions and clarifies the assumption behind each type of tension. The paper ultimately shows how tensions are conceptualized and dealt with. This conceptual clarity makes it apparent which features of tensions are included or excluded when describing them. In other words, conceptual clarity makes the assumption behind the conceptualization visible by indicating which features are included and which are not.

Keywords: Competing demands, tensions, paradoxes, dualities, dialectics, tradeoffs, dilemmas, conceptual clarity

5.2. Extended Abstract, Paper 2

Competing demands in organizations are intensifying and becoming imperative due to an increasingly global and dynamic environment. More specifically, managing tensions associated with competing demands is becoming necessary for effective innovation (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Norman, Palich, Livingstone, & Carini, 2004; van Dijk, Berends, Jelinek, Romme, & Weggeman, 2011). However, when organization members are faced with tensions, they often make a choice, compromise, or attempt at reconciliation. This happens for many reasons, such as organization member's need to produce consistent and reliable outcomes or predispositions that lead them to seek certainty as a way to simplify a complex reality, as well as people's general tendency to see the world as black and white (Bartunek, 1988; Martin, 2007; Tse, 2013). Dealing with the tensions in a way that leads to innovation therefore calls for a broader perspective and a mindset that embraces the complexities that tensions entail. With the claim that the framing tensions in a certain way affects how organization members respond, paper 2 aims to bring the notion of paradox to our awareness and offer a way to manage tensions when framed as paradoxes.

Using pragmatic philosophy as a point of departure and through a review of the literature on paradox and design, this paper suggests design thinking as a management concept (see Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, & Çetinkaya, 2013) to deal with tensions that are paradoxical. Design thinking is operationalized as the interplay between integrative thinking, a process characterized by abduction and reframing, symmetric structure, and an open-minded mindset. Thus, the paper shows a way to achieve a synthesis of paradoxical tensions informed by design thinking. Moreover, when faced with paradoxical tensions, rather than choosing one over the other (either A or B) or oscillating between two opposites in a single continuum (when is A or B suitable?), the paper promotes the notion of engaging A and B simultaneously and even extend the inquiry by asking "why not C?" where C represents a synthesis that incorporates the best of both worlds.

The paper concludes that dealing with a tension that is paradoxical requires embracing the complexity and ambiguities that the tension entails and which are reflected in organization members' thinking and mindsets and in the organization's structures and processes.

Keywords: Design thinking, tensions; paradoxes, paradoxical tensions; Symmetric organizational form; Synthesizing

5.3. Extended Abstract, Paper 3

A critical and well-established challenge for scholars in management and organization studies is to understand how organizations can effectively manage tensions (Kauppila, 2010; Smith & Tushman, 2005, p. 534). Increased interest in this topic have led to the emergence of a rich body of literature on tensions, both conceptual and empirical (Schad et al., 2016). Yet the existing literature has not fully answered the question of how to engage tensions that are paradoxical (Jules & Good, 2014), and we know little about how such tensions are made sense of in a creativity-based context such as architectural firms (DeFillippi et al., 2007; Lampel et al., 2000). When dealing with tensions (paradoxical or otherwise), the existing literature focuses on collective approaches at the organizational level, placing less emphasis on individual organization members (Schad et al., 2016). The limited works that have explored paradoxical tensions at the individual level have mainly focused on leaders and managers (Luscher & Lewis, 2008; Smith, 2014; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Hence, regardless of how important it is to engage paradoxical tension at the individual level, the current literature fall shorts in terms of explaining how this is done. Moreover, research on this topic has yet to explore how individuals in creativity-based contexts sustain this type of tension. Accordingly, this paper aims first at exploring tensions in the context of architectural firms and explains how organization members make sense of tensions. Second, the paper aims to explain the organizational arrangements that support individuals as they make sense of and keep the tensions alive.

The paper uses a case study based on three architectural projects undertaken by three Scandinavian architectural firms. In doing so, interviews of 21 staff members were used as a means to collect primary source data. Using an analysis inspired by grounded theory, the paper identifies four triggers, three paradoxical tensions and ways in which organization members dealt with such tensions. Through these results the paper details three salient paradoxical tensions at multiple levels (i.e. the organizational, project, and individual levels), along with four triggers that render latent tensions salient. To make sense of the (salient) paradoxical tension, the paper presents individual's "paradoxical mindset," which has both emotional and cognitive dimensions, as well as "paradoxical practices" that explain individual behavior. The paper also discusses organizational arrangements that support individuals to enable them not only to make sense of tensions but also to sustain them.

The paper concludes that making sense of tensions requires an interplay between individuals' paradoxical mindsets and practices supported by organizational arrangements. The paper explains this interplay from the

perspective of an organizing platform, which constitutes an institutionalized background condition in the form of organizational arrangements that give direction to individuals' emotional and cognitive dimensions and lead to the enactment of behaviors that allow individuals to make sense of tensions.

Keywords: Architectural firms; organizing platform; tensions; paradoxes; creativity-based context, paradoxical mindset, paradoxical practice

5.4. Extended Abstract, Paper 4

Space is where idea work takes place (Carlsen, Clegg, & Gjersvik, 2012; Kornberger & Clegg, 2003). This implies that the space that organizations build and how it evolves affects "idea work." In this case, Baldry (1999) argues that the work experience of organization members is intimately affected by the quality and the organization of space. This is to say, space can initiate, constrain, and influence individual and social behavior and certain organizational processes (Allen & Henn, 2007; Kornberger & Clegg, 2003). Against this backdrop, this paper explores spaces that elicit certain individual emotions, cognitions, and behaviors to engage tensions. In particular, the paper explores a space that makes engaging tensions possible. In management and organization studies, tension is a time-tested challenge. In practice, apart from the pervasiveness, organization members acutely feel the tension, which presses them to respond in one way or another. However, the focus in the paradox literature has been on the nature of the tension, the approaches to deal with it, and the impact of various responses (Schad et al., 2016). Given the importance of space as a condition for action and interaction in idea work, and the fact that idea work is characterized by paradoxes, this paper claims that the existing literature's focus on paradox is proposed in isolation from the particular nature of organization space. Consequently, the effect of the space in relation to paradoxes is underresearched and requires further investigation (Baldry, 1999; Penn et al., 1999).

Accordingly, this paper aims to examine how space elicits certain emotions, cognitions, and behaviors that make engaging tensions possible, by exploring the intersection between organizational space and paradox theories. This paper was put together based on an empirical study of three Scandinavian architectural firms and their five offices. The data were collected through archival materials, interviews with 21 staff members, and observations spanning 10 visits. Using theory-informed inductive theorizing, the paper identified spatial conditions

conceptualized as organized chaos, boundary(less)ness, premeditated spontaneity, and (re)framing. These empirically generated and theoretically informed conditions embody tensions in the materiality, social bonding, and ideals of an organization. Thus, the paper reveals the coexistence of order and disorder, the two-way interplay of form and function, designed and random interactions, and closed and permeable boundaries. Hence, this paper contributes to bringing space to the forefront of the literature on paradox. The paper thus complements the three existing streams in paradox literature related to nature, approaches to responding to the tension, and their impact. This paper concludes that space, and the conditions it involves, can be created and re-created to make engaging tensions possible.

Keywords: Architectural firms; generative space; organizational space; paradox theory; paradoxical thinking; creativity-based context; spatiality

5.5. Extended Abstract, Paper 5

Given the increasing pressure on organizations to engage competing demands, responses to the associated tensions have shifted from what is described as defensive towards active responses based on “both/and” thinking. The major focus of current research in this field is the question of how to achieve the state of “both/and” (see, for example, Briscoe, 2016; Fairhurst et al., 2016; Schad et al., 2016). Although “both/and,” as conceptualized in the literature (especially paradox literature) implies keeping the tension alive, in practice responses demonstrate otherwise. Responding to a paradox in practice entails action moves that resolve the tension, at least temporarily. However, any attempt at resolution, even temporarily, pushes the tension away. Hence, the question is, how can organizations and their members resist closure and embrace paradoxes? The purpose of this paper is, consequently, to conceptually explain how paradoxes can be embraced in order to resist closure and keep the tension alive.

Using Bakhtin’s dialogical perspective as a point of departure, the paper proposes acceptance of multiplicity, continuous generation of difference, collaborative expansion, and aesthetic moments as performative practices that emerge in and out of the dialogue. The paper argues that dialogue moves organization members from “both/and” thinking towards “more-than” thinking, which in turn enables options that were not previously evident to emerge. It is in that vein that the paper utilizes the concept of third space as a sanctuary for dialogue that connects opposites, displaces them, and situates them in a new relationship through ongoing interplay.

The paper establishes that tensions do not necessarily entail action moves but rather a space to engage in dialogue and keep tension alive. Moreover, a dialogical perspective, if translated into management action, means preventing closure, resisting unitary voices, and not discouraging ambiguity or inconsistency. Hence, by engaging in dialogue, the paper concludes that organization members can avoid premature closure of options. Embracing the inevitable paradoxes also means that they are never resolved but always in play and hopefully engender multiple voices to enter into organizational decisions.

Keywords: tensions, paradoxes, 'more-than' responses, dialogical perspective, third space

6. Synthesis and concluding discussion

In the introduction, I set out a general objective of advancing the understanding of tensions in general, and tensions in creativity-based contexts in particular. This section of the introductory chapter synthesizes the five papers and presents a concluding discussion showing how this objective has been achieved. I follow this with a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of the thesis, concluding remarks, the limitations of the thesis, and recommendations for future research.

6.1. Conceptualization of (and framing of) tensions

At a conceptual level, with the existing inconsistencies in the conceptualization of tensions in the literature, in this thesis I have attempted to achieve conceptual clarity. In so doing—that is, through the thesis—I have outlined a definition of paradoxes and how this type of tension differs from other similar kinds of tensions, and the corresponding implications. I have accomplished this using core features drawn from the extant literature (such as the existence of a dyad, contradiction, interrelatedness, complementarity, compatibility, simultaneity, and push-pull forces) to distinguish paradoxes as a type of tension from other related tensions, such as tradeoffs, dilemmas, dualities, and dialectics. Accordingly, I address Smith and Lewis's (2011) claim that there is a lack of conceptual clarity, as well as what Putnam et al. (2016) call the field's conceptual malaise regarding tensions. The distinctions I identify contribute to the field of research by clarifying underlying assumption of different kind of tensions and how the tensions that are the subject of researchers' attention are used.

Conceptual clarity not only has theoretical implications but also has empirical implication with respect to how tensions are framed and how they are associated with the responses in practice. In this case, the thesis has empirically established the notion that how tensions are framed influences how they are dealt with. With clarity about what a particular tension constitutes, the assumptions behind these tensions become more explicit—something that can, in practice, help in dealing with tensions. Apart from conceptual clarity, my explicit description of different tensions is also relevant because the current dynamic approach (see, for example, Ashforth and Reingen (2014)) fails to stress that managing tensions involves switching between different framings.

Luscher and Lewis's (2008) action research on how to work through paradoxes, for example, shows that organization members were, in fact, dealing with tensions by switching between both dilemmas and

paradoxes over time. Similarly, although the work of Ashforth and Reingen (2014) illustrates how organization members deal with dualities of “moral” and “pragmatic” demands, the response involve different framings of tensions over time and space. In Ashforth and Reingen’s (2014) case, the response involves choosing one at the expense of the other at a given point in time; and this response makes the framing of the tension a dilemma rather than a duality, at least temporarily. Thus, achieving conceptual clarity makes this claim explicit and explains the current gap between analysts’ theories and organization members’ practices. In this, I stress that not all tensions should be framed in a certain way at all times, as is the norm in the existing literature. This means that framings change as members switch between different ways of seeing tensions across time and space.

6.2. Paradoxical tensions in a creativity-based context

By focusing on framing of tensions as paradoxes, I show how firms can achieve synthesis—which is one form of active response—through design thinking (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Martin, 2009). In addition to my conceptual work, on an empirical level this thesis discusses tensions in a creativity-based context and how they are dealt with. Similar to Smith and Lewis (2011), the thesis shows that tensions are both embedded (latent tensions) in the organization’s systems and socially constructed. In this thesis, especially the empirical part, I focus on the notion of how those latent tensions became salient to organization members. This is so because it is these salient tensions that organization members react and respond to. In so doing, I identify the triggers outside of the individual (i.e. outside of the individual’s framing) that render latent tensions salient: these include increased organizational professionalization, constraints, a firm’s *raison d’être*, and individuals’ professional ethos. In the specific cases studied, these triggers bring about three tensions at multiple levels (i.e. artistic/commercial; aesthetic/performance; and passion/discipline).

The artistic/commercial tension is a tension that confronts management: for example, in their choice of projects that “make the headlines” or projects that “make money” for the firms. Engaging these two demands brings this tension to the attention of people in a management position. This is because, according to Smith (2014), managers face pressure to make their orientation and strategic intent clear and consistent. This tension is organizational in its nature and could also be related to efforts at harmonizing the organization’s *raison d’être* (as a creative firm) with the practical challenge of running the office (as a business). In a creative context such as architecture, although this tension exists, creative

acclaim can be considered a bigger driver than business success (Winch & Schneider, 1993, p. 927). This thesis throws light on this tension in such settings, because there is a general tendency to see architectural firms as centered on creativity even though there is a parallel commercial pressure.

At a project level, the tension of engaging a building's aesthetics and performance was central to the project team's design work. This is an articulation of the tension between form and function in modern architecture. Not only should a building be aesthetically pleasing, but it also has to perform or serve the function it was intended to fulfill. Just as the emphasis on form (i.e., façade) puts pressure on the performance of the building, the complex performance requirements of clients also put pressure on architects while designing the façade. In the thesis, not engaging both was explained using the myth of Daedalus and Icarus and labeled the Daedalian risk (Blau, 1987), in which a sharp swing toward one or the other demand will either "melt the wax or soak the feathers," i.e., favoring one and ignoring the other would put a project at risk of failure. Hence, the tension of accommodating aesthetics and performance was evident in the empirical setting in that if a project failed to harmonize both, it was ultimately considered a failure.

At an individual level, the salient tensions of passion and discipline tear members between what they "want to do" and what they "have to do." This is also related to architects' professional ethos and the constraints imposed by it. In a creativity-based context, this kind of tension occurs in organization member's everyday work. In this respect, Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) claim that the tension of delivering an exciting solution within a limited budget demands members to consider both sides of the coin. By adopting one at the expense of the other, Smith (2014, p. 1614) claims that members "fall prey to defensive responses and vicious cycles" because focusing on one exacerbates the need for the other. My empirical study revealed the interdependence of passion and discipline, as well as the contradiction that they create. This tension, which also reflects the pain and pleasure in members' work, is what drives them forward and makes them feel alive in their work. Members engage passion and discipline simultaneously as factors that coexist to spur discussion, hone the creative ideas, and work through constraints.

6.3. Managing and sustaining tensions

The sections above have presented the main findings regarding the conceptualization and framing of tensions, context-specific paradoxical tensions, and how these tensions rise to the surface to come to the

awareness of organization members. This section will focus on how organization members make sense of tensions in terms of individuals' emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions: that is, how organization members manage and sustain tensions. In addition, here I discuss the conditions that facilitate individuals' emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses in dealing with or living with tensions.

With regard to managing tensions, I propose the concept of design thinking (inspired by Martin, 2004; Martin, 2007) and argue that this might facilitate a virtuous response when organization members are faced with paradoxical tensions. I understand design thinking—as a management concept—as consisting of an integrative perspective, an open-minded mindset, abduction and reframing as processes, and a symmetric organizational form.

The integrative perspective—which is based on “both/and” thinking—is an alternative to “either/or” dominated perspectives such as analytical and intuitive perspectives (Martin, 2009). The open-minded mindset supports the pragmatist notion that available options may not be adequate and that there are new possibilities. With this mindset, members can work towards “what could be” rather than focusing just on “what is.” Consequently, their response is characterized by “creating” something new rather than “choosing” from the available options. Moreover, with open-mindedness, organization members accept that the tension will never be completely resolved. In fact, when viewing tensions as paradoxes, organization members do not seek to resolve the tension irreversibly (Quinn & Cameron, 1988). On the contrary, paradoxical tensions are ongoing, which is why organizations are always developing ways to recognize, manage, and live with them. Abduction and reframing as processes entail imposing a new template or a new lens in understanding the tension and allowing the creation of a new and unexpected creative alternative to live with it (Bartunek, 1988; Kolko, 2010). Symmetric organizational forms are suggested to deliberately embrace the loose sense of a harmonious presence of order and disorder, organization and disorganization.

Following the arguments above, I therefore propose design thinking as an organizational resource that facilitates the meta-skill of being able to confront and engage tensions productively. The main feature of this meta-skill is that instead of choosing between competing models⁶, it

⁶ Competing demands, as described in the section on key concepts, refers to opposing demands that depend on limited resources or attention. Because they are equally important to the organization, they create tension in the organization and among

allows members to seek a third option. The third option, in the form of a synthesis (not compromise), encompassed not only elements from both competing models but adds even more elements. Synthesis, as illustrated by the third option, is where the transcendence—as explained by Lewis (2000)—to approaching paradoxical tensions lies. When competing demands are engaged simultaneously, the synthesis will not simply be the imposition of one demand or a compromise between the two demands. Rather, synthesis—through transcendence—implies a creative and novel way of understanding and dealing with tensions.

The thesis, in addition to the conceptual work, empirically presents and discusses how organization members in architectural firms make sense of paradoxical tensions. The analysis of the empirical data led me to identify what I call an organizing platform. The organizing platform represents the institutionalized organizational arrangements and individual cognitive imageries that inform individuals' practices and reasoning. I use the concept of the organizing platform to weave together individuals' paradoxical mindsets (involving their emotional and cognitive dimensions) and paradoxical practices (the behavioral dimension) and organizational arrangements that members use to make sense of paradoxical tensions in a creativity-based context.

Within the organizing platform, the paradoxical mindset involves both an emotional dimension that illustrates how tensions are felt (i.e., as a source of anxiety or creativity) and cognitive dimensions which dictate the cognitive framing (as “either/or” or “both/and”). In other words, the emotional dimension explains the difference between reacting to the tension from anxiety and reacting to the tension as a call for creativity. Ashforth and Reingen (2014) show how anxiety and discomfort force individuals to split the tension; this, according to Jarzabkowski et al. (2013), is a defensive response. On the contrary, organization members such as those interviewed in the case study see tension as a source of new opportunity and a call for creativity. This organizing platform therefore facilitates virtuous cycles of awareness and acceptance of (rather than defensiveness again) tensions, leading to active responses.

As mentioned in the introduction through the conceptual tool of the sensemaking vortex—the emotional dimension exists alongside the cognitive dimension. Through the cognitive dimension, organization members frame the tension in a way that allows them to engage both or to seek a third option, and is reflected in the behavior that organization

members. These competing demands are operationalized in different ways, such as competing logics, competing values, competing models, competing forces, etc.

members exhibit. Hence, the three dimensions (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) are closely intertwined and discussed in isolation only for the purposes of analysis. The cognitive dimension represents the mental templates or framing against which organization members recognize and accept the simultaneous existence of contradictory demands (Smith & Tushman, 2005). The empirical study shows that when faced with competing demands such as aesthetics and performance, organization members think of how to accommodate both demands without favoring one over the other. This was illustrated empirically when interior architects had to choose between two options: the aesthetically pleasing (but beyond budget) and the less costly (but not as playful) alternative. The paradoxical mindset, with its emotional and cognitive dimensions, guides the behavior dimension of organization members toward an action. This behavioral dimension and the action that results from it is based on what Hansen (2008) called the practice of operating based on what “might be” rather than “what is” and is also discussed, conceptually, as an open-minded mindset. In this thesis, this action is discussed as the paradoxical practice and exemplified by how the interior architects acted. In this case, instead of choosing one or the other option, the interior architects conceived a third option where they did not have to compromise the budget or the aesthetics. Hence, engaging both also included creating a third option in practice. As explained above, this illustrates synthesis through transcendence. Similarly, when the architects faced a choice between using a limited space for a music studio or a conference hall, they instead created a multipurpose room that can be used for both. Therefore, the paradoxical practice was characterized by seeking possibilities based on the view that the available options are not enough, and there are options that organization members are not yet aware of but that are capable of creating.

Apart from the paradoxical mindset and practices that organization members use to make sense of tensions, there are also organizational arrangements that serve both as a support that institutionalized the management of paradoxical tensions and as a way to sustain the tensions. Such organizational arrangements include enabling and purposefully juxtaposing inconsistent competencies, introducing a third perspective, creating a dynamic yet stable structure, and facilitating the freedom to err. Without these organizational arrangements, organization members would most likely be unable to sustain tensions.

6.4. Evoking paradoxes

So far we have discussed the salient paradoxical tensions and how organization members make sense of such tensions and the organizational arrangement that help their sensemaking. A space that evokes certain emotions, cognitions and behaviors makes it possible to live with tensions. Here I offer a different but complementary approach by focusing on the spatial conditions that can elicit emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions organization member as they seek to live with tensions.

To accomplish this I explored the literature on organizational space and discuss how its mental, social and physical dimensions affect individual and social behaviors and organizational processes. Space can be created for different purposes, either to embed control or encourage experimentation. Paper 4 of the thesis specifically notes that a space that facilitates either one over the other would result in uselessness or triviality. That is, in order for anything to be accomplished in a space, it has to accommodate dual qualities (divergence and convergence; disorganization and origination, etc.) Such a space, which is simultaneously fixed and floating, enabling and controlling (Cairns, McInnes, & Robertson, 2003), creates an opportunity for organization members to value and embrace tensions and contradictions. Spaces that create the potential to embrace dualities are generative. Embracing both qualities, therefore, avoids the precarious extremes of being too restraining or too chaotic (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004). Consequently, in a spirit of exploring space that evokes engaging tensions, Paper 4 explores the intersection between the literature on organizational spaces and organizational paradoxes. To do so I draw the spatial conditions which are ingrained in the mental, social and physical space of the case firms. These conditions are manifested as organized chaos, where order and disorder coexist, in a premeditated spontaneity that is characterized by designed and random interactions, in boundary(less)ness that represent closed and permeable boundaries, and in (re)framing where problems emerge or are created and evolve. A space that is generative can evoke certain feelings, thoughts and behaviors, which make an organization member think and act paradoxically while engaging in their idea work. For it to be possible to accomplish anything in a space, for it to be generative, it must accommodate and promote both qualities simultaneously. This is manifested in the physical space: the spatial arrangement and the kind of social dynamics this arrangement creates (such as structure, communication, or belonging), which ultimately affect how organization members think and behave when dealing with existing problem or creating new ones.

So far, in section 6 I have reviewed what makes a tension paradoxical, how paradoxical tensions surface through triggers, and the different types of paradoxical tensions that characterize a creativity-based context, specifically architectural firms. I have also covered how organization members make sense of tensions, including a discussion of how such tensions are managed and sustained over time. Finally, I conclude the section by discussing the organizational arrangements that facilitate and elicit organization member's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that make it possible to live with tensions. This next section will present the major insights that reflect the above-mentioned synthesized discussions.

7. Concluding remarks

With a general objective of advancing the understanding of tensions in general and tensions in creativity-based contexts in particular, this thesis examines tensions both theoretically and empirically and establishes that tapping the power of tensions is challenging but can be accomplished by exploring, embracing and ultimately transcending them. In reaching this conclusion, this thesis has arrived at several insights worth highlighting.

First, exploring tensions (paradoxical or otherwise) happens when there is clarity as to the kind of tension one is dealing with. In this regard, by identifying and then assembling core features that researchers use to conceptualize tensions, the thesis achieves a conceptual clarity that delineates various tensions. Achieving conceptual clarity regarding tensions makes the assumption behind a framing explicit. In other words, conceptual clarity shows which feature of the tension are included and which ones are omitted. If conceptual clarity is lacking, the connection between tensions and responses will be elusive. With conceptual clarity, it is possible to decode whether the tension was perceived as a problem to be solved or as a call for creativity. When tensions are conceptualized as paradoxes, it means that they are resistant to resolution and that dealing with them will involve both acceptance and accommodating. After delineating various types of tensions, I propose the idea that not all tensions should be conceptualized (or framed) in a certain way permanently, although this is the norm in the existing literature. Instead, when we have clarity as to what various tensions constitute, their framing might change, which involves switching between different ways of understanding tensions across time and through space; this can be done only with a clear demarcation of which features are present.

Second, dealing with tensions requires that we shift from thinking (and doing) based on contingency approaches and adopt a contemporary approach. The contingency approach—based on “if/then”—is inadequate to grasp the intricacies of tensions and productively deal with them. More specifically, if tensions are approached as paradoxes; doing so escapes superficial integration and temporary resolutions. Even within the paradox literature, however—which is still fixated on how to engage A and B—the central questions should be redirected to entertain “why not C?” This is especially so in creativity-based contexts, where responses predominantly include creative integration or synthesis in the true sense of the word. The synthesis does not resolve the tension per se but rather transcends the tension: the two demands are still present, each

contains part of the other, and they are integrated on a different plane of understanding.

Third, regarding management of tensions, when individuals deal with paradoxical tensions they need to engage in an intricate interplay between a paradoxical mindset and practices—which comprise the organization member’s emotions, cognition, and behavior. However, this cannot happen without appropriate organizational arrangements. Put differently, managing tensions as paradoxes entails more than merely changing organization members’ framing from “either/or” to “both/and.” It also involves feeling comfortable with tensions and exhibiting behavioral complexity, and requires organizational support that embeds cognitions, emotions, and practices into the organizational system. Failure to institute organizational arrangements will most likely lead organizations, for example those in creativity-based contexts, to decline and lead their members into anxiety generated by the tensions present.

Finally, on the same topic as the preceding point, not all tensions require an action move. Using a dialogical perspective, I argue that dealing with tensions does not necessarily entail action moves but rather requires a third space to keep the tension alive. The dialogical perspective appreciates the presence of tension while seeking complementarity. That is, as members accept opposition and generate difference these become a source of energy. Keeping the tension in play and resisting closure—the tenets of dialogical perspective—puts such members in a zone of hybridity and prevents them from achieving a unitary voice, instead embracing a blended voice with its ambiguities and inconsistencies. Hence, managing tensions can entail more than achieving the state of both/and. The challenge is to be able to sustain the state of “both/and.” Doing so requires accepting the complexity and ambiguities that the tensions entail, which is reflected in the organization members’ thinking and mindset and in the organization’s structure and process.

8. Contributions

The thesis started with the aim of advancing our understanding of tensions in general and in a creativity-based context in particular. In achieving the overall objective, I have explored how tensions in a creativity-based context were framed, managed, and sustained, and how organizational conditions facilitate and elicit individual's emotions, cognition, and behaviors as they deal with tensions (see figure 1). In doing so the thesis offers four important contributions to management and organization studies in general and to the literature on paradoxes in particular.

First, I make a case for a shift away from the contingency approach and toward contemporary approaches for analyzing and dealing with tensions (for example, Lewis & Smith, 2014). I argue that the contingency approach—which is dominant in management and organization studies—does not adequately address tensions that are paradoxical. A true shift to the contemporary approach necessitates a transcendence of tensions. Organizations and their members systematically integrate competing demands as paradoxes and weaken their boundaries so that one cannot exist without the other (passion without discipline, aesthetics without performance, etc.). Systematically integrating both demands leads to a model that consider engaging the two demands, simultaneously and in their full strength, as the new normal. Such an understanding and embracing of tension opens up new possibilities, unleashing the creative potential of individuals and teams. This preferably requires that tensions are framed—where there is a pressure to “have one's cake and eat it too”—as paradoxes that can ultimately lead to increased creativity.

Second, the thesis contributes towards conceptual clarity as to what constitutes the paradoxical type of tension and how it is different from other conceptualizations of tensions. Specifically, I illustrate similarities and differences, as well as the underlying features and assumptions of what the various conceptualizations of tensions imply. Through systematic juxtaposition and nuanced discussion I address the lack of conceptual clarity and confusion, offering a complement to mere descriptions of tensions. This conceptual clarity is an important advancement in the literature on tensions and paradoxes, as it reduces misunderstanding. Moreover, conceptual clarity makes the connection between suggested responses and specific tensions clearer and enables the field to grow by turning the focus toward developing creative ways of dealing with these different types of tensions using a consistent and shared vocabulary. Conceptual clarity on tensions is valuable, because in

the current literature what are sometimes discussed as dualities or paradoxes are not necessarily so (see, for example, Ashforth & Reingen, 2014). In this case, although on the surface a dynamic model seems to be dealing with dualities, in reality instead deals with different kinds of tensions across space and time, which is the core tenet of the contingency approach. In this case, conceptual confusion might thwart theoretical development as it affects what Clegg (2002) calls “representing” the tension. In this case, what is paradoxical in reality might be represented as something else because of the conceptualizations that scholars use to represent it.

Third, this thesis contributes to the literature by challenging the assumption that dealing with paradoxical tension necessitates both differentiation (i.e. the moment of temporary either/or) and integration (see Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Smith, 2014). I argue that dealing with paradoxical tension is possible, at least in the studied empirical context, based on integrative “both/and” framing, without a separating, which renders the paradox absolute. Moreover, as I have stressed, separation (even for the purpose of subsequent integration) is not capitalizing the interdependence. Put differently, it is the spark the tension creates in the interdependence that brings about creativity. I make this point by showing the distinction between integration and balance in a creativity-based context. In a similar vein, in relation to dealing with the tensions of work-life, Friedman (2008) claims that balance—using the metaphor of a jazz quartet—is not the right metaphor, as it conveys compromise and that one demand is always sacrificed at the expense of the other at some point in time. However, integration implies a harmony of competing forces. In his example the piano, drums, bass, and horn play simultaneously instead of allocating time for each. Using a similar notion in an analysis of individual masterminds (such as Leonardo da Vinci), Rothenberg (1979) underscored that holding opposing ideas together moves the mind to a new level. Thus, the notion of integration, in a creativity-based context, provides a sharp contrast to dealing with tensions by being consistently inconsistent or a zigzag pattern (see, for example, Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). I provide examples of this notion when I explain, from the empirical study, how aesthetics and performance were engaged simultaneously and using the ‘shared value’ (see Porter & Kramer, 2006) from the existing literature.

Fourth, the thesis contributes to the paradox literature by extending its central question beyond the issue of “how can we accommodate A and B?” The empirical context I examined shows that the question can be converted to “Why not C?” (C is used here not as a next-step evolution

of A and B but to signify a break from the existing competing options towards something new). Reorienting the question in relation to tensions implies reframing, which influences actors as they deal with them and academics as they study them. Rethinking the central question, and the response it brings forth, prevents what Eisenhardt (2000) called the bland halfway point between one extreme and the other, or what Putnam, Myers, and Gailliard (2014) consider the neutralizing of the tension between A and B in a middle-of-the-road approach. I have shown how architects rethink A and B by showing their tendency to ask: why not create an option that encompasses both? This goes in line with the best-of-both, or neither-nor⁷, approach. In other words, organization members tend to consider creating a third option that moves beyond compromise, taking the best of both. Asking the “why not C?” question creates a new set of choices. In theory, this is important, as it adds a new dimension to the challenge of engaging tensions in that the third option as an action move truly transcends the contradiction⁸. Since the current literature is restricted to looking at A and B, by shifting the question to a C that engages A and B at a different layer of interpretation my conceptualization could ultimately expand the range of scholarly inquiry.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this thesis has four practical implications that could be useful to organizations in creativity based contexts, and to their members.

First, the identified triggers that bring tensions to the surface might have practical relevance, because knowledge of such triggers leads to recognition of the tensions and in turn awakens individual’s emotional and cognitive dimensions. Luscher and Lewis (2008) show that organization members respond effectively when they are aware of the tension. Effective recognition of tensions is important to those who seek to improve organizational performance and stimulate creativity. Having identified the triggers in this particular context, the tensions that surface at an organizational level cascade down to the individual level. When management responds to tensions at a higher level, their framing of the tension also affects how tensions will be dealt with at the project and

⁷ Neither-nor thinking is described by Stroh and Miller (1994, p. 37) as “choosing a third option” based on a Jewish proverb which advises that, “if there are two courses of actions, you should pick the third...by choosing neither path, you might ironically wind up travelling both”

⁸ This was reflected in the empirical context, for example, “Good things do not have to be expensive. You can do nice things with a low budget.” “Sometimes the cheapest and cheesiest materials can be put together to find beauty.”

individual levels. And when several triggers are in place, how managers frame the resulting tension sets the scene for individual organization members. As much as individual organization members frame tensions in their own way, how triggers bring tensions to the surface and how such tensions are dealt with at the top level also influences or shapes individuals' mindset and practices. Therefore, awareness of tensions could help organization members work through, rather than become stuck in, the tensions that become salient due to triggers.

Second, the thesis suggests different ways that enable organization members in creativity-based contexts to accept and engage tensions as paradoxes that can ultimately lead to increased creativity and innovation. As I have indicated throughout the thesis, organizations in the contemporary business environment are faced with tensions at multiple levels. Moreover, how these tensions are managed has performance implication (see, for example, Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009). In this regard, I argue that tapping the power of paradoxical tensions requires exploring rather than suppressing them. To do so, I propose the concept of design thinking and its elements—in relation to perspective, mindset, structure, and process—which makes engaging paradoxical tension possible. In addition, I have identified the emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions through which organization members make sense of paradoxical tensions. I have also outlined organizational arrangements that must be in place to help sustain tensions. Therefore, given the increased pressure on managers and organization members to deal with tensions, these suggestions could have practical applicability and therefore be of interest to practitioners.

Third, this thesis has practical relevance insofar as its findings show a shift in the role of organization members, specifically managers, from choosing between competing demands towards holding them and bringing the resulting tension to the surface, bringing the tension to awareness and engaging it. For organization members, this has to do with reframing tensions and changing the central question when confronting them. Instead of asking which one is the best, or under what condition should one be selected over the other, the central question to ask here is “how can I engage both?” Or what's more, “why not create a new alternative?” As I have illustrated, extending (prompting) the question of creating a new alternative enables organization members to not only embrace tensions but also move towards a space where tensions can be transcended. Wearing the paradoxical hat or being able to see interdependence and simultaneously in the midst of contradiction is an important skill for managers if they are to deal with complex organizational phenomena. In this case, the notion of a third option

could be relevant in a creativity-based context both as an outcome and as an approach. As an outcome, there is an action move of bringing forth an option that is not there yet but that can integrate the best of the two existing options. As an approach, it does not necessitate an action move; rather, it includes encouraging dialogue and introducing a third perspective to keep the two perspectives alive and in a continued state of awareness. This could be in the form of a third person who keeps the two camps informed about each other. In similar fashion, this could encourage generative spaces that evoke paradoxical ways of thinking and doing.

Fourth, the mindsets and practices presented here have practical relevance in relation to framing and how constraints that trigger tensions into salience could be presented. For example, constraints can be presented in two ways: either as a straightjacket that limits imagination or as a stimulus to creativity. In the first presentation, the constraint might be framed as: “this is your budget; get what you can within the budget.” Alternatively the same constraint could be framed as “make magic happen within this budget.” I use this simplistic example to highlight that how a tension is framed and presented can either evoke a positive emotion (energizing, solving the unsolvable) or as a paralyzing one (the tension represents a problem). I lean toward embracing the former. This, however, requires a supportive context that gives members the freedom to err, to experiment, to be naïve, etc. Having this freedom allows members to see possibilities and to work based on “what might be” rather than “what is.”

9. Disclosure, limitations, and further research

Because it has an aura of boldness, paradox as an approach and “both/and” thinking has seemingly been presented as a panacea to tensions. This might be easy and fascinating at a conceptual level, but practice might indicate otherwise. Hence, I do not wish to imply a preeminence of paradox over any other conceptualization or approach. As indicated in the appended papers, tensions emerge in different contexts accompanied by different contingencies and responses. However, the whole idea here is that when there is a pressure to attend to competing demands simultaneously, looking at a tension as a paradox instead of (for example) a dilemma or tradeoff might be more productive. So, although I believe paradox as an approach is not a panacea, I maintain—indeed, strongly believe—that exploring tensions as paradoxes, when there is a pressure to engage competing demands simultaneously, is not only possible but also desirable. Given the increased pressure on contemporary organizations to engage competing demands simultaneously, engaging or living with paradox should not to be viewed as odd, but rather as normal. That is, paradoxes, view thusly, are not to be removed but are rather are to be embedded in organizations: **paradox is the new normal**.

Different aspects of the thesis’s limitations are addressed in the individual papers. Below I will highlight the limitations (both empirical and theoretical) of the thesis in general and suggest further research directions to develop the field.

First, the empirical part of the thesis used architectural firms as a setting to study tensions in a creativity-based context. Hence we can ask how generalizable these results are to other organizations in creativity-based contexts. Although I did not set out to generate generalizable findings, I do see a potential for transferability (see Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013) of these concepts that might apply to a wider domain. In this case, firms within a creativity-based context can make particular use of the paradoxical mindset, paradoxical practices, and organizational arrangements when facing tensions of their own.

Second, the focus has been on the architectural side; the thesis could have benefited by including the construction companies involved in the projects. This was remedied by including construction architects and construction engineers to understand the other side of the creativity coin.

Third, when studying the spatial dimensions, the thesis could have benefited from more access to the offices for a comprehensive

understanding of how the spatial dimensions emerged and developed in relation to tensions. This was remedied by using secondary materials.

Lastly, given the Scandinavian location of the case firms—implying a specifically Scandinavian way of doing things (see, for example, Byrkjeflot, 2003)—the way the firms are organized and managed might also be reflected in how they deal with tensions. This might make the empirical results context- and region-specific.

Theoretically, most studies, including this one, focus on the virtues of engaging paradoxes and the positive outcomes of doing so. I have not discussed the pitfalls in attempting to engage paradoxical tensions at length. There are possibilities that a failed attempt or an over-exaggerated attempt to engage paradoxical tensions might lead to negative outcomes.⁹ This might include undesirable consequences such as chaos, conflict, or decline. Scholars in the field and practitioners alike can learn a lot not only by studying the virtues but also the downsides of attempting to engage paradoxes. One area could be to look at what paradoxes at the senior management level could mean to the lower level managers or operational workers down the line, especially in the absence of supportive organizational conditions. This could be investigated in connection with issues related to hypocrisy or cosmetic responses. That is, the goal senior managers set might be to engage tensions as paradoxes, but what is happening in practice might not be, which makes it a cosmetic response.

Finally, most, if not all, studies on tensions focus on two competing demands. From the empirical setting, at least, there were multiple demands involved (aesthetics, functionality, ethics, sustainability). So,

⁹ A commentary by Andre Spicer about the recent Volkswagen scandal can explain this. In their attempt to “do it all”—i.e., engage contradictory demands— management imposed what is considered to be impossible (paradoxical) goals characterized by tensions. Since achieving the goal was nearly impossible; some opted for ingenious solutions that seemingly embraced the tension. Such goals are described as “stretch goals,” meaning that although novel, they are extremely difficult (see Cunha, Giustiniano, Rego, & Clegg, 2016). Spicer indicates that a “big firm like VW is under pressure from all directions. Regulators want reduced carbon emissions, customers want cheap but powerful cars, investors want healthy profit, and employees want good wages. Doing all these things at once is hard.”.... “People further down the corporate pecking order often work furiously to find ingenious solutions that allow the company to deliver on many conflicting demands at the same time. At VW this came in the form of an impressive system that turned on pollution reduction when a car was being inspected and turned it off again during normal driving conditions”

(Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/23/opinions/spicer-volkswagen/>)

instead of focusing on the two demands, future studies on tensions might concentrate on multiple demands.

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