ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS IN THE FRONT END OF INNOVATION

AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY

By:
Linda Nilsson – 810411
Steinthor Oskarsson – 780815

Examiner: Bernd Hofmaier
Supervisor: Henrik Florén

Halmstad University
School of Business and Engineering
Management of Innovation & Business Development – TPA
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Acknowledgement

Writing a master thesis is a phase that sure is interesting and challenging. On these few months that we have worked on this we have faced many obstacles that we have had to overcome and by putting work and effort to it we have managed. Problems are only unsolved tasks.

We have also become quite specialized in the area of research, which we find very interesting. It is both connected to our studies at Halmstad University as well as we can see the connection to the practical world of organizations. It was interesting to visit all the six companies we collected our data from. We saw the environment within Research and Development (R&D) departments and how it differs between companies.

We appreciate all the help we received while constructing the thesis. We compared the collected data ourselves and discussed with other students who worked with their thesis at the same time. We took part in thesis seminars where we got great implementations for our thesis work. We are very grateful for this support. We would also like to thank Bernd Hofmaier for advising with selection of literature and good suggestions. Special thanks would we like to give to our supervisor, Henrik Florén, who gave us good advises and support during the whole process.

We are very grateful to the respondents of our empirical findings. They where very cooperative and made all our process during the interviews very easy. They are all busy people who gave time from their daily work to respond our questions in the name of science.
Abstract

New product development (NPD), represent a valuable source for companies’ future sustainability and development. Previous literature underline the importance of managing the early period of NPD, since this can increase the performance and consequently reduce the products time to market. Organizational politics is present during the whole innovation process, but especially in the front end where there is uncertainty or dissent about choices. For this reason, contributing a developed understanding of organizational politics within the front end of innovation (FEI), is the aim of this study.

The theoretical framework of this study combines prior theories that relate to the organizational politics. The structure of it is based on two elements referring to the individual- and the organizational elements. Organizational elements can further be particularised to structural- and strategical elements.

A qualitative study and a research design with six interviews, where conducted in six innovative firms of all size. This choice of methodology reflects the explorative purpose of this research. The empirical data are only primary data, collected during the interviews with Research and Development (R&D) managers and R&D subordinates.

The analysis of empirical findings revealed relevant conclusions, which can bring value to the research area, and also to the practice. Our findings show that diverse sources of organizational politics can be identified in the front end of innovation. Organizational politics both on the individual and organizational level are identified. Further its we find that informal and formal power is distributed both in the organizational level and the individual level.

The study’s practical relevance consists in the advices and implications to decision makers of innovative companies and managers within R&D. By identifying and increasing knowledge in the field of organizational politics in the front end of innovation, organizations can make front end activities more efficient and therefore obtain competitive advantages. The theoretical implications reflect the organizational politics in the area of the FEI.
# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

# ABSTRACT

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 **BACKGROUND**

1.2 **PROBLEM DISCUSSION**

1.3 **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

1.4 **DELIMITATIONS**

1.5 **DISPOSITION**

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 **INTRODUCTION TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

2.2 **THE CONCEPT OF POWER**

2.3 **INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS**

2.3.1 **CHAMPIONS AND PROMOTORS**

2.3.2 **INFLUENCE TACTICS**

2.3.3 **CHARACTERISTICS**

2.4 **ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS**

2.4.1 **DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION**

2.4.2 **PROJECT SELECTION**

2.4.3 **ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES**

2.4.4 **GOALS**

2.5 **MODEL FOR THE ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS IN THE FEI**

## 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 **RESEARCH APPROACH**

3.2 **RESEARCH STRATEGY**

3.3 **RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION**

3.4 **DATA ANALYSIS**

3.5 **RESEARCH VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

## 4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 **INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS**

4.1.1 **CHAMPIONS AND PROMOTORS**

4.1.2 **INFLUENCE TACTICS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

4.2 **ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS**

4.2.1 **DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION**

4.2.2 **PROJECT SELECTION**

4.2.3 **ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES**

4.2.4 **GOALS**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ANALYSIS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1</td>
<td>CHAMPIONS AND PROMOTORS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2</td>
<td>INFLUENCE TACTICS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3</td>
<td>CHARACTERISTICS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>PROJECT SELECTION</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4</td>
<td>GOALS</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>FURTHER RESEARCH</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIST OF REFERENCES</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

In the introduction we will explain the context and contribution to our research. We will start by briefly defining innovation and the front end of innovation. Furthermore, we will discuss the problem detected, the purpose of the study and finally propose our research question.

1.1 Background

Innovations are extremely important for organizations. In 1942, Schumpeter put emphasis on the importance of innovation for the business firm and society as a whole, and that is seldom disputed. Van de Ven expressed in 1986 the need for understanding and managing of innovation. This is of great interest and especially so today, in an everyday changing environment with pressure to get products to the market faster than any time before. Hadjamanolis defined innovation as ”The search for and the discovery, development, improvement, adoption and commercialization of new processes, new products and new organizational structures and procedures” (2003, p. 559).

The front end of innovation (FEI) is the stage consisting of idea generation. It begins when an opportunity is first considered for further exploration. It is the period between when ideas for new products are discovered and the product concept is deemed appropriate for formal development (Kim & Wilemon, 2002). It is the activities that occur before the formal and structured product and process development (Koen et al., 2001), or as defined by Kim and Wilemon (2002), the FEI is the stage before the decision of entering into formal development is taken. Khurana and Rosenthal (1998) define the FEI as being complete when the organization commits to capitalize or launch new product development (NPD) projects or decide to change or cancel it. FEI activities help to bring up a more distinct picture of products and their relation to market requirements, and to make plans and estimate required resources for projects (Khurana and Rosenthal, 1997). Furthermore, it is the period where the organization formulates product concepts and determines if and what resources that need to be invested in developing the idea (Kim & Wilemon, 2002).

The FEI-phase is presented as one of the greatest opportunities for improvements in the whole innovation process (Koen et al., 2001). However, managers of innovative organizations indicate that the FEI is the part of the innovation process where most weaknesses are found (Khurana & Rosenthal, 1997, p. 103). Those weaknesses are according to Khurana and Rosenthal (1997, p.103) mainly:

- Cancellation of new ideas due to their mismatch to the company’s strategy.
- Lack of human resources to work on new project, as key players are occupied in existing projects.
Frequent delay of product introduction in a competitive market where product life cycle is short. Since the FEI often can be chaotic, unpredictable and unstructured (Koen et al., 2001), previous studies have shown that possible improvements can be done. Improvements can mean less failures of new product development products as the origins of failures often can be found in the beginning of the process. Studies also show that it can increase the performance and reduce the products time to market. Kim and Wilemon (2002) point out that understanding the importance of the early phases of NPD (the FEI), can lead to competitive advantages and even be defined as a core competence.

Clearly, the FEI is a phase where many decisions needs to be taken. To those who invest in innovation strategy, investing in organizational politics is an alternative to increase the chances of achieving competitive advantages. This is seen by Baron (1995) who suggests that corporations should invest in non-marketing strategies, such as political strategies, as an optional investment with other innovation strategical investments. With that kind of strategy organizations can obtain competitive advantages (Baron, 1995).

1.2 Problem discussion

The American scientists Herbert Simon and James March book, Organizations, from 1958, followed by Richard Cyert and Marchs’s A behavioral theory of the firm in 1961, changed the focus of organizational power and politics. Where earlier researchers had assumed that organizational decision-making was a strictly rational process, Simon and March argued that you have to take the organization’s internal politics into account and that decision makers seldom agree about where the organization should go or how it should get there (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Stimulated by this, along with Burns and Stalker’s The Management of Innovation, a new strand within organizational theory, usually referred to as organizational politics, began to develop (Weissberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011).

Organizational politics is defined as “activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcome in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissent about choices” (Pfeffer, 1981, p.7), which there clearly are many of in the FEI-phase. Further, Pfeffer sees the decisions taken within organization as the result of strategic actions of individual or collective actors who use power and politics to reach their often divergent and potentially conflicting goals.

Divergent thinking in the initiation process (the FEI) of NPD projects has always been emphasized, and the assumption that functional rationality with shared goals among all organizational members in NPD decision processes exist is today rare (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011). This divergent thinking can however lead to power conflicts between individuals. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) indicate that individuals with the most power within organization tend to prevail in decision-making processes via certain influence tactics. Power can result from both
organizational structure such as formal power and from personal attributes, often referred to as informal power (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).

The role that power plays in innovation appears, according to Maute and Locander (1994), from three factors. First of all, the development of strategic innovations creates new demands for resources for the whole organization. Second, even though these demands are huge, managers with formal responsibility for new product development only have limited authority to acquire these resources from the people involved. Third, even though managers and other people with interest in the organization are independent, to share resources and make decisions together about goals, conflicts among and between these actors are two of the fundamental activities of organizational life. How resources are allocated between NPD projects is affected both by how power is distributed within the firm and by political activity between involved actors. All decision makers are faced with the difficult problem of resource allocation, a problem that is not facilitated by the already risky area of NPD (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011). “Innovation is not only a technological but also a socio-political process, which implies that the fate and the result of an R&D project is shaped by how influence is exercised” (Petersen, 2010).

The research within the area of organizational politics within the FEI is limited to date. Some of the existing literature discusses barriers to innovation, and how they can be overcome (e.g. Petersen, 2010; Hadjimanolis, 2003). A few articles discuss the selection process in NPD, and some of them explore the socio-politics among NPD managers (e.g. Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011; Maute & Locander, 1994). However, to our knowledge, no literature has combined all of these aspects into one discussion and used it to perform an empirical study. Consequently, there is an evident gap of research in this area. This discussion leads us towards the purpose of our study.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of our study is to explore what sources of organizational politics can be identified in the FEI. We want to define sources that materialize organizational politics within organizations and how they affect its operation on the individual and organizational level.

Increased knowledge in this field gives managers in innovative companies a chance to learn and understand more about the nature of their environment. More knowledge within the area of the FEI can lead to better management of this uncertain stage. This helps organizations to make front end activities more efficient, which leads to increased performance and, in the end, better competitiveness of the firm.

Research question

What sources of organizational politics can be identified in front-end of innovation?
1.4 Delimitations

In this study we are only examining the organizational politics from the viewpoint of developers and managers within R&D departments who work within the FEI. We do not look at other stakeholders and their involvement in organizational politics.

We have selected companies for our empirical findings that are based and operate in the region of Halland in Sweden. Though it is not obvious it might be a limitation to our research when results are compared to companies from other regions or countries based on different cultures and differences in laws and regulations.

1.5 Disposition

The first chapter of the thesis is the Introduction. In chapter two, Discussion of literature and theoretical framework, literature is introduced along with the theories applied in the research. Chapter three presents the Methodology and strategy used for collecting our empirical data along with potential drawbacks of the particular method. In chapter four, Empirical findings, we present our data which is collected through interviews. In chapter five, Analysis, we link together and analyse our empirical findings and theoretical framework with the aim of concluding our research and answer our research question.

Model 1 - Structure of thesis
2 Theoretical framework

In the theoretical chapter we create a framework out of existing literature and theory on the subject of organizational politics and organizational politics in the front end of innovation. With this theory, we will create a framework for our data collection of empirical findings. Theory will then be analysed with empirical data with the aim of answering our research question.

2.1 Introduction to theoretical framework

In this section, we will give a short introduction to the field of organizational politics. As said in the problem discussion, organizational politics is defined as “activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcome in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissent about choices” (Pfeffer, 1981, p.7).

For the sake of clarity, we have divided this chapter into two sections, the individual elements of organizational politics and the organizational elements organizational politics. Organizational variables include size, hierarchical level, organizational norms and functional dependence. Individual characteristics include self-confidence, need for achievement and locus of control (Maute & Locander, 1994). This is supported by Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011), who indicates that power is a result of both personal attributes and organizational structure. Thus, power is a core concept, both in regards to the individual elements and to the organizational elements. Therefore we will first discuss the concept of power.

2.2 The concept of power

“The concept of power is considered a core element of politics, as the possibility to make one’s interests heard and to add authority to them” (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011, p. 55) In a conflict, it is power that decides which preferences are enforced (Pfeffer, 1981). Pfeffer also states that “most definitions of power include an element indicating that power is the capability of one social actor to overcome resistance in achieving a desired objective or result” (1981, p.2). Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel claim that power can derive from norms that are deeply embedded in organizational structures (2011). Formal power like authority is only one source of power within organization and it often stands out because it is associated with hierarchy, a part of the structure of the organization which means that the individuals’ power comes from their structural position in the organization (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Informal power is often referred to as influence (Maute & Locander, 1994), which comes from personal power bases such as certain capabilities and personality traits (Petersen, 2010). Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel also describe these two main sources of power in the context of allocation of resources to NPD, as they state that the allocation can both be influences from intra-firm power distributions and political activity that occur between actors involved (2011). People involved in R&D can use technological information or knowledge as a relatively high power to influence project selection.
A power base is a personal or positional attribute, such as the characteristics and resources of the individuals involved, and the ability to influence stems from these (ibid). One of the main differences between authority and other forms of power is that the authority is directed downwards in organizations while the other sources of power works in other directions as well (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Maute & Locander, 1994). However, a position may give a person authority, but the exercise of authority requires interaction (Pettigrew, 1973; see also Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011) just like any source of power. Power is always exercised in a relationship between actors (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006), which means that power cannot be set up as a characteristic in itself, the individual must act (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011).

2.3 Individual elements

2.3.1 Champions and promotors

Schön (1963) was the first to introduce the term “champion”. Champions are defined as “people who (1) adopt the project as their own and show personal commitment to it, (2) contribute to the projects by generating support from the other people in the firm, and (3) advocate the project beyond job requirements in a distinctive manner” (Markham, 1998, p. 491). They also make use of “a variety of influence techniques such as selling, rationality, enthusiasm, and making personal appeals to other individuals for their assistance” (ibid). Howell, Shea and Higgins (2005, p. 642) show the behaviour of the champion as “(1) expressing enthusiasm and confidence about the success of the innovation, (2) persisting under adversity, and (3) getting the right people involved. The champions are recognized to play a key role in the innovation process and especially in the early stages where they determine the fate of the innovative idea by overcoming the implementation barrier (Petersen, 2010). These claims are supported by both Van de Ven (1986, p. 592) who states, “an innovative idea without a champion gets nowhere” and Schön (1963, p. 84), “[t]he new idea either finds a champion or dies”.

Promotors are people in the organization who, unlike the champions, help to push the idea/concept through the whole innovation process. The promotors are thus important for overcoming barriers in several stages of the innovation process, not just in the idea generation phase (Petersen, 2010). According to Maute and Locander (1994), two of the strategic decisions that power-holders have in exercising influence are the choices about influence intensity and influence method. Petersen (2010) states that a number of researchers have empirically tested what affects the use of influence tactics have. Mowday suggests two broad variables: (1) “Situational factors surrounding the influence attempt, such as the nature of the decision to be influenced, the person to be influenced, and professional or organizational norms regulating influence transactions. (2) Personal characteristics of the influence agent, such as personality, self-confidence, and years of experience.” (1979, as cited in Petersen, 2010, p. 4).

2.3.2 Influence tactics
There are many kinds of barriers to innovation. These can be both people related and firm related. Firm related barriers, such as lack of resources, will be discussed further down. The people related barriers of the organization can be both individual and group-related and exist due to notions such as bias and lack of motivation, lack of skills but also to the fact that the individual goals and interests can differ from organizational ones (Hadijmanolis, 2003). To overcome these barriers, so called champions and promoters, who use the process of influence, informal power, are important. Influence is the process in which people are trying to prevail over others to accept their suggestions and follow their advice and orders (Petersen, 2010). An influence tactic is defined as “the behavior one person (the agent) uses to influence the attitudes or behavior of another person (the target)” (Petersen, 2010, p. 2). These struggles for getting your way often occur prior to critical “go/no go” decisions in the end of the FEI, where some ideas are approved and some are not (Maute & Locander, 1994). The influence can be directed by employees upward towards superiors or lateral as influence among peers (Petersen, 2010).

In the existing literature, champions and promoters are widely discussed. In some cases the meaning of their existence are the same, both roles are identified by different power bases and contributions that lead to the overcoming of a specific barrier. However, some differences can be found.

### 2.3.3 Characteristics

Further, Maute and Locander (1994) show that individual characteristics such as self-confidence, need for achievement and locus of control are effective predictors of influence methods. Related to the personal characteristics is social intelligence (Petersen, 2010). People high in that are more able to identify social dominance and socio-political relationships among individuals, and this can serve as another power base (ibid). Social intelligence can be seen as an informal source of power, connected to those presented by Hatch and Cunliffe (2006, p. 254). They also mention the personal characteristics and the expertise, but adds “coercion (the threat or use of force), control of scarce and critical material resources (budgets, raw materials, technology, physical space), ability to apply normative sanctions (informal rules and expectations set up by cultural assumptions and values) and opportunity (access to powerful persons)”, as well. As these sources of power are informal, they do not correspond to the formal organizational hierarchies. People with informal power often draw on these sources in order to influence and affect those with formal power (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; see also Maute & Locander, 1994). The outcome can be that people at lower hierarchical levels can have substantial influence while the one with formal authority can have none.

### 2.4 Organizational elements

Organizational elements refer to structural and strategical elements. Structural elements refer to the build up of companies. Structural elements frame parts of the organization such as
distribution of information, communication, management and different departments but also different tasks and how they all function together. It is a framework of how organizations arrange their inner structure, communication and roles and how they allocate rights and duties. In some cases these things develop by themselves and are not strategically planned. Strategical elements, on the other hand, are a part of a company’s goal and plan of action. The strategy of the company is a conscious decision. Usually, it is formed by those in control of the companies. In the theoretical framework below, the organizational barriers to innovation will be discussed.

2.4.1 Distribution of information

As said above, how information is distributed and how communication and knowledge is shared is a part of the company’s structure. But it can also be communication among individuals. Maute and Locander (1994) see actions such as withholding information as a part of covert organizational politics. Information can be in form of knowledge, cooperation and communication, and especially knowledge is seen by Van de Ven (1986) as a very important part in innovation processes. Petersen (2010) points out the connection between cooperation and communication. Lack of cooperation in form of communication is one of the main barriers to innovation (ibid). It can harm the flow of information between individuals working on new product development. Information can also be lost permanently (Petersen, 2010). Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) see communication as one of the fundamental activities in product development.

2.4.2 Project selection

As will be discussed more in depth below, allocation of resources can cause many conflicts on different stages within organizations. New projects might sometimes have to compete with existing ongoing projects (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011). It is very common in organizations that the focus is on existing products or projects, instead of future products. Peters (1983) mentions 3M as an example of an organization doing the opposite, where they insist that their employees within R&D spend most of their time with the next generation in mind rather than following existing dying products. Van de Ven (1986) sees something similar as Peters in his discussion of idea management. He says that organizations as well as human beings are mainly focusing, harvesting and protecting existing practices instead of striving in new directions. This can be viewed as a structural barrier. Company culture is often cited as common impressions like shared norms, values and beliefs. In some cases these beliefs and values can form structural barriers as they do not support changes (Hadjimanolis, 2003). Peters (1983) seems to suggest that it is when employees are allowed to act freely on their own ideas that the more radical ideas are born. As said before, new projects sometimes has to compete with existing projects and NDP projects are often cancelled for different reasons. Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) note that projects can be cancelled when they do not match the company’s overall strategy. Lack of commitment from top management in form of not rewarding risk taking, and their lack of tolerance to failures, can be a cause of cancellation (Hadjimanolis, 2003), which can
be compared to Van de Ven’s discussion about idea management above. The risks of adopting new technological innovation and the willingness to take that risk can be challenging to a manager’s position and prestige (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel 2010). Cancellation has also been connected to companies’ structure as bounded rationality. More effects such as lack of information, as mentioned above, and evaluation of rules have been implied by Hadjimanolis (2003).

Another thing companies should have in mind when deciding what to develop and what not is what the market wants. Customer focus refers to how companies view the market needs and how the market develops. It connects to FEI activities as the customer focus is very important to the development of products. The FEI stage has to be connected to the customer focus as it is not practical to develop products the market is not looking for. Different methods can be used to view customers needs and explore customer behavior. Peters (1983) points out that most innovative ideas for new products come from customers. Furthermore, he shows how many global and successful companies obtain competitive advantages by listening systematically to their users and is therefore a part of a company’s strategy. Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) see that one of the main activities of the FEI is to define market requirements. Koen et al. (2001) have created a model for the front end activities. One of the core elements of their model includes concepts based on estimating customer needs. Kim and Wilemon (2002) say that customer involvement can improve product concepts. This means that the customers are a part of the organization in the way that they have a lot of power since the companies ought to listen to them.

2.4.3 Allocation of resources

Pfeffer (1981) sees the resource activities within organizations as part of organizational politics and implies that the political degree of resource allocation not only depends on individual but also on structural factors. Van de Ven (1986) sees resources as one of the most important elements in transforming innovative ideas into reality. Non-marketing strategies such as political strategies can conflict with the sharing of resources. The cases companies most often put their focus on are a part of their main marketing strategy and the cases that are delayed or discontinued are often connected to their non-marketing strategy (Ozer and Markóczy, 2010). Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) see project resources requirements as one core element in project planning along with priorities, tasks, schedule and supporting information.

Cabral-Cardoso (1996) states that processes within organization that influence allocation of resources are highly political. Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) also mentions that allocation of resources can be influenced by organizational structures. Herstatt et al. (2003) points out the importance of initial plans before it is decided to develop a certain idea. This is done to allocate resources and plan activities and also to set project goals (Herstatt et al., 2003). The process of selecting ideas and allocating resources is formal or informal. The informal process can include small decisions taken by a few individuals, and the formal process is often
used for bigger decision such as project selection (Koen et al., 2001). Balancing elements and activities in the front end requires balance between flexibility and performing the right actions (Khurana & Rosenthal, 1997). Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) see that conflict and different political modes of allocation of resources is influenced by lack of resources. They also see that allocation of resources is influenced by political activity between actors involved and intra-firm power distributions. Priorities of resources are something that managers have to consider in the FEI-phase. Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) see three kinds of project priorities for new product development projects, scope, timing or cost.

Lack of resources can affect the generation of new ideas in different ways. Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) see a connection between conflicts, for instance the lack of resources, and companies performance of innovation. Petersen (2010) finds lack of resources to be one of the main barriers to innovation projects and generation of ideas. Katila and Shane (2005), on the other hand, suggest that lack of resources does not need to have negative effects. It may also depend on, for instance, how new the firm is or on environmental factors.

2.4.4 Goals

Idea identification elements within innovative companies are usually driven by goals (Koen, 2001). Unclear or disputed goals can affect or harm the generation of ideas (Maute & Locander, 1994; Petersen, 2010). Petersen (2010) also sees unclear goals as one of biggest barriers to innovation. When a new product development project is ready to go to the development process, the project expresses goals for diverse activities and for allocation of resources for the project (Herstatt et al., 2003). Hatch & Cuncliffe (2006) also see that decision makers within organizations face many challenges such as competing goals, scarce resources and other conflicts. As seen by Cyert and March (1992) the development of organizational goals is a negotiation process. Different divisions of the organization do not necessarily share the same goals. Also, as mentioned in the individual elements, individuals within the same division might not either share the same goals. Organizations cannot be seen as a homogeneous entity with shared goals (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011). There is an obvious connection between organizational strategical decisions and organizational goals. When a firm applies a new strategy, marketing or non-marketing, it might have to reconsider its goals. Which strategy an organization chooses affects the forming of organizational goals (Ozer & Markózcy, 2010).

2.5 Model for the Elements of organizational politics in the FEI

In the model presented below we see a construction of the two elements of organizational politics in the FEI. The model shows the links between the elements and organizational politics and how the elements internally connect to each other, the organization affects the individual as well as the individual affects the organization. In the same way, individual elements can be founded from both formal- and informal power, as well as the organizational elements can “on
the paper” be formal, but since organizations are run by individuals, the role that informal power plays cannot be ignored.

Model 2 - Elements of Organizational Politics
3 Methodology

In the chapter of methodology we explain in detail the design and strategy of our research. We describe how it was conducted and also explain and give arguments for the different steps that we took during our research.

3.1 Research approach

There are two basic research approaches discussed in the literature, inductive and deductive. They are opposite types of research, and the decision between the two should be based on the purpose of the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). In general, when the researcher wants to test a certain theory or hypothesis, the deductive approach should be chosen (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The deductive approach means that you form a general rule and assume that this explains a single case (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The inductive approach aims at formulating a theory out of a set of empirical data (Saunders, et al., 2007). This means that the generalizable theory is not formulated until after the observations are made (Bryman & Bell, 2007). These two methods are most of the time regarded as exclusive alternatives, but since it is difficult to force all research into them the alternative is the abductive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Abduction, a combination of the deductive and inductive approach, is probably the method most used in real practice in many cases based on research processes (ibid). The method has some characteristics from both of the others, but is not a simple mix between them; it adds new specific elements (ibid). As explained above, induction departs from empirical data and deduction from theory; abduction starts from empirical data, but does not renounce the existing theory (ibid). Consequently, the research process alternates between previous theories and empirical facts that complement and reinterpret each other (ibid).

We are not testing any hypothesis, but existing theory in the field served as inspiration for our data collection and construction of our interview guide, thus, the deductive perspective of our abductive approach is reflected. However, since we attempt to study a quite narrow and specific area, how organizational politics affects the FEI, empirical findings can provide us with new knowledge about it, which can contribute to generating new theories and/or a theoretical model, and from this point of view, some of our thesis’ approach is inductive.

Epistemological consideration conceptualises what kind of knowledge in scientific research that are acceptable (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Qualitative studies are more connected to the interpretivistic perspective of epistemological considerations and less connected to positivism (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Shank (2002) sees empirical findings as inquiry that is grounded in the world of experience, meaning how others identify their experience. He further implies that qualitative research is an action that systemizes empirical findings to meanings (ibid). Systemize in the way of planning, ordering and following rules created by researchers. Qualitative research is a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3),
which makes the world visible by consistence of interpretive material practices. They further imply that qualitative research involves an interpretive, natural approach, meaning that it studies things in their natural context, aiming to understand or interpret phenomena in context of how people bring meaning to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Bryman and Bell (2007) further see that interpretivism in practice can reveal when managers of an organization base their management on a subjective meaning. In our study we try to research the world from the perspective of employees and managers in R&D. The FEI is a complex process and the political elements explored in that phase are activities that are normally informal and barely measurable with numbers. Our research aims to capture the interpretations of phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Also grasp the personal experience of the employees towards different activities that according to theory are subjects of organizational politics. Qualitative study and interpretive approach gives us flexibility to adjust our research as the knowledge of the area grows.

3.2 Research strategy

In order to answer our research question, we chose a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is, as mentioned above, concerned with words rather than numbers. Unlike a quantitative method, it is an effective way of collecting empirical materials like case studies, personal experience, introspection, life stories, interviews and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in the lives of individuals, and is considered to generate and develop new theories (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative methods are used for exploratory analysis with limited information available (Rasmussen, Østergaard & Beckmann, 2006), and the decision to use the qualitative method is based on the fact that the field of organizational politics in the FEI is still in its formative stages and there are only a few studies done within the area. It is also better suited when studying more in-depth social phenomena and makes it easier to gain more knowledge and understand a particular area (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Also, since the FEI is a rather complex area which requires explanation, in order to describe it to the respondents, face-to-face meetings where preferred. The qualitative method is superior in outlining the narrative from the respondents, and provide us with extensive details of their inside knowledge and experiences (Rasmussen et al., 2006). Using the qualitative approach instead of the quantitative makes it possible to look for specific rather than general characteristics, including aspects that perhaps not are evident at first sight (Hartley, 2004).

3.3 Research design and data collection

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) the data collection in qualitative studies can consist of interviews and observations as primary data and secondary data as documents and websites. We started our data collection by establish contact with the selected companies and suitable participants within them. The categories in our theoretical framework served as an inspiration for our interview guide. For the construction of it, we used the funnel model by Patel and Davidsson
(1994), starting with broader questions to include the central theme of the study, and followed with more specific questions which we tried to keep as simple as possible (See appendix). The intention of this was to avoid asking leading questions, while permitting the respondent to give more dynamic answers (Rasmussen et al., 2006). The interview guide is semi-structured and follows the main topics of our theoretical framework. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), semi-structured interview is not a very formal approach and can be flexible. The questions in the interview guide do not have to be followed completely (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and it was relevant to our research question and subject to have a guide but flexibility at the same time.

For this thesis, we selected a research design consisting of six interviews. This quantity allows us to do a more extensive exploration of the area and to see how the more established theories are applicable to the FEI, and increase the generality of the study’s result (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The research question and the conceptual framework are the most important criteria for delimitations in the choice of sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Theoretical sampling in qualitative research is done either through minimizing or maximizing the differences between the interviews and the comparison of data is used to generate new theories (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Our research question limited the sampling procedure to innovative companies active in the FEI, but since we aimed to do an explorative study, the size of the companies did not serve as a limit, but encouraged us to pick companies of both small, medium and large size, all in different industries in Sweden, since different environments can affect different political aspects. This gives an overview based on cross-industrial and diverse size factors. From those six companies we selected both managers and developers of R&D departments. This was done to get a broader perspective of the area and also to bring up as many subjects and activities of the organizational politics as possible. The area can be seen and experienced in different ways by managers and their subordinates. Perspectives that appertain to strategic elements of the organizational politics are often formed and penetrated by managers but affect their subordinates in a direct or indirect ways. The interviews took place at the companies in a quiet meeting rooms. It was insured that interviewee would not be interrupted while performing those interviews. The interviews all took around one hour and we borrowed a high quality recorder to collect the data (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.485).

Since this is an explorative study and not much research has been done in the field of organizational politics in the FEI, we think it is a relevant to cover as many different aspects as possible. This is done because people are influenced by their environment and organizational politics are almost as diversified as all the people who are involved in it.

With our research we want to explore what sources of organizational politics can be identified in the FEI. We have covered the subject of FEI and organizational politics in the introduction and theoretical framework. The key research fields of the theory were Organizational Politics, Organizational Theories, Front end of Innovation, Fuzzy front end, Innovation management, Organizational Behaviour, Socio-politics and Political behaviour. We have used libraries and databases to find relevant literature.
3.4 Data analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest two main forms of analysing data, within-case analysis, where data is compared against theory used, and cross-case analysis, where data in one case is compared to data in another case. Our approach will focus on within-case focus where data is compared with previous theories and present in conceptualization and frame of reference. When comparing to previous theory used, patterns are identified, whether data fits to previous theory or not (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (1994) define qualitative data analysis consisting of three concurrent activities, (1) Data reduction, (2) Data display, and (3) Conclusion/verification. Data reduction helps to sharp, sort, focus, discard and organize data. Data display means that reduced, sorted data and display it in an organized compressed way so that conclusions can be easily drawn. Conclusion is the final activity of qualitative research. There it is decided what things really mean. Regularities, patterns, explanations, configurations and propositions are notified (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In our analysis we compared our empirical findings with previous theories. We found correlations between the empirical data and theory and at same time we aimed to get answer to our research question. We went through the three main concurrent activities of qualitative data analysis mentioned above, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), which led us to the conclusion.

We analysed our data in order to get an overview of how the different concepts of organizational politics can identified in the FEI. By using the concepts created in our framework we could analyse the empirical findings. Many of our questions regarding organizational politics have to do with strategical activities. Our respondents were both product developers and managers of R&D department. Managers might experience strategical factors in a different way, as they often are a part of creating and applying a strategy. That could contribute to some differences such as how they respond to some questions regarding that subject. Our aim with the research was to get a broad overview and discover the big picture of organizational politics by looking at different sized companies in different industries or between different positions, not to analyze how each element, concept or subject from those different factors differs between different types (industry and size and even position) of companies. That is a challenge for future research and is discussed further in our conclusion. Information regarding operation and size of each of the six companies are not revealed as it may confuse the reader.

3.5 Research validity and reliability

The foremost reason for evaluating the internal validity of the data is to assure that what is being investigated is relevant in regards to the research question (Rasmussen et al., 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2007). By selecting innovative companies and people involved in R&D and the front end, we ensure that the area of research will be touched upon. However, since organizational politics is a rather sensitive subject some questions may make the respondent feel that they dig into a private realm or cover topics or areas that they think is sensitive (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Since
this can affect the answers of the respondents it is suggested by Bryman and Bell (2007, p.140) that “[t]he researcher treats each case sensitively and individually”. We started all our interviews by ensuring the respondents that everything they said would be treated confidentially. Using interviews for data collection where people provide part or whole of the raw data is subject to bias since the respondent may have incentives to overestimate or underestimate the effects of variables of a phenomenon (Rasmussen et al., 2006). Since we performed six interviews, we believe that our data is representative and as objective as possible.

Organizational politics is a phenomenon that most people are not concerned about in daily activities. It could therefore be that people in general do not have much direct knowledge about the field. It is therefore necessary to create good indirect questions that aim towards their daily actions and activities and avoid having theoretical questions. Bryman and Bell (2007) define that “[w]e use indicators to create tap concepts that are less directly quantifiable” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.159). In that way we create a bridge between our theoretical data and empirical findings. Before questioning we defined the concept FEI to those respondents that did not recognize it. This could affect how people understand the concept and consequently some of the answers. In order to decrease this bias, observation as a research strategy could have been a better choice. However, since the area is quite unexplored, starting with interviews as a method would give a good overview and the findings could later serve as an opening for researchers who wants to do more research in the field.

The external validity refers to “the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings.” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 410). The fact that we did an explorative study, and wanted to be as wide as possible when selecting companies, both regarding size and industry, our findings can be generalized to most settings within innovative companies.

Internal reliability refers to whether or not, in a setting where there is more than one observer, the researchers agree to what they hear and see (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In our study, both researchers took part in all the interviews, in transcribing the data, and in discussing and conducting the analysis.

External reliability refers to the capability of being able to replicate a study, and the possibility to other researchers to adopt a similar social role to the one of the initial ethnographic research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, the rules for this are less stringent in the literature on data analysis when conducting a qualitative study than a quantitative, since the role of the researcher differs largely between the two methods (King et al., 2006). Hence, we have focused on describing the methodological process as openly and visible as possible, to make it possible for other researchers to make a similar research in the field.
4 Empirical findings

In our empirical findings we outline the data and information collected in our interviews. Empirical findings are collected to compare and analyse together with theory and hence help us get answers to our research question. The information is arranged according to the different concepts that were formed out of our theoretical framework.

Since organization politics can involve sensitive personal information we decided to keep the information about our research participants and their companies confidential. That also encourages the interviewee to reveal information.

4.1 Individual elements

4.1.1 Champions and promotors

Promoting ideas

All the respondents seemed to have similar thoughts about what matters when presenting your ideas, one of the most important things seemed to be to have knowledge and to be well structured and prepared, as the respondents said:

“The guys that are more structured and write it down, think about it and present it in a good way are better”

“They need to present it in a good way and do some research before presenting it, if you do your homework before to support it, it will be easier to take a decision about it. A lot of ideas are just popping up...”

Idea champions

Ideas come from all over, customers and the market seems to be the main sources but others includes, users, service people, suppliers, salesmen and everybody within the firm. Asking the respondents about who comes up with ideas, they said:

“I would say most of the people are coming up but we have top five persons maybe...maybe they work with the products and they come up with more ideas....when you see the problems then you see the possibilities better than a financial guy that don’t see the improvements that could be done more directly, it’s the personality I would say, not a job, but a personality”

“We had one designer, she was very strong in that decision, she almost forced us to launch it, and we did, and it worked out! “.

Discussing barriers in the idea-phase among people within the company, the respondents said:

“We have a couple of good inventors in the company with a lot of ideas and improvements, but they are not so good in pushing it all the way”
“they can handle everything, often they are very lonely, they are working by themselves until they come to the point that they know that it would work, but then all the details, and all the many hours you have to work to get it ready, that they are not so interested in”, about people coming with ideas.

**Experience**

Time within the company and industry was another thing that seemed to matter when trying to get your ideas into practice, the respondents said:

“If you understand the whole business you are more successful with presenting ideas…”

“If there comes in a young one or a beginner with new ideas, it’s tough to go through the whole way...an older person with lots of good ideas have much easier to push his ideas through, the old ones they like to see their ideas of course, the old one maybe comes with a similar idea as the one the younger person already presented, maybe twist a little bit, a new angle”

“Of course you get a certain status if you have developed a lot and come with several ideas, then of course we have to listen to him, we are sure it is something interesting”

One of the respondents who had not been in the company for more than four months said:

“since I have not been here so long it is difficult to say, but in a year or so I will know more about the company and my role, before you know all the customers and so on, it is difficult to come up with new ideas”.

### 4.1.2 Influence tactics and characteristics

The respondents also discussed the personality of the persons presenting ideas a lot, they said:

“Yes, of course, it’s about how you present thing, some people are better and some are not so good, and of course you have an advantage of being charismatic and a good speaker”.

“Yes, it is from the sales people, some are very committed to their projects and try to get things going and help from different departments to do things, they are very goal-affected, working towards sales and have another mindset, its much in the personality”

“Yes, of course there are those people who do a little bit more than everyone else, they are very driven and then they get the power and then when they have it they take the chance to put their ideas forward, they are also very professional and they KNOW what they want to do, me myself, I am not that kind of person I think. That are some kind of people that just are that way and they make things happen, but I think they work hard to get there also....I don’t know what to say...but yes, without those persons a company would fail. But I don’t care so much about that, you just adapt to it that they are like that and I am not, if they have the energy to do that. If I do a good job and my boss thinks that I do a good job, why should I compete with them? I don’t know why they do like that, if it’s for self-esteem or to get the feeling that they are everywhere and, but I don’t know, it’s really hard to answer that question. Maybe the CEO likes them better, I don’t
know, but they are more visible than others...And in my former company I never felt any competition between colleges, it was more between products”.

Talking about why people did it, the respondents said:

“It is prestige” and “my ideas”

“You have to satisfy your own needs, that you want to do something, you don’t feel well if you have not made a good job”

“People are different, some are fighting a little bit more, sometimes just for their status”

However, one of the respondents had found a way to go through it, he said:

“People they like to see their ideas coming up and it’s also a way to get things done, maybe I have a good idea but I don’t say it, I talk to you and make you come with the idea, then it’s so much easier to get it through, so that’s the key...Colleges or supervisor, what so ever, that’s the best way to do it. If you have an idea, don’t present it, go to them and give them some hints and they and they will come with the idea and things would go...you need to know the rules, how to play your cards and get things done, that’s my opinion. You need to have some characters you need to cooperate with, or else if I don’t cooperate it will be very hard to push it, so it is important who comes with the invention so to say”.

Talking about what happens then, when the idea is there, the respondents said:

“Some are really driving things forward and have a lot of knowledge and attack and are not giving up, if they come to a problem they are not giving up, they have often knowledge far ahead for the end use”

“The founders of the company have had that role for many years, to bring it forward, but I start to see it now as we are growing, the founders are becoming smaller and smaller part of the company and we can’t be involved in every project, some years ago there where always one of the founders around to pick up the ball and move it forward, but now we are not that close anymore, we try to get the teams themselves to do it, it is not very clear yet, but we are working on it”.

Social intelligence

However, some of them did not seem aware of such activities mentioned above at all, when discussing all of the things mentioned above, one of them repeatedly said:

“Not really, we have always been customer oriented and everyone has been committed to the projects, of course sometimes someone are more committed, but no big difference, I haven’t seen anything like that, neither in my former job nor here In our company it’s very straightforward what we are developing, we know what we need and there is not so much discussion, most of us in the R&D department are looking into new ways of doing things, nobody is more dedicated to things than somebody else, we are all brainstorming new solutions to problems and we always try to help each other as much as we can”.
Relations to powerful persons

When talking about how important it was to have a good relation to your CEO the respondents said:

“I think it is very important to be seen! For themselves, I think it is so important for people, to hear that they do a good job, or just a small hello, to be seen, like a child “we are all small children”, “Of course we need to have their support, they think that R&D is important, the personal relationship depends on what you are focusing on yourself, if you want to have a high position within the company it could be good. If you have something in common and you also meet outside it is not negative for you at least”

“Of course you have advantage of knowing the right people, maybe you play golf with them and become their friend and things like that, of course it does impact, I am 100 percent sure of that, absolutely, I have seen that in several companies”

“I have only been working here for six weeks, but what I have seen is that the CEO, he is in everything, so you have to be friend with him”

“No, not at all, of course we do a lot of things outside work anyway and yes sometimes we talk about work related things but that it should be a better atmosphere to convince somebody? No, not really. And not in the company I have worked in before either”

4.2 Organizational elements

4.2.1 Distribution of information

All of the respondents agreed on the fact that the access to information is very important for the feeling of being involved, but it seemed to have both positive and negative outcomes, they said:

"Now it is more hierarchal, and now we don’t have as much access to information as we had before and I have been used to it so I miss it a bit, but, before, you felt that you where more part of everything, you knew more about how things where, I also felt that I could influence more back then”

“Our organization is open and easy to get your ideas and your voice heard since it is quite flat, anyone can have input on anything, that’s pros and cons for that, pros is that it can be quite motivating, you feel that you are involved always and you want to be involve in the process to improve things, cons can be that if you think you have the right to have comments about everything then you will have, it could be for something silly as for the colour of a room, if you don’t feel you have the option to have the opinion, then you don’t think about it, but if you think something and then someone else says “no, it wont happen”, then you might get disappointed.”

The interviewees all had similar experience with knowledge sharing within their development departments. One interviewee said: “We all work as a team and everybody have access to all information they need”. One company has development meetings with employees of R&D
where knowledge is shared. In that company and most others it was easy for new employees to get access to knowledge through existing employees. One company had experienced that communication and knowledge sharing is different in different teams and what kind of individuals whom are put together in a team for each project affects how the communication within that team works. We also talked about how dependent co-workers are of each other and all of them agreed that they are all helping each other and are working as a team and that they all need each other with all different capabilities and personalities.

All of the interviewees experienced lack of communication in different forms within companies. Some companies mentioned lack of communication between departments. Among others, the lack of communication appears within teams or departments. An example of that is when people are not informed about small changes made in some projects. As mentioned before, one company also experienced that employees wanted to be so well informed that they were offended if they were not informed of changes in innovation process that they were not working on. But in most cases all companies agreed on that communication between individuals and divisions are quite good.

4.2.2 Project selection

Project can be both on individual level as well as strategical level. Companies’ strategy can affect the focus the company takes with their products. Individuals within the R&D are the center of this. They are the one that develop their products and must be aware of what is happening on the market.

We asked the respondents two questions regarding the product focus of their employees. The questions where about if employees focused too much on existing products and forgot to look at the next generation. The other was if employees are so focused on the existing products that they do not watch the market for something that might help them or bring their idea into a new direction. One interviewee said that sometimes they were too focused on improving things and finding new solutions. That has resulted in that they have had trouble with finishing products. According to the interviewee they are too focused on the next generation. Another respondent stated that the company always aims to be innovative and is therefore constantly seeking new ideas. In that company’s vision it is stated that new products is one of their top goals. Other respondents had similar stories. Two respondents implied that the main reason that employees in R&D should not be too focused on existing products is the speed of the market. For the company to be competitive they need to be fast and watch the market. Focus on future generation products and on new items is generally high for all the companies according to the respondents.

Interviewees where also asked about the level of freedom of action for employees within R&D to work on their own ideas. The answers were on different levels. Two interviewees answered that employees in R&D do not actually work on their own idea but follow a plan. They have freedom to work with their planned project but the manager always knows what they are working on. Other interviewees considered the freedom to be quite high. As one interviewee said:
“if somebody comes up with and idea I would be surprised if he was not allowed to continue on it if its the cost is not to high”

One of the companies seemed to have radical freedom. The interviewee stated that they planned to go the “Google-way” and assign part of the working hours for employees of R&D to be able to work on totally new things.

When interviewees were asked about if products are developed “under the table” (this was explained to respondents), the answers were on both ends of the scale. Three of the respondents had never experienced that employees develop and work on their own ideas without others knowing about it. The other three companies recognized it. One company considered that it happened regularly. The inventor would then present the idea and a decision is taken if it is a relevant project to continue with. Another respondent stated that this has happened quite often. Sometimes an employee has added something totally new to a product, but it did not always follow the company’s strategy for the project. The idea may be good, but it was something they did not need for their product and it was not relevant to the customers’ wishes. This interviewee thought this happened because engineers within R&D have their mind set on new ideas and are not very focused on marketing.

Respondents were asked if employees get all the help they need with the creation and development of ideas (regarding for example time, equipment and capital). The answers where quite different. In one company R&D need to use machines from the regular production when doing testing on new products that are being developed. This may cost so they have to fight for it or negotiate for it. According to one respondent, R&D get all the time they need to work on new projects. Other interviewee told the opposite story. The main lack of resources for R&D is the lack of time. But in that company they have almost unlimited access to all the equipment they need. In other companies the employees seem to get almost all the help they need, though it is not unlimited.

Interviewees were asked if innovative projects have ever been cancelled. And as a sub-question, reasons for cancellation like too much risk, evaluation of rules and lack of info were asked. Most respondents had seen that happen. One respondent said that projects were often quit. In some cases the ideas are outside of their core competence and therefore too risky. In some cases it could be evaluation of rules like when demands for certain projects are not fulfilled. Another interviewee stated that they had never cancelled innovative projects because of risks:

“We are to stupid for that!”.  

4.2.3 Allocation of resources

Allocation of resources is often highly political. When working with or developing ideas or innovations in the FEI many different resources, such as time, money and equipment.

In all companies employees in R&D department get most of the resources they need, although it is not unlimited. Allocation of resources is mainly in the hands of R&D managers. Still it
depends on the size of the project. In the cases of two of the companies, if a product only needs a small adjustment, the decision of allocating resources for the process can be taken by project managers. When it comes to smaller projects, the decisions are taken by R&D managers. They also allocate extra resources to existing projects if necessary. All the company have special meetings for the decision of bigger projects. Normally, the participants of the meetings are R&D managers, developers, CEOs and more people. In one of the companies, the board of the company took these big decisions on similar meetings. When it is decided to go for certain project, it is, at the same time, ensured that the resources needed for the project are allocated. In most companies, the cost are the main consideration. In at least two cases there seemed to be more freedom with resources. In these companies, employees in R&D could make prototypes or tests for new products without discussing it with their superiors or bring the subject to a formal meeting. Although, it still depended on the size and cost of each project. One interviewee stated that employees get all the resources they need for their product development, but still they do not allocate time to “crazy ideas” since they have no extra time.

Interviewees considered resources to be equally balanced between individuals within their R&D department, and normally between divisions and teams also. One interviewee described the balance between division in this way:

“There are differences but there are also more problems to be solved, there are different needs for different departments”

The interviewees saw differences when it came to prioritizing their resources. Four of them mentioned time as what they need more of. One interviewee said that quality is the main factor:

“Almost only quality, the only cost we have is the time, so cost is not an issue unless it is very time demanding”.

It differs between companies if these allocation decisions are strategical, or just taken in each case as it comes up. In the cases of two companies most of the projects they work on are already in the budget plan for each year. These companies update their product lines in a routine way. For other companies, decision for this was more random and decisions about them is taken when ideas for projects or development comes up. None of the interviewees had noticed conflict between those who control access to resources and employees. Issues are discussed and problem solved.

All companies recognized lack of resources in some form. Five of the companies mentioned that time as the main resource. Interviewees from four of the companies could prevent new ideas from being generated when there was not enough time to work on certain projects or solutions. Often existing projects took all of their time, so, time for new projects was lacking. Two of those companies also mention that lack of human capital to launch more projects and therefore generate more ideas as one source. They needed more people in the R&D or someone to handle administrative issues so things could work faster in the development phase. One company did not experience lack of time but instead lack of equipment. Different teams within the R&D
department in that company sometimes had to fight or negotiate for the access to equipment, like industry machines used in the production, for test of new ideas they were working on. All of the companies claimed that this had a negative effect on the activities of their R&D departments and the development of new ideas.

When respondents were asked about project priorities (time, cost, quality) most mentioned time or quality. Of course all of them are important, but of those three, time was what five of the companies claimed to be most important. One respondent thinks quality is the most important. He said that their products have to be of good quality and customers are ready to wait if they need to improve function or quality.

Almost all the companies had some kind of formal decision meeting where they discussed and took decisions about ideas for new products or concepts, only one of them mentioned another way:

“but when you as we have an informal, it becomes like that, we try to be more formal about it, over the last years we have been more strict about it, you have to at least document it to get it into our feature request system, and when we have more information about the features we try to priorities after that. So everybody can see it and have comments about it, so we try to avoid those “talking in the hallway”, cause then its difficult to keep track of what is happening, it is also difficult to say no if someone comes and say “I could sell 500 of these, it would just take a week to develop, I have already talked to the developers”, but then we say “if its such a good opportunity, spend some time on it, and write it down”, and if they do we know its good, but if they don’t….I think its good to have some filter somewhere, to get the worst ideas away at least.”

4.2.4 Goals

Creating goals can affect how power is distributed within organization. Goal can lead to changed strategy or even changes in organizational structure.

All companies have goals for how much they should sell per year and their turnover. In all companies, goals are formed especially within R&D departments. Those are mainly goals for projects or for project teams. In two companies goals are formed into development plans. Those plans contain the project’s time limits, the financial part of each project and the role of each person within each development project. Goals are in the cases of two companies formed by R&D managers and in two other by the board. One company has a development council which set goals for all projects. In all companies individuals within R&D have personal goals for their role within the company. Two of the companies even have personal meetings with employees and managers of R&D, where personal goals regarding their job are discussed. Some of those personal goals can be a part of their work description. All of the companies had experienced that unclear or disputed goals had affected their work. In some cases it had delayed the process or project as they had to start from the beginning because of these unclear goals.
5 Analysis

In the analysis we link our empirical findings to our theoretical framework. This we do in order to reach a conclusion in our research and to answer our research question. The structure of the analysis is based on the different concepts of organizational politics we formed in our theoretical framework. Hence, we analyse what sources of organizational politics can be identified in the front end of innovation.

5.1 Individual elements

5.1.1 Champions and promoters

Champions are recognized to play a key role in the innovation process and especially in the early stage where they determine the fate of the innovative idea by overcoming the implementation barrier (Petersen, 2010). The champions are defined as people who show personal commitment to projects and try to get other people in the firm to contribute (Markham, 1998). Also, Howell, Shea and Higgins show the behaviour of the champion as enthusiastic and confident about the success of the innovation and very eager to get the project going despite adversities (2005).

All of the respondents mentioned that there are always a few people more committed than others and that those are very important for the whole innovation phase. Talking about the ideageneration phase, some of the respondents had different opinions about the people coming with ideas. One example was that some employees was more confident in their decisions than others. “we had one designer, she was very strong in that decision, she almost forced us to launch it, and we did, and it worked out!”. Also, it was mentioned that some employees was not so good in implementing the idea. “we have a couple of good inventors in the company with a lot of ideas and improvements, but they are not so good in pushing it all the way”. Another one said “they can handle everything, often they are very lonely, they are working by themselves until they come to the point that they know that it would work, but then all the details, and all the many hours you have to work to get it ready, that they are not so interested in”. Comparing this to theory, first of all we can agree to the fact that they seem to adopt the project as their own and show personal commitment to it, one of them clearly also expressed enthusiasm and confidence about the success of it. However, there also seems to be some problems on the way, which can be connected to the people related barriers to innovation mentioned by Hadijmanolitis (2003). In the former case there seems to be a lack of skills and in the latter a lack of motivation for pushing the project forward. According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), individuals with the most power within organization tend to prevail in decision making processes via certain influence tactics. Power can be both formal and informal. Informal power is often referred to as influence. Both of the behaviors mentioned above are political in the way that the people use their informal power through certain influence tactics to make things happen, in the first case self-confidence. In the latter case experience, used as an influence tactic to sort of make things not happen (Maute &
Locander, 1994). The persons who worked by themselves until they knew it would work but then was not so interested in all the coming work is relying on their experience and use that as informal power. They know that their ideas are good, and they know that the inventors also knows that. Their ideas are crucial for the company’s development and therefore they feel that they can do what they want to, nobody will force them to do all the, according to them, boring work needed to finalize the idea. Basically, people at the firm know that the inventors ideas are good, and therefore they will be developed one way or another even though the inventor stops where he/she can not or want not develop the idea further.

5.1.2 Influence tactics

According to Maute and Locander (1994), two of the strategic decisions that power-holders have in exercising influence are the choices about influence intensity and influence method. As Peterson (2010) mentions, there are many factors that affect the use of the influence tactics. Situational factors such as what kind of decision to be influenced, the person to be influenced and organizational norms that regulates the negotiations. As mentioned above, also personal characteristics of the influence agent such as personality, self-confidence and years of experience matters. As mentioned in the introduction to the theoretical framework, Maute and Locander (1994) show that individual characteristics such as self-confidence need for achievement and locus of control are effective for influencing. Starting with the situational factors, such as organizational norms regulating influence transactions, the access to information, also mentioned among the organizational elements, seemed to matter a lot. All of the respondents said that the access to information was very important for the feeling of being involved. They stated that access to information also made them more committed to what they are doing and they felt that there were better possibilities to influence, as one of the respondents said, "now it is more hierarchal, and now we don’t have as much access to information as we had before and I have been used to it so I miss it a bit, but, before, you felt that you where more part of everything, you knew more about how things where, I also felt that I could influence more back then". Here is a good example of how the organizational structure can affect the individual. The structure has changed through the years the respondent have worked at the company. The respondent expresses his/her longing for how things were when they had more access to information. The feeling of being involved seems to matter a lot, also the possibility to be able to influence. When you feel that what you do matters, and that you have the possibility to affect the way the company develops, you will most likely feel more dedicated to your work.

The possibility of being able to influence seemed to have both pros and cons. An open organization seemed to encourage people to come up with ideas, but this was perhaps not always for the best “...cons can be that if you think you have the right to have comments about everything then you will, it could be for something silly as for the colour of a room, if you don’t feel you have the option to have the opinion, then you don’t think about it, but if you think something and then someone else says “no, it wont happen”, then you might get disappointed.” Consequently, people who believe they can influence, will try to influence. Through the
possibility to influence they feel that they have gained informal power which they try to practise on everything, even things that really not matter to their daily work. In this case however, the people with formal power actually take advantage of it and says stop.

Another factor regarding organizational norms regulating influence transactions, as well as the ability to apply normative sanctions (informal rules and expectations set up by cultural assumptions and values), was what one of the respondents mentioned about their more informal decision making process “...we try to avoid those “talking in the hallway”, cause then it’s difficult to keep track of what is happening, it is also difficult to say no if someone comes and say “I could sell 500 of these, it would just take a week to develop, I have already talked to the developers”, but then we say “if its such a good opportunity, spend some time on it, and write it down”, and if they do that we know its good, but if they don’t....I think its good to have some filter somewhere, to get the worst ideas away at least.”, which shows that it is easier for the influence agent when there is an opportunity for him/her to do it more informally, and it is also difficult for the target to say no example above can also be connected to one of the informal sources of power, opportunity (access to powerful persons), mentioned by Hatch and Cunliffe (2006). The person sees the opportunity, and goes for it. Hence, this seems to show that people feel that it is easier to exercise their informal power in a more informal environment (the hallway), since it was not mentioned in the companies with more formal decision meetings.

5.1.3 Characteristics

Regarding the personal characteristics such as personality, self-confidence, and years of experience, mentioned by Petersen (2010), all the respondents except one mentioned personal characteristics such as being charismatic and a good speaker to be important variables when seeking for approval to ideas. Years of experience seemed to matter a lot, both years within the industry and time spent within the company, “if you understand the whole business you are more successful with presenting ideas, and your personal interest in getting things done also matters, how important it is for you”, “of course you get a certain status if you have developed a lot and come with several ideas, then of course we have to listen to him, we are sure it is something interesting”, “if there comes in a young one or a beginner with new ideas, it’s tough to go through the whole way...an older person with lots of good ideas have much easier to push his ideas through” Here it seems like personal interest, the goal of the employee, matters. If the employee can see that he/she will gain something (could be anything from money to power), he/she is keener on getting the idea through. Also, understanding the whole business gives the employee knowledge, which is an informal source of power. Knowledge can make the employee more self-confident when presenting his/her ideas. Further, years of experience gives the employee lots of informal power and hence an advantage in idea selection. Older people within the company also seemed to take advantage of their position, as one of the respondents mentioned “the old ones they like to see their ideas of course, the old one maybe comes with a similar idea as the one the younger person already presented, maybe twist a little bit, a new angle”. This could of course harm the idea-generating phase due to the fact that the younger
ones get tired of coming up with ideas and is clearly a case where people take advantage of their informal power, gained by years within the company.

Personality was something widely discussed among the respondents. Like said before, almost all of them agreed that being charismatic could help you, but other traits were discussed as well, for instance the personality of the sales people, that they are very goal affected and have another mindset. Another one discussed “Yes, of course there are those people who do a little bit more than everyone else, they are very driven and then they get the power and then when they have it they take the chance to put their ideas forward, they are also very professional and they KNOW what they want to do, me myself, I am not that kind of person I think. That are some kind of people that just are that way and they make things happen, but I think they work hard to get there also…. I don’t know what to say…but yes, without those persons a company would fail. But I don’t care so much about that, you just adapt to it that they are like that and I am not, if they have the energy to do that. If I do a good job and my boss thinks that I do a good job, why should I compete with them? I don’t know why they do like that, if it’s for self-esteem or to get the feeling that they are everywhere and, but I don’t know, it’s really hard to answer that question. Maybe the CEO likes them better, I don’t know, but they are more visible than others, but I don’t really know, it’s quite hard to answer, And in my former company I never felt any competition between colleges, it was more between products”. This proves that it helps to be goal oriented, the persons who know what they want make things happen. They are driven, probably self-confident, from that they gain informal power, and then when they have that they take the chance to put their ideas forward. Here the respondent clearly see that these people are fighting more than others, but also that they work harder for it and therefore deserve it. Also, he/she sees that they are very important for the company. He/she, on the other hand does not seem to be interested in being a part of it, possible reasons for this will be discussed further down.

Talking about why some did fight more for their ideas, the respondents said it was mostly about prestige, to feel that you do a good job. Some are fighting more than others for their status, as clearly shown before. However, one of the respondents had found a way to go through this. He/she knew that status was so important for other people, so if he/she let them believe the idea was their, it would be developed. This case is interesting in the way that by doing this, the respondent gets a lot of informal power, because he/she has found a way to get his/her ideas developed without having the formal power to get it done. But the only person he/she gains informal power towards is him/herself. Then it is also a question of what is most important to this person? In this case it seems to be that the idea actually will be developed, for him/her it was enough to know yourself that you do a good job, not that everybody else sees it. It is unclear whether the other person are aware of that the idea not really is his/hers, but probably the need for achievement is so large it does not matter.

Going over to one of the power sources mentioned by Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), the opportunity (access to powerful persons), which also can be connected to the situational factors such as “the person to be influenced”, by Petersen (2010, p. 4), mentioned above, the respondents had several
inputs. One of them saw it as an important factor for the individual itself, to be seen by your manager. This indicates that the individuals wants the influence of the person with formal authority. It is the same as mentioned above about the prestige and status, to feel that you are doing a good job. Or more, most individuals need to be seen by others to feel that they do a good job. Further, this can be used to gain informal power. If their performance is noticed by their manager, a person with formal power, they gain informal power out of that. Connected to the access to powerful persons, and if your relationship to your CEO matters, almost all the respondents agreed to that it would at least not harm your position within the company. This can also be connected to the need for achievement and locus of control presented by Maute and Locander (1994). One of the respondents was very strong in his argument, “of course you have advantage of knowing the right people, maybe you play golf with them and become their friend and things like that, of course it does impact, I am 100 percent sure of that, absolutely, I have seen that in several companies”. Again, it is a clear situation where the influence agent sees the opportunity to influence in a situation where it is easier to influence the target. One could say that the manager in his position with formal authority coming from the structure in the organization distributes power to his employee, who takes advantage of it.

Related to the personal characteristics is social intelligence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). People high in social intelligence are more able to identify social dominance and socio-political relationships among individuals, and this can serve as another power base (ibid). The social intelligence can be seen as yet another informal source of power. We have throughout the whole interview process seen differences in how the respondents reply to our questionnaire; some of them had a lot of things to add to the area of the individual elements, while others had not. Some of them did not seem to be aware of such a thing at all. When discussing the activities mentioned above, one of them repeatedly said, “Not really, we have always been customer oriented and everyone has been committed to the projects, of course sometimes someone are more committed, but no big difference, I haven’t seen anything like that, neither in my former job nor here. In our company it’s very straightforward what we are developing, we know what we need and there is not so much discussion, most of us in the R&D department are looking into new ways of doing things, nobody is more dedicated to things than somebody else, we are all brainstorming new solutions to problems and we always try to help each other as much as we can”. When talking about how the relationship to the managers matters, the same respondent said “No, not at all, of course we do a lot of things outside work anyway and yes sometimes we talk about work related things but that it should be a better atmosphere to convince somebody? No, not really. And not in the company I have worked in before either” And this can clearly be connected to the fact that people high in social intelligence are more able to identify social dominance and socio-political relationships among individuals (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and therefore have a better chance in noticing when they can use their informal power through different influence tactics to get what they want.
5.2 Organizational elements

5.2.1 Distribution of information

As seen by Van de Ven (1986), knowledge is a crucial factor in innovation processes. According to Petersen (2010), lack of communication is one of the main barriers towards innovation. This is supported by Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) that find communications to be one of the core foundations in NPD. Lack of communication can lead to the loss of knowledge or that people do not share valuable information, which can affect the development of new ideas. All interviewees stated that communication between employees were normally sensible. Most of them had also experienced examples where they felt that communication could have been better. It differed between companies if the lack of communication was between departments within R&D or between individuals within those departments or within project teams. One of our interviewees had experienced that sharing of knowledge was different, depending on the individual’s personal traits. Hence, how companies choose to communicate and share knowledge can be a structural element in the way that the organization have the control, the formal power, of what information they choose to distribute to their employees and what not. When there is a lack of communication between departments it can be lack of formal power distribution through structural factors or due to lack of structured communication such as meetings or through administrative systems. On the individual level, knowledge and experience are power sources, and it is up to the individual if they want to share the knowledge or not. Knowledge can hence be a barrier to innovation itself, if not distributed onward.

5.2.2 Project selection

As seen by Peters (1983), companies are often too focused on improving existing products instead of thinking about the next generation. Also Van De Ven (1986) means that individuals and companies mostly design to keep attention on and protect existing practices. Our respondents had different views on this subject. Some stated that employees might even have better focus on the next generation of products. In other companies there is too much focus on improving existing solutions or coming up with new ones, which could take time or other resources from existing projects. Employees in that situation normally have formal power to do that due to their hierarchical position within the company. It may also depend on the managers, or those who allocate resources, and whether or not they are focused on future products, or if they distribute power through allocation of resources in a formal way to employees for them to work on further improvements or other research. Like Peters (1983) also said, there can be a development-under-the-table-phenomenon where developers work on their own projects without anybody knowing about it, especially those who should be concerned, like project leaders. Three of our respondents recognized this behaviour. As mentioned before, one interviewee experienced a high degree of freedom for employees to work on their own ideas. In this kind of situation the employee must have formal power over some resources needed to work on the project even though it has been used in an informal way since it is done outside the boundaries of his formal authority. The
example above when employees work on ideas that are not connected to existing projects and have nothing to do with where they are heading is an example of this. This is highly connected to freedom of action as this behaviour is nurtured in environment of freedom. This can also be related to the focus on next generation products. When there is more freedom the employees are more likely to work on future ideas. This development on the side can also lead to the next generation products.

But managers can often be affected by existing beliefs and values that affect their support toward change (Hadjimanolis, 2003). This might mean that they are not open or supportive to what some developers are working on or where the development is heading. They cannot give them enough freedom and do not ensure that they have access to what they need because they are not as focused on future development as some developers. There the power that managers hold due to their position affects negatively to the innovation and future development of the company.

From our empirical findings we can see that cancellations of innovative ideas or projects do happen. As implied by Hadjimanolis (2003) innovative ideas can be cancelled because of the evaluation of rules, which is a way of how formal power can be distributed and affect projects. This was recognized by one of our interviewees. Their company cancelled projects because rules or demands for projects were not fulfilled. Another reason for cancellation was related to risk. It is mentioned by Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) and Hadjimanolis (2003) that projects can be cancelled based on that the risk is too high. In the cases of our respondents’ companies, it was because that the projects were not a part of the companies’ core competence. This is also supported by Khurana and Rosenthal (1997), who see that one reason for project cancellation is the fact that projects do not match company’s main strategy.

The importance for innovative companies to listen to their customers has often been discussed. As shown in theory, one of the key factors of generating new ideas is to listen to customers (Koen et al, 2001). Peters (1983) also declares that users give the most ideas for new products. According to empirical findings five of the companies get most of their innovative ideas through that channel. According to Peters (1983), it is possible to learn that many successful companies listen directly to their users in a strategical way, which gives them advantages. According to our respondents, feedback from customers mainly come thorough sales departments and those part of the company that interact most with users of their products. That part is not planned and has never been formed in a strategical way. The exception from this is a company that has a different strategy for getting their ideas. They mainly get ideas from their competitors and systematically explore what is happening on the market through exhibitions, magazines and web pages. Strategical decisions like this distribute power to those involve. If this action of listening to customers goes through the sales department it gives the sales manager power to affect how this input will be used to create next product or service generation. If he attends design meetings, his input will have higher value.
5.2.3 Allocation of resources

Resources are connected to all the three elements of organizational politics. Resources can be structural, as the allocations of them tend to form by time with the corporate culture or structure. An example of that can be when decision of the allocation of resources is taken informally without being a part of company’s strategy. In the same way it can be strategical decisions that are taken in formal meetings. In our empirical data we have cases of both, even within the same company. In most of the companies, allocation of resources is strategically decided on formal meetings. That mainly has to do with bigger development projects. In case of smaller projects and small development improvements on existing projects or products the decision can be taken by manager of R&D department, and can be seen as a structural informal action.

Theories have shown that lack of resources can be a barrier in the idea generation stage (Wessenburger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011; Petersen, 2011). As seen in empirical findings, all of the companies have experienced lack of resources in one way or another. This lack of resources affects the operation in the new product development departments, sometimes for existing projects and sometimes in the form of decreasing the sweep of the R&D departments. That is relevant when there is a lack of human capital. Lack of resources are normally connected to more formal decisions of the company, such as what equipment to buy, how many employees to have on each project or how much time there is to work on a project due to budget or deadlines. This is a good example of how power is used or distributed as a consequence of structural positions. However, even though the people who take these decisions have formal power to do it, resources often have to be shared among projects and that is a good example of a situation that can lead to power conflicts between individuals (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Further, Hatch and Cunliffe means that the individuals with the most power within organization tend to prevail in decision making processes. If the people involved are on the same level of the hierarchal scale, for example a group of R&D managers, it should be the person with most informal power who succeeds. However, it does not stop here. Managers with formal responsibility for NPD only have limited authority to acquire these resources from the people involved. This means that how resources are allocated between NPD projects is affected both by how power is distributed within the firm and by political activity between involved actors.(Maute & Locander, 1994; Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011). This takes us to the individual level of organizational politics and is a question of collaboration between the manager and his/her employees, and among the employees themselves.

As discussed above, lack of resources can lead to that individuals compete over required resources. It is though not only for their ideas but also for the fact that new projects might have to compete for resources with existing projects (Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, 2011). We can see that kind of conflicts in our empirical findings. One of our respondents explained that NPD ideas need to be tested in machines that are already in use for the ongoing production, which then has to be interrupted. In some cases, different project teams with different projects on different levels might have to use certain equipment at the same time. In those cases, leaders of those
project used informal power such as influence tactics, as they can be more experienced or have more motivation to bring their project forward. This kind of power source is described by Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, (2011) to be the political activity that takes place between those who are involved in the projects. The main things our interviewees experience regarding lack of resources were time and access to equipment. Even if they have unlimited access to other resources this can be a barrier to the development of new ideas.

Ozer and Markóczy (2010) show that conflict between sharing resources and non-market strategies can force companies to focus on their main market strategies and suspend their non-market strategy such as politic strategy. Organizational processes that include resource allocation decisions are inherently political in nature (Cabral-Cardoso, 1996) and are a distribution of formal power. As seen by Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) one of the biggest challenges for managers of innovative companies is to balance the allocation of resources. Van de Ven (1986) points out the importance of resources in innovation processes by seeing it as one of core elements in transforming innovative ideas into successful results. Flexibility management requires balance between flexibility and doing things by the book. Other activities and elements in the FEI should also be balanced (Khurana & Rosenthal, 1997).

As seen in empirical findings, all the companies have formal development meetings where it is decided if ideas or concepts are worth to take to next level of development. Decisions taken in this kind of development meetings will distribute as power to the projects in a formal way, which is an intra-firm power distribution as mentioned by Weissenberger-Eibl & Teufel, (2011). From all our interviews it is clear that these meetings affect the allocation of resources and the activities of each project are also assigned. Decisions for smaller development projects like improvements of products can tough sometimes be taken by R&D managers. Koen et al (2001) see these processes take place in most companies when it comes to selecting ideas. Choosing between new ideas can be done by individuals as a self-generated option or in a formalized way (Koen et al., 2001). Project priorities are important when planning new product development projects. This affects the allocation of resources as managers can prioritize differently according to personal values and personal beliefs (Hadijmanolis, 2003). Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) see three main priorities: scope, time and cost. Our respondents mainly mentioned time as top priority. Decisions can be influenced by time pressure, and therefore managers may have to compromise on cost to reach time limits.

The relations between resources and strategical and structural elements have been discussed. At the same time there are connection between those elements and the individual element. Decisions are that are taken on formal meetings that involve allocation of resources, effects individuals within organization. In our empirical data we have case of both, even within same companies. In case of all of the companies’ allocation of resources are strategically decided on formal meetings. That mainly has to do with bigger development projects. In case of smaller projects and small development improvements on existing projects or products the decision can be taken by manager of R&D department, that can be seen as a structural informal action.
As already discussed before, Peters (1983), mentions that freedom of action can lead to the birth of radical new ideas. Our interviewees identified freedom to work on their own ideas within their companies in different ways. In some companies project plans were followed and the employees of R&D worked after this plan and were therefore bound up in certain projects at certain time. This can distract employees from the development of ideas that are not related to the scheduled project. One company claimed that there was too much freedom of action in some cases. Employees sometimes come up with new ideas that had nothing to do with where the project is heading or what the customers want. This might both be positive and negative. Very radical and successful ideas can be born in such environments but it can also delay projects and increase project cost. When companies give employees freedom to work with their own ideas power is distributed formally to the employees, as they have control over their own time and possibly some other necessary resources.

5.2.4 Goals

Koen et al. (2001) see goals as one of the driving forces of the idea identification stage. Our interviewees recognized goals as a part of their FEI-processes. All the companies have goals for sales. Some of the companies set strategical goals like project plans or development plans. In case of all the companies, except one, goals are formed within the R&D department and people working on the same project normally share goals for ongoing projects. These goals are formed in different ways. Sometimes R&D managers or development councils form them and in other cases the board forms them. When goals are formed for sales or for whole departments they are normally on an organizational level and can affect as both as formal and informal power. Goals for sales are normally formed on meetings by people on high hierarchy level and are distributed to the company as a formal power. All respondents recognized that individuals within development have personal goals for their job. Such goals work as an individual pressure towards existing project and can in that form reacted as an informal power deriving from each individual.

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) see this and state that decision makers of organizations are often faced with competing goals, lack of resources and other conflicts. As seen in our empirical findings, and discussed in the “individual” part of the analysis, one company experienced that employees try to convince their manager about the quality of their idea and that they should select it rather than other ideas. In that case individuals use their informal power in form of influence tactics to affect the decision making process (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). That can be based on their personal traits (ibid) or technological knowledge (Weisenberger-Eibl and Teufel, 2011). It is seen in our empirical findings that unclear or disputed goals have affected the development processes in some companies. Two interviewees stated that it had delayed development processes. Peterson (2010) and Maute and Locander (1994) support that unclear or disputed goals can be harmful for new product development.
There is an indirect and direct connection between allocation of resources and goals. As seen in our empirical findings, when goals are set for new development projects, they are at the same time translated for allocation of resources and at the same time distributed as a formal power. That is mainly because goals for project are formed on formal meetings and therefore formed with hierarchy (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Some of the goals for allocation of resources are put down direct as seen in empirical findings, for deadlines of projects or the funding part. The indirect way are all the goals that follow with out discussion or decisions. That can be the allocation of resources like equipment, some human resources and time of employees from other department that are seen to be inevitable and are not tied down by plans. Herstatt et al. (2003) sees the connection between goals and allocation of resources in that way when the idea of NPD project is clear, the goals will follow for all necessary activities and allocation of resources to fulfil these activities.

As the concept of resources, goals can be connected to all three elements of the political behaviour. As mentioned, goals can be set in a strategic way for projects or divisions for instance by managers or board. They can also develop as a structural phenomenon. These goals are not planned or strategically arranged. Individuals within R&D often have personal goals both as a part of their job description and as a personal trait. Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) state that organization cannot be seen as homogeneous entity with shared goals. This is supported in our empirical findings where its mentioned that different R&D teams can have different goals, which can create a conflict when different teams need to use the same resource at the same time. Sometimes goals have to be negotiated, as organizational goals development is a process of negotiation (Cyert and March, 1992). Some of our interviewees had examples of this. When development plans, which is more or less goals for projects, was formed in one company everyone did not agree. At that point they needed to negotiate about how to continue and in the end a compromise was reached. This is a clear example of how power can come from a structural position within the organization where level of hierarchy can be important (Maute & Locander, 1994). This can also characterize persons with greater informal power who can influence decisions of others on same hierarchical level. Weisenberger-Eibl and Teufel (2011) also mention that R&D personnel use power in form of technical information or knowledge, which provides symbolic rationality and contributes to decision making.

As mentioned before power can be a structural and strategical phenomenon within organizations (Pfeffer, 1981). From our empirical findings we find examples of that goals can show distribution of power in a structural way. When goals are made for projects they create a lot of activities that follow the goal or project plan, that are not written down as part of the goal description. That is supported in our empirical findings. Through goals we can also see distribution of power as strategical phenomena. In our empirical findings we see that goals are formed for special projects. When the direct factors of those goals is executed as a strategy its a form of distributing power in a strategical way.
6 Conclusion and discussion

What types of organizational politics can be identified in the front end of innovation?

We have identified several activities that create different types of organizational politics in the FEI. Those activities exist both on the individual- and on the organizational level. From the different elements and concepts we used we found connections to the theory of organizational politics.

Our findings show that both organizational- and individual elements can derive from both formal and informal power distribution. Though the connection between individual elements and informal power usage and between organizational elements and formal power distribution is the most obvious we have found examples of opposite connections.

We see that many forms of formal power that derive from strategical- or structural decisions within on the organizational level will entail in informal power on a lower hierarchical level than it was created in. An example of that is when a strategy is made for listening to customers. Information deriving from there will give informal power to the individuals involved in that process. That gives them increased knowledge, which can help them to affect the direction of R&D.

Allocation of resources permeates almost everything in the organization and is an action that attracts different sources and types of politics. In main part it is decided in formal meetings (development meetings) how resources are allocated for each project. It is though not just so simple. Lot of different activities take place that affect those decisions both before the formal decisions are made and after. Different individuals can for example use their informal power to influence decision makers. This can for example be caused by their experience, their special knowledge of the circumstances or personal connection to decision makers. Project leaders or managers of R&D can also use their formal power due to their position to affect resources at all stages of the project time.

On the individual level, it is the use of certain influence tactics that are the main type. Self-confidence, knowledge and last but not least experience are some of the tactics used by the individuals without formal power to get what they want in situations where there is uncertainty or dissent about choices. Those without formal power do however not only use these influence tactics. Managers cannot fully rely on their formal power when it comes to take decisions, especially not in situations where people on the same hierarchical level should agree about everything from allocation of resources to what products to develop. Basically, what the front-end of innovation is all about.
6.1 Practical implications

This study provides more knowledge, information and understanding to the FEI-phase and the organizational politics taking place within it. Furthermore, it contributes to managers of innovative companies or R&D departments. In general, managers of companies agree that the greatest weakness of the innovation processes is in the front end. At the same time, the FEI-phase is presented as one of the greatest opportunities for improvements in the whole innovation process. Getting increased knowledge in the field of FEI gives them more understanding about the nature of their environment and by that they can improve the FEI-phase.

Managers could minimize information asymmetry within organizations. Information can give those that have access to it power to influence project selection. Often valuable information are only accessible to managers which do not always share them, but use them instead to affect project selection. If these information's where from the beginning open to all that are involved in a systematic way, it might save time and give clearer focus with project selection. It would change the way that those at lower level of hierarchy would handle their projects. This can also work the other way around. If managers do not get necessary information about e.g. technological resistance or new possibility in technology from those that work within R&D department, they do not have the necessary perspective to projects and cannot influence the FEI activities in the same way.

Another factor would be to link marketing- and sales departments to the FEI. This can be done by involving individuals or managers from those departments to the development meetings. These departments usually interact more than other departments with customers and therefore get valuable information and inputs from them. This would give these departments power to influence the development as well as distribute power from customers to the FEI.

It is very important to foster individuals that are important to the development. Good engineers (entrepreneurs or champions) can be good in technological solutions but lack skills in bringing their ideas forward. Those individuals can be developed in terms of self confidence and they can be provided with additional knowledge and even experience through education. It is also possible to move them temporarily to a new place in the development process so they can obtain deeper understanding and get new perspectives towards the whole development phase.

Identifying the different sources of organizational politics in the FEI can contribute in many different ways for those involved in the allocation of resources. Identifying and being aware of different sources behind organizational politics can affect how strategical decisions are made. Seeing how the distribution of power works when for example resources are allocated can affect the way managers use their authority.
6.2 theoretical implication

The result of our study will bring additional value to the research field of FEI. We identified many different sources of organizational politics in the FEI. As we divided our theory into concepts, we saw how these affect each other in a political way within organizations. This is an explorative study that will hopefully open many opportunities for future studies.

Future research should more explicitly address how political behaviour infect the formal part of the FEI because to much energy has been put in to the formal parts of the FEI. Many authors like Khurana and Rosenthal, are focusing highly on the formal part. Even though focusing on the formal part of FEI brings valuable information to the field we see in our findings that it is not enough. Researchers should also pay attention to the political perspective of it.

6.3 Further research

From our explorative study, we can see quite interesting and challenging subjects that could be explored in future research in the field of organizational politics in the FEI. Defining the types of organizational politics deriving from the sources that we explore in this study would be an interesting research to work with. To define what type of politics the source champion would belong to. Would different types connect internally and how would they connect to the different elements. Studying the relationships between the elements of organizational politics is left to be explored. If it is the individual who affects the organization or the organization that affects the individual. The connections between informal and formal power on the other hand and individual and organizational elements of organizational politics is also give a new perspective to the Exploring positive and negative affects of the organizational politics of the FEI would show the politics in a new perspective. That would be an extension to our study, showing that the sources of organizational politics we have identified can affect the FEI in a positive or negative way.

The collection of data could have been done in various ways, possibly resulting in different conclusions. As the organizational politics are a complicated subject that people is not aware of on a daily basis it might be difficult to form questions that are indirect enough to get an overview of the area. An observation would be ideal for researches on this field. Again, as the subject organizational politics is normally quite distant to people, it might differ a lot how interviewees respond to the questions. Some people might be more aware of what is happening around them and how, than others. Hence, different characteristics of the interviewees might affect the subject explored.
List of references


Appendix

Interview Guide

Structural elements

1. How would you describe how the front end of innovation works here?
   a. Where do ideas come from?
   b. Do you listen to customers?
      i. If yes, can you describe that process?

2. Is there something in the build up (structure) of the company that motivates idea creation?

3. Do you have roles for working in the front-end, such as project leader, a core team or an executive review group?
   a. If yes, who assigns the roles? If not, do you have different system?
   b. If you have a project leader, is he/she the one responsible for promoting the interest of the project and lobbying for support and resources?
      i. If yes, can you come with an example?
      ii. If not, who is doing that?

4. How would you describe the culture of the organization?

5. Do you think the focus in your company is too much on existing products instead of giving attention to next generation of products?
   a. If yes, do you think structure of the company affects?
6. Do you think the freedom of action is high in your company? (Freedom of working with your own ideas?)
   a. If yes, can you come with supporting example?

Strategical elements

1. When it comes to select ideas, how do you do it?
   a. Are the decisions formalized, or unformalized?
   b. What are the decisions based on?

2. Resource based questions:
   a. Do employees get all the help they need to work with creation/development of ideas?
      i. Do they get all the time they need?
      ii. Do they get all the equipment they need?
      iii. Do they get all the capital they need?
      iv. Can you support
   b. Do you think those resources are right balanced between employees?
      i. If yes/no, can you find examples?
   c. Do you think those resources are right balanced between divisions?
      i. If yes/no, can you find examples?
   d. What are the project priorities? (Time, cost, quality)
   e. Who plans how to allocate the resources?
      i. Is it strategy or a decision in each case?
   f. Have you noticed lack of resources? (barriers)
      i. If yes, what resources and how does it appear?
   g. Have you sensed conflicts between employees and those who control access to resources related to different interests?
      i. If yes, can you explain how it works?
h. Have you see individual fight for resources that they both cant get?
   i. If yes, can you come with an example of how it works?

3. How would you describe the leadership of the company?

4. Does the company have strategy for what kind of products you develop or should develop?
   a. If yes, can you describe that strategy?

5. Do you have a model for how the FEI process should be? How you should manage it?
   a. If yes, do you think it would increase opportunity identification for new ideas if the company would have a different strategy or plan for the Front End?
   b. If no, do you think it would increase opportunity identification for new ideas if the company would have strategy or plan for FEI?

6. Do you have some kind of incentive system that rewards people that come up with ideas?
   a. If yes, Can you describe it?
   b. How does that affect the working environment and development of ideas?

7. Has the company ever quit on innovative project based on.
   a. It was to risky project? (If yes/no, support with examples?)
   b. Evaluation of rules? (If yes/no, support with examples?)
   c. Lack of information? (If yes/no, support with examples?)

8. Has the company broken up or changed division to smaller division to get more efficiency into group work?
   a. If yes, can you mention an example of that?

9. Does the company strategically get ideas from or listen to their users or the market?
   a. If yes, can you describe that strategy?
Individual elements

1. Are some ideas developed ‘under the table’?
   a. If yes, can you come up with an example of that?

2. How is it with knowledge-sharing, are everyone helping each and work as a team?
   a. Can you support with an example?

3. Do you notice when subordinates (employees) try to influence superiors or managers regarding new ideas?
   a. If yes, how?

4. Have you noticed when superiors try to influence their subordinates?
   a. If yes, how?

5. Do you see trouble in internal cooperation like:
   a. Lack of communication? (If yes, how?)
   b. Lack of coordination? (If yes, how)

6. Do you see anyone more committed to the projects than others in your division?
   a. If yes, can you support that with an example?

7. Do you see individual that put much effort in convincing others about the goodness of their idea?
   a. If yes, can you describe how that works?

8. Do you notice anyone so committed to his projects or work that advocates his project beyond job requirements?
   a. If yes, can you explain that?
9. What is the best strategy for getting your ideas forward?
   a. Can you see that some people are more successful in it than others?
   b. How are they? (Smarter, more charismatic)
   c. Why do you think they do it?
   d. Are they important for the development of ideas?
   e. How about prestige, how important is that?
   f. How dependent are you of each other?

10. Do you know about people/person in the firm that is so committed that they/he seek help from others to solve their problems or get support for their project?
    a. If yes, can you come with and example of that?

11. Are there any of your colleagues you regard as a “project champion”, who is pushing ideas forward?
    a. How is this person?
    b. Is he important for the development of ideas?

12. Do you think that sometimes employees are to busy to work on their project or idea, that they forget to focus on new possibility’s as:
    a. Watching new things on market that might help them?
    b. Bringing their idea to new direction?

13. How important is it to have a good relation with your CEO or members of the board?
    a. Do you meet outside work time?
       i. If yes, do you discuss work related things

14. How is access to information?
    a. If yes, can you support that?
b. If no can you show us example of it

15. Goal related questions:

a. Does the company set goals for innovation processes?
   i. If yes, can you explain

b. Does the company set goals for amount of idea created?

c. Are goals shared among all employers?
   i. Examples?

d. Are goals shared within division?
   i. Examples?

e. Does the company set goal for each idea in process?
   i. If yes, how does that work?

f. Are goals formed by managers?

g. Are common goals formed by division (E.g. R&D)?
   i. If yes, Can you give an example?

h. Are goals discussed and negotiated?
   i. If yes, Can you describe how it works?
   i. Is it possible to have individual goals as well?

j. Do you see examples of that the interest of the firm more important than interest of the individuals?
   i. If yes, do you have an example

k. Do you think unclear goals has ever delayed or destroyed idea or project?
   i. If yes, do you know example of that?

l. Do you think that disputed goal has ever delayed or destroyed idea or project?
   i. If yes, do you know example of that?

m. Do you see employees that go further than others to reach their goals?
   i. If yes, do you know example of that?