The Gatekeeper's Gambit

The Politics and Practice of New Ideas in Corporate Innovation.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of “Innovation Gatekeepers” within corporate entities, and how these individuals impact the way in which new ideas are explored and funded. Drawing on the authors experience in corporate innovation and new product development, the study seeks to understand how these individuals, strategically positioned within organisational hierarchies, influence the trajectory of ideas, funding, and ultimately the products and services which are released to the public.

Private enterprises fund three-quarters of the worlds’ research and development (R&D) but there is a lack of transparency on the process they use and how that money is spent. Currently what is known of innovation within corporates is either not publicly available or delivered through biased marketing-led material. The literature in the field that exists is focused on best practice methodology and tends to avoid the examination of the practical realities of the innovation process in these environments. This research seeks to examine the unknown elements of this process, who is involved in innovation decision making, and how are these decisions made.

To gain an insider’s perspective of innovation processes within these corporations a grounded theory methodology was applied. Semi-structured interviews with corporate innovation team members elicited a rich contextual view of this environment that was interpreted through a constructivist lens. This research identified individuals who act as ‘Innovation Gatekeepers’. These gatekeepers, either consciously or subconsciously, apply a force that control the process of innovation. This force is realised through tangible tools, such as controlling the flow of information or access to resources, and intangible factors, such as personal drivers, motivations, and market forces.

The significant investment corporates make in R&D illustrates their desire to be innovative. This research has made visible the agency of specific individuals that have a disproportionate level of influence over the innovation process and its outcomes. This overwhelms other potential mitigating factors, such as increasing budgets or organisational priorities. Given that these individuals are inherent in an organisation and can’t be removed, corporates need to find a way to identify Innovation Gatekeepers and work to either harness or reduce their influence if they hope to be truly innovative.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Signed:

Date: 1 October 2023

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

Throughout my career in both big business and small start-ups, I've been both a witness to, and a participant in the innovation process. From boardroom brainstorming sessions to implementing strategies, I've seen first-hand the influence that corporate R&D has on the company itself, and more importantly the wider world within which these innovations are launched; with this influence comes responsibility, a responsibility I've felt deeply as I've navigated these environments.

I've often found myself in the role of the 'innovation gatekeeper', and in turn, seen others adopt the same role. This is the focus of this thesis, as I examine the influence and drivers of the role, and by way, how it impacts the innovation process. This role, while rewarding, has also been a source of personal conflict. How do we ensure that our innovations not only drive profit but also positively impact the world? How do we balance the immediate needs of a corporation with the long-term needs of society?

These questions have been the driving force behind my research, but as I embarked on this academic journey, I had to acknowledge my own biases. My experiences in the corporate world, both good and bad, have shaped my perspective. I've celebrated the successes of innovation, but I've also seen its pitfalls. This duality has been both my strength and my challenge as a researcher.

This research explores the concept of the 'innovation gatekeeper' in depth, drawing upon my own experiences and the broader implications of corporate innovation. But this research is more than just an academic exercise for me, it's a personal quest for understanding. How can we, as corporate professionals, ensure that our innovations are a force for good?

As I look to the future, I'm committed to continuing this exploration. I hope that my research can serve as a starting point for a broader conversation about the role of innovation in our society, and I hope that, in some small way, I can help bridge the gap between corporate success and societal well-being.

CHAPTER 1 Innovation and Big Business

In this era of product marketing and buzzwords, the term “innovation” can be overused, and yet the concept that sits behind it is far more important than mere spin-doctoring. It is an essential part of the growth and development of our society, with innovation embedded in the fabric of how we introduce new products, services, and ways of engaging with the world around us (Schumpeter, 1934; Porter, 1990).

Historically, the realm of innovation was dominated by scientists, universities, philosophers, and other trailblazers of thought. These pioneers, driven by curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge, laid the groundwork for many of the advancements we witness today. Their endeavours were often characterized by a genuine desire to push the boundaries of what was known and understood, seeking to benefit society at large. The United States, for instance, has built an excellent system of research-oriented graduate education, primarily aimed at the education of future engineers and academic scientific researchers (Keating, D., Stanford, T., Snellenberger, J. M., et al., 2004). This system has been instrumental in fostering innovation and technological advancements

However, the reality of the modern innovation landscape is far from this idealised, and in part romanticised, view of how invention and change have come to be. Innovation has become the domain of private organisations and the wealthy elite. We don’t know the extent to which this has shaped the world around us, nor do we fully understand the influences and factors behind the decisions which lead to these new innovations or products.

Private enterprise leads the charge when it comes to the bulk of responsibility for this innovation. While accounts vary in exact percentages, estimates point to around 75% of total R&D investment in global research and development (R&D) coming from the private sector (Cornell University, INSEAD, & WIPO, 2021). This means that private enterprises, and thus the shareholders and directors of those private businesses, make the final call on where the majority of global R&D spending is invested when developing the world around us.

Following this trend of private enterprise dominance in innovation, another significant concern arises regarding the demographic representation in leadership roles, particularly within private enterprise. The decision-making processes for these corporations are influenced by a select group of individuals, with the CEOs and board members of Fortune 500 companies predominantly being white, male, and older. A study by the Pew Research Centre highlighted the lack of diversity in top executive positions in Fortune 500 companies,

with a significant underrepresentation of women and minorities (Pew Research Centre, 2015). A study by the Harvard Business Review (2018) highlighted that only 2.7% of venture capital-funded companies had a woman CEO, and a mere 1% had an African American founder. Such skewed representation raises questions about the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of innovations that emerge from these enterprises (Robb, A., & Reedy, E. J., 2018; Kauffman Foundation, 2019).

By developing an understanding of both how the process of ideation and idea selection works within organisations, and what methods, systems, or rules govern the way in which these entities innovate, this demographic influence can be mapped and better understood. While a deep understanding of best practice innovation methods has been built within both private and public practitioners, there is still limited research on how decision makers influence the products and services used by society at large. There remains a question as to how this process actually works, and the practical reality of how and why innovation projects are chosen within private enterprise, and what factors govern these choices.

This thesis, and the subsequent discussion it presents, aims to further enhance our understanding of who, what, and how innovation decisions are made within private enterprises. With that knowledge, there is potential to facilitate a broader discourse on the role innovation plays in our society, and how ideas are selected within these entities. It aims to provide a working model to identify and understand who and how decisions are made within corporate innovation environments, and to suggest factors and influences involved in the decision making process.

The theory is outlined through an iterative diagrammatic model in Chapter 5, designed to demonstrate how different tools and factors come into play to fully realise the phenomenon of Innovation Gatekeeping. Ultimately, it aims to challenge the thinking of innovation methods in society, and questions where the responsibility for product innovation should sit; is it the domain of private entities, or does it belong to the world around them?

1.1 Background to the Research

Taking into account the investment made by private enterprise into research and development efforts (Cornell University, INSEAD, & WIPO, 2021), the significance of private enterprises' role in innovation can be viewed as substantial; as the primary source of investment in research and development, they are responsible for the majority of products and services worldwide. The implication of this spans beyond just the latest iPhone or newest Television, but rather extends to global economic growth, job creation in specific markets and regions, and overall societal well-being, where products and services are derived based on the needs of the people in a specific locale (Kerr & Nanda, 2017). Simultaneously, these entities drive the individual successes of those responsible for their creations; the domain of private enterprise is predominantly to return profit to investors, not to make the world a better place (Jensen, 1994).

Current research on how innovation works in practice is fragmented. Studies have focused on broader areas of innovation practices, like problem-solving methods, or implementation strategies (Crossan & Apadydin, 2010), There are plenty of theories proposing the best idea selection methods (Tuertscher et al., 2016; Vanhaverbeke et al., 2012; Mustar et al., 2014), What is unclear is how these processes are applied within organisations. An attempt to investigate the subject by the author found a paucity
of research that examines the real-world implementation of the early stages of innovation, particularly surrounding the selection of projects to fund and explore. This lack of understanding hasn't gone unnoticed, and is one of the factors that has led to scepticism and distrust towards innovation processes by the general public (Fichman, 2001), with the potential to slow, or even halt, the adoption of new innovations (Rogers, 2003). There are concerns about corporates as bad actors (Gina & Ariely, 2012), for example, there is a perception of "big pharma", or other industries where R&D is commonly seen as a force for corporate greed and societal destruction. This gap in the existing literature only exacerbates this perception, and highlights the need for more research into the process of corporate innovation.

It is this debate, whether there should be clarity on this process, or if it should remain the domain of corporate leadership, that is central to this research. Should we focus on transparency and inclusivity in research, or should we revert to industry and trade secrets? This debate proposes that the absence of clear and accepted criteria for accepting and progressing with innovation projects has, and continues to, overemphasise market factors, and side-lines societal and environmental issues as being of lesser importance (Stilgoe,

Owen, & Macnaghten, 2013). Further to this, researchers have started to question how positions of power, and power dynamics, shape such innovation decisions.

To understand how this happens, and what is occurring within these companies, I aim to use a hybrid of new and novel research, as well as a foundation of understanding that has developed over my own career, to better inform the insights produced within this study. From my own personal experience, a recurring observation has been the significant influence exerted by a select group of individuals at the helm of these organisations. These individuals, often holding senior positions, come with their own set of agendas, biases, and perspectives. Their decisions, consciously or unconsciously, shape the innovation trajectory of the entire organisation. For many innovation practitioners, including myself, navigating this landscape becomes a challenge. The desire to bring forth genuine, ground-breaking ideas often clashes with the need to align with the vision and preferences of these influential figures.

This phenomenon isn't isolated to my experiences alone. Conversations with peers and colleagues have revealed a shared sentiment: a feeling of being at the mercy of a few, with innovation efforts sometimes being redirected, reshaped, or even shelved based on the whims and preferences of those at the top. This dynamic raises several pertinent questions. What drives these influential figures to make certain decisions over others? Is it purely profit-driven, or are there underlying biases, past experiences, or even fears at play? And more importantly, how does this hierarchical decision-making impact the overall innovation culture within an organisation?

The answers to these questions are complex and multifaceted. While some leaders may genuinely believe in their vision and direction for innovation, others might be influenced by external pressures, such as shareholder expectations or market competition. Additionally, personal experiences, past successes or failures, and even educational background can potentially play a role in shaping their decision-making process. For innovation practitioners, understanding these dynamics is crucial. It not only helps in aligning their efforts with the organisation's direction but also in advocating for their ideas more effectively. This context influenced and helped to define the research problem and subsequent questions.

1.2 Refining the Research Problem

To summarise, with the background and personal perspective of the researcher in mind, this thesis aims to address a problem understanding who and how innovation decisions are made. This problem can be encapsulated in three layers:

1. ***Current State of R&D Spending and the Role of Corporates***
   While studies vary in the exact percentage, most point to around 75% of the total investment in research and development (R&D) comes from the private sector (Cornell University, INSEAD, & WIPO, 2021).

2. ***Understanding Where Ideas Come From and How They are Validated***
   Given how deeply ingrained such processes are in every day of our lives, there exists a substantial body of work that helps us understand this process, and guides us to make decisions based on this. However, understanding how private companies decide to build and develop the products and services they launch remains a "black box" of mystery, specifically, we still don't fully understand the practical reality of how and why innovation projects are chosen, and what factors govern these choices.

3. ***The People Responsible for the Process of Innovation***
   The processes by which these entities, and subsequently the teams they employ to manage and execute their innovation efforts, identify the problems to solve, or the opportunities to explore, remain unexplored, and instead rely on the assumption that private enterprise is simply following "best practice" recommendations (Dougherty, 1992; Ritala et al., 2020).

The selection of which idea to explore is central to the innovation process; addressing this lack of understanding is vital to helping us better understand how society is impacted by these decisions, and who is making them (Terwiesch & Ulrich, 2009), particularly where the "who" seems to be skewed to a particular demographic, which may or may not be representative of broader society. We are further challenged by the reality that this space is largely unregulated, and to do so can be seen as an affront to the principles of a market-driven economy and the nature by which our corporations are governed (Licht, 2005).

In summary, the problem statement addressed in this thesis is simplified as:

Corporate and private innovation significantly influences our societal landscape, dictating the products, services, and technologies that shape our daily experiences. Despite this profound impact, there is a lack of understanding about the mechanisms that govern how these entities select and prioritize their innovation projects, and who it is that drives this selection process. This gap in knowledge prevents us from comprehending the full implications of these innovation processes and restricts our ability to make informed decisions or suggest improvements. Most importantly, it hinders our capacity to guide these enterprises towards practices that better serve the broader community.

Emerging from this, there are two research questions which seek to refine the structure of the study, and limit the scope of how the data will be interpreted:

Research Question 1: *What factors influence the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects within corporate and private entities?*

Research Question 2: *How, and through whom, do these identified factors impact the innovation selection and prioritisation process?*

By addressing these questions, this study aims to shed light on the often opaque processes of corporate and private innovation. The findings will not only enhance our understanding of how innovation decisions are made but also provide valuable insights into how these processes can be improved to better serve the broader community.

Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a more transparent, inclusive, and socially conscious approach to innovation, starting with an understanding of what impacts the innovation process, and how these processes are undertaken within corporate and private entities.

1.3 Navigating the Thesis

Through the examination of real-world practice, and the analysis of existing knowledge in relation to corporate innovation, this research project seeks to bridge the gap between what is understood at an academic level, and what occurs in practice inside the innovation implementation process within corporate environments.

Initially, and to provide the reader with a frame of reference, Chapter 2 involves a foundational review of existing literature pertinent to the research questions; this exploration acknowledges the gap in existing understanding, and articulates the challenges in finding real-world examples. As a result, it discusses themes and concepts which occur within existing literature, however, makes it clear that such themes exist outside of the specific focus area of this study, and rather apply to corporate environments or projects as a whole. These themes form a basis of our understanding before the research process takes place.

Chapter 3 outlines the research process and presents the philosophical and methodological guidelines which underpin the research. Guided by constructivism, and the recognition that our understanding of reality is a socially constructed and subjective concept (Schwandt, 1994), the design of the research is outlined, discussing the use of the foundational literature review, and other tenets of grounded theory methodologies, as outlined by Glaser & Strauss (1967), before articulating the tools and methods deployed throughout the research to provide a rich understanding of both the approach and the associated reasoning.

Chapter 4 details the process of both the data capture and the analysis process; as the emergent nature of this study unfolds, the focus shifts from understanding the factors in idea selection, to better understanding the interplay between the individuals and groups within these environments. This chapter tells the story of the research, from the planning of the interviews themselves to the gradual refinement of the focus, and how the responses from interviews helped to frame and guide this evolution. It concludes with an articulation of the key elements which were identified and taken through to collectively form the emerging theory and core phenomenon, Innovation Gatekeeping.

Chapter 5 presents the details of Innovation Gatekeeping and its physical manifestations, including its influence on people, strategies, communication, and culture. A discussion of the concepts which inform this core phenomenon drives the core of this chapter, in an attempt to articulate the emergent theory, and a coupled diagrammatic model which helps to visualise the interplay of factors, and how they systematically contribute to the force of innovation gatekeeping.

Finally, in Chapter 6, the research is concluded with a reflection on insights, limitations, and the considerations of potential future implications for both research and innovation practitioners.

The research aims to equip the reader with a deeper and more enriched understanding of not only the process of innovation project selection and prioritisation, but to promote a further conversation as to how such factors impact the world around us, and what might be done to enhance and promote constructive innovation into the future.

CHAPTER 2 Literature Review

This chapter outlines the review undertaken of existing research that is relevant to the research question. An initial attempt reviewing existing literature on the real-world examples of the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects was largely unsuccessful due to an absence of studies. This gap in the research exists, or where research does exist it was unsuitable for our purposes, for three primary reasons:

a. Real-world innovation decision-making within corporations is often guarded as industry secrets or owned intellectual property. "Firms often keep the details of their innovation processes secret, both to protect their own investments in R&D and to maintain an edge in the competitive marketplace" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 129). This secrecy means that access to examples that enable an unbiased view of the practices which occur within these organisations is difficult to obtain, and little research on them exists.

b. Case studies that do exist consistently demonstrate outcomes that are intensely positive; I propose that such case studies are unusable for the purposes of this study due to the bias that likely exists therein. "Published cases of successful innovations in firms are likely to be systematically biased, as companies are more inclined to document and share their successes rather than their failures, and authors may be influenced by the companies that provide them with the case study data" (Vaccaro & Walrave, 2015).

c. Finally, any third-party case study found during the initial literature review was produced by a company that has a financial interest in presenting positive and best-practice-orientated case studies. "The potential for biases in the consulting research process, including case studies, is substantial, as management consulting firms may have vested interests in the success of the companies they work with, and they may present information in a way that highlights their own contributions and expertise" (Kipping & Armbrüster, 2002). Specifically, large consultancies which focus on implementing practices within organisations, produce studies that support their financial interests, rather than a real-world view of what occurs within the organisation.

To provide appropriate context, this foundational literature review focuses on both the current understanding of the processes involved in corporate innovation at a methodological level, such as ideation and idea selection, as well as factors known to influence the processes and systems within corporate entities, such as human factors and structures. Ultimately, this review provides the context through which a framework can be created in order to structure the collection of information, as well as a lens to better understand the findings themselves.

This chapter is divided into the key focus areas of understanding, which collectively provide an understanding of how the corporate innovation process works and inform the way in which the interpretation of the research will be conducted.

These Focus Areas are:

a) Corporate Innovation Teams
b) Ideation Methods
c) Corporate Structure and Cultures
d) Human Factors and Emotions
e) External Factors and Impacts

The literature itself makes many best-case assumptions about how corporate innovation functions, and how concepts are realised and selected within these environments.

2.1 Corporate Innovation Teams; A Contextual Overview

To better understand the complexities of the way corporate innovation works, the roles, structures, and general composition of innovation teams within these entities must first be understood. In best practice, teams are characterised by their diversity, comprising of members with large ranges of skill sets and levels of expertise. The primary function of these teams is to drive the organisational competitiveness in the market, and to drive growth for the company itself (Tidd & Bessant, 2013).

The function of these teams is to generate, evaluate, and implement new concepts, products, ideas, and commercial models, which then serve as the foundation for developing novel offerings which align with and further the objectives of the organisation (O'Connor et al., 2008). This continuous process of conceptualisation and delivery showcases the

dynamism of innovation within these corporations, and the iterative process through which the innovation team must deliver its outputs.

Within these teams, a wide range of functions are embedded to enable the creation of novel concepts; from technical experts and designers, to those who contribute through a knowledge base unique to a particular function or market requirement (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997). These teams are then instructed and guided by individuals who are external to the team itself, but who hold senior leadership positions within the organisation. They work to align the ideation and innovation processes and outputs with the broader organisational goals, and are responsible for facilitating the ideation process and aligning the outcomes with high-level strategy (Amabile et al., 1996).

Building on this structure, Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen (2009) propose an 'innovation engine', a structure where these different roles interact, combining the abilities of both disruptive innovators and operational managers. Through this interaction, it is supposed that the fostering of collaborative environments occurs, where the promotion of idea generation and implementation can be realised, and the focus is placed on mindsets which emphasise the value of innovative thinking over strictly defined roles.

The 'innovation engine' brings together a variety of roles which all individually contribute to the innovation process; Innovation Leaders, who oversee the innovation process in itself, Idea Generators, who creative drive the generation of new ideas, Technical Experts, who assess the feasibility and viability of a concept, Market Analysts, who understand market trends and can evaluate the potential desirability of a concept, and Project Managers, who oversee the implementation of concepts from an operational perspective. These roles within the engine are outlined in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2-1 Innovation Team Role Contribution

Role	**Contribution**
Idea Generators	Individuals responsible for creatively driving the generation of new ideas. Referencing: Amabile, T. M. (1983). *The social psychology of creativity*. Springer-Verlag.
Technical Experts	Professionals who assess the feasibility and viability of a concept from a technical standpoint. Referencing: Leonard-Barton, D. (1995). *Wellsprings of knowledge: Building and sustaining the sources of innovation*. Harvard Business School Press.
Market Analysts	Specialists who understand and evaluate market trends to determine the potential desirability of a concept. Referencing:

	Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2018). *Principles of marketing*. Pearson Education.
Project Managers	Individuals who oversee the operational implementation of concepts, ensuring timely and effective execution. Referencing: Kerzner, H. (2017). *Project management: A systems approach to planning, scheduling, and controlling*. John Wiley & Sons.

Idea generation lies at the beginning of the process which this research seeks to understand. In general, it involves the collective brainpower of a range of individuals within a corporation coming together to grow and form initiatives (Girotra, Terwiesch, & Ulrich, 2010). The landscape of how this process is undertaken within corporations varies dramatically, and is highly complex, shaped both by formal and informal mechanisms, as well as the diversity and construction of individuals participating in the process.

Key to the innovation process is how the process of identifying and selecting problems or opportunities to address, which subsequently become innovation projects, comes to be (Kijkuit & Van den Ende, 2007). The majority of research in this space focuses on either the *theory* of best-practice ways to approach this, or further understanding of the innovation phases post the selection process, in particular the process of creative ideation, the development of innovation projects, and their subsequent implementation (Tidd & Bessant, 2013), and so the understanding of how it functions is limited.

A consistent theme in existing literature regarding project selection is the dynamism of innovation. Dorst (2011) emphasises the importance of problem framing and argues that all innovation must start with a well-defined and framed problem, which then guides the subsequent ideation and development of the idea. This notion of problem framing supports the idea that corporate innovation teams must consistently, and dynamically, reframe and reinterpret the problems that they face, taking into account the changing factors that impact the problem they are attempting to solve (Teece, 2007). This suggests that an organisation's ability to adapt to change, both in the internal environment of the organisation and in response to external environmental changes, is crucial to the way problems are selected.

2.2 Ideation Methods

Innovation thrives on the collective genius of individuals, their interactions, and the mechanisms that facilitate the birth and nurturing of ideas. These mechanisms, whether structured or spontaneous, play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of innovation within

organisations channelling the raw energy of creativity into tangible outcomes that can redefine industries and even societies.

Ideation mechanisms can broadly be categorized into formal and informal. While formal mechanisms provide a structured environment for idea generation, ensuring consistency and volume, informal mechanisms thrive on spontaneity and the serendipitous fusion of diverse thoughts. Both, however, are integral to the innovation ecosystem, each complementing the other, ensuring a holistic approach to idea generation.

2.2.1 Formal Mechanisms

Formal ideation mechanisms, as the name suggests, are structured approaches to idea generation. These mechanisms are often employed by organisations to systematically harness the creative potential of their employees and stakeholders.

Bjork et al. (2010) outline the formal use of structured ideation, encompassing mechanisms such as brainstorming, workshopping, and innovation labs. These environments, by design, provide controlled settings for idea production. While they are effective in generating high volumes of ideas, not all of which are equal. For example, Bjork et al. (2010) observed a significant variance in the quality of these ideas. One of the reasons cited is the phenomenon of "groupthink", where conformity in such sessions can stifle creativity and lead to homogenized outcomes.

Paulus and Brown (2007) delved deeper into the dynamics of group creativity. Their findings suggest that while individual brainstorming sessions tend to produce more unique ideas, group sessions excel in refining and building upon initial concepts. This collaborative enhancement is a testament to the collective intelligence of groups, where diverse perspectives can amalgamate to produce richer, more nuanced solutions.

Diverging from these findings, Osborn (1957), the originator of the brainstorming concept, emphasized the importance of withholding criticism during brainstorming to foster a free flow of ideas. He argued that in the absence of judgment, participants are more likely to share wild, unconventional ideas, which might lead to breakthrough innovations.

Another formal mechanism worth noting is the Delphi method. Developed by the RAND Corporation in the 1950s, this iterative method involves a panel of experts who anonymously reply to questionnaires and subsequently receive feedback in the form of a statistical

representation of the "group response." The goal is to reduce the range of responses and arrive at something closer to expert consensus (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The Delphi method's structured approach ensures that every expert's opinion is considered, reducing the influence of dominant personalities that might overshadow quieter voices in traditional group settings.

2.2.2 Informal Mechanisms

Informal ideation mechanisms, in contrast to their formal counterparts, thrive in less structured environments. They often emerge spontaneously, driven by interactions, experiences, and stimuli that aren't pre-planned or orchestrated by the organisation.

Backman et al. (2007) explored the dynamism of informal ideation, emphasizing its potential to yield both high-quality and unplanned ideas. They noted that the environmental, temporal, and social contexts of interactions significantly influence the flow and fusion of ideas. For instance, a casual conversation by the water cooler or a serendipitous encounter in a hallway can spark innovative thoughts that might not emerge in a formal setting.

Such informal interactions are often fuelled by diverse teams. According to Phillips (2014), diverse teams, when managed well, can lead to enhanced creativity and innovation. The varied backgrounds and experiences of team members can lead to a richer pool of ideas, which can be especially valuable in the informal ideation process. Interestingly, work using computational simulations suggests that diversity can impact both idea generation and creative efficiency and indicates that some members of an innovation team should specialize in generating radical ideas, whilst the rest focus on taking those ideas on board and making improvements, combinations, and extensions (Connor & Sosa, 2018).

Moreover, the role of external stimuli, such as attending conferences, reading diverse literature, or even personal hobbies, can't be understated. Dyer, Gregersen, & Christensen (2009) in their work highlighted how innovators actively seek out diverse experiences to stimulate their thinking.

However, for these informal mechanisms to truly flourish, a conducive organisational culture is paramount. Edmondson (1999) emphasized the importance of psychological safety, where employees feel secure in sharing their ideas without fear of ridicule or reprisal. In such environments, employees are more likely to share, leading to a richer tapestry of ideas.

Furthermore, Grant and Berry (2011) discussed the concept of "idea scouts" and "idea connectors." While scouts bring external ideas into the firm, connectors play a crucial role in the informal mechanism by linking ideas together, often from different domains, leading to innovative solutions.

Lastly, the role of serendipity in innovation is noteworthy. Roberts (1989) discussed how unplanned, serendipitous events have led to some of history's most ground-breaking innovations. Encouraging an environment where such serendipitous interactions can occur can be a potent tool for organisations.

2.3 Corporate Culture and Structures

How the organisation adapts to the changing nature of culture and society around it presents the idea of diversity within the corporate environment, specifically the diversity of individuals it engages within innovation processes, and the role interdisciplinarity plays explicitly within the initial phases of innovation projects. Andriopoulos & Lewis (2009) propose that because of how complex problems are that are dealt with by innovation teams, there is an inherent need for the integration of diversity in both perspective and expertise required to select and ideate successful solutions. Such teams are evidenced both as cross-functional, or simply collaborative networks, which allow for the process to benefit from this broader range of knowledge and experience (Bresman & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2013). While this proposes other challenges within itself (communication, culture, prioritisation, etc), this remains a key component of the successful selection of innovation projects.

Company culture is, of course, broader than the diversity that exists within it. Schein (2010) proposes that sharing key values, beliefs, and norms within the organisation helps to shape the types of problems that result in successful progression, and likewise, the criteria that are used to make those selections. The implication of this is that there is pressure on organisational culture to ensure the right problems and opportunities are selected by these teams. A key factor influencing this cultural dynamic is external factors, which will be discussed later. Pressures from competition, regulation, or other external dynamics can impact both the culture of the environment and ultimately the metrics used to select and progress with innovation projects (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996).

The organisation's adaptability is tied to the way in which it deploys cognitive processes within idea selection. Schon (1983) suggests that identifying problems or opportunities is a reflective process, which means the organisation must be able to make sense of the world

around it, as well as to instinctively recognise opportunities and patterns which emerge from it. This suggests that the nature of the organisation plays an important role in the successful identification of projects to pursue. It requires those involved in the innovation process to be encouraged to critically examine ideas, and be comfortable with the changing nature of the innovation project (Nonaka & Takeichi, 1995). Evidence suggests that this is based on the organisation's ability to foster the right learning environment for this thinking to occur and also on the individual's ability to adapt or enhance their cognitive processes to perform this way (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

Separate from the way in which ideas are selected for progression in innovation environments are the criteria that are used to guide this problem selection. Existing literature focuses on this from a high-level organisation view, and the way projects within the organisation are selected (Cooper, 2008; Martinsuo & Poskela, 2011). Therefore, this view serves as a guide for potential areas where the specifics of innovation problem selection may align with the goals of the broader organisation.

The short-term vs. long-term considerations made when assessing the viability of a project are most prevalent. This navigation of trade-offs between short-term needs, like revenue generation, and external market pressures, are consistently balanced with longer-term strategic goals (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). It is in this longer-term realm that innovation projects play, often being aligned to sustainable growth objectives or market differentiation.

This tension is exacerbated by opposing interests from stakeholders engaged in the innovation process. Different stakeholders have different alignments when it comes to their objectives, driven by either the interests of their individual roles or by the function they are assigned (Mintzberg, 1983). While at a broad level, an organisation might be committed at a surface level to a particular ethical or environmental alignment (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Schilling, 2019), there may exist opposing and overpowering objectives which overwhelm any explicit criteria for problem selection that was previously agreed.

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When considering these drivers, it is logical to consider the appetite for risk that the organisation, and its key decision-makers, have towards innovation in general. The impact this has on the criteria used to select projects can be explicit, in the form of financial goals or limits, or implicit, in the tone and culture that surrounds the criteria itself. Ultimately there is a consistent battle to weigh the benefits of innovation, against the risks of failure (Knight, 1921). It's possible that this can be counter-balanced through the implementation of learning-orientated cultural practices. Senge (1990) suggests that the adoption of growth, knowledge acquisition, and skill development learning opportunities within all levels of organisations can help to create a common understanding regarding risk and reward acceptance.

The context and culture of organisations has already begun to be discussed. However, when viewed as an isolated theme, it is worth highlighting the vast amount of research that exists that alludes to its role in shaping the innovation process in corporate entities (Bessant & Tidd, 2007; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). Most prominently, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the theme of leadership in shaping these innovation decisions is seen as being critical to the type of outcomes produced; ultimately it is suggested that leadership is one of the most critical elements of organisational culture that impacts innovation decision-making (Bryant, 2003).

At a broad level, the type of leadership will ultimately impact the environment in which innovation is undertaken, and the freedom of which innovation decision-making is explored. A supportive environment delivered through openness, collaboration, and positivity towards risk generally leads to inherently better decisions in this space (Mumford et al., 2002). While conversely, environments shaped by low-risk appetites and scrutiny tend to squash innovation attempts, which lead not to the eradication of innovation projects, but rather to the results of those efforts being mediocre (Amabile et al., 1996).

This leadership style ultimately further impacts the way an organisation structures its norms and values (Schein, 1985). These shared belief systems have the potential to influence the types of projects which are selected, and the subsequent criteria used to prioritise, innovation projects (Schein, 2010). Martins & Terblanche (2003) talk about risk-norm vs. risk-averse cultures, and the subsequent outputs resulting in a higher probability of success with lower rewards and impact, and to the latter, the pursuit of ambitious and disruptive ideas with higher impact potential.

The type of leadership, and how it impacts the degree of centralisation, decentralisation, and formalisation within the organisation can similarly change the way in which information, and subsequently innovation projects and opportunities, are framed between stakeholders (Damanpour, 1991). Within a highly centralised structure, top-down decision-making is seen, limiting the diversity of ideas, and hindering the engagement of other stakeholders within the idea selection process. It is logical to assume that a decentralised structure would then provide the optimum environment for the free exchange of ideas and improved innovation. However, there is an argument supporting the balance between these two extremes as being critical to avoiding a lack of coordination and inefficiency when it comes to ambiguous projects (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Factors exist at a broader organisational context level that, while not controlled by the culture of the business, in turn, shape it and impact the way it approaches projects. Industry dynamics, competitive pressures, and regulation show up in the literature as examples of this (Porter, 1980). They both serve to constrain and enable specific opportunities or challenges within an organisation or industry (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). This balance emphasises the interplay between the internal cultural factors that impact research, as well as the external context in which it operates. Companies that operate in highly regulated industries might simply need to prioritise and form criteria that focus on compliance, or government requests, without the freedom to explore emerging opportunities or respond to threats in the same way that other industries experience.

2.4 Humans and Emotions within Corporate Innovation

Innovation, at its core, is a human endeavour. While processes, technologies, and strategies play pivotal roles in driving innovation forward, it is the human element that breathes life into these mechanisms. The intricate interplay of individual cognition, emotions, biases, and interpersonal dynamics shapes the trajectory of innovative efforts within organisations. Recognising and understanding these human factors is paramount, not just for the sake of

academic exploration, but to harness their potential and navigate their challenges in real-world innovation environments.

The subsequent sections delve into the multifaceted dimensions of human factors in innovation. From personal preferences and intuitive decision-making to the subtle yet profound influences of cognitive biases, this exploration seeks to shed light on the often-underestimated human variables that can make or break innovative endeavours. By understanding these factors, organisations and innovation practitioners can better position themselves to foster environments where human potential is realized, biases are acknowledged and managed, and genuine ground-breaking innovation can flourish.

2.4.1 Human Factors

No environment is immune to the impact of humans, and the factors driven by their personal preferences, intuition, and passions. Huy (2002) suggests that these personal factors significantly shape the selection, and ultimately the success or failure, of projects within innovation environments. These factors directly influence the ideation process, by impacting both the diversity, and the quality of the ideas generated throughout (Paulus & Yang, 2000).

Innovation is inherently a human-centric process. As highlighted by Amabile (1988), individual creativity is the cornerstone of organisational innovation. The interplay of cognitive, social, and environmental factors shapes the innovative potential of individuals. The diversity of thought, stemming from varied experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives, can be a potent catalyst for breakthrough ideas. However, this diversity can also lead to conflicts, especially in teams where individuals hold strong, differing opinions (Nemeth, 1986).

Furthermore, the motivation behind innovation varies among individuals. While some are driven by intrinsic motivation, finding joy in the act of creation itself, others might be propelled by extrinsic rewards such as recognition, promotions, or monetary incentives (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This dichotomy can influence the nature and direction of innovative endeavours within organisations.

2.4.2 Intuition and Decision Making

The role of intuition in decision-making cannot be understated. Simon (1987) posits that individuals often rely on their "gut feelings" or heuristics when making decisions, especially in complex environments where information is abundant but not always clear. This aligns

with Klein's 'Recognition Primed Decision" model (1993), which suggests that individuals make rapid decisions based on their intuitive recognition of patterns and situations around them. Within the context of a corporate innovation environment, the intuition participants bring heavily influences project selection and the culture surrounding a particular idea.

Intuition, often seen as the antithesis of logical reasoning, has its roots in experiential learning. It's the culmination of tacit knowledge acquired over time, which might not always be consciously accessible (Polanyi, 1966). In the realm of innovation, where ambiguity is a constant companion, relying on intuition can sometimes lead to breakthroughs that logical reasoning might miss. However, unchecked intuition can also lead to pitfalls, especially when it's influenced by cognitive biases.

Moreover, the balance between intuition and analytical reasoning is crucial. While intuition can provide rapid insights, especially in familiar terrains, analytical reasoning ensures that decisions are grounded in data and logic. Dijksterhuis et al. (2006) suggest that for complex decisions, a period of unconscious thought or "sleeping on it" can lead to better outcomes than immediate conscious analysis.

2.4.3 Power Dynamics and Hierarchical Influence

Structures and hierarchy add further dimensions to the interplay of human factors. The biases of decision-makers, especially those at higher echelons, can significantly influence the direction of projects. This can lead to the suppression of novel ideas in favour of those that align with the prevailing organisational culture or the personal biases of those in power (Pfeffer, 1992). Such power dynamics can stifle creativity and lead to a culture of conformity, where innovative ideas are side-lined in favour of "safe" projects that align with the status quo.

Organisational hierarchies, while essential for maintaining order and clarity of roles, can sometimes act as barriers to free-flowing communication. Ideas from lower rungs might not reach the decision-makers if there's no culture of open communication (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). This hierarchical barrier can lead to a phenomenon termed as "pluralistic ignorance," where individuals believe their opinions are in the minority and hence refrain from voicing them, even if they hold the majority view.

Furthermore, power dynamics can also influence the risk appetite of an organisation. Leaders in power, especially those who have been at the helm for extended periods, might

become risk-averse, preferring incremental innovations over radical ones (March, 1991). This can lead to organisations becoming stagnant, and missing out on transformative opportunities.

2.4.4 Cognitive Biases in Innovation

Cognitive biases play a pivotal role in shaping the decision-making processes within innovation environments. These biases, such as confirmation bias, anchoring, or the sunk-cost fallacy, all play a very visible role in the selection process (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). They, in turn, skew outcomes of any defined project selection process by influencing how the individuals involved perceive and evaluate the information they're presented with, which can shape the wider team and organisations decision-making (Nutt, 1998).

The realm of innovation is rife with uncertainties. In such environments, individuals often resort to cognitive shortcuts or heuristics to simplify complex decision-making processes. While these shortcuts can expedite decisions, they can also lead to systematic errors or biases. For instance, the confirmation bias, where individuals tend to favour information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs, can lead to tunnel vision, side-lining potentially disruptive ideas that don't align with the prevailing mindset (Nickerson, 1998).

Another prevalent bias in innovation environments is the sunk-cost fallacy. Here, individuals or teams continue to invest in projects based on the amount already invested, rather than the future value of the project. This can lead to the perpetuation of projects that have little to no viability, simply because of the reluctance to write off previous investments (Arkes & Blumer, 1985).

The overconfidence bias, where individuals tend to overestimate their ability and the accuracy of the predictions they make, contributes to unrealistic project expectations and outcomes (Moore & Healy, 2008). This overestimation can lead to overly ambitious projects that lack a solid foundation or feasibility.

Similarly, the availability heuristic, which relies on immediate examples that come to mind when evaluating a decision, can limit the scope of ideas considered during ideation phases. This bias stems from our tendency to weigh recent information more heavily than older, potentially more relevant data. In the context of innovation, this can lead to a focus on "trending" ideas while overlooking foundational concepts that might have longer-term potential (Schwarz et al., 1991).

2.5 Outside the Organisation; External Factors to Corporate Innovation

External factors are elements such as market trends, customer needs, or environmental challenges, all of which have the potential to shape the way problems and projects are selected within innovation teams (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Logically, these factors contribute to the shaping of the priorities and focus of these teams and steer the types of problems that they seek to solve.

2.5.1 Market Dynamics and Customer Needs

In the ever-evolving landscape of business, understanding market dynamics is paramount. These dynamics, which encompass shifts in consumer behaviour, technological advancements, and global economic trends, serve as a compass for organisations navigating the complex waters of innovation. As markets transform, so do the opportunities and challenges they present. Organisations that can adeptly read and respond to these shifts position themselves at the forefront of their industries (Porter, 1980).

Consumer behaviour, in particular, is a critical facet of market dynamics. With the digital revolution, consumers today are more informed, connected, and empowered than ever before. They have access to a wealth of information at their fingertips, enabling them to make more informed purchasing decisions. This shift has led to a rise in consumer expectations. They demand more personalized, convenient, and value-driven products and services. Organisations that can tap into these evolving needs and preferences, leveraging data analytics and consumer insights, can craft more targeted and effective innovation strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Technological advancements further compound the complexity of market dynamics. Breakthroughs in fields like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and renewable energy are continually reshaping industries. These advancements open doors to new market segments, business models, and value propositions. However, they also bring about disruptions, rendering obsolete traditional business practices. For organisations, staying abreast of these technological shifts is not just beneficial—it's imperative. Embracing a culture of continuous learning and adaptability ensures they harness the potential of new technologies while mitigating associated risks (Christensen, 1997).

Lastly, global economic trends play a pivotal role in shaping market dynamics. Factors such as geopolitical tensions, trade policies, and currency fluctuations can have profound impacts on markets. For multinational corporations, understanding these macroeconomic factors is crucial. It informs their global expansion strategies, supply chain decisions, and risk management practices. In an interconnected global economy, a ripple in one market can create waves in another. Thus, a holistic understanding of global economic trends, coupled with agility, positions organisations to capitalize on emerging market opportunities while safeguarding against potential downturns (Yip, 2003).

2.5.2 Competitor Landscape

In the realm of innovation, understanding the competitor landscape is not just about identifying who the competitors are, but also about discerning their strategies, strengths, weaknesses, and potential moves. This knowledge provides a strategic advantage, allowing organisations to anticipate market shifts and adjust their innovation strategies accordingly (Porter, 1979).

One of the primary aspects of the competitor landscape is the identification of direct and indirect competitors. While direct competitors offer similar products or services and target the same customer base, indirect competitors might satisfy the same customer need but through different means. Recognizing the nuances between these competitors helps organisations tailor their innovation efforts more effectively, ensuring they address genuine market gaps (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Furthermore, the rise of disruptive innovations has made it imperative for organisations to keep an eye on start-ups and smaller players, not just the established giants. These smaller entities, often unburdened by legacy systems and traditional hierarchies, can pivot quickly and bring ground-breaking solutions to the market. Their agility and risk-taking propensity make them formidable competitors, capable of reshaping entire industries (Christensen & Raynor, 2003).

Another critical aspect of understanding the competitor landscape is analysing their value propositions. What unique benefits do they offer? How do they differentiate themselves in the market? Answering these questions provides insights into potential areas of differentiation and innovation. It also helps in identifying potential collaboration or partnership opportunities, where synergies between competitors can lead to mutual benefits (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996).

Lastly, competitor benchmarking is an invaluable tool in this analysis. By comparing key performance indicators, best practices, and innovation strategies, organisations can identify areas of improvement and potential threats. This benchmarking not only provides a clearer picture of where an organisation stands in the competitive landscape but also offers actionable insights to drive future innovation efforts (Kerzner, 2017).

2.5.3 Socio-Environmental Challenges

In today's interconnected global landscape, socio-environmental challenges are at the forefront of many innovation agendas. These challenges, ranging from climate change and resource scarcity to social inequality and health crises, have profound implications for businesses and societies alike (Sachs, 2015).

Climate change, for instance, is not just an environmental issue but a complex socio-economic challenge. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and shifting agricultural patterns affect communities and economies worldwide. For businesses, this translates into disrupted supply chains, changing consumer preferences, and new regulatory landscapes. Innovating in response to these challenges is not just about corporate responsibility but also about long-term sustainability and profitability (Hart & Milstein, 2003).

Similarly, issues like water scarcity or deforestation have cascading effects on industries, from agriculture and manufacturing to tourism. Companies are now recognizing the need to innovate in water-saving technologies, sustainable agriculture practices, and circular economy models. Such innovations not only address environmental challenges but also tap into new market opportunities and enhance brand reputation (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

On the social front, challenges like urbanisation, aging populations, and health crises necessitate innovations in infrastructure, healthcare, and service delivery. For instance, the rapid urban growth in many developing nations calls for sustainable housing, transportation, and waste management solutions. Companies that can innovate in these areas stand to benefit from significant market opportunities while also contributing positively to societal well-being (Yunus, Moingeon, & Lehmann-Ortega, 2010).

Moreover, the rise of socially conscious consumers has made socio-environmental innovation a competitive imperative. Consumers today are more informed and discerning, often preferring brands that align with their values and demonstrate a genuine commitment

to addressing global challenges. This consumer shift is driving companies to embed sustainability and social responsibility into their core innovation strategies, rather than treating them as peripheral CSR initiatives (Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006).

In conclusion, socio-environmental challenges present both risks and opportunities for businesses. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach to innovation, one that considers not just economic returns but also societal and environmental impacts. Companies that can navigate this complex landscape effectively will be better positioned for long-term success and resilience in a rapidly changing world (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011).

2.6 Summary

Innovation, as a multifaceted process, is deeply rooted in a confluence of factors that span across individual, organisational, and external realms. Our exploration of the foundational literature has provided a comprehensive understanding of these factors, setting the stage for the subsequent research chapters.

Individual Factors: At the heart of innovation lie human emotions, cognitive biases, and personal experiences. As Huy (2002) and Goleman (1995) elucidated, the personal affinities, emotional intelligence, and intuitive decision-making of individuals play pivotal roles in shaping the innovation landscape. These elements, while often subtle, have profound implications on the ideation, selection, and execution of innovative projects.

Organisational Dynamics: Beyond the individual lies the intricate web of organisational structures and hierarchies. As Gupta et al. (2004) and Amabile et al. (1996) highlighted, power dynamics, decision-making biases, and the perceived fairness of processes can either foster or stifle innovation. The culture of an organisation, characterized by open communication, trust, and psychological safety, is paramount in nurturing or hindering innovative endeavours.

External Forces: The broader environment in which organisations operate exerts significant influence on their innovation trajectories. Market dynamics, customer needs, competitor landscapes, and socio-environmental challenges, as discussed by Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) and Sachs (2015), provide both opportunities and constraints. Navigating these forces requires a delicate balance of adaptability, foresight, and strategic alignment.

Formal and Informal Ideation Mechanisms: The literature underscores the importance of both structured and spontaneous approaches to ideation. While formal mechanisms like brainstorming sessions and innovation labs offer controlled environments for idea generation, informal interactions, spurred by serendipity and external stimuli, can yield unexpected yet valuable insights (Bjork et al., 2010; Backman et al., 2007).

In synthesizing these insights, it becomes evident that innovation is not a linear or isolated process. It is a dynamic interplay of factors, each influencing and being influenced by the other. As we transition into the subsequent chapters, it's crucial to bear in mind this holistic perspective. The foundational literature serves as a lens through which we can critically examine, understand, and contribute to the broader discourse on innovation.

This summary aims to distil the essence of our extensive literature review, providing readers with a concise yet comprehensive understanding to carry forward. As we delve deeper into the research, these foundational insights will serve as touchstones, guiding our exploration and enriching our interpretations.

CHAPTER 3 Research Methodology & Design

The following chapter articulates both the methodology and philosophical approaches taken to the research, as well as the resulting research and analysis design, which collectively underpin the study.

This chapter initially covers the contextual background to the research, acknowledging that the need for the study was born from both the personal observations of the researcher through their professional engagement within corporate innovation environments, and from wider conversations within the industry. This presents a framing of the research objective, which outlines the need to understand the factors at play within the process of selecting and prioritising innovation ideas and projects within corporate environments. The discussion within this chapter outlines this objective in detail and acknowledges the areas of focus as well as the areas out of scope for this conversation.

The philosophical approach is outlined, having been guided by constructivism, and the recognition that our understanding of reality is a socially constructed and subjective concept (Schwandt, 1994). This has informed the selection of research methods and tools, as well as the analysis undertaken of the data collected. The design of the research is then outlined, discussing the use of foundational literature reviews, and other tenets of grounded theory methodologies, as outlined by Glaser & Strauss (1967). This approach has been chosen for, in part, its ability to enable the emergence of knowledge within complex environments and to assist with the detachments of inherent biases the researcher may have in relation to the field of study.

This discussion acknowledges the inherent complexities of the environment the study is conducted within and guides the reader through the process of designing the research in a way that both addresses the complexities while acknowledging the inherent limitations of the ability to access and collect data within the environment. The reader should conclude this chapter with an understanding of the intended plan for the collection and analysis of data, and an understanding of the philosophical lens through which this research was undertaken.

As discussed, the initial research investigation exposed a gap in the literature, where such examples either didn’t exist or were unable to be utilised for two primary reasons:

a) Much of the literature related to real-world corporate environment innovation projects, where usable case studies could be extracted, was authored by corporations themselves, or by third parties with a vested interest in the corporation's performance. This raised concerns regarding the viability of the information and likewise was lacking in raw accounts of the process of selecting and prioritising ideas. Apprehensions around such works and literature are reflected in works by Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2017), who both discuss the limitations of such research where vested interest is involved.

b) A vast body of research exists which discusses the processes and practices which can be employed to identify or prioritise new ideas within corporate environments (Teece, 2018; CITE), which outline best-practice methods and study the limitations or benefits of various techniques. However, these resources failed to delve into the practical realities of such implementations and lacked the benefit of focusing solely on the dynamics involved in the process as it occurs in corporate settings.

Through these observations, a necessity to re-evaluate the research methods selected emerged, as well as a requirement to treat the literature review as foundational, rather than systematic. This transition aimed to better understand what factors had already been observed as being impactful in other areas of corporate innovation environments, and use these to ground the research in existing knowledge and understanding; already this hinted at the emergence of a constructive philosophical orientation, acknowledging the necessity of understanding the current body of knowledge and the context of its exploration within the domain of the study (Bryman, 2016).

3.1 Research Objective

This research aims to identify and understand the factors involved throughout the process of selecting and prioritising ideas and projects within corporate innovation teams, and to understand how these factors influence this process. The objective is to identify any phenomena regarding the individuals involved with the innovation process, and their impact on corporate innovation teams procedures for choosing and progressing ideas.

As discussed in Chapter Two, and from the personal observations outlined earlier in this thesis, the need for this research stems from the observed gap in the existing literature. While the macro-level factors involved in ideation processes within corporate innovation environments have been extensively covered, there is a lack of depth in understanding the

micro-level processes regarding human interactions within the corporate innovation process, specifically in regards to the selection and prioritisation of these ideas.

To achieve this objective, the study is guided by the central questions:

a) What factors influence the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects within corporate and private entities?

b) How, and through whom, do these identified factors impact the innovation selection and prioritisation process?

These questions aim not only to identify the factors themselves, but attempt to elucidate the way in which these factors impact the selection and prioritisation of ideas within the innovation process. This entails the roles, behaviours, attitudes, and interactions of these individuals, and subsequently how these elements come together to shape the process itself.

While the research attempts to uncover these factors and the potential implications they have, it stops short of providing any concrete solutions or propose methods to address any implications identified. Instead, it attempts to present a comprehensive understanding of the identified phenomena related to the interpersonal dynamics of the innovation process. It aims to lay the foundation for any future research to build intervention or enhancement strategies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of innovation within corporate environments.

This emphasis doesn't by any means attempt to overlook or undermine the importance of wider systemic factors, such as the financial resource available to an organisation, the market trends within the industry, or the broader socio-economic conditions in which the organisation is operating. Rather it focuses on the overlooked aspect of the idea selection and prioritisation process, the micro-level human and organisational dynamics which shape the day-to-day of how ideas are selected and prioritised.

The research is underpinned by a thorough methodological approach which incorporates insights from the foundational literature review, and conforms to the philosophical guidelines outlined in this chapter. It does however allow for the scope of evolution of design, given the grounded nature of the philosophical approach. This design aims to produce findings which will contribute to both the scholarly, and operational conversations regarding corporate

innovation, offering both practical insight and a platform for future research regarding the selection and prioritisation of ideas within corporate innovation teams. Figure 3-1 outlines this process by way of a diagrammatic representation.

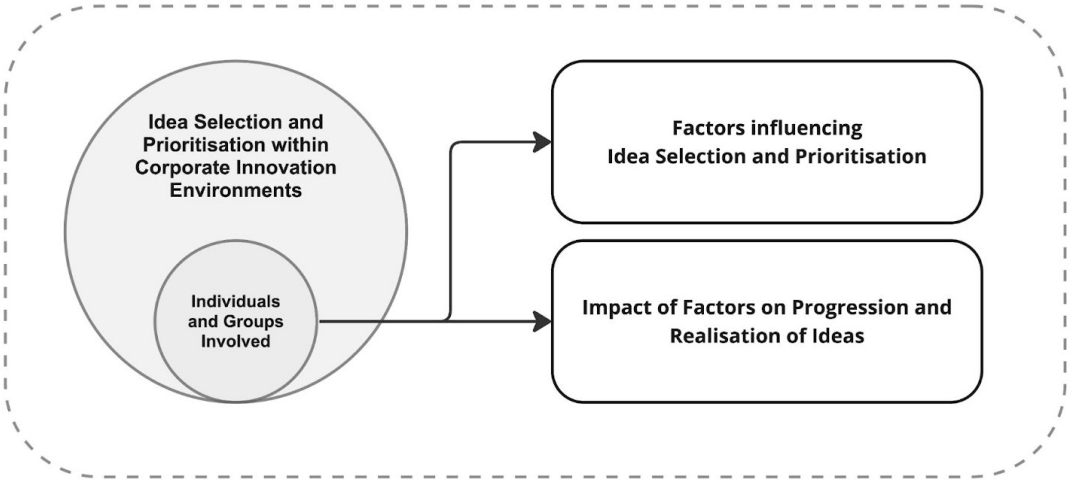

Figure 3-1 Scope of the Research Project Representation

3.2 Philosophical Approach

The research philosophy forms the basis and foundation of any study and gives us insight into the perspectives and beliefs which guide the researchers, and the research process (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015). Ultimately, it informs and outlines the lens through which the nature of reality (ontology), the nature and acquisition of knowledge (epistemology), and the research design itself, should be viewed (Creswell & Poth, 2017). By explaining this, the intent is to enhance the trustworthiness of this work, as well as to understand how these factors informed the way in which the study was designed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016).

Figure 3-2 helps to illustrate the philosophical approach to this thesis and details the building blocks through which the approach was developed. Saunders' model does not include constructivism as research philosophy, and indeed there is a vast interpretation of notions such as constructivism, realism, positivism, objectivism, and how they relate to paradigms, philosophies and so forth. This research does not enter this debate, but takes a simplistic view that philosophies and paradigms are broadly interchangeable and as such constructivism could be located in Saunders' model.

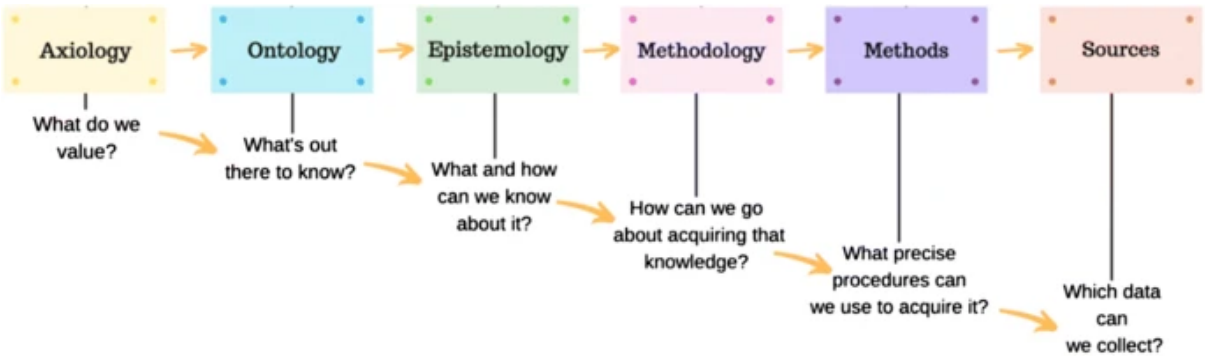

Figure 3-2 Adaptation of Grix's paradigmatic building blocks (Brown & Duenas, 2020)

By its nature, this research is inductive in the sense that it sets out to explore an issue to discover a potential truth rather than attempting to prove an established hypothesis. Initially the axiology and ontology of the work is outlined through the initial components of the diagram. The subsequent building block represent the epistemological considerations of the researcher; adhering to constructivism, this research views knowledge as subjective and is something which is co-constructed between the researcher and the participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This view follows on from the ontological idea of individual experience and meaning. This research is interested in individuals, and their subjective experiences, within the innovation idea selection and prioritisation process, which will form the basis for our data collection and analysis process.

These methods are represented through the next block, addressing the methodology of the research. This study utilises a qualitative approach and specifically utilises grounded theory to underpin this, congruent with the constructivist ontology and epistemology through its enablement of deep understanding of individual experiences, and meaning-making processes (Charmaz, 2014).

The next block discusses the methods and data collection techniques, which are foundationally supported by the inner layers and philosophical approaches; the use of in-depth interviews and first-person accounts throughout this research focuses on the capture of subjective experiences and narratives of individuals involved in the process of innovation project selection and prioritisation themselves, and deriving meaning from their accounts. This is completed through the presentation of the Sources block, which defines which data can be collected and processed through the methods defined.

The following discussion of the implications of this philosophical framing on our epistemological and methodological decisions, as visualised through the paradigmatic

building blocks. It explains how the constructivist orientation permeates throughout the process, and how this has resulted in the research tooling and approach. While the framing of the blocks begins with axiology, this has largely been covered in the introduction to this thesis.

3.2.1 Ontological Framing

This research utilises a constructivist approach, emphasising the importance of how individuals construct knowledge and meaning, derived from their individual experiences and interactions with the world around them (Creswell, 2013). Through this approach, an examination is undertaken of the interplay between innovation teams, the decision-making process behind the selection of innovation projects, and the subsequent impact these decisions may have on broader society. Throughout I remained open to the different perspectives of the stakeholders involved, as well as other methods through which a richer understanding of this interplay is constructed.

Constructivism acknowledges that there are multiple realities, which are shaped by the interpretations of the individuals experiencing the innovation process, all of which need to be considered when attempting to derive meaning (Connor, 2022). In application to this research, this acknowledgement means each innovation or corporate team will have a differing reality, shaped by the way the collective team, and each individual member, have constructed knowledge. Through observing multiple teams and team members, patterns emerge which allow for an interpretation of how they operate and engage with the environment around them. These interpretations, or ‘realities’, are understood as being shaped by the shared experiences, and the context through which the team operates (Connor, 2022, pg. 22).

This approach suggests that our understanding of social phenomena isn’t static, but rather consistently changes and morphs dependent on how these individual experiences change over time (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As an ontological stance, this deeply impacts the research approach. Constructivism highlights the importance of exploring and understanding the views and experiences of different stakeholders within the corporate innovation environment, as well as understanding upfront that these processes and outcomes aren’t fixed, but rather evolve as dependent on the experiences, values, and beliefs of those involved grow and change (Bryman, 2016).

To better illustrate this approach, Figure 3-3 describes the interplay between the individual realities of these team members, captured within the larger circle representing the construction of meaning. Within this meaning, there exist both contextual factors, represented through the diamonds, and influences created through individual and collective action, represented through the dotted lines. This figure describes visually how the research approach aims to take into account these elements in order to identify any potential phenomena at play in relation to the research objective.

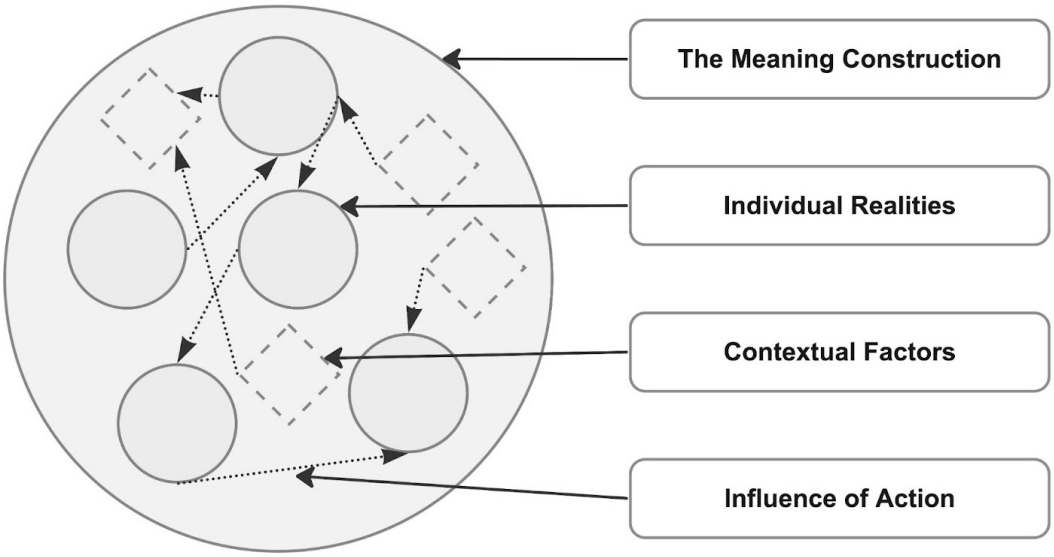

Figure 3-3 Conceptual Model of employed Ontological Framing

Reflecting on the literature review, and the dynamism involved in innovation as a practice, this is particularly relevant to this research; as creativity and individual choice shape the way innovation processes evolve, so too does the reality through which the overall context must be viewed. Using this approach, this research hopes to consider the context-dependent and changing nature of innovation, and how it is influenced by the individuals involved in the process, and their collective actions and belief structures (Schwandt, 1994).

Considering the research questions, this stance also provides the permissibility to deeply explore the subjective experiences of individual participants and use this exploration to help uncover real-world underlying processes and factors influencing the decisions made in innovation environments. Key to this is the focus on the “meaning-making” processes of these individuals, and the groups they belong to, as this helps us understand better the motivations that shape the decisions made which lead to innovation outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

By proxy, this constructivist approach also informed the methods chosen to undertake this study. Qualitative research approaches are well suited to help us explore individual participants' experiences, interpretations, and meaning-making processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through this lens, the aim is to develop a deep and context-dependent understanding of how innovation processes are deployed, while simultaneously taking into account the different experiences and dependencies which would emerge in different companies, cultures, and environments which would impact the individual experience of each practitioner (Mertens, 2010).

Practically, the use of a constructivist approach allows for a more nuanced commentary on the contextual factors which impact innovation decisions, as opposed to more broad-stroke factors present within the market force or institutional realities.

3.2.2 Epistemological Framing

Complimenting the ontological framing, this epistemological framework focuses on the nature, and the acquisition of, knowledge regarding how corporate and private innovation functions. Epistemology concerns the nature, source, and limits of knowledge (Crotty, 1998), so while a constructivist ontology speaks to the construction of nature through social interactions, this epistemology focuses on how this knowledge is acquired, navigated, and ultimately understood.

Within the context of this research, the ontological assumptions associated with a constructivist worldview aim to better understand the variations in individual and team experiences within corporate innovation environments. Specifically how they acquire, navigate through, and understand knowledge throughout the innovation ideation process. This approach assumes that knowledge is constructed by both the researcher and the research participants, through both interactions between the two, and the interpretation of those interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The research methods and design are selected through the perspective of this lens; here this guides our research toward qualitative methods, which results in the use of semi-structured interviews, and informal case studies. Both of these methods help to explore multiple perspectives, such as those from project team members, leaders, and managers, and in general assist in better understanding the perspectives of all the different stakeholders within the innovation process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

It also implies that the subjectivity of the researcher is key to the creation of knowledge; this means that throughout the study, the practice of reflexivity, and acknowledging any potential biases or pre-formed opinions (Berger, 2015), will be vital to informing the ultimate outputs, and is crucial for this research in informing the research findings. The self-imposed questioning of one's own beliefs and knowledge constructs helps to clearly articulate where the researchers themselves play a role in the formation of the knowledge. This self-enquiry attempted to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, and as such informed the use of specific research instruments and analysis techniques deployed throughout the study.

Similarly, the epistemological framing supports an inductive approach to hypothesis creation, in which patterns themes and categories emerge throughout the data analysis process, rather than being imposed prior to the data collection, aligning with a grounded theory methodology employed in this study (Glaser & Straus, 1967). While a set of potential factors have been identified that may impact the answers to our research questions via the initial literature review, it is critical to steer clear of forming new theoretical insights through the testing of these existing theories, and instead focus on generating these from the data acquired (Bryman, 2016); the aim being to produce a more nuanced understanding of the factors involved.

Importantly, constructivist epistemology doesn’t merely dictate the methods of data collection, but significantly influences the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the findings themselves. The emergence of knowledge is seen as jointly constructed between the researcher and the participants, and the presentation of these findings becomes a narrative, created through the participant's perspectives, and the researcher's interpretations of those perspectives (Charmaz, 2006). Consequently, the findings produced from this study are not detached empirical facts but are situated understandings which have been derived through the participant's experiences, and narrated according to the way in which they were presented throughout the interview process.

To assist in the understanding of this, Figure 3-4 (adapted from Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), articulates the constructivist epistemological approach inherent to this study. The figure outlines the Interactions and Interpretations as being the initial layer of understanding gained through the social engagement inherent in the innovation ideation process. These are explored through qualitative methods, in this case, semi-structured interviews and informal case studies, which capture the nuanced experiences of the participants. Reflexivity is exercised, in order to acknowledge the influence of the researcher in shaping the narrative. Following this, an ‘inductive approach’ allows for the themes to emerge naturally from the

data, ensuring that participant perspectives remain at the core of the narrative. Finally, the process culminates in the research findings, which represent the co-constructed knowledge created throughout this constructivist approach; this brings together a holistic view of the epistemological stance that acts as the foundation of the research process steps.

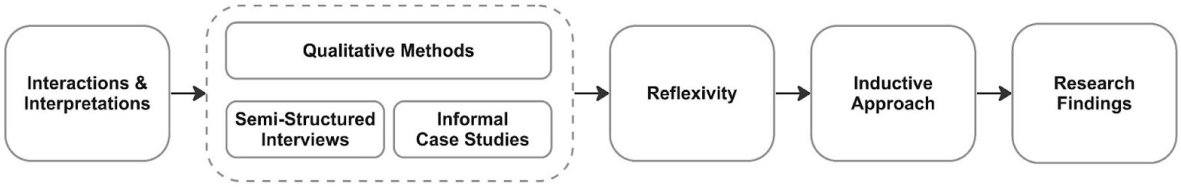

Figure 3-4 Constructivist Epistemological Approach Flowchart

3.2.3 Methodological Approach

The research adopts Grounded Theory as its methodology, which as Bryman (2012) explains serves as a bridge between both the philosophical underpinnings of the constructivist research philosophy, and the practical components of the research project itself. Grounded Theory itself is defined as Glaser and Strauss (1963) as an inductive research approach which aligns with the constructivist ontology and epistemology of this study and helps to realise the approach outlined in Figure 3-4 discussed in the previous section.

Glaser and Strauss (1963) further define the theory as being based on three key principles:

1. Beginning a research project free from preconceived theories of formed hypotheses, and allowing the theories to emerge from the data
2. Employing iterative and comparative data collection and analysis techniques, which allow for the consistent adaptation and refinement of these theories
3. The pursuit of theoretical saturation, where no new insights emerge, suggests a comprehensive understanding of the subject of the investigation.

These principles provide a flexible, yet systematic framework for how data is both collected and subsequently analysed. The process is both iterative and comparative, so with the knowledge that there is a lack of existing research that speaks to the research questions in mind, the research design is by nature adaptive, and will evolve in response to findings as they emerge. Employing additional literature reviews and other data collection methods will ensure any findings remain grounded in data, the key to the constructivist roots of this research (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The approach emphasises the subjective experiences of the participants as pivotal to the ultimate formation of a theory (Charmaz, 2014), making it

apt for the exploration of social interactions and the dynamics at play within corporate innovation environments.

The need for this adaptive design, and shifting from a deductive to an inductive approach, as outlined in section 3.1, led to the selection of this approach. Justification for this choice is directly evident through existing research, both in its suitability for studying complex social processes and interactions, such as those within corporate environments (Suddaby, 2006), as well as the discovery of new data where gaps in research exist (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Various Grounded Theory models exist, each having its own unique purpose and contextual applications. While a simplified view, they can be broadly categorised into three primary approaches: Glaserian Grounded Theory, Straussian Grounded Theory, and Constructivist Grounded Theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). These are compared in Table 3-1 through a comparative view of the different approaches and a commentary on the suitability for this study.

Table 3-1 Grounded Theory Approaches

Model	**Description**	**Commentary**
Glaserian Grounded Theory	This theory emphasises the inductive generation of theory from data through a rigorous coding process (Glaser, 1978).	Its prescriptive nature, and tendency to be detached from the participant's subjective experiences (Charmaz, 2006), limit the potential it has for this study.
Straussian Grounded Theory	A structured and systematic approach to exploring relationships between concepts and categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).	This method balances both objectivity and subjectivity throughout the analysis process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), and while measures of both exist in this study, the lack of existing exploration requires a more subjective approach.
Constructivist Grounded Theory	Emphasises the co-creation of meaning and theory between the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2006).	The focus on the researcher’s subjectivity and reflexivity in the research process, given the connection the researcher has to the subject matter, aligns with the philosophical approach of this study.

As described in the comparison above, the selection of the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach reflects the need for both a balanced and neutral view of the research context and environment, as well as a flexible approach to the data analysis process. The coding process, which begins as an initial coding flow, before moving to focused and theoretical coding, enables the emergent identification of themes and concepts, and a simultaneous

process of prioritisation and refinement, before the construction of the emergent, grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

This approach has been shown to be beneficial across various fields, including business studies (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010), as well as specifically within the field of Corporate Innovation (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) identifies the method as being able to handle the complexities of this industry and assist in the identification of phenomena, the discovery of new insight, and building the theory from the 'ground up'. The acceptance that the data is influenced by the researcher's interpretation helps to inform the interaction between the researcher and the participants themselves, not only through the data collection process but subsequently through the analysis of the data and the creation of theoretical outputs. This reflexivity is central to this research, where the researcher is invited to be explicitly about their preconceptions and the ways they may influence the research (Malterud, 2001).

Figure 3-5 below outlines the overall process involved within grounded theory and talks to the various methods and tools deployed throughout the approach as central to the emerging nature of both the collection and analysis process.

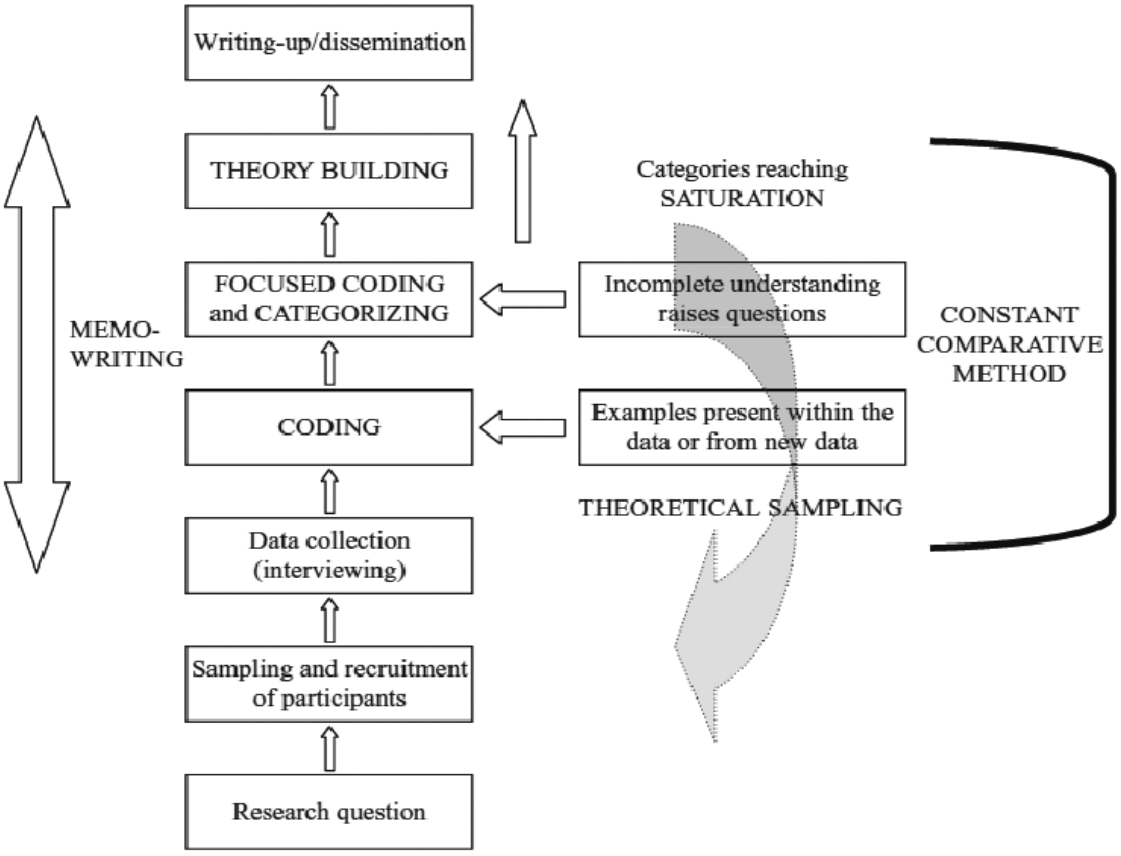

Figure 3-5 Grounded Theory Approach (Charmaz, 2006)

While the methodology provides significant advantages to this study, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations that exist within the method: the inductive nature of the approach can be time-consuming; it demands a high level of interpretation skill from the researcher; and due to its subjectivity, the results are not always easily generalisable (Bryand & Charmaz, 2010). This acknowledgement is taken into account throughout the analysis and narrative construction process design, outlined later in this chapter.

Ultimately, the aim is to provide new insight or knowledge which can contribute to the ongoing conversation and our deeper understanding of the impact of corporate innovation on the world around us. By embracing the Grounded Theory principles, the aim is to better facilitate the identification of themes and gaps in the existing knowledge, leading to the creation of these new insights (Charmaz, 2014). Shifting to discuss the research design itself, it is kept in mind that this approach requires both robust and logical data collection and analysis, but that this process remains flexible, iterative, and connected to the participants and their lived experiences.

3.2.4 Informing the Research Design

The design of this research emerges as a reflection of both the philosophical approach, and the methodological principles inherent within the constructivist approach, and the Grounded Theory methodology. The resulting synergy creates a comprehensive approach to the exploration of idea selection and prioritisation within corporate environments, with a particular focus on the individual experiences of those involved in the process. The design aligns with the researcher's constructivist philosophy, where the subjective experiences of those individuals and their meaning-making processes assign context to the interactions.

At a macro level, the research is designed to encapsulate foundational knowledge through the conduction of an initial literature review, framing the context of the study, before utilising semi-structured interviews to delve into the lived experiences of practitioners within the field, and the simultaneous use of informal case studies to add additional context to their individual narratives. Analysis of the data will occur concurrently, utilising a coding and memoing process to extract and simultaneously construct meaning from the individual interviews. The production of theoretical codes and memos will work in tandem to construct the emerging theory. Figure 3-6 below offers a representation of this process, as it has been applied to this research project. The interplay between the sampling and the analysis is reflected by a duel arrow, where other phases act as linear moments throughout.

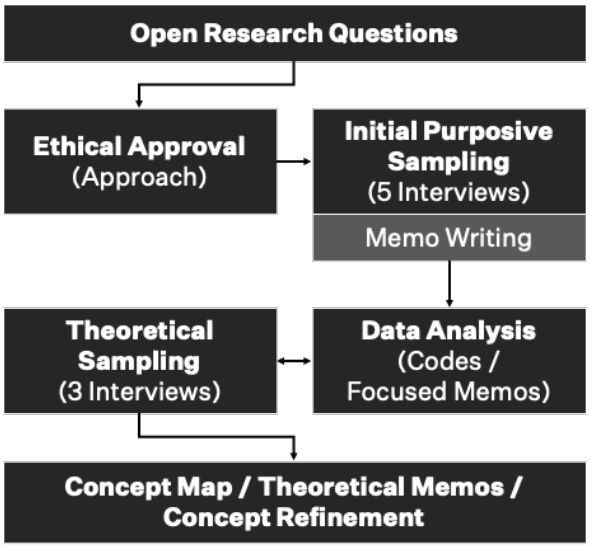

Figure 3-6 Research Design Flow

The subsequent discussion outlines the elements of the research design, both from a data collection perspective and from a data analysis perspective; examples have been drawn from the interviews and case studies to provide richer context to the explanation, and practical examples of the implementation process.

3.3 Research Design: Data Collection

The data collection design for this research focuses on an iterative approach, utilising a series of simultaneous and recurring steps: foundational and iterative literature reviews, participant selection and recruitment, and semi-structured interviews. This process is presented in Figure 3-7 which provides a visual representation of both the steps and the interplay between them throughout the evolution of the data collection.

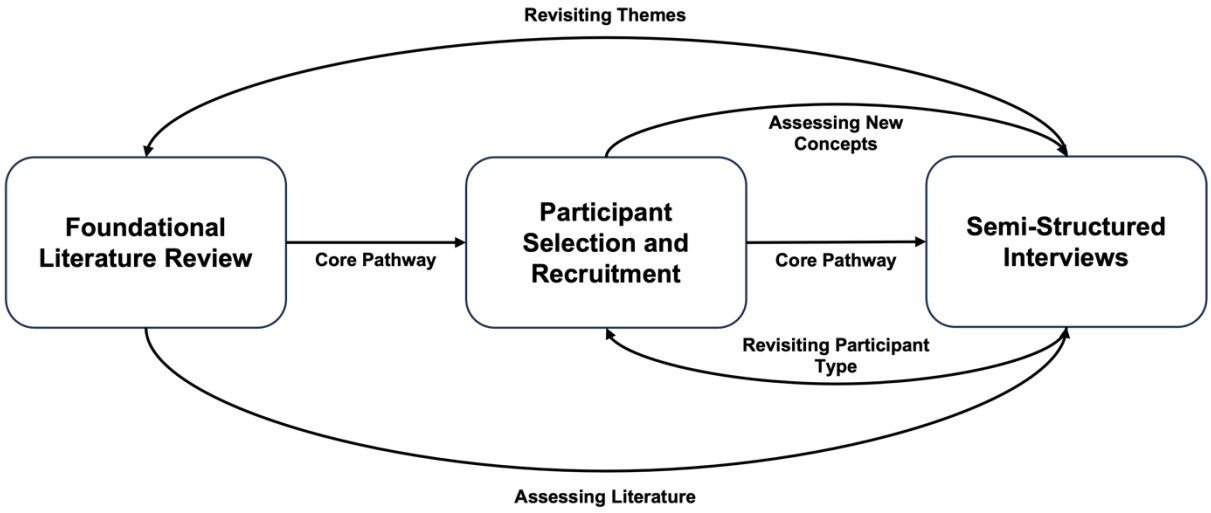

Figure 3-7 Data Collection Flowchart

During this process, the collection of data, and its analysis, occur simultaneously in accordance with the principles of grounded theory; any insights derived from earlier stages of the process help to inform the subsequent data collection activities, with the ultimate objective being to continually refine the emerging theory until it reaches saturation. This section discusses the elements of the data collection process and explains the rationale for its inclusion, the process through which it is executed, and how it contributes to the overall research goals.

3.3.1 Foundational Literature Review

Following on from the attempted systematic literature review, a foundational literary review was undertaken with this new insight to help us better construct the research questions and to provide the theoretical foundation for the study. In doing so, it provided the research with a robust underpinning of key theories and concepts to better investigate the gaps in the existing literature and allow flexibility and openness to potential new theories which could emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This approach differs from a traditional literature review, in that it seeks to gain a broad understanding of the existing knowledge and theories within the area, rather than focus on literature solely related to the research question (Bryman, 2016). This was used to provide the research with a solid and foundational understanding of key theories and concepts that can help add context crucial to investigating the gaps in existing literature, while simultaneously enabling us to remain open and flexible to any potential theories which could

emerge and maintain the inductive nature of the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Suddaby, 2006).

This approach is supported by Birks and Mills (2015), who argue that a foundational literature review helps to develop sensitivity to the themes and concepts within the area of research and facilitates the identification of areas where gaps exist within the knowledge. Further to this, it provides a deeper understanding of the context through which the phenomena under discussion operate and thus provides a more robust and grounded analysis of findings and data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Contextually, this study's foundational literature focused on the five key contextual pillars discussed in Chapter 2; Idea Sources, Selection criteria, Human Factors, Market Factors, and Social Factors. Through these pillars, a comprehensive understanding of the influential factors involved in corporate innovation processes was constructed, supporting the research's validity and the ability of the researcher to identify potential themes or emerging theories.

The use of this method to explore such contextual pillars is supported specifically within innovation management research; Tidd and Bessant (2018) acknowledge that understanding the broad context through which innovation occurs within any environment is essential for an investigation of factors that shape said process. Existing works also acknowledge the importance of understanding the dimensions of innovation in seeking to understand the interplay of factors involved, specifically the human and social factors at play within the process (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010).

3.3.2 Participant Selection & Recruitment

Given the exploratory nature of the approach, the selection and recruitment of participants for this study followed a considered and iterative process, which has been deeply embedded throughout the research design process. The participants of the study are selected based on their professional experience and involvement in corporate innovation environments, with a specific focus on those involved in the project ideation and selection elements of the process. Underpinning this specification is the aim of the study, where the need for participants to understand and relate to the beginning of the innovation process is key to the research questions and objective.

The recruitment process was multi-channel and involved both personal networks and professional networking channels such as LinkedIn. A purposive sampling approach was employed, a non-probability sampling technique that carefully considered the relevance of subjects and the potential contribution they may have towards the ultimate research objective (Palinkas et al., 2015). The decision was guided by insights taken from the foundational literature review, enhancing the robustness of the selection and recruitment process.

Emphasising the grounded theory's inductive nature, sampling evolved over time, where initial interviews produced rich data, which helped to inform a theoretical sampling process, leading to a more refined selection of participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In particular, this produced a need to seek out more senior innovation team members. Supporting this iterative approach, Charmaz (2006) discusses the importance of the research's adaptability, enabling the discovery of emerging trends and building a more comprehensive theory by adapting the data collection process to respond to these.

Participants were chosen for their roles in innovation-related functions, and for their experience in the innovation project ideation and selection process. The selection of team members with specific experience in the practical realities of innovation deployment aimed to ensure they had a comprehensive understanding of the innovation process to be able to valuably comment on its deployment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This also ensured diversity within the sample, participants were also selected from different industries and backgrounds, in order to represent various roles, levels of experience, industries, and cultural impacts - both within organisations and broader society (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Industries encompassed retail, utilities, finance, infrastructure, transport, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), and software and technology. Table 3-2 provides a comprehensive overview of the participant's functions, industries, and experience levels.

Table 3-2 Participant Function, Industry, and Level Overview

ID	Function	Industry	Level	Identifying Gender
1	New Product Innovation	Transport	Junior	Male
2	Product Lead R&D	FMCG	Senior	Female
3	New Product Lead	Utilities	Intermediate	Female
4	Product Consultant	Finance	Intermediate	Male
5	Chief Technology Officer	Utilities	Senior	Male

6	Group Manager Innovation	Retail	Senior	Male
7	Chief Innovation Officer	Infrastructure	Senior	Female
8	Services Manager Software	Technology	Intermediate	Male

Upon the identification of potential participants, each was provided (via email) a Participant Information Sheet. It contained the details about the purpose of the research, the interview process, the potential benefits, as well as key privacy protection measures (Palinkas et al., 2015). This explainer ensured that all participants were able to make an appropriately informed decision regarding their participation in the study; those who agreed were then provided with an Agreement to sign reflecting this, and interviews were scheduled accordingly.

To address the limitations of this approach, it's important to note that while purposive sampling brings in-depth insights, these may not be generalisable to all corporate innovation environments due to the sample's specific characteristics; however given the exploratory nature of the research, such an approach is considered appropriate (Charmaz, 2006). The use of reflection and memoing is utilised in order to address any potential bias inherent in the selection and participant recruitment decisions.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interview Structure

Semi-Structured interviews provide a platform for the exploration of participant's experiences, and perspectives, and for their in-depth interpretations of scenarios, while also ensuring that the research objectives are addressed throughout the process (Bryman, 2016). The flexibility of the style of interview affords the researcher the ability to explore emergent topics throughout the conversation. Employing an interview guide enables a structured conversation while simultaneously providing the flexibility needed to explore emerging topics or ideas in more detail (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The framework used for the semi-structured interviews covered five broad areas, each with a specific intent to garner information about idea formation and selection within the corporate environment. These areas were grounded both within the literature on innovation processes and decision-making identified within the foundational literature review (Dyer, Gregersen, & Christensen, 2009), and by incorporating specific questions which enabled the participants to reflect on their own innovation process experiences and draw their own conclusions based on these reflections (Rogers, 2010).

Table 3-3 describes the interview structure and purpose of each section:

Table 3-3 Structure of Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Section	Purpose
General Information	To understand the participant's roles, daily activities, and involvement in the innovation process
Insight Gathering and Idea Generation	To explore participants' approaches to identifying insights and ideas, and to understand the processes used within their experienced corporate environments
Projects and Problems	To explore participants' specific experiences with project ideation, selection, and execution, including the tools used, and the challenges faced
Knowledge and Sharing	To explore the mechanisms for sharing knowledge and lessons learned, and to share said knowledge and learnings on reflections
Philosophical Grounding	To capture the participant's broader beliefs and attitudes towards innovation, as well as any perceived challenges within the innovation ideation and selection process based on their subjective experiences.

This format enabled the use of open-ended questions and encouraged participants to share personal experiences and perspectives, while simultaneously ensuring that the key areas of interest related to the research questions were appropriately explored in each interview (Brinkmann, 2013). The interview guide can be referred to in Appendix A.

The aim was to utilise these interviews as an open platform, and to encourage participants to reflect deploy on their individual experiences and perspectives, thus ensuring that the insights they provided were authentically delivered and captured. The approach enabled the collation of rich and descriptive data for the analysis process, and simultaneously empowered the participants to be active contributors to the study (Charmaz, 2006).

The informal nature of these interviews created a conversational atmosphere, and participants were able to openly share their experiences and perspectives without fear of judgement or reprisal (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This atmosphere directly led to the facilitation of significant insights derived through interpretive conversation, as opposed to the conveyance of straight facts and accounts (Kallio et al., 2016).

Interviews took place throughout 2022 and were conducted either in-person, or via video conference, depending on the individual availability, preference, and general convenience of the participant. During the interviews, the researcher adopted a non-directive, and largely empathetic approach, to relate to the subjects and encourage them to explore and share

their thoughts freely (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). This created a comfortable tone to encourage open expression, which was supported by using a casual physical environment for the interviews (cafes, informal meeting spaces, etc.), to further promote a relaxed and conversational tone to the interviews (Rogers, 2010). Participants were offered refreshments, and a discussion about topics unrelated to the research was used at the beginning of the interviews to further enable this relaxed environment. This was repeated at the end of the interview to promote positive reflection on the interview process from the participants (Taherdoost, 2021).

Transcription of the interviews was facilitated using a recording tool called Otter, which is an AI-powered transcription software, that generates transcriptions from live audio recordings (Otter, n.d.). However, after the transcriptions were generated through Otter, any necessary amendments were made to grammar or individual words immediately post-interview to ensure the precise capture of information (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Participants were also invited to review the interview transcripts prior to any analysis, to check for factual correctness, and ensure that any information they wished to withhold was removed from the transcripts (Palinkas et al., 2015). Information regarding the size, structure, and geographics of each organisation the participants were involved in when recounting or explaining specific projects was captured to identify any thematic links. Any identifying information regarding specific organisations or projects was redacted from the transcriptions and subsequent analysis process to maintain confidentiality (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In summary, this research used a combination of qualitative tools and methods to systematically explore the dynamics of corporate innovation project selection. The primary data capture tool used throughout this research was semi-structured interviews, conducted with practitioners from various backgrounds and experience levels from within the innovation field.

3.4 Research Design: Data Analysis

The process used to analyse the data and apply codes to the raw transcripts was critical to the development of the emergent theory, as well as in identifying central themes and propositions which added context to this theory..

Throughout, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance and acknowledges their subjective role in the interpretation of data, and the shaping of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Reflexivity was enhanced through reflective note-taking, giving the researcher an outlet to critically examine their assumptions and biases, and better consider how these may have influenced the research process and the outcomes themselves (Finlay, 2002).

The collected data was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) methodology, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was chosen due to its suitability for the relatively small dataset, its emphasis on the researchers' active role in knowledge production, and its ability to accommodate the complexity of social processes (Bryman, 2016).

Drawing on Charmaz's (2006) principles, outlined in Chapter 3, the data analysis process described in this section emphasises the use of open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding of data obtained through interviews and informal case studies. The focus here is to showcase the process of conceptualisation, and how relationships between different units of data were discovered leading to the production of an emergent theory and related concepts. Similarly drawing on Maxwell & Miller (2008), the three Cs' of data analysis are Codes, Categories, and Concepts; by using this as a guide to the structure of our process, we articulate the process used for this analysis in Figure 3-9 below.

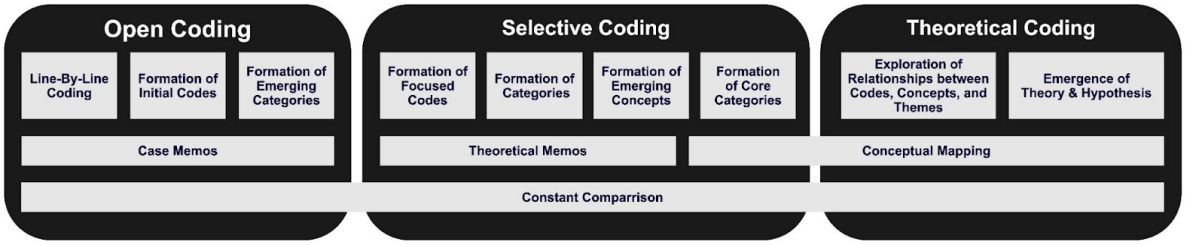

Figure 3-8 Three C's Adapted from Maxwell & Miller (2008).

The coding process, informed by grounded theory, allows for the discovery of new theoretical insights, and their synthesis based on the experience conveyed by the participants. It is further enhanced through a repetitive backwards-and-forwards between the analysis and the interviews, and the initial decoding process occurring alongside the data capture, as opposed to at its conclusion (Charmaz, 2014).

3.4.1 The Role of Interviews and Sampling

Grounded Theory also allows for flexibility within the research questions, and the adaptation of individual interviews based on any insights identified from previous interviews (Charmaz, 2014). Initial purposive sampling involved interviewing three practitioners, followed by initial case-based memo-writing to capture key ideas observed during the conversations (Birks & Mills, 2015).

As the initial codes developed, the researcher identified several limitations to the initial questions, as well as a need to focus on innovation practitioners with deeper in-corporate experience. Five subsequent practitioners were interviewed through this sampling approach, and following each interview, memos were drafted to capture initial insights and observations (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Following each interview, an initial analysis was performed to identify initial codes, as well as the construction of case memos. The iterative approach also allowed for the refinement of any key themes or patterns to reflect the ongoing execution of further interviews, and to adjust the sample of participants accordingly (Saldana, 2016). This sample size was arrived at throughout the data capture process, using the concept of data saturation, where any additional interviews ceased to produce substantially different codes (Guest et al., 2006). This approach is relatively common in qualitative research to ensure adequate depth of understanding has been reached while maintaining a manageable scope for the study itself (Morse, 2000). At the conclusion of the eighth interview, and its subsequent coding and memoing process, it was decided that data saturation had been reached.

3.4.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

A data analysis phase followed this, with the development of initial codes, and draft conceptual memos based on the researchers understanding of how these codes may evolve into focused codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). During this initial analysis, it became evident that some questions and lines of discussion required rephrasing due to varying interpretations of questions and key terms. For example, the word “innovation” had multiple layers of understanding from different participants given their individual perspectives. Given the desire to understand specifically the impact on decisions that lead to the introduction of new products and services via an innovation process, questions utilising such terms required tweaking; intent-based phrasing was deployed for better clarity, in line with grounded theory’s focus on flexibility and responsiveness to emergent findings (Charmaz, 2014).

The emphasis on the individual experience, and this adaptability, enables participants to attach their individual subjective meaning to their accounts, while still enabling the researcher to adapt and modify the interviews to enable a common understanding of the topics as they relate to the research questions (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). It also acknowledges that codes derived from the data represent the researcher's own interpretation of patterns and meaning, as aligned with the philosophical standpoint of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The three-stage coding process, open and initial coding, selective and focused coding, and theoretical coding, allows for the detailed examination of the collected data and the subsequent refinement of the emerging theory. Initial coding involves the examination of raw data to identify patterns to develop preliminary codes, which are descriptive, and aim to identify any potential aspects which could evolve our understanding of the concept (Charmaz, 2014). Table 3-4 below outlines the use of this coding as extracted from initial interview transcripts. In this extract of the initial codes uncovered through this research, we see ideas emerge which allow for familiarity with the data, and an understanding of how potential relationships may form for future coding phases.

Table 3-4 Initial Coding Example

Quote	Initial Code
"The executive team would have personal relationships with the executives in other corporates [...] they would see that there's opportunities that the other corporate would have already launched, and would go, let's just do that because X said so."	Executive relationships leading to project selection
"...basically the CEO had a child, and their kid had been in this situation where [redacted], and so the project was pushed forward pretty much because they needed it. I don't think there was any other research or anything, it was just accepted."	Mandated projects based on power dynamics and personal interests
"They [the executives] ended up getting a following pretty much because they're good speakers more than anything else."	Ability to speak well leading to power in decision making process

The focused coding phase involves a more in-depth analysis of the data, and the initial codes, to develop more abstract and high-level codes. Here, the organisation and synthesis of these initial codes allow for the identification of patterns, and the connection between these patterns (Charmaz, 2014). In the extract below (Table 3-5), the process of refinement of the codes, and the structure of the data, is evidenced.

Table 3-5 Focused Code Example

Focused Codes	Supporting Initial Codes	Discussion
Power Dynamics & Forced Decisioning	Executive relationships leading to biased project selection Mandated projects based on power dynamics Executive relationships leading to project selection Mandated projects based on personal interests Ability to speak well leading to power in decision making process	These codes revolve around the role of executives in driving project selection and decision-making. They suggest that personal relationships, ego, reputation, and short-term incentives often influence the selection of innovation projects for funding and progression.

This example was derived from the initial codes and represents the higher level of abstraction and the capture of relationships and patterns identified within the data. This process allows for a more coherent understanding of the data before an emerging theory is developed. This then leads to the production of theoretical codes, used to develop a comprehensive and grounded theory based on the data and the relationships present there; central categories are identified, and a deeper understanding of how they contribute to the overall research questions is articulated through the codes (Charmaz, 2014).

Memos were produced in a multitude of forms, including notes, diagrams, and conceptual maps, to facilitate this process, as well as to document the development of codes and their interrelationships as they evolved. Figure 3-10 gives an example of the memoing process in action.

Interview One - Case Memo
This one was particularly eye opening - it helped that the participant was really open about their experiences inside the business they were in, and their own emotions while they were there - so that was good. One big thing was the executive relationships and the office politics stuff, and how that can really mess with the project selection process and just decision making in general. It's definately not all about what's best for the consumer, and by the sounds of it, not what 's best for the company either. It seems to be all about who's friends with who, and who has power, and what they wake up thinking that morning, or the experiences that happen in their own personal lives. This JFDI mandate thing that occurs where a project just gets kicked off without thought, and then they seem to retrospectively fit businesses cases and cost justifications into it to make it happen. But then everyone becomes complicit in the process, like the teams themselves, and the people around them, all just go, yeah sure, and make it happen without thinking. I think it might be a pressure thing judging by what was said, but also they seem to get a kick out of the validation they get from bosses if it happens properly. It feels like the innovation process is kind of just an excuse to feel and be thought of in a certain way; it's a game of ego. But there's another interesting thought which is how do the social interactions and connections these people want to make inform this - is it like a process of making themselves look good, or is it about some kind of underlying incentive or financial reward or something?

Figure 3-9 Example Case Memo (Interview One)

Memoing provides a space for the researcher to record thoughts, ideas, and reflections on both the data itself and any emerging theories constructed throughout the research process (Charmaz, 2014). This enablement allows for the development of theories and patterns to be

tracked, and for the exploration of any connections between concepts and categories to be identified organically.

Within this research, memos were written throughout the coding process to capture specific ideas in consideration of both recency and through the lens of an informal tracking of concepts as they emerged. This led to the identification of gaps to be addressed through theoretical sampling, as well as considering any pre-existing bias or assumptions that needed to be considered.

The analysis phase then continued with the introduction of new initial codes, and the evolution of existing codes, before these were refined into focused codes throughout the selective coding process. The construction of a concept map enabled me to better visualise the relationships between these codes, and the emerging categories they represented (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Memos were written throughout the research process to document any specific reflections on the data and emerging insights, as both a record of the analytical process and to support the ongoing development of the emerging theory (Birks & Mills, 2015).

The process of constant comparison was used throughout this analysis period to compare the data, codes, and emerging categories, and to facilitate the development of an integrated and coherent theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2014). Simultaneously, deviant cases or data that did not fit within the patterns or categories were sought out to refine and challenge the analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additional literature was sought out and referenced simultaneously throughout this analysis phase, to better contextualise any emerging insights and themes within the broader academic discourse. Through this, it was ensured that any conclusion drawn from the analysis was well-grounded in any relevant research and contributed to the overall rigour and trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Bryman, 2016).

In the final stages of the analysis process, the researcher focused on the integration of developed categories and concepts into a core code, and supporting emerging theory, grounded with the use of theoretical codes to add additional literature to support the legitimacy of the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014). This process involved the unification of the broader categories, aimed at producing a comprehensive explanation of the innovation selection process. The social complexity of the research questions suggests the central

category requires substantial explanation, and provision of the context of the laddering categories and concepts, to support it as a unifying theory.

As discussed, informal case studies were utilised throughout this process to link these insights from the interviews to real-world examples of innovation projects in practice within corporate environments. The purpose here was to provide some practical and contextual background for the experiences provided by the interviewees, and an ability to sense-check how these discussions related to the practical implementation they described,. A more nuanced and context-specific understanding of these innovation practices emerged (Bryman, 2016). The desire to explore innovation project selection as a social phenomenon, and generate novel findings and theories from the work, as opposed to testing existing hypotheses, was also a primary driver in the inclusion of these in the research design (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The utilisation of such case studies, specifically those which are unpublished and have not been peer-reviewed, plays a valuable role in this study, given the lack of existing published literature in the space. These studies provided us with context-rich examples which helped complement the insights derived from the semi-structured interviews and provided an additional layer of context to our interpretation (Yin, 2014). Specifically, the inclusion of these case studies enabled us to minimise the biases demonstrated in any existing published literature, which focused on positive outcomes and successful case studies (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

3.4.3 Foundational Research Iteration

The foundational literature review serves as a basis for the understanding of key concepts relevant to ideating and selecting innovation projects; the literature was integrated iteratively throughout the data collection and analysis process, contributing to the way codes and ideas were refined and developed (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The literature integration occurred as data emerged, during the post-interview coding and memo drafting process, so as not to impose predetermined themes on any finding that occurred. This allowed the researcher to use the data from the interviews to guide the selection and interpretation of appropriate literature throughout the coding process and use it to help clarify and contextualise emerging codes and ideas. As an example, particular additional insight surrounding the structural implications of transparency (Argyris & Schon,

1978), and stakeholder engagement (Freeman, 1984), were added in light of these themes recurring regularly in interview transcription.

To ensure the ongoing quality and rigour of the literature, a focus was placed on incorporating peer-reviewed publications, aiming to guarantee a positive contribution to the research process. As an example, the Academy of Management Review played a significant role in helping to interpret data patterns emerging through the coding process and supporting the development of further peripheral concepts.

3.5 Ethical Considerations and Methodological Limitations

A primary consideration for the research method selection and design were the ethical considerations, and the consideration of any potential limitations of the design of the research, taking into account both best practices and ensuring the integrity of the study itself. In this section, both the limitations of the research methods and any relevant ethical considerations, are discussed and considered.

3.5.1 Limitations

It is acknowledged that throughout the implementation of this approach, there are limitations and considerations which must be taken into account throughout the research design. This discussion highlights any areas which may potentially impact the validity and generalisability of the findings.

Researcher Bias and Subjectivity

An inherent challenge within the qualitative process is the potential for bias and the influence of that bias on the data collection, analysis, and its subsequent interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the researcher is the primary instrument for the data handling, their own experiences and preconceptions formed from having worked within the innovation field may shape the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014). To mitigate this, a conscious effort was made to approach the data analysis with an open mind, and reflexivity (Malterud, 2001), through the use of a reflective journey to document any thoughts or potential assumptions that were being made throughout the research process, as well as engaging in debriefing and discussion aimed at challenging and refining interpretations made throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Sample Size and Theoretical Saturation

Grounded theory relies on sampling to guide data collection, aiming to achieve theoretical saturation throughout the collection process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Determining when this saturation has been reached, however, can be a subjective process, and relies on the researcher as the primary research instrument to interpret the data and identify when this saturation has been reached (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Adding to this, the relatively small sample size of the study has the potential to limit the generalisability of the findings to more broad populations or external contexts (Morse, 1995). To address this, a diverse and information-rich sample was procured, seeking to achieve theoretical saturation through constant comparison and iteration of the research subjects as required throughout the analysis and collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Dependence on Participant Perspectives

As this design is primarily based on the experiences and perspectives of the participants, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the participants' accounts is vital to the research's validity (Maxwell, 1992). In instances where the participants are unable or unwilling to provide complete or accurate information, considering factors such as social desirability, bias, or recall bias (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016), multiple methods of data collection, including interviews and document analysis, were deployed to help triangulate findings, and enhance credibility (Denzin, 1978).

3.5.2 Ethical Considerations

The discussion regarding these ethical considerations is organised into four main components: informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, participant selection, and researcher reflexivity.

Informed Consent

All participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the topic and subject matter of the research, both verbally, and then via a detailed consent form. This form outlined the research purpose, approach, and rights of the participant in relation to their participation in the study (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). All participants agreed to participate in the study with this knowledge and signed documentation to confirm this consent. It is noted that none of the participants were under 18 years of age, and all were current practitioners in their fields of sound mental capacity.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

To best protect the confidentiality of the participants, and the organisations they discussed throughout the interviews, as well as any organisations mentioned in the case studies, the following measures were implemented:

Removal of all identifiable information from the case study data, and the assignment of numbers to refer to participants rather than names (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001)
Ensuring that any company discussed in the case studies was not identified by name or identifiable factors, and altering any project detail as required to maintain confidentiality, without compromising the integrity of the research findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018)
Informing participants of their right to decline to answer any question, to cease discussion on a particular topic, or to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Additionally, the use of unpublished and informal case studies presented some unique ethical challenges. As it was assumed that these case studies had not undergone any peer-to-peer review processes, as would be the case with published case studies (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012), the researcher cross-referenced any information obtained through these informal case studies with the data collected through interviews and the literature review in an attempt to identify at discrepancies or inconsistencies (Stake, 1995). This process aimed to ensure the validity of the findings and minimise any risk of drawing any insight based on biased or unreliable sources (Patton, 1999). No novel insights or findings were identified from these case studies, and thus this risk remains minimal.

Participant Selection

Identifying and selecting participants, taking into account their roles within organisations and innovation teams, required a considered approach, to ensure a variety of representation and diversity within the interviewee pool (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants were purposively sampled to ensure there was a variety of roles, levels of experience, and industry backgrounds, in order to enable this diversity of thought (Tongco, 2007). This aimed to minimise any bias potential, as well as generally enhance the perspectives gathered from the interviews themselves.

3.6 Reflecting on the Methodology

At the outset of the data capture and simultaneous analysis phase of the study, the research focused on deploying the grounded theory approach as detailed throughout this chapter,

with a focus on systematic data analysis, and the inductive theory construction approach. As discussed, the strength of this process lies in the ability to allow ideas to emerge from data, making it appropriate for the exploration of complex social phenomena like the ideation and idea selection process within organisations.

However, as the study progressed, the challenges of this method became evident. It wasn't a divergence from the original plan, but rather both a necessary adaptation, in line with Charmaz's (2006) interpretation of grounded theory as a flexible and reflexive tool, and a realisation of how the emergence of such ideas has an impact both on the ideas produced, but also the very research topic and questions themselves. Charmaz (2006) emphasises the iterative nature of the approach, and discusses the potential for change in both methods and focus as the research evolves; it took some time for the permission granted by this statement to "sink in", as the initial instinct of the researcher was to fight the change of focus.

Early on, and during the initial stages of the analysis, what is now recognised as the core theme became evident, that being the role that individual humans, or groups of humans, play in the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects. Despite attempts to adhere strictly to the research questions, which aimed to understand the broader factors at play outside of just human-focused elements, this focus gravitated back towards those individuals who wielded influence over the creation, and selection, of ideas for innovation teams. The recurrence of themes or ideas in the data, as Bowen (2008) notes, indicates its salience, which leads the research to more intensely focus on one particular aspect. The reflection of the researcher, and the acceptance of this approach, enabled the emergence of the core concept and its associated phenomenon.

At this point, three interviews had occurred, and some substantive changes to the approach were considered and implemented; some of these were intentional, and some of these were natural given the flow of emerging ideas. For example, the interview guide was originally designed to provide consistency across all interviews, and while the substance of this remained unchanged in its core questions, the prompts and follow-up conversations which occurred throughout the interviews were altered both consciously and unconsciously to allow the natural emergence of this focus to shine through.

Through this focus, the study also required a refinement of the subject and interviewee. What was emerging from the conversations was a consistent theme where those people described as having the most impact on the idea creation and selection process were at the

upper echelons of organisations. They were described, both positively and negatively, as controlling the ideation process. To further explore this, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) theoretical sampling was employed, allowing for the refinement of the data collection process, and identifying participants for the final three interviews who were specifically in positions which would equate to those described by the earlier subjects.

It's also acknowledged here that there was an intent to make extensive use of informal case studies as supplementary data sources, following Yin's (2003) endorsement of their ability to capture the nuance of complex phenomena. However, in practice, these proved to provide little practical purpose, with the nature of them being largely high-level and subjectively biased toward the success of a project without understanding the selection and prioritisation of the idea itself. Although they were used occasionally to validate anecdotal accounts provided by the participants, and at times where there was a more explorative nature to them used to prompt thoughts and are recorded in memos as having done so, they did not contribute significantly to the formation of the emergent theory.

The most intriguing aspect of the study from a reflective perspective came throughout the final stages of the data analysis process, or rather, what was perceived to be the final stages at the time. Initially, a strict coding and focused coding method, supplemented by the use of memos, was employed, in following with the process outlined in Chapter 3, discussed by Charmaz (2006), and supplemented through reflexive methods to guard against the researcher bias and to help shape the emergent ideation process. However, when the writing process itself commenced, and at the time when the findings began to take shape as a narrative, a dynamic shift occurred in the analysis. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) note that this writing phase is not merely a tool for reporting, but rather is of itself a method of inquiry. Here, and at this point in the study, the act of writing began to facilitate the emergence of interconnected ideas and theories beyond what had been identified through the structured analysis process originally proposed.

Throughout the writing process, conceptual maps and codes were revisited, and additional literature was sought to supplement the ideas and emergent interconnectivity. Artefacts which were created during the initial phases of analysis and data capture were able to form a firm foundation, but the emergence of the final theory and associated concepts and categories was rooted in the writing phase itself. This, again in hindsight, reflects the complexity of the grounded theory approach, and the need for the development of theories through this process to be both iterative and flexible (Birks & Mills, 2015).

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research methods employed in this study, which aims to understand the dynamics of idea generation and innovation within corporate environments. The chapter began by detailing the research objectives, before articulating the background and context, in particular discussing the systematic literature review as the starting point and leading into a discussion of various grounded theory models to better inform our selection of approach.

From here, it discussed the philosophical underpinnings of the research design, including the ontological, epistemological, and methodological framings. These were used to inform and justify the research design itself. Utilising a constructivist grounded theory approach, the design encompasses a foundational literature review, as well as a data collection and analysis process that utilises initial, focused, and theoretical coding to define the emerging theory. This approach was further explored through a discussion of the practical application of these coding methods, as well as the theoretical sampling and memoing components of the methodology.

Finally, potential limitations of the approach were acknowledged, and potential mitigation strategies were proposed. Alongside this, ethical considerations were addressed to ensure and provide trustworthiness, that academic integrity was adhered to, and that the rights and wellbeing of the research participants were taken into account.

Building on this understanding and the approach detailed in this chapter, the following chapter delves into the detail of the data collection and analysis process, focusing on the specific codes and ideas identified throughout the analysis; this serves to underpin the emerging theories and understand the factors involved within the idea generation and selection process within corporate environments.

CHAPTER 4 Data Capture and Analysis

This chapter outlines the way in which critical ideas emerged throughout the research process. While not stringently adhering to the principles of grounded theory, it utilises the core methods to collect and discover insights as they emerge.

Structurally, this chapter outlines the following:

1. A reflection on the methodological approach, and a discussion of how this evolved throughout the data collection and analysis process
2. An outline of the approach itself, and a narrative-driven description of the emergence of key ideas and themes discussed at a broad level
3. A presentation of the key themes uncovered throughout the analysis alongside the evidence collected throughout the research, and a preparatory discussion of the perceived interplay between these concepts enabling a solid foundational understanding for the findings discussion in Chapter 5.

Throughout, commentary is provided on how these themes emerged, and where required, contextual information in relation to the researcher's own experiences within the corporate innovation field.

This chapter as a whole, thusly, presents not just the emergence of the ideas and concepts in and of themselves, but rather tells a narrative representing the stages of data collection, analysis, and the writing process. One of the crucial realisations here was the emergence of systems thinking, seeing a system of ideas as a central component in the development of the theory. This understanding led to the formal introduction of systems thinking (Checkland, 1981) into the analytical framework.

This approach enabled a shift from viewing and attempting to define the factors involved in the idea selection and prioritisation process as discrete entities and rather permitted them to be seen as part of a more complex system. Subsequently, the individual factors could be abstracted, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the resulting core category. It also offered a more holistic view of the phenomenon, where there were separate distinct systems at play, which were not related specifically to human motivations (i.e. organisational structure, strategic priorities, etc), but which had variable levels of influence on the central theme itself.

The concurrence of the data collection and analysis components of the research also provided a challenge when it comes to the presentation of this chapter. The resulting structure reflects the research approach, focusing not on separate stages of the data collection and analysis, but on the concurrent and interwoven nature of these processes. The sequence of this chapter is dictated by the concepts and phenomena that emerged as the research unfolded, in a mirroring of the chronological evolution of the research, and to provide a roadmap for how these various concepts should be sequentially understood.

The importance of the explicit depiction of the approach is not ignored; following the guidance of Bryman (2012) and Dey (1999), the chapter begins with a reflection of how the process was conducted. Following this, a linear description of the concurrent capture and analysis process is provided, aimed at providing an illustration of the process through which the data was explored and interpreted, while simultaneously demonstrating how the research questions and discussions evolved over time, and at which moments various concepts began to emerge.

From here, the sections of this chapter are organised based on the emergent concepts. This breakdown builds on the initial insights and provides a comprehensive description of how the core phenomenon emerged, its nature, the peripheral concepts, and the interplay between these. The intent of this flow is not only to narrate the emergence of the ideas but also to provide foundational concepts for exploration in later chapters, particularly throughout the discussion of the findings. For clarity, the presentation of this process as adapted and modified throughout the research, is provided in Figure 4-1.

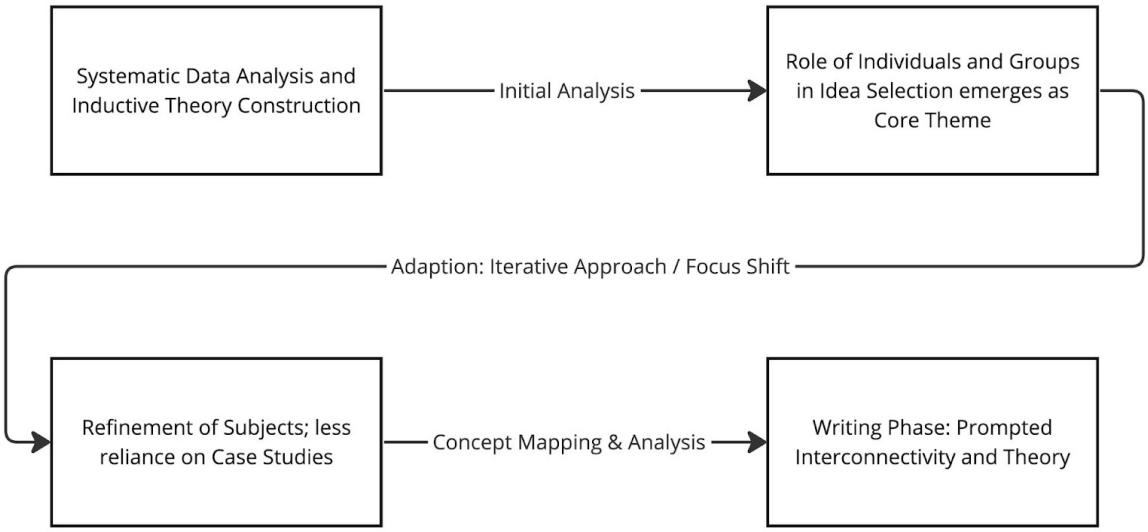

Figure 4-1 The Emergent Research Process

4.1 The Research Process; A Narrative Reflection

Initial interviews were conducted through the lens of understanding the broad factors which were involved within the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects within corporate entities; as such, the conversations were general, and aimed to elicit stories and anecdotes which could be used to better understand any factors involved. At the outset, the researcher faced an initial challenge in the inherent constraints of the Grounded Theory methodological framework; although familiar with the method itself, moving from the descriptive stage where data is understood, to a higher level of conceptualisation proved an exhausting task. So while the process of simultaneously capturing and analysing data makes sense, in practice it led to substantial back-and-forth between attempting to ensure structure and sufficient provision of information from the interviews, and simultaneously allowing the participants to narrate the experience as they saw it.

It was by embracing the conceptualisation process, as outlined by Glaser (1978), and leaning into the iterative process of collecting, coding, memoing, and repeating this process, that both the interviews themselves, and the subsequent data collected, were able to be broken into smaller more manageable pieces of information. In turn, this helped to make the process more digestible and led to the informed creation of the focused and theoretical codes. The initial three interviews used this structure and questions prescriptively and didn't vary from the interview guide initially presented. What was unexpected was the intensity

through which the participants engaged in the process; in many ways, it allowed them to voice and air their frustrations.

, After the interviews were fully transcribed and sense-checked the process began with open coding with the data broken into manageable portions. The chronological order of the interview was maintained to preserve the flow of information and ensure any contextual information or discussion was relevant to previous sections. Each section was then examined to identify initial codes, such as words, phrases, or sentences used to describe emergent themes identified within the participants' responses. Alongside this process, memos were drafted and attached to each segment, which allowed for the documentation of any thoughts, interpretations, insights, or other ideas which emerged.

Figure 4-2, as shown below, presents an example of the initial coding process, and demonstrates how different data segments were extracted from the transcripts in manageable chunks, and then these initial codes were applied, along with accompanying memo notations as thoughts emerged.

This process involved taking the transcripts from interviews post their completion, and sectioning them initially according to the interview structure, and then subsequently, by theme of discussion. The example provided here shows a section discussing the forced directive onto teams based on several factors; this is also indicative of the way in which participants discussed the concept of people and power structures throughout the interviews.

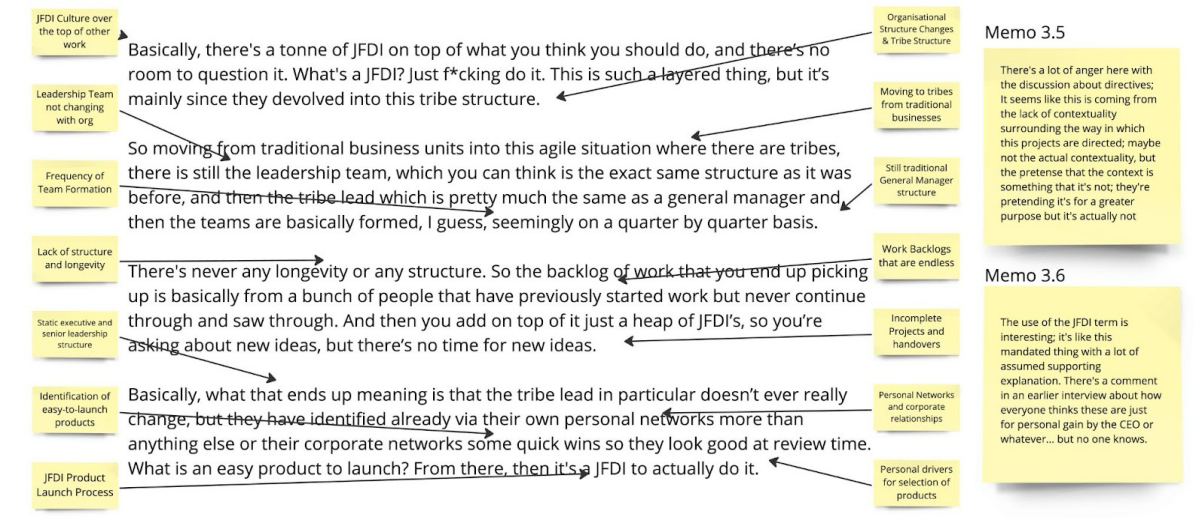

Figure 4-2 Coding and Memo Sample

As this progressed, initial codes began to emerge, allowing the natural development to occur of the codes based on the participant's own phrasings and intent. Using this process led to the production of many codes which were unrelated or irrelevant to our primary research questions, however, in order to ensure the exhaustion of any potential data points which may otherwise be missed, the process was continued with the expectation of eventual emergent patterns. The key reflection required to underpin this process proposed by Glaser (1978) was used throughout the analytical process; focusing on what study the data relates to, the categorisation of an incident that it indicates, and the broader actualisation of what is really happening within the data that is being analysed.

The beginning of the second phase represents a shift in focus of the study. A series of key concepts and focused codes were emerging, however as isolated concepts, they lacked meaning in terms of their implications for the research question. The impact of things like Power Dynamics and Internal Politics are well documented when it comes to their impact on people and decision making within organisations.

To explore this, the initial categories were revisited, and expanded upon. Through this, the idea was to enable a more robust foundation to approach subsequent interviews, and to fully embrace the emergent nature of the grounded theory approach. Table 4-1 outlines the expansion of these categories in a condensed format, and shows how these were built out with additional understanding and explanation, allowing for the researcher to consider their role within the process more thoroughly.

Table 4-1 Expansion of Categories

Category	**Related Codes**	**Explanation**
Power Dynamics	Executive relationships leading to biased project selection, Mandated projects based on power dynamics and personal interests, Ability to speak well leading to power in the decision-making process	These codes represent the influence of personal relationships, executive decisions, and communication abilities on project selection and decision-making processes within corporate innovation environments. Power dynamics can significantly impact the conception of ideas and shape the direction of innovation projects.

Organisational Structure & Communication	Agile and tribe structure, Siloed information and lack of communication, Governance, and decision-making forums, Organisational dynamics, Internal politics, Communication gaps	This focused code highlights the role of organisational structures, communication, and decision-making forums in shaping the corporate innovation environment. The presence of silos, internal politics, and communication gaps can hinder the development and execution of innovative ideas.
Resource Constraints & Efficiency	Resource constraints, Release train, Inefficient processes, Financial focus, Streamlining and headcount reduction, Hiding inefficiencies	This category capture resource allocation and process efficiency within corporate innovation environments. Limited resources, inefficient processes, and a focus on financial savings can impact the conception, selection, and execution of innovative projects, ultimately influencing the organisation's ability to innovate successfully.
Employee Empowerment & Disillusionment	Disillusionment and talent burnout, Learning from experience, Autonomy, and voice, Empowering workers, Learning from past experiences	These codes highlight employee empowerment, learning, and personal growth
Customer Focus & Clear Objectives	Lack of customer focus, Clear objectives, Definition of successful project, Importance of clear objectives, Reframing objectives, Importance of understanding customers	This category emphasizes customer-centric approaches and objectives in the conceiving and executing innovation phases.
Balancing Structure & Flexibility	Structure vs. process, Avoiding checklist mentality	These codes highlight the need to balance structure and flexibility within corporate innovation environments. While structure is essential for guiding project selection and progression, allowing for flexibility and avoiding a checklist mentality can lead to better outcomes and foster a more dynamic innovation culture.
Dysfunctions in Corporate Environments	Dysfunctions in corporate environments, Resistance to change in corporate culture, Frustration with integrating innovation in the existing environment, Employee attrition due to lack of innovative culture, Corporate fear of innovation	This focused code represents the challenges and dysfunctions that can arise in corporate environments, impacting the conception of ideas and the decision-making processes within corporate innovation environments. Addressing these dysfunctions is essential for fostering a healthy innovation culture and ensuring the successful execution of innovative projects.

Further to this, an initial concept map was designed. Noting that the research is still in its infancy, this concept map was created in order to gain an initial understanding as to how the ponteittla codes, categories, and concepts could relate to one another, and help to understand whether or not the approach of the research needed to be modified to better reflect any missed opportunities. Figure 4-3 below shows a version of this, whereby the process used is articulated and proposed emerging concepts are presented in their relation to both the core category and the initial categories.

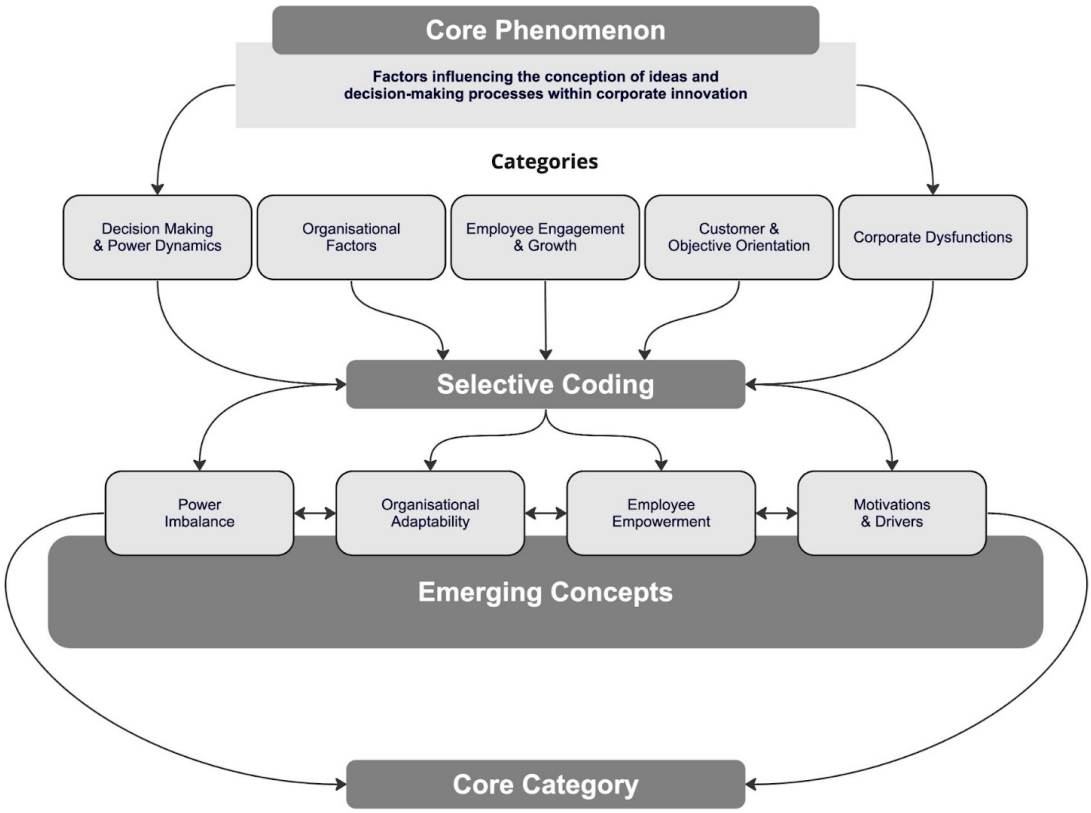

Figure 4-3 Initial Concept Mapping Process

The foundational evidence from these references can be used as justification for the selection of the term Gatekeeper. While this term implies the stopping of something as it enters or begins (Lewin, 1947), in this case it is used as a reference to the groups or individuals which exert control on the very beginning of the innovation process, as well as the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects.

In an attempt to better understand how these factors may be interrelated, Theoretical Coding was used to abstract the conceptual relationships between the ideas and examine how these relationships relate to literature to allow for a higher level of abstraction; this abstraction aims to produce a core category to integrate into the emergent theory (Glaser &

Holton, 2004). Building on Glaser's (1978) definition of this work, theoretical coding "families" were used as an initial tool to identify any potential relationship between the categories; while this list isn't exhaustive, the framework acts as an initial guide, which is complemented by the existing literature, and theoretical codes identified therein (Glaser, 1978).
Identifying these relationships resulted in the discovery of a number of contextual relationships, which worked to form the developing propositions, and grounded the categories in an external framework. Table 4-2 presents an example of some of the most impactful relationships identified and explains their development through the coding families and literature, alongside the theoretical codes reflected in this same table. These theoretical codes formed the basis of the peripheral categories used in the construction of the emerging theory.

Table 4-2 Relationship Emergence using Glaser's (1978, 1998, 2001) Coding Families

Emerging Categories	**Theoretical Coding & Peripheral Categories**	**Applied Glaser Coding Families**	**Codes derived from the literature**
Power Dynamics	Human Factors	Interaction (Mutual Effects, Mutual Dependency)	French and Raven's Five Bases of Power (1959)
Power Dynamics	Organisational Factors	Interaction (Mutual Effects, Mutual Dependency)	Balancing power dynamics (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006)
Organisational Structure	Organisational Factors	Structural Functional (Groups, Role Sets)	Mintzberg's Organisational Configurations (1979)
Resource Constraints	Organisational Factors	Interaction (Mutual Effects, Mutual Dependency)	Resource-Based View of the Firm (Barney, 1991)
Employee Empowerment	Human Factors	Cultural (Social Norms, Social Values, Social Beliefs)	Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)
Customer Focus	Strategic Focus	Cultural (Social Norms, Social Values, Social Beliefs)	Market Orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990)
Balancing Structure & Flexibility	Organisational Factors	Interaction (Mutual Effects, Mutual Dependency)	Organisational Ambidexterity (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996)

Balancing Structure & Flexibility	Strategic Focus	Process (Stage, Progressions, Sequencing)	Dual Strategy Approach (Porter, 1987)
Dysfunctions in Corporate Environments	Organisational Factors	Structural Functional (Groups, Role Sets)	Organisational Culture (Schein, 1985); Organisational Learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978)
Dysfunctions in Corporate Environments	Human Factors	Cultural (Social Norms, Social Values, Social Beliefs)	Emotional Intelligence and Organisational Dysfunction (Goleman, 1995)

This extrapolation of concepts enables the viewing of the peripheral categories as more dynamic, and while they all act as individual systems which function separately, they act together in order to influence the occurrence of the core phenomenon.

4.2 Emergence of Core Codes

As interviews progressed, Core Codes and the impact of particular factors on the research questions morphed from speculation into substantiated ideas. The scope of Human Factors became clearer, and thus a definition or capturing criteria became evident; elements related to individual perspectives which significantly affect the behaviour and decision-making processes of individuals. Table 4-3 Interview Excerpt Gatekeeper External Forces describes through an interview excerpt how the interrelation of these factors extends beyond just the individuals themselves but rather exists as both tools of the specific person, as well as an external force impacting them which shapes their decision-making process.

Table 4-3 Interview Excerpt Gatekeeper External Forces

Participant	**Interview Extract**
Participant Four	“Yeah, the commerce commission started making pretty public comments about [the company]. Not that anything bad was happening, but more that the knee jerk reaction here was just to shut up shop.”
Participant Seven	"[She] decided that we needed to respond immediately [to a competitor advertising campaign], so a lot of ongoing projects were stopped, and cash was reallocated to projects that were direct responses to [the competitor's] move. It felt like it came from fear rather than anything else."
Participant Two	“When we got a new exec last year, things took a crazy turn.”

Innovation Gatekeepers influence the way in which an organisation's strategic priorities are either shaped, or interpreted, to control the innovation project selection process, by using these as prioritisation catch-all's; they are the way that a conversation can be shut down through a referral to the "greater good" of an organisations goals and vision. The success of such projects is indeed reliant on the organisational strategies supporting their existence in the first place. Tushman and O'Reilly (2007) discuss the importance of this in relation to all projects, providing us with an extrapolation that suggests the strategic priorities of organisations influence the innovation projects which are selected for progression.

One participant discussed this through the reference to the appointment of a new executive, and the acknowledgement that when someone new joins that team, existing projects or ideas could be discarded in favour of those which are aligned with the new executive's vision. Similarly, another example discussed the interpretation of the strategy or vision in order to suit a particular need; in this example, the participant described their direct manager using a loose interpretation of the organisation's strategic vision to justify the progression of a particular project, and the disestablishment of another. The existence of these examples supports the view that this manipulation of strategic intent exists as a tool employed to manifest the phenomenon of Innovation Gatekeeping

This notion is supported by Chesbrough (2003), who argues that the strategic alignment of innovation projects to the strategic vision of an organisation is critical to the success of those projects; the implication here is that the control of these has the ability to shape and manipulate the selection and progression of any such ideas. Similarly, Carlile (2004) refers to the process of using such strategies as means to control projects as boundary-spanning individuals and discusses their tendency to do this in order to better align with their own beliefs and interests.

The presence of resource contention within an organisation is a separate factor described as influencing this process. Resources, including funding, personnel, or equipment, can be either scarce or in high demand within an organisation; the ability for gatekeepers to use their positions within a structure to influence the allocation of these resources becomes increased. Eisenhardt and Tabrizi (1995) discuss this idea as being central to the influence of leaders within organisations on project outcomes, and how this ability to manipulate resources leads to biased selection of projects, and the overall reduction of diversity in, and quality of, project efforts. Table 4-4 outlines this concept and positions it as related to, but distinct from, the control of the resources themselves.

Table 4-4 Transcript Extracts: Resource Contention

Interview	Quote
Participant Four	"There's just never enough cash. And to get it you basically have to be best friends with accounts. If they don't like you, they'll just cut you, or not give you stuff, or whatever. I get it, they have goals and budgets and stuff, but man, if you aren't playing the game, you're gone."
Participant Two	"…and they stop you because they take away your budget, or announce decide that this quarter we are going to focus on this other random market that they just saw a competitor in the UK or something was working on."

To garner a deeper understanding of these themes, the subsequent components of this chapter will outline the three primary themes, and attempt to collate the codes and categories into a narrative.

4.3 The Key Themes

Ultimately, three key themes emerged as individual humans (or occasionally groups of individuals) as primary influencers or movers in innovation projects, tools that these individuals use tangibly to impact innovation projects, and factors which influence the way that the tools are used. This section outlines each of these themes in detail.

4.3.1 Theme One: People as Influencers

Theme One describes key people, and groups of people, as primary influencers of innovation projects. The prevalence of the individuals involved in the manipulation of the idea selection and prioritisation process became apparent early on in the data collection; while it had been acknowledged prior to the research itself, it was assumed to be simply a part of the overall collection of factors, as opposed to being central or core to the research question. However, the dynamic that participants in round one had discussed were overwhelmingly related to how specific people within the organisation had manipulated the process of idea selection and prioritisation, often times at the expense of other potentially successful projects.

In revisiting the creation of the codes and categories, it was noted that participants described the changing nature of the selection and prioritisation process as being dependent on either individual people, or groups of people. Table 4-5 articulates two key extracts where

participants were discussing individuals as the drivers for decision making and the individual influence of these people on projects.

Table 4-5 Individual Roles in Innovation Projects

Interview	Quote
Participant Two	"[They] made all the decisions based on [their] ego. It wasn't like, a go or no go decision, it was just, how was this going to make [them] look good in front of the rest of [their] team? It got kind of ridiculous at one point, like we were literally employed just to help [them] get a promotion."
Participant Three	"It's actually just people. There are people that float around the business and make all these decisions and it feels like there is no real purpose or meaning to them. But those decisions mean that we can't do what we're supposed to be doing. And they stop you because they take away your budget, or they decide that this quarter we are going to focus on this other random market that they just saw a competitor in the UK or something was working on."

Throughout these next two interviews, and through the concurrent analysis process, the core concept being explored became more defined and conceptualised. These elements, and the way in which they come together to inform the manipulation of ideas and the selection of projects within innovation teams, were initially viewed as a specific element of the broader study, represented through the idea of Selective Ideation.

The thinking in regards to the concept of Selective ideation began simplistically as an attempt to identify the specific things that influenced the ways in which individuals or groups attempted to exert control over the selection and prioritisation process but evolved to take into account a more nuanced view of this. The emergence of not just the physical activities individuals undertake to influence this process, but rather the reason why both those tools are employed and possess enough power within themselves to enable the manipulation of this process.

Selective Ideation was a concept initially explored as representing the way in which individuals influenced the selection process through their own biases and personal motivators; Table 4-6 provides a memo written in relation to this concept throughout the analysis phase.

Table 4-6 Selective Ideation Memo

Memo	Content
Selective Ideation	This idea of selectivity within ideation is interesting, it's like there are groups of people, or maybe just individual humans, who have a disproportionate level of power over the ideas that are picked. Selective Ideation might be the best expression of this, but I'm still not quite sure that it actually captures what I'm getting at here. It's not just selectivity, it's kind of broader than that, but at the same time it's quite a good way to think about how these ideas of power dynamics and structural impacts come together to form a sharp point. The picking and choosing of things at whim based on recency - what's felt or thought or experienced at any one time being the primary tool in selection. Maybe it's more like Selective recency? The only real catch here is that it doesn't take into account the other factors that support it, like information or resources, or other humans. It also just seems to sit at the ideation end of the process, rather than the actual decision-making process - it sort of does as the selection of influences supports the process of decision-making, but simultaneously I don't think it captures exactly what is being described here.

As the interviews progressed, it became clearer that the concept in and of itself was much more than this, and was central to the way in which participants were describing the phenomenon occurring across all projects and organisations. They referred to a person or people as a "blocker", specifically in their function of preventing or manipulating the way in which projects are selected. A particular interview extract emerged where the participant made the statement "...there's people that just gatekeep for fun…" While initially this seemed an innocuous and throwaway comment in the context of their story, through a secondary examination the potential impact of the quote became clearer; indeed, memos from this interview note the question "what do they mean by gatekeeping - is this the word for what is happening?"

Throughout the integration of the following two interviews, the idea was built upon to expand from simply a concept relating to how interpersonal dynamics impacted the process of idea selection and prioritisation, but rather to encapsulate this intense emotional response which interviewees had when describing the role of specific individuals within this process. It was guttural in some cases, with one participant taking a moment to regroup post a particularly animated explanation of a scenario involving a meeting of stakeholders where they were presenting the proposed future of a product set; comments from these moments are articulated through Table 4-7.

Table 4-7 Interview Extracts: Individuals & Groups and Emotive Discussions

Interview	Quote
Participant Five	"I think the intent is always good right, like, people want to do cool things. But then they get distracted by something and their focus changes. It's like you're constantly at the whim of something else. I think it's because innovation projects aren't like, well, they don't make all the dollars upfront. There's other parts of the business that make all the money right now. So you exist initially to try and change that and make more money in other ways, but then you end up just as a pawn kinda, like people use you to make themselves look better. Or try and kill you if you are seen as a threat or something."
Participant Five	"And to get it you basically have to be best friends with accounts. If they don't like you, they'll just cut you, or not give you stuff, or whatever. I get it, they have goals and budgets and stuff, but man, if you aren't playing the game, you're gone."

While just a select example, it demonstrates the impact these specific individuals or groups had on the participants, and their interpretations of the idea selection and prioritisation process. The evolution of this concept, and how it evolved to expand beyond the initial theme proposed, and shifted to one where the person or individual is central to the experience of the interview subjects, is outlined in Table 4-8 Innovation Gatekeeping Memo, where the use of memoing, and comparison between this and previous memos, allowed for the thinking to evolve from a specific element to a broader concept.

Table 4-8 Innovation Gatekeeping Memo

Memo	Content
Innovation Gatekeeping	"It's actually not the selection; it's like a guardian that kind of shapes the way that Innovation Projects come to life. This seems to be something that comes from individuals (although there's the example that talks to the accounts team doing this as a group...) but it's just them saying yes or no, it's way deeper than that. Ironically it's like the constructivist view, but applied to a completely different phenomenon – the individual experiences of the human or group make and shape the way that 'hey will enable or disable the flow of ideas and green-lighting projects. There's things they use to do this, telling people things and keeping those things from others, or promoting fear of failure, but separately, there's why they can do that, it's both of these things together that cause this to occur; they can't be viewed in isolation. It's gatekeeping; but not just in a bad way, it can be good, there's some evidence of that too..."

This identification of specific people or groups, while focusing on the tools or factors involved in the shaping of projects, was clear and consistent throughout all conversations; the root of project selection, and subsequent progression of projects, lies in these people and groups.

The build of this insight to present the idea of gatekeeping was supported through additional literature; the concept of Gatekeeping appears in numerous contexts throughout related literature and helps to build a richer picture of what it implies, and how it can be articulated.

This concept repeated itself frequently, and the discussion of Power and Power Dynamics became a repeating concept within the codes and memos. Power, as held by individuals, allows them to shape the entirety of the innovation process through the unintentional or inadvertent promotion of ideas that align with their own interest and power base while suppressing and rejecting ideas that challenge their own status quo, or position within this power structure (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Exploring this concept required additional literature, and for consideration regarding personal motivations and drivers. Factors which contribute to these motivations include reputation and egotistic behaviour, career enhancement, personal gain, or even financial incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In particular, the idea that those in power, or leaders as they are described, who are motivated by any form of self-interest are more likely to make decisions which align with their personal goals, even if these goals aren't aligned with the interests or vision of the organisation itself (Vroom, 1964). These motivations act to shape the way in which individuals can employ specific tools or techniques to manipulate and shape the promotion or evaluate innovative ideas.

Within these contexts, these people may become more inclined to protect their own interests and maintain the power they hold by selectively promoting ideas which align with their personal agendas, and reinforce existing power structures (Pfeffer, 1992). This, in turn, leads to a lack of diversity within innovation pipelines and stifles the organisation's ability to produce innovative concepts to pursue and select such ideas (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007).

Likewise, within sociology, the concept of Gatekeeping refers often to the way social networks interact with one another, and the distribution of the power held by members of those networks (Burt, 2004). This power extends to the cultural dynamic of those social networks and impacts the norms and habits of these groups to the extent of subconsciously suggesting appropriate or inappropriate behaviour and action which members can undertake (Bourdieu, 1986).

This process suggests that influential groups or individual's connections to the social network of an organisation manifest through the control of resources, and the ability of different members to influence the strategic priorities of an organisation. The leveraging of this influence can be dictated by the personal experiences and norms of the group or individual, which may differ from the broader intent of the innovation goals themselves. Table 4-9 articulates such leveraging in action as extracted from the interview transcripts.

Table 4-9 Transcript Extracts Regarding Influence Leverage

Interview	Quote
Participant Four	"It's a power play, right? I get to decide this thing we're doing and it'll make me look good in front of my boss, and I'll get the promotion or the raise or whatever. It's just this, I'll use it for my own benefit kinda [sic] mentality."
Participant Two	"This was when [leader] just used [their] power. It was nutso [sic]. [They] went on to run this separate business that [they] probably landed by showing how powerful [they were], so I guess that's why? But it left this trail of disaster and fear behind."

Within communication studies, and within the context of media and journalism, gatekeeping refers to the process where editors, producers, or other influential individuals decide on which stories are to be published or broadcast, which are funded and provided with appropriate resourcing, and how they are shaped before the presentation to the wider public (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). This shaping of the contextual information, and the allocation of resources, ultimately dictates the knowledge consumed by broader society and influences the way in which particular pieces of information are understood or are weighted in importance.

What is noticeable from the interviews was the potential for individuals to both be actively aware of their role in the influence of projects, or ignorant to their position and power. This was elucidated by the contrasting experiences shared by participants Four and Five in the interviews. Participant Four highlighted the unconscious form of gatekeeping, where the individual seemed unaware of the role, describing it was a "built-in mechanism" rather than a deliberate act to stifle innovation. This subconscious gatekeeping could stem for either ingrained organisational practices, or personal biases, which can bother subtly inhibit the free-flow of innovative ideas (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999).

Conversely, Participant Five described the scenario of conscious gatekeeping, whereby the individuals actions were both deliberate, and aimed at direct control of the innovation process, describing it as being a “totally conscious thing”, and specifically describing the gatekeeper as having “certain things he wanted to happen, and others he didn’t.” This dichotomy between both the conscious and the unconscious gatekeeping describes a more complex layer of both organisational dynamics, and personal drivers, both of which emerged in subsequent themes.

4.3.2 Theme Two: Direct Influences

Theme Two describes the presence of direct influences, enacted by specific individuals, to influence innovation selection and prioritisation, which here are referred to as tools.

Overwhelmingly, participants discussed the human elements of innovation and problem identification and refinement process. Conversations were full of emotion and personal experience, creating a rich insight surrounding the human experience of corporate innovation processes. Human Factors as a peripheral concept describes a broad spectrum of factors which occur throughout the innovation process; it is so broad that as a concept it carries a heavy burden when articulating its impact on the tools due to its breadth and complexity.

This is amplified by the interconnectivity it has with the use of tools by individuals, as well as its relationship with other peripheral concepts. This interconnectivity, and the specific factors that fall within this peripheral concept, became evident through the abstraction of the data, and the importance of its role in understanding the core phenomenon became increasingly apparent throughout the analysis process.

In the context of corporate innovation, information isn't just data; it's a strategic asset. The way information is disseminated, withheld, or manipulated can significantly influence the trajectory of innovation projects. As Participant Five pointed out, being kept in the dark can feel like flying blind, underscoring the critical nature of transparent information flow.

“When we're informed, we can make decisions that align with the company goals. But when information is withheld, it's like trying to hit a moving target in the dark." (P5)

Within Information Science fields, Gatekeeping describes the control over the flow of information, and the restriction or allowance of this among systems and individuals (Lewin,

1947). This restriction impacts the ability to understand the context through which an idea or decision needs to be viewed and helps to control the perspective of those receiving the filtered information. This process shapes the direction and prioritisation of tasks and ultimately defines the outputs of those tasks; viewed in line with the research findings, we see this process occurring when individuals, or groups of individuals, control or shape the information provided to innovation teams. Table 4-10 references two transcript extracts which discuss the restriction of information within innovation environments, as related to the gatekeeper role.

Table 4-10 Control of Information Flow Extracts

Interview	Quote
Participant Five	“Certain people stop you. They stop you from knowing things, they make it so that you’re completely flying blind.”
Participant One	“People get surprised when they don’t know something, and I don’t know who is supposed to have told them. Part of this is a storytelling thing, but when people are deliberately stopping you from doing that, it becomes impossible.”

Control over the flow of information, being the dissemination of key knowledge related to ideas, projects, resources, goals, or contributing factors within the organisation (Fleming & Waguespack, 2007), is one such tool. The sharing or withholding of such information, based on objectives, personal interests, organisational constraints, or other justifications, impacts the ability of broader stakeholders involved in the process to both contextualise innovation projects and ideas and to understand the broader purpose of the role which innovation plays in a particular circumstance (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013).

The restriction of information can inadvertently lead to groupthink, where teams operate within an echo chamber, reinforcing existing beliefs and stifling innovative thought. This is particularly concerning in innovation environments where diverse perspectives and fresh ideas are crucial. Participant 8 described the way in which the flow of information promoted a group-think effect within the organisation and described the negative influence of this: "When we're only fed certain pieces of information, we all start thinking in the same direction. It's counterproductive."

In one particular interview transcript, the practitioner described the way in which they were provided with a briefing in a company-wide planning meeting regarding the introduction of a

new project. The participant referred to the process as “very, very, very siloed” by which they were referring to the provision of information related to the goals and objectives of the project and the fact that this was new information to the wider team. Subsequently, the participant explains that this information had been misinterpreted, and the extreme levels of prioritisation placed on the project were misplaced; it had been a comment made in passing at a senior management meeting. The siloed nature of the organisation, they explained, had been addressed previously, but had no real effect on the way in which information became disseminated. This demonstrates the unintentional contribution to the creation of such silos, and thus the flow of information obstructing the organisation's ability to act on viable innovation opportunities; the participant explained that the project went on for six months before the misinterpretation was rectified.

These examples occur regularly throughout the findings; the prevalence of the reference to control of information can be seen en-masse through Figure 4-4, a graphic representation identifying the prevalence of words mentioned throughout the interviews which reference this occurring.

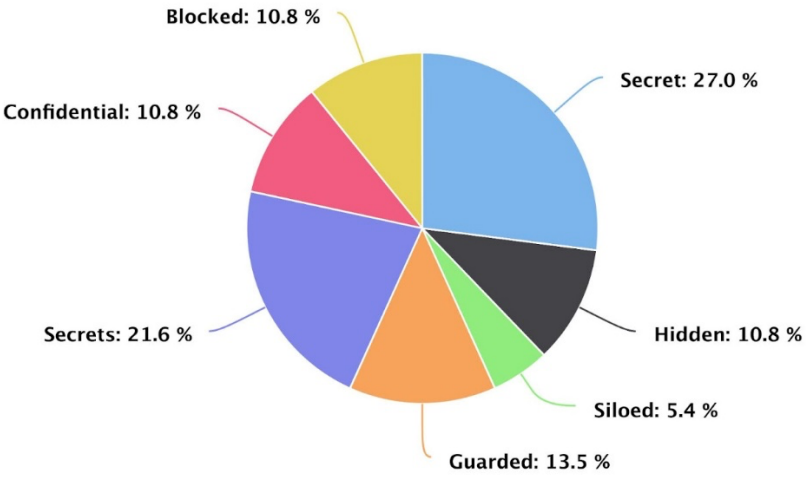

Figure 4-4 Word frequency: Control of Information Flow

Modern organisations leverage a plethora of digital tools to manage and disseminate information. While these tools can enhance transparency and collaboration, they can also be weaponized to control information flow strategically. Participant 4 described the way in which folder structures from an IT perspective drove silos of information within the organisation, and how this is reflected in a hierarchy of influence: "We use [specific collaboration tool] to share updates. But access to some folders is restricted. It's obvious that there's a hierarchy in how information is shared."

Beyond the strategic implications, controlling information flow has an emotional dimension. When team members feel they're not privy to essential information, it can lead to feelings of exclusion, mistrust, and demotivation. This emotional toll can be detrimental to team cohesion and the overall innovation culture, as was observed by Participant 5: "It's not just about being out of the loop. It's the feeling that you're not trusted or valued enough to be in the know. It's demoralizing."

Similarly, the evidence of the influence individuals have on the allocation of resources within organisations contributes to its prevalence within the decision-making process and exemplifies the impact it has on the team's ability to ideate and select concepts. Pertaining to the distribution of financial, human, and material resources within these environments, (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007) it either enables or restricts these teams to undertake any such selection or identification tasks from the outset. Decisions on these allocations by stakeholders are also influenced by individual interests, power dynamics, and overall strategic priorities which underpin the philosophical positioning of the person making such a decision (Chesbrough, 2003).

A transcript extract within Table 4-11 describes the scenario of an influential manager within an organisation who was able to divert resources from a team working on the conceptualisation of a new customer engagement platform and divert this to an existing sales platform, aimed at refining the existing acquisition strategy of the business. The participant explained that the manager "... was convinced that we should make the existing one better, rather than experimenting with something new, which was the whole reason we were hired in the first place, so most of our budget ended up being cut, and in the end, we couldn't get any buy-in from anyone." This decision limited the resources the team had available for the conception of the idea and ultimately blocked any potential impact on the business, described by Carlile (2004) as the loss of potential gains.

Table 4-11 Interview Extracts: Resource Restriction

Interview	Extract
Participant One	"When we first started this, there was this buzz, you know it? When you've landed on something? … But [redacted] decided that the tech budget needed to be given back. So it got shelved before it even started."
Participant Four	"It was news to me, but [they] said that there wasn't the capacity. So I didn't even get to pitch it."

Participant Five	"The [redacted] stuff was actually nearly cut off. It was only because [they] needed it to work, so basically pre-billed a bunch of stuff so that it got hidden. Just needed someone to work the system."

Another participant explained this through their relationship with an accounts team member, and how through building an alliance with this team member they were able to have influence over the innovation gatekeepers' decision-making process. Through this, they were able to restore previously lost innovation funding. Conversely, a separate example discussed an instance of resources being abruptly withdrawn from their project when a change of leadership occurred.

4.3.3 Theme Three: Indirect Influences

Theme Three describes how the presence of indirect influences, not controlled by specific individuals, influence the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects. These influences are referred to as Factors.

Aligned to this discussion within the interviews was the idea of how empowered employees are to work against the personal motivations of individuals or groups who have differing motives. While this was initially viewed as an organisational or structural factor, it is in this instance viewed by the participants as inherently human, referring to the emotional freedom and empowerment felt by employees to enact innovation projects.

This emerged from participants as both generalised feelings of empowerment, and specific examples where they had pushed back or avoided project manipulation by way of being empowered; one participant described their sense of empowerment through the direction of a specific manager who was in the process of resigning, and wanted to “cause chaos”. “I knew he would have my back, and so I was able to just go ahead and call [them] out. I felt like I had an out, so I could just go ahead [with the innovation project] and that [another stakeholder who wanted to pause the project] couldn’t do anything about it, or at least it would be too late to.”

Table 4-12 highlights some of the additional commentary made in these initial interviews, which discussed the impact of this within the innovation project setting.

Table 4-12 Empowerment Comments from Interviewees

Interview	Quote
Participant One	"The attitudes towards innovation, it was so entrenched in personal stuff that it was hard to get a fair hearing for any idea. I think they had blown so much time and cash on it before, so kinda [sic] understandable, but there's no way anyone was going to be able to get anything across the line. We didn't have the power."
Participant One	"I had ideas, but honestly, how did I feel you ask? Powerless. That's probably a good word. I know I sound super negative, but that's how it was."
Participant Three	"I knew [manager] had my back. So it was just the ability to have a bit of a shield that meant that you could do what needed to be done."

This idea of empowerment is closely related to the culture of an organisation, where an emphasis on openness and shared ownership of projects tends to empower employees to make decisions autonomously regarding project progression or selection (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The promotion of openness, collaboration, and shared ownership over innovation efforts within an organisation acts to drive the generation and exploration of a diverse range of ideas and reduces the potential risk that biases or dysfunctions exhibited by the gatekeeper can impact the process (Ahmed, 1998; Dougherty & Hardy, 1996). Likewise, the increased perceived power and status employees exhibit within organisations that encourage the support and validation of these practices are more likely to challenge norms and advocate for the introduction of novel and transformative ideas (Kotter & Heskett, 1992).

While noting the nature of the data collection was not quantitative, there is an emerging trend which exists in the alignment of perceptually positive outcomes with organisations which anecdotally promote a more open and empowered environment. This trend, when discussed in interviews, tends to align with less discussion on potential "blockers" in the form of individuals.

Table 4-13 identifies where participants discussed particular organisations, the identification of positive outcomes, and the level of openness and empowerment described surrounding those projects vs. the presence of perceived innovation gatekeeping.

Table 4-13 Employee Empowerment Quotes

Interview	Quote
Participant One	"The moment they left us to it, things took off."
Participant Two	“Having the space to throw around the ideas and to not have someone breathing down your neck is a massive change.”
Participant Two	“It was [successful]. And that goes right back to how we got it out of the way [of executive members] from the very beginning.”

The concept here of employee empowerment gave way to a broader theme emerging of dysfunction within an organisation. This aimed to capture several concepts coming through in the interviews, including excessive bureaucracy, rigid hierarchies and structures, and conflicting interests amongst staff, units, and departments. These can amplify the prevalence and influence of innovation gatekeepers, by creating barriers to those factors which mitigate them; free communication, open collaboration, and the free-flow of ideas amongst teams (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967).

Here, the synthesis of discussions and memos supporting these to produce potential conceptual fields of interest. Broadly, four concepts began to emerge as being the areas which proved to elicit the most intense responses from participants, and seemed to have the most direct impact on the process of ideating and selecting concepts for innovation teams:

a) Power Imbalance is a central part of decision-making within corporate innovation environments; the data provided a structural basis to understand the influence of this concept, and interwove themes of power dynamics, executive relationships, and personal interests as they impacted the decision-making process. The significance of this became more apparent as additional data related to organisational structures, and employee engagement and despondency emerged.

b) Organisational Adaptability emerged from both individual and group views, ideas, and behaviours, and accounts for factors around how the organisation is structured, along with how group structures within those organisations, and the flexibility these different structures afford, impact the ideation and prioritisation processes of innovation teams.

c) Employee Empowerment emerged as a central aspect related to fostering motivation and growth within individuals, and the converse of this, where decisions made through power imbalances or varying motivators and goals collide with the self-perceived purpose of the Employees.

d) Motivators and Drivers is an abstraction of both the customer focus motivation of innovation teams as a general broad stroke, as well as individual drivers, and collective group and cultural drivers, which when viewed collectively contextualise decisions made within these teams and allow for the contextualization of the types of projects executed by innovation teams.

Hierarchy was, throughout the analysis, the most prevalent of organisational factors to be mentioned. Indeed the nature of innovation gatekeepers is that they tend to be exclusively managerial in their positioning, and the rigidity of structure within a business environment can further enable the gatekeeper to access the tools required to enact the phenomenon. Put simply, the use of resources and information is better available to those in leadership (Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011), which are called out as two of the empowering tools of innovation gatekeeping.

This idea is supported through further research, where the stifling of ideas is often aligned with an extremely hierarchical structure, (Cummings & Oldham, 1997). These structures tend to centralise the process of decision-making, and subsequently, the ability to select or prioritise projects falls to a few, rather than happening at a collective level (Pfeffer, 1992). The age of both Cummings & Oldham (1997), and Pfeffer (1992)'s works suggests that this issue has been evident in such structures for some time.

The exertion of control over the innovation selection and prioritisation process occurs through a series of phenomena which cannot be appropriately explained through the previous three concepts. This fourth concept articulates a series of more nuanced processes, which together affect the cultural norms and attitudes of both the organisation as a whole and the individual innovation teams, which in turn impact the selection and prioritisation of projects. This idea of innovation culture emerges from Martins and Terblanche (2003), who articulate it as being the shared set of norms and values held by innovation teams, which when enacted either encourage or discourage innovation-led behaviour. Likewise, the use of such norms and values, and the ultimate shaping of the

culture, determine the motivations, creativity levels, emotional responses, and commitment of teams to innovation projects (Amabile, 1997).

Throughout the interviews, examples of this manipulation are evidenced through the influence of factors which worked to control the overall motivation and emotional responses to projects, and indeed innovation teams as a whole. One transcript described the experience of a participant, where a senior executive drove a fearful approach to all innovative projects, and required a specific risk analysis to be conducted on any idea which was proposed; while such a process isn't influential in itself, the analysis was subsequently used to create a culture of fear, with Participant 3 quoting the executive as saying "...if this doesn't work, it's your head…" in relation to the success or failure of the project.

Figure 4-5 below describes the frequency of codes related to this cultural manipulation within the analysis process, and how often they occurred post the initial coding phase. The way in which these comments showed up was in direct relation to the level of manipulation the respondents experienced within an organisation, and how that impacted different elements of the experience of the wider innovation team.

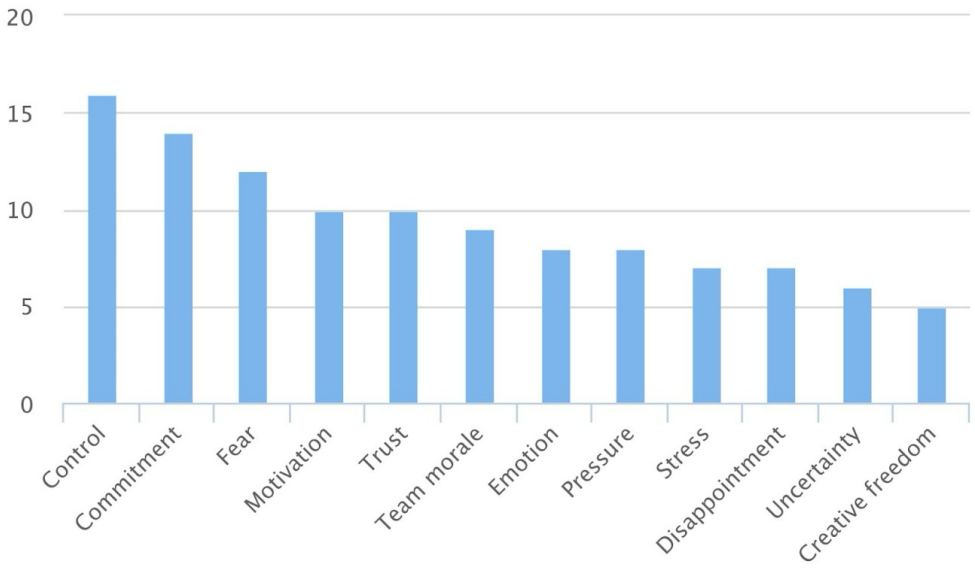

Figure 4-5 Frequency of Cultural Manipulation Codes

Importantly, participants were describing this process as emerging from senior members of their organisations. One participant discussed at length the decisions their senior manager had made based on ego and how they perceived board expectations, and the use of innovation projects to bolster their image. Another described how the decision-making

process was impacted by the television and media that one particular manager consumed, and how the constant change of direction based on this media led to the loss of focus and resources for the innovation team. Perhaps most impactfully, one participant referred to their own projects, and indeed themselves, as a “pawn for gain” when referring to how those around them treated their projects.

4.4 Summary

Thematically, three key concepts emerged from the analysis which were taken forward into the emerging theory. The first being the idea of individuals as innovation gatekeepers. This captures the discussions with participants centring on the observations and experiences where specific humans (or groups of humans) enacted a force on the innovation process, either inhibiting it or exerting a force on it based on factors outside of the control of the innovation team itself. The second was the presence of direct influences which these individuals used to exert this force; these are identified as tools which are harnessed to enact the control, as opposed to influences or motivators for their use. Finally, the third theme revolved around the indirect influences, which are those forces which dictated both the presence of gatekeepers, and their ability to use the tools in order to exert force.

CHAPTER 5 Findings & The Emerging Theory

In the intricate tapestry of corporate innovation, the threads of individual decisions, organisational tools, influencing factors, and the forces they generate intertwine to create a complex pattern. Chapter Four delved into the nuances of these individual threads, exploring their nature and significance. As we transition into Chapter Five, our aim is to weave these threads together, forming a cohesive narrative that encapsulates the essence of the research findings.

At a high-level, the findings highlighted in Chapter 4 provide three key themes, which when brought together, enable a deeper understanding of the potential phenomenon at play. To better pull these through to create an emerging theory, they can be extracted into propositions; these represent the practical implications of the themes, and result in the addition of a fourth proposition which describes the interplay and impact of the first three. Throughout this chapter, each proposition will be examined, and discussed in relation to the initial literature, before they are brought together as a singular theory.

Here is an initial view of these propositions and the accompanying theoretical model presented in a graphic representation.

Proposition One: Key humans control the flow of concepts and ideas within organisations. This proposition underscores the pivotal role of individuals in the innovation process, acting as gatekeepers who can either facilitate or hinder the flow of innovative ideas.

Proposition Two: To exert this control, these individuals employ a series of tools, or direct forces. These tools, both tangible and intangible, serve as mechanisms that influence the trajectory of innovation within the organisation.

Proposition Three: The prevalence and effectiveness of these tools are not constant but are modulated by the presence of specific factors, or indirect forces. These factors can enhance or diminish the impact of the tools, shaping the innovation landscape.

Proposition Four: The interplay between the tools and factors gives rise to a force that defines the innovation climate of the organisation. This force, influenced by both the tools at the disposal of the gatekeepers and the prevailing factors, determines the pace and direction of innovation.

As we delve deeper into this chapter, we will unpack each proposition, exploring its intricacies and understanding its implications. Through this exploration, we aim to present a comprehensive picture of the core phenomenon, providing insights that are both profound and actionable. Figure 5-1 below outlines the high-level view of the theory through which these propositions come to life, and forms the basis for this analysis.

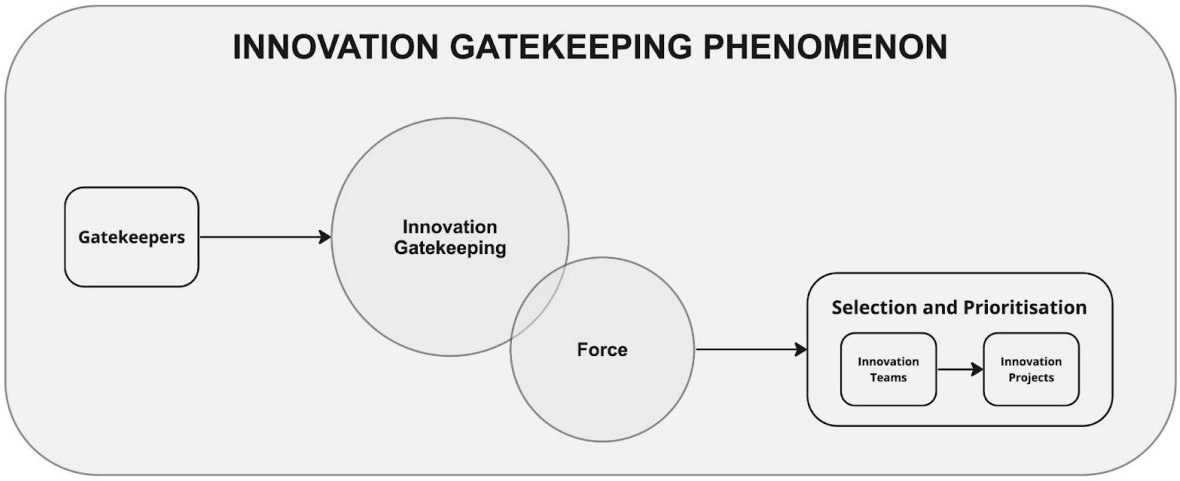

Figure 5-1 Emerging Theory Model

5.1 Individuals as Innovation Gatekeepers

Proposition one, suggests that key humans control the flow of concepts and ideas within organisations, and articulates the theme identified in Chapter Four of individuals being the primary influence on organisational project selection and prioritisation within innovation teams.

In the realm of corporate innovation, the role of individuals as gatekeepers emerges as a central theme, a concept that is both intricate and multifaceted. The research presented in Chapter 4 underscores the profound influence these individuals exert on the flow of ideas, the allocation of resources, and the overall trajectory of innovation within organisations.

The term "gatekeeper" is not merely a designation but a reflection of the pivotal role these individuals play. They are not passive observers; they actively shape, direct, and influence the innovation landscape. Their decisions, as highlighted in the narratives from Chapter 4, are often influenced by a confluence of personal biases, organisational dynamics, and broader industry trends. These decisions have far-reaching implications, affecting not just the immediate innovation project but the overarching culture of innovation within the organisation.

Drawing from the data and insights gathered, several key observations can be made:

a) Position and Influence: The position of these gatekeepers within the organisational hierarchy often correlates with their level of influence. However, it's not just the title that grants them this power. Their deep understanding of the organisation's ethos, their networks, and their ability to navigate the intricate dynamics of corporate politics amplifies their role. This narrative of power imbalance is discussed in chapter 4, and aligns with Davis and Eisenhardt (2011), accentuating the way in which hierarchies and seniority within organisations directly influence the control of resource and the flow of information.

b) Decision-making Dynamics: The decision-making process is multifaceted. While strategic objectives and organisational goals play a role, the personal biases and experiences of these gatekeepers also weigh heavily. Chapter 4's exploration revealed instances where personal experiences, past successes or failures, and even peer influences shaped the direction of innovation. The narrative is reinforced by the work discussed in Chapter 4 from Pfeffer (1992), who described the centralised decision-making process in hierarchical structures as tending to place significant power in just a few individuals, which underlines the critical nature of personal bias within the decision making dynamics of organisations.

c) Cultural Architects: Beyond decision-making, these individuals also play a role in shaping the culture of innovation. They set the tone, establish norms, and create an environment where innovation can thrive or be stifled. Their actions, behaviours, and decisions send strong signals throughout the organisation, influencing how others perceive and engage with innovation. This emphasis resonates with Martins and Terblanche (2003) who articulated that organisational culture, shaped by individuals, or in this case gatekeepers, significantly impacts the innovation-led behaviour of any group, reinforcing their role as cultural architects.

d) Interplay with Broader Dynamics: The role of gatekeepers doesn't exist in isolation. It's intertwined with broader organisational dynamics, industry trends, and even global shifts. The decisions they make are often a reflection of these larger forces at play, making their role even more critical in the grand scheme of things. Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) discuss the way in which organisational structures and external dynamics work together to influence the innovation process, and help to support the

argument that gatekeepers roles are intertwined with the boarder organisational, and external, dynamics.

e) Challenges and Implications: Recognizing and understanding the role of these gatekeepers presents both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, their influence can accelerate innovation, ensuring that the best ideas get the resources and attention they deserve. On the other, there's a risk of centralizing too much power, leading to potential blind spots or missed opportunities. Drawing on the work discussed from Cummings & Oldham (1997), the stifling of ideas in extremely hierarchical structures emphasises the *double-edged sword* of gatekeeping in organisations.

In synthesizing the above observations with the broader research context, it becomes evident that the role of individuals as gatekeepers is foundational to the understanding of corporate innovation. Their influence permeates every facet of the innovation process, from ideation to implementation. As we navigate the complexities of corporate innovation, recognizing, understanding, and engaging with these gatekeepers becomes paramount.

Outlining the nature of innovation gatekeeping, as described in Chapter 4, the ideas of power and influence emerge as themes which drive the concept forward, and draw upon the frameworks described by both Tushman & O'Reilly (2007), and Chesbrough (2003). The narrative of the process itself encapsulates a strikingly vivid depiction of how the positioning of these individuals, as well as their personal motivations, shape the way in which they control and exert force on the organisational innovations they are view as being within their scope of influence.

As previously discussed, Amabile (1997) outlines the way in which emotional responses and creativity levels within organisations are aligned, and driven by individuals and associated human-centric dynamics. These emotional undertones, stemming from exclusion and mistrust due to gatekeeping, reverberate throughout innovation channels within organisations, and contribute to the resonance of the force applied to projects. One participant underscored this idea as the "pawn for gain", and reflects on how the individuals involved in the wider sphere of this influence are part of a broader game, in which they are not controlling players.

It is, however, crucial to remain aware that the gatekeeper may or may-not be aware of the influence they have, nor conscious of the consequence; again the frameworks from

Tushman & O'Reilly (2007) assist in outlining the nuances of this role, and the human factors which are at play here.

5.2 Innovation Project Forces - Direct Tooling

As discussed, the functional characterisation of Innovation Gatekeeping occurs through the manipulation of Force. In order to understand how this occurs, and to identify the properties of the phenomenon, two questions assisted in guiding the analysis:

1. What specifically occurs that enables the phenomenon?
2. How is the phenomenon enabled?

The first question attempts to answer with some specificity *what* is occurring when innovation gatekeeping occurs; what is being done, and by whom, in order for it to occur. This suggests that properties pertaining to this question are likely to be more tangible in nature. The second question is more nuanced, and attempts to understand *how* the process occurs; it proposes less tangible and more strategic properties which influence how the properties identified by the first question are deployed.

The analysis produced a distinction between these two sets of properties, as well as an understanding of how they interact within the phenomenon; this introduction to the properties acts as a prelude to a deeper discussion on how they were defined and identified, as well as the way in which they interact.

To provide a distinction, the term Tools is used to describe mechanisms which control the "what" of innovation gatekeeping, and the term Influences refers to the broader and more contextual "how" as to how the phenomenon is enabled. While the tools act as devices through which the control of the innovation selection and prioritisation process occurs, the analysis of the data suggests that they are governed by something else entirely. Separate from tools, which directly create a force which causes innovation gatekeeping to occur, another group of concepts emerged which had similar characteristics, and were derived through the investigation of the peripheral concepts, but manifested quite differently.

These concepts are described here as Influences, and as the analysis progressed, it became clear that they were not directly responsible for the selection and prioritisation process, but rather influenced the ability to access the tools, as well as the effectiveness of the tools themselves.

The Tools and Influences have several characteristics to them, which enabled them to be classified as separate from tools, and emerged throughout the coding process. Table 5-1 below outlines the key differences between the characteristics of Tools and Influences.

Table 5-1 Characteristics of Tools and Influences

Characteristic	Tools	Influences
Impact	Tools have a **direct impact** on the decision-making and prioritisation processes within corporate innovation; they are the means through which innovation gatekeeping is enacted.	Influences have an **indirect impact** on the innovation gatekeeping process; they don't directly produce force themselves, but rather they shape the environment and conditions under which the tools can be used and accessed.
Influence	Tools directly influence the creation of force through both intangible and tangible methods, which are used to exert control over the innovation selection and prioritisation process.	Influences condition the way the influence of tools is exerted and the availability of the tools; they are systemic and structural elements, which together indirectly influence the innovation gatekeeping process.
Control	Tools can be controlled, and are used by an individual or individuals, either consciously or subconsciously, who then deploys them in innovation environments.	Influences aren't controlled directly, but can be managed and influenced by internal and external factors; this control can result in environments which are conducive or restrictive for the use of Tools.
Nature	Tools have a more tactical nature, and are employed in response to a specific situation, or used to achieve a specific outcome.	Influences have a strategic nature and reflect the context and cultural reality of both the organisation and the individuals within that organisation.

It was evident that the phenomenon itself is almost universally linked to particular individuals or stakeholders from within the innovation process. This idea gave way to the question of what these individuals do to enable this occurrence, and consequently the identification of specific tools that are used to achieve this. The discussion of these tools attempts to describe the devices employed by persons in this position, as separate from the Influences influencing their use, it answers the what, not the how.

Table 5-2 outlines these tools and provides a framework for the subsequent discussion of their identification. It presents a summary of what this section proposes, in an attempt to enable the reader to better frame the idea of tools verses Influences prior to the subsequent discussion on their emergence.

Table 5-2 Tools of Innovation Gatekeepers

Tool	Description
Control over information flow	Gatekeepers have the power to control the flow of information within the innovation process, influencing which ideas are shared, developed, and implemented.
Influence on resource allocation	Gatekeepers can impact the allocation of resources, such as funding, personnel, and time, to specific projects and ideas, affecting their development and success.
Shaping strategic priorities	Gatekeepers can influence an organisation's strategic priorities by promoting certain ideas or projects that align with their personal interests, beliefs, or connections.
Impact on innovation culture	Gatekeepers can influence the innovation culture within an organisation, affecting employee motivation, creativity, and commitment to the innovation process.

Importantly, these tools are just that, tools. There is no suggestion that these are universally positive or negative; simplistically, these aren't a recipe for identifying subjectively "good" or "bad" influencers of innovation teams but rather are a cultural reality in that they work as a set of criteria to identify which individuals or groups act as Gatekeepers within corporate environments. This is specifically mentioned, as a vast majority of participants referred to them in a negative light; however, it must be noted that there were equally instances in which such tools were discussed positively.

The tools themselves emerge from the analysis of the peripheral concepts of Human Factors, Organisational Factors, and Strategic Factors; these concepts serve both as enablers and constraints in the way that they shape the context in which the tools are deployed; for instance, power dynamics may determine the extent to which an individual can control the flow of information, or allocate resources between teams, such examples are evidenced throughout the discussion of the tools and Influences involved in the phenomenon.

Expanding on this, Proposition 2 suggests that Innovation Gatekeeping requires the use of Tools, including the manipulation of information flows, the control of resource allocations, the use and interpretation of strategic priorities, and the creation of particular innovation cultures, which when used apply a Force, which influences the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects within corporate environments.

It is worth pausing to briefly quantify the use of the word Force to describe what is occurring here. While the word itself seems loaded, it is instead a word used to define the intangible pressure which is applied when individuals, or Gatekeepers, use tools to impact the innovation process. The word is used as it is suggested in the data that this Force is malleable (or can be altered depending on the intensity through which tools are applied) and thus exists as a variable Force.

Figure 5-2 illustrates the coming together of these Tools, as informed by the literature and research data, and visualises their collective influence in the creation of the Force described, which ultimately impacts the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects. This, together with the previous proposition, acts to continue the emersion of the theoretical model.

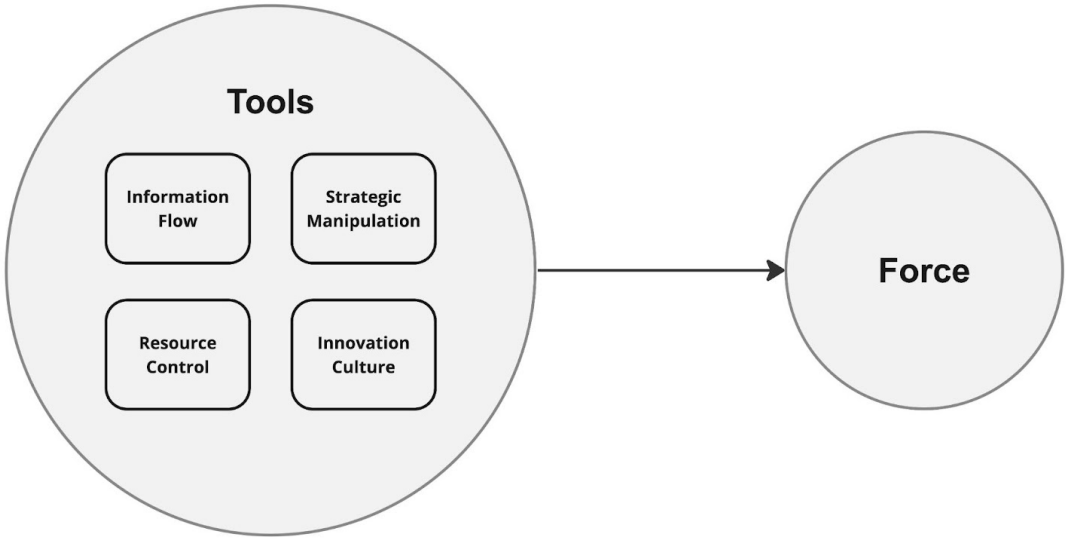

Figure 5-2 Emerging Theory Model: Tooling

The emergence of these tools from the peripheral concepts highlighted that there is no fixed relationship between them, and they can relate to multiple peripheral concepts simultaneously. Similarly, there is no fixed relationship between the tools themselves, in so far as the data analysis suggests. For example, in this same reference, a gatekeeper may

control the flow of information, and manipulate the resource allocation of a project simultaneously, in order to achieve their desired outcome. However, there is no fixed requirement for this to occur in order for the phenomenon to exist.

With this context, each tool can emerge in the form of a proposition, which defines how it interacts with the core phenomenon.

Using this framework, based on both the codes captures from interviews with innovation practitioners, and the supporting literature gathered through the analysis process, we are able to shape a contextualised view, and indeed a working definition, of this category, to carry through into our analysis of the interplay between Innovation Gatekeeping and the peripheral concepts. Succinctly, it emerges as the use of control to shape and form the flow of information, resource allocation, strategic prioritisation, and cultural norms of innovation projects within corporate environments.

For clarity, the amalgamation of these four individual propositions can be viewed as a singular proposition, Proposition 2, which describes the use of these tools, and the role that they play in the application of Force throughout the innovation gatekeeping phenomenon. The layering of this into the broader theoretical model can be visualised in Figure 5-3 where the idea of Tools exhibiting a Force on the selection and prioritisation of projects and teams is articulated as a single contributing element of the model. It's impact is still governed by the presence of Factors, as will be articulated in Proposition 3.

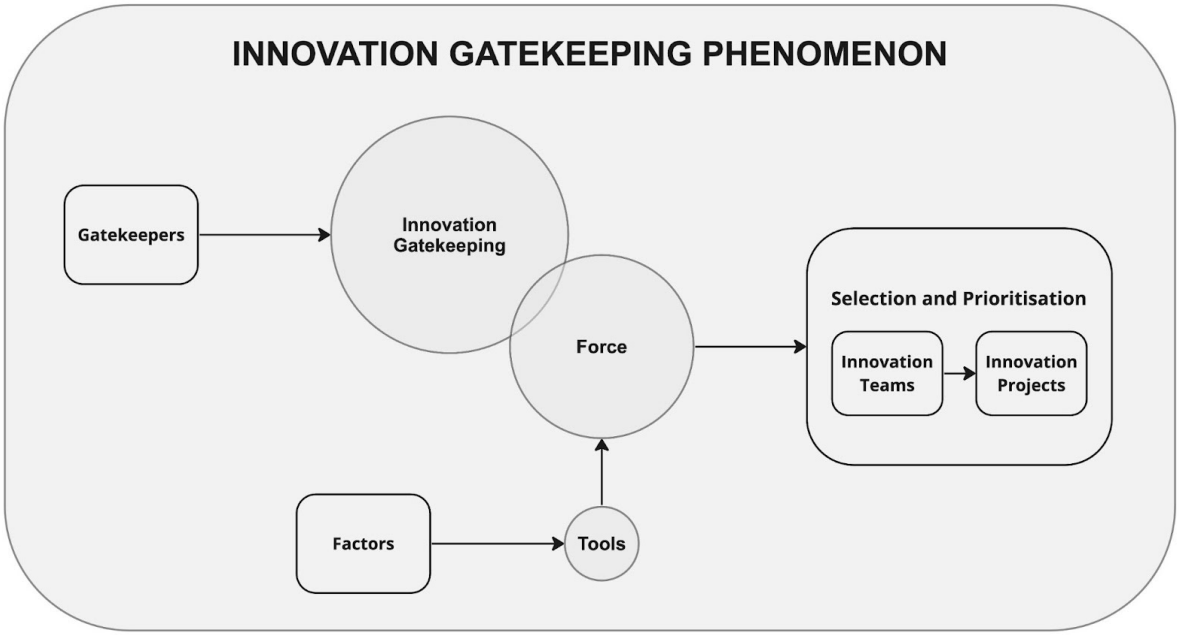

Figure 5-3 Emerging Theory Model: Proposition 2

Through this contextualised view of the tools used to shape the phenomenon of Innovation Gatekeeping, the “what” becomes evident as to the properties which exert a physical force on the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects. This then brings focus to the “how” - that being the factors which influence the way in which those tools are deployed in these environments.

Through the continued analysis of the peripheral factors, these emerge as individual factors in themselves; the subsequent section describes these factors and proposes a further series of propositions, which enable the enrichment of the emerging theoretical model.

5.3 Innovation Project Forces: Indirect Influences

Influences which don’t cause direct enactment of force, but rather dictate the way in which force is applied to the innovation process, are defined here as indirect influences, or factors. These factors describe the elements present both in the organisation, and the broader environment surrounding the organisation, which impact the prevalence of both the gatekeeping phenomenon and the way in which it shows up.

Factors fall broadly into three key categories, which collectively shape the influences which drive the motivations and reason for being behind individuals or groups of gatekeepers:

a) Personal and Human Factors
b) Organisational and Cultural Factors
c) Market and Societal Factors

What is notable, and emerged throughout the interview analysis, was the malleability of these factors; they exist on a spectrum rather than in absolutes. To better define this, they can be ascribed a metric which correlates to the spectrum they are on, supported with existing literature, and defined in full as Malleable Metrics.

These metrics, outlined in Table 5-3, enable the extrapolation of the emerging theory out into one which better defines the size and shape of the force exerted on the innovation project.

Table 5-3 Influences and their associated definitions as Malleable Metrics

Code	Influence	Malleable Metric	Supporting Literature in relation to tools
3.1	Power Dynamics	**Power-Reward** *The degree to which an organisation rewards its staff in their use of power dynamics to exert control.*	Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue the impact of power dynamics is directly proportional to the unintentional reward of those in power through continued promotion and praise.
3.2	Inclusiveness	**Empowerment Equity** *The degree to which an organisation promotes the equitable empowerment of staff and team members*	Kanter (1993) highlights the impact of power-sharing and equal access to resources as leading to environments where staff feel high levels of equitable empowerment.
3.3	Personal Gain	**Reputational Gain** *The degree to which an organisation enables career progression, or positively reinforces, the use of internal projects for personal gain.*	Ashford and DeRue (2012) argue that environments where individuals are able to shape project selection based on individual needs lead to the de-contextualisation of innovation projects.
3.4	Hierarchy	**Hierarchy Intensity** *The degree to which an organisation is hierarchically structured.*	Hage (1999) highlights the intensity through which excessive hierarchical structures infer the innovation potential of the organisation.
3.5	Resource Contention	**Resource Contention** *The degree of contention which exists over resources within the business; including human resources, financial resources, and technical resources.*	The degree to which resource contention is an issue in organisations directly impacts the prioritisation levels that those in power provide to innovation projects (Bstieler & Hemmert, 2015).

3.6	Dysfunction	**Dysfunction Prevalence** *The degree to which elements of dysfunction are present within the organisation (bureaucracy, rigidity, conflicting interests, etc).*	Christensen (1997) in "The Innovator's Dilemma" underscores the role of internal organisational dysfunction – such as bureaucracy, conflicting interests, and lack of clear communication – in hampering disruptive innovations.
3.7	Customer Focus	**Customer-Centricity** *The degree to which an organisation implements and practices customer-centric strategic decision making*	Drucker (1954) in "The Practice of Management" emphasizes that the purpose of any business is to create and keep a customer. A truly customer-centric organisation continually aligns its processes, products, and services to the ever-evolving needs of its customers.
3.8	Flexibility	**Strategic Flexibility** *The degree to which an organisation is flexible or fixed with its set strategic priorities*	Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) in their work on dynamic capabilities underscore the need for organisations to possess the ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments.
3.9	Time-Bound Incentives	**Incentive Time-Horizon** *The degree to which an organisation attaches long-term or short-term incentives for its staff based on its strategic priorities.*	Jensen and Murphy (1990) in their paper "Performance Pay and Top-Management Incentives" discuss the misalignment of executive compensation with long-term shareholder value. They stress the need for incentive structures that align with long-term strategic goals rather than short-term financial metrics.

This observation, and the application of a metric to each Factor, reinforces the argument that the Influences themselves are variable in nature, There is variability through which the tools can be accessed by Innovation Gatekeepers dependent on the degree to which the Factorial metric is present. This implies that it is the Influences that dictate the degree to which the tools are available; while there may be additional considerations related to the way the tools

are used, and the viability of outcomes based on the presence of Influences, this is beyond the scope of this research.

A view of how the interplay between these metrics, and the tools of the innovation gatekeeper's ability to exert influence, allows for an understanding of how the Influences ultimately affect the selection and prioritisation of innovation projects. This presents a further proposition, suggesting the variability of the Influences, in relation to how the Tools are deployed within corporate environments.

Proposition 3 defines this process as being: *The prevalence and effectiveness of these tools are not constant but are modulated by the presence of specific factors, or indirect forces. These factors can enhance or diminish the impact of the tools, shaping the innovation landscape.* It is this influence on the way in which tools are used, as highlighted in Chapter 4, that outlines the elements of the emerging theory which indirectly influence the outcomes of innovation projects and decision-making process within these teams, rather than the instruments which are employed to enact that influence.

To continue the layering of the theoretical model, Factors may be upweighted or downweighed in order to impact the prevalence of tooling within Innovation Gatekeeping; Figure 5-4 demonstrates this phenomenon and how it applies a fluctuating force upon the tools used to enact Innovation Gatekeeping.

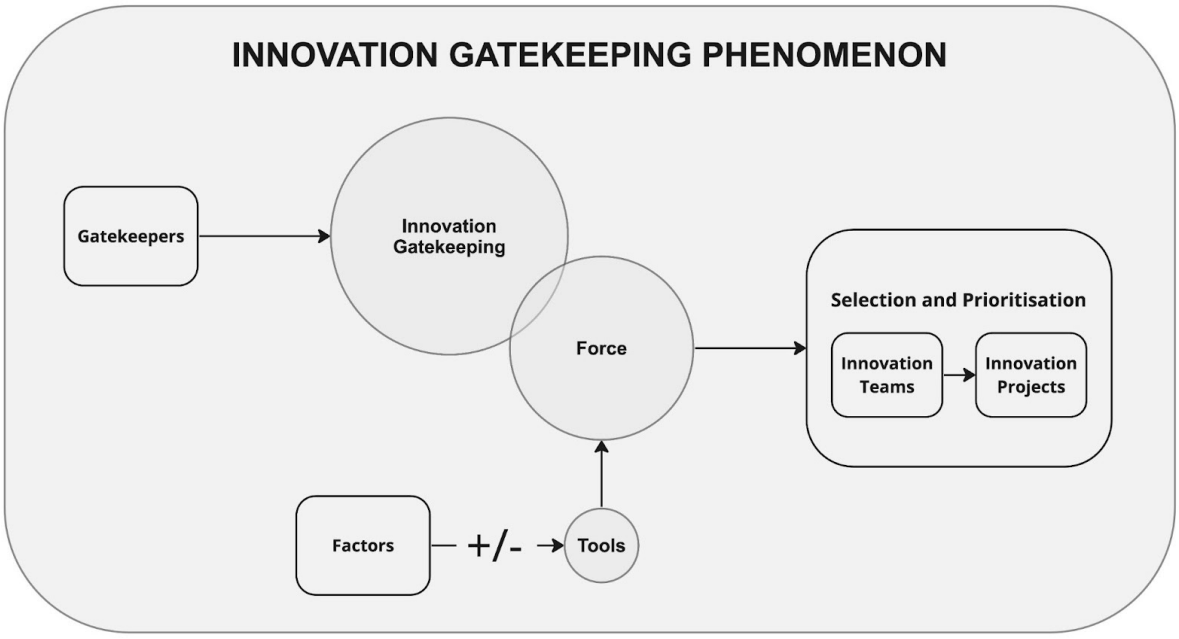

Figure 5-4 Emerging Theory Model: Proposition 3

5.4 Pace and Direction of Innovation

Finally, Proposition Four discusses the impact that the totality of the previous three propositions has on the innovation environment itself: *The interplay between the tools and factors gives rise to a force that defines the innovation climate of the organisation. This force, influenced by both the tools at the disposal of the gatekeepers and the prevailing factors, determines the pace and direction of innovation.*

Describing the way in which these factors and tools work together to both influence the individuals who act as innovation gatekeepers, and simultaneously provide them with instruments through which the phenomenon can occur. As they come together, it is a force which results which defines the dynamic of the organisation and it's innovation culture; together, it is proposed, these elements not only influence the way in which innovation project teams function, but that they directly influence both the pace of innovation, and the direction in which an organisation takes it's innovation efforts.

This proposition builds on the discourse discussed in Chapter 4, and proposes that the interplay between tools, factors, and innovation gatekeepers in central to the nature of innovation teams, and the decisions made within the context of the projects they embark on, and they ideas which they pursue. These dynamics reveal the amalgamation of these elements and the way in which they shape the climate of organisations innovation teams; to define this in detail, taking an example of both tools and factors, and laddering these to view the impact on the climate of organisational innovation, will enable a clear articulation of the proposition.

Initially, the tools at the disposal of innovation gatekeepers are pivotal in defining the trajectory on which innovation projects are headed; scenarios of resource diversion by influential managers, and the allocation of financial, human, and material resources, is a single example of this in action, where Tushman & O'Reilly (2007) reinforce the enablement or restriction of any team in undertaking selection or identification tasks when such a tool is used upon them.

This is built upon by the prevailing factors which exist within organisation structures and cultures, and are intertwined with, but don't directly inflict, the gatekeeping phenomenon. The hierarchical position and the ensuing power dynamics of gatekeepers are central to understanding how the innovation culture plays out, as highlighted by Chesbrough (2003) and substantiated by comments from both interview subjects four and five, who separately

discussed the presence of such elements in their daily innovation project activities. The emotional dimensions which stem from this, and the idea of employee empowerment discussed by Conger & Kanungo (1988), further outline the argument in support of this proposition; the level of empowerment impact the employees' ability to contribute to, or challenge, the innovation direction, thereby impacting the pace and culture of innovation project teams.

Broader organisational dynamics and industry trends also play a role in shaping the innovation climate; Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) described, almost 55 years ago, the rigid hierarchies and structures in organisations that amplify the prevalence of stifling action, and thereby affect the free communication and collaboration crucial for innovation. This assertion is corroborated by the narratives outlined by participants in Chapter Four, where changes in leadership or organisational priorities abruptly altered the resource allocations and objectives of teams, and thus the innovation focus and culture.

The visual representation of Proposition Four is articulated in Figure 5-5 below, which depicts the confluence of tools, such as resource allocation and information control, and factors like organisational hierarchy and employee empowerment, and how collectively they orchestrate the innovation climate. It illustrates the interrelations between these personal and corporation drives, and how they in turn impact the factors and tools which work collectively to produce the forces which shape the innovation selection and prioritisation; together this all impacts the culture of innovation in and of itself.

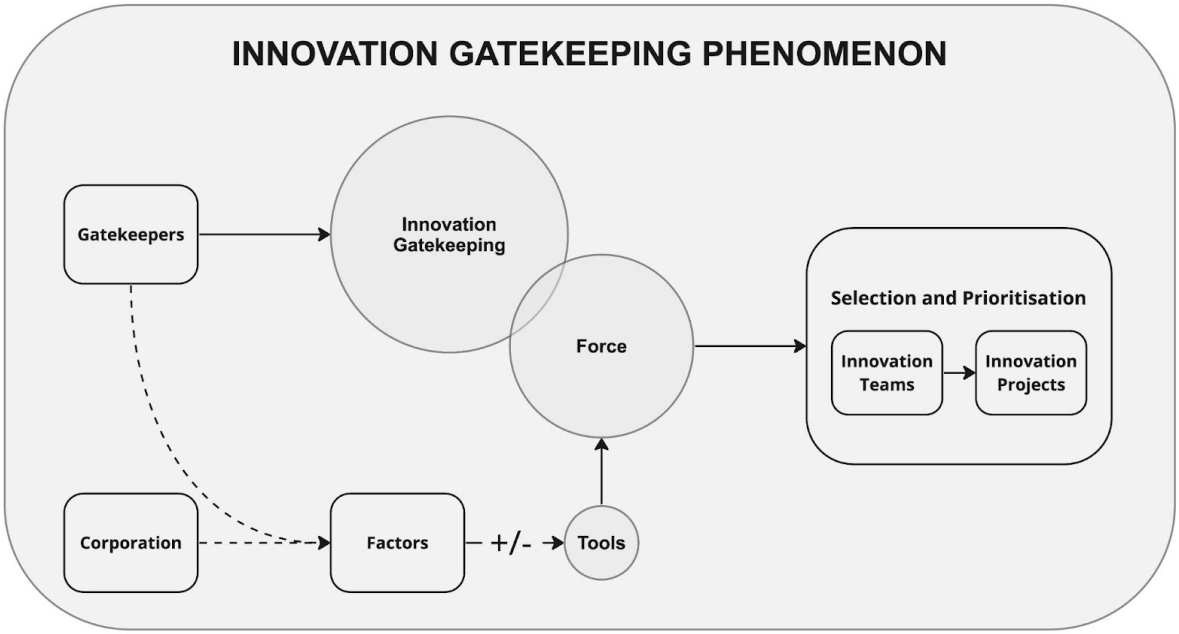

Figure 5-5 Emerging Theory Model: Proposition 4

Holistically, examining these tools, factors, and the interplay together, underpins Proposition Four. It underscores how these elements all work dynamically together to provide a clear visual representation of the innovation landscape within organisations, and provide a clear grounding for a better understanding of what factors exist within these environments that influence the ultimate outputs of corporate innovation teams.

5.5 Summary

Together, these four propositions come together to describe the emerging theory, that put simply, Innovation Gatekeeping occurs when factors and tools enable individuals or groups to influence the outputs of innovation teams within corporate environments; this results in a manipulation of the innovation culture itself, which is defined here by the pace and nature of the outputs of innovation projects.

The final realisation of the emerging theory can be depicted visually in Figure 5-6 below, which demonstrates the interplay of the propositions as a single flow of activity. The implications of this, and the potential for future investigation and understanding of its importance, is discussed in Chapter 6.

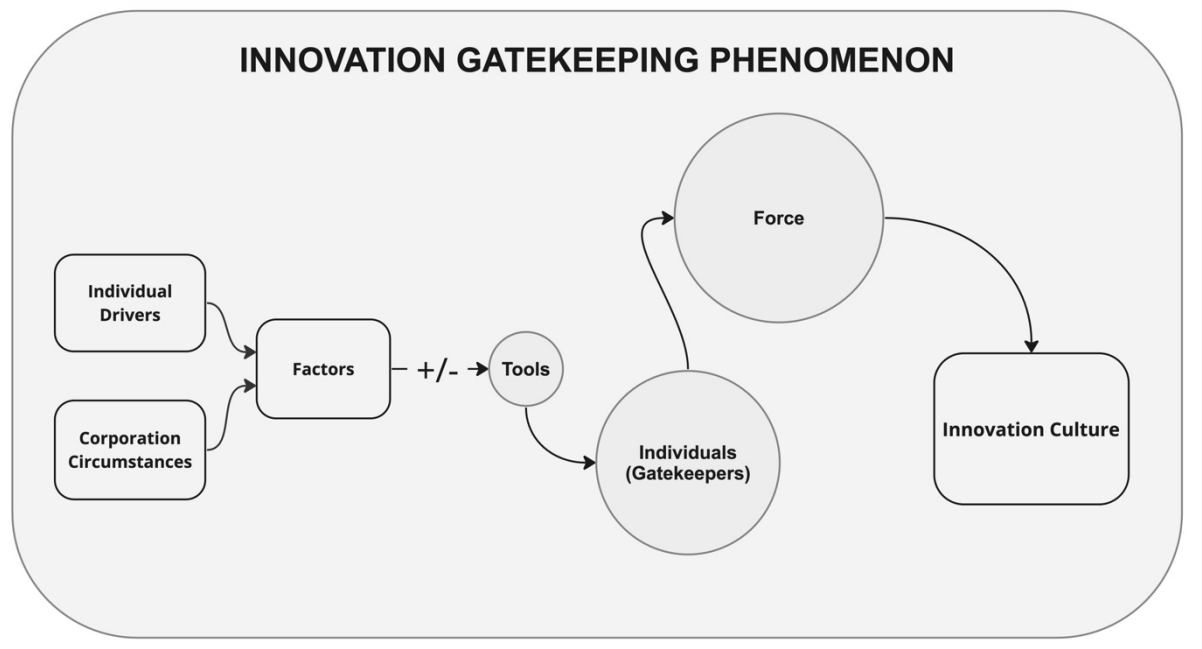

Figure 5-6 Innovation Gatekeeping Phenomenon

CHAPTER 6 Conclusions

This research sought to better understand the intricacies surrounding the influences on innovation environments within corporate entities. Through the examination of existing literature, and an analysis of primary data collected through a series of semi-structured interviews, an understanding of how individuals, often positioned in managerial or influential roles, serve as both conduits and barriers within the innovation pipeline; these individuals can be called Innovation Gatekeepers.

The core propositions which emerged from this research highlighted just how profound the impact of these individuals is on the innovation climate within organisations, and how their ability to utilise tools such as controlling information flows, or restricting resources, enables the conductive or restrictive behaviour of these individuals. Their ability to utilise these tools was controlled and influenced by the presence of factors, which are elements true of the corporation they work within, or the broader societal environment in which they exist, and create a tendency to promote or detract from the use of such tools.

The interviews provided a rich overview of the multifaceted nature of gatekeeping, and through this it was revealed that this process is both conscious and subconscious; the gatekeeper may or may not be aware of the influence which they have in any given situation, and may just be acting habitually or instinctually. The analysis proposed that elements such as hierarchy, power dynamics, and the availability of resource are pivotal factors which define the scope and pace of innovation, and how the emotional dimensions experienced by both gatekeepers and the wider innovation team members, bring human aspects into the phenomenon as separate to the drivers of the gatekeeper themselves.

Together, these findings underscore the criticality of a conducive innovation culture; the ideas of transparency, collaboration, and empowerment all stand out as key elements which work together to mitigate adversarial impacts of gatekeeping. Through blending both the theoretical insights elicited from the existing research, and real-world reflections from interview participants as well as the researcher’s own experience, a holistic picture of innovation gatekeeping emerged, and provides a robust foundation for comprehending any deeper interplay between factors which fuel or thwart innovation within corporate environments.

6.1 Implications of the Results

The findings from this work have a series of implications for both the practice of innovation within corporate environments, as well as the theory of innovation management applied to corporate settings. Key implications include three primary implications.

The first surrounds the dynamics of Gatekeeping, and how both the controlling tools and factors which contribute to the force are shaped. The understanding of how gatekeeping dynamics impact corporate environments within this study showcases the role of individuals within the innovation process. It suggests that organisations should think about mechanisms that can support both the identification of such influences, as well as how to engage with and foster the positive potential influences of these individuals to help foster conducive environments for innovation.

When it comes to tooling, the strategic allocation of resources, steered by gatekeepers, is one of these key tools utilised to impact both the pace and direction of innovation; such resource presents itself both in the form of human capital and material capital, but also as financial resource. Companies should aim to create processes and criteria for the allocation of resources which makes this process more transparent, and thus mitigating the risk of stifled innovation efforts.

Further, the factors involved largely tie into the less tangible elements present in the phenomenon, such as emotions. The emotional toll that the innovation gatekeeping process can take on team members, stemming from potential exclusion or information asymmetry, underscores the importance of fostering an environment which enables inclusive innovation; addressing these emotional aspects could lead to enhanced cohesion and more robust innovation cultures.

The second implication covers strategic decision making. The study highlights the need for a more holistic approach to decision making across the entirety of organisations, and showcases how such processes have a “trickle-down” effect which impacts innovation projects and decision making. Such processes need to take into account not only strategic objectives, but also the human elements involved in the innovation process, and how such strategies can change and move depending on the individual drives of those defining the strategy.

Finally, the third implication sits at a policy and procedure level, and suggests and requirement for the refinement of these at a corporate and potentially governmental level. Organisations may need to revisit and refine their existing policies and procedures concerning innovation management in order to account for the gatekeeping phenomenon; through this the goal is to produce a balanced and inclusive approach, that is focused on the good of the overall organisation and its members.

This study opens an initial line of enquiry into the process of gatekeeping within corporate environments, and offers a *mirror* through which organisations have the potential to introspect and recalibrate their innovation strategies. Through the process of addressing these identified areas of importance, there is potential for the creation of nurturing innovation environments which foster both creativity, and potential commercial outcomes.

6.2 Contribution

This research helps to understand some of the more underexamined areas of the field of innovation management, particularly within corporate environments, and through the lens of research which is not financially tied to the betterment of organisational innovation.

A key contribution of this research is the understanding of the Gatekeeping Phenomenon, specifically it's relation to Corporate Innovation Environments. Through the examination of the innovation gatekeeping phenomenon, this research project augments the existing body of knowledge, and helps to plug an obvious gap in the current body of work in this field; specifically, it unveils the underlying dynamics and dimensions which influence the selection and prioritisation of research projects, and proposes the way in which emotional dynamics and organisational constructs impact innovation. It provides a perspective on how gatekeeping operates within corporate settings, and suggests that this is indicative of individuals and their influence, as opposed to capability or capacity issues.

Further, this work assists in bridging the gap between theory and practice, and reveals the practical implications of gatekeeping in real-world corporate settings. The narratives and evidence drawn from the research and interviews provide a tangible basis for understanding some of the theoretical constructs surrounding gatekeeping, and provide a solid foundation for how the theory can be applied to the corporate innovation setting.

Practically, the research highlights the role of policy and organisational culture in either enabling or stifling innovation enables this study to put pressure on organisations, and wider

industry bodies, to develop better informed policies and managerial practices to assist in fostering conducive innovation ecosystems. At an organisational level, it also extends beyond the micro-level analysis of individual gatekeepers to incorporate broader organisational dynamics enables the project to better understand the macro-factors at play, and how these relate to the individual-level gatekeeping behaviours which occur. This provides a multi-layered understanding of the innovation ecosystem present within corporate environments.

Finally, through the exploration of emotional dimensions associated within innovation projects in corporate environments, this study represents a level of progress being made to understanding more about the emotional and human-centric aspects of innovation projects, and how gatekeeping sits as a core influential factor within these emotional settings. This view encourages a more empathetic and inclusive approach to innovation, and in particular to methods employed when managing and engaging with teams working within this space

This research, through both the findings and the subsequent presentation of the emerging theory, provide a foundational pathway for further study into the role that individual influencers have on corporate innovation and R&D, with a particular focus on the human-centric elements of these processes. By doing so, it holds the promise of fostering more inclusive and effective innovation practices, and the delivery of more innovative products and services.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations to this study are evident, and should be addressed if further research is to be conducted using this as a foundational work.

The restricted size of the participant group was driven by the desire to gather focused and intimate explorative conversations with subjects, and thus to gather more meaningful insights. However, it was also dictated by willingness from potential subjects to participate, given that the subject matter was potentially sensitive, thus influencing the decision to limit the study to participants who were willing to engage in unrestricted discussions. This intentional selection sought to prioritize ethical considerations and ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives.

With this in mind, the findings of this work may be influenced by the size and the diversity of the sample used when interviews were conducted. While efforts were made to ensure

variety existed within the interview pool, participants gathered are geographically restricted to New Zealand, and simultaneously were those that were willing and able to speak openly about their organisational experiences. Given these constraints, the perspectives gathered might not encapsulate the full spectrum of experiences across different organisational settings and industries. In addition, the study was cross-sectional in nature, and may not capture the evolving dynamics of innovation gatekeeping over time, or through different perspectives in a particular industry. A longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights into how the phenomenon and its implications evolve.

The reliance on self-reporting may be subject to recall bias or the participants desire to present themselves in a particular light; it's acknowledged that given the author of the study works in this field, this desire for personal representation may have been increased accordingly. The study also heavily leans on qualitative data, and uses a grounded theory approach to reach conclusions. While rich in narrative, this does lack a level of empirical rigor that quantitative data could provide should broader implications be drawn from the study; the absence of this data may limit the generalisability of the findings. The extent to which the findings can be generalised to other settings, geographies, or environments remains a question. The unique characteristics of the participating interview subjects and their respective organisations may limit the external validity of the conclusions drawn.

The analysis may carry a degree of subjectivity, especially considering the researcher's own role within the field, and the personal experiences of having worked in corporate innovation environments. Despite the use of analytical frameworks, the interpretations may be influenced by the biases and preconceptions of the researcher.

These limitations highlight areas where caution should be exercised when it comes to interpreting the resulting and propositions, and suggest ways in which future research endeavours could build on this study's findings.

6.4 Further Work

Aside from those elements explored within the limitations of this study, further work within this space which could be undertaken to both improve upon and continue to explore the findings of this study.

Potential areas for expansion include:

a) Exploring Inter-Organisational Dynamics

By examining the inter-organisational dynamics of particular corporations or industries, and understanding how these interact with innovation gatekeeping, a richer and more holistic understanding of the phenomenon could be developed. This could include understanding how external partnerships, outsourced innovation, industry bodies and networks, and market dynamics could influence the gatekeeping behaviours and the ultimate impact they have on innovation teams; this understanding could help better understand the potential longer-term mitigation strategies organisations could undertake to ensure positive outcomes.

b) Technological and Policy Interventions

Investigating and modelling how technological and general policy interventions could be used to mitigate negative effects of innovation gatekeeping could prove a viable pathway for further study from both an academic and a practical lens.

c) Cross Cultural Studies

Conducting cross-cultural studies to explore how different cultural settings influence the manifestation and impact of innovation gatekeeping could both help the findings of this study be applied at a global level, and simultaneously enrich a broader societal view of this phenomenon.

d) Development of Training and Development Programs

Exploring the design and implementation of training and development programs aimed at raising awareness, mitigation of negative aspects, or otherwise harnessing the potential of innovation gatekeeping could be a pragmatic way to enhance organisational innovation culture.

e) Impact of Emerging Technologies

It would be remis to not examine the impact of emerging technologies on the dynamics of innovation environments, and what further affect this may have on innovation gatekeeping. Particularly within digitally-driven organisational environments, this could provide contemporary insights into the phenomenon.

Each of these avenues could help contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how the phenomenon of innovation gatekeeping impacts the outcomes of corporate innovation, and more broadly, how the phenomenon can be harnessed for producing conducive and positive outcomes for corporate innovation teams.

6.5 Guidance for Corporate Implementation

To assist in managing gatekeepers, a multifaceted approach should be taken by those in managerial or influential roles within corporate environments, beginning with the identification of the role that gatekeepers play, and the understanding of the need for strategic management of their influence. To effectively identify potential gatekeepers, organisations should seek to identify who, either individually or within a team structure, has the ability to manage the flow of ideas or physical resources – once this is identified, understanding the motivations and biases of these individuals will enable the alignment of their actions with the broader organisation innovation goals.

To mitigate any potential negative impacts such gatekeepers may have, managers or HR teams could implement transparent processes for idea evaluation and development, and help to ensure anyone within the organisation can see and understand the diversity of ideas considered throughout innovation processes. This could include establishing a formal mechanism for idea submission and review, establishing a way to mitigate the potential influence of specific individuals on this process. Training processes focused on the recognition and management of cognitive biases could also be beneficial for these identified potential gatekeepers to ensure self-awareness throughout ideation and selection processes.

Alongside this, creating teams which span functions and disciplines, including individuals with varying levels of influence and expertise, could help in balancing the power dynamics within team environments, and ensuring the fair evaluation of concepts and ideas. Reviewing such processes regularly, and fostering a culture of positive-change and willingness to adapt based on collective feedback and results could support the mitigation of negative influence from gatekeepers.

Finally, for leadership teams to effectively manage this influence on a broader scale, actively engaging with and integrating gatekeepers into the innovation processes itself could prove to leverage their capabilities in a positive manner. By engaging gatekeepers early on in the

innovation process, and by involving them in strategic discussions at a goal and strategy level, leaders could leverage the unique capabilities of these individuals and reduce the potential of such individuals to become bottlenecks – encouraging gatekeepers to share their knowledge and networks could help to enhance the flow of information and ideas, fostering a move innovative culture overall.

6.6 Conclusion

The exploration into innovation gatekeeping, particularly with the authors own interest and background in the field, has helped to answer questions which have remained the realm of speculation both at a practical and a theoretical level. The journey through the literature review, the interviews, and the analysis process has illuminated the intricacies of the phenomenon, and carved pathways for potential future enquiry.

The findings underscore the role of individuals as innovation gatekeepers, and the influences that these individuals have over the innovation climate and culture within the environments they operate within. Through the lens of organisational hierarchies, decision-making dynamics, and cultural architectures, a nuanced understanding of innovation gatekeeping emerged; through this the conceptual framework and four key propositions developed help to contribute to the academic discourse, and provide pragmatic insights for organisations aiming to foster conducive innovation environments.

This study, however, is a single stepping stone in the broader world of organisational innovation theory and research. The intersections of personal, organisational, and industry dynamics offer the potential for fertile ground on which further exploration and understanding can be undertaken. Recommendations for further work delineate a potential roadmap that, if pursued, could help to enhance the understanding and management of innovation gatekeeping, and impact the overall use of the dramatic financial remit which is held by corporate R&D teams.

The overarching aspiration is that the insights produced here will serve as a catalyst for both academics to further understand the space, and practical advancements to occur in understanding and navigating the outputs of corporate innovation environments. The proposed continued lines of inquiry aim to enable organisations to be better equipped to harness the full potential of their innovation capabilities, and foster cultures that not only embrace, but thrive on the boundless possibilities that innovation presents.

With a mix of both reflection and anticipation, the conclusion of this project marks both an end and a beginning – an end to the academic enquiry which set out to plug a gap in existing research, and the beginning to an extended dialogue and exploration, aimed at nurturing innovation ecosystems that are more inclusive, dynamic, effective, and ultimately, produce more incredible things for the good of everyone.

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APPENDIX A – SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTION GUIDE

Section One: General Information

- Tell me about your role and what you do.
- What does a typical day look like for you?
- What drove you to want to do this job?

Section Two: Insight Gathering Process

- Talk me through your process of coming up with new innovative ideas.
- Tell me about your insight-gathering process, how do you go about it?
- What is the difference between a good insight, and a not-so-good one?
- How do you select the insights you want to use to progress to a project?

Section Three: Projects & Problems

- When you begin working on a project, how do you go about selecting the problem that you're trying to solve?
- Tell me about a project that didn't go so well;
- What was the problem you were trying to solve?
- Talk me through an experience where you felt like you didn't have a clear problem to solve, but had to press forward anyway
- What was the driving force that made you continue?
- Tell me about a time when you had a clear problem to solve;
- Did it help make it easier to find a solution?
- What process did you use to define the problem?
- Talk me through some examples of problems you've attempted to solve, and how you identified the key problem

Section Four: Sharing Learnings

- Tell me about the end of a project; what do you do once you've completed something?
- How do you go about sharing the outcomes with others?
- How would you go about looking for learnings from other businesses or projects before you started yours?

Section Five: Philosophical Approach

- Tell me about what innovation methods you use
- What drives your desire to innovate
- How did you get into this space?
- What would be your dream innovation project?
- How would you define a successful project?

Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think would be important for me to know?

APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title
Insight discovery and problem identification in Corporate Environments

An Invitation
I would like to invite you to participate in a study being conducted to better understand how innovation and R&D processes work in corporate entities, specifically, the role of insight discovery and problem identification, and how learnings at the end of projects are shared, both internally and externally.

My name is James, and as the Primary Researcher on this project, I'll be conducting a series of interviews with people who work in the R&D space to hear thoughts, experiences, and opinions on these processes. If you decide to participate, I'll be asking you questions about:

- You and your experience
- Projects you have worked on, both successful and not-so-successful
- How you personally uncover new insights and problems to solve
- How you personally go about sharing the learnings from your projects
- Your personal philosophy on innovation, and how you approach it

This study is part of my Masters of Creative Technologies work; I'm looking to uncover the role that insight, learnings, and problem refinement plays in Corporate Environments, and what potential improvements we could make to positively impact the world of innovation.

What is the purpose of this research?
The study is focused on understanding how members of organisations who are involved in innovation and R&D projects gather and share insights and learnings, and how the sharing of these is undertaken pre and post-project.

A small number of practitioners are being invited to participate in a series of interviews designed to better understand how different people gather insights, share learnings, and general thoughts on the value of these processes.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
You've been selected for this study based on your role and work experience, particularly in relation to your experiences utilising problem identification and solutioning methods, as well as insight identification. The criterion for this study is based on experience within the innovation and R&D space but is industry neutral, so we will be chatting with people across a broad range of specialties.

You've received this information sheet based on that recommendation.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
If you would like to participate, please let me know by responding to this email and advising me, at which point we'll organise a time for your interview. At that time, you'll also need to provide a signed copy of the consent form, which you'll find attached to this email. Make sure you read this document and the consent form in its entirety, and that you agree to all points therein before signing. You can either email me a copy of this or bring a physical copy to our interview.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?
Your role in this project is to participate in an informal interview, where we'll be discussing your personal experience and reflections in the innovation & R&D space.

This interview will be relaxed, so there's no need to prepare anything in advance. The location and time are dependent on your availabilities; we'll arrange these via email should you indicate that you wish to participate in the project.

Post your interview, I'll be transcribing and analysing the outputs, to see if when compared to other interview outputs we can identify themes or concepts which emerge. If you wish, you may review the interview transcript prior to any analysis taking place to check that it is factually correct and does not include any information that you do not wish to share.

At the end of the research, you're welcome to request a summary version of the findings; please indicate on the consent form if you wish to receive this.

The research will involve:

- A one to two-hour meeting,
- To be conducted at a place of your choosing (cafe, AUT campus, etc), to be decided on mutually.

What are the benefits?
This research is designed to help better understand how we can deploy insight gathering and problem identification within corporate environments, ultimately aiming to speculate as to what changes or modifications could be made to existing processes to produce better outcomes for all innovation or R&D projects.

Simultaneously, this project will directly assist me in completing my Masters in Creative Technologies.

How will my privacy be protected?
All identifiable elements of these interviews will be kept confidential, with only thematic outputs being used to ultimately produce the research outputs. Names of individuals, organisations, and specific project details will not be disclosed. Should examples arise in our conversations that would add value to that research, these will be adapted for privacy and confidentiality.

As discussed above, data security and confidentiality of who is participating in these interviews is taken seriously, and will not be disclosed outside of the core research group. Should you have any further concerns, please raise these prior to the final publication of the project.

What are the costs of participating in this research?
There is no cost to participate in this research, other than approximately one hour of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?
You have two weeks to consider your participation in this research.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?
At the conclusion of the research, you'll receive a one-page outline of the key findings. If the research is published, you'll also receive a link to the publication for your reference.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?
Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *[redacted].*