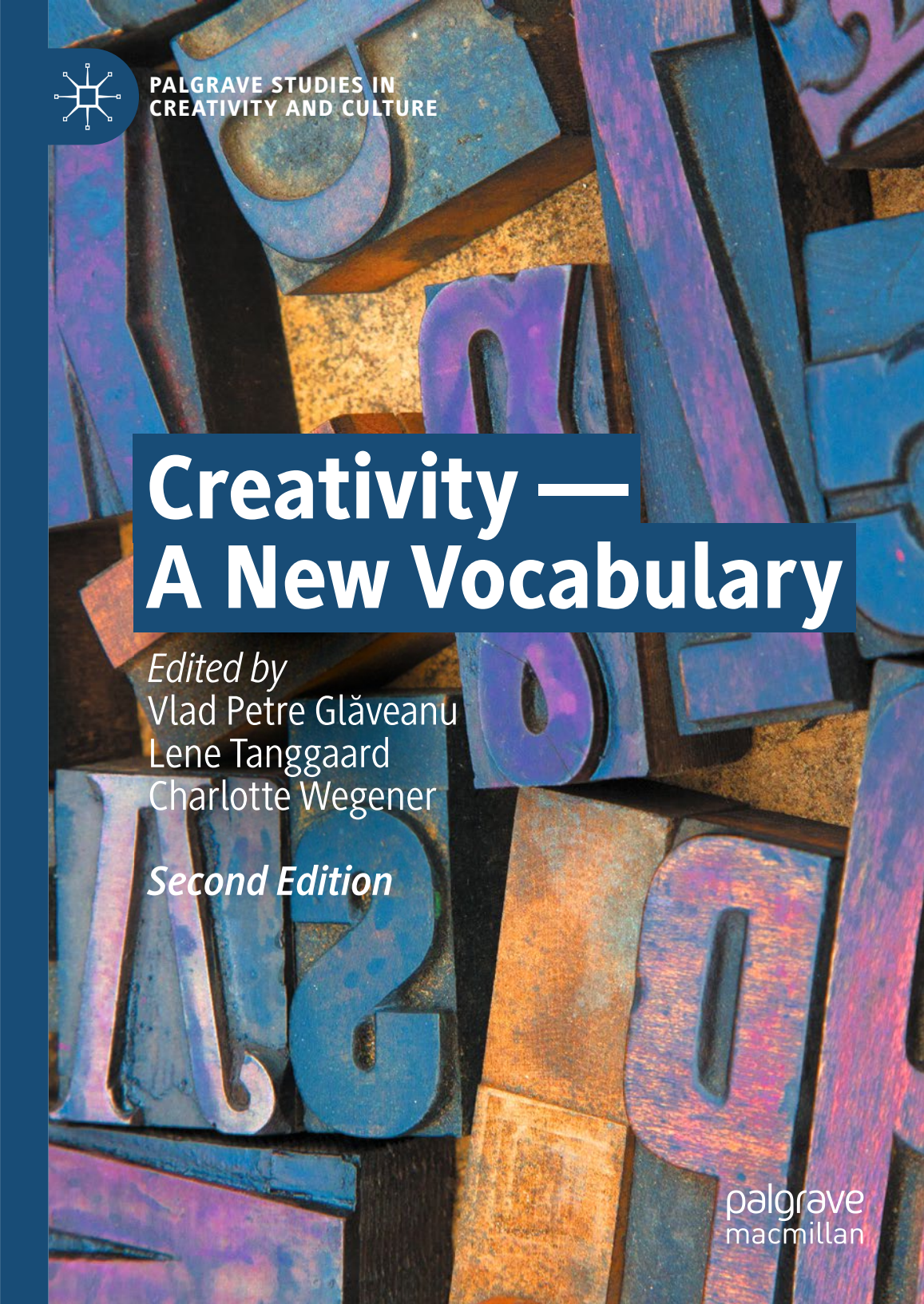

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

Creativity — A New Vocabulary

Edited by
Vlad Petre Glăveanu
Lene Tanggaard
Charlotte Wegener

Second Edition

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture

Both creativity and culture are areas that have experienced a rapid growth in interest in recent years. Moreover, there is a growing interest today in understanding creativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon and culture as a transformative, dynamic process. Creativity has traditionally been considered an exceptional quality that only a few people (truly) possess, a cognitive or personality trait 'residing' inside the mind of the creative individual. Conversely, culture has often been seen as 'outside' the person and described as a set of 'things' such as norms, beliefs, values, objects, and so on. The current literature shows a trend towards a different understanding, which recognises the psycho-socio-cultural nature of creative expression and the creative quality of appropriating and participating in culture. Our new, interdisciplinary series Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture intends to advance our knowledge of both creativity and cultural studies from the forefront of theory and research within the emerging cultural psychology of creativity, and the intersection between psychology, anthropology, sociology, education, business, and cultural studies. Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture is accepting proposals for monographs, Palgrave Pivots and edited collections that bring together creativity and culture. The series has a broader focus than simply the cultural approach to creativity, and is unified by a basic set of premises about creativity and cultural phenomena.

Vlad Petre Glăveanu
Lene Tanggaard • Charlotte Wegener
Editors

Creativity — A New Vocabulary

2nd ed. 2023

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Vlad Petre Glăveanu
School of Psychology
Dublin City University
Dublin, Ireland

Charlotte Wegener
Department of Communication
and Psychology
Aalborg University
Aalborg, Denmark

Lene Tanggaard
Department of Communication and
Psychology
Aalborg University
Aalborg, Denmark

ISSN 2755-4503 ISSN 2755-4511 (electronic)
Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture
ISBN 978-3-031-41906-5 ISBN 978-3-031-41907-2 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Paper in this product is recyclable.

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Michael Mose Biskjaer is an Associate Professor in Design Creativity and Innovation at Aarhus University, Denmark. Based on creativity, digital design, and innovation research, he adopts a human-centered, interdisciplinary approach to explore the impact of digitalization on creative processes and practices within and beyond design.

Svend Brinkmann is Professor of Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark. His research interests include philosophical psychology, qualitative methods, and studies of psychiatric diagnoses. He is currently exploring the social, cultural, and material aspects of mental illness in the research project PLACES: Psychopathology in Ecosocial Niches. His most recent books in English are *Stand Firm, Standpoints, The Joy of Missing Out, Grief: The Price of Love, and Think!* (all of which are published by Polity).

Kristian Dahl, organisational psychologist, is the founder of the consulting firm LEAD—Enter Next Level. In his work he focuses on leadership development, consulting, innovation and public sector leadership. He has published a number of books and articles on this and related topics. He has extensive experience as a consultant and has worked with a wide range of organisations in both the public and private sectors. He is an expert in designing large-scale leadership programmes and the development of organisational capacity for innovation.

Peter Dalsgaard is a full professor of Interaction Design and director of the Centre for Digital Creativity at Aarhus University, http://

digitalcreativity.au.dk. His work explores the design and use of digital technologies from a human-centered perspective with a focus on how humans use technology to think and create in new ways.

Carolin Demuth is Associate Professor of Cultural and Developmental Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark, where she is also co-directing the Centre for Cultural Psychology. Her work is located in the field of discursive psychology, narrative psychology and language socialisation. Her recent publications are the *Cambridge Handbook of Identity* and *The Routledge International Handbook of Innovative Qualitative Psychological Research* that she co-edited. She is a founding member and president of the Association for European Qualitative Researchers in Psychology (EQuiP).

Constance de Saint-Laurent is an assistant professor at Maynooth University, Ireland. She works on social thinking and technology as well as on the impact of technology and societal changes on people and organisations. She has previously carried out research on social media, misinformation, collective memory, and representations of alterity, some of which has been published in the open access book Social Thinking and History: A Sociocultural Psychological Perspective on Representations of the Past.

Lars Elbæk is Associate Professor in Sport and Health, focusing on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. He earned his action research PhD on using digital technology in physical education teachers' education at the University of Southern Denmark. Through several projects, he has deep knowledge of interaction design and design research in collaboration with public institutions and private companies. He is PI for an Erasmus+ project-developing movement based on design methods in collaboration with five European universities, producing and publishing +400 method cards and +30 videos (https://www.mecamind.eu/).He has initiated and run the Nordic Sports Innovation Summit twice.

Claus Elmholdt is an associate professor at Aalborg University, Denmark, and founding partner in LEAD—Enter Next Level. His research and consultancy work focuses on issues of leadership, leadership development, management teams, learning, creativity and organisational change. He has published several articles, books and book chapters on these topics. His recent works include *Effektive ledergrupper* (*Effective Management Teams*) (2015), *Magt i organisationer* (*Power in Organizations*) (2014),

Ledelsespsykologi (*Leadership Psychology*) (2013) and 'Grænsekrydsninger i organisationer', 'Boundary-crossing communities of innovation' (in *Innovation Psychology*, 2013).

Morten Fogsgaard is a doctoral student in Leadership and Organisational Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark. He is a senior consultant and partner in a consultancy firm, UKON. Currently, he is researching and consulting on topics concerning leadership development, boundary-spanning leadership and management teams, as well as power and influence in organisations. He has published a number of articles and most recently contributed to a book on power in organisations (Klim, 2014). In addition to this, he teaches courses in the Master of Public Governance at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and is a part-time lecturer at the University of Copenhagen and Aarhus University.

Vlad Petre Glăveanu is Full Professor of Psychology at the School of Psychology, Dublin City University, and Adjunct Professor at the Centre for the Science of Learning and Technology, University of Bergen. His area of expertise covers creativity, imagination, culture, collaboration, perspective-taking, wonder, and possibility studies. He is the founder and president of the Possibility Studies Network, editor of the Palgrave Encyclopedia of the Possible, and editor of the journal Possibility Studies & Society (Sage).

Kim Halskov is a Professor of Interaction Design at Aarhus University, Denmark, where he in addition to being director of Centre for Advanced Visualization and Interaction, see www.CAVI.au.dk, also is co-director of the Centre for Digital Creativity, see www.DigitalCreativity.au.dk. He is the author of many articles dedicated to design processes and design creativity and co-editor of *Sticky Creativity: Post-it® Note Cognition, Computers, and Design* (with B. T. Christensen and C. Klokmose, 2020).

Tue Krabbe-Juelsbo specialises in creativity and learning in his roles as consultant, research assistant at Aalborg University in Denmark and as an external researcher at Gothenburg University in Sweden. Previously, he has held positions as a creative director and documentary photographer, and he has worked extensively in the realms of art, fashion and design. Recent publications include newspaper and journal articles about learning, apprenticeships and creative thinking in the workplace (e.g., the book *LÆR* written with Lene Tanggaard).

Nik Kharlamov is Associate Professor of psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark. His research fields are visual perception of natural scenes and cognitive models of eye movement control in reading. He has also done research in environmental and urban psychology, including research on development of environment-related meanings (such as "home") over relatively short time spans.

Ludvig Johan Torp Rasmussen is Assistant Professor in Sport and Health-related Innovation at Aalborg University. He received his PhD from Aalborg University. His work focuses on exploring the experiential and developmental qualities of creativity in sports. To this end, he does qualitative and applied research, collaborating with various sport practitioners and organizations to develop creativity-nurturing approaches that may improve participation, development, and performance. One of his most recent publications is a collective work comprising four volumes on *Creativity Training in Football* (Aalborg University Press, 2023, in Danish).

Lene Tanggaard is dean at School of Design Kolding in Denmark and Full Professor of Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark. Tanggaard is the founder of Centre for Qualitative Studies at Aalborg University and member of a number of boards, including the Danish Council for Research and Innovation and the Danish Design Center, Design Society in Denmark. Her work focuses on learning, creativity, design. vocational education and qualitative methodology.

Luca Tateo is a cultural psychologist, Professor in Theory, Epistemology, and Methodology of Qualitative Research at the University of Oslo, Norway, and affiliated professor at the Federal University of Bahia. He is a member of the board of the Network of Excellence "Ideas for the Basic Education of the Future" on Innovative Learning, Teaching Environments, and Practices, based at East China Normal University in Shanghai. He is co-editor in chief of the Journal "Human Arenas. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Psychology, Culture, and Meaning", Springer, and editor in Chief of the book series "Innovations in Qualitative Research", Information Age Publishing.

Brady Wagoner is Professor of Psychology at the University of Copenhagen, Aalborg University, and Oslo New University College. He received his PhD from the University of Cambridge on a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. His work focuses on developing a culturally sensitive

psychology that explores the dynamic processes of mind in context over their static products. More specifically he has applied this framework to such topics as memory, social change, the history of psychology, and the public engagement with science. His books include *The Constructive Mind: Bartlett's Psychology in Reconstruction* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) and *Handbook of Culture and Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2018). He has received numerous prestigious awards, including the Humboldt Award from the AvHumboldt Foundation in 2021.

Charlotte Wegener is an associate professor at the Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Denmark. She researches social innovation in welfare organizations and education with a particular interest in learning across organizational and professional boundaries. Inspired by her background in music science and literature, she is passionate about language as material and seeks to expand academic writing by involving fiction, music, dreams, and everyday life experiences.

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Why Do We Need a Newer Vocabulary for Creativity?

Vlad Petre Glăveanu, Lene Tanggaard, and Charlotte Wegener

The Second Edition

It is both an exciting and daunting task to revisit work done years prior, especially when the book in question concerns creativity. As a forward looking and, most of all, forward driving phenomenon, creativity seems to be all about the future. This makes it even more bold of us to have used the word 'new' in the title of our book. Novelty is subject to the passing of time and what was a new vocabulary in the middle of the 2010s might

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

L. Tanggaard • C. Wegener
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: lenet@ikp.aau.dk; cw@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_1

seem slightly out of date close to ten years later. And yet, we can proudly say that this book stood the test of time. Its novelty is not as much temporal as it is conceptual. The vocabulary proposed then remains important today because the work needed to reframe how we think about creativity (and, alongside it, imagination, innovation, invention, human possibility; Glăveanu, 2023) is ongoing. The 'new vocabulary' proposed years ago is worth revisiting precisely because revisions are needed to stand as a still relevant contribution, and there is more to learn from it, more to do, more to challenge. Including the association between creativity and the future. Yes, creative processes are future-oriented, but they are also firmly rooted in the past, in lived experience, in the world as is and was. Similarly, this second edition is not merely a 'newer' vocabulary but a revisiting of past ideas in a changed—some might say radically changed—present, for the purposes of open-ended and yet-to-be written futures.

Since 2016, the world has known a devastating pandemic, several horrific wars, a continued migration crisis, an alarmingly rapid deterioration of the environment, and the birth of technologies—like user-friendly generative AI—that we are not sure we fully understand and control. In this markedly different context, talking about creativity is not a luxury but a real necessity. Creativity might not be 'the cure', as some marketing campaigns try to persuade us, but there is little hope of coping with these 'postnormal times' without it (Montuori, 2023). And yet, this is not the creativity of isolated geniuses, disembodied minds, and cognitive tests. The creativity that is reduced to thinking processes and the moment of insight. That is attributed to only some people, primarily artists, and not others, especially marginalised and oppressed communities. To stand a chance as individuals, communities, and as humanity (a phrase that sounds less dramatic now than it would have done in 2016), we need to rethink what we mean by creativity, how and where we find it, how we study it, and why it matters to us. The present book, in its second edition, is dedicated, once more and with even more urgency, to this very aim. But, in order to understand where we are heading to, we need to start from the beginning.

On Creativity and Breaks

In the first edition, we used Elsbach and Hargadon (2006) to argue that organisations eventually may begin to experience long-term underperformance and lack of creativity and innovation owing to intense workload pressures and stress. Constant speed makes you move forward; however, it may be in the wrong direction (towards failures, or even accidents) or it may be a short ride (stress and burnout). Experiences during the lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic have made these claims about time and space for creativity much more complex. Some experienced a much-needed time-out while others had to deal with workload pressures like never before in the health care frontline or in front of the screen at home (Wegener, 2021). Crises can be paralysing, yet they are also potentially catalysts for creativity because it becomes so obvious that what we used to do no longer serves its purpose. Recent creativity scholars point to this fact (Beghetto, 2021 among others), yet, uncertainly as a driver for creativity can also be found in Dewey's (1910) and other early pragmatists' work. Creativity-inducing breaks do not need to be of a magnitude that shakes the ground. Sometimes, a tiny break can be just what is needed for creativity to push through.

This book was initially conceived during a coffee break. One of our colleagues had his PhD defence in the afternoon. In the morning, the three of us had met to plan new activities at the department. Some people are comfortable in these formal idea generation meetings, some are not. In fact, Paulus et al. (2006) showed that face-to-face meetings for brainstorming or innovation might be less productive than most of us believe. It is stimulating to be with people who have many ideas and who are good at articulating them; however, some people become more silent than they normally are and possibly relevant contributions may be lost in such circumstances. Their strength is the breaks. And, on that day, the break turned out to be a moment of genuine creativity.

On the way to the coffee room, Charlotte told Vlad and Lene that she had a piece of writing which remained unfinished for almost a year. Its title: 'Upcycling'. Would they read it and make suggestions on how to move forward? Both immediately accepted, finding the topic quite intriguing. Jokingly, we all agreed not only that we creatively upcycle things, but that creativity itself also often involves upcycling and recycling objects, ideas, actions, and so on. On our way to the defence, coffees in hand, the three of us talked about the titles of academic papers. Many titles are too

long, even boring. We have noticed that the menu at fancy restaurants often uses only one word to evoke a feeling for each main ingredient—maybe we need more simple, but expressive, titles for academic papers? Titles that make us hungry to experience what is actually on the plate? How many words could we use? Very few. In fact, one word might do. Just like in a dictionary! 'A new dictionary …?' 'A new vocabulary …?' 'Creativity …?' 'Creativity—A new vocabulary'! The PhD defence was about to begin and the idea generation had to stop, or at least continue in silence. The result of that coffee break is the first edition of this book. *A New Vocabulary*.

Things We Do with Words

In a paradoxical way for its own area of interest, the field of creativity research and practice often repeats the same kinds of words and concepts decade after decade. To mention just a few: divergent thinking, convergent thinking, cognitive processes, incubation, association, brainstorming, and group-think (Thompson & Choi, 2006). In later years, we have witnessed new words gaining momentum such as crisis, war, climate change, wicked problems, metoo, identity politics, globalisation, economic trends, competition, survival, accelerated changes and complexity. These can be taken as signs of increased societal pressure on all of us to revisit reassumptions and fixed beliefs and ways of living. While creativity was in the first twenty years of the twentieth century dominantly related to the need to become more creative, to ensure the survival and growth of industries, economies, and societies (Bilton, 2007), it is now increasingly related to solving massive problems on a planet striving to survive our constant pressure to subject ourselves to a consumer culture and a growth paradigm. This is today the main reason why there is again a need for a new vocabulary emerging. We need it. There are different angles to pursue in trying to understand these changes and, before introducing our alternative terminology, let's briefly consider two key processes—consolidation and creative limitation. Both kinds of phenomena can explain why words and concepts are repeated in particular fields of research and also why this may limit our creative potential. In the end, vocabularies are never innocent …

Consolidation

Concepts unite to form a field of research. The process of consolidation is behind our tendency to repeat words and concepts and to stay within given frames, within a professional field or sub-culture. In creativity research, consolidation has been a high priority because of the somehow slippery character of the phenomenon of interest. There is no doubt that consolidating a research field requires some kind of consistency in the concepts used, not least in order to enable communication between researchers. This is something already shown by Berger and Luckmann in their popular book *The Social Construction of Reality*, from 1966. In this book, the two authors argue that the institutionalisation of social processes within a professional field grows out of habitualisation and customs, gained through mutual observation with subsequent mutual agreement on the 'way of doing things'. For many years, a cognitive-based terminology dominated the field of creativity research and many say it still does (Glăveanu, 2014); this has resulted in words from cognitive as well as personality psychology being used frequently, leading to the legitimisation of creativity as a cognitive process or personality trait. Equally, the new words entering our creativity vocabulary—such as industry, growth, economy, and globalisation—are an indication of the fact that creativity is being studied more and more outside of psychology, including in the applied fields of management and organisational science (Foss & Saebi, 2015).

Creative Limitation

While the repetition of concepts is necessary for the actual institutionalisation and consolidation of a field of research, it may also unintentionally inhibit our creative thinking within that field (Meier & Wegener, 2017; Wegener, 2022). Too much familiarity and habituation, also in the form of repeating words and embracing the same forms of argumentation over and over again, can lead to dangerous forms of group-think. This is usually how the process goes: "Consideration of a new problem tends to activate frames for similar solutions from long-term memory, so people may tend to retrieve frames related to old solutions and attempt to adapt them to the new set of circumstances—a practice sometimes referred to as *satisficing*" (Santanen, 2006, p. 27). Satisficing and repetition of old patterns of thinking can sometimes be useful, but they also endanger our

creativity. From a critical angle, the field of creativity itself can be said to experience a long period of being 'locked' in its own terminology because of the success of years, even decades of consolidation.

Can We Move Beyond Consolidation and Creative Limitation?

Consolidation and creative limitations are related phenomena when a field of research gains momentum and becomes stabilised through processes of institutionalisation. Considering these processes in their interplay and taking them seriously as a possible challenge to our field, this book tries to offer an alternative. What if instead of talking and, as a consequence, thinking about creativity using the same old terms or the new, popular concepts of today, we look for inspiration somewhere else? What if, in fact, it is in the odd or common words, or in words seemingly unrelated to creativity, that we find a more solid ground (conceptually and pragmatically) to theorise creativity? The outcome of this rather 'creative' exercise in this book is—we hope—a fresh, new perspective, perhaps a 'cool' (Nordic) gaze on creativity.

A Few Notes on Concepts and Categories

In research, the concepts we use to understand phenomena reflect processes of categorisation while, at the same time, many of the categories we create in psychology do not exist in the world as such. Categories are the researcher's constructs, chosen based on his or her preferences and experiences. As noted by Bowker and Star (2000), concepts and categories are always historically situated. They are learned as part of membership in communities of practice. When we give meaning to the world around us, we produce certain forms of organisation that, in turn, produce certain material arrangements, subject positions, and forms of knowledge. These are "the material and symbolic practices of conceptualization—the making of boundaries and categories to be deployed in research" (Edwards & Fowler, 2007, p. 110). Thus, although there is no other way of being analytical and systematic, we should always remain critical when it comes to our own processes of naming, labelling, and creating categories (Weick, 2006).

Categories are part of the research processes and cannot be escaped; however, we can experiment with them, deconstruct them or even try to dissolve them with the aim of adding new perspectives or reframing our studies. This is our intention with this book in relation to creativity. What does it mean to talk about creativity in terms of thinking or personality traits? Or in terms of societal progress and economic growth? What does it mean to always go back to the classic categories of person, product, process, and press (Rhodes, 1961)? What would it mean to talk about it in terms of pathways, bodies, the digital, rhythms, or spaces? What would that imply for the way we think about creativity and, importantly, for the way we (en)act it in everyday life?

Building on both the constructionist and pragmatism traditions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; James, 1907), we consider language and vocabularies highly consequential for how we define, discover, assess, validate, and practice creativity. For example, let's take the very common reference to the *creative person*. Studies of what makes people creative and what distinguishes creative people from others (less creative) have marked the very beginning of what we call nowadays the 'psychology of creativity' (Barron & Harrington, 1981). To this day, we find a vigorous literature, at least in psychology, dedicated to the creative person, his or her personality, cognitive styles, and more recently, his or her brain processes. We are, in other words, very often concerned with *who is* (or can be) a creative person. Yet, very few ask *what is* the creative person? Is it even appropriate to talk about creativity as a property or quality of people? What exactly 'in' or 'about' a person is actually creative? In everyday conversations, we might hear such and such being called highly creative (often in contrast to the speaker or simply the rest of us), but when we ask for details we will most probably learn about what the person does ('see, just the other day …'). Wouldn't it make more sense to talk about creative action rather than creativity as a personal attribute (Glăveanu, 2014)? How about if we dropped 'creativity' altogether, as a noun, and kept only 'creating', as a verb (Wagoner, 2015)?

This radical suggestion might belong to the realm of Borges's fantastic prose (see 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' in his collection *Fictions*, 1962), but, in practice, we cannot do without nouns, without words, without categories. And they often, for better or worse, stabilise reality for us, performing a kind of magic by which the thing I say (creativity) becomes something real, something I refer to in the world (such as the creative person). So, what is there to do?

We can become more aware of what words and categories actually 'do'; we can inquire more about *the power of vocabularies* and, if we get really annoyed, we can create our own! *Creativity: A New Vocabulary*. Aren't we, though, just replacing one set of terms with another? …Yes, but different vocabularies have different pragmatic value. The first editor engaged in a similar exercise some years ago, 'against' the traditional 4P model. What resulted was the 5As (if you are curious to know more, see Glăveanu, 2013). By the time the three editors finished their coffee break, a whole new alternative vocabulary had emerged. And when they talked to other colleagues from their university, more and more words kept being added. In the second edition, we revised and included almost all the initial chapters and added five brand new ones: Body, Digital, No, Silence, Worldmaking. And many are, surely, still to come! For the moment, though, we all 'settled' for a small collection of essays. The instruction given to authors was rather straightforward:

> Please think about a concept from your own area that is not usually associated with creativity but could help us develop a new way of understanding creativity as a dynamic, relational, developmental phenomenon.

Fear. Rhythm. Translation. Mess. Can they teach us anything about creativity? What about the seemingly 'opposites' of creating: Memory, Silence, Rules? And then issues we don't often think about in relation to creativity: Power, Space, Things…Is this just another vocabulary? Through the free, deconstructive, and playful approach we all took in writing each chapter, the outcome might just as well be considered an '*anti-vocabulary*' of creativity. But perhaps this takes the critical attitude a step too far. We are not claiming here the birth of a revolutionary new language of creativity (in fact, as you will see in this book, as a group of authors, we are quite suspicious of revolutions as the prime markers of creativity). Quite the contrary, with only a few exceptions, you are probably very familiar with the concepts discussed in the following pages. By symbolically replacing some concepts with others we don't aim to establish a new orthodoxy or expect you, dear reader, to unlearn words and adopt ours in a rather Orwellian move. What we hope is that you will enjoy thinking about creativity in new ways, that you will find at least some of the terms we propose useful in practice and, above all, that you will learn to take all vocabularies—new and old—with a grain of salt. Why not start your own?

Reading This Book

And while we are on the topic of de(re)construction, let's unpack the notion of a book a little. The implicit assumption shared by authors and readers alike is that a book begins with the first chapter and ends with the last one. Reading a book, you often gain momentum and, if you are lucky, you get the feeling that you won't be able to put it down until the very last page. Linear reading; often matched by linear ways of understanding what has been written.

Our hope is that you won't read this book in the same way. If we are to imagine now a 'how to' set of instructions, we would first invite you to pick up the book and observe its weight, its colours and images, the smell of printed letters on new pages (yes, you probably know the scent as well). Then, find the table of contents and have a look. Amused? Intrigued? A bit of both? Start from the concept you find most interesting or, if you are so inclined, the least interesting, then move to the one you think might be related to it, then the next one and so on. Make and follow your own pathway through this collection of essays (and, if you are wondering, 'Pathways' (Chap. 14) does happen to be a chapter!).

Some hypothetical itineraries:

- *The process journey*: 'Business as Usual', 'Lostness', 'Mess', 'Rhythm', 'Stumbling', 'Translation', 'World-making'
- *The materiality journey*: 'Affordance', 'Body', 'Craft', 'Pathways', 'Space', 'Things', 'Upcycling'
- *The social journey*: 'No', 'Perspective', 'Power', 'Reflexivity', 'Rules', 'Silence'
- *The conditions of creativity journey*: 'Difference', 'Digital', 'Fear', 'Language', 'Memory'
- *The haphazard way*: Any chapter, in any order (we suggest from end to beginning)

No matter what path you take through the book, you will probably end up in a similar place. But the nature of the journey will be different. As you might notice, we deliberately didn't include a final chapter that brings all of these words together. We don't want to create a 'model' of creativity simply because we believe there is no single model for it, nor should we aim to have one (see also Baer, 2011). What we do have are different

conceptions and terms for creativity, some better than others (or, rather, more useful), when tested against the ultimate proof of practice. We can only hope our proposed vocabulary will pass this test.

Maybe you will tell us if this was the case when we meet on a future coffee break. It's on us!

References

Baer, J. (2011). Why grand theories of creativity distort, distract and disappoint. *International Journal of Creativity & Problem Solving, 21*(1), 73–100.

Barron, F., & Harrington, D. (1981). Creativity, intelligence, and personality. *Annual Review of Psychology, 32*, 439–476.

Beghetto, R. A. (2021). How times of crisis serve as a catalyst for creative action: An agentic perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 600685.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Anchor Books.

Bilton, C. (2007). *Management and creativity: From creative industries to creative management*. Blackwell Publishing.

Borges, J. L. (1962). *Fictions* (A. Kerrigan, Trans.). Grove Press.

Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (2000). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA MIT Press.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. D.C. Heath and Co.

Edwards, R., & Fowler, Z. (2007). Unsettling boundaries in making a space for research. *British Educational Research Journal, 33*(1), 107–123.

Elsbach, K. D., & Hargadon, A. B. (2006). Enhancing creativity through 'mindless' work: A framework of workday design. *Organization Science, 17*(4), 470–483.

Foss, N. J., & Saebi, T. (2015). *Business model innovation – The organizational dimension*. Oxford University Press.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2013). Rewriting the language of creativity: The five A's framework. *Review of General Psychology, 17*(1), 69–81.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Distributed creativity: Thinking outside the box of the creative individual*. Springer.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2023). Possibility studies: A manifesto. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221127580

James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking*. Longmans Green.

Meier, N., & Wegener, C. (2017, December 15). *Word matters, words matter: On fine-tuning our vocabularies of academic writing to become better writers*. http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2017/12/15/materiality-of-research-word-matters-words-matter-on-fine-tuning-our-vocabularies-of-academic-writing-to-become-better-writers-by-ninna-meier-and-charlotte-wegener/

Montuori, A. (2023). Possibilities in postnormal times. *Possibility Studies & Society*, *1*(1–2), 157–162. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231172435

Paulus, P. B., Nakui, T., & Putman, V. L. (2006). Group brainstorming and teamwork: Some rules for the road to innovation. In L. L. Thompson & H. S. Choi (Eds.), *Creativity and innovation in organizational teams* (pp. 69–86). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Rhodes, M. (1961). An analysis of creativity. *Phi Delta Kappan, 42*, 305–311.

Santanen, E. L. (2006). Opening the black box of creativity: Causal effects in creative solution generation. In L. Thompson & H. S. Choi (Eds.), *Creativity and innovation in organizational teams* (pp. 21–42). Psychology Press.

Thompson, L., & Choi, H. S. (2006). *Creativity and innovation in organizational teams*. Psychology Press.

Wagoner, B. (2015). From crisis to creativity: Towards a psychology of creating. *Creativity: Theories – Research – Applications, 1*(2), 70–74.

Wegener, C. (2021). Writing (in) the Syncope. *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift, 16*(30). https://doi.org/10.7146/dut.v16i30.122640

Wegener, C. (2022). Rhythms of writing: Processes of connecting (with) words. In I. B. Simpson & L. Revsbaek (Eds.), *Doing process research in organizations: Noticing differently* (pp. 59–79). Oxford University Press.

Weick, K. E. (2006). Faith, evidence, and action: Better guesses in an unknowable world. *Organization Studies, 27*(11), 1723–1736.

CHAPTER 2

Affordance

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

How many things can you do with ordinary bricks (see Fig. 2.1)? Well, let's see: One can certainly try to build something, since this is what bricks 'are for'. But what if you had only one brick? You could perhaps break it into little pieces and build a small house or a wall. Moreover, if you have little pieces of brick, you could draw with them on the pavement. And if the brick's shape can be altered, then why not dig a small hole (if it is not there already) and put a candle in? If you bring it in contact with a stronger source of heat, you might be able to cook on a brick or use it to warm up the bed during winter. Or, even better, why not use it as a flower pot? If you have plenty of tiny things, you can 'hide' them inside a carved brick or, if you get really creative, use the space inside to hold a napkin, or a knife, or even a gun. And, speaking of guns, you can also use the brick to hit someone, or break a window (not that you would of course, except for self-defence). Or use it for pest control—not a very nice image but, still, a potential use. For more constructive purposes, you can use the brick as a hammer, or stand on it and make yourself taller in family photos. And, if

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_2

Fig. 2.1 Pile of bricks. (*Source*: Photo by Thegreenj, licensed under the Creative Commons)

you can stand or lean on it, maybe books can too; here you go, the brick as a bookshelf end piece! Or as a door stopper, or as a means to keep a car from sliding down a steep slope. If you like martial arts, you can break bricks with your hand or head or, if you are more like me, watch someone else do it on TV. And, if you are artistically inclined, you can paint the brick or sign it and call it art (à la Marcel Duchamp). Finally, why not wear a brick around your neck—it is good exercise and an amazing conversation starter at parties!

The brick test item belongs to the classic Alternative Uses Tasks proposed by Guilford (1967) as a measure of divergent thinking. Whether you are asked what you can do with a brick, a cardboard box or a paperclip, the principle is the same: generate as many ideas as you can, in a given amount of time. While the first ideas may be very common (in the example above, using the brick for construction), the later ideas are likely to uncover some new, unexpected uses (Lubart, 2003; see also Chap. 13). If these uses are surprising or valuable in some ways, they are labelled as 'creative ideas' (different from conventional ideas, useful but not very

novel, or bizarre ones, original but not so useful—who wants to wear a brick around the neck after all?). It is widely acknowledged, of course, that divergent thinking estimates creative *potential* (Runco, 1993), which is different from actual achievement. In other words, someone can be very skilled at answering this kind of task, but this doesn't mean he or she will necessarily be creative in solving real-life problems.

What makes this question interesting then? Unlike the traditional concern for the qualities of the ideas proposed (scoring them for fluency, flexibility, originality and so on), I find this task useful because it invites us to think about a material object (see also Chap. 23). Even if we don't usually have a brick in front of us while answering—yet another limitation of test situations—we nevertheless get mentally to manipulate a brick and reflect on its physical properties. A brick is a solid object that can support things or people, can be broken, can absorb heat, can harm someone, can hold things inside, can be an obstacle or an ornament, and so on. Thinking about what can be done with a brick is not only about what we would *want* to do with it but, essentially, also about what we *can* do considering its material properties. In other words, it is very much about what the brick 'affords' us to do, a conclusion that turns creativity from simple ideation into concrete, situated action. More than this, it points us to the societal and developmental history of being situated, as human beings, within physical, social and cultural environments and relating to them across time. The fact that a person is born and grows up in a particular context will leave its mark on the 'landscape' of affordances encountered (including through the different objects available in different spaces) and, more importantly, the likelihood for specific affordances to be discovered, enacted and cultivated. Creative expression displays clear cultural variations (Shao et al., 2019), and yet, it would be a mistake to consider culture in terms of 'more' or 'less' creativity. Paying attention to affordances and, more generally, to the socio-material contexts of being creative, we can understand better how, why and with what people create. But, in order to grasp these complex issues, we need to start from the definition.

Affordances, a Debated Concept

What is an affordance? For James J. Gibson (1977, 1986), the psychologist who coined this term:

> The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. (…) something that refers to both the environment and the animal (…). It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment. (Gibson, 1986, p. 127)

The key concern for Gibson, as a founding father of ecological psychology, was the relation between person and environment (see also Chap. 21, also Chap. 3). Traditionally, these two elements have been treated separately in psychology, leading either to subjectivist accounts grounded in the experience of the individual or, on the contrary, to objectivist models that focus on the world as 'real' and external to the person. In an effort to cut across this Cartesian split, Gibson's notion of affordances is deliberately relational. In his own words, "an affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer" (Gibson, 1986, p. 129). This fundamentally means that studying either the person or his/her context, in isolation, is misguided—an observation that is very useful particularly for creativity research where such compartmentalisation remains common. Just like affordances, creative expression cannot be 'located', meaningfully, in either the person (e.g., his or her mind, or brain, or even body, taken separately) or the environment (e.g. in things, places, norms or values). The use of affordances and, as discussed here, the *creative* use of affordances, cuts across mind and body, person and world.

What objects afford us in terms of action is therefore neither dependent on their physical properties nor completely relative to the perceptions or intentions of the human actor. On the contrary, affordances are described, simultaneously, by both terms. To come back to the example of the brick: We can break it into small pieces—but this depends both on the size of the brick and the strength of the person. Being broken would not be afforded by a brick the size of a house (in the absence of other tools, of course), just as it would not be a distinctive affordance for humans the size of a teaspoon. Moreover, although the possibility of breaking a brick exists, in principle, each time we have the chance to manipulate one, we will probably not perceive it as such because our activities have a different goal; for instance, building something, which specifically goes against destroying what we intend to use as 'building material'. In this sense, affordances not only depend, in general terms, on the properties of objects and the abilities of human beings, they are also made salient in a contextual manner. Gibson, whose main interest was perception, famously proposed that we don't perceive objects as a sum of qualities (like solid or not, of a certain

colour and shape, and so on) but, rather, in terms of what we can do with them—their affordances or, in the formulation here, *action potentials*. These are not pre-determined courses of action but rather open-ended and emergent possibilities to act, think, and be 'differently'. To grasp affordances means to understand where such differences exist and how they can be made use of in ways that transform, simultaneously, person and world (Magnani, 2023).

Despite this clear benefit of representing a bridge built between the subjective and the objective, the person and the world, perception and action, affordance is both a debated and unfinished concept. The effort of theorising the phenomenon we call affordance did not begin with Gibson and his thinking was a continuation of, as well as a response to, predecessors such as Heinz Werner, Kurt Koffka and Kurt Lewin (see Niveleau, 2006). Furthermore, Gibson himself wrote relatively little about affordances and what he did write was, at times, contradictory (Jones, 2003). One of the most widely criticised assumptions in this regard refers to his hypothesis of 'direct perception' of affordances. Practically going against his own premise of how an affordance depends, simultaneously, on person and environment, Gibson claimed in the same book that "the affordance of something does not change as the need of the observer changes. The observer may or may not perceive or attend to the affordance, according to his needs, but the affordance, being invariant, is always there to be perceived" (Gibson, 1986, pp. 138–139). In other words, the affordance exists 'in the object', for everyone to see, independent of who the observer is or what the context might be. This part of his theory naturally attracted considerable criticism. If we return to the example of the brick, we might say that, according to the idea of direct perception, the possibility of supporting things on its surface exists at all times and for all people. Even young children can notice and make use of it, without understanding what a brick is. But, of course, placing things on a brick is not what we usually use this object for. Building things with bricks requires more than one brick, or even bricks themselves; one has to develop a kind of mortar and use other specialised tools, none of which is obvious for 'direct perception'.

The problem with an object-based notion of affordances is that it doesn't take into account the role of culture. Humans live in a largely man-made world of objects that are effectively 'introduced' to them through socialisation processes from an early age. The affordances of these objects, connected to the way we use them, reflect the socio-cultural

nature of our existence. The brick is not just a piece of matter whose properties are immediately transparent to observers: It is a *cultural product* or an *artefact* (see Costall, 1995; see also Chap. 23). It is not only the case that some more 'creative' uses of bricks require the development of a complex material culture—think, for instance, about using carved bricks as knife or tissue holders—but also making use of the affordance of constructing things with bricks is cultivated from early on when, for instance, children start interacting with Lego or other brick-like toys. Adults play a crucial role in this development, something that is not accounted for by Gibson's person—environment dyad. Developmental approaches to the study of affordances would point, in this context, to the ways in which other people scaffold the discovery and use (or the decision not to use) 'action potentials'. They would also consider the life-course consequences of prioritising certain courses of action, more easily afforded compared to others. At the same time, culture not only sets up norms for using objects, but also restricts certain uses. Protecting and cherishing human life is a value in societies across the globe, and this discourages us from commonly noticing the affordance of killing someone by hitting them with a brick. And yet, shared norms don't regulate all our behaviours and they certainly don't do it in the same way—this is how such violent uses are not completely foreign to any of us and they are depicted in movies, stories, books and the like. Finally, context is again hugely important: Protesters gathered in a square may, depending on circumstances, 'see' a pile of bricks differently than construction workers do (see also Chap. 15).

Beyond Conventional Uses of Objects

The socio-cultural critique above contributes to our understanding of both affordances and of creativity. This is due to the fact that the alternative view (i.e. direct perception) not only makes people passive recipients of what is afforded by their environment but also leaves unexplained the creation of new objects with new affordances. On the contrary, "from the perspective of sociocultural change, new entities with novel affordances are introduced into the culture, new affordances of familiar objects are realized, familiar affordances are sustained over time through continued use, and affordances fade from the scene through disuse" (Heft, 2003, pp. 175–176). In other words, affordances need to be understood as a dynamic, contextual and relational phenomena, in agreement with Gibson's overall view. These reflections also help us complete the relation

between person and the material world by adding cultural normativity to the model (see also Chap. 19). Figure 2.2 depicts this interdependence between intentionality, materiality and normativity in the form of three intersecting circles that create overlapping spaces (for more details, see Glăveanu, 2012, 2022).

In Fig. 2.2, the space of the conventional is defined at the intersection between what the person *would do* (intentionality), *could do* (materiality) and *would do* (normativity). Unlike the relatively small space allocated to it in this visual depiction, the area of the conventional is in fact very wide and includes most of our everyday actions with materials and interactions with other people. In terms of affordances, this area is represented by what Alan Costall (1995, 2014) calls '*canonical affordances*'. These relate to common and predictable uses of objects, such as chairs used for sitting, cups for drinking and bricks for building. The possibility of such uses is not only 'inscribed' in the materiality of objects, in the way they are designed, it is also supported by societal mechanisms (for instance, chairs are normally placed near tables, one is invited to sit and so on). This is how we develop expectations about objects, something that shapes our own intentionality in relation to them. Because of this coordination between intentions, material properties and norms, the conventional is often associated with less creative, or even non-creative, action. Indeed, using chairs for sitting is hardly surprising and is often catalogued as mundane or habitual. This misconception derives from the fact that we tend to see affordances as 'static' potentials to use things in a certain way when, in fact, they are actively, and often creatively, made use of. The canonical

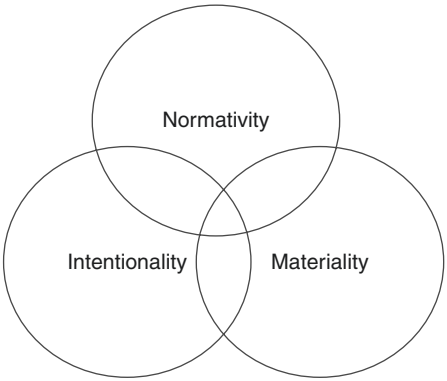

Fig. 2.2 The conventional and the non-conventional in object use

affordance of building with bricks has been acted upon for millennia and there isn't anything every exciting about that; however, what is actually being built and the new technologies of building can lead to very diverse outcomes.

Nevertheless, we are more inclined to look for creativity in the 'marginal' spaces represented in Fig. 2.2, those in which there is no perfect alignment between what we would, could and should do. For example, very often, actions considered creative come out of perceiving and acting on an affordance that was not salient before (i.e. the intention to make use of the object in that particular way was absent; a common problem for designers, see Norman, 2004). 'Discovering', in a moment of creative insight, that chairs can be glued to the wall in an art installation, or that bricks can become photo frames if carved properly, uses existing affordances in non-canonical ways. Of course, in both these cases other things are needed to achieve the new use (such as glue, a chisel and a hammer, and so on), which comes to show that exploiting new affordances often requires transforming the material support in more or less radical ways. In this sense, even if intentions and cultural norms are convergent, materiality can be lacking. In some circumstances, it is precisely the materiality of the world that confronts us with a problem, a form of resistance to our intentions, prompting us to find new, creative solutions (chairs can break, bricks can be too heavy to carry and so on). At times, as a response, we end up contradicting cultural norms related to the use of objects. If the brick is culturally a common, uninteresting object, we can wrap it up nicely and offer it as a funny gift or, if particularly wicked, place it under a Christmas tree!

The schema in Fig. 2.2 is a conceptual framework that can be equally used as an analytical tool or an intervention tool. In studying the creative use of objects, we can be guided by questions related to intentions, material properties and cultural norms. We especially can consider their overlaps and the kind of 'everyday' versus 'unusual' or 'rare' opportunities built at their intersection. As an intervention guide, this schema can help practitioners play with different types of constraints. What would happen if we bracket or change the intentions with which we normally approach objects or problems? What if we consider completely new types of materials? What if we question certain social norms or replace them with their opposite? What emerges in the middle of the figure and what changes at the periphery of the intersection between would, could and should?

Creativity (Re)Defined

Our thinking about creativity is incomplete, I would argue, without referring to affordances or, more broadly, trying to theorise the role and place of material objects within creative action. From the perspective developed here, creativity is not about generating ideas but, rather, about *expanding our action possibilities by perceiving or creating new affordances and exploiting existing affordances in new ways* (Glăveanu, 2012). Both becoming aware of what is possible and enacting possibilities relate to the discovery, use and transformation of affordances (Glăveanu, 2023; Meretoja, 2023). Gibson had this intuition when he wrote that, "the fact that a stone is a missile does not imply that it cannot be other things as well. It can be a paperweight, a bookend, a hammer, or a pendulum bob. It can be piled on another rock to make a cairn or a stone wall" (Gibson, 1986, p. 134). And the list goes on. Objects don't allow us to do everything. A brick cannot fly us into space. However, we can certainly do more with them than what we know we can, what we assume or what we usually do. Did you ever consider using a brick to serve drinks? As an ashtray? In weight lifting? Given the right circumstances, you just might!

References

Costall, A. (1995). Socializing affordances. *Theory & Psychology, 5*(4), 467–481.

Costall, A. (2014). Canonical affordances and creative agency. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from social and cultural psychology* (pp. 45–57). Routledge.

Gibson, J. J. (1977). The theory of affordances. In R. E. Shaw & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Perceiving, acting, and knowing* (pp. 67–82). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gibson, J. J. (1986). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2012). What can be done with an egg? Creativity, material objects and the theory of affordances. *Journal of Creative Behavior, 46*(3), 192–208.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2022). Affordance. In V. P. Glăveanu (Ed.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of the possible*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98390-5_10-3

Glăveanu, V. P. (2023). Possibility studies: A manifesto. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221127580

Guilford, J. P. (1967). *The nature of human intelligence*. McGraw-Hill.

Heft, H. (2003). Affordances, dynamic experience, and the challenge of reification. *Ecological Psychology, 15*(2), 149–180.

Jones, K. S. (2003). What is an affordance? *Ecological Psychology, 15*(2), 107–114.
Lubart, T. (2003). *Psychologie de la créativité*. Armand Colin.
Magnani, L. (2023). Possibilities in an abductive perspective: Creating affordances as cognitive chances. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221142718
Meretoja, H. (2023). Expanding our sense of the pos- sible. Ten theses for Possibility Studies. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 137–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231171448
Niveleau, C.-E. (2006). Le concept gibsonien d'affordance: Entre filiation, rupture et reconstruction conceptuelle. *Intellectica, 43*(1), 159–199.
Norman, D. A. (2004). *Affordances and design*. Retrieved December 8, 2014, from http://jnd.org/dn.mss/affordances_and.html
Runco, M. A. (1993). Divergent thinking, creativity, and giftedness. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 37*(1), 16–22.
Shao, Y., Zhang, C., Zhou, J., Gu, T., & Yuan, Y. (2019). How does culture shape creativity? A mini-review. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1219.

CHAPTER 3

Body

Ludvig Johan Torp Rasmussen and Lars Elbæk

Thomas Edison is credited with saying that "The chief function of the body is to carry the brain around." Considering the times of western modernization, this statement makes perfect sense. Indeed, the nineteenth century was a period where creativity was ultimately seen as an internal process, going on within the isolated, imaginative, and illuminative mind of the great inventor. Even today, many conceptions of creativity—especially those associated with the "I paradigm" (Glăveanu, 2010)—still build on the premise that creative persons acquire certain cognitive attributes, such as certain thinking styles or personality traits.

As argued by Glăveanu (2016a), researchers interested in creativity, lay people, and even inventors themselves are keen on identifying 'the moment of inspiration' where creativity happens. And in most cases, the qualities alleged to be involved are attributed to cognitive processes responsible for

L. J. T. Rasmussen (✉)
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: ljtr@hst.aau.dk

L. Elbæk
University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark
e-mail: lelbaek@health.sdu.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_3

an idea popping up in the mind, rather than what the creators *do* with their bodies as they inter*act* with their social and material environment. Similarly, considering geniuses like Edison, or Leonardo da Vinci before him, we are quite likely to think about what a unique and twisted mindset they must have had to think of unprecedented ideas such as the phonograph or the parachute. Contrarily, we do not usually consider how they must have used their body (e.g., hands and senses) to actively explore and play with different possibilities before creating the final solution.

Opposed to the common perspectives in psychological creativity research, cognitive abilities and personality traits should neither be treated as the origin nor the core of creativity. Instead, we should unravel "the meeting point between person and situation […] the interface between creator and world, where efforts are constantly made to adapt to and grow within a changing environment" (Glăveanu, 2016b, p. 211). Building on research on embodiment and creativity, we explore the potential of placing the body in this interface (see also Chap. 22). The analytical 'cut' of the body is detrimental not to our understanding of creativity but also our possibilities for action in terms of making it more tangible in educational and workplace settings. So what is the role of the body in creative activities and processes? And what does it mean theoretically and practically, to consider the body as a key to creativity?

Opening the Black Box of the Body

Generally, the field of creativity research says very little about the role of the body in creative activities. As argued by Malinin (2019), definitions involving production of something novel (or original) and useful (or valuable) do not account for the multidimensional phenomenon. Indeed, such views draw attention towards the attributes of persons and products rather than those of socially and materially situated activities. Although the 'WE paradigm' (Glăveanu, 2010) is marked by more attention to the interaction between person(s) and the environment, there is a need for more knowledge about the role of the body in creative activities.

A promising contemporary perspective that explicitly involves the body is *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science* (RECS), which was introduced to creativity research by Laura H. Malinin. Going beyond seeing the brain as a computer in the head, disconnected from the outer world, RECS frames cognition to embrace brain, body, and the world in a dynamic system (Malinin, 2019). Further, this perspective proposes that what and how we

learn, develop, and create is shaped, constrained, and enacted through open-ended explorative processes where we interact with diverse features of our social and material environment. For example, Malinin (2016) showed how creative people habitually exploit their material environments (e.g., qualities of architectural spaces) as instruments to engender and sustain different creativity modes.

In terms of creativity, RECS can be summed up by the 5E's, embodied, embedded, enactive, extended, and emotive (with the fifth one described by Stillwell & Harman, 2021). First, the *embodied* premise situates the body as an intrinsic part of a larger cognitive system, which spans mind, body, and environment. Second, the *embedded* thesis suggests that depending on our unique bodily capacities, we variously shape, and are shaped by, affordances (i.e., action possibilities) that are generated and exploited as we interact with our social and physical context. Third, the *enactive* element stresses that our sensemaking and embodied experiences are created through meaningful interactions with the environment in a process of interwoven action and perception. Fourth, the *extended* element refers to cognitive integration, meaning that our mind's boundaries are open and flexible and that our thinking is distributed beyond our body. Hence, the artifacts, resources, and people we interact with are incorporated into the cognitive system and thereby play an important role in creative cognition (Malinin, 2019). Finally, the *emotive* element implies that emotions play a role in 'coloring' our experiences and influences the way we perceive and act (Stillwell & Harman, 2021).

In order to offer new avenues for future research and practice in embodied creativity, Malinin (2019) examined the state of creativity research from the RECS perspective. Among more, this showed compelling evidence for the basic idea that the body shapes our creative mindset. Further, Malinin identified a potential to develop practices built on more embodied metaphors (e.g., 'break the walls') than those usually related to creativity (i.e., 'think out of the box'). To fulfill this potential, we must recognize the complexity and multidimensionality of embodied creativity. Further, Malinin (2019) argues that the common experimental approaches to access creativity are insufficient and points out qualitative studies of 'creativity-in-the-wild' (e.g., drawing on complex-systems theories) as a promising alternative. The issue is that predominant research in the area adopts protocols where creativity is equated with divergent thinking as measured by methods such as Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, Alternative Uses Tests, and Lego Tasks (for a review of this experimental

research, see Frith et al., 2020). Unfortunately, these studies focus on "the role of action in ideation processes, but do little to dispel the notion that creativity happens *solely in the head*" (Malinin, 2019, p. 7). Our take is that such experiments tend to detach the body from the creative activity. In other words, the experimental tasks do not directly involve the body in creating solutions, but merely put it in motion during the task. For example, participants are asked to squeeze a soft ball, walk on a treadmill, or use a game controller to destroy a wall in a zigzagged corridor during assessment. Consequently, such approaches treat movement as a catalyst for cognitive creativity, not as an integrated part of creative activity. Thus, it can be questioned whether such experiments involve any embodied creativity. At least, this research focuses on embodied stimulation of cognitive creativity.

Based on RECS, the body is a central part of the dynamical cognitive system in which we interact with the social and material world. However, rather than elaborating the unique role of the body in creative activities, RECS primarily aids in grasping the dynamic relationship between people and their surroundings (see also Chap. 21). And, as detailed above, it tends to focus on how this interaction impacts *cognitive* processes of creativity. Somehow, the integration of the body in an expanded cognitive system—ranging from mental to embodied, and situational elements—neglects the unique contribution of the body in creative activities. Hence, the body, and its possibilities to create movement (in practical and abstract terms), are more or less disguised. The role of the body is even absent from the "common principles about person-environment interactions" that Malinin (2019, p. 7) draws from research on improvisational performances. Similarly, the endorsed 'creativity-in-the-wild' studies tend to focus on the role of artifacts in shaping creative activity and to showcase the emergent and distributed nature of creativity. As Malinin argues, this "yielded new insights into the role of the socio-material environment in the development of creative expertise" (p. 8). Although such insights are important, more focus on the body is needed to develop pedagogical practices (e.g., activities or task constraints) to nurture embodied creativity (see also Chap. 19).

These issues also bear practical consequences. Malinin's (2019) examination of the research area shows that the RECS perspective primarily informs the design of workplace and learning environments in terms of particular building landscapes, room configurations, and furnishing that fosters different moves, postures, and gestures, which, in turn, support

our associative and divergent thinking. Hence, more knowledge is needed on how embodied creativity unfolds in the interaction with settings, others, and artifacts (i.e., materials and tools) to offer practical guidelines for how the body could be used to be creative (i.e., what we could *do* with the new interior design, available tools and physical objects in the process of creating). This can only be achieved by placing the body at the center of creative activity.

Sketching the [Creative] Body

Rather than contemplating how socio-material environments may be designed and equipped to invite creative actions, this chapter addresses the need for expanding on the role of the body in exploring, exploiting, and changing the material environment, e.g., by picking up different tools, equipment, and props, examining them with our hands and senses, moving them around, and using them to manipulate the environment and to craft something. For us, this approach exaggerates and illuminates the premise of RECS that 'creative ideas' do not originate in the mind, but from actively using our body to interact with the environment (Malinin, 2019).

In light of the above, and especially to circumvent the trend to treat the body as a resource to boost creative cognitions, there is a need to understand creativity as a culturally, socially, and materially situated activity involving the moving body's exploration of novel and meaningful action possibilities in relation to a particular obstacle or task. From this perspective, the body and its unique movement potentials are put at the center, to stress our embodied, explorative being in the world, moving in and with our surroundings.

To pave the way for more embodied approaches to understanding and nurturing creativity in educational and workplace settings, a working model of the body is sketched in Figs. 3.1 and 3.2 (see next pages), which comprise a variety of body parts involved in creative action. To specify, the notion of 'the body' foregrounds an interdependent and co-constitutive system behind the body, including what some call 'the mind' and several other constituents that enable continuous exchanges with the physical, cultural, and social environment.

Compared to previous research, which emphasizes changes in the physical environment, the sketches, should be considered as an elaboration of the multifaceted role played by the body in the person-environment

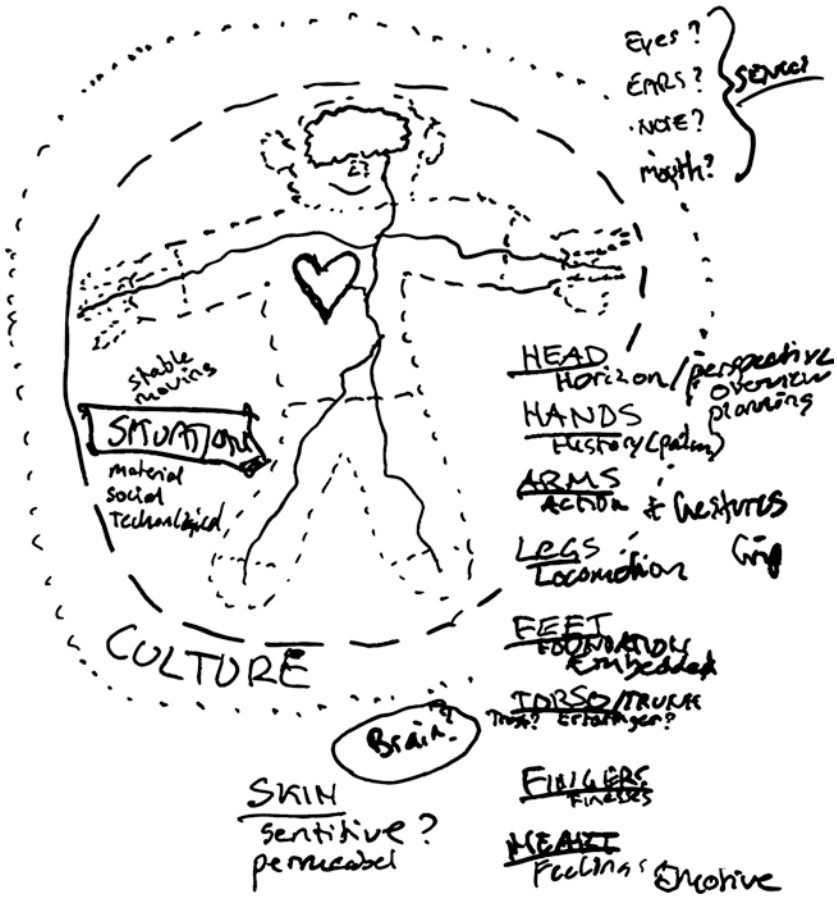

Fig. 3.1 Our very first raw sketch of the body with initial notes on all the 'body parts' that we could possibly imagine to somehow play a role in creative actions

continuum. In both sketches, the inner circle represents the situation and the socio-material resources available (e.g., others, props, equipment, room configuration). Further, the outer circle represents broader socio-cultural norms and values. This illustrates that the human body is always situated in a context, which influences its action orientation in time and space (Rasmussen, 2019). Paraphrasing Engel (2015), the body narrates our individual life story and relatedness—historically and culturally—by

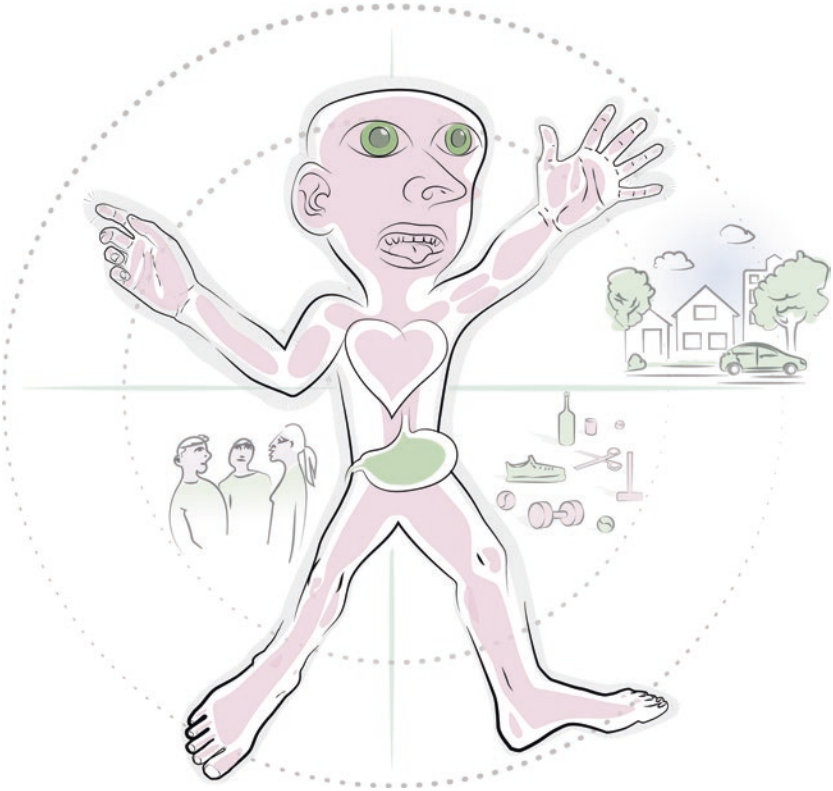

Fig. 3.2 A subsequent, computerized version of the body with highlighted body parts

telling about our past, present, and future, and mirroring our basic values, norms, and meanings.

In terms of creativity, drawing the first sketch helped us perform a conceptual dissection of the body into a series of everyday and metaphorical terms that could be explored to understand the multifaceted role of the body in person-environment interactions leading to creative action. The second sketch is a computerized and refined version of the first sketch, which highlights five body parts that we chose to examine in the present chapter (i.e., by exaggerating their size):

1. **Hands** for handling and exploring materials
2. **Legs** for locomotion and shifting perspective
3. **Senses** for sensitizing and empathizing
4. **Heart** for hope, affections, and emotions
5. **Gut** for guessing and intuition

We continue this entry by providing an overall introduction to these five tentative body parts. As evident in the following, each body part opens the door to particular research areas related to embodiment and creativity. These avenues supplement and extend the overall understanding of embodied creativity as embedded, enacted, extended, and emotive. Hence, this way to grasp the body may enrich and expand how leaders and teachers design for creative action.

Hands for Handling

Ideas are not created in isolated minds, but in continuous interaction with the material and social environment. In this regard, one might ask 'how do we interact with the environment'? Our best answer would be 'by using our hands.' We not only use our hands to draw and write. We also use them to reach, take, examine, shape, turn, shake, squeeze, touch, manipulate, and dismantle. They are the core of creative activity, as we use them to not only handle things, but also to change, and create things. Hence, we think and create with our hands (see also Chap. 5). This account of the hands draws on an understanding of human experience originating from John Dewey's pragmatist replacement of the 'epistemology of the eye' with a more enacted and subjective 'epistemology of the hand' (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010). This perspective shows that truth, knowledge, and new ideas cannot arise by passively observing an objective reality. Instead, the different things each of us carries around and brings to the situation (e.g., embodied experiences and capacities) are tied to our practices and activities. Different stimuli arise from our doings and active engagements with the world as we explore and handle its tools and (problematic) situations. And this process determines what we are able to create. As Baber (2019) describes it, we change the information we embody by manipulating tools and materials through improvised and opportunistic actions. Hence, the body not only produces experiences through actions. Our movements unite our experiences and expressions (Engel, 2015). Hence, the body is a core part of what we experience at any moment in time.

Legs for Locomotion

Whereas our hands help us shape and move tangible objects in our outer world, our legs help us shift location in space to take a new view of the social and material world. This is key to creativity as it helps us to move to another position, and thereby grasp the situation and the available objects and persons from other perspectives. Hence, body wandering (i.e., aimlessly moving from place to place, going where the wind blows) and not just mind wandering, may open new paths to explore. This idea draws on Glaveanu's (2015) perspectival model (see also Chap. 15), which conceptualizes 'a position' not only at a *social* (e.g., playing a role with a given function such as manager/employee, or teacher/pupil), but also at a *spatial* level (i.e., taking a given location with a certain viewpoint). In spatial terms, we use our locomotor skills to move to another spot. We can bend our knees or stretch our toes. We can climb onto a table or lie down on the floor. We can move slow or fast, and move in and out of distance (i.e., like a painter stepping back from the canvas). And as we move, we change our relation to the world, perceive, and experience the material and social situation in different ways, and thereby enable new action possibilities to be shaped (see also Chap. 2). Such 'moment-to-moment contingency,' where each and every action depends on the former and can be changed by the following is a recurrent embodied quality found in studies on improvisational creativity (Malinin, 2019, p. 7). It is also widely accepted in research on creativity in team sports, where the players' dynamic field positioning in cooperation and opposition variously open and close windows of opportunity in space and time (Hristovski et al., 2012; Tanggaard et al., 2016).

Senses for Sensitizing

At a deeper level, the activities of our hands and legs elicit tactile and sensory experiences as we interact with tools and materials in the environment. These inputs play a crucial role in creative activities as we become sensitive to something or someone (e.g., certain qualities or affordances in the material). In this regard, our skin, eyes, ears, and nose are all active, to continuously provide sensory input not only informing our experience of the situation, but also our impression of how our actions influence the world. Our senses play a crucial role in creativity since they allow us to register, sense, connect to, and move in and with physical objects in the

environment and the others we interact with. This relates to research showing that different kinds of sensory experiences (e.g., tactile input) provided by bodily movement can facilitate creative processes. For example, the sounds of musical instruments can inspire composers (Svanæs, 2013), and smells can affect creative writing (Gonçalves et al., 2017), e.g., since this sensory input triggers memories that evoke recalling of pleasant experiences (Davies et al., 2003). Similarly, Friend and Mills (2021) discuss the role of touch in creative media production in community maker spaces and mention that coupling touch, vision, sound effects, materials, proprioception, and bodily movements can create a digital interface between the mind, body, and the material world. Such practices can be found among circus artists, who work with gravitational forces, muscles, joints, and rotational axes as functional tools, which animate them to create their acts (Lavers et al., 2019). Through an active and sensitizing process, the artist and the apparatus engage in dialogue and enact each other. In other words, the apparatus becomes a pretext—a working aid with which the artist extends and is interrelated in exploring action possibilities (see also Chap. 23).

Heart for Hope and Affection

Motions and emotions are intrinsically connected—we are moved by movement and moved to move (Fuchs & Koch, 2014). In this regard, emotions such as boredom, anxiety, anger, joy, frustration, and pride are not just mental states or traits. They involve affective, motivational, and expressive aspects that influence our bodily sensations and behaviors, and our emotional reactions toward certain situations or objects (Fuchs & Koch, 2014). In this regard, embodied habits and dispositions such as motives and interests influence the way we meet any situation and thereby which action possibilities we can generate, discover, and utilize (Rasmussen, 2019). In this regard, our sketch proposes the heart as a metaphor for our hopes, affections, passions, motives, and interests. The heart depicts our emotional way of being in the world, which affects our openness to engage in new and unusual activities.

This idea is supported by the embodied affectivity framework (Fuchs & Koch, 2014), which suggests that our emotional makeup results from circular interactions between 1) the *affective qualities* or affordances of social (e.g., a positive energy and ambience) and physical (e.g., tools, surfaces, room size, and temperature) aspects in the environment and 2) our *bodily*

resonance in terms of postures, expressive movements, and movement tendencies (i.e., the way we communicate bodily expressions provide impressions and affect us). In this regard, *interbodily resonance* is a mirroring and complementing process between self and other, that varies between expressions and impressions (Fuchs & Koch, 2014). Through its resonance with the environment, the body is a medium of emotional perception in terms of coloring our experience and charting distinct parts of the environment with affective valence. Accordingly, designers of creative activities need to consider emotional and affective aspects as keys to bodily engagement, as these aspects shape our bodily responses to the environment. In this regard, minor material changes can offer diverse emotional relations. For example, the affective qualities of a vaulting box made of wood diverge much from one made of foam. In most cases, the latter would invite more creative and risky jumps that are not yet perfected.

Gut for Guessing

The final body part considered in this preliminary exploration of the creative body is the gut. We grasp the gut as a metaphor for 'unconscious guessing,' instinct, and intuition as well the impulsive acts that ensue such processes. In this regard, intuition is defined as an umbrella term describing all kinds of automated skills, instincts, and unconscious actions, operations, and processes (Welch, 2022). Relating to aspects such as expertise and implicit knowledge, intuition is a way of knowing that is connected to a deeper perception and understanding of the world, or as an action oriented decision or perception unaided by any logical or rational methods (Welch, 2022). In this regard, the theory of Movement-Knowings highlights the role of *embodied intuition* (and our tacit bodily experiences) in shaping our emotions, perceptions, cognitions, decisions, and actions (Welch, 2022). More specifically, as we interact with others and physical objects (e.g., using our hands, legs, and senses), our embodied intuition shows itself in the experience of varied forms of body sensations that provide physical information, such as shivers, changes in breathing, flows of energy in different body parts, or an unusual feeling in the gut or heart (Tantia, 2011). From this view, embodied intuition plays a central role in decision-making, problem-solving, and creativity. Further, it suggests that intuitive decisions and actions involve a deep understanding of the relation between the body, mind, and environment, which is grounded in our bodily experiences (Welch, 2022). This

enables us to entertain our hunches by acting intuitively and impulsively, without knowing exactly why we do the particular action, but curiously driven to find out what happens next.

Towards an Embodied Future

As illustrated so far, the body cannot be simply grasped as a passive "residence for our mind and soul or a carrier of physiological attributes" (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 22). On the contrary, it should be treated as an active and sensitive interface between our inner and outer world, one which enables new and meaningful action possibilities to emerge as we interact with artifacts, others, and conceptual resources. Further, a key takeaway from our conceptual dissection of the body is that movement plays an integral role in engaging all the above and more body parts.

Importantly, we intentionally label our model of the body as a 'sketch' since it should not be treated as a finite list, encompassing all relevant dimensions of the body. Rather, it is an open invitation to add or remove (ir)relevant body parts. For example, the sketch could be extended with elements such as *back for background* (e.g., embodied habits), *chest for courage* (e.g., embodied appearances; see also Chap. 8), and *head for horizon* (e.g., embodied imagination). Further, a more thorough examination of each body part is warranted. Yet, by opening the door to a range of concepts about the body and embodiment in creativity research and beyond, we hope our tentative sketch of the creative body may inspire scholarly discussion regarding the potential of embodied perspectives to address conceptual, theoretical, and methodological issues that limit practical application of creativity in educational settings.

Involving diverse processes and expressions created by the body, the application of embodied creativity requires physical responses to the tasks devised in classroom or work settings. This not only requires us to attend to the influences of space, materials, and environment, but also to carefully consider the emotional relations between different bodies (Griffith, 2021) as well the explorative, locomotive, sensory, affectional, and intuitive resources each body brings to the table. In this regard, our sketch offers some directions for how to ignite the creative body.

Hands *What can you do with this? How can it be used and manipulated? Explore different ways the object—or the other(s)—can be handled.*

Legs	*From how many positions can this be used?* *Move around the object to explore different perspectives.*
Senses	*How can you get in touch with the tools and surroundings?* *Explore the properties and constraints of the materials.*
Heart	*How does this activity make you feel? How could this make you happy?* *Choose a direction that you desire and contribute to a positive atmosphere.*
Gut	*What does your body tell you? What features of the object are you drawn to?* *When making decisions, trust your gut feeling.*

Such guidelines would be useful for all kinds of creative activities, not just in sports and the performing arts, where the role of the body is exaggerated. The body is ingrained in creative processes no matter if we are dealing with a kid playing with a hockey stick and an empty can of soda in a courtyard, an apprentice carpenter building a fairytale playhouse for his daughter, or a chef, inventing a new recipe by mixing ingredients in unorthodox ways. This takes us to a key paragraph from Glăveanu's (2014) critical reading of the psychology of creativity, by which we end this endeavor to place the body at the forefront of creative activity:

> If the atemporal, asocial mind is what researchers tend to focus on as a primary locus of creativity […] then this mind also seems to float unsupported by eyes and ears, by hands and legs, by the world of artefacts 'out' there, ready to be used and transformed […] And yet, ideas are never ethereal, they have a verbal, written, pictorial, bodily expression. Even when people think, and all the more when they create, there is movement, and speech, and use of tools like pens and paper, etc. (Glăveanu, 2014, pp. 18–19)

References

Baber, C. (2019). Thinking with hands, acting with minds: embodied cognition and creative practice. In S. Bagnara, R. Tartaglia, S. Albolino, T. Alexander, & Y. Fujita (Eds.), *In Proceedings of the 20th Congress of the International Ergonomics Association (IEA 2018)* (pp. 225–234). Springer International Publishing.

Brinkmann, S., & Tanggaard, L. (2010). Toward an epistemology of the hand. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 29*, 243–257.

Davies, B. J., Kooijman, D., & Ward, P. (2003). The sweet smell of success: Olfaction in retailing. *The Journal of Marketing Management, 19*(5–6), 611–627.

Engel, L. (2015). Den langsomme vej [The slow route]. In H. Winther, L. Engel, M.-B. Nørgaard, & M. Herskind (Eds.), *Fodfæste og Himmelkys – Undervisningsbog iBevægelse, Rytmisk Gymnastik og Dans [Foothold and kisses to the sky – Teaching in movement, rhythmic gymnastics and dance]* (pp. 11–20). Billesø & Baltzer.

Friend, L., & Mills, K. A. (2021). Toward a typology of touch in multisensory makerspaces. *Leaning, Media and Technology, 46*(4), 465–482.

Frith, E., Miller, S., & Loprinzi, P. D. (2020). A review of experimental research on embodied creativity: Revisiting the mind–body connection. *Journal of Creative Behaviour, 54*(4), 767–798. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.406

Fuchs, T., & Koch, S. C. (2014). Embodied affectivity: On moving and being moved. *Frontiers in Psychology, 5*(10), 3389.

Glăveanu, V. P. G. (2010). Paradigms in the study of creativity. Introducing the perspective of cultural psychology. *New Ideas in Psychology, 28*(1), 79–93.

Glăveanu, V. P. G. (2014). The psychology of creativity: A critical reading. *Creativity, 1*(1), 10–32.

Glăveanu, V. P. G. (2015). Creativity as a sociocultural act. *Journal of Creative Behaviour, 49*(*3*), 165–180.

Glăveanu, V. P. G. (2016a). Craft. In V. P. G. Glăveanu, L. Tanggaard, & C. Wegener (Eds.), *Creativity – A new vocabulary.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Glăveanu, V. P. G. (2016b). The psychology of creating: A cultural-developmental approach to key dichotomies within creativity studies. In *The Palgrave handbook of creativity and culture research* (pp. 205–223). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Gonçalves, F., Cabral, D., Campos, P., & Schöning, J. (2017). I smell creativity: Exploring the effects of olfactory and auditory cues to support creative writing tasks. In R. Bernhaupt, G. Dalvi, et al. (Eds.), *Human-computer interaction* (INTERACT 2017. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, 10514). Springer.

Griffith, A. (2021). Embodied creativity in the fine and performing arts. *Journal of Creativity, 31*, 100010.

Hristovski, R., Davids, K., Passos, P., & Araújo, D. (2012). Sport performance as a domain of creative problem solving for self-organizing performer-environment systems. *The Open Sports Sciences Journal, 5*(1), 26–35.

Lavers, K., Leroux, L. P., & Burtt, J. (2019). *Contemporary circus.* Routledge.

Malinin, L. H. (2016). Creative practices embodied, embedded, and enacted in architectural settings: Toward an ecological model of creativity. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 3389.

Malinin, L. H. (2019). How radical is embodied creativity? Implications of 4E approaches for creativity research and teaching. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 2372.

Rasmussen, L. J. T. (2019). *On the role of creativity in sport.* Aalborg Universitetsforlag. Aalborg Universitet.

Stillwell, P., & Harman, K. (2021). Phenomenological research needs to be renewed: Time to integrate enactivism as a flexible resource. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 20*, 1609406921995299.

Svanæs, D. (2013). Interaction design for and with the lived body: Some implications of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction (TOCHI), 20*(1), 1–30.

Tanggaard, L., Laursen, D. N., & Szulevicz, T. (2016). The grip on the handball – a qualitative analysis of the influence of materiality on creativity in sport. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 8*(1), 79–94.

Tantia, J. F. (2011). The role of the body in decision-making: A review of the literature. *Neuroethics, 4*(1), 1–12.

Welch, S. (2022). Movement-knowings: Affect and embodied intuition. In S. Welch (Ed.), *Choreography as embodied critical enquiry: Embodied cognition and creative movement* (pp. 57–74). Palgrave Macmillan.

CHAPTER 4

Business as Usual

Kristian Dahl and Lene Tanggaard

> We are living in the autumn of our world, as our generations grow dumber and poorer than those of our parents. Our economy has been bled dry, organisations are collapsing and the Chinese are coming. The EU is slowly but surely being driven to its knees.

So goes the familiar requiem for the EU. The box is then opened, presenting us with the silver bullet: Creativity, invention, radical innovation or some other term about doing something new. The silver bullet is placed in the revolver and the revolver in the hands of the saviour. The leader. *Pull the trigger*.

Many texts on creativity begin by stating that creativity and innovation are key to the survival of societies and industries in the twenty-first century (e.g. see Tanggaard & Stadil, 2014; Zhou & Hoever, 2014). However, if

K. Dahl (✉)
Skørping, Denmark
e-mail: kd@lead.eu

L. Tanggaard
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: lenet@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_4

creativity is to play such an important role in businesses and societies, one of the big challenges facing us all currently must be to demystify creativity by challenging the myth of the 'great' man or woman that successfully pulls the creativity trigger. Accordingly, in this chapter, we suggest treating creativity as usual business, part and parcel of ordinary organisational life (see also Chap. 16).

Leaders around the globe appear to be a little tired of the creativity circus, too—but who dares to admit it? You cannot be a leader if you reject being creative and innovative; doing so would be to define yourself as a non-leader and, ultimately, as complicit in the impending downfall. So, if the leader's job is to fire the silver bullet, we hope the right bullet is in the chamber. But we are not so sure this is the case. The gunpowder is wet. A new vocabulary is needed in the field of management and organisational creativity. Our key suggestion here is to treat creativity as business as usual, in line with other research perspectives stating that novelty is overrated (Sawyer, 2012; Tanggaard & Wegener, 2015). We need another discourse of creativity and a new vocabulary. We have chosen a directly personal and provocative style to develop it. Please forgive us.

Towards Business as Usual

> Learn from the great geniuses, hang out with artists and designers, walk in bare feet—or at least wear attractive clothes—think outside the box and generally avoid being conservative and leader-like.

This is the arts and humanities ultimate revenge on business.

> You all should have gone to the art academy instead of business school, or at the very least trained to become psychologists—or just smoked more pot instead of being overachievers. Business has failed because it is being run as business as usual. Now the cure is being unusual, which means you have to make the leap over to our paradigm. Come over to the humanists, where we have the unusual for all of you 'usuals'! Once you have become unusual, go back to business and reshape it according to our vision.

Humanities as usual and wet gunpowder.

If those of us in the humanities really want to be innovative and creative in our attempts to contribute to innovation, the first step could be escaping from our own paradigm and perceptions. What if the solution is

business as usual? What if we try to think of inventiveness, creativity and innovation as an organisational process that must be built up—no differently from a sales process, logistics process or any other trivial organisational leadership task. To explore this perspective, we initiated a qualitative study of how creating something new and turning it into something commercial can be seen as an organisational process similar to other central business processes such as production, sales, procuring and logistics. Our intention was to explore creating something new with a business perspective as our analytical starting point. This demanded two things: An analytical framework from the business world to work within and, subsequently, experienced leaders from the business world who could contribute their practical expertise.

The Managers' Perspective

We made an agreement with a group of MBA students about dedicating a two-day workshop to this topic. In this group, there were 18 MBA students who typically had ten years' management experience in large as well as small organisations.[1] The goal was to explore:

> What management tasks do managers in a business process perspective see as most important at different managerial levels when trying to create something new and of value for the current business?

We focused exclusively on how managers see management tasks in relation to creating something new and of value to the business, and how this plays out at different organisational levels. Obviously, this is not without limitations. It gives priority to the manager's top-down perspective, it might overemphasise the importance of the manager (Meindl et al., 1985; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987), and it clearly collides with all the perspectives that underline the creation of something new as an uncontrollable process (Stacy, 2003; see Chaps. 10, 12 and 22).

In order to be able to understand the creation of something new in a business-process perspective, we needed to build an analytical framework that understands business processes in mainstream business thinking connected to both a horizontal as well as a vertical perspective.

[1] We would like to thank the Business Institute, Aalborg and the MBA students from this school who have helped us immensely developing the ideas in this chapter.

A Horizontal View on Creating Something New

The horizontal view is all about understanding business processes as a series of elements or partial processes which, when connected, either lead to a given result or fail to do so because of a weak link somewhere along the line. This way of thinking is often connected to Porter's (1985) concept of the value chain. When we transfer this to the creation of something new, in a process perspective, we need concepts to denote the partial processes of which the creation of something new consists. Here, we found it helpful to use the Inventiveness—Creativity—Innovation (ICI) framework (after Juelsbo et al., 2015) as a guiding taxonomy (see Table 4.1).

We like this model because it represents a step towards taking the magic out of creating something new in a business perspective. It contributes to the conceptual understanding of the differences between ingredients that are often mixed together in an esoteric concoction. Inventiveness, creativity and innovation are now more clearly defined—making them easier to work with for non-artists. On the other hand, the model can also be read as a description of building blocks that can be combined in processes focused on innovation. Read from the top down and from right to left.

Business-process models or the very idea of the value chain is often critiqued for because they represent an overly compartmentalised view fit for a stable environment (Mintzberg, 2005) and thus ignore that interconnected sub-processes are often not clearly divided but rather overlapping and fluctuating. This critique also applies to the ICI model.

A Vertical View on Creating Something New

In a vertical perspective, a business process must be managed at several organisational levels. In the literature, it is an established idea that it is a managerial responsibility to support, maintain and ensure the right focus on, and coordination of, the sub-processes of the business process (Hammer, 2007). At the same time, it is an important point that the job that managers must do when ensuring efficient business processes varies across organisational levels (Hammer, 2007).

The idea that leadership demands something different at different organisational levels is often called the 'leadership pipeline perspective' (Kaiser, 2011). In a special issue of *The Psychologist-Manager* on this topic, the Leadership Pipeline model was called "perhaps the biggest idea to affect leadership development and talent management over the past

Table 4.1 The ICI framework

	Inventiveness	*Creativity*	*Innovation*
Definition:	The ability to respond in new and valuable ways in situations where this is necessary. It is the ability to act quickly, intelligently and with adaptability when the previous modes of action are no longer adequate (Tanggaard, 2014)	The creation of new and useful ideas. Characterised by management of the production of ideas to ensure meaning within the specific context	"The multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new or improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace" (Baregheh et al., 2009)
Purpose / goal:	Create a breeding ground for new ideas Well-being at the workplace.	Prioritise ideas, incorporate them into the project and manage the associated tasks. Link different ideas together.	Implementation of ideas.
Context:	Inventiveness is present in all people and can be viewed as creative/ innovative potential It is closely linked with your professional competence and motivation in everyday practice, where ideas for solving tasks in new ways arise	An identified creative potential that is converted into managed tasks The good idea is prioritised, after which time and money are allocated for development and implementation	A strategic perspective is typically adopted in this process: How does the idea fit into the organisation?

decade" (Kaiser, 2011, p. 71). Publications by Freedman (1998), Charan et al. (2001) and Goldsmith and Reiter (2007) made the basic message about discontinuity known to the public; namely, that leadership at different levels demands different things from a manager and those managers often fail when promoted because they continue doing what ensured success at the lower leadership level.

If we accept these perspectives, a logical conclusion is that some of the same mechanisms may apply when attempting to understand the leadership of inventiveness, creativity and innovation. Hence, we asked the MBAs participating in the workshop to:

> Describe what they see as the most important tasks that managers must do in relation to inventiveness, creativity and innovation at four different hierarchical leadership levels.

We asked the MBAs to use four generic leadership levels representing the leadership hierarchy common to many organisations. These levels were inspired by the work of Charan et al. (2001), Dahl and Molly-Søholm (2012) and Freedman (1998):

- Leader of employees: Responsible for a group of employees and creating results through the professional work done by the employees.
- Leader of leaders: Responsible for leaders of employees and creating results through the management work done by them.
- Functional leader: Responsible for leaders of leaders and managing a large part of the organisation through them.
- CEO: Overall responsibility for the whole organisation and, ultimately, creating results through the work done by the whole organisation.

It is extremely important to differentiate between these different positions if we want a nuanced understanding of what goes on—or should go on—at different organisational levels. It is also very important to note that the exclusive focus in our analysis on the work the leaders do is not the same as saying inventiveness, creativity and innovation are reserved for the upper organisational echelons. On the contrary, our exploration is all about what leaders should be held accountable for if the aim is to enable inventiveness, creativity and innovation at the employee level as an integrated part of everyday organisational life. Of business as usual. With these considerations in mind, we analysed the materials from the workshop, i.e. the MBA students' work with our two models, the ICI-model and the Leadership Pipeline model, and condensed the meaning (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014), with an emphasis on the discontinuous, i.e. the unique aspects of each level of leadership.

The MBA students thus described the task for leaders at each level and the potential pitfalls that might kill creativity. Looking through the data, the following patterns emerged in the way leaders describe their tasks related to inventiveness, creativity and innovation:

- The *inventiveness field* progresses from leaders of employees, who must ensure that employees' daily work provides the opportunity for the regular experimentation and implementation of small everyday improvements, to the senior leadership level, which must insist that the organisation achieves a balance between operations and innovation. A closer look at the different levels of leadership also reveals some interesting patterns. At the bottom of the leadership chain, inventiveness is closely linked to high professional competency among employees; the leaders' task is to stimulate experimentation as an integrated part of everyday work and operations. The leader is responsible for creating learning and ensuring that resulting errors are converted into a driver of further development. At the same time, it is important to establish zero-error zones in which experimentation is prohibited. This would typically be in areas that are highly regulated by law and where strict adherence to procedure is required due to high-risk work (think about some of the work that goes on in a control tower in an airport). The leader of leaders is responsible for ensuring that the leader of employees is able to execute such tasks and provide leadership support. At the top two levels of leadership, the most important issue is building an organisation in a strategic perspective to enable inventiveness. This requires support from the organisation's culture and performance management systems. The top level of leadership thereby builds architecture for inventiveness that the other levels of leadership translate into a practical framework that promotes employees' inventiveness in their daily work. It is at 'top–down' job to stimulate an organisation where 'bottom–up' inventiveness is possible.
- The *creativity field* progresses from the leader of employees, who must be able to identify new and useful ideas, which often emerge from employees' inventiveness or from customers, to the senior leadership, which is responsible for ensuring an organisational structure and process that collects the right ideas and converts them into strategic innovation initiatives. The interesting thing in this respect is that things often go wrong because leaders of employees lack the professional or strategic insight to assess the commercial or optimisation potential of an idea, thereby letting it die. Moving up to the next level of the hierarchy—leader of leaders—the task is to support, develop and hold the leader of employees accountable for creativity efforts. This requires the leader of leaders to set aside time for listen-

ing to new ideas and, together with the leaders of employees, assess their potential and develop the best ideas. These ideas and social practices are then transferred into the innovation structure. The innovation activities associated with some ideas can be initiated at employee level, while big ideas, crossing areas of operation, are lifted up to the managerial level. These are typically ideas that exceed the budget, are outside current strategic plans, or can be realised only with full senior management backing. The most important tasks here are to ensure that your part of the organisation has a culture and processes that generate, share and communicate ideas upwards, as well as horizontally. This includes ensuring that innovation takes place at the right level. Some types of everyday innovation processes require very little discussion, while the more radical or particularly resource-intensive processes must be lifted up to the executive level and discussed as a possible strategic innovation initiative. The CEO's most important task is twofold: taking ultimate responsibility for ensuring the organisation has leaders at all levels focusing on creativity, including its necessary structures and processes, and ensuring that the right creative ideas travel through these organisational structures and are converted into strategic innovation initiatives.

- The *innovation field* progresses from leaders of employees' management of professional specialists who spend some of their time, often concurrently with operations-related work, participating in innovation processes, to the CEO, who ultimately works to ensure that the organisation's business model is competitive. The leader of employees' task largely involves ensuring that the practical structuring of innovation work functions correctly; this is where the actual transformation from idea to tangible product or service takes place. One step higher up is the leader of leaders, who provides support to the leaders of employees in the innovation work. This often includes maintaining an overview of progress in specific projects and communicating their status. Another important task is being able to implement or drive transformations or improvements in operations to ensure capitalisation on the innovation work carried out. The challenges here are that you may not necessarily have ownership of the idea to be implemented and getting the organisation to do something new may require challenging habits or powerful occupational groups within your organisation. At the managerial level, innovation work also comprises two main tracks. One involves helping subordi-

nate leaders drive the practical transition to new business models, or implementing the ideas developed in the innovation process. If these ideas are not guided all the way to implementation, the functional leader has failed. The second track involves working with the senior leadership to ensure that the innovation architecture is in place and enables all levels to act within it. The CEO is ultimately responsible for ensuring a functional leader level in the organisation that masters this task and, in a broader perspective, for ensuring an effective innovation strategy as an integrated part of the organisation's overall strategy.

Too Much Like Business as Usual

We've set out to explore how leaders perceive their job and responsibilities in relation to the creation of the new in a business context using the existing management hierarchy and a business process/value-chain perspective as our points of departure. Unfortunately, the whole exercise resulted in a hierarchical model—the kind that can easily be used as the basis for a management control system …One of the biggest myths is that control and management are the No. 1 enemy of creativity because they just reproduce what already exists (see Bilton, 2007). The myth also goes that creativity is about everything outside the box and not inside it. Yet, the leaders that participated in this study maintained that you could do something wrong or fail fatally and inexcusably when trying to create something new for the current business. This collides with the idea that the new only emerges when we play in a safe space, shielded from critique. The model also became tediously normative with all the descriptions of basic tasks that leaders at different levels must perform for the sake of the organization—not for the leaders' own sake. Creativity is supposed to be pleasurable and fun. What is worse, the leaders also said that things go wrong if everyone participates on equal terms—totally undemocratic Taylorism! And the employees aren't even included in the model. They are the ones who perform the practical inventiveness, creativity and innovation work, yet the leaders themselves don't even see this as particularly special. It's just a task they perform as part of everyday business—as with all other tasks that need to be done in order to keep the organisation going. And it is part of the leader's job to enable and ensure this happens. This study must be wrong—it is too much like business as usual.

Epilogue

As the sun sets on the horizon of traditional approaches to creativity, leaders find themselves at a crossroads as artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly emerges and transforms the very way many businesses operate. The situation right now is a historic tipping point akin to when the internet emerged or when the first telegram was sent across the Atlantic. Leaders now have both a new silver bullet in their hands—and a gun pressed against their forehead. Use AI to transform your business, or AI will make it irrelevant.

It is now imperative that leaders enable their organisations to use AI as a tool to stimulate creativity and innovation (see Vinchon et al., 2023; also Chap. 7). Embracing AI to amplify human creativity and innovation requires leaders who understand the delicate interplay between technology and human ingenuity. Leaders must think of AI as a new collaborative partner or colleague for employees rather than a replacement. This calls for the development of an organisational culture and design centered around striking the right balance and coexistence of human ingenuity and AI-driven insights. This will be one of the most important organisational challenges faced by leaders in this decade.

One of the most important things leaders can start doing is creating an environment that embraces experimentation. By fostering a culture of curiosity and encouraging employees to explore both the possibilities and limitations of AI, leaders empower their teams to break free from conventional thinking and venture into uncharted territories. By providing the necessary resources, support and freedom to explore, leaders can inspire individuals to leverage AI's capabilities as a tool for ideation, problem-solving and envisioning novel solutions. As AI evolves, it will be equally important to stimulate and maintain the collective capability for critical reflection and 'thinking outside the AI'. This is a prerequisite for being aware of and mitigating the inherent risks, biases and limitations of AI. At least, this is what ChatGpt tells us we should include in this epilogue.

References

Baregheh, A., Rowley, J., & Sambrook, S. (2009). Towards a multidisciplinary definition of innovation. *Management Decision, 47*(8), 1334.

Bilton, C. (2007). *Management and creativity – From creative industries to creative management*. Blackwell Publishing.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2014). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Charan, R., Drotter, S., & Noel, J. (2001). *The leadership pipeline: How to build the leadership-powered company*. Jossey-Bass.

Dahl, K., & Molly-Søholm, T. (2012). *Leadership Pipeline i den offentlige sector [Leadership Pipeline in the public sector]*. Dansk Psykologisk Forlag.

Freedman, A. (1998). Pathways and crossroads to institutional leadership. *Consulting Psychology Journal, 50*, 131–151.

Goldsmith, M., & Reiter, M. (2007). *What got you here – Won't get you there*. Hyperion.

Hammer, M. (2007). The process audit. *Harvard Business Review, 85*, 111–123.

Juelsbo, T., Backström, S., & Tanggaard, L. (2015). *Fra opfindsomhed til kreativitet og innovation igennem det rette klima*. [From inventiveness to creativity and innovation through the right creative climate]. Erhvervspsykologi.

Kaiser, R. B. (2011). The leadership pipeline: Fad, fashion, or empirical fact? *An Introduction to the Special Issue: The Psychologist-Manager Journal, 14*, 71–75.

Meindl, J. R., & Ehrlich, S. B. (1987). The romance of leadership and the evaluation of organizational performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 30*, 91–109.

Meindl, J. R., Ehrlich, S. B., & Dukerich, J. M. (1985). The romance of leadership. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 30*, 78–102.

Mintzberg, H. (2005). *Strategy safari: A guided tour through the wilds of strategic management*. Free Press.

Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. Simon & Schuster.

Sawyer, K. (2012). *Explaining creativity – The science of human innovation*. Oxford University Press.

Stacy, R. (2003). *Strategic management and organisational dynamics: The challenge of complexity?* Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Tanggaard, L. (2014). *Opfindsomhed* [Inventiveness]. Gyldendal.

Tanggaard, L., & Stadil, C. (2014). *In the shower with Picasso*. LiU Publishers.

Tanggaard, L., & Wegener, C. (2015). Why novelty is overrated. *Journal of Education and Work*, online first.

Vinchon, F., Lubart, T., Bartolotta, S., Gironnay, V., Botella, M., Bourgeois-Bougrine, S., Burkhardt, J. M., Bonnardel, N., Corazza, G. E., Glăveanu, V. P., & Hanchett Hanson, M. (2023). Artificial intelligence & creativity: A manifesto for collaboration. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.597

Zhou, J., & Hoever, I. J. (2014). Research on workplace creativity: A review and redirection. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1*, 333–359.

CHAPTER 5

Craft

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

Thomas Edison is credited with saying that "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration", suggesting thus that having a creative idea is not the only thing that matters, there is also a lot of hard work involved. He was, in this way, responding to popular beliefs that consider insight the real mark of the genius. In fact, the first conceptions of creativity were actually based on the idea of divine inspiration (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) and the Ancient Greeks, for instance, metaphorically pointed to the muses as the source of true creation. While this image actually locates creativity outside of the person, it was following the Renaissance that genius became 'internalised' as biological and hereditary (Montuori & Purser, 1995). Today, such extreme views are avoided but the ethos of attributing creative qualities to the individual continues in research focused on creativity and intelligence, personality, thinking styles, neurological correlates, and so on. This kind of research typically uses ideation/divergent thinking tasks as a measure of creativity (more specifically, 'creative potential') and, since it rarely looks at what

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_5

people actually do, it contributes to the classical separation between *inspiration* and *perspiration* (for a more distributed understanding of inspiration, see Glăveanu, 2022).

But what is actually the role of perspiration or hard work for creative achievement? On the one hand, studies of accomplished creators in different domains repeatedly suggested that one needs at least ten years of preparation before making a big contribution to their chosen field (Gardner, 1994). On the other hand, the constant accumulation of knowledge or skills, through repetition, is often questioned (see also Chap. 11). Can 'too much knowledge' or 'too much exercise' lead, on the contrary, to reduced creativity? Both camps in this debate bring their own arguments but the question, formulated as such, is misleading. It is not a matter of how much knowledge one has, but how readily accessible and flexibly organised that knowledge is (see Weisberg, 1999). Equally, it is not any form of repetition that is useful in building creative skills, but engaging in what Ericsson (2006) calls "deliberate practice", which involves effortful activities designed to increase performance. What both these examples show is that high-level creativity requires expertise and this takes time, as well as a great deal of… perspiration. And yet, surprisingly, when we think about great achievements such as Darwin's evolutionary theory or Edison's inventions related to electric light, we are more likely to ask 'How did they get the big idea?', rather than 'How long did it take them to know their field?', or 'How many years did they use to write up and promote their ideas?'

This, I argue here, is the result of an inclination towards understanding creativity in terms of *insight* rather than *mastery*. Both lay people and psychologists interested in creative phenomena, and even creators themselves, are generally keen to identify the 'moment' when creativity happens—the stage of 'illumination' in Wallas's famous typology (see Wallas, 1926). It is no surprise, therefore, that very often creativity is metaphorically associated with a lit light bulb. However, without denying the role of insight, I consider such an approach reductionist at best, misleading at worst. What it does is actively obscure the stages of 'perspiration' that not only accompany but trigger creative thoughts. Learning, writing-up, checking and reformulating one's ideas are not second-hand activities but essential parts of creating, and this applies equally to celebrated and mundane creations (see also Chap. 4). Creativity as mastery is the contrasting paradigm that doesn't oppose but, in fact, integrates and expands our understanding of creative ideation. If the light bulb is the emblematic symbol of the first,

'romantic' view of creativity, craftwork can be the emblem of the latter. What does it mean though, theoretically and practically, to consider creativity a form of craft?

From Creativity in Craft to Creativity as Craft

Crafts involve skilful work, using one's own hands as well as a wide range of materials, tools and techniques, leading to the creation of new things. The outcomes of craft are diverse, and there is often no clear boundary between arts, craft and design. Indeed, all three of them are human activities fundamentally based on explorations of the possible in material, social and psychological terms (Crilly, 2023; Ormerod, 2023). Examples of craft include weaving, embroidery, wood carving, rug making and ceramic work, among others. Although many of these are practised around the globe, there is always a cultural as well as individual mark in both the making process and the outcomes of craft.

Take as an example the craft of decorating eggs in northern Romania. Figure 5.1 depicts some of the products of this activity, made with the help of the traditional technique, using warm wax and drawing motifs on the shell of the egg at different stages, before immersing in colour. While on the surface very similar, employing an established range of colours, patterns and motifs (see Gorovei, 2001), each egg is unique in the combination of these elements and the more or less visible changes or additions made in the process of drawing (see Glăveanu, 2012; see also Chap. 24). Moreover, there are features of decoration that individualise this work and 'locate' it within a broader community context—in this case, the village of Ciocăneşti where black as a background colour is considered traditional.

There are a few distinguishable characteristics of crafts that contribute to the creativity of their outcomes. First, they often require *manual labour* and draw on a *flexible set of skills and habits* (Ross & Glăveanu, 2023). This is due to the fact that the conditions of work are always changing and the craftsman is often required to improvise in order to overcome practical challenges (see also Chap. 22). For example, eggs are not all the same size and shape; they are fragile objects and are difficult to draw on. In quilt-making, appliquéd quilts require a careful selection and organisation of pieces in the creation of a general pattern, a process that involves multiple decisions and needs to consider, at each step, material constraints (Cooper & Allen, 1999).

Fig. 5.1 Easter eggs decorated by Larisa Ujică, Ciocăneşti, Romania. *Source*: Photo taken by the author

Second, the products of craft belong to a recognisable set of outcomes while bearing the mark of individual and regional styles, something that makes each of them *unique*, even when the intention of the craftsman is to duplicate. Many are meant to serve practical and symbolic functions, and they often reflect a particular kind of aesthetics. For instance, the South Indian *kōlam* is a beautiful and intricate design, never really the same, rendered usually in rice flour on the threshold or the floor of houses and temples, and having a protective function (Mall, 2007). Despite the ephemerality of many craft products, they nevertheless endure as a material practice. And it is in this close relation to *materiality* that craft activities gain a distinctive note. Artisans engage in a dialogue with the objects they produce and often describe their work as being done by the object itself, guiding its own making (see also Chaps. 2, 3 and 23).

Finally, developing expertise is impossible outside a social context, and craft activities are acquired and practised in interaction with others. Learning in craft takes the form of *apprenticeships*, guided forms of

participation in community settings (Rogoff, 1995). Learning is here an ongoing process, and it is undertaken through both observation and trial and error. Moreover, the products of craft are not only made possible by social relations and exchanges, but are also meant equally to maintain and reflect them. Quilts in New Mexico, for example, are created in family contexts and made for immediate family, close friends or dreamed-of partners (Cooper & Allen, 1999, p. 17). Decorated eggs are kept by the family and placed on the table during meals at Easter. The making and use of craft is inseparable from *tradition* and it is this accumulation of expertise at the level of groups and across generations that makes crafts, simultaneously, continuous with the past and different from it. Take the example of Japanese *ukiyo-e* ('pictures of the floating world'), a genre of woodblock prints and paintings very popular in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Kozbelt & Durmysheva, 2007). This traditional craft builds on ancient Buddhist conceptions and, in turn, has inspired important European artists such as Degas, Manet and Whistler. The vitality of this craft, as with many others, rests in its capacity both to 'keep' and to 'change' in the constant creation of a neo-tradition (see also Chap. 18).

Manual labour, skills, practice, material tools, apprenticeships and tradition—all these characteristics of craft can easily be applied to creative action in a variety of domains. The creativity of everyday life certainly reflects all these, and many of its processes and outcomes could actually fall within an extended definition of 'craft' (e.g. interior design, cooking, gardening and so on). What about the arts and sciences? Metaphorically, one speaks about *craftsmanship* when referring to mastering a certain domain and knowing the tricks of the trade. But is this only a metaphor?

What I am arguing here is that we certainly have at least an element of craft in most, if not all, other areas of creative production. And it is precisely this element that contributes to them actually being considered 'creative'. This is because, outside the specific knowledge and abilities required by high-level performance in art, science and technology, the medical field and so on, the embodied, material, patterned and yet flexible ways of 'doing' things—craftsmanship—offers the real ground for a masterful performance. Creativity as mastery involves constantly perfecting one's craft.

What About Routines and Mindless Repetition?

Our image of crafts and craftsmen is, of course, the product of centuries of reflection on the difference between knowledge, truth and authenticity, on the one hand, and technique, skill and manual work, on the other. The big divide between art and craft is an example of this. Collingwood (1938) believed the latter is the outcome of 'preconceived' ideas and that "the craftsman knows what he wants to make before he makes it" (pp. 15–16). This accusation is not the only one of its kind. Craft is, for most, not synonymous with creativity but, if anything, the opposite of it: the realm of routines and mindless repetition. While this is certainly not an opinion shared by craftsmen themselves, it is not surprising to find many of them reluctant to take on the identity of 'creator' (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). The *ukiyo-e* artists, focused on by Kozbelt and Durmysheva (2007), don't even mention originality or departures from tradition. In my own research with Easter egg decorators, there was a need to find the balance between continuing a tradition and adding or contributing to it. And yet, craftsmen are aware that their work leads to unique products, admired by those around them. But if novelty happens, they rarely take credit for it directly: It is accidents, or the material taking over and imposing its own rules; for women drawing ornaments in rice, "credit for innovation lies as much with the generative capacity of the kōlam (…) as with the creativity (…) of the practitioner" (Mall, 2007, p. 75).

The misconception of craft as the antithesis of creativity steams from a certain understanding of the relation between idea generation and idea implementation that prioritises the former over the latter. The old fallacy of believing that 'the sculpture is already waiting in the marble' makes researchers and lay people alike focus on having creative ideas (the sculpture), rather than working (the marble). What craftwork demonstrates is that there is no strict separation between the two. It is in and through making that insights emerge, are detected, fail or lead to new developments. The craft of making things is not mechanical—if anything, because it always involves a certain amount of risk (see the notion of 'workmanship of risk' in Pye, 1968; see also Chap. 8). The spontaneity of being inspired and building an artistic or scientific 'vision' cannot be disconnected from practice, from material tools and their resistance to our visions, from the role our bodies play in generating any kind of novelty. In the end, creation is not the result of a disembodied, cerebral entity but becomes manifest precisely in practical action, in the development and application of *techne*, in craft itself.

Additionally, a pervasive misconception regarding the role and meaning of tradition contributes further to marginalising crafts. It is certainly true that repetition and stability are encouraged in a variety of folk activities but the tradition being 'kept' is neither static nor monolithic. Traditions change in order to continue and this is nowhere more obvious than in the work of craftsmen. Furthermore, all others forms of creative expression are ultimately rooted in tradition, whether we call it knowledge, conventions, norms or the existing canon. Arts have their own traditions; science as well. As Feldman noted, "creative thought (…) is, by definition, part of a cultural tradition—even when it breaks with tradition" (Feldman, 1974, p. 68). Breaks with tradition are rare but not uncommon, even in craft. What we often fail to notice, though, is that such 'revolutions' are carried by and lead to the institutionalisation of their own 'traditions'.

From Creative Thinking to Creative Making

What I have been advocating here is a way of relocating creativity from a paradigm focused on thinking, insight and revolutionary outcomes to one grounded in learning, traditions, mastery and craftsmanship. Despite presenting them almost as opposites, these views are not incompatible, just as creative thinking is not the opposite of creative making. The latter integrates the former. However, instead of the fascination with one 'big' moment of insight, we are left with evolving and cumulative insights, with the gradual transformation of people and things (see also Chap. 14), working within a frame set by material constraints. In this sense, I am using the overall metaphor of creativity as craft as a more comprehensive way of understanding creative phenomena. The consequences of separating thinking from making, idea generation from implementation, ideas from body and creating hierarchies between them is counterproductive. This is how, for instance, we have now two relatively separate literatures, one on creativity ('getting the idea'), the other on innovation ('creating a change in the world based on this idea'). An integrative approach is long overdue.

Isn't this a rather romantic vision of crafts and of craftsmen? Aren't they limited by a need to preserve rather than create? Opposed to change? Working to sell their products and make a living? In some cases, yes, but I am not making a one-to-one parallel between craft and creativity here. I am simply noticing deep similarities and highlighting the theoretical and

practical significance of relating the two. For Richard Sennett, "craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake" (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). For a long time, we had the scientist (or inventor) and the artist as the two main paradigmatic representations of creative people. And yet, creativity goes well beyond scientific or artistic work. There is room for 'thirdness' and, in particular, for a focus on forms on everyday life creativity, the kind of creative expression that combines the analytical side of science and the expressive side of art with the constraints and possibilities of daily action and interaction (for a discussion of science, art and craft as creativity paradigms see Glăveanu, 2017). Crafting is a component of all human activities and, potentially, one that expands into the non-human world (Harris, 2023). Nowadays, a lot of crafting takes place in digital spaces (see also Chap. 7), including through the construction and circulation or memes and other creative online content (Glăveanu & de Saint Laurent, 2021). While the move from Easter eggs to memes might seem surprising, there are many key features that bring the two examples together, including references to larger traditions (from decoration patterns to meme templates), learning through apprenticeships (in physical workshops or online forums) and the reliance on embodied work (less visible but certainly present in the generation of online content).

A deeper reflection on the complex relationship between craft and creativity raises a number of new questions. Would internauts easily identify as craftspeople? Can a focus on craft create a natural bridge between various other domains of creativity? Does the study of craft shed new light on the evolutionary (species based) and developmental (life course based) origins of our creativity? Is this a more inclusive and participatory way of co-creating? What does it mean to focus on craft and craftmanship in the context of a rapid rise in artificial intelligence (AI) and AI-powered creative work? Last but not least, can those who produce craftwork be our new prototype of the creative person and, if so, how would this change the way we understand ourselves, others, machines, society and nature?

References

Collingwood, R. G. (1938). *The principles of art*. Clarendon Press.

Cooper, P., & Allen, N. B. (1999). *The quilters: Women and domestic art, an oral history*. Texas Tech University Press.

Crilly, N. (2023). Design research and the study of the possible. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 46–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221128218

Ericsson, K. A. (2006). The influence of experience and deliberate practice on the development of superior expert performance. In K. A. Ericsson, N. Charness, P. Feltovich, & R. R. Hoffman (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of expertise and expert performance* (pp. 685–706). Cambridge University Press.

Feldman, D. H. (1974). The developmental approach: Universal to unique. In S. Rosner & L. E. Abt (Eds.), *Essays in creativity* (pp. 47–85). North River Press.

Gardner, H. (1994). The creators' patterns. In M. Boden (Ed.), *Dimensions of creativity* (pp. 143–158). MIT Press/Badford Books.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2012). Creativity and folk art: A study of creative action in traditional craft. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 7*(2), 140–154.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2017). Creativity in perspective: A socio-cultural and critical account. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 31*(2), 118–129.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2022). Inspiration. In V. Glăveanu (Ed.), *The Palgrave encyclopedia of the possible*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98390-5_42-4

Glăveanu, V. P., & de Saint Laurent, C. (2021). Social media responses to the pandemic: What makes a coronavirus meme creative. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 569987. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.569987

Glăveanu, V. P., & Tanggaard, L. (2014). Creativity, identity, and representation: Towards a socio-cultural theory of creative identity. *New Ideas in Psychology, 34*, 12–21.

Gorovei, A. (2001). *Ouăle de Paşte. Studiu de folclor* (2nd ed.). Paideia.

Harris, D. (2023). Non-binary possibilities of creative agency. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 99–104. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231166485

Kozbelt, A., & Durmysheva, Y. (2007). Lifespan creativity in a non-Western artistic tradition: A study of Japanese ukiyo-e printmakers. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 65*(1), 23–51.

Mall, A. S. (2007). Structure, innovation and agency in pattern construction: The Kōlam of southern India. In E. Hallam & T. Ingold (Eds.), *Creativity and cultural improvisation* (pp. 55–78). Berg.

Montuori, A., & Purser, R. (1995). Deconstructing the lone genius myth: Toward a contextual view of creativity. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 35*(3), 69–112.

Ormerod, T. C. (2023). Possible, yes, but useful? Why the search for possibilities is limited but can be enhanced by expertise. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 178–189. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231172562

Pye, D. (1968). *The nature and art of workmanship*. Herbert Press.

Rogoff, B. (1995). Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship. In J. V. Wertsch, P. del Rio, & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Sociocultural studies of mind* (pp. 139–164). Cambridge University Press.

Ross, W., & Glăveanu, V. P. (2023). The constraints of habit: Craft, repetition, and creativity. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-023-09902-5

Sennett, R. (2008). *The craftsman*. Yale University Press.

Sternberg, R., & Lubart, T. (1999). The concept of creativity: Prospects and paradigms. In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 3–15). Cambridge University Press.

Wallas, G. (1926). *The art of thought*. Harcourt-Brace.

Weisberg, R. (1999). Creativity and knowledge: A challenge to theories. In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 226–250). Cambridge University Press.

CHAPTER 6

Difference

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

Creativity is rooted in difference. This simple statement doesn't seem, at least initially, to tell us much. Indeed, for something or someone to be creative it needs to be different from what existed before. Novelty and originality are found in most definitions of creativity (e.g. Runco & Jaeger, 2012), alongside effectiveness; so, in this sense, difference is placed at the core of our thinking about this phenomenon. However, all this suggests is that creative action results in some kind of difference. My aim is to argue that it also *originates* in difference and understanding this has deep implications for how we recognise, conceptualise, and foster creative expression. Indeed, I take difference to be the atom of creativity and, more broadly, of our explorations of the possible, a socio-cultural approach extensively discussed elsewhere (see Glăveanu & Gillespie, 2014; Glăveanu, 2020). For the purposes of this chapter, my focus is on theorising difference and outlining those differences that are particularly productive for creative work; the tentative list I offer is, of course, a work in progress.

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_6

Difference is the result of processes of *differentiation*. As such, whenever we notice differences between objects, people, ideas, events, and so on, we should inquire into how these differences came about. It is often the case that creativity researchers consider difference in terms of the (material and/or symbolic) distance that exists between two entities. In this sense, differences are perceived as breaks with what existed before and the 'size' of the gap they create is often taken as a potential sign of creativity. It is one thing to design a new cup, another to create a completely new type of receptacle for holding liquids. But this is a static view. We don't have any sense of the processes leading up to different outcomes, more or less different, more or less surprising. Moreover, what exists and what is being created stand in close dialogue with each other, and it is precisely because of this dialogue that the 'new' can be noticed, defined, and appreciated. To gain a fuller picture of the role of difference for creativity, we need to adopt a developmental perspective. And the developmental story of difference is intertwined with that of creativity.

Differentiating between self and other, between the 'me' and 'non-me' world in Winnicott's terms, is a great ontogenetic achievement, paving the ground for creative expression. This is possible because difference, once experienced, requires being managed by the child through the use of symbolic means. The transitional objects that stand for the care-giver (Winnicott, 1971) are the first instances of symbolic activity which, later on, will be fundamental for creative play. A second type of difference is thus added to that between self and other—the distinction between signs and objects. A broom can become a horse for the child who uses it as such. A form of detachment from the here-and-now is thus created, in play, with the help of imagination (see Vygotsky, 1933). As the child experiences the world, a process mediated by other people, he or she expands the range of material and symbolic tools available to transform both oneself and the environment. New forms of difference, between the present moment and an imagined or expected future, between what is possible and what is impossible, between one's wishes and the normativity of culture, and so on, become productive for creativity. And yet, despite the fact that we all experience such differences, on a daily basis, we don't always do so creatively.

This is because difference is a condition of possibility for creativity, but it is not the only one. In other words, it is a fundamental, *necessary but insufficient condition*. To be creative, one needs not only to recognise

difference, but also to develop the ability to act on it and use it in concrete situations (see also Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2017). At the same time, difference can also be obstructive, and we are all familiar with not being able to overcome the 'gap' between what we think and want and what others think and want, or what the material world is ready to offer us, frustrating our needs and desires. Each person's 'style' of dealing with difference will be crucial in these cases and contextual factors are likely to also play a major role. But, before reflecting further on this issue, let's unpack difference further with the help of a simple typology.

Difference Between Self and Other

The difference between self and other has deep ontogenetic roots that have been widely discussed in developmental psychology. Developmentalists commonly describe the child's trajectory from egocentrism to decentration (see Piaget, 1973), from a state in which the self and its needs are overpowering and seek immediate gratification to one in which the child becomes aware that others also have a 'self'. Moreover, the child learns not only to see other as self but, conversely, to understand his or her own self as an other would. This is made possible through social interaction and, in turn, makes possible the development of reflexivity and self-awareness (Mead, 1934; also Chap. 17). And, I would add, this is also the premise for the development of creativity (see Glăveanu, 2015).

It is precisely because there is a difference between self and other and because we become able to take the perspective of others on ourselves and our action that we ultimately gain new insights and can discover novel aspects of reality (see Chap. 15). But is it ever possible to 'take' the perspective of another person? Surely, this is either a metaphor or an imaginative attempt. Sometimes it is a process based on deep forms of identification, other times one that thrives on stereotypes and even prejudice (Glăveanu & de Saint Laurent, 2018). However, as argued by Gillespie and Martin (2014), position exchanges or "putting oneself in the shoes of the other" are, in fact, embodied acts, at least in early childhood, when children construct and alternate, in play, between different roles: doctor and patient, policeman and thief, parent and child, and so on. This material, embodied aspect should not be underestimated (see Chap. 3). The difference between self and other is not only productive for creativity because different people have different knowledge, skills, professions, life experiences, and so on, but also because they occupy different positions in space and

thus see the world (even slightly) differently. As Bakhtin (1990) wisely noted, the other always has a surplus of knowledge, if anything because one cannot see "the back of one's head".

Difference Between Sign and Object

It is in interaction with other people that we are introduced, from an early age, to the symbolic universe of our culture. Another form of distanciation is key here—that between a sensorial, immediate experience of the world, and an experience mediated by signs and symbols, including language (Vygotsky, 1978; see also Chaps. 9 and 26). The emergence of the capacity to symbolise is largely considered to mark the birth of creativity (Gardner, 1982; Winnicott, 1971). This is because the use of signs and symbols allows us to generalise, think in abstract terms, bring to mind the past, and imagine the future. Naming objects, people, situations, helps us refer to them and communicate about them to others who share the same semiotic codes. Signs and symbols play a crucial role in delimitating what we conceive as possible and what we decide to enact as possibilities, or not to enact at all (Valsiner, 2023).

But, as we know from experience, communicating meaning is never straightforward and there are plenty of opportunities for ambiguity and misunderstanding. This is partially because of the 'gap' between objects (what is being signified) and our representation of them, including the words we use to name them (the signifiers). This difference can lead not only to confusion, but also to creative outcomes; Magritte's art, for instance, focuses precisely on the relation between object—word—representation (see Magritte, 1929 and also Chap. 23). The surrealism of Magritte creatively exploits such differences and his famous painting of a pipe under which is written "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" (This is not a pipe) vividly demonstrates that, although they 'stand' for each other, a drawing is not the object; conversely, the word 'pipe' itself is not the object either. The creative act of replacing one with the other problematises, in this case, the taken-for-granted of our language and cultural conventions. It also reveals the fact that the relation between signs and objects is never one-to-one (i.e. one object, one meaning for it), but rather many-to-many (i.e. one object can be depicted using different signs, one sign points to multiple objects). Difference is the marker of such multiplicity, creativity is its main quality.

Difference Between What Was, Is, and Will Be

Temporal differences also play a key role in creative expression (for an argument about the temporal imagination, see Facer, 2023). Despite attempts to 'locate' creativity in either persons or products (and thus reify it and make it static), a full understanding of this phenomenon needs to start from observing it as a process, as a form of action (see also Chaps. 5 and 14). This means studying creativity as it unfolds in time. Creators, arguably, constantly move between different dimensions of temporality, a movement made possible by the symbolic activity referred to just before. They are in dialogue with what existed before, in their field, in relation to the problem they want to solve, and so on, while relating to the past in order to move towards a desired future (more or less clearly specified). It is very often the case that great acts of creativity actually recover something from a distant past and give it a new direction or revitalise it (see Chap. 25). At the same time, beside this societal level, creators also draw on their own life trajectory. Interviews with creative people from different domains (Glăveanu et al., 2013) shed new light on how their processes of creating are nurtured by what they have seen and experienced, including the routines of their daily lives. Finally, the temporal is revealed at a microgenetic level when considering how, at each moment, creative work is shaped by what we remember (previous states), what we perceive, and what we envision to do. In all these cases, it is not only continuities that are brought to the fore, but also contradictions and ruptures. Accidents and the unexpected become significant for creativity precisely because they 'segment' its temporal flow (Ross & Copeland, 2022).

Difference Between the Possible and Impossible

Humans not only imagine the future; they also actively construct representations about alternative futures, about the possible, and even the impossible (Damhof & Gulmans, 2023). The capacity to think about things or events that have not happened yet, including ones that cannot happen—such as imagining you had wings or could breathe under water—creates a tension that is highly productive for creativity. Arguably, most of our progress as a species originates in being able to imagine the (seemingly) impossible (Corazza, 2023). The visionary literature of Jules Verne offers a testimony of this: We might not have wings but we can fly, even to the Moon; we might not be able to breathe underwater but we will create

the technologies that allow us to explore the oceans. Creative work is work that constantly expands the space of the possible, in thought and in action. This, however, requires a category of the 'impossible' and its contents have fascinated us for millennia (think, for instance, about the efforts of mathematicians to formalise theories about phenomena that are not readily available to perception—such as n-dimensional spaces). Art and design are also fields in which the category of the impossible flourishes (see also Chap. 13). One needs only to consider Escher's constructions or the many optical illusions catalogued as 'impossible objects'. The difference between the real and the unreal/surreal establishes, here as well, the parameters of the creative space.

Difference Between Would and Should

The difference between our wishes and aspirations and society's conventions inspired Freud to write about civilization and its discontents (Freud, 2002). These tensions, frequently open conflicts, between individual and society have for a long time been considered the mark of the creative genius. This reinforced an essentialist, exclusivist, and even pathological understanding of creativity and creative individuals (Montuori & Purser, 1995). It also ultimately depicted culture and its conventions as unitary and monolithic. On the contrary, what I refer to here as the difference between a person's intentionality (would) and cultural normativity (should) is not an opposition but, rather, a disjunction that prompts the person to be creative. On many occasions, the solutions we find end up creating a dialogue and re-alignment between intentions and norms (see also Chaps. 2 and 19). Either one or both of these terms change in the process. While we might not be able directly to transform societal norms, we are indeed agents in relation to our immediate cultural context. The difference between what we want to do and what we should do reveals the fact that our goals are dynamic, and that culture is appropriated in flexible ways and enacted in communication with others. It is this difference that we need to navigate in our daily life—when, for instance, we want to leave work early, as well as in interpersonal relations—where it can become the engine behind social movements leading to visible social change. In all these cases, the outcomes are often novel and, at least, potentially creative (and sometimes artistic as well; Glăveanu, 2017).

What Difference Makes a Difference for Creativity?

The last question to surface, picking up from the previous remark, is whether 'potentially creative' turns into 'creative' and, if so, under what circumstances. In other words, are all differences 'good' for creativity and, if not, what kind of difference makes a (creative) difference?[1]

From the start, I want to restate the fact that difference doesn't need to be romanticised, or considered the ultimate solution for enhancing creativity. My claim is simply that there would be no creativity in the absence of difference (in the same way in which there would be no human self and no human culture). This applies at both the individual and societal levels. Just think about a world in which, for example, there would be no difference between self and other—we would all think in the same way, know the same things, have the same views, and so on. This is the essence of totalitarian regimes and totalitarian mindsets, struggling against a plural future and agentic, individual action (Montuori, 2005). In contrast, a future open to creativity relies on multiplying spaces where, initially, difference is recognised (which doesn't always happen, even when it is rather obvious!), then appreciated and valued, and finally built upon in a constructive manner. There is no one type of difference, from those mentioned above, that will, at all times, for all people and in all places increase (or hinder) creativity. This is not only because our psychological and social reality escapes simple forms of determinism (Baumeister & Alquist, 2023); it's because the differences I referred to before are all present, *simultaneously*, within one and the same situation. Moreover, they are related to each other and make each other possible (see, e.g. the discussion about self—other differences and their role in the emergence of symbolism). It is, once again, not difference itself that 'creates', but people who *act on difference* in ways that widen or bridge its multiple 'gaps', integrate them further or, indeed, continue ongoing processes of differentiation.

[1] The author would like to acknowledge long and fruitful conversations with both Alex Gillespie and Ron Beghetto on this topic.

References

Bakhtin, M. (1990). Author and hero in aesthetic activity. In M. Holquist & V. Liapunov (Eds.), *Mikhail Bakhtin, art and answerability: Early philosophical essays (Slavic series 9)*. (V. Liapunov & K. Brostrom, trans.) (pp. 22–52). University of Texas Press.

Baumeister, R. F., & Alquist, J. L. (2023). The pragmatic structure of indeterminacy: Mapping possibilities as context for action. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 15–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221150777

Corazza, G. E. (2023). Beyond the adjacent possible: On the irreducibility of human creativity to biology and physics. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 37–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221145664

Damhof, L., & Gulmans, J. (2023). Imagining the impossible: An act of radical hope. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 51–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231174821

Facer, K. (2023). Possibility and the temporal imagination. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 60–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231171797

Freud, S. (2002). *Civilization and its discontents.* Penguin.

Gardner, H. (1982). *Art, mind, and brain: A cognitive approach to creativity.* Basic Books.

Gillespie, A., & Martin, J. (2014). Position exchange theory: A socio-material basis for discursive and psychological positioning. *New Ideas in Psychology, 32*, 73–79.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2015). Creativity as a sociocultural act. *Journal of Creative Behavior, Early View., 49*, 165.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2017). Art and social change: The role of creativity and wonder. In S. Awad & B. Wagoner (Eds.), *Street art of resistance* (pp. 19–37). Palgrave.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020). *The possible: A sociocultural theory.* Oxford University Press.

Glăveanu, V. P., & Beghetto, R. A. (2017). The difference that makes a 'creative' difference in education. In R. A. Beghetto & B. Sriraman (Eds.), *Creative contradictions in education* (pp. 37–54). Springer.

Glăveanu, V. P., & de Saint Laurent, C. (2018). Taking the perspective of others: A conceptual model and its application to the refugee crisis. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 24*(4), 416–423.

Glăveanu, V. P., & Gillespie, A. (2014). Creativity out of difference: Theorising the semiotic, social and temporal origin of creative acts. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from cultural psychology* (pp. 1–15). Routledge.

Glăveanu, V. P., Lubart, T., Bonnardel, N., Botella, M., de Biaisi, M.-P., Desainte-Catherine, M., et al. (2013). Creativity as action: Findings from five creative domains. *Frontiers in Educational Psychology, 4*, 1–14.

Magritte, R. (1929). Les mots et les images. *La Révolution Surréaliste, 12*, 32–33.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. University of Chicago Press.
Montuori, A. (2005). How to make enemies and influence people: Anatomy of the anti-pluralist, totalitarian mindset. *Futures, 37*(1), 18–38.
Montuori, A., & Purser, R. (1995). Deconstructing the lone genius myth: Toward a contextual view of creativity. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 35*(3), 69–112.
Piaget, J. (1973). *The child's conception of the world*. Paladin.
Ross, W., & Copeland, S. (Eds.). (2022). *The art of serendipity*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Runco, M. A., & Jaeger, G. J. (2012). The standard definition of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal, 24*(1), 92–96.
Valsiner, J. (2023). Possibilities enhanced and constrained: Where dynamic semiosis works. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 226–229. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221128499
Vygotsky, L. S. (1933). Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Soviet Psychology, 30*(5), 62–76.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Internalization of higher psychological functions. In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
Winnicott, D. W. (1971). *Playing and reality*. Routledge.

CHAPTER 7

Digital

Michael Mose Biskjaer, Peter Dalsgaard, and Kim Halskov

Introduction

"Digitalization has revolutionized the way we live, work, and interact with each other. From online shopping to social media, technology has changed the world as we know it, and perhaps one of the most significant impacts of digitalization is on human creativity. With the advent of digital tools and platforms, people from all walks of life have been able to unleash their inner artist, writer, musician, and designer like never before. Digitalization has made it possible to explore new creative realms, collaborate with others on a global scale, and share our creations with the world at the touch of a button. In short, digitalization has given us unprecedented power to create and innovate, and the results have been nothing short of extraordinary."

When prompted to "Write a catchy introduction about how digitalization has influenced human creativity," the much-debated artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, ChatGPT, launched in November 2022 by the

M. M. Biskjaer (✉) • P. Dalsgaard • K. Halskov
Centre for Digital Creativity, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark
e-mail: mmb@cc.au.dk; dalsgaard@cavi.au.dk; halskov@cavi.au.dk;
https://tinyurl.com/3h9r2rxz

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*,
Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_7

American research lab, OpenAI, proposes the text above. Although the catchiness lies in the eyes of the reader, it is compelling to argue that the text is both *effective* (or appropriate) by serving the desired purpose and, maybe more debatable, *original* (or novel) by conveying its content in a manner that is if not surprising, then at least not quite as one might have expected, e.g., hyperbolic terms like 'revolutionized' and 'extraordinary.' The text therefore arguably meets the criteria of the standard definition of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). With AI as the pioneering example, the past three decades, in particular, have seen an upsurge in new digital technologies and tools to support human creativity (Frich et al., 2018b; Frich et al., 2019b). This has given rise to several pressing questions and concerns. No longer seen as the pinnacle of a uniquely human ability, creativity itself is now undergoing a transformation, suggesting that previous conceptualizations may no longer suffice. The ubiquity of digitalization has ushered in not just a novel landscape of opportunities but also a great complexity in how we understand creativity in our humanistic approach to production, education, collaboration, inspiration, ideation, experimentation, and expression of creativity. Although it could be tempting to wipe the slate clean and build a whole new framework to support an understanding of creativity directly based on digitalization, we find it more rewarding to return to the first analytical model of creativity, *the four-P model*, to explore through examples the impact of digitalization on creativity today, six decades later. Rather than championing a particular ism, our work is interdisciplinary and mainly draws upon Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and digital design research. Our position is situated and pragmatic, influenced by Donald A. Schön's (1992) notion of 'designing as reflective conversation with the materials of a design situation' as presented in his eponymous paper. In other words, we subscribe to the idea often attributed to American author and playwright, Arthur Miller, namely that "man must shape his tools lest they shape him." The number and sophistication of these tools for creativity have grown dramatically with digitalization, and this calls for further investigation into and reflection on the concept of creativity itself in the digital age.

Revisiting the Classic Four-P Model of Creativity

In his seminal short paper, Mel Rhodes (1961) aimed to take "some of the fuzz off the concept of creativity" (p. 305). Following Joy P. Guilford's (1950) influential presidential address to the APA (American Psychological

Association) a few years earlier, an event often considered the beginning of modern empirical creativity research, Rhodes' model became a cornerstone in the first wave of creativity research (Sawyer, 2012). After spending five years pursuing definitions of creativity, which yielded forty (!) propositions, Rhodes realized that these definitions were not mutually exclusive. Rather, they seemed to "overlap and intertwine" (p. 307), indicating four distinct strands. These four strands of creativity were (1) *person*, (2) *process*, (3) *press*, and (4) *product*. In sum, they are known as *the four-P model of creativity*. Since Rhodes introduced his model, the creativity research community has proposed more refined conceptualizations of creativity insofar as the four P's may not fully capture creativity in its complexity (Runco, 2007). Key contributions include Glăveanu's (2012) five A's framework (actor, action, artifact, audience, and affordances), Lubart's (2017) seven C's of creativity (creators, creating, collaborations, contexts, creations, consumption, and curricula), inspired by a 1967 paper by Guilford (1967), and recently Sternberg and Karami's (2022) eight-P theoretical framework that incorporates the themes of wisdom and intelligence (purpose, person, press, problem, process, product, propulsion, and public). While these contributions have an even more nuanced perspective on creativity than what Rhodes originally presented, we wish to embrace ahistorical perspective by exploring how far digitalization has pushed our understanding of creativity since the four-P model's inception as the first clear, analytical perspective on creativity.

Person

Rhodes' first strand in the four-P model is *Person*. By this, he addresses the individual who engages in the creative process and is shaped by a range of factors that are believed to influence the individual's creative output. Among these factors are personality traits, cognitive abilities, and motivational tendencies. Rhodes suggests that individuals who exhibit creativity often possess specific personality traits that set them apart from others, such as a tendency toward openness to new experiences, curiosity, persistence, and a willingness to take risks. In addition to personality traits, cognitive abilities, e.g., the capacity for divergent and convergent thinking, play a role in determining the creative potential of an individual. Motivational factors also affect the understanding of the personal aspects of creativity (Amabile, 1983).

The increased accessibility and exposure to a diverse range of creativity-related content and perspectives online, which will be unfolded under *Press*, may help facilitate the development or transformation of these traits in individuals. The use of various digital tools may further enhance certain cognitive skills, such as the ability to generate ideas and solutions quickly and efficiently. Young generations grow up with access to a continuously evolving set of digital tools to support creative exploration and expression, such as cameras integrated into mobile phones, programmable toys such as LEGO Mindstorms®, and easily accessible programming environments such as Scratch®, among others (Papert, 2020). Proficiency in using such tools can accelerate the development of creative potential, which Runco (2003) emphasized be included as an additional P in an updated model of creativity.

The flipside of such opportunities, however, is that digital tools may also impede cognitive abilities critical to the creative process, including the ability to concentrate and engage in sustained creative thinking. Just as the young generation today grows up with access to an unprecedented range of tools for creative expression, they are also exposed to ever more content designed for passive consumption rather than active engagement. Digitalization may therefore also impact motivational factors associated with creativity. While the increased accessibility of digital tools and platforms may offer individuals new opportunities for self-expression and creative exploration, the same range of opportunities can also create new types of pressure and expectation around productivity and output (Amabile et al., 2002). This can negatively affect intrinsic task motivation and creativity, as individuals feel pressured to produce content at a rapid pace.

As illustrated by the text in this chapter's introduction, written by the AI chatbot, ChatGPT, one of the most fundamental changes and indeed challenges to Rhodes' initial notion of Person is that of who or what we consider to be a creative agent (du Sautoy, 2019). While we have traditionally used digital technologies to automate routine tasks, a new generation of generative AI systems display an uncharted capacity for creating text, visuals, and code that mimic—and are often hard to distinguish from—the output of human creators. This clashes with fundamental assumptions about creativity as a quintessential human ability, and it prompts us to reconsider how we define creativity. The capabilities of AI tools are rapidly evolving, and we speculate that many creative practices will increasingly revolve around forms of human-AI interactions, shifting the role of digital tools from instruments to something more akin to

creative collaborators. This ultimately begs the complex questions of who the actor is, what it means to be human or a human actor, and whether the 'actor' of creativity has not always been an interactive and evolving system of person and tools, mind, and culture; a point emphasized by Glăveanu (2020), (see also the entry on "Things").

Process

The second strand in Rhodes' four-P model is *Process*, which captures cognitive aspects such as perception, learning, and the stages of the thinking process. Of relevance for understanding the creative design process are also the tools and materials facilitating the process. Digitalization has presented vast new opportunities for creative expression based on the development of new kinds of creativity support tools (CSTs) for easy integration into creative processes. Designing such tools to be truly useful has been called a 'grand challenge' for HCI researchers (Shneiderman, 2009). One of the domains of creative practice now revolutionized by CSTs is architecture. The use of classic floor plans, façade, and cutting planes have for centuries been the fundamental approach to visualization in architectural design, but 3D Computer-Aided Design (CAD) has completely transformed the way architects design buildings. The use of CAD-based tools not only offers a much more detailed and accurate representation of a building than ever before but also enables the exploration of complex organic forms of buildings. A groundbreaking example of architectural design that seems unfeasible without advanced CAD-based tools is the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao designed by Frank Gehry and inaugurated in 1997. This means that the CSTs have shaped not only the creative product (the museum) but indeed the creative design process itself. Another example of a novel approach to creating unique and innovative structures in architecture and design is a parametric design that uses algorithms to create multiple variants of complex shapes that can be explored and changed. Attempting to generate the same number of variants with such tools would no doubt have led to a very different and much more time-consuming process.

A more generic item that has become near-synonymous with the creative process, not least in design, is the small, but versatile sticky note. Since their inception more than fifty years ago, sticky notes have become the most widely-used design material and are now integral to many creativity techniques such as brainstorming and affinity diagramming (see,

e.g., Harboe & Huang, 2015). Like many other materials used in creative processes, sticky notes have been digitalized, enabling change of color, resizing, and easy copying (Dalsgaard et al., 2020). Digital sticky notes offer an infinite digital canvas in contrast to the whiteboard as the standard sticky note workspace. The digitalization of sticky notes affords several benefits, such as remote collaboration in real-time, storage and distribution of the canvas, etc. Still, digital does not simply mean easier, faster, or better compared to paper (see, e.g., Umejima et al., 2021), and the drawbacks of going digital cannot be ignored (Christensen et al., 2020). The digital sticky note stays in the computer and unlike its analog counterpart, it cannot be glued to almost all physical objects and surfaces, including even the human body (Vermeulen & Biskjaer, 2020), as a way to get an easy overview of a complex creative process. As a case in point, the comparison of analog and digital sticky notes demonstrates that different tools embody different affordances and constraints, which in turn can shape the creative process.

With reference to Wallas' (1926) classic book, *The Art of Thought*, Rhodes (1961) argued that seeking inspiration is one of the key stages of creative thought processes. Fashion designers, for instance, take inspiration from other designers' works as well as nature, fine art, etc. Previously, such inspirational sources were mainly found in printed books, by visiting museums, or by traveling to remote places. Today, digitalization, not least the Internet, provides an immense and easily accessible resource. One of the most well-known sites is the image-sharing and social media service, Pinterest, founded in 2009, which is said to currently have several hundred million active users. Indeed, it seems that digitalization has changed our conception of the very first part of a creative process. Jane Darke (1979) coined the notion of a 'primary generator' to describe the creative decision-making that as a catalyst sets the creative process in motion; an idea that has since been influential in design (Biskjaer & Christensen, 2021). With the development of generative AI as a resource in creative processes, overcoming the problem of writer's block (see, e.g., Rose, 2009) might have become a little bit easier. This again points to the big question of how digital technologies impact creativity: To what extent does the adoption of digital technologies lead to different modes and practices of creation? With the Internet and, likely soon AI, being a fundamental part of today's global culture both individually and collectively, such shifts in our approach to creativity are undeniable as we are witnessing fundamental changes in "the very processes that define culture such as

communication, meaning-making and institutionalisation" (Literat & Glăveanu, 2016, p. 331). A promising approach to this complexity might be to begin by posing some of the basic, but difficult questions, such as who, when, where, how, and why (ibid.). Concretely, we subscribe to Literat and Glăveanu's (2018) idea of analyzing the distributed nature of online creativity through three key dimensions: social, material, and temporal, (for the importance of the temporal aspect, see also Kaufman & Beghetto, 2022).

Press

According to Rhodes (1961), *Press* pertains to "the relationship of human beings and their environment" (p. 308). This environment comprises various factors that can either support or constrain the creative process indirectly by affecting variables related to the creative process or person. These factors occupy multiple scales, from the macro-level socio-cultural context in which creativity unfolds over the meso-level of organizational culture and infrastructures and to the micro-level of creative practitioners' resources and workflows. In the broader perspective of *Press*, we see digitalization not as an event, but rather as a continuously evolving fundamental condition for many aspects of human creativity. As society has become increasingly digitalized, this has caused a profound transformation of *Press* factors that shape or influence creative processes, bringing about both opportunities and challenges.

One of the most significant benefits of digitalization is the increased accessibility and sharing of information via global infrastructures and platforms, which can expand the range of resources and perspectives available to creative individuals (Shneiderman, 2007). As a case in point, a graphic designer can search for design inspiration on platforms like Behance® or Dribbble® where thousands of designers share their work and creative processes. This can expose the designer to a broader range of styles and approaches, helping them to develop their own unique aesthetic (Bruckman, 2008). Similarly, a writer can access a wealth of research and data on virtually any topic through online databases and academic journals, providing them with a more comprehensive understanding of their subject matter and serving as a resource for cognitive offloading (e.g., Dror & Harnad, 2008, see also the entry on "Memory"). Still, having access to such an abundance of inspirational material presents another

challenge: How to capture, store, and recollect the materials for later creative use (Dalsgaard et al., 2023).

Digitalization has also enabled new forms of collaboration that transcend physical and geographical barriers. Online communities and forums allow creatives to connect with like-minded individuals from around the world, sharing ideas and providing feedback on each other's work (Poetz & Schreier, 2012). This can promote the exchange of diverse perspectives and the development of new, innovative solutions to creative challenges. An example of this are platforms such as Splice® or BandLab® where musicians can collaborate on songwriting projects, sharing ideas and tracks remotely. This can allow for a more diverse range of sounds and styles, as musical collaborators, literally, bring different influences and types of expertise into the mix (Biasutti, 2018). Similarly, photographers can share and critique each other's work on social media platforms like Instagram, allowing for a more interactive and collaborative creative process (see also Literat & Glăveanu, 2016, 2018).

For good and bad, digitalization has also led to an acceleration in the pace of work, creating pressure to produce quickly and frequently. In some instances, an increased speed of production can lead to a greater quantity of work and the ability to meet tighter deadlines. This can be beneficial for creatives who work in fast-paced industries such as advertising or social media marketing. On the other hand, the pressure to produce quickly and frequently may impede creative processes. Creativity often requires a certain amount of time and space for ideation, experimentation, and refinement, and the importance of incubation is well-established (see, e.g., Tsenn et al., 2014; Gilhooly, 2016). The expected pace of creative production may cause writers and journalists to feel compelled to generate a high volume of content quickly, resulting in lower-quality work or burnout. Similarly, designers or artists may struggle to produce their best work under the pressure of tight deadlines. The demand for rapid production can also lead to a reliance on templates or pre-designed solutions, rather than allowing for individualized and original creative approaches. This can result in a decrease in the overall quality, originality, and uniqueness of the work produced.

Product

The final strand in Rhodes' four-P model is *Product*. Rhodes (1961) underlines that Products be differentiated from ideas, which are construed

as "a thought which has been communicated through other people in the form of words, paint, clay, metal, stone, fabric, or other material" (p. 309). 'Product,' on the other hand, means an "idea embodied into tangible form" (ibid.). From an ontological perspective, this distinction is a bit puzzling since it seems to imply a dichotomy between a material and its tangible form. Even so, Rhodes' focus on a necessary perceptibility of a creative product has been influential and brought to the fore in one of the most-cited definitions of creativity, according to which: "creativity is the interaction among *aptitude, process, and environment* by which an individual or group produces a *perceptible product* that is both *novel and useful* as defined within a *social context*" (Plucker et al., 2004, p. 90, original emphasis).

Despite the advanced affordances of digital tools, some artists still prefer analog technologies. One example is American author, Paul Auster (b. 1947), who famously insists on writing in hand before switching to his Olympia SM-9 De Luxe (early version) typewriter, thereby avoiding digital word processors such as Microsoft Word altogether (Auster & Messer, 2002; Biskjaer & Dalsgaard, forthcoming, see also the discussion of the predilection for analog photography in the entry, "Rules," as an example of a 'self-imposed creativity constraint,' Biskjaer, 2013). Such examples of opting-out strategies, however, are the exception. Most artists have embraced digital technologies even though their creative expertise mainly lies within analog media. One example is British visual artist, David Hockney (b. 1937) who has embraced the iPad®. Using the app, Brushes®, Hockney humorously remarked that one of the benefits of creating a digital artifact is that "there is no cleaning up needed even if you have drawn all day," and that using a backlit iPad meant that he could turn off all the lights in his house to paint the moonlight while still seeing his (digital) canvas clearly (Hockney, 2020).

Many types of creative products today often emerge through networking processes (Chung et al., 2022) that would be hard to imagine without digital technologies, and several creative professions now rely entirely on digital technologies while working on a creative product, e.g., journalists (Franks et al., 2021), musicians (Folkestad, 2012), and designers in various disciplines (Frich et al., 2019a), to name but a few. In other creative domains, the creative product itself can be seen as a hybrid between a traditional analog artifact and a given digital technology that serves to augment or add to the former. Such examples include so-called smart textiles or e-textiles in which sensors are added to the clothing material (see

e.g., Stoppa & Chiolerio, 2014) or media architecture installations where advanced interactive lighting is designed for and then projected onto a unique building façade (see, e.g., Dalsgaard & Halskov, 2010).

At first glance, such examples point toward the benefits of digitalization for creative products regardless of domain. Still, several challenges remain. Some of these are easy to resolve, such as when David Hockney (2020) adds a thin film to the surface of his iPads to add friction to emulate the feel of a pen on paper. Others are very complex. The advanced affordances of CSTs entail that a creative individual can feel trapped in a loop of never-ending, non-destructive editing of a short story, or making version after version of an almost-identical track to get it 'just right.' Such unconstrained possibilities might be detrimental to creativity, as the creative digital product may never appear to be finished. Other challenges revolve around social media and legal issues, not least the risk of copyright infringement. Given how easy it often is to duplicate a creative product, it is near-impossible to control what happens to one's creative products once uploaded to a social media platform. The professional quality of these CSTs also means that any outcome will often sound or look professional, and with ubiquitous access to videos, tracks, photos, and texts, etc. online, the risk of high-quality creative products being 'drowned out' amidst all these creative offerings is an ongoing concern. Interestingly, the emergence of NFTs (non-fungible tokens), i.e., a unique digital identifier that through blockchain technology can certify ownership and authenticity, has already had a significant effect on digital art. In 2021, the NFT-fitted work entitled *Merge* by artist Pak even reached a record-breaking auction price of US$91.8 M. This suggests that NFTs as a state-of-the-art example of a digitalized creative product, paradoxically, marks a return to the theme of German philosopher Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) seminal essay written more than eighty years ago, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), in which he argues that mechanical reproduction devalues the aura ('uniqueness') of a creative product (Benjamin, 1969). As digital products become increasingly recognized as 'sites of creativity,' it becomes equally relevant to discuss Rhodes' (1961) conventional distinction between Product and Press, which is more challenging to uphold in a digital context (see also the entry on "Space").

Toward a Sociotechnical Understanding of Creativity

As shown by the above interpretation of digitalization through Rhodes' (1961) four-P analytical model, the four strands are difficult to segregate. Rhodes himself was aware of this and noted that although "[e]ach strand has unique identity […] only in unity do the four strands operate functionally" (p. 307). The role and complexity of creativity in society have changed significantly since Rhodes presented his four Ps, and this development suggests that a more nuanced perspective may be required. As mentioned, other more fine-grained analytical frameworks and models have been proposed, and the research community's call for developing a new sociocultural perspective on contemporary creativity seems a relevant and promising avenue for future work (Glăveanu et al., 2019). As argued elsewhere, however, we believe that such an endeavor within creativity research, given its strong roots in psychology, must also embrace a more technology-inclusive approach toward creativity in response to the growing impact of digitalization on sociocultural practices (e.g., Frich et al., 2018b). Here, a helpful first step would be to recognize the importance of a transparent nomenclature, which is critical in creativity (see also the entry on "Language"). Ideally, such future creativity research should be built on close interdisciplinary collaboration between the APA and the HCI research communities (Frich et al., 2018a). Here, it would be relevant to examine how to create more clarity about how digital technology, such as ChatGPT and other AI-powered resources, are not merely add-ons to or tools for human creativity but indeed an integral part of the very phenomenon itself. Some scholars are already working in that direction, among them Pegah Karimi et al. (2018) who have proposed a basic distinction between *creativity support tools* (the development of digital tools to support users' creativity); *computational creativity* (fully autonomous systems where algorithms generate creative artifacts); and *computational co-creativity* (co-creative systems where computers and users interact to make creative artifacts). A focal point that is attracting increasing interest is *prompt engineering*; that is, what a user types into an AI-driven system to achieve a desired (creative) result, (see, e.g., Oppenlaender et al., 2023; Gero et al., 2023; Liu & Chilton, 2022). Although any simplified taxonomy can be challenged, and although the number of P's that future analytical models of creativity should consist of is an open question, we hope

that this 'Digital' entry can inspire others to pursue a sociotechnical understanding of creativity.

Acknowledgments This project is partly funded by Independent Research Fund Denmark 0132-00111B, Managing Ideas in Creative Work.

References

Amabile, T. M. (1983). The social psychology of creativity: A componential conceptualization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*(2), 357–376.

Amabile, T. M., Mueller, J. S., Simpson, W. B., Hadley, C. N., Kramer, S. J., & Fleming, L. (2002). *Time pressure and creativity in organizations: A longitudinal field study*. Harvard Business School Working Paper.

Auster, P., & Messer, S. (2002). *The story of my typewriter*. Distributed Art Publishers.

Benjamin, W. (1969). The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations* (pp. 218–222). Schocken Books.

Biasutti, M. (2018). Strategies adopted during collaborative online music composition. *International Journal of Music Education, 36*(3), 473–490. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0255761417741520

Biskjaer, M. M. (2013). *Self-imposed creativity constraints*. PhD diss. Department of Aesthetics and Communication, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark.

Biskjaer, M. M., & Christensen, B. T. (2021). A second look at primary generators. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation, 7*(1), 7–23. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2020.08.007

Biskjaer, M. M., & Dalsgaard, P. (forthcoming). The write tool for the job? How digital creativity support tools can also constrain creativity. In C. Tromp, R. J. Sternberg, & D. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Paradox of constraints in creativity*. Brill Publishers.

Bruckman, A. (2008). Social support for creativity and learning online. In *Proceedings of the second IEEE international conference on digital game and intelligent toy enhanced learning* (pp. 3–7). https://doi.org/10.1109/digitel.2008.47

Christensen, B. T., Halskov, K., & Klokmose, C. N. (Eds.). (2020). *Sticky creativity - post-it ® note cognition, computers, and design*. Academic Press (Elsevier).

Chung, J. J. Y., He, S., & Adar, E. (2022). Artist support networks: Implications for future creativity support tools. In *Proceedings of the 2022 ACM Designing Interactive Systems Conference (DIS '22)* (pp. 232–246). ACM.

Dalsgaard, P., Biskjaer, M. M., & Frich, J. (2023). Capturing and revisiting ideas in the design process: A longitudinal technology probe study. *Design Studies, 88*, 101200. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2023.101200

Dalsgaard, P., & Halskov, K. (2010). Designing urban media facades: Cases and challenges. In *Proceedings of the 2010 ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '10)* (pp. 2277–2286). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/1753326.1753670

Dalsgaard, P., Halskov, K., & Klokmose, C. N. (2020). A study of a digital sticky note design environment. In B. T. Christensen, K. Halskov, & C. N. Klokmose (Eds.), *Sticky creativity - post-it ® note cognition, computers, and design* (pp. 155–174). Academic Press (Elsevier).

Darke, J. (1979). The primary generator and the design process. *Design Studies, 1*(1), 36–44.

Dror, I. E., & Harnad, S. (2008). Offloading cognition onto cognitive technology. In I. E. Dror & S. Harnad (Eds.), *Cognition distributed: How cognitive technology extends our minds* (pp. 1–23). John Benjamins.

du Sautoy, M. (2019). Can AI ever be truly creative? *New Scientist, 242*(3229), 38–41.

Folkestad, G. (2012). Digital tools and discourse in music: The ecology of composition. In D. J. Hargreaves, D. E. Miell, & R. A. R. MacDonald (Eds.), *Musical imaginations: Multidisciplinary perspectives on creativity, performance and perception* (pp. 193–205). Oxford University Press.

Franks, S., Wells, R., Maiden, N., & Zachos, K. (2021). Using computational tools to support journalists' creativity. *Journalism, 23*(9), 1881. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211010582

Frich, J., Biskjaer, M. M., & Dalsgaard, P. (2018a). Why HCI and creativity research must collaborate to develop new creativity support tools. In *Proceedings of the 2018 ACM TechMindSociety Conference* (pp. 1–6). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3183654.3183678

Frich, J., Biskjaer, M. M., & Dalsgaard, P. (2018b). Twenty years of creativity research in Human-Computer Interaction: Current state and future directions. In *Proceedings of the 2018 ACM Conference on Designing Interactive Systems (DIS '18)* (pp. 1235–1257). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3196709.3196732

Frich, J., Biskjaer, M. M., MacDonald Vermeulen, L., Remy, C., & Dalsgaard, P. (2019a). Strategies in creative professionals' use of digital tools across domains. In *Proceedings of the 2019 ACM Creativity and Cognition Conference (C&C '19)* (pp. 210–221). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3325480.3325494

Frich, J., Vermeulen, L. M., Remy, C., Biskjaer, M. M., & Dalsgaard, P. (2019b). Mapping the landscape of creativity support tools in HCI. In *Proceedings of the 2019 ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '19), article 389* (pp. 1–18). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3290605.3300619

Gero, K. I., Long, T., & Chilton, L. B. (2023). Social dynamics of AI support in creative writing. In *Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Conference on Human Factors*

in Computing Systems (CHI'23), article no. 245 (pp. 1–15). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3580782

Gilhooly, K. J. (2016). Incubation and intuition in creative problem solving. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 1076. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01076

Glăveanu, V. P. (2012). Rewriting the language of creativity: The five A's framework. *Review of General Psychology, 17*(1), 69–81. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029528

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020). A sociocultural theory of creativity: Bridging the social, the material, and the psychological. *Review of General Psychology, 24*(4), 335–354. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.409

Glăveanu, V. P., Hanchett Hanson, M., Baer, J., Barbot, B., Clapp, E. P., Corazza, G. E., Hennessey, B., Kaufman, J. C., Lebuda, I., Lubart, T., Montuori, A., Ness, I. J., Plucker, J., Reiter-Palmon, R., Sierra, Z., Simonton, D. K., Neves-Pereira, M. S., & Sternberg, R. (2019). Advancing creativity theory and research: A socio-cultural manifesto. *The Journal of Creative Behavior, 54*(3), 741–745. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.395

Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist, 5*(9), 444–454. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063487

Guilford, J. P. (1967). Creativity: Yesterday, today and tomorrow. *The Journal of Creative Behavior, 1*(1), 3–14.

Harboe, G., & Huang, E. M. (2015). Real-world affinity diagramming practices. In *Proceedings of the 2015 ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '15)* (pp. 95–104). ACM.

Hockney, D. (2020). "I love drawing": David Hockney on iPad painting and finding joy in spring. *Royal Academy Magazine*, Spring 2020. Retrieved from https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/article-david-hockney-ipad-painting-during-lockdown

Karimi, P., Grace, K., Maher, M. L., & Davis, N. (2018). *Evaluating creativity in computational co-creative systems.* Retrieved from http://arxiv.org/abs/1807.09886v1.

Kaufman, J. C., & Beghetto, R. A. (2022). Where is the when of creativity? Specifying the temporal dimension of the four Cs of creativity. *Review of General Psychology, 27*(2), 108926802211428. https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680221142803

Literat, I., & Glăveanu, V. P. (2016). Same but different? Distributed creativity in the internet age. *Creativity. Theories – Research - Applications, 3*(2), 330–342. https://doi.org/10.1515/ctra-2016-0020

Literat, I., & Glăveanu, V. P. (2018). Distributed creativity on the internet: A theoretical foundation for online creative participation. *International Journal of Communication, 12*(16), 893–908. Retrieved from https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/7621/2275

Liu, V., & Chilton, L. B. (2022). *Design guidelines for prompt engineering text-to-image generative models*. In Proceedings of the 2022 ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI'22), article 384 (pp. 1–23). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3491102.3501825

Lubart, T. (2017). The 7 C's of creativity. *The Journal of Creative Behavior, 51*(4), 293–296. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.190

Oppenlaender, J., Linder, R., & Silvennoinen, J. (2023). *Prompting AI art: An investigation into the creative skill of prompt engineering*. Retrieved from http://arxiv.org/abs/2303.13534v1

Papert, S. A. (2020). *Mindstorms: Children, computers, and powerful ideas*. Basic Books.

Plucker, J. A., Beghetto, R. A., & Dow, G. T. (2004). Why isn't creativity more important to educational psychologists? Potentials, pitfalls, and future directions in creativity research. *Educational Psychologist, 39*(2), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3902_1

Poetz, M. K., & Schreier, M. (2012). The value of crowdsourcing: Can users really compete with professionals in generating new product ideas? *Journal of Product Innovation Management, 29*(2), 245–256. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2011.00893.x

Rhodes, M. (1961). An analysis of creativity. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 42*(7), 305–310.

Rose, M. (2009). *Writer's block: The cognitive dimension*. Southern Illinois University Press.

Runco, M. A. (2003). Education for creative potential. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 47*(3), 317–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830308598

Runco, M. A. (2007). A hierarchical framework for the study of creativity. *New Horizons in Education, 55*(3), 1–9. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ832891

Runco, M. A., & Jaeger, G. J. (2012). The standard definition of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal, 24*(1), 92–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2012.650092

Sawyer, R. K. (2012). *Explaining creativity: The science of human innovation* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Schön, D. A. (1992). Designing as reflective conversation with the materials of a design situation. *Knowledge-Based Systems, 5*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/0950-7051(92)90020-G

Shneiderman, B. (2007). Creativity support tools: Accelerating discovery and innovation. *Communications of the ACM, 50*(12), 20–32. https://doi.org/10.1145/1323688.1323689

Shneiderman, B. (2009). Creativity support tools: A grand challenge for HCI researchers. In M. Redondo, C. Bravo, & M. Ortega (Eds.), *Engineering the*

user Interface - from research to practice (pp. 1–9). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-84800-136-7_1

Sternberg, R. J., & Karami, S. (2022). An 8P theoretical framework for understanding creativity and theories of creativity. *The Journal of Creative Behavior, 56*(1), 55–78. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.516

Stoppa, M., & Chiolerio, A. (2014). Wearable electronics and smart textiles: A critical review. *Sensors (Basel), 14*(7), 11957–11992. https://doi.org/10.3390/s140711957

Tsenn, J., Atilola, O., McAdams, D. A., & Linsey, J. S. (2014). The effects of time and incubation on design concept generation. *Design Studies, 35*(5), 500–526. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2014.02.003

Umejima, K., Ibaraki, T., Yamazaki, T., & Sakai, K. L. (2021). Paper notebooks vs. mobile devices: Brain activation differences during memory retrieval. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience, 15*, 634158. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2021.634158

Vermeulen, L. M., & Biskjaer, M. M. (2020). Off the wall: Creative use of post-it ® notes in artistic practice. In B. T. Christensen, K. Halskov, & C. N. Klokmose (Eds.), *Sticky creativity - post-it ® note cognition, computers, and design* (pp. 175–198). Academic Press (Elsevier).

Wallas, G. (1926). *The art of thought*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.

CHAPTER 8

Fear

Luca Tateo

What has fear to do with creativity? How can a highly valued process be related to such an ugly emotion? It sounds frightening, yet fear is an underestimated part of the way human beings look at the future (Tateo, 2021a). Indeed, hope and fear are two very important and complementary emotions oriented towards the future, which often go hand by hand (Tateo, 2022; Tateo et al., 2022).

From an evolutionary point of view, fear is very useful. On the one hand, if you are a weak, hominid primate during the Early Paleolithic, and you hear a noise in the grassy savannah it might be time to start running. On the other hand, the key to survival is the capability of finding a good balance between fear and hope, that is the capability of making the right decision about whether something is a "trick" or a "treat". But if you are a slightly more "civilized" primate and you are thinking to start a family, living in a perennial state of fear will not help your mating and your marital status. You must find a more creative way to cope with everyday uncertainties. You may

L. Tateo (✉)
Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway
e-mail: luca.tateo@isp.uio.no

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_8

not want to settle for deciding your response to uncertainty. You may want to find the way of anticipating and "governing" uncertainty.

The question of how mankind has been able to rise above a natural state of fear and build civilization has always been one of the fundamental questions of moral and political philosophy. Emotional experiences, such as fear, are common to all animal species, but emotions as immediate responses to environmental changes are binding us to the *hic et nunc* of an eternal present. We had somehow to develop different ways to cope with emotions in order to become what we are today as a species (Henley & Rossano, 2021). Ethological evidence tells us that we share with other species some capacity for learning, using tools, modifying the environment, treasuring experience and transmitting knowledge apart from genetic selection. Nevertheless, it is certain that we are the only living beings, as far as we know, that are able constantly, voluntarily and collectively to construct and to deconstruct abstract and non-existing "objects", such as divinity, love, society, ethics, and so on, in order to guide future-oriented actions (Valsiner, 2014) not as direct reactions to contingent stimuli. This implies that we must be able to anticipate and form an idea of both the negative and desired outcomes, both what we fear and what we hope. In other words, we must be able to imagine a course of action and control of future events (Tateo, 2020). Can we call this an expression of creativity?

In the eighteenth century, the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) proposed a very interesting theory. He tried to explain the relationship between mind and culture and how human experience led to the birth and historical development of civilizations (Vico, 1948 [1744]). He imagined the first human "tribes" dealing with scary natural phenomena, such as lightning and thunder, completely immersed in the overwhelming experience of the senses and unable to elaborate any rational explanation for these phenomena. Those primordial men were characterised by the strong embodied flow of their emotions; rationality and reflection were long to emerge. But one faculty was very powerful: imagination. Then they built an imaginative explanation for those things causing fear and uncertainty. They attributed thunder to the will of a gigantic, powerful being living somewhere above in the sky and they called him Jupiter. Vico believed that human knowledge is primarily anthropomorphic. What is unknown and far from direct experience also requires to be explained by larger causes. 'Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, whenever lost in ignorance, man makes himself the measure of all things' (Vico,

1744/1948, p. 54). Thus, Jupiter became the prototype of all natural forces, an imaginative explanation for real events. At the same time, through attributing will and power to this imaginative entity, mankind started to detach the emotion of fear from the immediate and contingent events in the environment (see also Chap. 5). They also started to regulate their own behaviour—not with respect to a direct stimulus, but through a *sign*: It was the beginning of culture.

Imagination, Signs and Self-Regulation

According to Vico, culture is nothing but the collective solution people developed to account for and to control phenomena the real causes of which they could not understand. Once imagination has created a sign that represents the cause of fear, detaching it from the immediate experience of its presence, it can be used to self-regulate the behaviour in different conditions and can be communicated to other people in different situations. 'Human beings are unstoppable generators of signs – as they strive towards future objectives which, by their nature, are necessarily uncertain' (Valsiner, 2014, p. 25). Therefore, we produce and reproduce signs as an action upon the world in order to make sense and to manage uncertainty outside and inside us; we can call this capability *imaginative function* (Cocking, 2005). In this sense, fear, hope, imagination and creativity are closely connected, to the extent that creativity as a socio-cultural category can build upon imagination as a higher mental function. From fairy tales to religious iconography, imagination has been used to promote or inhibit specific culturally valued or despicable behaviours. The feature of this semiotic process resides in the fact that meaning is elaborated always in both linguistic and iconographic forms (see also Chap. 7).

One of Giambattista Vico's most important arguments is that, through imagination, we build things that we treat as abstractions and build abstractions that we treat as though they were real things. The philosopher Georg Simmel (1858–1918) wrote: 'imagination produces a content that has a sense of its own, a logical coherency, a certain validity or permanency independent of its being produced and borne by life' (1918/2010, p. 15). The distinctive feature of human nature is the capability to create life forms (Simmel, 1918/2010)—e.g. divinity worship, marriage, money, art and burials—as self-regulatory systems through the complementary movement of abstraction and reification as key features of symbolic activity. This is why metaphorical and imaginative thinking are always present

in human activities. Their relevance for our understanding of creativity is due to the fact that they subsume both a productive and reproductive role, acting as the cauldron from which life-forms emerge, crystallise and decline in order for new ones to be formed.

Human activity creates universal and abstract representations of life starting from very situated individual actions. Such institutionalised representations of the world become traditions—that is, frameworks distanced from the individual, immediate experience—within which the meaning of individual experiences acquires sense in return (see Fig. 8.1). 'Aspects of that "external" world generated on the basis of firmly shared ecological cultural background conditions tend to become objectified and acquire the status of social realities' (Rommetveit, 1992, p. 22). From Santa Claus to the invisible hand of the market, everyday life is full of such entities that we, and our fellow humans, firmly "believe" in (create their "reality").

Religion and art provide us with wonderful examples of how fear and imagination work as regulatory systems through the continuous interplay between abstraction and reification. Just think about literary masterpieces such as St Johan's 'Apocalypse' or Dante Alighieri's 'Divine Comedy'. These authors created complex and powerful heavenly visions out of abstract religious concepts but, in return, those imaginative worlds became collective self-regulatory systems of signs for the people listening to the torments of the wicked or the joys of the blessed. Thus, imagination creates the conditions for experiencing the constraints and the affordances, the *do*s and the *don't*s, the rights and the wrongs of our experience. As Simmel elegantly put it, our lives are characterised by a process of borders-creation, limiting ourselves in order to orient our existence towards the uncertainty of the future. But as soon as we create a border, a goal to

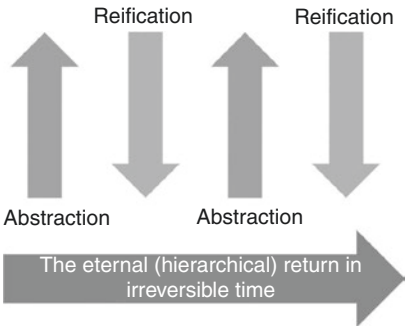

Fig. 8.1 Building things as though they were abstractions and building abstractions as though they were real things

reach, an obstacle to our goal, or a constraint to our freedom or drive, we are already setting the conditions to overcome it. Once we create damnation, we immediately evoke salvation. When we create sin, we already evoke redemption. Once we create monsters in our fairy tales, we create the conditions to destroy them; '[t]his [signifies] reaching out by life into that which is not its actuality, but such (...) reaching out nevertheless *shapes* its actuality' (Simmel, 1918/2010, p. 8). Images become the body of abstract concepts and, in return, they become abstract and universal ideas detached from the single work of art.

Fear, Imagination and Creativity: Some Examples

The ultimate cause of fear for human beings is, of course, the finitude of the individual's existence. There is no stronger fear than that of dying (Tateo, 2022). That is why this relationship between fear and creativity, mediated by imaginative processes, is fairly evident in religious and artistic productions related to eschatological topics such as death or war. We can look at the process of artistic creation and the final artefact in one of the most famous contemporary paintings: Picasso's 'Guernica' (Doyle, 2008). This masterpiece can be seen as a reflection on the meaning of art in front of life, violence and collective conscience. I use the term "reflection" playing a little with the iconic and metaphorical meaning of the word. On the one hand, we have the most common narrative of the artist that creates the masterpiece in a few days, as photo-documented by his mistress Dora Maar, after knowing of the Nazi and Fascist carpet-bombing of the Basque town. On the other hand, we have the narrative of how the large canvas resonated in the spectators of Spanish Republic's Pavilion at the Paris Exposition in 1937.

The second example I provide is meant to illustrate the relationship between eschatological themes and creativity at a different level. In this case, the imaginative process as the psychological foundation for creativity is represented by the Fontanelle Cemetery, a charnel house located in a cave in the tuff hillside of Naples, the hometown of Vico (see Fig. 8.2).

In the early nineteenth century, during the urban reformation under the French rule of Naples, all the anonymous bones of poor people that had been buried around in the town or that had died during the 1656 Great Plague were moved and stockpiled in the cave. Until the end of the nineteenth century, new bones were periodically stored there, reaching the incredible estimated number of 60,000. In the same period, a

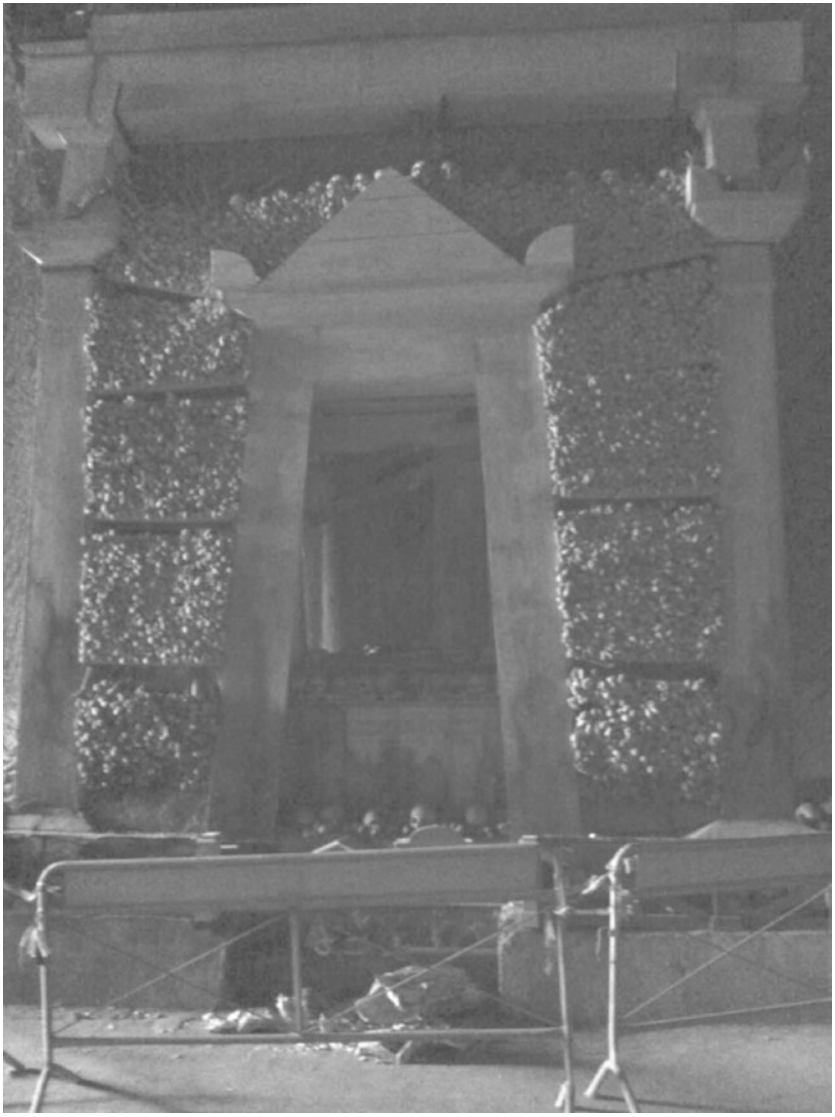

Fig. 8.2 An altar made of bones in Fontanelle Cemetery. *Source*: Photo taken by the author

spontaneous process of worship began. Lay people went into the cave "adopting" an unknown skull, giving it a name (often revealed to the caretakers in dreams), bringing offers and praying for grace. Such acts of individual devotion soon became a tradition, so that small altars, boxes (see Fig. 8.3) and wooden racks with flowers and candles gave shelter to the skulls.

The cult of devotion to the skulls lasted well into the 1970s, when the Church decided that it had degenerated into fetishism and ordered the cemetery to be closed. Nevertheless, the watchmen of the cemetery I interviewed, recently re-opened as an open-air museum, swore that the cult is still going on, even if sporadically. The Fontanelle Cemetery is an example of how individual imaginative processes, rooted in a specific cultural background, once reified and detached from the immediate experience of believing, can result in religious traditions which, in return, become a framework for the organisation of collective behaviour, e.g. promoting worship.

The third and last example is a very well-known historical commonplace in European Christianity: The medieval Memento mori (Latin for 'remember (that you have) to die'), a religious theory and practice of

Fig. 8.3 A shrine with a worshipped, anonymous baby skeleton in Fontanelle. *Source*: Photo taken by the author

reflection on mortality, considering the vanity and the transient nature of all earthly life and pursuits (Hallam & Hockey, 2001). It developed as a widespread art theme, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, through sometimes very complex systems of iconography—such as, for instance, the *Danse Macabre* and the *Triumph of Death* themes (Fig. 8.4).

One can barely figure out the powerful emotions that this painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1526/1530–1569) raised in sixteenth-century lay people living in the whirlwind of the recent Counter-Reformation, the European wars and the Great Plague. An army of skeletons is massacring mortals while they are busy with their everyday activities. The imaginative work behind this iconic representation of death and caducity is acting as a promoter for "right" behaviours and as an inhibitor of sin in view of a differed, fearful event. This effect is produced through the interplay between individual and collective imagination, during a continuous shift between

Fig. 8.4 A shrine with a worshipped 'The Triumph of Death', c. 1562, Museo del Prado, Madrid. *Source*: Image under public license, retrieved on January 3rd, 2015

Fig. 8.5 A face-mask decorated with a national flag becomes more "protective"? *Source*: Free use image, downloaded from Pixabay, retrieved 13 April 2023 from URL https://pixabay.com/images/id-5531364/

abstraction from concrete images that represent abstract concepts and reification of ideas into embodied, iconographic signs. This is just one of the peculiar ways in which human beings have elaborated a complex system of signs, through which self-regulation and social regulation intertwine to form the basis of imaginative processes.

One could object that the above examples are historical legacies of superstitious times. Yet, the eschatological dimension of everyday life produced a generalised feeling of fear just during the recent Covid-19 pandemic (Tateo, 2021a; Tateo et al., 2022). Facing the invisible threat of a new unknown virus, human beings individually and collectively produced signs to decorate a special object that suddenly became an everyday companion (Fig. 8.5) (Tateo, 2021b).

The wealth of shapes and decoration that proliferated on facemasks during the pandemic was an example of fear-generated creativity. People believed that modifying the mundane medical object in different fashions would have protected them and the others, while also sending messages that could affect social relationships (Tateo, 2021b).

Conclusion

If imagination was just individual thinking through images or a means to escape from everyday life, it wouldn't be much more than Sleeping Beauty dreaming of her prince or Homer Simpson visualising a doughnut to

escape from Marge's reproaches. The ubiquitous presence of imaginative processes in everyday activities tells us that there is something more at stake here. Imagination is linked to the need of making sense of what can happen, and is fuelled by fear and hope, the two most human emotions attached to the future. Civilizations are plentiful of creative acts to control eschatological events through signs, even in the most recent pandemic. The fact that iconic and linguistic modalities always go together should lead us to pay considerable attention to the role of imaginative work in psychological processes (Tateo, 2020). Human beings fear both what they know by past experience and what they do not know yet by future uncertainty. Imaginative work is related to both past and future by bringing to mind something that is absent, whether it is no longer or not yet there. It is a way of treating things as if they were abstractions and abstractions as if they were real things. In this sense, imagination embodies signs as much as it produces them. Once mankind has developed the capacity to imagine the cause of its fears, it has gained the opportunity to handle it by distancing from it—both to overcome fear itself and to use it as a way of regulating and effectively creating collective life.

References

Cocking, J. (2005). *Imagination: A study in the history of ideas. Edited with an introduction by Penelope Murray*. Routledge.

Doyle, C. (2008). Exploring the creation of Picasso's Guernica: Composition studies, chance, metaphors, and expertise. *Creativity Research Journal, 20*(4), 445–450.

Hallam, E., & Hockey, J. L. (2001). *Death, memory and material culture*. Berg Pub Ltd.

Henley, T. B., & Rossano, M. J. (Eds.). (2021). *Psychology and cognitive archaeology: An interdisciplinary approach to the study of the human mind*. Routledge.

Rommetveit, R. (1992). Outlines of a dialogically based social-cognitive approach to human cognition and communication. In A. H. Wold (Ed.), *The dialogical alternative* (pp. 19–44). Scandinavian University Press.

Simmel, G. (2010). *The view of life. Four metaphysical essays with journal aphorisms* (J. A. Y. Andrews & D. N. Levine, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1918.)

Tateo, L. (2020). *A theory of imagining, knowing, and understanding*. Springer Nature.

Tateo, L. (2021a). Atmos-fear and semiotic devices: How to turn the right to healthcare into A war. In *Global pandemics and epistemic crises in psychology* (pp. 128–149). Routledge.

Tateo, L. (2021b). Face masks as layers of meaning in times of COVID-19. *Culture & Psychology, 27*(1), 131–151.

Tateo, L. (2022). Cultural mediation of grief: The role of aesthetic experience. *Culture & Psychology, 29*, 411. Online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X221145901

Tateo, L., Marsico, G., & Valsiner, J. (2022). The pandemic atmos-fear. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation, 11*(2), 125.

Valsiner, J. (2014). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. Sage.

Vico, G. (1948). *The new science of Giambattista Vico*. (T. Goddard Bergin, & M. H. Frisch, Trans.). Cornell University Press. (Original work published 1744.)

CHAPTER 9

Language

Carolin Demuth and Vlad Petre Glăveanu

The Language of Creativity

It is certainly fitting to have a chapter on language in a vocabulary book. The fact that how we talk (and write) about creativity relates closely to how we think about this phenomenon and act in relation to it is obvious (for more reflections on this issue, see Chap. 1). But there is something more we can learn from language if we look beyond the 'language of creativity' and into the phenomenon of language itself (see also Chaps. 20 and 26). Uncovering what this might be is the purpose of the present chapter. Interestingly, in doing so, we will be using language (again) to formulate and share our ideas. Language as a dynamic and dialogical process frames our approach and reveals the value of paying attention to language activities when it comes to creativity, and well beyond it.

C. Demuth (✉)
Department Communication & Psychology, Centre for Cultural Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: cdemuth@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_9

What is the usual *language of creativity*? In science, we often hear about novelty and value, originality, significance, innovation, giftedness, talent, genius, art, science, invention, inspiration, improvisation, imagination, divergent thinking, discovery, so on and so forth. 'Newer' vocabularies of creativity bring with them new concerns for difference, positions, perspectives, and reflexivity (Glăveanu, 2020). What would a focus on language and its processes teach us about creativity? As we will see here, it would bring to the fore new terms such as dialogue, genre, centripetal and centrifugal forces, intertextuality, indexicality, games, and so on. The first vocabulary applies well to the creative person and his or her creative output; the second focuses our attention on process and context, both crucial for understanding and using language. But, before turning to these notions, let us start by unpacking further the bi-directional relation between language and creativity.

Creativity at the Origin of Language

Language can very well be thought of as the *prototype of creativity*. Indeed, language as a form of communication is one of the most creative things that exist. Of course, communication is not unique to humans. Bees, dolphins, and apes, among other species, have also developed forms of communication—visual, tactile, chemical, and auditory (Bradbury & Vehrencamp, 2011). However, this form of communication comprises a finite, limited number of things that can be expressed. Moreover, it doesn't show the same degree of flexibility and the emergent properties that characterise human language. A famous observation by Humboldt (1836/1999, p. 91) is illustrative here—our language involves 'infinite employment of finite means'. The intrinsic creativity of language use is not reserved for artistic work, in novels, poems, or theatre plays. It is not primarily the act of pushing the boundaries of language in ways similar to those of the Dada movement in literature (see, for instance, 'How to write a Dadaist poem' by Tristan Tzara, 1924). Linguistic creativity is, first and foremost, the marker of daily communication.

There exist over 7000 different languages according to the Ethnologue in 2023![1] This number humbles even the greatest polyglots and can put in perspective other of humanity's 'creative products'. The intrinsic variety of these languages should also be noticed. From dialects to sign systems,

[1] For the Ethnologue website, go to http://www.ethnologue.com

from written symbols to character styles, linguists and anthropologists remind us of how culturally rich human culture is around the globe. Of course, as any living cultural artefact, languages come into existence, transform, 'merge', 'split', change, and vanish. Usually, the latter happens when the community of speakers disappears or adopts other means for communication. Indeed, many of the over 7000 languages we have today are spoken and understood by small communities, hard-pressed by the ethos of globalisation. But, rather than dying out, most languages transform, becoming hybrid creations whose history is closely linked to that of the communities who use them.

It might therefore be more appropriate to talk about '*language practices*' or '*language activities*' rather than of 'languages' (which suggests a rather fixed sign system). Words are adopted and, often—especially with today's expansion in the technological domain—new words are actively created to refer to new social phenomena (think, for instance, about the verb 'to google' or the noun 'selfie'). The Cambridge dictionary even has a blog[2] that follows the development of new words in the English language. On the 25th of May 2023, the top word we found on their website was 'doomerism' or the feeling of worry and fear that a situation will not get better (don't feel bad if you never heard of it, newer words will soon come along, and some of them are bound to have more positive connotations).

In summary, there is a lot of creativity in language and this creativity becomes apparent if we consider that language is primarily a social practice and an utterly dialogical activity that has the potentiality to be indexical, performative, and phenomenological (Ochs, 2012), as we will discuss below.

Language at the Origin of Creativity

We argued above that creativity stands at the core of both the emergence and evolution of different forms of language practices, well beyond art. It is important to acknowledge now that the reverse also holds. In the absence of language there would be little, if any, creative action. And this is not because much of our creativity depends on words and linguistic exchanges, oral and written, but because the capacity to use language is deeply connected to our capacity to symbolise. Meaning-making processes

[2] To visit this blog go to http://dictionaryblog.cambridge.org/category/new-words/

are the essence of language and, through the acquisition and use of language, the essence of human creativity.

To understand this, it is helpful to look at how children learn language. The ability to understand and use language within the first two years of life has an enormous effect on development. Vygotsky (1930/2004), for example, was of the opinion that, when the practical activity of the child becomes mediated by the use of signs and tools, it undergoes a major qualitative transformation. Being able to refer to something with the means of something else (e.g. to use the word 'mother' referring to the person of the mother), the child can distance him/herself symbolically from the here-and-now of perception and the flow of immediate experience. In doing so, the child also becomes capable, gradually, of planning ahead, to imagine, to solve problems, and …to create. This is because the 'links' between thoughts and words, the ways in which people organise their own mental activities, rather than being merely systematic or logical, have a formative, developmental, and creative character (Shotter, 2008). The 'revolution' represented by the use of signs, first and foremost linguistic ones, to operate on oneself and the world around is at the origin of societal achievements, such as the development of science and art, and all other domains of creativity (see also Winnicott, 1971).

A key characteristic of language is *indexicality*, the feature of our utterances to point to something in the world. What we come to understand quite soon when we start reflecting on language, as Aristotle did (see Richards, 1932), is the fact that word, meaning, and object are not linked by necessity. There is nothing in the actual object of a bottle that makes one call it 'bottle' (as, indeed, the two of us would rather call it *Flasche* in German and *sticlă* in Romanian) just as there is nothing in the word 'bottle' that brings us necessarily to the idea of bottle. In an alternative world, we might call a chair 'bottle' (or, indeed, in a delusional world or, why not, an artistic one). And this is crucially important for creativity. Saussure (de Saussure, 1916/1974) referred to this as the arbitrariness of signs. We call it, here, the fundamental flexibility and openness of language. Noticing and exploiting (metaphorically, artistically, humorously, and so on) the difference between word, meaning, and object is the marker of most (if not all) forms of human creativity (see Chap. 6; and also Glăveanu & Gillespie, 2014).

When children learn a language, however, they do not merely learn linguistic skills and symbolic abstractions but, first and foremost, *communicative-semantic skills* (Erneling, 1995; Shotter, 2008); i.e. to

participate in what Wittgenstein (1953) called 'language games'. They learn how to use words (including intonation, gestures, and so on) in specific situations for specific purposes. There are countless creative ways of how words could be used as the interaction unfolds; i.e. there are countless creative ways in which the meaning of a given situation could potentially be co-created through language activity. The child has to learn which ones are socially acceptable and appropriate in a given situation (see also Chap. 19).

Here, we see the circular nature of creativity and language: Language activity is not only constructed (i.e. made up of grammatical structures, words and so on, all of which are built and delivered in real time with relevant prosody, timing, and such), but also constructive (in the sense that it is used to build versions of psychological worlds, of social organisations, actions, and histories) (Potter, 2012). Nevertheless, discursive co-constructions are not arbitrary; they are often constrained by the social expectations and cultural conventions that we have learned to apply. In other words, our creative act of constructing social reality and meaning-making through language is always interrelated with previously experienced ways of constructing reality together with others. We will elaborate on this in the next section.

It is important here to note that language—conceived of as an activity—goes far beyond mere words and symbols. It comprises prosody, gesture, and mimicry, as well as the phenomenology of experiencing language (Bertau, 2014b; Cresswell & Teucher, 2011; Ochs, 2012). Using language, oral or written, is not only a social and cultural but embodied activity (Demuth, 2021; Demuth et al., 2020; see also Chap. 3). Finally, creativity and language alike can be considered a form of communication (in the end, through the creative act, a person communicates something to others) and a way of experiencing the world (the often neglected phenomenological aspect of the creative act).

Dialogue at the Root of Language and Creativity

Language practices have no single or identifiable author (except perhaps those invented by sci-fi authors—but even these depend on the creativity of their users). Our propensity to discover who is 'responsible' for a certain creative artefact is put to the test by the study of language(s). And, through these lenses, we come to discover that our daily lives and the functioning of our societies are deeply marked by historical acts of

collective creativity. Many of the most mundane (and yet indispensable) objects we use, the traditions and rituals that give texture to our existence, or the rhythms we enjoy listening, illustrate acts of truly distributed creativity (see Glăveanu, 2014). It is our individual and collective creativity that transforms language and adapts it to an ever-changing world, and it is language that facilitates creative expression through its 'tensions' between word and world. The *polysemy* of natural language (Ricoeur, 1973), the fact that there is never a perfect 'one to one' relation between word and world but a 'one to many' relation, is central for creativity (see also Chap. 21). But where does this multiplicity come from? In order to understand this, we need to recognise the social nature of language, an aspect we haven't discussed much so far.

Language is not merely a tool we use for communicating content; it is a social *practice* that is always intertwined with emotion and volition (we pursue ideas, argue for something, etc.). Moreover, it is intertwined with the social practices of others (Demuth, 2013, 2015). Self-other relations are crucial for the way we use language (think of how you talk to your friends at the pub and to your superiors at work), and for its acquisition (the child would not use the words 'mother' or 'bottle', or any word for this matter, without the social scaffolding provided by adults). Dialogue is, in fact, considered so important for both the theory and practice of language that we find, today, a growing number of *dialogical theories* that consider, starting from language, the dialogicality of the mind (Linell, 2009) and that of the human self (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

One of the pioneers of this kind of thinking is uncontestably Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician. In his words:

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—over-populated—with the intentions of others. […] language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other …The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.
>
> (Bakhtin, 1975/1992, pp. 293–294)

Language is dialogical, thus, in (at least) two ways. On the one hand, dialogicality refers to the situated interaction of language activities taking place between two or more persons. In that sense, language is interactive (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992) and largely spontaneous (Shotter, 2008); i.e. it is not static but always in the process of 'becoming', and hence allows for creativity in how interactions unfold. Language activity is always other-oriented and action-based; in other words, we are not passive receivers of 'messages'. Utterances are addressed at someone and anticipate responsitivity (Bakhtin, 1986). Already Humboldt noted that it is only through the responsiveness of the other to my utterance that I can understand my own utterance (cf Bertau, 2014b).

On the other hand, however, and in a broader perspective, the dialogical nature of language refers also to the human nature of being dialogically intertwined with others: As Bakhtin reminds us, our utterances draw on what we have heard or used before in other situated (inter)actions. Our own language is, in this sense, full of the 'voices' of others that we learn to inhabit, to combine, and respond to. This defines the *polyphony* of using language to communicate, the conceptual match for the polysemy of words we have referred to briefly. The multiplication of voices and meanings reflects the diversity of self-other dialogues we participate in, directly and indirectly, as members of a community of practice and a society.

By drawing on similar 'forms' or 'patterns' of language (e.g. ordering a meal in a restaurant, engaging in small talk at a conference or at a family dinner), we build traditions of language activities (see also Bertau, 2014c). Bakhtin referred to these as *speech genres*. Linell (2009) further developed this idea and spoke of communicative genres to point out that language is more than speech. Brockmeier (2005) reminds us that, when we speak, we use countless genres without noting or suspecting that they exist at all. They are like the air we breathe or like water is for the fish. But we can also break out of these traditions when, for instance, we perform language activities in an unconventional way (e.g. telling a personal anecdote in a scientific talk). Bakhtin spoke here about centrifugal and centripetal forces. The first refer to the cultural canons that have a normative impetus on the language use of a person within a specific socio-cultural group (see also Demuth, 2013, 2015). Centrifugal forces, on the other hand, allow for individual choice of language. Participants may, for instance, 'try to question established genres, breaking them up, protesting by overtly flouting their norms, or creating new "crossover" genres' (Linell, 2009, p. 53). The utterances of an individual are therefore neither entirely shaped by

cultural conventions, nor an entirely individual creation. In that sense, utterances are always travelling through texts and contexts, something we can refer to as *intertextuality* (Linell, 2009). The same holds true for non-verbal genres that imply creativity, such as music or cooking.

The dialogical tradition has much to teach us about creativity. First and foremost, it points to the fact that, just like language activities (and through language activities), creativity is a dialogical act. In other words, it is never an act of the solitary self (the creator); neither is it a process that leads to absolute novelty and breaks with what existed before.

In a dialogical (or dialogistic) understanding of language 'dialogue' does not refer to two persons exchanging ideas but rather '*dia*' ('through' or 'by') and '*logos*' (words, discourse, talk, thought, reason, knowledge, theory) refer to any kind of human sense-making, semiotic practice, action, interaction, thinking, or communication. 'Dialogism' is an epistemological framework of how we acquire knowledge about the world and ascribe meaning to the world. Our being in and experiencing of the world is hence thoroughly interdependent with the existence of others and language playing a crucial role in this (Bertau, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Linell, 2009).

We may also ask: Is language based on verbal content and paraverbal elements only (see also Demuth et al., 2020)? In her book "Where is language?", Ruth Finnegan (2015), for instance asks what is language and where does it reside? She challenges the predominant Western view of opposing "literate, rational, scientific, civilized, Western, modern" vs. "communal, emotional, non-scientific, traditional, […] and oral" (p. 5) that in academia lead to an understanding of language as abstract sign system and rational means of expressing some hidden mental entities in the mind (e.g. identity). What is commonly described as paralinguistic (e.g. volume, pitch, intonation) or extralinguistic (e.g. gesture, mimic, body posture, and body movement) elements are, she argues, in fact not supplementary extras to language but intrinsic. She puts forward a view of language as multi-dimensional and multi-participant performance that may be written, spoken, or sung. Communication is seen as comprising multi-sensory including auditive, visual, tactile and somatic elements, and as happening in a material environment, i.e. within a specific physical setting and spatial arrangements.

Within creativity, self and other, conventions and innovations cross paths; this is something that makes creative products simultaneously individual and social, shared and unique. Polyphony, polysemy, and intertextuality—core features of language. Core features of creativity as well?

Order and Spontaneity, in Dialogue

What we discussed in this chapter points to the fact that, just like creativity, language use has a distinctive air of spontaneity. At the same time, language is utterly orderly—both with regard to grammar and syntax, and with regard to socio-cultural conventions of language use. There are rules for addressing others, for what can or cannot be said, and for how things are told that apply to virtually any context we might find ourselves in, even when we are alone (see also Chap. 19). And yet, as we start a conversation, we can never be sure what exactly we will say a few minutes later (see Chap. 22).

Wittgenstein (1953) described language activities as people's spontaneous, living, embodied reactions in the ongoing flow of their contingently intertwined activity. To capture the simultaneously orderly and spontaneous nature of language, he used the metaphor of *language games*. For Wittgenstein, the origin of the language game can be found in ongoing interactions. When speaking, we engage in a 'living', embodied relation with other living beings. We do so not only by "spontaneously responding to this living form, but by spontaneously responding to it *in anticipation* of what it might do next" (Shotter, 2008, p. vii, emphasis in the original).

This might be one of the deepest insights a study of language can offer creativity researchers. When creating, just as when we use language (and we use it always creatively in some sense), we are not only in collaboration with others (Barron, 1999), but also in dialogue with them. Creativity is fundamentally social because it responds to what others have done before and anticipates what can be done next, constantly expanding the boundaries of the possible. The creativity game, just as that of language, is a game of dialogue.

References

Bakhtin, M. (1975/1992). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (V. McGee, Trans.; M. Holquist, Ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barron, F. (1999). All creation is a collaboration. In A. Montuori & R. Purser (Eds.), *Social creativity* (Vol. I, pp. 49–59). Hampton Press.

Bertau, M. C. (2014a). Introduction: The self within the space–time of language performance. *Theory & Psychology, 24*(4), 433–441.

Bertau, M. C. (2014b). Exploring language as the "in-between.". *Theory & Psychology, 24*(4), 524–541.

Bertau, M.-C. (2014c). On displacement. *Theory & Psychology, 24*(4), 442–458. Special Issue 'Language and the Self'.

Bradbury, J. W., & Vehrencamp, S. L. (2011). *Principles of animal communication*. Sinauer Associates Inc.

Brockmeier, J. (2005). The text of the mind. In C. Johnson & D. Johnson (Eds.), *The mind as a scientific object: Between brain and culture* (pp. 432–452). Oxford University Press.

Cresswell, J., & Teucher, U. (2011). The body and language: M. M. Bakhtin on ontogenetic development. *New Ideas in Psychology, 29*, 106–118.

Saussure, F. de (1916/1974). *Course in general linguistics* (Wade Baskin, Trans.). Fontana/Collins.

Demuth, C. (2013). Socializing infants towards a cultural understanding of expressing negative affect: A Bakhtinian informed discursive psychology approach. *Mind, Culture, and Activity., 20*(1), 39–61. Available at: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10749039.2012.719992

Demuth, C. (2015). Mother-child communication: Cultural differences. In James D. Wright (editor-in-chief), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (2 edn., vol. 15, pp. 874–880). Elsevier

Demuth, C. (2021). Managing Accountability of Children's Bodily Conduct: Embodied Discursive Practices in Preschool. In S. Wiggins & K. O. Cromdal (Eds.), *Discursive psychology and embodiment: Beyond subject-object binaries* (pp. 81–111). Palgrave Macmillan.

Demuth, C., Raudaskoski, P., & Raudaskoski, S. (Eds.). (2020). *Lived Culture and Psychology: Sharedness and Normativity as Discursive, Embodied and Affective Engagements with the World in Social Interaction*. Frontiers Media SA. https://doi.org/10.3389/978-2-88963-690-7

Duranti, A., & Goodwin, C. (Eds.). (1992). *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge University Press.

Erneling, C. (1995). Language development. In R. Harré & P. Stearns (Eds.), *Discursive Psychology in Practice* (pp. 164–182). Sage.

Finnegan, R. (2015). *Where is language? An anthropologist's questions on language, literature and performance*. Boomsbury.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Distributed creativity: Thinking outside the box of the creative individual*. Springer.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020). A sociocultural theory of creativity: Bridging the social, the material, and the psychological. *Review of General Psychology, 24*(4), 335–354.

Glăveanu, V. P., & Gillespie, A. (2014). Creativity out of difference: Theorising semiotic, social and temporal gaps. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Perspectives from cultural psychology* (pp. 1–15). Routledge.

Hermans, H. J. M., & Kempen, H. J. G. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. Academic Press.

Humboldt, W. (1836/1999). *On language: On the diversity of human language construction and its influence on the mental development of the human species*. Cambridge University Press. (Originally published in 1836).

Linell, P. (2009). *Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically*. Information Age Publishing.

Ochs, E. (2012). Experiencing language. *Anthropological Theory, 12*(2), 142–160.

Potter, J. (2012). Discourse analysis and discursive psychology. In Cooper, H. (Editor-in-chief), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology. Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 111–130). American Psychological Association Press.

Richards, I. A. (1932). *The philosophy of rhetoric*. Oxford University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1973). Creativity in language. *Philosophy Today, 17*(2), 97–141.

Shotter, J. (2008). *Conversational realities revisited: Life, language, body and world*. Tao Institute Publications.

Tzara, T. (1924). To make a Dadaist poem. Reprinted in *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, 2011 (Barbara Wright, Trans.). Oneworld Classics.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1930/2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 42*(1), 7–97.

Winnicott, D. W. (1971). *Playing and reality*. Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. Blackwell.

CHAPTER 10

Lostness

Charlotte Wegener

Prologue

In his text 'The social construction of validity', Kvale (1995) states that 'An attempt will be made here to demystify the concept of validity in social research by taking it back to everyday language and interaction' (p. 19). He then tells the story of his own encounter with scientific language as a young student in Norway trying to memorise Latin-based English scientific terms which did not belong to the Norwegian vernacular. I was really encouraged and entertained by his text and especially the introduction—a highly recognised social scientist unable to get a grip on core social science terms. This is, of course, not a story of intellectual inability. It is a story of how to connect scientific knowledge and everyday experience. He builds his argument on the basis of his own everyday experience. He writes:

> Later, when traveling in the United States, I learned other meanings of the terms validity and reliability; for example, when cashing a check in the

C. Wegener (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: cw@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_10

> supermarket, I was told that my European driver's license was not valid as identification; when in an academic discussion, I was told that my argument was not valid. Or I heard that the information about the used car I was looking at was not reliable, nor was the car dealer known to be a reliable person. Here the terms valid and reliable belonged to the vernacular, important to the on-going interactions of everyday life.
>
> (Kvale, 1995, p. 20)

This text is funny because it questions pretentious scientific language. It is instructive and helpful because it offers an alternative: That scientific knowledge can be grounded in everyday experience and inform our everyday life. What I learned from Kvale is how to include in my texts the messy epistemological processes of wondering, questioning and getting to know and understand something. I learned that a research account is not authoritative because it connects everything, synthesises and concludes. It can be authoritative because it invites the reader into epistemological struggle. A researcher voice can be authoritative because it is present in the creative act of being lost and finding a way.

Lost

It is often said that we *acquire* knowledge, *gain* insight and *make* new discoveries. Rarely do we hear of scientific work being discussed in terms of *dropping something*, *letting go* or *getting lost*. Inspired by Kvale, the following is a practical demonstration of a research process in which everyday experiences of lostness opened up the creative interrogation of scientific concepts (see also Chap. 12). The empirical material comes from a field study of elderly care which aimed to contribute to knowledge of how innovation processes are initiated and managed and, especially, how innovation competencies can be nurtured (Wegener, 2013, 2016). It illustrates my quest for an adequate methodological and theoretical vocabulary while tracing innovation in the field with the help of the theoretical concept of "knot-working". Knot-working is defined as the combination of different kinds of knowledge to achieve new insights; in learning, creativity and innovation, knot-working is seen as a core activity (Engeström, 1987; Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). Knot-working does not necessarily involve new factual knowledge. Rather, it is the act of combining knowledge in new ways, e.g. when people with different professional knowledge or organisational roles interact to identify, analyse and handle problems.

Trusting the theory and having the ambition to practise what I preach, I attended several welfare innovation conferences, theme days and workshops, all of which were structured to allow for knot-working—between researchers and practitioners, between different welfare professionals or between policy makers and citizens. I was eager to engage in knot-working. What happened, however, was practically the opposite. From the earliest days of my fieldwork, I sensed the theme of "being lost" and documented it in my field diary:

My first innovation conference

Hundreds of welfare innovators are gathered in a former storage building at the edge of the town. Numbered blue balloons are tied to exhibition booths, each describing its own innovation project. I stroll around at random. At a health exhibit, a nurse offers to measure my blood glucose level, but my level falls below the lowest measurement unit, the nurse tells me. I don't know if this is good or bad. I spot an acquaintance I haven't seen in some time; we hug and tell each other how great it is to meet again... until she sees some other acquaintances and moves on.

An MC in a black dress and fishnet stockings enters the scene and blows a foghorn to start the presentation programme at the stalls. We are instructed to look at our conference folders and choose the stalls we would like to visit. Every time she blows the horn, we must move on to the next stall on our list, looking for the stall with the appropriately numbered balloon floating over it. People move. The horn blows. People move again. The balloons with the stall numbers printed on them sway back and forth, making it difficult for me to see which stall I should go to. I do not always reach the designated stall until the next horn sounds. However, when the session is over, I find myself with a pile of brochures and business cards.

Now we are going to work through an innovation process in groups. My group's task is to identify an urgent issue in state schools and to develop new solutions to it. We must move on to the next step in the innovation process every time we hear the horn. The MC instructs us in problem framing, idea generation, selection of the best idea and action plan design. We generate post-its, group them into piles and end up producing a flowchart, which we hang on the wall of the exhibition area using sticky tack. We can now proceed to exhibiting our solutions.

It's lunchtime. The chefs are toned and wear black T-shirts. They make vegetarian and organic food on the spot. There are no chairs.

Hyper-stimulated and feeling increasingly lost, I spot an empty backroom area with a round sofa in the middle. I take a seat among paper sheets and crayons. Outside, snow is falling heavily. Maybe I will not be able to get to the railway station? Maybe I can't get home! I grab my bag, rush to the lobby and ask the receptionist to call a cab. 'Unfortunately, this is not possible', she says. 'All taxi driving has been suspended due to the snowfall'. I fumble through coats and run out into the snow, coat in hand. Not a soul. I look back and notice another conference participant just rushing out. 'There might be a bus stop further down the road', she shouts, and we run side by side.

Just then, a bus comes wobbling by. We run and wave, and the bus's rear end slips to the side as it stops in the middle of the road. We board the bus and throw ourselves onto the seats, exhausted. The snowdrifts make it a two-hour ride to the railway station, and my travelling companion and I talk all the way.

Knot-Working and Not-Knowing

Reviewing my field diary, it seems that I escaped, but only temporarily. 'Innovation is everywhere', as one interviewee emphasized. According to Helge, a nursing home manager whom I met during fieldwork, the employees complain to him that the continual changes in work routine are making them exhausted. He recalls to me how he tells the employees:

> I can only assure you that changes will accelerate, and you are welcome to join in. If not, you could just step down and look for some other place where changes are not part of the agenda. However, I don't know such a place.

The metaphor of knot-working shaped the design of the study, what I paid attention to and how I interpreted it. At first glance, knot-working seemed an appropriate metaphor for what was going on. Soon, however, I lost track. Very few of the participants I talked to during fieldwork had stories of innovation through knot-working, and most did not even regard "innovation" as a suitable depiction of desired changes. The interviewees regarded innovation as a pervasive imperative, but they did not know the meaning of it, or they struggled to reformulate it in order to avoid it undermining routines and values that worked well (Wegener, 2014; Wegener & Tanggaard, 2013; see also Chap. 3).

Yet innovation had practical, everyday consequences, as Bente, another nursing home manager, complained to me:

> Innovation, it's something that pops up in my mailbox at least once a week. And it always means that I must go without personnel for days because they are off at some training course.

The innovation agenda is alluring, with its abundance of offers, activities and invitations to be "part of it". Yet, at the same time, it is confusing and exhausting, with dead-end arguments, rapid-fire decision-making and no space or time for random wandering around or even getting lost. I found that, as a researcher wanting to identify innovation through knot-working, I could easily become an advocate for an agenda I was increasingly worried about. I was certainly not the only person feeling lost in the innovation world!

The metaphor of knot-working was useful for explaining some empirical phenomena. But, basically, I could not relate knot-working and elderly care innovation to each other. If I clung solely to knot-working, my main finding would be a non-finding. I would be able to produce a neat story of cross-organisational and cross-professional collaboration deficiencies and thus suggest possible strategies to overcome employee inertia, or the much-researched "resistance to change" (see also Chap. 16). Instead, I chose to drop the metaphor of knot-working and eventually allowed myself to get lost in the landscape of innovation research and elderly care practice. I started to take part in activities that did not fit with my ideas of what knot-working might be; eventually, I almost forgot that I was studying innovation and just immersed myself in the activities that happened to unfold while I was present in the field (see also Chap. 22). Meanwhile, I read plenty of innovation studies and methodology literature and produced two comprehensively written field diaries. I spent months together with intern students, mentors, teachers, managers and elderly residents. I was reading and writing passionately, but I did not have a clue as to where this strategy would take me. To be honest, it did not look like or feel like a "strategy" at all. I was no closer to elderly care knot-working or innovation. I no longer knew what I was studying.

Why am I Here?

The following incident turned out to be my study's ultimate lostness story and thus also the focal point that decisively emboldened me to go off-track:

> In the living room, the nursing home resident Annie is wandering around. 'I am so confused. Why am I here?' she asks, continuously. Once in a while, the care assistant Helga or the student Peter respond to her:
>
> Helga: It's because your husband passed away 18 months ago, and now you are here. Where do you live?
>
> Annie: I live at Vestergade 201.
>
> Helga: No, you live here, just down the corridor in room 6. Where do you live?
>
> Annie: I live in room 6.
>
> Helga: That's fine.
>
> Later on, Annie addresses the student, Peter:
>
> Annie: I'm so confused. Why am I here?
>
> Peter: It's because your husband passed away.
>
> Annie: What am I supposed to do?
>
> Peter suggests that she watch TV and guides her to the sofa. Another resident, Elsa, sits down beside Annie on the sofa:
>
> Annie: I'm so confused. I don't know why I'm here.
>
> Elsa: I don't know either.
>
> Annie: It's damn annoying.
>
> Elsa: Yes, but I am here right next to you.

Though this exchange added no obvious insight related to my research questions about knot-working, creativity and innovation, I could not forget it. Elsa did not provide any solution to Annie's confusion, yet she offered the most precious gift: undivided attention and company. I regarded it as irrelevant, but I returned to this page in my field diary until I knew the dialogue by heart. I also investigated dementia and lost myself in a world of locked doors, caregiver intervention and wandering around when I started reading abstracts such as the one below:

> The occurrence of episodes of getting lost was examined in 104 subjects with dementia who were assessed every 4 months over 5 years. All subjects were initially living at home with a caregiver who could give good information. Forty-three subjects needed to be brought back home at least once. Five subjects repeatedly got lost. Forty-six subjects were kept behind locked doors at some point. Subjects who got lost were more likely to become

> permanently resident in institutions (odds ratio = 7.3; 95% confidence interval: 3.0 to 17.8). Patients who performed better on a behavioral test of topographical memory were less likely to get lost over the subsequent 5 years (negative predictive value: 90%). The risk of patients with dementia getting lost is substantial and requires frequent intervention by caregivers. This risk is a major reason for institutionalization.
>
> (McShane et al., 1998)

Eventually, a reading of Lather's (2007) methodology of getting lost in the landscape of knowledge or the landscape of science gave me an analytical "hook"—a means to channel my emotional engagement and words to explain why I was drawn to lostness rather than trying to avoid it. These two ladies mirrored a feeling exceedingly familiar to me. Did it hold any creative potential? Lather (2007, p. 136) argues that we should cultivate the ability to engage with 'not knowing' and move toward a 'vacillation of knowing and not knowing'. Wandering and getting lost thus become creative methodological practices. It may seem cynical to capitalise on two old women with dementia, yet the experience of getting lost is all too human.

Most of the time, we try to knot-work, to make connections, to make sense. Dementia is a state of involuntary lostness. The researcher may also inadvertently get lost and confused (as I did at the innovation conference and in fieldwork), but we can turn these experiences into a deliberate strategy. Following Pitt and Britzman (2003), Lather distinguishes 'lovely knowledge' and 'difficult knowledge' (Lather, 2007, p. 13). Lovely knowledge reinforces what we think we want, while difficult knowledge includes breakdowns and learning to allow loss and feelings of lostness to become the very force of creativity. When we lose track and things do not make sense, we are forced to act and think *differently*.

Concluding Remarks on the Epistemological Struggle

My disorientation at the innovation conference and Annie's state of confusion while sitting in front of the television at the nursing home turned out to be a gateway to widening my initial ideas of what was part of the study and what was not. I chose to aim for *difficult knowledge*. Researchers invariably begin their work expecting to see certain events occur and may construct their research questions and fieldwork tasks around those

expectations. Annie, in front of the television, was obviously part of my data, but she did not fit in. *I* had to change my questions and research methodology because I wanted to include her.

As I sensed, she had the power to provide me with a lever for questioning the innovation enthusiasm not just in the organisational world, but also in much of the innovation literature. What I ended up concluding is that a great deal of research, and indeed many of the public and policy discourses of welfare innovation we are surrounded by, fail to ask basic questions regarding their key concepts. Research can thus be regarded as the mobilisation of certain concepts, subjects and disciplines to represent and order what is occurring. We want more drivers for innovation, and we want fewer barriers to innovation. We expect people to perform knot-working, and we take it for granted that this will lead to innovation. Following this premise, much research on welfare innovation involves pursuing innovation moments, finding less innovation than expected or desired, explaining what are termed "barriers" to innovation and proposing measures to overcome these. The problem is that the innovation agenda does not leave time and space for getting lost. The imperative seems to be "Onward, onward!". But where are we heading to, and what is left behind? We might not be able to perform relevant innovations—in organisations *and* in ethnographic analyses and accounts—if we too eagerly head for pre-designated destinations; that is, for lovely knowledge. While "knot-working" refers to the intentional combination of mainly cognitive resources, to finding one's way, making ends meet and conclusions clear, "not knowing" refers to the unpredictability of bodily and affective experiences and to open-ended problems and possibilities. To allow for creativity in research, and in most of our daily life, we need to practise both.

Annie will never get a meaningful explanation of why she is at the nursing home. The fact that 'your husband is dead' does not reduce her feeling of loss and of being lost. She will keep asking, '*Why am I here?*'. Don't we all ask the same question once in a while? I certainly did when I was at the innovation conference. It's damn annoying. However, being lost together—as Annie was on the sofa, in front of the television, and as I was on the bus while fleeing the innovation conference—makes it bearable. In a tribute to Lather, Clarke (2009, p. 218) puts it this way:

> What I personally value most about reading Lather is the doubled knowledge that I am both very much alone *and not alone* in my existential engagements around research which take form as anxieties and terrors in the night.

Kvale shared his encounter with Latin-based English scientific terms not belonging to the Norwegian vernacular. As researchers we can write about our epistemological struggle and unleash the creative potential of lostness, together.

References

Clarke, A. E. (2009). Getting lost and found and lost and found and lost again with Patti Lather. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, 30*(1), 212–221.

Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding. An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. Orienta-Konsultit Oy.

Kvale, S. (1995). The social construction of validity. *Qualitative Inquiry, 1*(1), 19–40.

Lather, P. A. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. State University of New York.

McShane, R., Gedling, K., Keene, J., Fairburn, C., Jacoby, R., & Hope, T. (1998). Getting lost in dementia: A longitudinal study of a behavioral symptom. *International Psychogeriatrics, 10*(3), 253–260.

Pitt, A., & Britzman, D. (2003). Speculations on qualities of difficult knowledge in teaching and learning: An experiment in psychoanalytic research. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(6), 755–776.

Tuomi-Gröhn, T., & Engeström, Y. (Eds.). (2003). *Between school and work: New perspectives on transfer and boundary-crossing*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Wegener, C. (2013). *Innovation – Inside out. Change and stability in social and health care education*. Dissertation, Aalborg University Denmark. https://vbn.aau.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/316411853/180913_charlotte_wegener.pdf

Wegener, C. (2014). 'I don't know why I'm here': From knot-working to not-knowing. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography, 3*(2), 246–258. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-07-2013-0016

Wegener, C. (2016). Driving forces of welfare innovation: Explaining interrelations between innovation and professional development. In S. Billett, D. Dymock, & S. Choy (Eds.), *Supporting learning across working life: Models, processes and practices* (Vol. 16, pp. 113–127). Springer. Professional and Practice-Based Learning. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29019-5_6

Wegener, C., & Tanggaard, L. (2013). The concept of innovation as perceived by public sector frontline staff – Outline of a tripartite empirical model of innovation. *Studies in Continuing Education, 35*(1), 82–101.

CHAPTER 11

Memory

Brady Wagoner and Vlad Petre Glăveanu

When we think of memory, some kind of container for storing things or surface for inscribing information usually comes to mind. It is thought that experiences are put into or written on these surfaces as memories and then taken out when remembered in roughly the same form as they were put in. This conception dates back to Plato, who first described memory as a wax tablet in the mind, on which experiences were inscribed. In Plato's time, literacy was becoming a more widespread social practice and the wax tablet was one new technology that helped sustain it. The dominance of literacy since this time has contributed to the persistence of this *metaphor of memory* (Danziger, 2008), such that, today, we talk of memories metaphorically as being inscribed on a computer hard disk (rather than wax

B. Wagoner (✉)
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Oslo New University College, Oslo, Norway
e-mail: wagoner@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_11

tablet), or inscribed in the brain as an 'engram' (literally 'that which is converted into writing'). If we follow this metaphor closely, then, creativity and memory have little to say to one another, because memories are understood in terms of their fixity and fidelity to the past, whereas creativity is conceptualised as just the opposite. In fact, only those that are able to 'forget' or stand outside tradition are seen to be truly creative, as the solitary genius image has it (Montuori & Purser, 1995).

In contrast to this metaphor of memory and the implications it brings with it, we will argue that remembering is an active and creative process, which is *generative of new meanings.* The past is not simply reproduced but dynamically reconstructed by the person to meet present concerns and move towards an open future. Thus, memory becomes a playground for the meeting and mixing of different ideas, a framework for the construction of novel and useful products. This perspective was first articulated in psychology by Frederic Bartlett (1932/1995) who described remembering as "an imaginative reconstruction" (p. 213) undertaken on the basis of our past taken as a whole and of particular details of it retained in the form of images. Bartlett was also revolutionary in that he conceptualised remembering as both social and psychological, involving the complex interplay between the two (Wagoner, 2017). Social life provides both the basis (i.e. the requisite tools) and context (setting in which it occurs) for memory construction, while personal psychological factors ensue that memory products are not simply reproductions of already existing social forms. Thus, as with creativity, remembering shapes individual and collective phenomena. In this chapter, we will focus on the collective phenomenon of street art to illustrate how remembering is a constructive and creative process, as well as part of a personal and social process.

The Street Artist: Delinquent or Creative Genius?

Street art is a polymorphous social object. For some, it is a clear example of vandalism, the pointless defacement of private or public property. For others, it is an illustration of free speech, the voice of the marginalised that comes to reclaim a space for itself in society (see also Chap. 13). When its political message is delivered in clever, aesthetic ways, street art often becomes a symbol of creativity within a social movement.

There are, of course, notable differences between a quick tag, a repeated stencil and more elaborate graffiti images, such as murals; nonetheless, each of them has at least the potential to surprise us and make us wonder

about their author, their meaning and the circumstances in which they were made (see also Chap. 5). The fascination with street art and its unique culture have, in recent times, brought great popularity to some street artists, generating a curious *paradox*—while street art aims precisely to reverse the 'high culture' pretentions of art and ridicule the establishment, the visibility of some of its creators is due precisely to their incorporation into the world of art. The case of Banksy is notable here. While his (her, their?) identity has not been fully proven, despite several reports indicating different people from Bristol, Banksy became well-known not only as a graffiti artist and political activist, but also as a film director (see the 'Exit Through the Gift Shop' documentary, 2010). His work often takes the form of stencils that satirise the political, economic and social elites and can be found in different parts of the world. Figure 11.1 depicts a common theme for Banksy, the rat, photographed in Manhattan in 2013.

Whether Banksy is a delinquent or a creative genius (or both) remains an open question. What is undeniable is the fact that his work attracts a great deal of attention and is now being sold for considerable amounts at auction houses in London and elsewhere. While the authenticity of many such works can be contested, Banksy did find ways to communicate with the public, including through a personal page (https://www.banksy.co.uk) and several books (e.g. Banksy, 2006). If we accept the definition of creativity in terms of novelty and originality, as well as value (Mayer, 1999), then Banksy's artistic outputs are certainly described by the first two attributes. Are they socially *valuable* as well? Opinions are mixed and perhaps some might place this kind of creative expression under the category 'malevolent creativity' (see Cropley et al., 2010) but, nonetheless, they have a special significance at least for a wide range of people. One might also point out how these graffiti works dramatise tensions already existing in society, which is the criterion Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1971) used to define art (see also Hedegaard, 2014, for an application of this approach to graffiti).

Is Banksy's work also one of memory? For many reasons, it is. First, its themes and messages address notable events or situations and, through this, add their representations of social life to our collective memory. Moreover, the very representation of these themes draws on culturally shared codes and images which are not created by the artist him/herself but transmitted and changed through social interaction. The image of the rat, depicted in Fig. 11.1, is an emblematic symbol (within the Western world, at least) of the clandestine, marginalised or stigmatised and,

Fig. 11.1 'Mediocrity killed the rat', Manhattan stencil attributed to Banksy. *Source*: Photo by Piratilla, file under a Creative Commons licence

through this association, it prompts identification processes in viewers of the stencil (is the rat the street artist, the viewer, a certain social group, all at once? and so on). Furthermore, the style of this work, what makes it (at least, allegedly) a recognisable 'Banksy', draws on models from the past, including from other artists and genres such as anime or caricature (see also Chap. 18). Equally, the techniques of rendering graffiti have not been invented by Banksy but, arguably, learned through repetition and continuous practice. Memory processes are at work whenever personal or social knowledge is used in novel ways, habits become crystallised, and events of

the past are actualised by the author and transformed for his/her audiences. The street art of Banksy and its strong social message are not the product of a creative process that invents anew conventions and symbols, but it becomes vivid precisely because it engages with what we, as viewers, know, have learnt or experienced. This *mnemonic foundation of creative expression* is not unique for graffiti, or for the graffiti of Banksy, in particular. The creativity of street art both draws on memory and, as we come to show next, carries it.

The Creative Memories of a Revolution

A perhaps even clearer creative and mnemonic use of graffiti occurred during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Although there had been some graffiti in Egypt before (even some dating back to Pharaonic times), it was only with the revolution that it became one of the most important political tools (Awad & Wagoner, 2015). The Revolution brought with it a transformation of Egypt's major cities through paint and the emergence of creative talents. Cairo, for one, was full of graffiti expressing solidarity (e.g. Egyptian flags, merged cross and crescent), empowerment (symbols of freedom and strength) and the occupation of public space (previously monopolised by the state; see also Chap. 21). These works often built upon *symbols* from Egypt's ancient and recent past. In Fig. 11.2, a mummy is shown waking up, presumably after a long sleep, and shouting 'I'm free'. This image is juxtaposed with one of a person, whose eyes and mouth are covered by three hands to symbolise political censorship. There is also a contrast between the word 'die', with an arrow pointing to the covered face, and the word 'life', which was the first word in the Revolution's key chant: "Life, freedom and social justice" (the word *aish* in Arabic means both 'life' and 'bread'—thus, in the motto it stands for both). Interestingly, in this graffiti and many others English is used instead of Arabic, suggesting that the artists intended to communicate their message to an international audience through consistently posting it on new media such as Facebook. Finally, the whole image is framed by the Egyptian flag carrying with it national pride and solidarity amongst Egyptians.

In addition to the use of memory by means of symbols from the past, there was also the memory of events and figures from Egypt's recent past. The revolutionaries used graffiti to remind the public of horrific actions done by the authorities, to give a face to the many 'martyrs' killed during the revolution and, again, to clarify the revolutionary cause. One of the

Fig. 11.2 Revolutionary graffiti on Mohammad Mahmoud Street (off Tahrir Square). *Source*: Photo taken by Brady Wagoner

most common types of graffiti depicted images of martyrs and victims of police or military repression. For example, the many protestors who lost their eyes when a sharpshooter targeted them were commemorated in a large mural depicting each of the victims with a patch over their eye. Perhaps the most remembered victim is Khalid Said, who was brutally beaten to death by police in broad daylight, the summer before the revolution began, for uncovering police corruption. A Facebook site was started afterwards with the title 'We are all Khalid Said', which was used to organise the 2011 revolution. To this day, Khalid Said's image remains a powerful symbol of injustice and police brutality. It continues to evoke strong sentiments and clarify the revolutionary cause to the public (in Tunisia, Muhammad Bouazizi's image has served a similar role) (Awad & Wagoner, 2018). Figure 11.3 shows a graffiti of Said's face after being brutally beaten, much like the photo taken of it, which demonstrates the police's said cause of death (i.e. a 'drug overdose') to be a lie. It is also interesting how Said is portrayed with angel wings and is accompanied by

Fig. 11.3 Graffiti of Khalid Said. *Source*: Photo taken by Brady Wagoner

an angel, signifying his place in heaven. Not only the image, but also the colours are eye-catching.

These examples argue that memory is not merely reproduced but reconstructed to promote action in the present and for the future. To do this, remembering adapts and elaborates the past to meet current demands to move forward. One could talk about graffiti as a device of importance in keeping, creating, communicating and staging memory in and for the public. Tahrir square (in the center of Cairo, Egypt's capital) became a site of revolutionary theatre, filled with impressive murals as well as protest demonstrations, songs, chants, speeches and make-shift museums (narrating events), while a multiplicity of television cameras peered down from the buildings above to broadcast events to the world. In these contexts, memory is a powerful political force and as such is typically contested and often manipulated. Different social actors aim to impose their own way of representing the past in order to project a given future. As Orwell famously put it: "who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the

present controls the past". Memories must be permanently *re-created*, much like the graffiti that is continuously erased by authorities and remade by the revolutionaries. In this process, what replaces the old also makes reference to what was there before or the fact that it was erased, creating a kind of dialogical trajectory of memory. It is also worth highlighting here that this form of memory is the product of the reciprocal action of many social actors, working both with and against certain representations of the past. Public representations of memory interact at a deep level with personal memories of people but are not isomorphic with them. A powerful methodological approach can thus be to simultaneously study changes in public memory (e.g. street graffiti, monuments, etc.) and how they are registered and understand by differently positioned people (as an example of this, see Awad, 2017).

Creativity and Memory, Reunited

The case of street art makes a strong argument for how and why memory and creativity are inter-connected in the daily life of individuals, communities and nations. Psychologists, however, have rarely studied their relationship in these terms (unlike work done, for instance, on the links between memory and imagination; Mullally & Maguire, 2014). At best, the psychological mode of inquiry proceeds by reifying processes such as remembering and locating them within the mind—in recent decades, the brain—of isolated, generic individuals (see also the critique by Billig, 2013). As such, instead of considering how and when people engage in *acts* of memory and creativity and what brings the two together—or sets them apart—a classic psychological approach would focus on the internal correlates of these acts (such as remembering words, or producing solutions to a problem) and study their co-variation. Models such as the associative memory framework for group creativity (Brown & Paulus, 2002) use this kind of empirical approach to outline the role of a conceptual network for finding and generating new ideas. These models miss the fact that memory and creativity are not only psycho-socio-cultural phenomena but also highly interactive and embodied actions (see also Chap. 3). Revealing the dynamic nature of memory can transform our understanding of creativity just like considering the relation between creativity and the past, including habits (Glăveanu, 2012), can help us understand the creative nature of remembering, as individuals and as societies.

Our starting point, as such, is different. We considered here the articulation between memory and creativity within the situated activity of people and their social interactions. In fact, historically, remembering and creating have always been closely connected based on similar practical observations. Ancient Greeks considered Mnemosyne (Memory), the mother of the muses, and orators were trained first in the arts of memory and invention (Bauer & Glăveanu, 2011; Glăveanu & Wagoner, 2015). The words *inventory* (an organised system of memory) and *invention* (creative production) originate from the same source, highlighting their earlier conceptual interconnection. The medieval art of memory involved a person developing a rapid-access architecture of knowledge that would both facilitate learning and the creation of new knowledge (Carruthers, 2008). Over time, an increasingly individualistic way of defining both these processes meant that, in subsequent centuries, and particularly from the Renaissance onwards, memory and creativity became dichotomised along the lines of past—future, copy—original, repetition—spontaneity. From the invention of the printing press to the age of mechanical reproduction in art (see Benjamin, 1936/2008), technological advances contributed to the separation between reproducing and creating.

However, emerging pop culture built on mechanisms of mass production also opened the doors for a rapprochement. Today, we live in a world where *re-mix* and *re-use* constitute the very substance of communication and communal living (see also Chap. 25). Street art is only one example of this complex dynamic, revealing creativity and memory as two faces of the same coin. It also points to the fact that the relation between creativity and memory is expressed in action, individual and collective, and can only be understood within a broader societal context. Banksy's social commentaries and the art of Egyptian revolutionaries draw on the past and a shared history, always looking towards the future. The work of memory they perform is creative, at least inasmuch as it refuses simply to reproduce the past; their aim is to support reflection and change.

References

Awad, S. H. (2017). Documenting a contentious memory: Symbols in the changing city space of Cairo. *Culture and Psychology, 23*, 234–254.

Awad, S. H., & Wagoner, B. (2015). Agency and creativity in the midst of social change. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *Constraints of agency: Explorations of theory in everyday life* (pp. 229–244). Springer.

Awad, S. H., & Wagoner, B. (2018). Image politics of the Arab uprisings. In B. Wagoner, F. Moghaddam, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The psychology of radical social change: From rage to revolution*. Cambridge University Press.

Banksy. (2006). *Wall and piece*. Century.

Bartlett, F. C. (1932/1995). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Bauer, M., & Glăveanu, V. P. (2011). Communication as rhetoric and argumentation. In D. Hook, B. Franks, & M. Bauer (Eds.), *The social psychology of communication* (pp. 209–228). Palgrave Macmillan.

Benjamin, W. (1936/2008). *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*. Penguin.

Billig, M. (2013). *Learn to write badly: How to succeed in the social sciences*. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, V. R., & Paulus, P. B. (2002). Making group brainstorming more effective: Recommendations from an associative memory perspective. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 11*, 208–212.

Carruthers, M. (2008). *The book of memory: The study of memory in medieval culture*. Cambridge University Press.

Cropley, D. H., Cropley, A. J., Kaufman, J. C., & Runco, M. A. (Eds.). (2010). *The dark side of creativity*. Cambridge University Press.

Danziger, K. (2008). *Marking the mind: A history of memory*. Cambridge University Press.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2012). Habitual creativity: Revising habit, reconceptualizing creativity. *Review of General Psychology, 16*(1), 78–92.

Glăveanu, V., & Wagoner, B. (2015). Memory and creativity: Historical and conceptual intersections. In J. Valsiner, G. Marsico, N. Chaudhary, T. Sato, & V. Dazzani (Eds.), *Psychology as the science of human being: The Yokohama manifesto* (pp. 67–83). Springer.

Hedegaard, M. (2014). Exploring tension and contradiction's in youth's activity of painting graffit. *Culture & Psychology, 20*(3), 387–403.

Mayer, R. (1999). Fifty years of creativity research. In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 449–460). Cambridge University Press.

Montuori, A., & Purser, R. E. (1995). Deconstructing the lone genius myth: Toward a contextual view of creativity. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 35*(3), 69–112.

Mullally, S. L., & Maguire, E. A. (2014). Memory, imagination, and predicting the future: A common brain mechanism? *The Neuroscientist, 20*(3), 220–234.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1971). *The psychology of art*. MIT Press.

Wagoner, B. (2017). *The constructive mind: Bartlett's psychology in reconstruction*. Cambridge University Press.

CHAPTER 12

Mess

Lene Tanggaard and Tue Krabbe-Juelsbo

This text is about mess, feelings of loneliness and loss, and their potential creative power. In a recent paper on collaborative writing, Wegener (2014) shared her experience with the reader on how a writing refuge almost turned into a prison. Having spent two days at the refuge, piles of paper with interview transcripts and field notes were a total mess. The themes in the writing she had constructed beforehand in her initial analysis seemed irrelevant and boring now after working with the actual texts for two days. Feeling lost, Wegener realized that she needed to break free and do something, so she eventually decided to leave the research files behind and enjoy life in the sun outside the dirty windows in her room (Fig. 12.1). She walked out along the beach, and when she returned, she began

L. Tanggaard (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: lenet@ikp.aau.dk

T. Krabbe-Juelsbo
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Gothenburg University, Gothenburg, Sweden

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_12

Fig. 12.1 Dirty window source: By Ruth Hartnup, Flickr, picture used under a Creative Commons licence

reading A. Bryatt's *A Biographer's Tale*, which she found by chance in her messy suitcase. The book was simply meant to be leisurely read and not intended to serve as a research tool; however, soon, Wegener found herself writing a fictional dialogue with the protagonist Phineas from the tale about feeling lost and in need of creative inspiration (see also Chap. 8). Interestingly, this unplanned interaction with the fictional character not only provided a sense of companionship but also initiated a process of introspection and self-discovery. This underlines the potential of unexpected encounters, even with fictional entities, to spur creative thought.

In her paper, Wegener writes up this dialogue, reflecting on the creative potential inherent in turning a fictional character into a dialogue partner, and how the dirty window is an ancient, well-worn trope for intellectual dissatisfaction and scholarly blindness. In sum, Wegener turned intellectual 'blindness' and the mess of her notes into one long reflection log on writing creatively with fictional figures (see also Chap. 15). Bringing or creating order, meaning, and structure into a situation of mess, confusion, or bewilderment is essentially what creativity is about. Scientists often find solutions in the midst of complex, seemingly unrelated data, or how artists create masterpieces out of random splashes of paint. This is the essence of creativity—making sense out of chaos. Writing about mess as a driver for creativity implies that our starting point is in the shift towards paying attention to the processes of acting in everyday life, rather than starting from the classification of products of human actions into classes of 'creative' versus 'non-creative'. One cannot explain the process based on its outcomes (Valsiner, 1987), but the outcomes can be explained by a direct examination of the dynamics of ongoing activity and its immediate context (Tanggaard, 2014).

On Why We Might Have Ignored Mess

However, the notion of mess does not really figure in many texts on creativity or its sister term, 'innovation'. On the contrary, it seems that quite the opposite notion is gaining momentum; namely, the concept of design, proposing that creativity is something to strive for strategically and to work with methodologically. This introduces an intriguing dichotomy: the seemingly spontaneous emergence of creativity from chaos versus the deliberate cultivation of creativity through structured processes. Both have their merits, and a balanced approach might entail integrating elements of both, but in this chapter we focus especially on the emergent aspects of creativity and argue that what might seem emergent and spontaneous might in fact be the result of a probing, trying, corporeal acting in the world.

As noted by Ræbild (2015), "The notion of Design Thinking has, as such, been widely appropriated within fields of management and innovation as a whole, where countless publications have seen the light of day" (p. 37). The term was coined by Tim Brown, CEO of the New York-based design consultancy IDEO in 2008 in a paper titled Design Thinking, and Brown defines design thinking as "a discipline that uses the designer's

sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity" (p. 86).

One of the reasons behind Brown's great success, his company, and the whole notion of design thinking may be that it is an ambitious attempt to uncover what guides creativity and innovation. Brown identifies three consecutive design spaces—labelled Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation—and sees design as led by problem-solving. Some of the methods include asking questions, using user-centered observational research, mapping business constraints, cross-disciplinary involvement, sharing insights, creating narratives, addressing appropriate technology, integrating potential, and synthesizing possibilities. The Ideation phase incorporates brainstorming, sketching, scenario building, creating frameworks, sharing and communicating within the team, prototyping, and testing. The Implementation phase comprises presenting the case to the business and implementing the newly obtained knowledge.

One could argue that design thinking has grown out of an attempt to systematize and map methods, which can be used by consultants and companies to strategically bring forth more creativity and innovation (see also Chap. 3). However, in some respects, this attempt is counterintuitive to the processes of creativity in everyday life, and as noted by Ræbild (2015), very few designers actually work guided by these methods. Citing Nigel Cross, Chair, and founder of the long-standing design journal *Design Issues*: To be too involved with the urgent necessity of designing to want, or to need, to stand back and consider their working methods.

> The working methods of innovative designers are, for the most part, not systematic; there is little evidence of the use of systematic methods of creative thinking. The innovative designers seem. (Cross, 2011, p. 74)

The *dilemma* involved in describing methods for creativity while creative processes in everyday life are more about working out of necessity without the need for a systematic methodology is what troubles us in the present context. Design thinking is very much a description of a consultancy approach to design, but it does not cover the complexities and mess of an actual designer's work practices (see also Chap. 4). Accordingly, our premise is that in everyday life, creativity *is more about mess than methodology*. It might even be that the notion of design lures us into thinking that creativity can always be designed. On the other hand, novices and educational institutions often strive for methods and guidelines to help them get started, and ultimately, how can one learn to be creative if not by

following methods outlining what others have done before? Is there middle ground to be found here?

What Is Mess, and What Is Its Relationship with Creativity?

The design thinking approach described briefly above divides creativity into distinct phases, starting with inspiration, leading to ideation, and ending with implementation. However, it's important to note that the creative process often doesn't neatly align with these structured stages. Many innovators do not start up with a great idea or feel inspired. By contrast, they work much more experimentally in a trial-and-error manner. As an example, Pete Sims explains in his book Little Bets (2011) how the famous and innovative American comedian Chris Rock practices night after night at a small club close to his home in New Jersey, prior to developing his large-scale shows. He tries out his jokes and awaits audience reactions. Only one of the 100 jokes generated an audience response to the way Rock wanted. Having practiced time and time again and carefully noting the reactions of the audience, Rock manages to collect the best jokes for his show. Rather than coming out of the blue, the show develops gradually, taking shape in the course of sometimes more than a year, and being based on experimental creativity, a kind of fooling around (Tanggaard, 2014).

Accordingly, the creative process is often far from structured and predictable. It can be a messy, iterative journey of trial and error, refining and adapting ideas based on feedback and results. Practices of improvisation are closer to the everyday creativity of comedians such as Chris Rock than to the systematic use of methods for creative thinking. The messy picture of creativity that we suggest here does, indeed, ultimately question the widespread belief that the creative process starts from ideation in Western culture. As Sims has suggested, creative processes are more likely the result of little bets, meaning a continuous move back and forth, making errors, trying one more time, and gradually making progress. However, this is not the case for comedians.

Empirical studies have shown, time and time again, that human practice is not guided by plans, as we often tend to think. Inspired by the work of German pragmatist Hans Joas, who wrote extensively about situated creativity in his book The Creativity of Action (1996), it would be more in

line with these practices to state that human cognition and learning are not isolated processes of mental adaptation but are closely intertwined with the real-life situations and contexts in which they occur. Joas regards life practices and human actions as creative actions. His pragmatic perspective resonates with that of thinkers, such as George Herbert Mead and John Dewey, who rebelled against the idea that human actions are driven by an end-means type of rationality. For Joas, it is not the case that people first make plans (mentally) and then carry out actions (in practice) with reference to the pre-formulated plan. Instead, "actors find themselves confronted with new situations that force them to come up with creative solutions—a process which cannot simply be captured by a functionalist logic" (Joas & Knôbl, 2009, p. 522). The term 'situation' replaces an end–means logic because it is the specific situation in which actions are undertaken that cause perception and cognition to arise and plans to be formulated—and that demands human creativity: "These situational challenges thus require new and creative solutions rather than the unwavering pursuits of goals and plans formulated at a particular point in time" (p. 518).

Accordingly, working with a situated and messy concept of creativity draws on a different understanding of creative processes built upon a human capacity for wise and creative action in unexpected situations, a capacity that is necessary in a world undergoing constant change. This shifts the paradigm from a sterile, controlled environment to one that embraces the chaotic, unpredictable nature of real-world scenarios. Creativity is an attribute of not only mental processes and divergent thinking but also of a fundamental, corporeal, action-based capacity for adequately responding to the unexpected, a capacity for digging deep into failures to make things come alive in ways that were not always foreseeable (see Chap. 12); it helps stabilize a world in constant flux. In other words, creativity is a dynamic force that enables us to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

In Ingold's words, reflecting on the creative work required to build something:

Builders know all too well that operations seldom go according to the plan. Working in a fickle and inconstant environment, they have continually to improvise solutions to problems that could not have been anticipated, and to wrestle with materials that are not necessarily disposed to fall, let alone to remain, in the shapes required of them. Completion is, at

best, legal fiction. The reality, as wryly observes, is that "finishing is never finished".

(Ingold, 2013, p. 48)

These words beautifully encapsulate the reality of the creative process: It is seldom a straight path from conception to completion. Instead, it involves a constant negotiation with the materials and circumstances at hand, a continuous process of adaptation and improvisation.

One of the authors recently underwent house renovation that included having carpenters to change the interior doors of the house. Sitting on the couch, writing, he overheard the youngest carpenter curse and swear as he tried and failed to get new doors to fit the frames and odd shapes of the old house. All plans and drawings came up short when they met the reality of the crooked angles and unexpected details. The reality didn't simply correspond to reality as is often the case. Rather than trying to make the reality fit the plan the carpenter took a different and more corporeal approach. As he eventually calmed down, he turned his rage into a constructive argumentative process with the material and simply began to speak to the wood. Slowly, he started trimming something here and carving a little there, all the while having the material as a silent but equal 'conversation partner' (see also Chap. 20). Eventually, the door fit perfectly in the old frame and moved to the next frame where the conversation started all over again to reflect the different crookedness of each and every frame. This story offers a vivid portrayal of the unpredictable nature of creative work and how a flexible, adaptive approach can lead to solutions that rigid planning could not have anticipated.

Accordingly, there is no finished plan to abide by for the manual worker and, when there is a plan (as is quite common!), it does indeed change along the way; for another current study of an actual building construction learning process, see Pedersen (2012). What we can learn from empirical studies, such as that undertaken by Pedersen, creating and making a building is a complex process in which drawings, plans, and the actual construction process are constantly changing in light of economics, weather conditions, and sickness among the team, new directions from the building contractors, and so on. This highlights the dynamic, evolving nature of creative projects, which are subject to a multitude of external and internal factors that necessitate continual adaptation and adjustment.

So Why Use Methods?

What we have learned from the above is that creativity is often an outcome of messy situations—more specifically, of attempts to bring a kind of order into a context where no order existed before. If there is a plan, it is often conceived based on the requirements of the concrete situation. However, what may explain the huge market for creative thinking methodologies? If these are not in line with the usual requirements of creativity in real life, why do they develop or use them?

The most relevant explanation is that suggested by Ræbild (2015), namely, that schools need methodologies to teach upcoming designers, for example, how to go about designing. Furthermore, the explicit formulation of these principles can also be used to gain disciplinary status and recognition within a given field. However, this does not rule out the problem we might face if we confuse the recipe with food or the map with the real landscape. Methods might prevent us from finding something new, such as when we become blind to the actual landscape, because of an obsession following the prescribed route. At the same time, in a famous study on skills learning, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) showed that novices need roadmaps and guidelines to become skilled. The novice needs manuals and guidelines, while experts base their practice on intuition and work with their perception of what is needed in the situation, as exemplified by Ræbild's (2015) study on expert designers. Expert practice is not based on these rules and manuals, and sometimes they have to be forgotten for the expert to work effectively. Therefore, what can be done to solve this dilemma?

According to Dreyfus (2001), one solution is to make more use of apprenticeship learning than is currently seen in the educational system. He argues that there are limits to explicit instructions because creative ability involves developing a sense of the game as it is played. The researcher in training must learn to undertake qualified evaluations regarding what counts as a good article, and the baker must be able to assess when the dough is sufficiently elastic. Developing such a 'connoisseurship', such a skill of assessment, has been described by Elliot Eisner (1991) as something that cannot be learned on the basis of formal rules alone. It is about developing a sense of quality, form, size, types of argumentation, and so on, and for playing the game; however, there are limits to what can be achieved through explicit instruction. Instead, there is often a need for what Bourdieu, according to Kvale (1999, p. 180), called "wordless

pedagogy". There is not just one method of learning to be a researcher, a baker, an architect, or a ballet dancer if learning is not understood as a mechanical means towards an end. Instead, we can speak of situational abilities that can be communicated through participation in particular activities. Dreyfus writes:

> It is only an apprentice to one's parents and teachers that one achieves what Aristotle calls practical wisdom: the general ability to do the right thing at the right time and in the right way. (Dreyfus, 2001) 48)

According to this view, learning to be more creative is largely about gaining access to environments in which one can blossom. Learning is about learning something specific and developing practical reasons so that one knows the appropriate actions that need to be performed in concrete circumstances. In this sense, learning is primarily a socially ontological question that involves changing our lives, participating in particular contexts, and being able to do the right things at the right time (see Chap. 11). A legitimate objection to apprenticeship—not just as a metaphor for a given learning situation in which one learns from skilled teachers, but also as an actual pedagogical organization—is that apprenticeship is unquestionably elitist. Not everyone can have the opportunities that, say, Niels Bohr had to become a Nobel Prize winner by working alongside other Nobel Prize winners. The modern Western school system is designed to offer knowledge and professional practices to as many people as possible. The point is not, however, to argue for or against apprenticeship in the school system; it is more fundamental to discuss apprenticeship as a form of practice that can, but does not necessarily, provide access to the potential to be creative.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have argued that the creative process is inherently messy and largely the result of meeting and overcoming the challenges we face in everyday life. Often, things do not go as planned when, for instance, we schedule time for intensive writing or drafting elaborate schemes for building houses. It is the situational ability of the writer or craftsman to create order and structure in the middle of the mess that ends up making all differences. Therefore, we argue that we can benefit from paying attention to everyday processes and problem-solving activities

when writing and thinking about creativity. Creativity is thus more about mess than methodology, but how do you establish a strong practice and train those situational abilities when you are just starting out?

Methodologies such as design thinking and structured checklist approaches can serve as the basis upon which an independent practice is established, and from which it can spring. Combining methodological and formal education with apprenticeships might allow the student and designer-to-be to enter a fruitful dialogue between the codified method and what the situation and context call for in the present moment. This is to be thought of as both the internal dialogue of the learner and a slow probing dialogue between the learner and the experienced master/practitioner (see Chap. 4). This situational ability also involves disobeying rules and striking them out when needed. This is mediated by socio-material affordances: What the situation and problem at hand lend to you (see Chap. 2). We must train this ability to assess and respond to develop a fine-tuned sensing apparatus that can guide us in making informed decisions when certain combinatorial aspects in one context might not be applicable in the next. We must allow for mess and stumbling (see Chap. 19) to unfold our practice that can be, but is not necessarily, guided by rules and methodologies. It is through participation in a situated social practice that one learns to be creative in that given context.

References

Brown, T. (2008, June). Design thinking. *Harvard Business Review*, 84–92. Hbr.org

Cross, N. (2011). *Design thinking: Understanding how designers think and work*. Berg.

Dreyfus, H. (2001). *On the internet*. Routledge.

Dreyfus, H., & Dreyfus, S. (1986). *Mind over machine*. Free Press.

Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye*. Macmillan.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making*. Routledge.

Joas, H. (1996). *The creativity of action*. Polity Press.

Joas, H., & Knôbl, W. (2009). *Social theory—Twenty introductory lectures*. Cambridge University Press.

Kvale, S. (1999). Forskere i lære [Research apprenticeship]. In K. Nielsen & S. Kvale (Eds.), *Mesterlære—læring som social praksis [Apprenticeship—Learning as social practice]* (pp. 178–197). Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Pedersen, M. (2012). A situated perspective on the regulation of practice. *Theory & Psychology, 22*(4), 420–435.

Ræbild, U. (2015). *Addressing the body—Methodological practices in professional fashion design*. PhD thesis. Design School Kolding.

Sims, P. (2011). *Little bets: How breakthrough ideas emerge from small discoveries*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Tanggaard, L. (2014). *Fooling around: Creative learning pathways*. Information Age.

Valsiner, J. (1987). *Culture and the development of children's action*. Wiley.

Wegener, C. (2014). Writing with Phineas: How a fictional character from A. S. Byatt helped me turn my ethnographic data into research texts. *Cultural Studies—Critical Methodologies, 14*(4), 351–360.

CHAPTER 13

No

Svend Brinkmann

Many people seem to associate creativity with positivity and saying yes. Late modern culture—particularly on the internet—is full of positive affirmations of creativity such as "I attract good ideas into my life," "I create every day and feel fantastic," and "I release all resistance to expressing my creativity fully." These are just a few random motivational statements that I have found, which establish a connection between creativity and an affirmation of yes. However, this conceals the equally deep relation between creativity and negation—the no. Or so I shall argue.

In this chapter, I shall claim that in order to create one must in a certain sense negate the status quo. At its most basic, creativity is therefore grounded in the no. No to the separation of races, as when Rosa Parks sat down on the bus and would not move for a white passenger. No to the conventional understanding of art, as when Marcel Duchamp invented the readymade and exhibited a bicycle wheel and a urinal more than 100 years ago. And no as a creative aesthetics in its own right, as seen in the fictitious academic journal *Nein Quarterly*, developed on Twitter by 'the failed intellectual,' Eric Jarosinski (2015). I shall return to these examples below.

S. Brinkmann (✉)
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: svendb@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_13

Through a focus on such very different creative acts of negation, this chapter aims to critique the primacy of yes and celebrate the power of no. I will argue that it is often the yes that is reactionary, because it simply goes along with whatever happens, whereas the no can be subversive, thought-provoking, and eminently creative. In this way, I hope that my text will complement that of Tanggaard (2020), who looked at the creative potential of rejections. Unlike Tanggaard, I will not address the experience of being rejected, although that is important in its own right, but rather look at the act of rejecting by saying no.

The Culture of Yes

We live in a culture of yes. It is a culture where the positive is privileged over the negative, action over inaction, the new over the old, and yes over no. Commercials tell us to "just do it!", and people who are innovative and entrepreneurial are celebrated as cultural icons and sought after in the workplace. The culture of yes is so prevalent that is it difficult to imagine that it could be otherwise. In a way, this leads to quite an uncreative *zeitgeist*, where only one way of being in the world is deemed proper and significant. Those who say no, dwell on the past, and prefer contemplation over action are easily thought of as reactionary and problematic in a culture of yes. However, such people might be creative in their own right.

In what follows, I will try to show that it is misguided to connect creativity with yes. I will not deny that creativity may involve a positive, yea-saying approach to new ideas and the world in general, but I will argue that there can also be creative power in negativity and naysaying. I believe that the argument can even be taken a step further: Often the incessant compulsion to saying yes leads to deeply unoriginal ideas where nothing interesting happens. Just to give a personal example, if I can be forgiven for providing a bit of anecdotal evidence: A few years ago, I met a person at a festival of ideas who wanted to teach me improvisational theatre. She thought I needed to develop personally, and she subscribed to the "yes, and…" rule, according to which one should always accept what the other improvisor states with positivity and move on from there. This technique is also used in business and management as a way of facilitating brainstorm processes, i.e., as a way of avoiding the killing of ideas. Nevertheless, engaging in this practice struck me as fundamentally uncreative. We went in circles, and the constant yeses seemed frantic and almost manic. So, I decided to begin to say no instead. The other improvisor was surprised,

perhaps a bit annoyed. But the result was that the speed of the interaction decreased. The conversation became quieter. We could hear our own thoughts. In my view, we actually began to be creative, because a stumbling block was introduced. Without wanting to generalize too much, I believe a no can often function in this way. We might think that it kills the creative process, but it may also function as a helpful speedbump that slows us down and enables us to reflect critically instead of just acting like yes-robots.

Some of the most visible exponents of the positive yes culture are the hordes of 'motivational speakers' that claim to help individuals and companies develop by saying yes. One example is Todd Henry, who on the website "Learning to say yes" writes:

> Unfortunately, "no" can be more than just a word, it can also be a lifestyle. When our default posture toward anything unknown is to shrink back, hover around the perimeter, or generally opt-out, we are refusing the best of what life offers. […] Creativity always begins with a yes. To create is to first say yes, then sort things out on the other side. It is to first say "yes" to the risk, then to embrace it, then to overcome it. All creations are not successful, but every act of creating begins with an act of bravery. I've come to treat the very act of saying "yes" as a successful outcome. If I do this enough times in a row, I know that I will eventually make something worthwhile.
>
> Are you living your life with a posture of yes?[1]

The excerpt above is peppered with positive words, which the author associates with saying yes. The point behind such calls to arms is usually that we should seek to find inspiration and motivation and be true to ourselves. In other words, we should focus on and work with the internal—in this context, primarily by daring to say yes in order to unleash a creative potential. We do this by setting goals and being courageous. You should not do what others expect—or so the message goes—but what you want to do. Creativity is coupled with self-development and self-optimization. The paradox is, of course, that in recent years we have all been expected to set goals, fight to succeed and live 'as you please'—all while saying yes. It is considered wrong to not want to be part of this network of interconnected demands.

Paradoxically, it might now be people who resist this culture of yes that appear as truly original. Like in Monty Python's famous movie *Life of*

[1] Quoted in Brinkmann (2017, p. 48).

Brian, where the main character, who has been proclaimed the Messiah, addresses his followers with the words "Look. You've got it all wrong. You don't need to follow me. You don't need to follow anybody! You've got to think for yourselves. You're all individuals!" The Messiah lectures the masses on the need to be themselves and not follow him blindly. They must do what they individually think is right. To which the crowd responds, uncreatively and as one voice: "Yes, we're all individuals". The only creative individual in the scene is the character Dennis, who says "I'm not." Ironically, he confirms his status as an individual by denying it. He performs a truly creative act by insisting on being just like the others, who in turn insist on being unique individuals in the same tedious way.

The Creativity of No

In line with the "yes, and…" technique, most theories of creativity favor the affirmative and the positive. For example, when writing about characteristics of the creative personality, Csikszentmihalyi (2013) used words such as energy, playfulness, fantasy, extroversion, rebellious, passionate, openness, sensitivity, and enjoyment, although he also recognized that sometimes the opposite attributes can be relevant. However, it seems that our conception of creating something new and valuable is quite intimately tied to an openness to the yes. The creative human being is seen as someone who can and will. In short, a yea-sayer.

Not everyone agrees with this though. In a number of books, the philosopher Simon Critchley has drawn our attention to the significance of the negative, of not being able or willing to do something, as fundamental to the human condition. In a volume aptly titled *How to Stop Living and Start Worrying*, Critchley celebrates the likes of Lévinas, Blanchot, and Beckett, a pantheon of philosophical writers who portrayed humans fundamentally as subjects that *can't*, "subjects that are defined by impotence" (Critchley, 2010, p. 47). Since the Enlightenment, we have become so used to thinking of humans in terms of motivation, rationality, and the will that we have forgotten the importance of *not* being able to do something, e.g., in the face of loss. As subjects, Critchley argues, we are structured by our relationships with others, and since these relationships are fragile and will end, there is something about us that we cannot control. In fact, there is much less that we *can* control than we like to believe.

Our cultural preoccupation with positivity, development, and progress might be damaging if this existential impotence is forgotten: "we should

as rigorously as possible divest ourselves of this ideology of the future and the cult of progress", Critchley claims: "The idea of progress is only a couple of hundred years old, and it's a really bad one. The sooner we're rid of it, the better" (Critchley, 2010, p. 118). As the writer Tom McCarthy says in a conversation with Critchley: "We need to replace progress with repetition. That would be a much healthier world. Think of the Renaissance. Renaissance means rebirth. What they did was to say: 'Look at these Greeks. It's great!' […] And Shakespeare's plays: there's no claim to something new, he's rewriting Ovid or taking speeches straight out of the Roman parliament" (p. 118).

It is only in the past few centuries that we have started to perceive the new and future-oriented as having quality in itself. No one would say that Renaissance artists or Shakespeare lacked creativity, although they found their ideas in the past. But we have replaced a mindset of repetition, maintenance, and care with one of constant innovation. Paradoxically, this easily becomes quite unimaginative, when everyone suffers from the same illusion of the new. We have created a culture that draws up visions, makes plans, and runs workshops about the future, and it is for precisely that reason we forget our past insights and achievements far too easily (Brinkmann, 2017). Concepts like innovation and disruption float around in all sorts of discourse about organization and education, in which any sense of the value of repetition and the tried and tested has been lost. We are forever being told to 'think outside the box.' Fortunately, some creativity researchers are more grounded and have pointed out that it only makes sense to think outside the box if you know that there is a box (and what it is made of) (Tanggaard, 2014). In most cases, it is probably wiser to balance on the edge of the box, tinkering around the edges and improvising around tried-and-tested themes. The new only makes sense within a horizon of something known. If you know nothing of the past and its traditions, it is impossible to create anything new that is useful.

The Power of No

I mentioned some people in the introduction, who are known for having contributed creatively to the world. The most famous of those mentioned are Marcel Duchamp and Rosa Parks. Duchamp, born in 1881, was one of the most influential figures in modern art, particularly known for his conceptual work and for challenging the prevailing understandings of the nature of art. According to Rosenthal (2004), there was in the work of

Duchamp a rejection of previous forms of art, since these were meant to please the eye, whereas Duchamp wanted to develop art in the service of the mind. Through irony and satire, Duchamp worked in subverting ways, thereby saying no to artistic conventions. He is most famous for introducing the 'readymade,' which was the most influential development on artists' creative process in the twentieth century, according to Rosenthal. The readymade is an object that becomes a work of art through the decision of the artist. For example, the *Bicycle Wheel* from 1913 consisted of the fork and wheel of a common bicycle put on top of an ordinary stool, and the *Fountain* from 1917 was a urinal with an inscription by the artist. Duchamp took such mass-produced objects and exhibited them, thereby challenging and overthrowing conventional approaches to art. Without this creative rejection of established standards there would probably not have been dadaism, surrealism, or the pop art of Andy Warhol.

The creative power of no is also found outside the world of art, for example in the resistance to racial segregation and oppression found in the life and actions of Rosa Parks. Parks was born in 1913 and became known after an incident on December 1, 1955, when she refused to give up her seat on the public bus in Montgomery, Alabama, to a white passenger. Parks, an Afro-American woman, had already been an activist in the NAACP that works to advance justice for African Americans, but, on December 1, Parks had been working all day, so when the bus driver demanded that she gave up her seat for a white person, she did not abide and was arrested. In her autobiography she explained:

> People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in. (Parks, 1992, p. 116)

This seemingly innocuous 'no' led to a bus boycott in Montgomery in the black community, and Parks was found guilty in court on charges of disorderly conduct. The boycott lasted more than a year and ended only when the US Supreme Court ruled that the racial laws of Alabama were unconstitutional.

It may seem strange to refer to Parks as a figure of creativity, but there is no doubt that her acts of opposing injustice and concretely saying no to the unfair request on the bus, led to many subsequent changes in her state

and nation. Parks became an icon of the civil rights movement in the United States, working with Martin Luther King and later receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It is important that we bear such examples of oppositional naysaying in mind when we ponder the nature of creativity. There was no "yes, and…" philosophy of positivity in Parks' struggle, but rather a quiet yet rebellious act of no.

My final example of the creative power of no is found in the work of Eric Jarosinski (2015). Jarosinski is interesting in this context, because he not only practices the no of what he calls "utopian negation" in very creative ways but also theorizes it in his own particular manner. The story of Jarosinski is somewhat typical of how social media has affected creative processes in ways that are both good and bad. Jarosinski describes himself as a failed intellectual that used to teach at elite universities such as Rochester and Rutgers, but after Twitter emerged he began to spend more time writing tweets of no more than 140 characters than working on German philosophy, culture, and social theory. In 2014, he became a full-time tweeter, perfecting the aphoristic genre that the extremely limited format of Twitter allows. He developed a social media persona, a fictitious journal (*Nein Quarterly*), and published a book with some of his best tweets in 2015.

The project of *Nein* is humorous, critical, and rather self-depreciating. Jarosinski uses perspectives from the likes of Marx, Nietzsche, Kafka, Freud, and especially Adorno to develop mini-commentaries on philosophy, politics, and human existence in general. The book *Nein* begins with a *credo* of naysaying that is worth quoting here at length (Jarosinski, 2015, p. xi):

> It's not hard to say no. It's hard
> to say it right. At the right time.
> For the right reasons.
>
> Harder still to keep saying it, especially
> when we live in a world of yes. A tyranny
> of yes.
>
> Yes to family, Yes to friends. Yes to terms.
> Yes to conditions. Yes to work. Yes to play.
> Yes to a life of yes, yes, and yes, please.

> But there is another life. An uncertain life.
> It sings a song to no. Of no. For no.
>
> Not just any no, however. A no of not
> now. Not yet. And not only.
>
> The no of Nein.

This is not the normal form of expression for Jarosinski. Instead, he routinely squeezes complex issues into the 140-character format of Twitter in a way that makes the reader think along. Like this example, written under the hashtag FAQ: "Ontology: what the fuck / Causality: why the fuck? / Epistemology: how the why the fuck? / Phenomenology: the fuck" (Jarosinski, 2015, p. 17). Or this one called #HowToFindHappiness: "Think of where you last saw it / See if it's still there. / If it's not, ask yourself why it left. / If it is, ask yourself why you didn't stay" (p. 37).

The tightness of the form parallels that of haiku poetry but adapted to the social media aesthetics of the twenty-first century. Jarosinski manages to creatively employ the critical theory insights from German philosophers in aphoristic readings of current cultural phenomena. His approach is negative, celebrates the no, and is at the same time highly creative.

Concluding Theoretical Postscript

In this text, I have criticized the cultural privileging of yes and the affirmative, both in society at large and in our understanding of creativity. I have argued that there can be creative power in no and the negative, and I gave three examples that hopefully illustrate how arenas as different as art, politics, and social media may develop creatively through negation. Of course, my argument is not that the yes is inherently uncreative or that the no is creative per se, but rather that we should be careful not to forget the negative and critical in our approaches to creativity.

I have done little to theorize the creative power of no in this context. If I were to do so, however, I would point to pragmatism as an approach to human life and thinking that builds on what Joas has called the creativity of action (Joas, 1997). Unlike many other theories of social life that

approaches the world as relatively static and fixed, pragmatism sees reality as dynamic and fluid. This means that creativity is not just about breaking free from the stasis of status quo, but more a matter of constantly trying to tinker with and stabilize a world in flux. Creativity is thus inherent in human action, also when we are concerned with what looks like repetition, as Critchley argued above.

For classical pragmatists like William James and John Dewey—and also Hans Joas in recent years—humans need to think intelligently and act creatively, whenever the flow of living is interrupted (see Brinkmann, 2013). If there is no stumble block, then we just go on living, so sometimes it can be necessary to create a stumble block if we want to reflect and change something. This is an educational task for teachers that I cannot address further in this context. But the pragmatist perspective implies that negation is built into the very fabric of creativity. There is a creativity of action in our daily improvisation that makes things run smoothly, but there is additional creative power to be found in the reflective rejection of previous modes of art, politics, and communication—as well as many other phenomena in our lives. In other words: in the no.

References

Brinkmann, S. (2013). *John Dewey—Science for a changing world*. Routledge.

Brinkmann, S. (2017). *Stand firm: Resisting the self-improvement craze*. Polity.

Critchley, S. (2010). *How to stop living and start worrying*. Polity.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2013). *Creativity—Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. Harper Perennial.

Jarosinski, E. (2015). *Nein. A manifesto*. The Text Publishing Company.

Joas, H. (1997). *The creativity of action*. University of Chicago Press.

Parks, R. (1992). *My story*. Scholastic Inc.

Rosenthal, N. (2004). Heilbrunn timeline of art history: Marcel Duchamp. *Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/duch/hd_duch.htm

Tanggaard, L. (2014). *Fooling around: Creative learning pathways*. Information Age Publishing.

Tanggaard, L. (2020). *Det kreative nej—om at bruge afvisninger som drivkraft*. Akademisk Forlag.

CHAPTER 14

Pathways

Lene Tanggaard

Have you ever thought about your everyday life and the most everyday moments as a creative accomplishment? As something involving creative action? Think for a moment about those most mundane, typical days: A rainy Monday on your way to work or shopping in the supermarket or on the Internet—do these days require any creativity? Or what about those more spectacular days, those days standing out more clearly, such as when you decided to move, asked your partner to marry you, or when your first child was born? While I'm not able to test your answers, my guess would be that you would not immediately see the typical supermarket experience or the morning walk in the park with the dog as a creative one. Most often, we pay more attention to the spectacular and the extraordinary. We remember these extraordinary days more clearly than the routines and the habits of everyday life, such as eating breakfast or falling asleep. The exception to this would be when we travel to foreign places and eat different kinds of breakfast, at a different time, or fall asleep in hotel rooms with

L. Tanggaard (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: lenet@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_14

strange pillows that require 'improvisation' to become comfortable. However, the premise of this chapter is that *everyday life*, also in its mundane and habitual aspects, should become the focus of creativity research if we want to move this field of inquiry steps ahead and, not least, to broaden its focus.

Very often, creativity research is concerned with the study of what enables people to express themselves creatively; e.g. in an aesthetic manner, or by producing creative ideas and objects, stepping out of the proverbial box. For example, definitions of creativity often emphasise criteria for creativity such as novelty and useful within a social context, as in the following illustration from Plucker & Baghetto: "Creativity is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context" (Plucker & Baghetto, 2004, p. 90). While the effort to reach clearer definitions is ongoing, much research focuses on illuminating what conditions lead to the production of creative outputs (Simonton, 2013), also in the very broad sense of "new and personally meaningful understandings for oneself and others" (Beghetto, 2021, p. 473). However, a careful study of the creativity intrinsic to mundane processes and to everyday life is rarely considered by creativity researchers (see Craft, this volume). When Richard (2010, p. 189) considers the concept 'everyday creativity', two criteria are mentioned, namely originality and meaningfulness. Everyday creativity in this sense refers to drawing, writing, painting, cooking, gardening, and other activities done with the purpose of doing something creative. Other researchers refer to everyday life creativity as 'mini-c' (Silvia, Beaty, Nusbaum, Eddington, Levin-Aspenson & Kwapil (2014) explicitly comparing it to other kinds of bigger 'c', sometimes unintentionally leading to a perception that mini 'c' might be of less value than big 'c'. While the conduct of life in itself can be both original, novel, meaningful, and useful, the creativity involved in achieving this would probably not 'live up' to the usual criteria used in this kind of research. How original is ordinary life, could one ask, and how may we account for the kind of creativity that happens without the purpose of being creative and what happens when mini c is felt as big c? There is still important work to do to account fuller and more in its own right for the everyday in everyday life creativity.

Despite the relative neglect of everyday life creativity, an everyday life focus would help us understand creative processes in broader terms. One such term is precisely that of 'creative pathways', inspired by theoretical

work related to the concepts of *situated learning* and *trajectories of participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Gibson's notion of *affordances*. In this chapter, I invite you to reflect on the weaving together of episodes, events, and situations encountered in everyday life as a creative act. I furthermore argue that the term 'creative pathways', understood as those routes of everyday life left behind us or seen in front of us, illuminates the interdependence of individual lives and social situations within social practices. It contributes to a system-oriented, distributed model of creativity focused on the interdependence of mind and culture (Glăveanu, 2014), while still maintaining persons as a relevant unit of analysis in creativity research.

Pathways as a Term

What I will do in the present chapter is suggest that researchers interested in creativity should begin to study how people go along creative pathways in ordinary life, outside the research lab, with its focus on divergent thinking and personality tests, and even outside the domain of the spectacular, of highly productive geniuses and their lives. For example, one relevant question for creativity researchers might be what people do when they create new pathways in their lives, or just try to maintain existing ones. Choosing pathways as a central concept, my intention is to focus explicitly on creativity not as an isolated 'thing'—e.g. divergent thinking—but as *concrete movements and ways of making* in everyday life (see also Body, this volume). As such, I suggest that creativity research should focus its attention on the making of ordinary life in order to find out more about creative phenomena.

The idea of studying pathways is based on the notion that creativity is the particular dimension of *potentiality* in everyday life which is 'not yet there' and which cannot always be imagined beforehand. Indeed, creative actions are often only seen in retrospect, such as when we see footprints of our travelling in the snow, post routes we have run on Facebook, often proud of having run longer than expected or leave traces via photos of our lives on Instagram. Accordingly, studies concerned with everyday life creativity need to follow processes and pathways as they are unfolding both retrospectively, 'here and now' and forward moving. Indeed, they should not, committed as they are to studying the processes of something coming into being, solely base their conclusions on what is there already, such as abilities related to divergent thinking or personality traits.

However, what is a creative pathway? In general, pathways are created in the communication or correspondence between subjects (persons) and objects in the world, objects which afford certain actions rather than others (see, for instance, the pathways in the snow in Fig. 14.1). For example, within the educational system, certain pathways of study are often available to students. An illustration of this can be found in Nielsen's (1999) study of music conservatory students in Denmark, showing how the students are likely to take either the concert pianist pathway, or the pathway of becoming a music teacher (in Nielsen's term, 'trajectory of

Fig. 14.1 Pathways in the snow. (Source: Uploaded by Jenny Downing on Flickr under a Creative Commons license)

participation'). To some extent, the students choose these pathways following their interest, motivation, and abilities, but these pathways are also already laid out for them as typical options reflecting certain combinations of courses, already existing pathways among former students and teachers.

As a student however, you would maybe experience the choice of a pathway of study as something quite unique, involving a certain amount of personal creativity and room for improvisation. All this implies that, for example, some parts of a music conservatory student's life are made and lived through due to a kind of improvisational, here-and-now creativity, while other parts of a student's life offer evidence of what can be called 'historical creativity' (accumulated within the stories of former generations and the curriculum that crystallises the former creativity of the students and teachers involved). Affordances for creative acts and the formation of creative pathways are defined when subjects do something in the world; their study requires us to move along these pathways ourselves. In this context, the term 'creative pathway' is closely connected to the term 'affordances', drawing on Gibson's work on this notion (Gibson, 1977; see also Affordances, this volume)). The affordances of things create opportunities for movement and the establishment of creative pathways.

By studying creative pathways, we are able to overcome the strict separation between creative persons, on the one hand, and creative products, on the other (see also Glăveanu, 2014). Actually, this focus allows us to explore, simultaneously, *micro* and *ontogenetic change*; it both situates in time descriptions of creative action and brings to the fore the co-development of person and context, be it social or material. As Feldman notes, 'creative accomplishment, after all, is nothing if not a developmental shift (...). Creativity is quintessentially a developmental matter' (Feldman, 1999, p. 170). The reverse is also the case, since creative learning is the main driver of development across the lifespan (Tanggaard, 2014).

Considering the above, in the present context, creativity is understood and researched as potential coming about along creative learning pathways created by, and creating, affordances for action. These may be processes involving the improvisational creation of pathways in the here-and-now, or they may be creative pathways that constitute our life trajectory (Zittoun et al., 2013; Zittoun & de Saint-Laurent, 2015). There is a stringent need for such approaches in today's creativity research.

The case in point is that, when studying creative pathways, we are encouraged to focus on the unfolding of creativity in everyday life. In view

of that, while studies of creative processes are nothing new, they seem to be less prominent today than just a few decades ago. Most current research on creativity tends to measure it retrospectively; e.g. counting the number of answers in divergent thinking tests, patents in companies, the number of citations among researchers, papers published, or products that came into being, and so on. In this chapter, creativity is considered from a more *prospective* angle, giving creativity a forward reading, seeing it and studying it as a kind of making, resulting in things and new forms of practice which unfold as action proceeds (Ingold, 2013; Tanggaard, 2014).

The Methodology of Creative Pathways

In order to study creativity as the creation of pathways, I argue, we need to study everyday life as it is lived in the streets, in the supermarket, in trains, in TV shows, at art galleries, in school, at work and when eating, drinking, at play, sleeping, and so forth (Brinkmann, 2012). This requires a *qualitative* approach which can study dynamic processes and processes that expand what is already there.

As such, when studying creative pathways, we need to follow them. It may be the pathways of a passenger in the train, a student making her way through the educational system, or a shopper trying to find ingredients for dinner in the supermarket. Or it may be the pathways left behind as new participants take over (e.g. in the educational system). Accordingly, pathways carry with them a history while being constantly in the process of being made, even when we are not aware of these processes. The pathways of passengers in the train, for instance, are an improvisational accomplishment, but the affordances for these are often given in advance through the design of the train, the space allocated to each person, the stops along the line, and so on. Additionally, in the supermarket, pathways are indeed already designed by marketers and managers who know how to persuade shoppers to buy more than needed, or to select particular products instead of others (see also Chaps. 16 and 21). Today, on the internet, we leave thousands of traces of our lives, and we do need to consider carefully what kinds of pathways we are leaving and how they also become creative materials for others to handle. This allows for considerate reflection of creativity and ethics in a digital age and for studies of how we might manage our digital lives more carefully.

Sometimes, things do break down, or we allow ourselves to think twice; e.g. when almost spilling one's coffee in the train or when understanding

retrospectively what we did, with potentially more dramatic consequences than spilling one's coffee. Normally, I would not even notice all the improvisation and constant coordination in my life and or with my fellow passengers required in such moments, but reflecting upon this kind of episode prompted me to envision multiple pathways being created in the here-and-now. In particular, cultural psychologists point to the fact that "from time to time, (...) people find themselves faced with some kind of *discontinuity*, break or rupture in their ordinary experience" and, in these circumstances, they employ symbolic devices "that enable them to make a new adjustment to the situation or to 'resolve' the problem" (Zittoun et al., 2013, p. 416). Approaching development in terms of creative processes associated with transitions and pathways—rather than with fixed stages, or more or less universal routes to creative achievement—represents a much more contextual and meaningful way of situating human existence in culture. Any research focused on this would need to investigate the co-creation of pathways in the dialectics between persons and social situations affording particular acts, between paths already created and new paths being formed. And to study pathways in situations of breakdown, discontinuity, or rupture might be particularly useful, as these situations often allow us to observe new paths in the making (see also Chap. 8).

Reflecting Pathways: Where to Go Next?

Normally, many people would likely agree that creativity is all about transgressing and changing those practices we are part of, either gently and gradually, or rapidly and radically. Creativity involves doing something new or original—possibly something unexpected—and combining things in new ways relative to that which already exists. However, focusing on creative pathways, my point is that we can, indeed, study not only extraordinary creative achievements, but also those actions and paths involved in stabilising everyday life, making the train journey go ahead and ensuring coordination among people. It could also help us understand or even prevent pathways to establish as in the case of digital footprints mentioned earlier.

The above implies what could be termed an *extended perspective on creativity*, drawing on Nielsen's (2008) distinction between a restricted and an expanded perspective on learning. Rather than adopting a narrow perspective on creativity, restricting it to the measurement of divergent

thinking and of particular outputs such as citations or the number of patents, an extended approach sees creativity as part of people's everyday living, as a process of making sense, regulating and orienting oneself, not delimited to any particular space or practice, but permeating everyday life as a whole. As such, focusing on pathways being created in everyday life, creativity researchers would likely become more aware of the creativity of ordinary situations, the affordances that make creativity possible, as well as the likely dialectics between creating what is new and drawing on what is there already (see also Chap. 11).

Only in this way can one avoid the worst pitfalls of today's obsession for creativity and innovation, in which a dichotomy is often made between 'business as usual' and 'challenge everything', whether in terms of how we undertake schooling, how business life operates, or how to live creative lives (see also No, this volume). The trick is precisely to interweave these two 'modes' and tolerate the paradox of their *co-existence* in order to avoid romanticising radical innovation in such a way as to neglect slower and more gradual change. By the same token, we must remember that what we consider radical innovation in one context may be regarded as entirely ordinary in another context; thus the need to always ask: creative (or innovative) where and for whom? In some cases, changing everything is creative while, in other cases, trying to impose stability can be the most creative pathway to choose. In this sense, creativity is conceptualised as based on inquiry, on people's creative actions when being part of and/or confronted by a world that is constantly changing and that we seek to understand or to control. Creativity is thus part of life itself, not the preserve of exceptional individuals. Creativity is part of thinking and acting in new ways in a world that demands our participation.

Accordingly, our focus should be on processes of creativity, underlining the movements, and travelling that often go along with creating something new in our social practices. In the context of this chapter, this means that creativity cannot be regarded as a phenomenon reserved for exceptional individuals or creative elites. Everyone is fundamentally creative because creativity is that which keeps our lives interlinked and allows us to tackle unexpected situations in everyday life on the train, in educational situations, or in any other context. It is nevertheless clear that we can develop more of this creativity by learning to see it and by being encouraged to be creative. Accordingly, and as an alternative to the risk of 'novelty' fetishism when it comes to accounts of the creative process, the

present chapter encourages us, first, to *describe and recognise* the actual processes of creativity, which don't always start with great ideas—and, not least, to describe the process of creativity from the creator's own perspective.

Conclusion

To conclude, I suggested here that creativity research needs to investigate, to a greater extent than before, the ordinary—rather than only the exceptional, the new and the original or the explicit creation of what is new. Furthermore, I argued that 'creative pathways' is a term that may guide researchers interested in the simultaneous development of persons and social contexts. Pathways are created in ordinary life and the formation of these may involve creativity and the improvisational co-creation of opportunities for action. As such, studying pathways directs creativity researchers towards the potential for creating in everyday life and sheds new light of the processes of creativity itself. Furthermore, this approach adds materiality and for instance digitality to the study of creativity as pathways are both there, already materialised as existing ways of moving and doing things, while also being created in the here-and-now by persons acting in correspondence with the affordances of different social situations. All this is in line with recent *socio-cultural studies* calling for more process-orientation and a more explicit focus on materiality and social practices in creativity research.

References

Beghetto, R. A. (2021). Creative learning in education. In M. L. L. Kern & M. L. Wehmeyer (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of positive education* (pp. 473–491). Palgrave Macmillan.

Brinkmann, S. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in everyday life—Working with everyday life materials*. Sage.

Feldman, D. H. (1999). The development of creativity. In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 169–186). Cambridge University Press.

Gibson, J. J. (1977). The theory of affordances. In R. E. Shaw & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Perceiving, acting, and knowing* (pp. 67–82). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Thinking through creativity and culture: Towards an integrated model*. Transaction.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making*. Routledge.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Nielsen, K. (1999). Musical apprenticeship. Learning at the academy of music as socially situated. *Institute of Psychology, 24*(2). Aarhus University.

Nielsen, K. (2008). The learning landscape of art and craft. In K. Nielsen, S. Brinkmann, C. Elmholdt, L. Tanggaard, P. Musaeus, & G. Kraft (Eds.), *A qualitative stance: Essays in honor of Steinar Kvale* (pp. 47–56). Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Plucker, J. A., & Beghetto, R. A. (2004). Why creativity is domain general, why it looks domain specific, and why the distinction does not matter. In R. J. Sternberg, E. L. Grigorenko, & J. L. Singer (Eds.), *Creativity: From potential to realization* (pp. 153–167). American Psychological Association.

Richards, R. (2010). Everyday creativity: Process and way of life—Four key issues. In J. C. Kaufman & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of creativity* (pp. 189–215). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511763205.013

Silvia, P. J., Beaty, R. E., Nusbaum, E. C., Eddington, K. M., Levin-Aspenson, H., & Kwapil, T. R. (2014). Everyday creativity in daily life: An experience-sampling study of "little c" creativity. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 8*(2), 183–188. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035722

Simonton, D. K. (2013). Teaching creativity: Current findings, trends, and controversies in the psychology of creativity. *Teaching of Psychology, 39*, 217–222.

Tanggaard, L. (2014). *Fooling around: Pathways to creative learning*. Information Age.

Zittoun, T., & de Saint-Laurent, C. (2015). Life-creativity: Imagining one's life. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from cultural psychology* (pp. 58–75). Routledge.

Zittoun, T., Valsiner, J., Vedeler, D., Salgado, J., Gonçalves, M. M., & Ferring, D. (2013). *Human development in the life course: Melodies of living*. Cambridge University Press.

CHAPTER 15

Perspective

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

What are the differences between how you perceive the world as an adult and how you perceived it as a child? To start with, there certainly is a difference in size. As a child, tables and chairs are the same height as you, bookshelves look enormously tall and you have to reach up for the doorknob. If you want to look out of the window, you probably need to climb on a chair or a pile of books. And, as you looked out of the window, the world appears bigger than you see it as an adult; cars, trees, people all miraculously grow, and the pet dogs you know as small become the size of tiny horses. Now, this change of physical size is not the only transformation taking place. Seeing the world through the eyes of a child, you will probably find many things you don't understand (such as how cars work), things that scare you (the dark corners of your room at night), and things that bring you an immense joy unexpectedly (such as mother agreeing to get you some ice-cream after a walk in the park). Most of all, you are probably curious about all things around you—the things that you now, being an adult, stopped questioning. New words begin to sound funny and strange and the question 'Why?' is often on your lips (Glăveanu, 2020a).

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_15

You find grown-ups ready to answer and explain things to you, but also those annoyed by your questions and those who end up ignoring you. You also have friends to play with and imagine, during the game, that every one of you is someone or something else. You can easily become an animal by walking on all-fours or a doctor by placing the stethoscope around your neck. How strange and exciting is that? Imagining, as a child, that you are an adult!

The above is an exercise in perspective-taking. Children playing adult roles and adults imagining the world as children experience it. And it certainly is a creative exercise. In their games, children's role-play is highly flexible, as they constantly make up new rules on the spot and negotiate them with others. Adults, despite having been children themselves at some point, make considerable efforts to resituate their perspective. As Kennedy rightfully notes, "childhood is both the most deeply familiar moment of the human life cycle and the great unknown" (Kennedy, 2008, p. 1), at once a known and distant land we can only return to as adults. Indeed, despite great efforts in developmental psychology, including Piaget's (1973) effort to explore children's own conceptions of their world, our understanding of how children think is shaped by our own particular standpoint. This is how progressive, almost linear developmental trajectories are very common in psychology, placing the child on the road to becoming a fully social, logical and mature individual. It is rarely that we get to appreciate children's knowledge *in its own right*, despite the fact that great artists often found inspiration precisely in this act of perspective-taking. Pablo Picasso is credited with saying that it took him four years to paint like Raphael but a lifetime to paint like a child. Freud (1908/1970), in a similar vein, made a parallel between creative writing, daydreaming and children's play. For as difficult as seeing the world through the eyes of children might be, it is not impossible; the brilliance of Roald Dahl's books resides precisely in how great he was at taking a child's perspective on life.

The example above hopefully illustrates both the difficulties and benefits of taking new perspectives on ourselves and our environment. Engaging in this exercise facilitates the emergence of novelty in both thinking and action, since we are able to *de-centre* from one way of doing things and embrace *multiplicity*, i.e. the multitude of points of view that can be cast on any object, issue, person or event. Not having this ability would, in turn, deprive us of such possibilities and confine as to an egocentric view of the world, one that makes creativity impossible or, at best, accidental

(since, to realise one is being creative, he or she ultimately needs to take the perspective of others on his or her work). Although I offered the example of clear and more or less conscious acts of perspective-taking—the efforts made by Picasso to draw like a child illustrate this point—micro-moments of building and changing perspective are much more common in everyday life. They are, in fact, the basis for developing a sense of self and relate closely to our capacity to use signs and symbols (see also Chap. 9). They are, ultimately, at the core of what makes us creative beings.

Perspectives and Positions

It is not possible to theorise perspectives outside of action. This is because people build, enact and reflect on perspectives in the course of action and in communication with others. The concept of perspective has a long history in psychology and philosophy. My use of this term here is inspired by the social psychological theory of George Herbert Mead (1934). Following pragmatism, perspectives appear as *action orientations* (Gillespie, 2006) that guide our perception and our doing. They accomplish this function by relating us to our environment. Indeed, perspective is a relational concept, as it is established 'between' person and world. Acting in the world from the perspective of the child is different than doing so from the perspective of an adult. This is because perspectives are simultaneously constrained materially (including by body size and physical abilities; see also Chap. 3) and symbolically (through sign mediation, accumulated knowledge and expertise; see also Chap. 26). Perspectives, in this sense, actively construct the world for us but they do so based on what is afforded by the world itself (see also Chap. 14). They give us a certain view of our environment that highlights some aspects of it and obscures others. To continue with the example of a child, young children might ignore a complicated piece of technology placed right next to them but react, in a very expressive manner, to the colours and sounds of a new toy. Their perspective of the world will make visible things that adults ignore, and vice versa. And it is not a matter of perception alone. As I have mentioned, perspectives relate to doing, to using objects, to acting within situations. Children are not only quick to notice toys, they notice *through* grasping and manipulating them.

This action focus is reinforced by the fact that perspectives are not simply semiotic or cognitive constructions; they are not primarily ideas or schemas about things, but come out of material, bodily forms of

engagement. A perspective is not a view from nowhere, something scientific research aims in vain to accomplish, in its pursuit of 'objectivity': It comes from the *positions* we occupy in the world. Being a child or an adult, a man or a woman, a doctor, teacher or priest—these are at once social and embodied categories. They have associated with them not only roles, identities and representations, but also concrete spaces, tools and sets of constraints. The social worlds we live in are built upon the differentiation of positions where people actively position themselves in relation to others while also being positioned by others (sometimes with very negative consequences). Studies on positioning in psychology cover a wide spectrum, from the production of positions in discursive practice (the positioning theory developed by Harré and van Langenhove, 1998) to the more embodied exchange of positions reflected in children's games and other social activities (Gillespie & Martin, 2014). Independent of their focus—on language, symbols or bodies—positions are eminently social in the way they are constructed, adopted and changed. They are often institutionalised (e.g. professional positions such as that of a mechanic, chemist, designer and so on), but they can also be defined in more general terms (e.g. being an actor and observer or audience). This difference is associated also with how easily one can adopt different positions (and thus develop new perspectives) and, most importantly, how easy it is to move between positions, a crucial process for creativity.

To take a concrete example we can think about an umbrella. What kinds of perspectives or ways of thinking about and acting with/on the umbrella can we envision? The most dominant of them all is the conventional view of umbrellas as objects meant to shelter us from the rain. This perspective originates from a position of umbrella-users that most of us have occupied since early childhood. We know about umbrellas, we see them and use them in highly convergent and, some would say, "uncreative" ways. Fortunately, we are not trapped by conventional perspectives. A simple mental exercise of changing positions and considering how the umbrella would look like for someone living in East and South-East Asia, for instance, immediately shifts the horizon of possible actions involving this object (see Fig. 15.1). To start with, umbrellas can come in different shapes and sizes and be much flatter than the prototypical image (at least in the West) would suggest. Second, umbrellas could be used to protect one from the sun as much as or more than offer protection from the rain. The function—protection—remains overall the same, but our perspective on what the umbrella 'is' changes depending on the position we occupy,

Fig. 15.1 Japanese woman with an umbrella (before 1888). (Source: This image was taken from Flickr's The Commons, with no known copyright restrictions)

physically and culturally. These kinds of shifts of perspective invite a broader question that is crucial for any creative process: If the umbrella is not only one type of thing, then what else can it be or become?

Moving Between Perspectives: The Creative Meta-Position

It is not only essential for creativity to be able to develop new perspectives on oneself and the world, but also to consider self and world from multiple positions at once; in other words, the ability to *move between* perspectives and to *integrate* them. The argument here is that our reality will look (even if only slightly) different when seen from two or more positions. For example, an artist can be completely immersed in his or her work, applying paint on the canvas. From time to time though, the artist will step back and look at the painting in order to evaluate it, to see what has been done and what should be done further. Arguably, this is a good example of micro-changes in position with great consequences for creative activity (see also Glăveanu, 2015). It makes the artist alternate between a first-person perspective, engaged in doing, and a third-person, audience position, contemplating what has been done. What is important to notice is the coordination between these (physical and symbolic) positions and perspectives. Although they are enacted in turn, they feed into each other, effectively continuing and shaping the course of action. This is a well-documented dynamic not only in art (see Dewey's, 1934, discussion of the relation between doing and undergoing), but also in most other human activities. Becoming an audience to oneself, capable of seeing our action as others would (including a 'generalised other'—e.g. our group or our society; see Mead, 1934), leads to gaining awareness, a new understanding of the situation and perceiving and exploiting novel affordances (see Chap. 2). But this is only possible if the two (or more) perspectives are related to each other in the process of integrating experience (Gillespie, 2006).

To offer a simple illustration of this basic mechanism, consider the famous ambiguous image presented in Fig. 15.2. What do you see in it? A duck, a rabbit, both? Perceptually, the image can become for us, in turn, a duck facing left or a rabbit facing right, two different perspectives on the same 'object'. However, despite these shifts, we do know the image we see is one and the same. Being able to move quickly between these

Fig. 15.2 'Rabbit and Duck'. (Source: From the 23 October 1892 issue of *Fliegende Blätter*, the earliest version of this illusion; image in the public domain)

perspectives allows us to gain the notion of a double or ambiguous figure of which this is but one (famous) example. These kinds of images, as a special class of illusion, are meant to make us reflect on the nature of our perception and the objects around us. The world invites multiple interpretations and this is an important conclusion for people who are ready to explore it creatively.

Returning to the example of the umbrella, being able to grasp both Western and Eastern uses of this object can open it up to new understandings and new (and potentially creative) actions. It is by realising, at once, that a simple umbrella can be related to from multiple perspectives and positions that we open it up to creativity and recognise it as an open-ended product of human culture and activity. Original perspectives can emerge from this tension between conventional and unconventional uses (or uses that are conventional elsewhere). Can the umbrella be used to pot flowers, to create a lamp, to inspire a skirt, so on and so forth? By relating old and new perspectives to each other and biding various positions together we increase the scope for the emergence of possibility.

The argument so far is, thus, that being able to develop new perspectives on the world not only expands our immediate possibilities of acting within it; it also fosters greater reflexivity in relation to objects, people and events (see also Chap. 17). It facilitates the elaboration of what Hermans and Kempen (1993) call a *meta-position*. This requires taking distance from all the different positions we adopt (initially, at least, in succession) in order to consider them simultaneously and relate them to each other. At a micro-level, articulating the duck and rabbit perspectives within the same image requires a kind of meta-position but, more than this, developing a meta-position in this situation allows us to place ambiguous objects in relation to other objects of our everyday life and notice, perhaps, the fundamental openness of the latter. Equally, when understood at once as something that protects from the sun, from the rain, but also as an object that can be used as a container, ornament or even weapon, the umbrella turns into fertile material for creativity and, more broadly, for possibility thinking. In both cases above, the meta-position can be summarised as 'things are not always what they appear to be', an important part of what I would call the creative attitude or mindset (for more on creative mindsets see Karwowski, 2014). In sum, meta-positions synthesise the movement between different perspectives and have emergent properties—building on them generates novelty, a condition of possibility for creative action.

Perspectives We Take, Perspectives We Silence

The dynamic outlined above is essential for creativity. It also points to the fact that creativity is much more than generating new or divergent ideas as a purely cognitive exercise, taking place in the head. On the contrary, it involves at all times the dialogue and movement between different socially and materially defined positions. The developmental history of this dialogue is not hard to guess: It is because we interact with others, from infancy, that we are encouraged to understand their views and their action and take their perspective on our views and our action (as well as material objects; see Chap. 23; also Glăveanu, 2020b). Communication and interaction are the basis of this key achievement, leading to awareness of the self and opening up new possibilities to think and act in the world, often in a creative manner.

How can we exploit this in practice? For one thing, the benefit of engaging in *creative collaborations* with other people rests precisely in the

possibility of expanding one's understanding of a situation by integrating another's point of view. This kind of dynamic has been extensively studied in the socio-cultural literature (see John-Steiner, 1992). Of course, differences in perspective are not always productive for creativity and can sometimes have a blocking effect but, in order to have a real understanding of their role, one needs to adopt a longitudinal stance and thus observe how difference is created and managed across time (see also Chap. 6). On other occasions, this difference might not be sufficiently large to lead to a creative breakthrough. People working in groups might, in fact, find themselves quickly agreeing with each other, instead of trying to diversify perspectives. This is how creative group-work techniques such as the six thinking hats of de Bono (1985) became very popular in various organisational contexts. What they basically do is invite people to participate within the situation from different positions (metaphorically represented by coloured hats) and thus formulate perspectives that emphasise certain aspects, such as emotions, facts, logic or ...creativity.

Such methods try to set up creative work climates in which diversity is valued. Other settings in our society, however, often prioritise sameness over difference. Governmental offices, military camps and, unfortunately, schools have often been criticised for this. It is not that perspective-taking is absent from any of these contexts, but that people are often encouraged to adopt a certain ('correct') perspective and dismiss others. In small and large groups, as well as at a societal level, relations of power are fundamental for legitimising positions and perspectives (see Chap. 16; also Escobar, 2023). For a long time, women, ethnic and sexual minorities had no position to speak from in order to fully participate in their society. Adopting a perspectival approach to creativity is therefore more than an intellectual or practical exercise: It raises ultimately the *ethical* question of which perspective we are encouraged to take, and which we ignore or try to silence (see Chap. 20; also Ó Brolcháin, 2023). The consequences of both are very obvious and not only for creativity. Going back to the first example of children and their position in a world of adults: What would be the outcome of taking their perspective seriously, instead of dismissing it as immature or illogical (in other words, 'childish')? What would a child do with everyday things like an umbrella? Picasso surely had his own answers in this regard.

References

de Bono, E. (1985). *Six thinking hats: An essential approach to business management*. Little, Brown, & Company.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Penguin.

Escobar, A. (2023). Welcome to possibility studies. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 56–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231171450

Freud, S. (1908/1970). Creative writers and day-dreaming. In P. E. Vernon (Ed.), *Creativity: Selected readings* (pp. 126–136). Penguin Books.

Gillespie, A. (2006). *Becoming other: From social interaction to self-reflection*. Information Age.

Gillespie, A., & Martin, J. (2014). Position exchange theory: A socio-material basis for discursive and psychological positioning. *New Ideas in Psychology, 32*, 73–79.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2015). Creativity as a sociocultural act. *Journal of Creative Behavior, 49*(3), 165–180.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020a). *Wonder: The extraordinary power of an ordinary experience*. Bloomsbury Press.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020b). *The possible: A sociocultural theory*. Oxford University Press.

Harré, H. R., & van Langenhove, L. (Eds.). (1998). *Positioning theory*. Blackwell.

Hermans, H. J. M., & Kempen, H. J. G. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. Academic Press.

John-Steiner, V. (1992). Creative lives, creative tensions. *Creativity Research Journal, 5*(1), 99–108.

Karwowski, M. (2014). Creative mindsets: Measurement, correlates, consequences. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 8*(1), 62–70.

Kennedy, D. (2008). *Representing childhood: Image, narrative, theory and practice*. Paper presented at the 4th Global Conference Creative Engagements: Thinking with Children.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. University of Chicago Press.

Ó Brolcháin, F. (2023). Environmental ethics and possibility studies. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 172–177. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231171446

Piaget, J. (1973). *The child's conception of the world*. Paladin.

CHAPTER 16

Power

Claus Elmholdt and Morten Fogsgaard

Contrary to creativity, power intuitively has a negative connotation (Pfeffer, 2010) and is often mentioned in connection with coercion and suppression, which limit opportunities and freedom of choice (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Power in organisations concerns the effects of structures and processes on employee behaviour and attitudes (Pfeffer, 2010; Thompson & McHugh, 2002; Yukl, 2013). Power can certainly be used in negative ways. At the same time, power is a *precondition* for organising individuals to act in a collaborative manner in order to achieve shared goals (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014).

Research has shown that feeling powerful boosts creativity because powerful people are less likely to conform to status quo (Galinsky et al., 2015; Weick & Guinote, 2008). In this chapter, we will explore the

C. Elmholdt (✉)
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: elmholdt@ikp.aau.dk

M. Fogsgaard
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

UKON, Aarhus, Denmark
e-mail: mf@ukon.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_16

dynamics of power in processes of creativity and show its paradoxical nature as both a bridge and a barrier to creativity in organisations.

Recent social psychological experimental research (Slighte et al., 2011) on the relation between power and creativity suggests that when managers give people the opportunity to gain power and explicate that there is reason to be more creative, people will show a boost in creative behaviour. Moreover, this process works best in unstable power hierarchies, which implies that power is treated as a negotiable and floating source for empowering people in the organisation. We will explore and discuss here the potentials, challenges and pitfalls of power in relation to creativity in the life of organisations today. The aim is to demonstrate that *power struggles* may be utilised as constructive sources of creativity. It is thus a central point that power is not necessarily something that breaks down and represses. On the contrary, an explicit focus on the dynamics of power in relation to creativity can be productive for the organisation. Our main focus is to elaborate the implications of this for practice and theory in relation to management. We suggest that power hierarchies that are too stable—which implies that power is mainly used as a source for keeping position and privileges intact and preventing others from obtaining power—obstruct persons and organisations from actualising their creative potential.

The Two Faces of Power: Suppressive and Productive

Power is a controversial concept (Clegg et al., 2006). Power does not seem to be something we can apply clearly —something we can divide between "those with power" and "those without power". Power affects processes that we are all involved in, take part in, act on the basis of, and base our understanding of ourselves and one another on. In political science, it is popular to analyse organisational power and control as being caught in a contradiction between government and governance (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014). Government is depicted as an old, top-down, hierarchical form of control as opposed to governance, which is described as a much more open and dialogic form with democratic network participation and control from the bottom and up. Despite the fact that it can make sense to distinguish between different control paradigms, our opinion is that there always has been and always will be networks in hierarchies, and that there always has been and always will be hierarchies in networks. Our task is therefore to figure out how to optimise a constructive interplay of

leadership and participation in and across organisations. Power is not only a limiting factor—it also creates opportunities; these are the aspects of power that we need to cultivate in the creative process.

There is no simple way to conceptualise power. However, one can see two general historical lines in the power literature (Clegg, 2002). The first reaches back to Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and deals extensively with the question 'What is power?' This question is often described as a *power-over* perspective with a focus on power as a suppressive force. In this perspective, power is often defined as the control of valued resources over others (French & Raven, 1959; Keltner et al., 2003). This view of power is centred around power structure—who possesses power, who or what is the target, and how can power be identified? Here, power is viewed as a resource for the few, a repressive phenomenon that dominates, oppresses, and robs others of freedom. As a consequence, an organisation contains a number of positions, each with associated power constellations. It is primarily a mono-centred understanding of power, a top-down perspective on the distribution of power. The other historical line asks the question 'What does power do?' This line of thinking can be traced back to Niccoló Machiavelli (1469–1527). It is often described as a *power-to* perspective, inquiring into the productiveness of power. It focuses specifically on how to exercise power and the effects it has on individual consciousness.

The point is that the effects of power as suppressive or productive are strictly contingent. For some people and in some situations, the effect of power may be experienced as positive while, for others, it will be negative. Power itself is not "over" or "to" in a transcendent way; it is "over" and "to" depending on the specific situation and the contingent position of the agents involved in the relation (Clegg et al., 2006). This analysis seeks to emphasise the systemic nature of power relations and, therefore, of politics and governance in organisations. Power in organisations is not limited to an employer's power over an employee. Thus, technologies of power and control in the workplace are no longer conceived as purely repressive by those subjected to them, but also as the very mechanisms through which a coherent sense of self-identity comes into existence. Power is seen to be productive in that it *produces* the resources, particularly in the form of social practice, through which our sense of self is realised. In this perspective, power can produce creative processes and identities. To understand power and creativity means deciphering various forms of political economy in organisations. That is, the processes that organisational leaders use to establish and produce power and structures

of dominance, motivation and rhetoric, which they then strive to legitimise (Clegg et al., 2006). Only through the use of power can leaders steer organisations through heavy storms and troubled waters. And only through the use of power can others resist and challenge this steering. Organisations are, above all, means of constituting relations between people, ideas and things that would not otherwise occur. Therefore, organisations are arenas for power struggles.

The Relation Between Power and Creativity

As pointed out by Tanggaard (2014), it is misleading simply to juxtapose creativity with the stabilising systems of knowledge, routines and management that give order to our activities within organisations. Creativity needs constraints. Moreover, organisations are in need of both efficient exploitation of existing knowledge and skills and the ability to use this platform as an outset for exploring new and wiser ways of doing things. The concepts of *exploitation* and *exploration* were introduced by James G. March (1991) as a way to describe the paradoxical interplay of organisational needs for stability and change. Exploitation concerns utilising existing skills; exploration relates to creativity and opening new organisational opportunities. In this chapter, we define creativity as the production of novel and useful ideas, and innovation as the successful implementation of creative ideas within organisations (Amabile, 1996). Creativity is more than just new ideas; it is new practices (Hartley, 2005). At the same time, innovation is more than new products, processes and services; it is value-adding newness in a very broad sense (Darsø, 2000). As such, creativity and innovation have to do with the explorative side of organisational change. James March emphasised the need for ambidextrous organisations that create positive results by having the power to utilise existing skills and explore new opportunities. 'Too much exploitation will cause inertia and conservatism whereas too much exploration will potentially minimize efficiency, economies of scale and 'learning by doing' (March, 1991). Traditionally, power has been linked to the utilisation of existing skills through the direction and control of employees' goal-directed behaviour (see also Chap. 3). Exploration, on the other hand, has been related to leaders facilitating employees' freedom to explore, create and innovate new ideas, services and products. This common-sense notion of the exercise of power as suppressive and contrary to creativity and innovation will be contested and replaced by a more nuanced account in the present chapter.

Let us bring in a case from an earlier research by one of the authors on reproductive and innovative learning processes in the everyday life of apprentices at a dockyard (Elmholdt, 2004). The case reveals a piece of traditional Danish working-class culture where the power hierarchy was tight, stable and based on seniority. The result was an organisational learning culture characterised by an outspoken imbalance between exploitation and exploration to a degree that caused inertia and conservatism. The apprentices were not encouraged to engage in explorative activities but were expected to be obedient and engaged in learning the skills of the trade. The journeymen were not particularly focused on explorative activity either. The focus of the management was stiffly directed towards optimising the exploitative use of the production plant and the existing skills. The case is set in the late 1990s, when the competition from Asian shipyards was fierce. Cutting costs and making the workers run faster was generally the cure prescribed by the management. The trade union fought for the benefits of the workers and looked with suspicion at all plans to cut costs; i.e. laying off workers and making the rest of the employees work harder and faster. The story ends in 2001, when the dockyard finally went bankrupt and closed down.

The interview quotation that follows is interesting, as it shows an exception from this general picture of exploitative activity and reproductive learning—a "*crack*" in the power hierarchy that made creativity flourish for a brief moment. Not a complete removal of stabilising organisational systems and constraints, but a destabilisation of the normal power hierarchy. The momentary destabilisation of the power hierarchy was created by a situation where the journeymen went on strike. The apprentices were hired on a different agreement and had to continue working as usual. They came into work Monday morning eager to prove their worth and show the journeymen that they could stand on their own feet and do high-quality work. This quote is from an interview with a third-year apprentice:

Apprentice: *When we put up the big pipes at the ships, we once used wooden blocks to stabilise the whole thing. I found out that it is much easier to use line instead. Using line, you can easily make adjustments, which are faster than hammering wooden blocks under the pipes.*

Interviewer: *How did you find out?*

Apprentice: *Actually, it was during the period when the journeymen went on strike. The cabinetmakers' workshop was closed, so we did*

> *not have access to wooden blocks. That forced us to think on our own. I figured that we could try with some line and weld on some iron. We did, and it worked very well. We have kept on using it ever since, and we can now see that others are starting to use it.*

The case sheds some light on the complex dynamics of power and creativity. It is obvious that the stable power hierarchy at the dockyard defined a narrow area in which to engage in everyday explorative and creative activities. It is also reasonable to argue that the strike situation empowered the apprentices to engage in a broader range of explorative and creative activities, which resulted in the invention of a new and more efficient production method than before. The strike created a situation where order and disorder were juxtaposed, which opened a "crack" for creative and innovative activities (Weick & Westley, 1996). But how can we explain the self-destructive conservatism displayed by the journeymen, and why did the apprentices so eagerly chase the empowering possibility of turning the strike into explorative and creative activity?

Recent social psychological research (Slighte et al., 2011) may help us answer these questions. The study by Slighte and colleagues suggests that the perceived possibility of gaining power by being creative may boost creative performance. The apprentices might have perceived the strike as a "nothing to lose and all too win" situation. Through the creative act of finding a new solution to the problem of welding big pipes without using wood to block up the pipes, they were able to gain power. They gained the power of taking charge and the satisfaction of feeling competent and empowered in the situation, and they were recognised by the journeymen as the inventors of a more efficient line system for welding pipes.

An interesting point is that this dynamic only seems to work if the power hierarchy is unstable *and* low-power individuals perceive creativity as a way to gain power. In everyday work conditions, the apprentices were positioned as inferior status individuals and perceived themselves as such. The power hierarchy was relatively stable and, consequently, the apprentices showed little engagement in explorative and creative actions. However, 'when the power hierarchy is unstable, those lacking power hold the power to create' (Slighte et al., 2011, p. 896). One practical insight to draw from this is that managers may increase creativity by using their power to facilitate "cracks" that destabilise organisational power hierarchies, and make it apparent that creativity is a functional way for

employees to become more powerful. The fact that the opportunity to "warm up" by engaging in creative tasks may help low power employees to boost their creative performance is also supported by a recent empirical study (Kim et al., 2023).

The next question seems harder to answer. How can we explain the finally self-destructive conservatism displayed by the journeymen? Why didn't the "powerful" journeymen engage in broader explorative activities in their everyday practice, enabling them to find a creative solution to the pipe-welding problem? One possible answer could be that they actually did not perceive themselves as highly powerful, but rather as vulnerable and in risk of losing their jobs. Therefore, they focused on defensive acts of keeping their current position and privileges and did not perceive creativity as a way to gain increased power and security.

The key explanation for both our findings—the apprentices engaging in broadly explorative and creative activities during the strike and the conservatism displayed by the journeymen going on strike in order to keep their privileges—is grounded in the assumption that individuals who perceive themselves as powerful think and act in ways that maintain and increase their power. In contrast, individuals who perceive themselves less powerful think and act to protect themselves against possible threat. The journeymen might have felt insecure and threatened by the fierce competition from the Asian dockyards. A feeling of insecurity and lack of power might trigger avoidance motivation, a focus on potential losses and a narrow attention focus (Förster et al., 2006; Keltner et al., 2003), which are often described as key barriers to creativity in organisations (e.g. Fredrickson, 2001).

Power and the Unstable Hierarchies of Modern Organisations

The important thing in this analysis is that it emphasizes the systemic nature of power relations and therefore of politics and governance in organisations. Power and knowledge come together in discourses to be understood as socially embedded structuring principles of what can be said about a given subject at a given moment in history. Power thus develops between people and operates unnoticed, as discourses, and as the structuring principle of modes of conduct.

Today we tolerate power, says Foucault, only if it has managed to mask its expression. The methods of power have moved from explicit laws and threats of corporal punishment to the use of what he calls 'normalisation' and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1982). Normalisation refers to how different strategies for self-discipline bring individuals to act and experience themselves and each other in ways that are consistent with the prevailing discourse.

The prevailing discourse in today's organisations, is that traditional controlling and coercive-based management strategies has passed (see Kolind & Bøtter, 2012). Modern people want to think for themselves and hence creativity, self-management, individuality and freedom become key concepts within modern management (Neck & Houghton, 2006). In line with this development, it is often emphasised that leadership based on trust, rather than control, is the way forward in creating prosperity and efficiency in organisations (Thygesen et al., 2008). Concepts such as "readiness for change" and "power of innovation" flourish in the media as well as in the research literature, and employees make demands for meaningful work and attractive workplaces where they can achieve self-actualisation (Brinkmann, 2008). These modern ways of performing leadership power may certainly destabilise power hierarchies in ways that support creativity. However, this does *not* imply that power relations completely disappear, or that power and creativity are necessarily opposites, as argued above.

In order to grasp this increasing complexity, we need to extend the classical notion of power as forms of influence based on execution of control and sanctions (Clegg et al., 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014). This perspective does not fully embrace the performance of power in organisations today. Organisations were previously, as at the dockyard, characterised as largely hierarchical and bureaucratic. This form of organisation reinforced explicit, direct and apparent power mechanisms (Fleming & Spicer, 2014).

Contemporary organisations, at least in a Scandinavian context, tend to be more democratic, organic and dialogue-oriented (Schultz, 2014). The organisational structure has become more flexible and the boundaries more blurred. At the same time, power has been atomised; there is no longer an unequivocal centre or distinct structure. Furthermore, recent theories of power in organisations (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014) suggest that the execution of power frequently occurs in tacit and indirect ways. The concept of power is thus *extended* to include discourses, strategic

behaviour and socialisation. Following this line of reasoning, which relates to the *power-to* perspective described above, power is understood as relational and not as an institution, structure, or specific location (Al-Amoudi, 2007). The execution of power in organisations is therefore not limited to, for example, an employer's power over an employee. Instead, it must be viewed in a larger perspective where the context, the formal and informal norms, and the discourses in which the employer and employee are embedded, are taken into consideration.

A great deal of research on power assumes that power positions are stable and secure with no possibilities of losing the privileged position (e.g. Slighte et al., 2011). However, power positions are often all but stable. Even in our extremely stable shipyard case, we saw how power positions changed and cracks of opportunity for creative actions opened. Power evolves between people and operates unnoticed in the form of discourses, structuring principles and modes of conduct. In line with this, Gary Yukl (2013) points out that it is not only within the formal authoritative position in the organisation that individuals possess power. Every person in the organisation can, in his or her own way, draw on different power-bases related to, for example, specific skills, previous experience, personal dispositions, personal background, and so on. Interestingly, one could presume that for low power individuals, power instability in itself is empowering, leading them to act and behave as high power individuals. Subjectively, they may feel as if they have an immense amount of power in this situation (Slighte et al., 2011, p. 896), as exemplified by the apprentices' behaviour in the strike situation.

Positional power interacts in complex ways with personal power to determine a manager's influence on subordinates and organisational processes of creativity; managers relying too much on positional power are likely to experience resistance (Yukl, 2013). Managers need to take into account the local images of creativity, good leadership, social behaviour (discursive power) and organisational context when designing effective actions. Furthermore, hierarchy, power distance (structural power), personal characteristics and personality (personal power) are also relevant when leaders facilitate creativity. The effectiveness of power in relation to creativity depends not only on the power-bases used but, most of all, on the manner in which power is *co-created*.

Surrender Your Power—and Increase Your Power in the Process

The American social psychologist Dacher Keltner published a book called *The Power Paradox* in 2016. In the book, Keltner points out that the road to successful leadership is changing and that the change can be seen most clearly in a shift in the way we think about and exercise power in organisations—from the classical command and control leadership role to more empowered leadership. For decades, many organisations have been characterised by this harsh understanding of power, where the individual who possesses the power exerts more or less direct pressure on another individual or group of individuals who then comply. In this "power-over" perspective, the leader, or the one in power, enforces his authority and gives orders to others, like in the Game of Thrones or House of Cards TV series, where bloodthirsty and intriguing versions of power are explored and played out. Machiavellianism creates the best literature, admits Keltner, but he does not think much of using such stories as qualified guides to good leadership in today's complex organisations.

> There's a culture of honour, a revenge-based culture, and it's as violent as any place in human history. Well, when you line up the data and say, 'OK, let's find the Machiavellians and see how they do,' they don't do well. They don't do well in organisations and they don't do well in school yards. (2016, p. 98)

In his book, Keltner refers to anthropological studies of hunter-gatherer societies that confirm his thesis that egotistical Machiavellian leaders are not the ones who achieve the greatest success. On the contrary, individuals who share their food, labour, protection and care with others are the ones who gain power and status, which is reflected in a good reputation and an increased reproductive potential. Against this background, Keltner argues for a new understanding of power in leadership, where leaders act more like collaborators who get others to support their case by making everyone stronger. Power, in Keltner's framework of understanding, thus becomes a means of strengthening the common good rather than an end in itself. That is why you rarely find people like Frank Underwood from the House of Cards or Cersei Lannister from the Game of Thrones when you look closely at the leaders who exercise their power successfully today.

Successful modern leaders do not regard power as a zero-sum game. Instead, they focus on strengthening creative processes mutually, and the power of their leadership is therefore linked more to empowerment than to the raw display of power—although we often overlook this because there is such a fascination with big personalities. The term empowerment means "to empower others and delegate power" (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014). Here, power is viewed in a "power-to" perspective where the meaningful thing is what power does. In other words: How power is exercised and what effects power has on the culture, the individual's awareness and the organisation (Clegg et al., 2006). In contrast to the Machiavellian understanding of power, power in the form of empowered leadership strengthens the creativity in organisational communities.

Implications for Organisational Theory and Practice

We have tried to argue here that the concept of power is useful when analysing creativity in an organisational context. It allows us to probe more deeply into the power processes that help constitute historical, and therefore arbitrary, limits for a wide range of acts and forms of consciousness in the organisation. By insisting that power relations contain not only repressive, but also explicitly productive aspects, the discursive understanding of power opens the way towards applying power constructively in the management of organisational creativity.

Our case-analysis of the dockyard showed that momentary "cracks" in a relatively stable power-hierarchy might fuel creative action, especially if creativity is perceived as a way to produce positive change in the current situation. However, this case also shows that the relation between power and creativity is certainly *contingent* and depends also on how the current situation is perceived by the actors. An implication for practice seems to be that managers might increase organisational creativity by using their power to facilitate "cracks" that destabilise organisational power hierarchies and empower persons to perceive creativity as an opportunity, rather than a threat.

As a final note, an interesting distinction emerged in the chapter between "*order*" and "*power*". Because, by nature, organisations are stabilising systems, giving order to our activities is a fundamental aspect of organising and we need this order if we are to create—creativity needs constraints (see also Chap. 17). Discussing power makes us focus on the stability of the organisational order and on who can decide when and how

it can be changed. In this sense, more fluidity in modern organisations can enhance creativity if individuals are empowered, but it can also harm if the organisations do not manage to preserve some form of orderly functioning (see also Chap. 10). As with many other things, finding a balance in this regard is challenging but also extremely rewarding.

References

Al-Amoudi, I. (2007). Redrawing Foucault's social ontology. *Organization, 14*, 543–563.

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context*. Westview Press.

Brinkmann, S. (2008). Selvudvikling og kompetencer i konkurrencestaten. In S. Brinkmann & P. Triantafillou (Eds.), *Psykens historier i Danmark—om forståelsen og styringen af sjælelivet*. Frederiksberg.

Clegg, S., Courpasson, D., & Phillips, N. (2006). *Power and organizations*. Sage.

Clegg, S. R. (2002). *Frameworks of power*. Sage.

Darsø, L. (2000). *Innovation in the making. Interaction research with heterogeneous groups of knowledge workers creating new knowledge and new leads*. Handelshøjskolen.

Elmholdt, C. (2004). Knowledge management and the practice of knowledge sharing and learning at work: A case study. *Studies in Continuing Education, 26*(2), 327–339.

Fleming, P., & Spicer, A. (2014). Power in management and organization science. *The Academy of Management Annals, 8*(1), 237–298.

Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow. Michel Foucault – Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Fogsgaard, M. K., & Elmholdt, C. W. (2014). Hård og blød magt i ledelse. In C. Elmholdt & M. Fogsgaard (Eds.), *Magt i organisationer*. Aarhus.

Förster, J., Friedman, R. S., Özelsel, A., & Denzler, M. (2006). Enactment of approach and avoidance behavior influences the scope of perceptual and conceptual attention. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 42*, 133–146.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist, 56*, 218–226.

French, J., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). Institute for Social Research.

Galinsky, A. D., Rucker, D. D., & Magee, J. C. (2015). Power: Past findings, present considerations, and future directions. In M. Mikulincer, P. R. Shaver, J. A. Simpson, & J. F. Dovidio (Eds.), *APA handbook of personality and social psychology, vol. 3. Interpersonal relations* (pp. 421–460).

Hartley, J. (2005). Innovation in governance and public services: Past and present. *Public Money and Management, 25*(1), 27–34.
Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2005). *Managing to collaborate: The theory and practice of collaborative advantage*. Routledge.
Keltner, D. (2016). *The power paradox. How we gain and lose influence*. Penguin Books Ltd..
Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003). Power, approach, and inhibition. *Psychological Review, 110*, 265–284.
Kim, S., Lucas, B. J., & Concalo, J. A. (2023). Low power warm-up effect: Understanding the effect of power on creativity over time. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 107*, 104474.
Kolind, L., & Bøtter, J. (2012). *Unboss*. Jyllands-Postens Forlag.
March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science, 2*(1), 71–87.
Neck, C. P., & Houghton, J. D. (2006). Two decades of self-leadership theory and research. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21*(4), 270–295.
Pfeffer, J. (2010). *Power. Why some people have it—And others don't*. Harper Business.
Schultz, M. (2014). Organisationskultur. In S. Vikkelsø & P. Kjær (Eds.), *Klassik og moderne organisationsteori* (pp. 209–232). Hans Reitzels Forlag.
Slighte, D. J., de Dreu, C. K. W., & Nijstad, B. A. (2011). Power, stability of power, and creativity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 47*, 891–897.
Tanggaard, L. (2014). A situated model of creative learning. *European Educational Research Journal, 13*(1), 107–116.
Thompson, P., & McHugh, D. (2002). *Work organizations: Power, conflict and resistance*. Palgrave.
Thygesen, N., Vallentin, S., & Raffensøe, S. (2008). *Tilliden og magten*. Børsens Forlag.
Weick, K. E., & Westley, F. (1996). Organizational learning: Affirming an oxymoron. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (pp. 440–458). Sage.
Weick, M., & Guinote, A. (2008). When subjective experiences matter: Power increases reliance on the ease of retrieval. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*(6), 956.
Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations*. Prentice Hall.

CHAPTER 17

Reflexivity

Constance de Saint-Laurent and Vlad Petre Glăveanu

Do we need reflexivity in order to be creative? Many would probably be inclined to see a connection between a contemplative attitude and creativity, an image deeply rooted in our (frequently) romantic conception of the genius (Montuori & Purser, 1995). Rodin's well-known sculpture 'The Thinker' embodies this association, but it also opens up the question of what the creator is actually reflecting on. Reflexivity, as commonly defined in dictionaries, suggests turning towards oneself and, in this sense, if we assume Rodin's 'Thinker' is engaged in an act of reflexivity, perhaps he is deeply immersed in thought about his own condition. Is he self-absorbed? There is a crucial difference to be made between reflection and reflexivity. The old story of Narcissus tells us he was so in love with his own image, his own reflection (in the water), that he drowned trying to reach it. Turning towards oneself, in order to foster creative action, needs, on the

C. de Saint-Laurent (✉)
Department of Psychology, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Ireland

V. P. Glăveanu
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*,
Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_17

contrary, to create a *distance* between observer and observed, not collapse these two positions.

Here lies the paradox of reflexivity and, at the same time, the feature that makes it essential for creativity. The observer and the observed are one and the same person and yet, to avoid self-absorption, they need to be differentiated. We can think about other people and objects in the world but, in order to reflect on oneself, the self needs to become other to itself; in other words, to consider itself like another person would. This accomplishment—of being self and other at the same time—both draws on our interactions with others and defines us as social beings (Gillespie, 2006; Mead, 1934). Our definition of reflexivity is thus fundamentally social—being reflective is not a solipsistic (as in the case of Narcissus) or solitary (as in the case of Rodin's 'Thinker') act. Reflexivity implies being able to take distance and look at one's self or action from an external position. This external position can be the one of a specific other person, one that we are either in dialogue with or whose views we have internalised, it can be our own self as we know it from the past or as we imagine it in the future, or it can be the more generic position of the public or society as a whole. All these positions facilitate *de-centration*, preventing us from becoming trapped in unitary, singular and egocentric views of self and world. Ultimately, such de-centration makes us flexible, creative (Glăveanu & Lubart, 2014) and capable of agentic action (Harris, 2023; Martin & Gillespie, 2010).

Reflexivity is important for creativity because it builds on our ability to develop new perspectives on reality (see also Chap. 15; see also Meretoja, 2023), while turning these perspectives *back* on the self and our ongoing action. This marks the difference between creative potential (i.e. being able to generate different novel ideas) and creative achievement (i.e. using these ideas to understand things differently and act in new ways). Our argument here is that engaging in reflexivity not only generates new potential understandings of self and its situation, but prompts the person to imagine and act upon these possibilities by placing different perspectives in a productive relationship with each other (Glăveanu, 2020). Through this, we are not only postulating the crucial role of others for developing a position of reflexivity, but claim that such a position is intrinsically related to (creative) action. Being reflective supports creative expression precisely because it goes beyond constructing a Narcissus-like 'reflection' of the self; it places *multiple* positions about self and world in

active *dialogue* with each other (see also the notion of meta-position in Chap. 15).

This dynamic is crucial for the work of artists, scientists and inventors, but it also permeates creativity in everyday life and in the social domain. It can be argued, in fact, that multiplicity of perspectives and reflective dialogues among them is the unifying characteristic for creative work across domains. Artists might engage with perspective of their previous selves or that of their culture (often in an oppositional manner; see also Chap. 13). Scientists are likely to reflect upon the perspective of their peers and critics, including through well-established mechanisms such as peer review. Designers are fundamentally oriented towards the position and perspective of their end users (see Chap. 25). The exact content and outcomes of these perspectives and, thus, the kind of reflexivity involved might differ each time, yet these are necessary conditions for the emergence of meaningful novelties in both established domains and in society at large. The illustration that follows explores the link between creativity and reflexivity within society. It focuses on a tragic event that shook public opinion in France and internationally, occasioning unprecedented levels of social mobilisation, engaging a wide range of positions and generating a variety of (socially creative) perspectives and responses.

'Je suis Charlie'

On 7 January 2015, two armed men entered the offices of the French journal *Charlie Hebdo* and, on their exit, left behind 11 dead and 22 wounded. The satirical journal had published caricatures of Mahomet in 2006, leading its main editor and most famous caricaturist, Charb, to be identified by several Islamist terrorist organisations as a priority target. In the days following the attack, a policewoman and the clients of a kosher shop in Paris became victims of similar acts of violence.

These events led to reactions of an unprecedented magnitude in France and to a unanimous condemnation of the attacks from the international community. The public response culminated on 11 January 2015, when the French president and 50 other heads of state walked in Paris, followed by millions of people. Not even the end of World War II had brought so many demonstrators to the streets of Paris (see Fig. 17.1). Around the world, people showed their support through the slogan '*Je suis Charlie*' (invented by a French designer in the early hours of the tragedy), and by organising local gatherings.

Fig. 17.1 Demonstration in Paris. (*Source*: By Oliver Ortelpa, image licensed under the Creative Commons)

Moreover, both professional and non-professional cartoonists started publishing commemorative drawings expressing grief and resistance: Men with pens defying armed terrorists became a common sight in newspapers and on the web. The image in Fig. 17.2 uses the same general theme, of the pencil, to show solidarity with the victims. These impressive acts of individual and collective creativity in the weeks following the event included, besides cartoons, music, videos and written pieces that reflected on what had happened. Beyond mourning the dead, many of these creative acts also expressed the need of their authors to understand why one could die 'just for a drawing'. Through their actions, these authors gave new meanings not only to the tragedy, but also to the simple act of drawing. Furthermore, their creativity was both occasioned by and gave birth to reflective processes, whose dynamic is discussed in the next section.

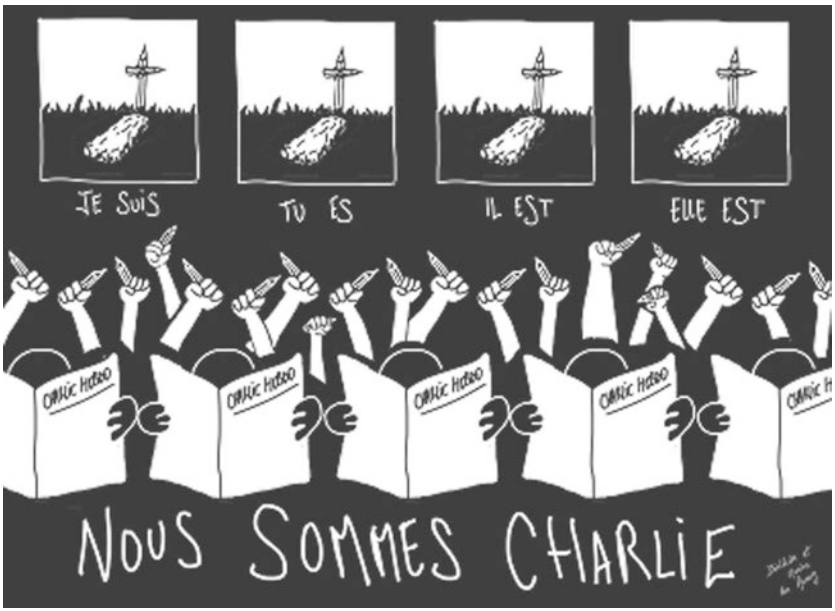

Fig. 17.2 '*Nous sommes Charlie*' (We are Charlie). (*Source*: Marine des Mazery—homage by CESAN students; image licensed under the Creative Commons)

Reflecting on Charlie

Despite a feeling of 'national unity' that swept the country, divergent voices soon appeared. Beyond the foreseeable debate on freedom of speech versus respecting others' beliefs, multiple lines of fracture started to emerge. Was it normal to march behind heads of state that would have jailed *Charlie Hebdo*'s journalists in their own countries? Should we write new laws to prevent terrorism? Should we condemn those who did not show support to the journal? And what does it mean to be a laic country? As it soon turned out, marching together did not mean that people gave the same meaning to the events, especially in the poor suburbs such as the ones the terrorists came from. In the end, some people started saying that they did not feel, after all, that they were that much like 'Charlie'. While, for many, it was scandalous not to identify with the victims and 'become' Charlie, sadly, more than the dozen islamophobe attacks on mosques that followed the events did not cause the same outrage …Was this 'national

unity' made against those who did not feel or think in the same way as the majority?

Although it is easy to ignore dissonant voices, especially in the wake of such a large movement of solidarity, it is undeniably necessary to engage with these different perspectives in order to avoid the sterile dichotomisation of the public sphere between 'us' and 'them'. Finding new solutions for society implies taking new perspectives on the world and trying to understand what can lead some people to commit such terrible actions. Looking at ourselves *through the eyes of others* is a rare opportunity to see what kind of society our collective actions create for them and, thus, how we could change it. Unfortunately, not everyone takes such a position, and many even condemn the attempt to look at the world through the eyes of someone who did so much wrong, especially if it means considering them as victims, in one way or another. However, many attempts to become reflective were made, including one by a group of teachers working in schools from difficult areas. In the days following the attacks, they published a text in *Le Monde* entitled "How could we let our students become murderers?" (for the original text in French, see Boussard et al., 2015). Their argument captures very well the dynamic of reflexivity and its connexion to creativity, as we now briefly explain.

In this article, the authors start by expressing their grief as they consider the journalists killed to be like brothers, sharing the same ideas and ideals. But, after hearing recordings of the terrorists talking to journalists, they realise that the other 'protagonists' of the attacks are also familiar to them:

> If the crimes of these killers are unbearable, what is terrible is that they speak French, with the accent of suburban youth. These two killers are like our students. The traumatism, for us, is also to hear this voice, these words. This is what made us feel responsible.

Such a realisation prompts them to look at themselves through the eyes of their students: How else could they understand why their students would do such a thing? To do this, they start with a simple question: What do we look like for them? And they write:

> But let us make the effort of changing the point of view, and let us try to look at ourselves as our students see us. We are well-dressed, have comfortable shoes, or at least we are very evidently beyond these material contingencies and we do not fantasise about the consumption goods our students

> dream of: we don't perhaps also because we would have the means to own them.

From a very basic observation—seeing that one is 'well dressed', just as you would notice after looking in a mirror—the authors move to a deeper reflection about what their appearance might mean to their students. They do not lose their own perspective—they still refer to their own relation to 'consumption goods' at the end; neither do they ignore the perspective of their students. Instead, they build on the difference between them, which allows them to look at the situation from a new angle:

> No one seems to want to assume responsibility. The responsibility of a state that lets imbeciles and psychotics languish in prison and become the toys of manipulators;[1] of a school that we deprive of means and support; of a city policy that bounds and coops up slaves (without official papers, elector cards, names nor teeth) in suburban cesspools. The responsibility of politicians who do not understand that virtue is only taught through example. […] So, let us open our eyes on the situation, to understand how we arrived here, to act and to build a society free from racism, anti-Semitism, a laic and cultivated society, more fair, free, equalitarian and fraternal.

This social critique ends with a proposition for the future: We need to open our eyes to the social conditions of others and how we might be responsible for them. But these teachers do not stop here; they also propose a new way of understanding the situation:

> Those in *Charlie Hebdo* were our brothers, as were the Jews killed for their religion, Porte de Vincennes, in Paris: we mourn them. Their killers were orphans, placed in foster care: wards of the nation,[2] children of France. Our children thus killed our brothers. This is the exact definition of a tragedy. In any culture, it provokes a feeling that has not been evoked in the past few days: shame.

By using a cultural tool familiar to them—the genres of literature—they give a new meaning to the situation: It is a tragedy, because their students, the children of the state, killed their brothers, their ideological equals.

[1] The investigations that followed the attacks revealed that prison had played an important role in the radicalisation of the killers.

[2] Two of the killers were orphans, placed in foster care and made wards of the nation while still very young.

This allows them to name and legitimise what they feel: shame. It also permits the integration of the multiple perspectives into a single narrative, making what happened more 'comprehensible' in some ways. But, most interestingly, their discursive move renders both perspectives inseparable and, through a powerful metaphor, allows people to rethink the notions of responsibility, belonging and otherness. Instead of collapsing all perspectives into one—a single '*Je suis*' where dissonant voices are isolated outside the group—they create, through reflexivity, a metaphor that encourages all to be, in turn, reflective. It is a call to find new solutions to social issues, solutions that bear the ethical mark of understanding self and other as interchangeable positions.

After Charlie

The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and its aftermath illustrate both an unexpected crisis and the individual and collective efforts made to overcome it. If creativity is required within situations where there is no learned or practised solution (Torrance, 1988), then the tragedy in France certainly qualifies as such a situation. It is perhaps still too soon to appreciate fully whether many of the individual and collective answers to *Charlie Hebdo* are 'creative'; they certainly are unprecedented and, as shown, invite people to reflect on the events, on themselves and on the society in which they live. Parallels can be made here with individual and social answers to a more recent challenge, this time at the global level—the 2019 COVID pandemic—and their intrinsic creativity (de Saint Laurent et al., 2021; Glăveanu & de Saint Laurent, 2021). To answer such events by engaging in reflexivity, as citizens and as communities, is already a rather creative initiative. It avoids two other common but unproductive 'solutions': On the one hand, self-indulgence in a glorified image of the in-group and denying that society itself has any problems (a Narcissus type of answer); on the other, aggressively blaming minorities and other ethnic or religious groups for the tragedy (finding scapegoats). To be reflective means, here, to accept the complexity of self—other relations and to be able, simultaneously, to see *the self as other and the other as self* (see also Martin et al., 2009). This is the basis for a creative way of dealing with this crisis and, perhaps, of making it a turning point towards a better future for all. The fact that neither revolutionary creative outcomes can be expected to emerge from situations such as *Charlie Hebdo*, nor easy solutions accepted by everyone, is specific for societal creativity (see Glăveanu, 2015; also

Moghaddam, 2023). Collective problems—like terror attacks or pandemics—are defined by the multitude of positions they involve and, as such, being creative in the social domain is intrinsically linked to being reflective and questioning one's own perspective.

But is there any use for reflexivity in creative action outside societal, inter-group, or inter-personal problems? *Charlie Hebdo* might seem like a rather extreme and particular example on which to focus. What about the activity of painters, of scientists, or of teachers and students in school, and so on? Regardless of domain, the need to engage with and understand the perspectives of others is always present. What reflexivity does it prompt us to look at our own position from the standpoint of others; in this way, reflexivity can help us envision new possibilities of action within any given situation. If creativity draws on noticing and acting on difference (see Chap. 6), then reflexivity helps us engage with difference creatively, without collapsing different positions into a single perspective, that of the self, or dichotomising them, in a counterproductive 'us versus them' dynamic. And, if the above is the case, then a key question emerges: How often do we become reflective about our relation to others and the world around us? Is it equally easy to become reflective in online spaces as it is in face to face interactions (see also Chap. 7)? And, most importantly, how can we support reflexivity in ways that are conducive for the creativity of both individuals and societies as a whole?

References

Boussard, D., Louys, V., Richer, I., & Robert, C. (2015). Comment avons-nous pu laisser nos élèves devenir des assassins?. *Le Monde*, January 14, p. 12.

de Saint Laurent, C., Glăveanu, V. P., & Literat, I. (2021). *Internet memes as partial stories: Identifying political narratives in coronavirus memes. Social Media + Society*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121988932

Gillespie, A. (2006). *Becoming other: From social interaction to self-reflection*. Information Age.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2015). Developing society: Reflections on the notion of societal creativity. In A.-G. Tan & C. Perleth (Eds.), *Creativity, culture, and development* (pp. 183–200). Springer.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020). *The possible: A sociocultural theory*. Oxford University Press.

Glăveanu, V. P., & de Saint Laurent, C. (2021). Social media responses to the pandemic: What makes a coronavirus meme creative. *Frontiers in Psychology / Organizational Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.569987

Glăveanu, V. P., & Lubart, T. (2014). Decentring the creative self: How others make creativity possible in creative professional fields. *Creativity and Innovation Management, 23*(1), 29–43.

Harris, D. (2023). Non-binary possibilities of creative agency. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 99–104. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231166485

Martin, J., & Gillespie, A. (2010). A neo-Meadian approach to human agency: Relating the social and the psychological in the ontogenesis of perspective-coordinating persons. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 44*, 252–272.

Martin, J., Sugarman, J. H., & Hickinbottom, S. (2009). *Persons: Understanding psychological selfhood and agency*. Springer.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self & society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. University of Chicago Press.

Meretoja, H. (2023). Expanding our sense of the possible. Ten theses for Possibility Studies. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 137–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231171448

Moghaddam, F. M. (2023). Political plasticity and possibilities for political change. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2, 152), –156. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221135332

Montuori, A., & Purser, R. (1995). Deconstructing the lone genius myth: Toward a contextual view of creativity. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 35*(3), 69–112.

Torrance, E. P. (1988). The nature of creativity as manifest in its testing. In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *The nature of creativity: Contemporary psychological perspectives* (pp. 43–75). Cambridge University Press.

CHAPTER 18

Rhythm

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

To study the rhythm(s) of creativity—this sounds like a novel idea! Especially if we don't confine the notion of rhythm to music alone. The rhythm of creativity, as I discuss it here, doesn't refer to the melodic quality of accomplished compositions but, rather, to the rhythmic nature of our creative movement in the world (Glăveanu, 2020). Did you ever consider the movement and sounds one hears in spaces where creative work is performed—not only art studios, scientific laboratories, but also schools and streets, squares and markets? Some are very noisy environments, others mostly silent but, in all of them, one can distinguish a certain regularity of activities and sounds, a rhythmicity of doing and perceiving, of acting and being acted upon. This regularity is paired with uniqueness, the distinct quality of each 'melody' of living and creating. The universe of sound we are immersed into often escapes us, when focused too much on the visual world (Hendy, 2013). And yet sounds, and the rhythms they create,

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_18

are the essential markers of what makes our existence dynamic and temporal: *continuous movement*.

Rhythm is movement. At least, the etymological origins of the word tell us so. The Greek *rhythmos* referred to 'measured flow or movement', the Latin *rhythmus* to 'movement in time',[1] and most associations of these terms point to proportion, symmetry, arrangement, order and so on. Since rhythm includes both structure and its transformation in time, it became a very important notion for the 'arts of continuity' such as music and poetry. For them, rhythm is a recurrent or repeated pattern, a beat, or an accent. But the same applies to movement outside the sphere of art. Our daily life has its own rhythm, as do the activities of a society. The latter are often translated into social, economic and political indicators and are typically expressed using larger temporal units such as decades or generations (e.g. think about the recurrent patterns of migration around the world and their wide spectrum—from seasonal to permanent). In contrast, the micro-rhythms of everyday life are more rarely documented, despite their vital significance for shaping our existence and our trajectory through the social world. A study of the life course in terms of rhythm, styles and motifs is necessarily, at once holistic and developmental, individual and social (see Zittoun et al., 2013). Finally, there are other types of rhythms, from biological to astronomical, that frame the movement of people and societies. The fascination for their cyclical nature has been a dominant feature of pre-history and antiquity and survives, to this day, albeit in different forms, within religion and myths, collective practices and rituals, philosophy and art (see Meyer, 2023, for an insightful analysis of the link between ancient rhythms and human possibility).

Human culture is defined by rhythm as a dynamic system that moves and changes along irreversible time (Valsiner, 2013). This rhythm is the essence of creativity, understood here not as a unique feature of special individuals but as a widely distributed process of making, transforming and renewing cultural forms (Glăveanu, 2014). To associate rhythm and creativity means to recognise the interdependence between biology and culture, each defined by their own cyclicity, as they shape the creative work of individuals and societies. This is well reflected by examining human activity. All activities—including those deemed 'creative'—are based on movement and movement itself involves different forms of repositioning,

[1] The Online Etymology Dictionary (http://www.etymonline.com/).

from physical and social to psychological (see also Chap. 15). These acts of repositioning are fundamentally patterned inasmuch as they involve position exchange, shifts of perspective, and a back and forth between action and perception, or what Dewey called "doing" and "undergoing" (Dewey, 1934). Recognizing the rhythmic nature of these processes helps us on several accounts. First of all, it situates actions and activities within a wider cultural context. To act rhythmically means to connect to, to reflect on, and to co-participate in the rhythmic movement of people and ideas at a specific time and in a specific space. Second, it makes our understanding of creative action much more developmental in nature. Rhythms have a history that is, at once, societal and personal. This turns the exploration of how people come to acquire, share and transform certain courses of action a key concern. Last but not least, rhythms cut across the divide between the psychological and the material. Action is always embodied, even when it seemingly takes place only 'in the mind' (Wertsch, 1998), and the rhythms of creative action reflect this attribute particularly well, given their emphasis on doing and making.

As such, my focus in this chapter will be on the creativity of the cultural rhythms of human existence, both individual and collective; to illustrate them, I will draw on three different examples from Japan. This allows me to explore an expanded understanding of rhythm as movement and, in turn, capture three of its central characteristics: *regularity*, *uniqueness* and *emergence*. It is particularly this last 'property', coming out of the intersection and coordination between multiple rhythms, in their regularity and uniqueness, that is a defining feature for creativity (see also Montuori, 2003). Indeed, to create is considered in this chapter to be a rhythmic movement through culture, a movement that is, simultaneously, deeply personal, highly expressive, and fundamentally shared.

Regularity

The patterned ways of rhythms, as they unfold, reveal their regularity. This regularity is associated with a relative stability over time, something that makes patterned movements distinguishable and invests their rhythms with an identity function. Ceremonials are a great example of re-enacted rhythms of great cultural significance. In the case of the tea ceremony in Japan, rituals go beyond a simple pastime for small social groups and become a national symbol (Surak, 2012). I had the pleasure of being introduced to such a ceremonial at the teahouse of the Hama Rikyu

Garden in Tokyo. My friend and I ordered the traditional powdered green tea—*Matcha* tea—which arrived in a beautiful bowl with a small confection and wooden stick on the side, as well as a brief information leaflet. The contents of this leaflet explained to us the proper manners of tasting *Matcha* tea (for more on constraints and possibility see Valsiner, 2023).

The Manners of Tasting Matcha Tea

<The tea ceremony is not performed>
The spirit of the tea is at the heart of hospitality.
What should you taste first? The confection or the tea?
The confection is all eaten before drinking the tea. It is because the taste of the tea becomes better. <Don't taste them alternatively>
How do you eat the confection?
Bring the confection toward you by putting it on the packet of paper (Kaishi). Cut it with small wooden stick and eat one piece after the other.
How do you drink Matcha tea?
Take the bowl with your right hand and place it on the left palm. In order to avoid the front of the bowl, turn the bowl clockwise twice. Then drink all the tea in three or four sips (the number of times is not important). When it is served, the visitor's side is the front of the bowl.
What do you do for the place where the mouth touched the bowl?
After drinking the tea, wipe the place where you drank from with your right thumb and index finger. Wipe your fingers on your Kaishi. Then turn the bowl back twice so that the front faces you and place the bowl in front of you <It is not necessary to perform them here>
And, with a feeling of gratitude, you look back at the bowl before returning to the place where the host served.

What appears to be a highly regulated activity reveals, in fact, the parameters of a cultural rhythm of serving and drinking tea. The places, times, behaviour and attitudes of a tea ceremony are specified in advance and they gain 'thickness' through repetition, observation and practice (see also Chaps. 19 and 20). However, the movement itself, for as conventionalised as it is, will never be identical for any two people drinking *Matcha* tea, or for the same person at different times. And this is because rhythms are regular and shared but they also bear the mark of uniqueness. This was certainly the case for me and my friend, both foreign to this ceremonial and, to a certain extent, to the cultural universe of rhythms that surrounds it. While we did our best to respect the instructions given, we also

(creatively) appropriated them and infused the entire ceremonial with our own rhythm, a mixture of what we learned there and our past experiences of drinking tea. The regularity of a rhythm doesn't have to be prescribed explicitly within a culture; it most often accumulates over time through constant processes of socialisation (see also Bourdieu's notion of habitus; Bourdieu, 1984).

Uniqueness

The appropriation and personalisation of rhythms are unavoidable in the case of any cultural practice and the example of the tea ceremony can be complemented, in this regard, with another one concerning the use of votive pictures in Shinto shrines and, sometimes, in Buddhist temples. These votive plaques, called *ema*, have a long history in Japan (see Ashikaga, 1954; Reader, 1991), dating back to the early eighth century. The small wooden plagues, ornamented on one side, are the support on which visitors write their wishes in order to make them known to the gods or local deities. The motifs placed on an *ema* vary, but they can include a figure of worship, a religious or a cultural image; e.g. one of the signs of the 12-year zodiac cycle. Traditionally, the *ema* depicted a horse (which is also what the name in Japanese suggests), since in the Nara period a horse used to be donated to the shrine by supplicants. But, since this practice was not feasible for most of the population, a wooden, clay or paper representation of a horse became a popular offering in later centuries. Nowadays, visitors buy plaques at the shrine, write their wishes on them (usually not on the ornamented part) and leave them on shrine ground in specially designated places (see also Chap. 21). An illustration of this practice is offered (see Fig. 18.1) from the Inari shrine in Kyoto, where the fox is a popular symbol, something visible also on the votive plaques.

The cultural rhythm of visiting a shrine or temple, the ceremonies performed there, the buying, writing and hanging an *ema* are all common to locals and attract curious foreigners (such as myself). What caught my attention most, however, was the uniqueness of each votive plaque I saw at the Inari shrine. Despite some fairly common wishes written on the back of the plaques—mainly by students praying for academic success (see also Reader, 1991), the front of the *ema* encourages people to draw their own motifs within the space of a stylised fox face. From smiley eyes to anime-like drawings and even the depiction of heroes such as Spiderman or famous actors, these votive plaques evoke, first, the creative aspirations

Fig. 18.1 Votive plaques at the Inari shrine in Kyoto. (*Source*: Photo taken by the author)

of their authors, incorporated within a broader cultural rhythm—wish-making at the shrine or temple. This is not only an expression of individuality within regularity (after all, *ema* do have a pre-defined spatial and symbolic place in the life of the community), but also a vivid illustration of how patterned activities, including rituals and ceremonies, draw not on one but on multiple cultural and personal resources (see also Chap. 5). This multiplicity supports the last and most important feature of rhythms—their emergent quality.

Emergence

A rhythm is patterned movement, shaped by society and the routines of everyday life, while being, at the same time, unique and the basis for creative action. How is this possible? The emergent or creative property of our daily rhythms derives from the fact that our movement is,

simultaneously, personal and shared, unfolding within a complex environment marked by the rhythms of others (see also Chap. 14). This might not be always obvious to us while engaged in our own activity since, particularly in cases of creative work, we often get to experience what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) famously referred to as '*flow*'. This is marked by complete immersion, focus on movement and the enjoyment of it. But flow is certainly not a solipsistic state. On the contrary, observing activities that lead to us to being in flow we often come to realise the importance of other people. Think, for example, about bands playing jazz, or research teams working together in a laboratory. More and more nowadays, research is concerned with networked or collaborative flow (see Gaggioli et al., 2013), in which relations and their rhythm come to the fore, articulating individual emotions and motivations. The emergence that is at the core of collaboration relies heavily on the articulation, intersection and hybridisation of rhythms, where the whole is greater than the sum of parts.

The last illustration of this dynamic in a Japanese context takes us back to the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, on 6 August 1945, and the sad story of Sadako Sasaki, a child diagnosed with leukaemia after the bombing, who died at the age of 12 (Coerr, 1977). She became a well-known victim of this tragedy, remembered for her determination to fold 1000 paper cranes, based on an ancient Japanese legend that whoever accomplishes this will be granted a wish. After her death, this became a symbol not only of the suffering, but also the hope for peace following the disaster and, in 1958, a statue of Sadako holding a crane was unveiled in the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. One account of this story says that Sadako did not manage to finish the *origami* cranes and her friends continued her work. Today, children all over Japan commemorate her story by folding and sending paper cranes to the memorial (see Fig. 18.2), in what became a small exhibition place used to display drawings and other small artistic products. Through them, people from Japan and abroad co-participate in a collective movement of great symbolic significance. The particular rhythm of creating an *origami* shape, repeated thousands of times, gains new, emerging properties when it encounters the creations of others, when personal action becomes communal (see also Chaps. 11 and 17). This emergence doesn't stop at the level of meanings though, it also finds expression in the proliferation of artefacts produced and sent to the memorial. Through them, it is not only a rhythm that is being shared, but the possibility of creatively answering war, suffering and death.

Fig. 18.2 Paper cranes at the memorial of Sadako Sasaki in Hiroshima. (*Source*: Photo taken by the author)

From Rhythm to Style

I have argued here that an exploration of rhythm is essential for understanding creative action in its patterned, unique and emergent expression. The tea ceremony, the shrine votive plaques and the Peace Memorial in Japan illustrate very well the simultaneously individual and cultural movements that contribute to building a shared, public life. From very mundane activities, such as serving and drinking tea, to sending one's wishes to the gods and hoping for a better, more peaceful future, the rhythms of individuals and communities intermingle, generating a complex picture of normativity and distinctiveness.

What these rhythmic movements ultimately generate is a style, defined by Baerveldt and Cresswell (2014, p. 60) as "the *coherent deformation* of a norm or convention" (see also Baerveldt, 2013). Style is usually considered of great importance in art and every artist knows that, in order to be recognised, he or she needs to continue being creative within the (often

self-imposed) boundaries of a coherent body of work. The same applies to our existence as social and cultural beings and to human action across domains. There are patterns of activity in producing scientific outcomes, designing new artefacts and engaging with other people and material tools in the everyday. The style of our actions and interactions is something we at times get to reflect on, especially when we encounter obstacles or resistance, or when our style becomes at odds with the style of others. In those cases, we tend to try and reconnect with the rhythms we are familiar with, to find those resonances between our actions and the actions of others, to playfully engage with what culture has to offer us. Our style 'bends' according to the context we are in and this is one of its most important creative qualities—being able to change, to adapt, to surprise while, at the same time, remaining recognisable, understandable and ultimately predictable, even if only in retrospect.

The rhythms of our life are both freeing and constraining; in fact, they allow us to be creative precisely because they are always related to the conventional. The notion of style helps us transcend the long-established dichotomies between individual and social, stability and change, sharedness and uniqueness (see also Chap. 25). While creativity is, in essence, movement, this movement leaves multiple 'traces' and crystallises in the form of style—accents within our own generative rhythms of being and creating.

References

Ashikaga, E. (1954). Votive pictures: A Japanese superstition. *Western Folklore, 13*(1), 29–33.

Baerveldt, C. (2013). Culture and dialogue: Positioning, mediation or style? *New Ideas in Psychology, 32*, 66–72.

Baerveldt, C., & Cresswell, J. (2014). Creativity and the generative approach to culture and meaning. In V. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from social and cultural psychology* (pp. 93–109). Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

Coerr, E. (1977). *Sadako and the thousand paper cranes*. Putnam's.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper & Row.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Penguin.

Gaggioli, A., Riva, G., Milani, L., & Mazzoni, E. (2013). *Networked flow: Towards an Understanding of creative networks*. Springer.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Distributed creativity: Thinking outside the box of the creative individual*. Springer.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020). *Mobilities and human possibility*. Palgrave.

Hendy, D. (2013). *Noise: A human history of sound and listening*. Profile Books.

Meyer, C. (2023). Rhythm and possibility: Making space for ancient futures. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 145–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231162304

Montuori, A. (2003). The complexity of improvisation and the improvisation of complexity: Social science, art and creativity. *Human Relations, 56*(2), 237–255.

Reader, I. (1991). Letters to the Gods: The form and meaning of Ema. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, 18*(1), 24–50.

Surak, K. (2012). *Making tea, making Japan: Cultural nationalism in practice*. Stanford University Press.

Valsiner, J. (2013). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. Sage.

Valsiner, J. (2023). Possibilities enhanced and con- strained: Where dynamic semiosis works. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 226–229. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221128499

Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. Oxford University Press.

Zittoun, T., Valsiner, J., Vedeler, D., Salgado, J., Gonçalves, M. M., & Ferring, D. (2013). *Human development in the life course: Melodies of living*. Cambridge University Press.

CHAPTER 19

Rules

Tue Krabbe-Juelsbo

In this chapter, I delve into the concept of rules and their role in fostering the creative process. Often perceived as restrictive elements that can stifle creative impulses, rules, whether self-imposed or externally dictated, can paradoxically serve as a platform upon which the creative process thrives. This phenomenon transforms perceived limitations into newfound opportunities. **Indeed, the crux of my argument is that rules are not anathema to creativity but rather, are integral components that can bolster it. The absence of a structure or framework within which to channel creative energies could lead to an absence of creativity itself; rules are therefore instrumental in defining these creative boundaries.

As we will examine in this chapter, several creative practices have their own set of 'rules'—frameworks within which skilled creators cultivate habits and routines with the specific aim of sparking creativity. This 'Janus head'—the complex, dialectical relationship between rules and creativity—will be probed from the standpoint of a socio-material and distributed approach to creativity (Glăveanu, 2014; Tanggaard, 2013).

T. Krabbe-Juelsbo (✉)
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
Gothenburg, Sweden

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_19

In the ensuing discussion, I will utilize the term 'rules' to denote either material constraints or social conventions and explore their interplay with creativity from three distinct perspectives: self-imposed rules, social rules or norms inherent in a chosen practice, and an amalgamation of both. To provide concrete examples, I delve into four Nordic case studies that explicitly or implicitly revolve around rules:

1. Constraints—the recent trend among fine art and documentary photographers to revert to 'basics' by using analogue cameras and black-and-white films.
2. Conventions—the recent 20th anniversary of the avant-garde film-making movement, Dogma95.
3. Constraints and conventions—the film 'The Five Obstructions' (2003) by Jorgen Leth and Lars von Trier, where rules and obstructions emerge as the key drivers of creativity.
4. Constraints and conventions—the genre-defying work of ceramicist Gurli Ellebaekgaard.

The Intricate Relationship Between Rules and Creativity

When we peruse contemporary research within the realm of the cultural psychology of creativity, we find that the concept of rules is integral to creative actions. The erstwhile perception of creativity as a domain exclusive to the arts, individual genius, and general eccentricity has now expanded to encompass creativity as an economically valuable, highly contextual, situated, learnable, and observable phenomenon (Amabile, 1996; Sternberg, 2006). **We have largely transitioned from the romantic notion of the solitary 'artist-in-a-garret', who awaits nocturnal visitations from muses, to replicable methods of thinking and doing that occur in the intricate, often chaotic processes and practices that constitute everyday life (McWilliam, 2007; see also Chap. 10).**

I argue that focusing on the role of rules can propel us towards further development in both research and creative practice. However, it is essential to operate with a nuanced comprehension of rules: They can act as both constraints (for instance, those arising from the material and the possibilities it offers to our action, such as a photographic camera) and conventions (socially imposed norms and institutionalized manifestations of

rules; e.g. in the Dogma95 and 'The Five Obstructions'). While rules are intrinsically connected to materiality, their constitution is heavily reliant on a sociocultural system wherein rules bear normative values. Creative practice is often guided by a blend of these different types of rules, and to bolster both creative practice and research, I propose that we nurture a heightened awareness of these diverse rules in creative activities.

Time to Be Playful and Serious: The Delicate Balance Between Freedom and Structure

The great philosopher John Dewey, once declared, "to be playful and serious at the same time is possible, and it defines the ideal mental condition" (Dewey, 1910, p. 218). Similar to the essence of any good game, attaining this state requires rules and boundaries. Consider football as an example. To participate in a match, one needs to be aware of the placement of corner posts, identities of opposing team members, and expected conduct in the field. Only then can you truly immerse yourself in the game and engage in strategic maneuvering (Bilton, 2007; Stadil & Tanggaard, 2014). This analogy also extends to creative processes. For instance, when photographer Jan Grarup resorts to old analog equipment, he must respect and adhere to the limitations inherent in that specific camera. With just three knobs on the camera, understanding their functions—the rules they represent and the possibilities they offer—becomes crucial for engaging in Dewey's concept of serious play.

However, the arena of creativity research often overlooks the importance of rules. This could perhaps be attributed to the prevalent 'embryonic fallacy' (Moghaddam, 2010; Tanggaard, 2013) in psychological research on creativity. This fallacy treats the individual as the primary source of psychological experience while neglecting the significance of context, social practices, and materiality as constitutive dimensions of the creative process.** Here, I wish to propose that socio-materiality and distributed creativity (Glăveanu, 2014; Hutchins, 1996) can provide a valuable complement to the earlier focus on creative geniuses and subsequently, creative individuals in general. Exploration of rules, affordances, and materiality is of particular interest in this context.

Socio-Materiality, Rules, and Creativity Research: A Triadic Interplay

From the perspective of socio-materiality, a camera is not merely a passive instrument awaiting human manipulation. Instead, it is an active participant in the creative process that significantly influences what a photographer can produce. Building on prior and current research efforts that strive to position context, social practices, and the environment as more than just 'a bowl to the soup', or a neutral backdrop for individual actions (Lave, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 1991), socio-materiality emphasizes the importance of the objects and artifacts we interact with in our daily lives (refer also to Chap. 20). These artifacts invite us to engage in specific practices that become tangible manifestations of the rules they impose upon us.

To elucidate how humans and artifacts dynamically interact in the practice of photography, we can refer to Gibson's concept of affordances (Gibson, 1979, see also Chap. 2). An analog camera, with its physical film that needs to be manually loaded, permits certain actions while precluding others. This interaction 'affects' us in much the same way we 'affect' the camera through our manipulations. The limitations presented by the camera become nuanced representations of material-imposed rules originating from these affordances. In this regard, the photographer and chosen camera morph are inseparable and interdependent entities (Latour, 2005). This convergence of human action and knowledge signifies fluid engagement with the world, involving open-ended processes of improvisation with available social, material, and experiential resources (see also Chap. 12).

Having established a nuanced understanding of the different types of rules related to material constraints and social conventions, underscoring that rules are not antithetical to creativity, and that we might benefit from going about creativity research and creative practice with attention to rules, I now turn to three Nordic cases. Time to see what is actually in the hands of photographers and moviemakers!

Picking Up the Camera: A Nostalgic Return to the Analogue Era

Imagine the kitchen of Jan Grarup, an acclaimed Danish documentary photographer, and a three-time winner of the World Press Photo, among numerous other accolades. The setting is subtle and intimate. Bathed with

soft lighting, the worn wooden table narrates stories of its years of service, with various marks and stains reminiscent of morning coffee rituals and late-night wine indulgences. Scattered across the table are an array of items: a well-used passport, receipts, a few coins, a MacBook, multiple phones, several portable hard drives, and a tangled web of wires snaking from electrical outlets to keep the devices powered. Amidst this clutter, the range of different cameras stands out. However, a bag filled with undeveloped film cassettes sitting next to Jan's iconic sunglasses is a sight that oddly contrasts digital ambiance.

This image of Jan's workspace caught my eye when it popped up on my Facebook feed. It sparked my curiosity—why would one of the world's most sought-after war and crises photographers intentionally reintroduce analog practices into his workflow? This intriguing question became the focal point of this chapter.

Jan's striking photographs regularly adorn the pages of internationally renowned media outlets like The New York Times, Time, The Guardian, and Newsweek, portraying the harsh realities of war, famine, and natural disasters. Like many successful storytellers, he leveraged the speed and convenience of digital photography to promptly dispatch his images to media agencies worldwide. Trained in analog photography at the Danish School of Journalism between 1989 and 1991, January initially used a non-digital workflow. However, as newspapers and media agencies transitioned to digital equipment in the late 1990s, he adapted it accordingly. Currently, the majority of reports and commercial photography are digital. This leads us to an intriguing question: Why would a modern photographer choose to work with black and white films? Why would some photographers willingly 'handicap themselves,' as critics in the photographic community might suggest?

As I delved into trade journals, newspaper articles, and conversations with other photographers, I discovered that analog photography never truly vanished. In fact, many of the world's top fine art and documentary photographers have recently been reverting to the 'basics' and dusting off their old cameras.

Shooting with an analog film involves manipulating a tangible medium—a strip of celluloid negatively imprinted with light—offering a direct sense of materiality. Digital photographers have predominantly become manipulators of digital symbols; however, by returning to traditional practices, we reaffirm the fundamental understanding of the tangible (see also Chap. 20). This basic comprehension of how our tools

function is crucial not only for mastering our craft but also for understanding our world. Operating a fully mechanical device does not afford technical detachment.

Choosing to use vintage equipment does not inherently make January more creative. However, from a socio-material analytical perspective, this decision has significant implications. This self-imposed rule (using old cameras) compels Jan to adhere to the material-imposed rules dictated by the camera's affordances, while concurrently challenging some of the socially imposed rules (convention of the field; shooting digitally in the twenty-first century).

Playing By or Breaking the Rules of Photography

Fundamentally, taking photographs is a straightforward process. The essential components are a sealed box with a tiny hole, optics to focus the light entering through the hole, and a light-sensitive medium inside the box to capture light. This basic principle applies to both analog and digital photography, where a filmstrip or digital sensor captures light. These elements can be regarded as immutable laws or rules that any photographer must operate within. Opting for a specific camera introduces a different or at least an additional set of rules to the equation: the constraints or material-imposed rules of the chosen camera. These rules coexist with, or are influenced by, the conventions of the photography field and societal norms—socially imposed rules. These rules guide us on what constitutes a good photo, what we can or cannot photograph, how to photograph, and so forth.

Picking up an old analog Leica camera, you are immediately aware of the surprising weight of the deceptively small metal-body camera and the minimal number of buttons that can be physically manipulated. In this regard, this camera offers you far less as a photographer than the newer digital models. The latter are laden with a multitude of manipulation possibilities through intricate menu systems in the camera and extensive post-production capabilities on the computer later. For analog cameras, the devil is truly in the detail. However, instead of viewing this as a limitation, Grarup describes how this old technology allows him to concentrate on the most crucial aspect, capturing the perfect shot. This enables him to strive for perfection, rather than being lost in menu systems and settings.

For example, see Fig. 19.1, "No Photography Allowed". To create this tongue-in-cheek image, one rule was deliberately broken (social

Fig. 19.1 No photography allowed. (Source: Adam Foster, image licensed under Creative Commons)

conventions), while others, such as the physical laws of photography and material-imposed rules of the camera (constraints), were necessarily adhered to.

Dogmas, Chastity Vows, and Obstructions

I wish to submit the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by DOGMA95. (…) I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste. I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a 'work', as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My main goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the available means and at the cost of any good taste and aesthetic considerations. Thus, I created my VOW CHASTITY.

(Opening and closing statements from DOGMA95)

These opening and closing statements from DOGMA95 marked the start of an era that reinvigorated Danish cinema. On March 13, 1995, at a grand conference in Paris celebrating the first 100 years of cinematography, filmmakers Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg brought more than just their business cards. Lars were invited to speak, and he responded by tossing a stack of red pamphlets into the crowd, announcing the DOGMA95. The atmosphere was thick, with a hint of revolution.

DOGMA95 was a manifesto of 10 rules that any film maker must adhere to in order to call it a "Dogme" film. It was designed to counteract the expensive, mainstream-appeasing film productions of the time. The Dogme brothers felt that filmmaking had become more about prestige and money. They wanted to simplify production, allowing stories and performances to take the spotlight. In this pursuit, they committed to 10 dogmatic rules they had devised. The DOGMA95 movement garnered awards, and 31 films received the official Dogme certification from 1995 to 2005. Filmmakers as far afield as Korea, Chile, and the USA were inspired by the Dogme films' aesthetic and the simplicity of their production.

The directors and actors saw these self-imposed rules and vows as liberation from the heavy-handed standards of production—the established rules of the field at that time. The new rules became part of the creative expression, rather than a burden creators had to bear. However, as history would have it, self-imposed rules can gradually become social conventions or norms, in turn becoming something to rebel against by a new avant-garde. As more Dogme movies were produced, these rules evolved into a genre and a standard of production in and of themselves until the movement officially dissolved in 2005.

Lars von Trier, one of the Dogme movement's founders, later took this concept of rules and obstructions even further with his old friend and mentor, Jorgen Leth. In 1967, Jorgen had produced 'The Perfect Human', Lars' favourite film. Lars presented Jorgen with a challenge: to remake 'The Perfect Human' five times, each time with a different obstruction/rule imposed by Lars von Trier.

"Watching 'The Five Obstructions' is at once like witnessing two chess masters playing dominoes and like spying on a series of therapy sessions", as A. O. Scott from the New York Times put it in his review on May 26, 2004. As you watch an impeccably dressed Jorgen Leth sit in the slums of the red-light district in Bombay, eating a lavish dinner in front of a translucent screen separating him from a crowd of street children, you might find yourself agreeing with the reviewer. From the first challenge (remake the film in Cuba with no shot lasting longer than 12 frames), through the second (remake the film in the worst place in the world but do not show that place onscreen), and all the way to the fifth and last challenge, you truly feel like you're watching two masterminds communicating and creating through the medium and via obstructions.

The creation of the 'Five Obstructions' was, in itself, a creative act. With rules as the pivot, it represented a break from the conventions of traditional moviemaking (see also Chap. 3). Usually, the director would try very hard to hide the different rules at play—both constraints and conventions—and, while the Dogme movement took a first step in the right direction with its manifesto (rebelling against the conventions of the field by using some of the material constraints, e.g. banning the use of artificial lights), 'The Five Obstructions' took it one step further. The rules became the creation.

The Master of Clay

If you've dined recently at a randomly chosen Copenhagen fine-dining restaurant there is a good chance you have experienced the work of ceramicist Gurli Ellebaekgaard. You might have wondered what the cloud-like structures that presented your food were made of as they seemed to hover over the table, defying their weight and material origin. Other serving pieces looked like giant leaves with small circular indents to both hold and present the food. Both made you want to touch the medium as much as eat the food presented.

Her standard dining plates look more traditional but with a spotted glazing that makes them look like pieces of moss, fungi, or dappled pebbles. The surfaces are both smooth and textured at the same time depending on where you hold them. They are tactile in a different way that normal clay works of ceramicist without screaming their difference out loud.

Gurli is a trained ceramicist from Kolding School of Design and the Arts and Craft School in Bergen, and she is a master of her craft. A craft that is steeped in tradition—and a craft with both deeply held conventions and material constraints to be explored, bent, and worked with creatively. From her small shop and workshop in Copenhagen, she is happy to both show her work and talk about her creative explorations, walking the fine line between tradition and renewal.

Copenhagen is home to several well-esteemed ceramicists, and as you walk the city you can peer into their workshops. Most of the exhibited pieces look traditionally Nordic with clean lines, subtle glazing, and few ornate details. The craft is steeped in conventions, and you rarely doubt if a plate is a plate when you see one. The material constraints of what's possible to do with clay are also present. There is simply a limit to which shapes are possible to capture once the pieces have been through the furnace. If you walked past Gurli's shop you might think nothing of it and her products from a distance but walk up close and they will make you stop.

She describes her process as rooted in tradition, spending years learning and perfecting her craft of throwing clay and learning the ways of the master ceramicists. But also, that she can't help playing with and pushing the boundaries of what is possible with shapes, colours, and tactility. This allows her to both produce wild unica pieces like the ones you will find in fine-dining restaurants, but also more normal looking scullery, where the devil and the creativity are in the details.

"It's very much a material dialogue. I almost know what's possible now in terms of shape and form, but I still don't know what the finished piece will look like before I open the oven. The intense heat of the furnace is a finicky partner! Sometimes I find an oven full of wonderful surprises with beautiful plates, vases, and mugs with moss-like glazing—other times an oven full of deflated vessels, collapsed clouds, or ugly looking plates with flawed glazing. I never quite know. That makes it interesting!"

Taking inspiration from Danish and Norwegian nature and the 'aesthetics of the ugly', as Gurli puts it, she walks a fine line between producing work that are simply works of art, highly functional pieces that still stand out due to their tactility and glazing, and pieces like a traditional tea mug that still managed to surprise with a small indent just where you unknowingly put your fingers. Adhering to but also challenging the rules and conventions of both craft and materials.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for a renewed focus on the relationship between creativity and rules and, thus, for an extended view of creativity. Instead of limiting our view to the creative person or process (mostly idea generation), I argue that it is in the dynamic interplay between person and process, idea and object that new things and practices materialize. When creativity is seen as part of everyday life and ingrained in daily life practices, it becomes a process of making sense and going about one's life with practical wisdom (Sternberg, 1998). The subtle or explicit rules—constraints and conventions—with which we engage knowingly or unknowingly—as self-imposed, material-imposed, social-imposed or an amalgam—shape and guide our creative practice.

Cultivating a heightened attention to the different rules at play might help us orient ourselves as creative practitioners whenever rules becomes enablers or catalysts, rather than a nuisance to be endured. As researchers, a heightened attention to rules can inform both our fieldwork and our own creative practice. In all these cases, the interplay between sociocultural and material aspects, and how norms shape the affordances of artefacts, represent rich territories to be explored further.

The photographer can't envision the perfect shot without actively getting out there and trying to capture it. A ceramicist can't make unique and creative work without shaping it with her hands. It is by knowing the rules of the field and being sensitive to the socio-material affordances granted by the equipment that one learns to play the game—and to push its boundaries. These artefacts constitute important parts of the process of creativity and, in this way, creative processes and products are not thought of as separate entities but are viewed as an interdependent whole with various rules shaping this continuous pas de deux.

References

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context*. Westview.

Bilton, C. (2007). *Management and creativity: From creative industries to creative management*. Blackwell.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Health.

Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton Mifflin.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Distributed creativity: Thinking outside the box of the creative individual*. Springer.

Hutchins, E. (1996). *Cognition in the wild*. MIT Press.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social*. Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J. (2011). *Apprenticeship in critical ethnographic practice*. University of Chicago Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

McWilliam, E. L. (2007). Is creativity teachable? Conceptualizing the creativity/pedagogy relationship in higher education. In *30th HERDSA Annual Conference: Enhancing Higher Education, Theory and Scholarship*, 8–11 July 2007, Adelaide.

Moghaddam, F. M. (2010). Commentary: Intersubjectivity, interobjectivity, and the embryonic fallacy in developmental science. *Culture & Psychology, 16*, 465–475.

Stadil, C., & Tanggaard, L. (2014). *In the shower with Picasso*. LID Editorial.

Sternberg, R. J. (1998). A balance theory of wisdom. *Review of General Psychology, 2*(4), 347.

Sternberg, R. J. (2006). The nature of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal, 18*, 87–98.

Tanggaard, L. (2013). The sociomateriality of creativity. *Culture and Psychology, 19*(1), 20–32.

CHAPTER 20

Silence

Charlotte Wegener

Compost is stuff, junk, garbage, anything, that's turned into dirt by sitting around a while. It involves silence, darkness, time, and patience. From compost, whole gardens grow.
—Ursula K. Le Guin (2016, p. 110)

It is not a stretch to view Le Guin's compost and gardens as the creative process and suggest that creativity involves silence in some form. I guess many will intuitively agree that creativity requires occasional silence, and silence is also attributed to creativity by scholars with statements such as 'pregnant with possibilities, a source of creativity' (Bigo, 2018, p. 122). Silence positions us as listeners. Listening is seemingly passive—and even more so listening when there is nothing to listen *to*—and thus easily deemed unproductive in a world obsessed with activity. Maintaining

C. Wegener (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: cw@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_20

silence, not rushing to produce, prove and make yourself heard thus allows for sensing more subtle input. Silence, then, can allow for the piling up of things easily ignored or discarded as of no relevance; for a playful accumulation of ideas and information that may, when the time is ripe, combine in ways as never before—that is, creativity as the result of learning from or re-creating existing processes and materials (Tanggaard & Wegener, 2016).

Since I set out to write this piece about silence, I have sought to keep the inquiry open, listened to silence and noise, refrained from discarding information as irrelevant and just collected what resonated with me in a file with Le Guin's words as epigraph. I assumed it would all come together when it had finished composting. This did not happen, of course, and then came heavy digging, intense weeding and meticulous tying-in of stems and shoots—the hard work often undervalued in understandings of creativity (Tanggaard, 2019). Creativity growing out of silence involves a balance of waiting and working, of being and doing. Le Guin has something to say about that too. We will return to her at the end.

What follows is my cultivation of website browsing, research reading and a return visit to my journal written during the first lockdown in 2020. 'It reads as an almost free stream of associations on silence', one early reader commented. I am happy if it reads like that. Written in the present tense, the text suggests a processual inquiry, a connecting of elements into some kind of intermediate whole (Wegener, 2022), a privilege of process over person and product, never to be completed. An invitation.

Silence Is Ambiguous

Silence is a complex and ambiguous term. Bono, the lead singer of U2, said of the late musician Jeff Buckley that he was a pure drop in an ocean of noise. Bono seems to suggest that Buckley's talent was an antidote to noise; that his music enticed some kind of silence in the listener, an observation that I find to be both strange and true. Silence may not be the absence of sound. Nor does silence in itself lead to creativity. Silence is oppressive, as when no one speaks up in the face of injustice or when the perspectives of certain groups are ignored; that is, when people are *silenced*. Silence is an effective torture technique involving confinement and sensory deprivation that makes even the most mentally and physically robust person sick and insane. Silence may even mean death, as when Shakespeare lets Hamlet declare his famous last words: 'The rest is silence'.

That said, silence of the kind involved in Le Guin's compost-time is rare in workplaces. I have never attended a meeting, no matter how explicit the quest for participants to be creative, which involved any form of generative silence, i.e. silence as affordance (see Chap. 2). Why do managers and others responsible for creativity seem to be reluctant (or unable) to perceive silences as an affordance? Saunders (2012, p. 219) suggests this may be because silence 'often looks like day-dreaming, wool-gathering, reverie, it involves apparently inactive activities, it requires being "off-task"'. While policy and management rhetoric celebrate creativity, there seems to be an even more celebrated idea of making yourself heard and seen, an imperative to (loudly) document your productivity. As Power (2009, p. 24) puts it, we are at all times supposed to be a 'walking CV' able to show off where we've been and how we have made profitable use of our time. Being a walking CV, individually or as a team, leaves little room for composting, and this may impede a delicate source of creativity: 'If silence involves less (literal or figurative) noise, it leaves room for (more of) something Other and new to emerge in its stead' (Bigo, 2018, p. 122). Silence and creativity—the reasoning seems straightforward: noise in the world, and mental noise in our heads, self-imposed noise from smartphone notifications, to-do lists and so on. All this noise leaves little room for something Other to emerge. Compost-time easily comes to equal waste-of-time. Just leaving room for 'something' to emerge is risky in a world where value-creation is often considered loud, plannable and measurable. Something 'Other and new' seems a bit too unpredictable, too open. We are moving away from the very idea of silence, however.

'There Is No Such Thing As Silence'

Most of what I have found about silence seems to be about sound. From a website summarizing the findings of Dr. Seth Horowitz's book *The Universal Sense*, I learn that:

The ear senses the changes in pressure of molecules. That's hearing.
Even in quiet areas, you can hear the air molecules vibrating inside your ear canals or the flow of your ear fluid.
Energy vibrates and therefore makes sounds. Intergalactic space and even black holes make sound.
Sound is vital to the evolution, development and function of the mind.

When you move and listen from another place, what you hear will change.[1]

All this suggests that composer and music theorist John Cage was right when he stated: 'There is no such thing as silence' (Cage, 2011, p. 51). We will return to Cage shortly. Studying silence makes it clear that when noise is reduced, the sounds of life itself—from ear canals to galaxies—become audible. It also suggests that the experience of silence may make people listen differently and that sound is relative. Move, and your perception will change (see Chap. 15).

For learning to listen differently, I find inspiration in Lefebvre's (1992) *Rhythmanalysis*, which assists my attempts to conceive of research as a fine-tuning of the senses through intimate, embodied experiences of space and time. Lefebvre (1992) argues that the human body has several rhythms and that rhythms outside the body can be studied with the researchers' own rhythms as reference (see also Chap. 18). The term 'Rhythmanalysis' thus refers to the conjunction of the rhythmanalyst (the researcher) and the object of study. To become a rhythmanalyst, the researcher must listen to his (or her, their) body and learn rhythm from it, and then he 'will listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to *murmurs* [rumeurs], full of meaning—and finally he will listen to silences' (p. 29). The more you listen, the more you sensitize yourself to silence. And (even though Lefebvre seems to stay with duality) this kind of listening takes us towards perceiving the listeners and the sound as one—towards creativity as process (see Chap. 14).

Towards Negative Decibels

We can learn more about silence from John Cage, who claims it doesn't exist. His famous piece *4'33"* instructs the performer *not* to play his or her instrument for the duration of 4 minutes and 33 seconds. On YouTube, we can watch (and hear) a pianist not hitting a key or a conductor guiding an entire symphony orchestra not putting bow to string or mouthpiece to lips. It is a silent piece in three movements, and is it not quiet. The piece *4'33"* consists of the sounds of the environment that the listeners make and hear while it is being performed. There is coughing, clearing of throats, paper rustling and audience whispering, even people leaving in

[1] https://www.ctpublic.org/health/2015-03-16/there-is-no-such-thing-as-silence.

anger. 'There is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound', says Cage (2011, p. 191).

The piece *4'33"* consists of the sounds of the wind, the raindrops on the roof and the noises of the audience. 'They didn't get it', Cage explained after the tumultuous premiere. 'What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds'.

So, does this mean that silence can only be negatively defined? And negatively experienced? I turn to the acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton, who finds and records quiet places. Quiet places are not defined by silence, though. Rather, Hempton defines quiet places as places free from any human-made noise, i.e. places with 'the sound of pure nature'. He defines a quiet place as a location where you can listen to the sounds of nature without interruption for 15 minutes. How many quiet places did he find? In the continental United States, he suggests there are twelve, but, as to where they are, he keeps quiet.[2] I wonder: When he is there, recording the sound of pure nature, what does his presence do to his definition of silence?

In the lab, too, attempts to generate entirely noiseless environments have been largely unsuccessful (Bigo, 2018). Some, however, come close. Anechoic chambers at universities around the world afford the study of human perception, the notions of silence and sound, the development of hearing aids and much more. Anechoic chambers are soundproof rooms letting in no noise from the outside. Inside, walls made of wedges or cones make any sound produced inside the room stop cold. The anechoic chamber at *Orfield Laboratories* in Minnesota holds the Guinness World Record for the world's quietest place. The background noise measures negative decibels.[3]

In the anechoic chamber at Microsoft's headquarters in Redmond, Washington, the background noise is so low that it approaches the lowest threshold theorized by mathematicians, the absolute zero of sound—the next step down is a vacuum, or the absence of sound.[4] People who have spent time in an anechoic chamber talk about hearing their heartbeat, and deafening ringing in the ears. Soon, they lose balance because the lack of

[2] https://www.theinertia.com/environment/there-are-only-12-quiet-places-left-in-the-u-s-and-this-man-will-only-tell-us-3-of-them/.

[3] https://www.soundacousticsolutions.com/blog/2018/04/05/the-quietest-room-on-earth/.

[4] https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/anechoic-chamber-worlds-quietest-room/index.html.

reverberation destroys spatial awareness. This is why visitors must spend their time in the chamber sitting or lying in a net, a giant hammock strung out surrounded by wedges.

The Longing for Silence

If you dream of more silence in your everyday life, you should probably not rent an anechoic chamber. The longest anybody has been able to be in the one at *Orfield Laboratories* is 45 minutes. Many are willing to pay generously for silence, though, and silence has become a much-sought-after luxury. It has become a commodity we can acquire, allegedly, by travelling around the globe to spend time at a silent retreat or, less drastically, to hike the mountains or sit by the fireplace in a summer cottage. Silence belongs to the holidays as a luxurious commodity. Treating silence exclusively as luxury and leisure thus excludes rich sources of creativity in everyday life.

As mentioned, this may be because being loud is so widely hyped and because loudness easily equals productivity. It may also be because uncertainty is unpleasurable. Absorbed in noisy, scheduled activities, we might feel we are in control, productive and polishing our 'walking CV'. But when there is silence we may realize that we have very little control at all. In this, silence is very different from action, and it:

> generally begins with a surrender of the chase, the abandonment of efforts to impose our will and vision on the world. Not only is it about standing still; with rare exceptions, the pursuit of silence seems initially to involve a step backward from the tussle of life… [I]t's as though, as a culture, we've learned to 'mind the gaps' so well that they've all but disappeared. (Prochnik, 2011, p. 12)

Gaps can be scary. We'd better fill them instead of stumbling into one (see Chap. 22). In this respect, the experience of silence implies the ability to give in, let go and surrender. Bigo (p. 129) refers to organizational theorists Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, who 'attribute to silence the power to open up spaces in which the rational all knowing and control oriented ego-mind becomes more transparent, leading to a possible transformation of one's relation to reality'.

There are ample stories about scientists, writers and artists seeking to renew their relation to reality (that is, change perspective) by means of seclusion and by spending solitary time in silent places. In *A book of Silence*, Sara Maitland (2009) examines how living alone and secluded for long

periods of time both fosters and impedes her artistic output. Secluded for long periods, she experiences auditory hallucinations, intensified sensations and strong connectedness to her environment. In the chapter 'The Dark Side', she writes about the harms of prolonged silence and arrives at a distinction between chosen and enforced silence. As summed up by Maftei (2008), 'the main difference between an imposed "silencing" and a desirable, self-chosen silence lies not in the actual events arising, but in one's reactions to and perceptions of the experience'. Eventually, Maitland becomes attuned to ways and places of silence in her day-to-day life, thus relating to silence through gardening, meditating, etc. and hence the experience of a creative everyday life.

Everyday attunement was indeed the case as I chronicled this:

A Silence As Never Before, Spring 2020

The lockdown is a time of great concern and of renewed listening. To me, there is a silence as never before. To others, more noise. The lockdown is definitely noisy for the Asian immigrant workers trapped in transit at Moscow airports with expired work permits, the inhabitants of the Cape Town townships who share one water tap with a hundred neighbours and the New Delhi citizens who are desperately trying to buy food in the four-hour window from the political announcement of the curfew until it takes effect.

I have never watched any news about the conditions of Asian immigrant workers in Russia, access to tap water in South African townships or the status of the food supply in India. I chose not to remind myself because I did not want to know. Now I watch the news all the time.

I ask a friend to take a Friday-night ride to the city centre. We park our bikes and walk past the row of closed cafés by the waterfront. All tables and chairs are stacked up, and at each front door we read a notice announcing that the café is closed 'until further notice'. The scratchy sound of small wheels against pavement makes us step to the side to give way for a skater who is taking the opportunity to race in this usually overcrowded space. He wears no protection aid of any kind—knees, hands and head boldly exposed to the world.

I strongly sense that this has to do with a renewed reverberation. I am losing balance like the people from the anechoic chambers report. Lefebvre (1992) wrote that, finally, we will listen to silences. I am a rhythmanalyst in the still and empty city. I know there is a frenzied noise around the globe, and that all this is temporary. But right here, right now, I am absorbed in an almost silent time-out.

We walk by a small square full of newly sprung Japanese cherry trees. They are early, we agree: Their powdery blossom used to be an April treat. The flowers are soft against my palms and have no smell. The sky is dark blue now, with a slim new moon, and there is nothing more we can do but return to our bikes and head home along the seashore. I listen to noises and, finally, to silences. My friend is right beside me, keeping up the pace. She doesn't say a word. She might be listening, too. I wouldn't know. If I ask, I will not be listening to silence any more.

A Vibrant Silence

This is what I was able to do with silence and creativity for this piece of writing; the story is almost done. I piled up stuff, I waited, and I worked hard. Some weeds and a few flowers grew. Some seeds are yet to sprout. Le Guin has something more to say about creativity by composting:

> Like a poem, a story says what it has to say in the only way it can be said, and that is the exact words of the story itself. Which is why the words are so important, why it takes so long to learn how to get the words right. Why you need silence, darkness, time, patience, and a real, solid knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar. (Le Guin, 2016, p. 110)

For creativity to grow out of silence, we need 'real, solid knowledge', Le Guin seems to suggest. That is, we need to acquire knowledge and to practise the skills necessary for creativity to emerge (see Chaps. 5 and 26). Letting stuff, junk, garbage, anything, just lie there composting on its own is not enough. Fine-tuning the senses is important, and so is exercising our skills. Without hard work, no creativity. So, what did I learn and what to conclude?

Complete absence of sound does not exist. There is no such thing as silence, but if we let go of what silence *is*, we can keep silence vibrant and ask what silence does and what experiences of silence we desire for creativity to flourish. Listening to silence allows for a change in the way of being in and perceiving the world, maybe even noticing that you can hear the air molecules vibrating inside your galaxies as they resonate with the ear canals of the universe.

And maybe there *is* such a thing as silence. But as soon as you say it, you lose it. When you start singing 'Silent night', the night is not silent any more. The song is beautiful, though, grown out of an experience of

listening in the night. And when you stop singing—and refrain from babbling away or checking your phone—there will be a moment of silence that is very satisfying.

Listen…

References

Bigo, V. (2018). On silence, creativity and ethics in organization studies. *Organization Studies, 39*(1), 121–133.

Cage, J. (2011, Original 1961). *Silence: Lectures and writings* (50th anniversary ed.). Wesleyan University Press.

Le Guin, U. K. (2016). *Words are my matter: Writings about life and books, 2000–2016, with a journal of a writer's week*. Small Beer Press.

Lefebvre, H. (1992). *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Maftei, M. (2008). A Book of Silence By Sara Maitland. The Kelvingrove Review. London: Granata. 4

Maitland, S. (2009). *A book of silence*. Granta Books.

Power, N. (2009). *One dimensional woman*. Zero Books.

Prochnik, G. (2011). *In pursuit of silence: Listening for meaning in a world of noise*. Anchor.

Saunders, L. (2012). Silences and silence in 'creativity'. *London Review of Education, 10*(2), 215–225.

Tanggaard, L. (2019). Content-driven pedagogy: On passion, absorption and immersion as dynamic drivers of creativity. In R. A. Beghetto & G. E. Corazza (Eds.), *Dynamic perspectives on creativity: Creativity theory and action in education* (Vol. 4). Springer.

Tanggaard, L., & Wegener, C. (2016). Why novelty is overrated. *Journal of Education and Work, 29*(6), 728–745.

Wegener, C. (2022). Rhythms of writing: Processes of connecting (with) words. In B. Simpson & L. Revsbaek (Eds.), *Doing process research in organizations: Noticing differently*. Oxford University Press.

CHAPTER 21

Space

Nik Kharlamov

Consider the page of text that the word processor is displaying on my screen. Although the page is virtual, it still preserves some aspects of the pre-computer reality: Black text against white background, which itself is placed against more black as a rectangular shape—software tells me in fact, that the chosen document size is 'Letter'. As I am revising this chapter for the new edition, the page is already mostly filled with text—I need to add some, remove some, edit some…

Is this page—(a) space? Is it 'creative space'? And more generally, is 'creative space' the same as 'space of creativity'? What does space have to do with creativity?

Filling the Void with Meaning

"Spaces have multiplied, been broken up and have diversified. There are spaces today of every kind and every size, for every use and every function. To live is to pass from one space to another, while doing your very best not to bump yourself" (Perec, 1974/2008, p. 6). Georges Perec, the French

N. Kharlamov (✉)
Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: nik@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_21

experimental writer, wrote an entire manuscript on space, entitled *Species of spaces* (1974/2008). The first species in his taxonomy is, indeed, "The Page" (Perec, 1974/2008, p. 9)—I can hardly think of something more Perecquian than referring in writing, or more adequately: in typing, to *the page itself* on which filling a page with lines of text is discussed. Perec, whose entire thought seemingly revolves around the activity of writing, writes how scribbling sequences of letters on an empty page of paper provides the said page of paper with an orientation and the said lines with direction.

Filling a void (*space*) of paper with signs (*meaning*) is an idea that directly resonates with Yi-Fu Tuan's geographical thought. For Tuan, the essence of spatiality is humans transforming abstract, undifferentiated space into a fabric of meaningful *places* (Tuan, 1977). It also resonates with Heinz Werner's (1957) 'orthogenetic principle' of development, whereby development of human psychological functioning proceeds by way of differentiation, articulation and hierarchical integration (Bibace & Kharlamov, 2013).

Filling a void with meaning. Creating a *difference*. Creating a *place*. As Perec not so much 'writes' as 'conveys through' his writing, meaning construction is an emotionally charged business—in his case, one laden with anxieties, nostalgia, yearning. The same meaning also ultimately escapes writing. Perec has on different occasions experimented with approaching this meaning in a highly descriptive fashion, by carefully noting down what he could see around himself—for example in *Species of spaces* (1974/2008, pp. 50–54) and in a separate work entitled, passingly, *An attempt at exhausting a place in Paris* (1975/2010). As Marc Lowenthal notes in his *Translator's afterword* to the latter text, after an attempt is made to describe and communicate everything, "what always remains after such an effort, what remains uncommunicated, is misery" (2010, p. 50). And yet, Perec continued efforts to write and communicate the "infraordinary", "the markings and manifestations of the everyday that consistently escape our attention as they compose the essence of our lives" (Lowenthal, 2010, p. 51).

Filling a void—such as a page—with meaning implies an empty space and a process that (at least assuming that it is implemented by one or more pre-generative-AI humans) in some sense is *creative*. Is space, then, just neutral container, space of creativity?

Poem on the Wall

Let's explore a concrete case of space where text could belong. Among the various spaces of this kind, urban walls are among the most ubiquitous. They offer space for house numbers and street names, logos, signs, advertisements, posters, flyers, murals, and, of course, graffiti.

> *He'll never give You BALOONS*
> *but a good memory INSTEAD*

Read the first two lines of what I might call, provisionally and with a nod to Stanley Fish (1980), a *poem*, written on the wall of the beach house at Lyons Park, also known locally as Dane Street Beach, in Beverly, Massachusetts (Fig. 21.1). The anonymous producer of this inscription had used a tool (most likely a spray can) to write an emotion-laden piece

Fig. 21.1 Dane Street Beach, Beverly, MA, USA. (Source: Taken by author, January 2015)

of language right into the fabric of publicly accessible urban environment. Another inscription in white paint visibly contests the poem in red.

The brick wall has served several different roles. First, as an *object*, a result of the human activity of building (a nod to Heidegger, 1954/2008; see also Chap. 23). Second, as *space*—a container for what beyond doubt was a result of creative *activity*. But beyond that, the wall both has an affordance (see Chap. 2) for this activity and functions as trigger for it. Finally, the wall with the inscription has served as *catalyst* (Beckstead, 2021) for further creative activity for the present author. Human environment is formed through precisely such historically extended *layers* of materiality and activity—layers that are meaningful and significant, that foster emotional responses and further communicative activities and that are part of larger contexts of power and resistance (Awad, 2021). Do we, then, do justice to this space by denoting it as 'space of creativity'? Is it simply a piece of void, waiting to be made into place (à la Tuan, 1977), to be differentiated, articulated and hierarchically integrated (à la Werner, 1957)?

Extended Mind and Dwelling in the World of Poems and Plastic Jars

A cluster of ideas upsets the common-sense understanding of creativity as a property of the creative 'mind', as something akin to personality traits. As Andy Clark and David Chalmers (1998) famously argued, what we alternatively call "cognition", "mind" or "consciousness" is not contained inside the head of a "person" but is *extended into* the environment, into the very space that surrounds us and can only exist as a property of this organism-environment relationship.

Consider the face, this absolutely central facet of a human organism. It is well-known how the human brain is geared toward recognizing faces even in some of the most unlikely shapes and scenes (witness the age-old tendency to ascribe facial features to hills and mountains, even on Mars). However, perform a simple experiment by looking at somebody's face (or a photograph, if you have no humans at hand) and then closing your eyes and trying to reconstruct the image of the face. In fact, it is a task next to impossible, no matter how much the Romantics would love to have it the other way around. Still, to the extent of the available abilities, skills, habits, experience and perhaps talent, it is possible for a person to attempt

at creating a representation of a face. Faces are represented in language, using words (The nose—is it narrow? Bulbous? Is there a nose bump in the middle?—and so forth). They can also be represented in lines of ink or paint and in pixels on computer screens. Indeed, some great painters have been able to create or reconstruct faces without looking, in the process, at any source material.

This little experiment is explained by the fact that, to the best of our current understanding, the human brain does not actually store a single, detailed, veridical ongoing representation of the scene in front of the eyes. The *world itself* serves as memory, accessible for updating online, as needed, depending on whatever concrete task the visual system and the psychological system is engaged in at any given moment (O'Regan, 1992; Van der Stigchel, 2020). Indeed, the phenomenological impression of stable, rich, verisimilar visual world is best described as an intricate illusion, a product of constructive action of the nervous system (Martinez-Conde & Macknik, 2017; Pearson & Westbrook, 2015).

It is a small and logical step from here to conclude that the very material space and its features—such as these words on my computer screen—are not just a 'product' or 'outcome' of a 'creative process'. It is not my 'mind' that first creates a meaning—a blueprint for writing or making or doing or performing—so that my 'body' then can effect a realisation of the blueprint and imprint its features on the external world. Instead, the primary process in creativity is what Tim Ingold, following Martin Heidegger (1954/2008), described as *dwelling*: "the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings" (Ingold, 2000, p. 186; see also Chaps. 5 and 14).

An elegant example of dwelling is how toddlers learn the designed actions of everyday objects such as opening jars with twist-off lids (Rachwani et al., 2020): The developmental progression proceeds from nondesigned actions (such as shaking and putting the jar into the mouth) to individual designed actions (such as attempting to rotate the lid) to successful implementation of the full action. Importantly, this progression is not happening inside the 'mind' locked inside the toddler's head but occurs in close interaction between the person and the object and in a dynamic cycle between perception and motor action. "Discovery and implementation of the designed action are intertwined" (Rachwani et al., 2020, p. 76; see also Chap. 6). Much of toddler interaction with the world

exhibits hallmarks of embodiment, including supposedly abstract higher-level cognitive processes such as making action choices—for example, trying to fit into a toy car that is far too small (Rivière, 2014).

Psychologists would recognize this "dwelling" account of psychological functioning—and consequently, of creativity—as "embodied cognition" (Glenberg et al., 2013; Wilson, 2002), a perspective in close dialog (but not synonymous) with Clark and Chalmers' (1998) "extended mind". It implies that any activity, be it even the activity of reciting a well-learned poem or opening a jar of hazelnut spread, is much more here-and-now, spontaneous, constructive, even serendipitous than common sense would admit. If so, then, the world itself is also not a passive recipient of projecting mental plans, but offers endless possibilities for *stumbling* (see Chap. 22). Where does this leave us with regards to creativity and space?

The Staatsbibliothek Experiment

I found a desk in a row of desks on a little balcony-like space that houses law books (Rechstwissenschaft). From this balcony, I face huge windows, a cathedral straight ahead and the house of the Berlin Philharmonic on my right-hand side.

Public libraries have different rituals and rules of access. The ones I have visited in the USA thus far were all free to enter from the street. You could just walk in past the guards with whatever you have on you, no passes or registration needed, and proceed straight into the reading rooms and other facilities. In Denmark, I also simply walk in, no cards needed. But here, in Berlin, I had to sign up for a library card to even get past the guard post (staffed by two middle-aged women perched royally on elevated armchairs, overlooking the gates that open only for the library card holder).

An experiment: Watch *Wings of Desire* (Wenders, 1987). (The original German title was *Der Himmel über Berlin*, *The Sky* (or *Heaven*) *above Berlin*.) Take a photograph (Fig. 21.2) of the Berlin Library interior (make sure the photograph has a bit of sky in it). Retrace the steps of the angels.

The Berlin Public Library at Potsdamer Straße is just like much of Berlin itself. It has a great deal of open, empty space. Uncounted (by me) cubic feet of emptiness hover above the library floors. Even the men's room, as soon as the visitor passes a narrow dilapidated cubicle just past the door, opens into a wide, empty room covered with tiles, one wall completely devoid of anything but a faucet for filling the cleaning bucket.

Fig. 21.2 Allgemeiner Lesesaal, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Haus Potsdamer Straße, Berlin, Germany. (Source: Taken by the author, February 2015)

Right now [at the time of writing of this section, in February 2015], there are pockets of renovation around the library. The façade is being renovated (and there is a massive excavator rolling to and fro in front of the main entrance), and there is scaffolding inside as well. Still, the library is the *same*. As I watch the library scenes in *Wings of Desire*, I realise that my laptop sits atop one of the very desks that I see on the screen, illuminated by the same brown lamps (perhaps the light bulbs are energy-saving now). Almost 30 years later, laptops and cell phones on the desks might be the only signs that we're not in West Germany anymore. It is as if history itself has sedimented in this spacious edifice, even as all around it Walter Benjamin's storm of progress rages, propelling the Angelus Novus forward (Benjamin, 1950/1999, p. 249).

Perec says nothing about libraries in his *Species of space*, except that readers read there (Perec, 1974/2008, p. 14). Yet, of all possible spaces, they might be among the most paradoxical in terms of their relationship

with both history and creativity. Libraries exist to conserve and preserve in an unchangeable form, to solidify, to make perpetually accessible to the future generations. What can be more alien to both the *irreversibility of time* (physical and historical) and the *generation of novelty* (that is, creativity in the most basic sense of the term)? Still, even in the age of the Internet, young and old learners are directed to the library to learn and develop. (Indeed, in many countries—such as Denmark and the USA—it is the public library where the poorest and least technologically enabled members of the public access the Internet and the essential digital public services.) This may be what Borges's man of the Library meant when he wrote that "the Library is limitless and periodic" (Borges, 1941/1962, p. 87, italics removed). Infinite, open, chaotic and yet with a seeming regularity and orderliness (see also Chap. 12).

The paragraphs in this section were *written in* the library and are precisely an exercise in *stumbling*. Do they also *belong to* the library? Will they belong there in the future?

Creative Spaces and Their Discontents

It is unlikely that my writing of the Staatsbibliothek experiment or the unknown author's writing of the poem about baloons and memory can be framed as execution of mental programs, products of purely cognitive activity of algorithmic manipulation of abstract symbols (as the much-maligned "Physical Symbol Systems Hypothesis" perspective in cognitive psychology would portray it—see Glenberg et al., 2013, for a detailed exposition of this perspective). Spaces where these texts were produced were never an empty void to be filled by a (creative) mind, never an 'abstract geography' (contrary to what I myself once assumed when writing about human psychological experience of space and place—Kharlamov, 2012). Thus, the concept of 'space of creativity' has little value: Space itself is creative, both in the grand sense of workshops of great masters and in the most minute sense of a toddler, learning what for them is undoubtedly an incredibly creative act of opening a plastic jar. Is there potential in the expression 'creative space'?

In 2002, Richard Florida introduced the term "creative class", defined as distinct socioeconomic group, whose function in the economy is to "create meaningful new forms" (Florida, 2002, p. 6). Florida argued that the twenty-first century economy will be primarily driven by this new class. Around the same time, concepts of 'creative city' (Florida, 2005; Landry,

2000) and 'creative space' became popular. Politicians, municipal officials, architects and consultancies across the world raced to attract the creative class and to foster spaces for its flourishing (one typology of such spaces includes 'personal', 'collaboration', 'presentation', 'making' and 'intermission' spaces—Thoring et al., 2018). The jury is still out on the successes of the ensuing policies (Nathan, 2015) and the concept has been criticized as embodying and perpetuating displacement, and even oppression, of the non-creative classes (McLean, 2014; Peck, 2005; see also Chap. 16).

For our purposes, the main discontent of 'creative space' is that while the concept underscores the role of space in fostering creativity, it is at the same time rooted in a worldview that limits creativity to a particular kind of capitalist activity, whose results can be commercialized and capitalized upon. Neither kids creating new things (as little as those things might be—a clumsy drawing of mom and smiling sun, a sandcastle) nor graffiti of resistance are included.

In light of the idea that creativity is extended into and distributed (Glăveanu, 2014, Ch. 11) across the physical and social environment, the very notion of defining *a particular space* as 'space of creativity' or 'creative space' is misleading. Equally misleading is defining a person or a social class as 'creative' and then hoping to design a container—a 'creative city' for instance—into which this creative entity will fit. It is the relationship between humans and space, rather than space or humans alone, that is creative. Sometimes it is creative in a troubling, disruptive, subversive or plain annoying fashion (as my parents learned when I once tried using the wallpaper in the bedroom as watercolour drawing canvas).

Assuming that some spaces, some people or some objects (works, products) are more creative than others can be valuable practically and theoretically. However, creativity studies could benefit from temporary suspension of this assumption to explore creative relationships between humans and spaces of the kind that Georges Perec would call "infraordinary"—such as a child's drawing on the bedroom wallpaper.

References

Awad, S. H. (2021). Street art. In V. P. Glăveanu (Ed.), *The Palgrave encyclopedia of the possible*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98390-5_154-1

Beckstead, Z. (2021). Catalysis in cultural psychology: Its past and future. In B. Wagoner, B. A. Christensen, & C. Demuth (Eds.), *Culture as process: A tribute to Jaan Valsiner* (pp. 409–418). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77892-7_36

Benjamin, W. (1999). Theses on the philosophy of history. (H. Zohn, Trans.). In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations* (pp. 245–255). Pimlico. (Original work published in 1950.)

Bibace, R., & Kharlamov, N. A. (2013). The spiral: The concept of development after Werner and Kaplan. *Culture & Psychology, 19*, 453–462. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X1350032

Borges, J. L. (1962). The library of Babel. (A. Kerrigan, Trans.). In A. Kerrigan (Ed.), *Ficciones* (pp. 79–88). Grove Press. (Original work published in 1941.)

Clark, A., & Chalmers, D. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis, 58*, 7–19. https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/58.1.7

Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Harvard University Press.

Florida, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class*. Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2005). *Cities and the creative class*. Routledge.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Thinking through creativity and culture: Toward an integrated model*. Transaction Publishers.

Glenberg, A. M., Witt, J. K., & Metcalfe, J. (2013). From the revolution to embodiment: 25 years of cognitive psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 8*(5), 573–585. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691613498098

Heidegger, M. (2008). Building dwelling thinking. (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). In D. F. Krell (Ed.), *Martin Heidegger: Basic writings* (pp. 343–363). HarperCollins Publishers. (Original work published in 1954.)

Ingold, T. (2000). *The perception of the environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. Routledge.

Kharlamov, N. A. (2012). The city as a sign: A developmental-experiential approach to spatial life. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of culture and psychology* (pp. 277–302). Oxford University Press.

Landry, C. (2000). *The creative city: A toolkit for urban innovators*. Earthscan.

Lowenthal, M. (2010). Translator's afterword. In G. Perec (Ed.), *An attempt at exhausting a place in Paris* (pp. 49–55). Wakefield Press.

Martinez-Conde, S., & Macknik, S. L. (2017). Unchanging visions: The effects and limitations of ocular stillness. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 372*(1718), a20160204. https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2016.0204

McLean, H. (2014). Digging into the creative city: A feminist critique. *Antipode, 46*(3), 669–690. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12078

Nathan, M. (2015). After Florida: Towards an economics of diversity. *European Urban and Regional Studies, 22*, 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776412463371

O'Regan, J. K. (1992). Solving the "real" mysteries of visual perception: The world as an outside memory. *Canadian Journal of Psychology, 46*(3), 461–488. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0084327

Pearson, J., & Westbrook, F. (2015). Phantom perception: Voluntary and involuntary nonretinal vision. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 19*(5), 278–284. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2015.03.004

Peck, J. (2005). Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 29*(4), 740–770. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2005.00620.x

Perec, G. (1974/2008). Species of spaces/Especes d'espaces. (J. Sturrock, Trans.). In J. Sturrock (Ed.), *Georges Perec. Species of spaces and other pieces* (pp. 1–96). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1974.)

Perec, G. (2010). *An attempt at exhausting a place in Paris.* Wakefield Press. (Original work published in 1975.).

Rachwani, J., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Lockman, J. J., Karasik, L. B., & Adolph, K. E. (2020). Learning the designed actions of everyday objects. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 149*(1), 67–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000631

Rivière, J. (2014). Embodiment in children's choice: Linking bodily constraints with decisional dynamics. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23*, 408–413. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414548214

Thoring, K., Desmet, P., & Badke-Schaub, P. (2018). Creative environments for design education and practice: A typology of creative spaces. *Design Studies, 56*, 54–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2018.02.001

Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience.* University of Minnesota Press.

Van der Stigchel, S. (2020). An embodied account of visual working memory. *Visual Cognition, 28*(5–8), 414–419. https://doi.org/10.1080/13506285.2020.1742827

Wenders, W. (Director). (1987). *Wings of desire* [Film]. Road Movies Filmproduktion.

Werner, H. (1957). The concept of development from a comparative and organismic point of view. In D. B. Harris (Ed.), *The concept of development: An issue in the study of human behavior* (pp. 125–148). University of Minnesota Press.

Wilson, M. (2002). Six views of embodied cognition. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review, 9*, 625–636. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03196322

CHAPTER 22

Stumbling

Lene Tanggaard

This chapter reflects on the experience of stumbling and how such experiences in everyday life may open a chance to learn and engage in creative processes, which may eventually make us more creative or result in something creative.

I will focus specifically on stumbling as an instance in everyday life leading to *learning* or resulting in *data*, which can be used for creative purposes. Examples of this include a conversation that sticks in our memory; a chance observation made at work, in the gym or in the local school; or an advertisement that provokes anger, without being immediately able to say why and major events as the recent pandemic which caused global change. When an experience constitutes an example of data, it is often because it seems so strange or awkward that we begin to reflect on it and learn from it (see also Chap. 15). Examples of stumbling data from everyday life are almost endless, showing that almost any event can provide us with valuable information (Latour, 2005).

L. Tanggaard (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: lenet@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_22

In this sense, it is not bad to stumble. To stumble upon something is to be in a position to find out new or even old things about the world we live in. It is often through deviations or noteworthy events that the social world becomes evident to us as an object to reflect upon. Deviation often fuels irritation, frustration or the imagination, and this may lead to a break with habitual assumptions about everyday life. *Imagination* is understood, here, as one of the most important dimensions in the process of turning instances of stumbling into creativity (see also Chap. 6). Imagination allows people and groups to think beyond the given, the here-and-now, to envisage alternatives, to create parallel worlds or to travel through time, in the past, present or in the future. Imagination is both extremely individual—people imagine their unique futures—and deeply social, in its constituents (fed by media and other kinds of shared representations) (see Zittoun & de Saint-Laurent, 2015).

In order conceptually to understand the creative dimension of stumbling upon something, I will draw on the pragmatist epistemology developed by John Dewey (1938). According to Dewey, most of our life is based on routine and habit (also referred to as 'tacit' or 'silent' knowledge); thinking and reflection become necessary only at the point where habitual life cannot continue unchanged. In this sense, imagining what might happen next, or thinking about what has happened, are necessary only when ordinary practices cannot continue as they were. These instances, though, which involve imagination, may be seen as an attempt to re-establish balance after an error, or to understand the nature of the apparent strangeness in order to be able to take action in response. According to the principles of pragmatism, all knowledge is connected to action, either directly (as in action research) or with respect to the development of 'thinking technologies' that enable us to deal with new situations in the future (Brinkmann, 2012).

In his numerous books and articles, Dewey diagnosed the problems inherent to "*the spectator theory of knowledge*". For Dewey, philosophical problems and positions—such as the spectator theory of knowledge—do not suddenly fall from the sky, but are ideas that grow out of the lives of communities (Dewey, 1920, p. v). Thus, he traced the dualisms of knowledge and action, ends and means, the ideal and the real and theory and practice, to the birth of science and philosophy in Ancient Greek society, in which a sharp division of labour was instituted between, on the one hand, slaves and women who took care of the practical work and, on the other hand, free men, who could spend their time engaging with

philosophy and purely theoretical thought. According to Dewey, it was the social separation of the working class and the leisure class that "became a metaphysical division into things which are mere means and things which are ends" (Dewey, 1925, p. 124). This social, cultural and economic division has subsequently influenced our philosophical ideas and has, in particular, given rise to the "spectator theory of knowledge" (Dewey, 1929, p. 23): The theory that true knowledge arises through the passive observation of reality, which allegedly is independent of the observer.

Dewey was keen to demonstrate that this epistemological idea was not only wrong as a philosophical thesis, but also that it gave rise to problematic social consequences in its separation between those who know (e.g. those educated in theoretical forms of thinking) and those who do not know and need to be instructed appropriately by those who do know (e.g. people with practical forms of education). This separation should be replaced, Dewey argued, with a perspective that insists on the fact that different people know *different things*, and that everything we know—if it is to deserve the label 'knowledge'—must have some connection with practical action. We should define something as knowledge only if it allows us to derive some benefit for human experience. This applies to even the most abstract forms of theory. What we call theory, thought and reflection are forms of human activity that are required when our habits are disturbed and suffer a breakdown, as in instances of stumbling (Fig. 22.1). Likewise, in his book the *Craftman*, the sociologist Richard Sennett expands the meaning of craft in a critique of his mentor, the German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt. In her unfinished masterpiece *Life of the Mind*, she distinguishes between the solution of practical and technical problems (how to fix this?) and creative human beings consciously judging and discussing the quality of what is created (what is it good for?). Sennett finds this distinction false, because "discussions related to creation can happen mentally in relation to the materials" (Sennett, 2009, p. 16f., my translation). Framed differently, thought does not only happen when work is over. Sennett warns about a degrading of things in themselves and encourage us to ask: "What the creation of concrete things show about ourselves" (ibid.). Well-designed clothes and great food give us a chance to imagine a more encompassing ordering of goods. This shows how values literally grows out of the hands as part of working with and stumbling over materials.

Fig. 22.1 Stumbling. (Source: By Fimp, under a Creative Commons licence)

How Can We Stumble Creatively?

In the above, knowledge is not something mirroring nature, or achieved by passively observing things; rather, it is something that arises when there is a disconnection between existing understandings of a phenomenon and the here-and-now encounter with the phenomenon we are trying to understand. To take a specific example: One day in the supermarket, you meet a friend. You have not seen her for many years. She says 'Hello' to you, but you do not immediately recognise her. The friend's appearance has changed; she now dresses in a more grown-up way and her hair is shorter and turning grey. You might find it difficult to recognise her as the 'same' as before. As a result, even in only minor ways, you might have to change your assumptions about your friend; accordingly, new knowledge arises within the situation. You now know her as a different person, at least going by her appearance. Meeting her again, you become curious. Has she also changed her political opinions? What about sports and music, which were her favourite topics of conversation years ago? Is she still with her

husband and what about her job situation? In Dewey's sense, you now begin an enquiry, initiated by bumping into your friend by chance.

If you do not stumble on a regular basis—or, at least, are not aware of this happening, one of the most important things you can do in order for creative deviations to occur is to re-learn the joy of experimentation and *learning by doing*, including *learning by failing*. A renowned Danish fashion designer, Henrik Vibskov, at one point, talks about the importance of 'learning through failures'. During a TV show quoted in Tanggaard (2014b, p. 6), he said "Failures are my main means of learning". According to Vibskov, mistakes can initiate a creative process because they point towards something that could not be imagined before venturing into the experience. This is the impetus that is familiar to many of us: Contact with, or resistance afforded by, the materials with which we work gives rise to new ideas. Creative imagination is fundamentally relational, arising in the space between subjects and objects—even if immediate experience might give us the impression that good ideas pop into our heads seemingly out of nowhere.

A recent and dramatic example of stumbling, which were not planned or even expected (although some said it was), is the COVID-19 pandemic which, although on a tragic background, invited us to reflect upon life and death and modern ways of living. I'm not sure we all know exactly what we have learned from this major stumbling experience, but hybrid forms of working has grown out of the crisis lead by technological development of online platforms as *Zoom* or *Teams* already available, and the crisis lead many people to consider living in a more sustainable ways, also fuelled by the evident climate change. Incidentally, the pandemic lead to what I termed crisis-creativity (Tanggaard, 2020), meaning a certain kind of creativity growing out of necessity. The Italian writer Paolo Giordano wrote in his book *Smittens tid* (2020) that Corona was a time for reflection and consideration living through, as he writes: "*a pause where everyday life was put on a hold and rhythm was interrupted*" (p. 15, my translation). The pandemic recreated the cultural and social landscape as a stumbling instance inviting us to reconsider many aspects of our lives. It represented a kind of boundary-crossing creativity leading to many minor instances of creativity in schools and at work and at the same time major, global change.

A pandemic is an unusual occurrence, and even if contingency, disturbance and change are normal phenomena in many parts of the world, many large international companies know that creativity cannot be provided on demand but requires space and time for incubation. Things

sometimes have to be put on a hold. A famous example of this is Google's 20 per cent rule. For 20 per cent of their time, the employees at Google are allowed to experiment with their own projects. In his book *What Matters Now*, Gary Hamel (2012) mentions that many large American companies run similar schemes, because innovation is seen as a key ingredient in ensuring their survival. An innovative company, Hamel writes, is able to see itself and its environment as a portfolio of skills and assets which can be combined in an infinite number of ways to create new products and technologies. However, the problem is that many companies do not invest in ways of increasing employees' innovative skills. They operate a kind of innovation apartheid whereby only the chosen few are allowed to define themselves as inventive. They perhaps feel that they have enough ideas in the first place; but they forget to ask themselves how many of these are potential 'game changers'.

The point is that they should encourage 'wild ideas', permit experimentation and 'error', develop others' ideas and ensure that conditions allow for plenty of new proposals to be put forward. In his work developing a theory of innovation, Hamel discovered that innovators are not necessarily 'super sharp' or artistically gifted people; rather, they are people who have developed a kind of routine in which they regard the environment as a sea of opportunities. They turn dogma on its head. They see more clearly. They utilise what they can and they tune into customers' feelings. In many ways, they are anthropologists who seek to explore every chink and crack, every opening that errors create in the space between dream and reality.

Experiments allow for unexpected discoveries. Many scientific discoveries are the result of the phenomenon I call 'stumbling'. This approach sees errors as positive. After all, we talk about '*coming across*' or '*stumbling across*' a great offer, or a good idea. Again, stumbling is a positive thing. To 'stumble upon things' (in this figurative sense) is a precondition for being able to see the world in interesting ways. It is when stumbling that we can break with the habitus that characterises most of our everyday lives. What we call thought is, from a pragmatic perspective, an attempt at redressing an imbalance caused by a failure or fault; to understand that which at first seems incomprehensible and to achieve more appropriate means of acting.

To benefit from instances of stumbling upon something, we must be open to the new data we encounter whenever we happen to run into new solutions (see also Chap. 8). To do this, we must keep our 'antennae out' and be curious about the world: This will often set the powers of our

imagination in motion. Imagination is very often prompted by a break within our current situation, a kind of disruption resulting from what Peirce, cited in Zittoun and Cerchia (2013, p. 2), calls "'irritation' due to the suspension of belief in things as they are". And yet, imagination starts quite concretely from things as they are and moves them further.

In talking of 'stumbling' or 'deviation data', I am also referring to the subject's transactions with an environment that he or she, at certain moments, 'happens to cross' and wonders at. This reiterates something I have frequently highlighted (Tanggaard, 2013, 2014a): Creativity is, in fact, rooted in *socio-materiality*, an insight that takes its inspiration from a number of ontological and methodological considerations within Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004), with particular focus on improvisation in distributed relations (Ingold & Hallam, 2007). The materials-related concept of creativity offers a sharpened awareness of the ways in which materials, objects and environments suggest innovative measures and also provide an opportunity for innovation within social activities. The significance of material factors has been neglected in most of the existing psychological research on creativity. There has been a marked tendency to adopt an intellectual understanding of creativity that is restricted to the individual person, where creative potential is often defined in terms of divergent thinking. In this sense, the environment plays a subordinate role, acting as the bowl containing the soup, but not being part of the soup itself (Guilford, 1950). The problem with such an individualised understanding of creativity is that we lose sight of the fact that environments are, in fact, constitutive for creativity (Glăveanu, 2014; Tanggaard, 2014a).

The ontological consequence of a materialised and relational view of creativity is that we are forced to move away from a dualism in which the individual subject is opposed to the object and, instead, examine the ways in which materials and environments invite people to innovate. This dialectic is a general characteristic of all social practice, and if we are to achieve a greater degree of analytical sensitivity as to how basic material conditions affect our ways of expressing ourselves creatively then, as Schraube (2009, p. 300) highlights, we should bear the following in mind: "It is not only the subjects that do something with the things; *things also do something with the subjects*" (emphasis added).

Here, we can briefly turn to an illustrative example. The Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson—known, for example, for his temporary physical transformation of New York City through the work 'The

New York City Waterfalls'—told of how ideas are not given to him, but actively taken from something and then embodied in a dialogical interchange as a continuation of his work with materials. In an interview with the Danish magazine *Weekendavisen* (Bonde, 2009), Eliasson talked about the need to manipulate ideas before knowing their value. The journalist asked the question "How do you get your ideas?"

> It is not that ideas are created in a vacuum which exists after finishing one work and waiting for a new idea to arise. Ideas are generated in continuation of previous work—as the result of a dialogue. I do not think that creativity comes from within; rather than having an idea, you embody ideas and, in this way, you are testing whether they are viable.

If we are to follow Eliasson's phenomenological description, ideas are not seen as coming from within or resulting from a definite moment of inspiration. Rather, they are embodied in our practical work in the world. Values grow out of our hands.

Certainly, our knowledge of the world is a practical affair, and it is something grounded in our habitual conduct. We *know how*, Dewey says, "by means of our habits"; the knowledge involved "lives in the muscles, not in consciousness" (Dewey, 1922, p. 177). When we develop habits of dealing with the world, we develop an understanding of the world, which, therefore, cannot be ascribed to a disembodied 'mind' (see also Chap. 18).

Conclusion

This chapter is based on the premise that we must recognise the importance of stumbling for our capacity to learn and reflect on instances of stumbling in order to be more creative. This type of deviation may arise inadvertently or be instigated deliberately (see Chap. 17). Once we become aware of errors and instances of stumbling in everyday life and begin to learn from them, we have the opportunity to make discoveries and create something new. This suggests an understanding of creativity that:

1. Disregards a specifically harmonious view of the creative process in favour of one that may be characterised by failure, mistakes and the realisation that we need to re-think things

2. Celebrates the importance of making small, gradual steps and movements, rather than being an imagined hero who creates amazing things out of thin air
3. Expands the pragmatist understanding of knowledge, in which creativity is theorised as that which makes a difference in practice by using new tools to manage specific challenges

All of these emphasise the fact that creativity is a process and a phenomenon that is found in the *transactions* between subject and object, where ideas emerge from the materials with which we work.

References

Bonde, L. (2009). Kunst står samfundet nær [Art is connected to society]. *Weekendavisen*, no. 14, 03.04.

Brinkmann, S. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in everyday life—Working with everyday life materials.* Sage.

Dewey, J. (1920). *Reconstruction in philosophy.* Beacon Press. (2nd enlarged edition published 1948).

Dewey, J. (1922). *Human nature and conduct: An introduction to social psychology.* Modern Library. (This edition published 1930).

Dewey, J. (1925). *Experience and nature.* Open Court.

Dewey, J. (1929/1960). *The quest for certainty.* Capricorn Books.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry.* Henry Holt & Co.

Giordano, P. (2020). *I smittens tid—vidnesbyrd fra pandemiens frontlinje* [In times of infection—Testimonies from the frontline of the pandemic]. Aarhus: Klim.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2014). *Thinking through creativity and culture: Towards an integrated model.* Transaction.

Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist, 5*, 444–454.

Hamel, G. (2012). *Hvad tæller nu?* [What counts now?]. Gyldendal.

Ingold, T., & Hallam, E. (2007). Creativity and cultural improvisation: An introduction. In E. Hallam & T. Ingold (Eds.), *Creativity and cultural improvisation* (pp. 1–24). Berg.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory.* Oxford University Press.

Law, J. (2004). *After method: Mess in social science research.* Routledge.

Schraube, E. (2009). Technology as materialized action and its ambivalences. *Theory & Psychology, 19*, 296–312.

Sennett, R. (2009). *The Craftman.* Yale University Press.

Tanggaard, L. (2013). The socio-materiality of creativity. *Culture and Psychology, 19*(1), 20–32.

Tanggaard, L. (2014a). *Fooling around: Pathways to creative learning*. Information Age.

Tanggaard, L. (2014b). *Opfindsomhed* [Creative action]. Gyldendal.

Tanggaard, L. (2020). Krisekreativitet [Crisis creativity]. In N. Schultz & O. Jensen (red.), *Det epidemiske samfund* [The epidemic society] (pp. 193–208). Hans Reitzels forlag.

Zittoun, T., & Cerchia, F. (2013). Imagination as expansion of experience. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, *47*(3), 305–324.

Zittoun, T., & de Saint-Laurent, C. (2015). Life-creativity: Imagining one's life. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from cultural psychology* (pp. 58–75). Routledge.

CHAPTER 23

Things

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

We are born into a world of things: Something that is undeniable. Things surround us, they give our life stability, accumulate over time but also change and diversify. Arguably, the most simple definition of creativity would be the process leading to the creation of new things, material and symbolic (including, nowadays, virtual; see Chap. 7). In most cases, creative processes leave a 'visible' mark in the world, they generate or change things around us, but they can also take the shape of utterances or processes (see also Chap. 9). A dance performance can be a creative outcome despite the fact we would not commonly call it a 'thing' (although its recording might be considered one); same for a piece of writing (see also Chap. 26). Nonetheless, by and large, creativity involves a kind of *externalisation* or *materialisation* (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003). Individuals and their culture are connected to each other through things, in the constant dynamic between internalisation and externalisation, appropriation and transformation of the material world. But, of course, other people stand 'between' person and things (Vygotsky, 1997), those who make the things we use, who introduce them to us, who teach us or guide our

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_23

action. It is virtually impossible—or, in any case, reductionist—to consider the relation between individuals and their material surroundings without taking into account the crucial part played by other people and by society at large (Harris, 2023; Pickering, 2023). In other words, without understanding how things become, through (inter)action, objects and, ultimately, artefacts.

Surprisingly for creativity research, however, things, objects, artefacts are rarely taken into consideration (Tanggaard, 2013). And this despite a pervasive focus on products in recent definitions of this phenomenon and in the methodologies used for evaluating creativity (e.g. the consensual definition and consensual assessment technique proposed by Amabile, 1996). In fact, the interest of most psychologists working in this area is placed on unpacking the 'immaterial' aspects of creative production: personality traits, cognitive processes, intelligence, motivation, forms of pathology, and so on. This largely disembodied, intra-psychological approach was challenged in recent decades by more and more studies focused on the social aspects of creativity (see the We-paradigm in Glăveanu, 2010), without really bringing materiality into the equation of creative production (for an exception, see Chap. 3). The 'new' concern for communication and social recognition mainly remained at the level of language, representation and institutionalised forms of culture. And this despite a growing body of empirical evidence suggesting that, at least for creators themselves, material objects and their properties play an important role (for findings from five different creative domains, see Glăveanu et al., 2013). Indeed, materials support, shape, react to, resist and generally lead creative action. They appear, at least from a phenomenological perspective, to be actors in their own right. How are we to understand this?

In this chapter, I propose and discuss a basic (but surely not uncontroversial) distinction between things, objects and artefacts. This typology is proposed not as a tool to classify material reality (because materiality goes beyond these simple categories which don't account, for example, for the body, microscopic structures below the level of our perception, and so on); rather, it is meant to capture the *relation* between us and materiality. In other words, this distinction refers to the nature of this relationship and suggests that we interact with material entities either *as* things, objects or artefacts, depending on context. Importantly, the 'status' of the material entities we manipulate is not set in advance, but constructed during the interaction itself and thus open to change. Of course, the things around us can be considered and related to in a variety of other ways. For a scientist,

a microscope is an instrument, for an economist it might be catalogued as a commodity, for an artist it can be an interesting example of 'found art', and so on (see also Chap. 15). My interest in the distinction between things, objects and artefacts comes from its relevance for theorising creativity. As will become obvious shortly, these conceptual categories are meant to engage with key issues in this area, such as conventionality, affordances and the flexibility of action (Magnani, 2023).

The Thing Itself

The interrogation about materiality needs to start from the thing itself. At least, this is what philosopher Martin Heidegger thought in his essay 'The thing' (Heidegger, 1971). By focusing our attention on the '*thingness*' of a jug (see Fig. 23.1), Heidegger was trying to get us to experience materiality before or in the absence of our usual cultural representations and scripts about what a jug is. Of course, one might wonder if this is ever possible, or if it is a useful exercise. When adopting a phenomenological approach we can, however, at least try to approximate what such an experience would be like. After all, during our first months of life we do encounter things in the world around us prior to language. But arguably, even then, things don't only exist outside us but are being introduced to us by others, positioned in front of or against us—in other words, for Heidegger, turned into objects. How do we relate to a jug then, as a thing?

First, we perceive its physical properties. We see it, as Heidegger noted, as self-supporting. Gibson's (1966) theory of direct perception can be interesting in this regard since it postulates that the affordances of objects are immediately available to us for as long as we can perceive them. This theory has been rightly criticised (see Chap. 2), especially since what objects afford or not is largely culturally conditioned. Direct perception might inform us that the jug is a solid object that can be filled, lifted, broken and so on, but this information will not help us use it 'as a jug'. For Heidegger, it was the *void* inside a jug actually doing the holding, not its sides or bottom, although these are usually the ones we notice and represent when thinking about the jug. In other words, the thingness of a jug, should we ever be able to perceive it, would surprise us because it contradicts or resists common uses or ideas about what a jug is. Material entities as things are fundamentally open to any potential use and appropriation by culture while, at the same time, imposing their insurmountable constraints. The jug can be lifted, thrown, put upside down, glued to the wall

Fig. 23.1 A jug. (Source: By freegr, source: Pixabay; image in the public domain)

and so on; all these actions are 'afforded' by it but, if we are not careful in handling it, the jug will break and this is an aspect of its material reality that is independent of our perception or will.

To relate to the material entities around as things, one can do an easy experiment: To close one's eyes and let the hands introduce them to the things in front. How does this feel? Can you bracket previous knowledge about what you are touching? What new features jump out? Anything surprising? Anything unusual? This exercise can be illuminating as to what we usually take for granted: The materiality of the world around us, a materiality that is 'there' in ways that pre-exist any symbolic forms of

understanding or social conventions. And one of the aspects that can be striking about such (less mediated) experiences of materiality is how open materials becomes to new interpretations and new understanding. What we thought we knew about things changes and, with this change, materials reveal themselves differently to us, a difference that means a lot for creative thought and action (see also Chap. 6).

Objects and Conventions

For Heidegger, a thing becomes an object when it is placed in front of us, either physically or as a mental representation; as such, it becomes defined by its '*over-againstness*' (see also Chap. 13). My own distinction between things and objects is much simpler. If things confront us with their materiality in a rather direct, unmediated manner, objects are things culturally presented to us. They are the '*what for*' of things, their main function or functions decided upon by their makers, validated by society, and inscribed into the physical appearance of the object (see also Chap. 19). The jug as an object is a vessel used to carry and pour liquid. Its shape (the void inside, as well as its walls and bottom) affords this perfectly. Many jugs have a handle that allows easy manipulation by human hands. The bottleneck of many jugs, such as the one in Fig. 23.1, makes it easier not to spill liquid accidentally and also facilitates the act of pouring. These are all what Costall (1995) calls *canonical affordances*. Jugs afford holding and pouring water or other liquids; these affordances are reflected by their material properties and taught to children from early on. As such, we can rightfully conclude that, as socialised individuals, we live in a world of objects rather than simply of things.

This is what Richard Shweder (1990, p. 2) referred to as the intentional world, populated by intentional objects—things that are made, bred, fashioned, fabricated, invented, designed, constructed (see also Crilly, 2023). The things we have around us are not simply there but, as we tend to assume, are there for a purpose. This is how we learn to inquire into what something is for when its 'function' is not obvious to us. Our constant meaning-making processes invest reality with both significations and purpose (Valsiner, 2013). This makes us highly efficient in navigating our environment but, occasionally, the same inclination to manipulate things as objects can restrict our creativity. Conventional uses and canonical affordances are easily perceived and enacted in everyday life. We develop *expectations* about how things are and how they should be used, and this

makes our action and the actions of others quite predictable. If a jug is on the dinner table, I will probably assume it has water in it, or else I can fill it up with water. But are objects always used so uncreatively? Certainly not. In fact, the very meaning of 'conventionality' is highly contextual and it depends not only on culture, person, but also situation. If the jug I referred to before is in a glass case in a museum, I won't assume it is filled with water and I will certainly not want to fill it up. This corresponds to the conventions associated with being a museum visitor. Canonical uses are not set once and for all but are dynamic and changing, just as our (material) culture is. Moreover, objects themselves are never completely unambiguous and this requires, on our part, the capacity to improvise and, sometimes, deliberately go against the conventional.

An interesting exercise here, to make the experience of things as objects more palpable, would be to go against typical uses and social conventions when it comes to materiality (see also Chap. 25). How can we act with a jug in the most 'un-jug' way possible? For many, breaking the jug would reflect such an action as it goes against a series of implicit norms—do not destroy things that are of value, do not act aggressively, do not waste, etc. With no intention of advocating for destruction for the sake of destruction, let's engage in simple thought experiments for the moment. How do we feel when we use objects the way they are not supposed to be used? Does it make a difference if other people are watching us or know about our transgressions? What if we do this in the name of creativity? Does this change how we—and others—perceive these actions? Does it invite transgressions (see also Chap. 13)? At the same time, does it make it obvious why understanding what objects are is indispensable for moving 'with and against' conventional meanings in creative work?

The Openness of Artefacts

The openness to a myriad of uses turns objects into artefacts. The jug, in its thingness, remains the same, and the conventional uses of filling and pouring are there to be perceived but, alongside them, we can notice the jug's many other affordances. It can become a candle holder, accommodate an ant farm, turn into a lamp or a bird feeder and so on. All these uses exploit the jug's basic affordance of holding but in less canonical ways. They make the jug a *creative object*. Indeed, the notion of artefact has artistic and cultural overtones (one expects to find artefacts in museums), but this is not how I use it here. Everything can become an artefact if we

relate to it as such—if we go beyond singular, conventional uses and see them as one possibility among many. In order to do this, however, we need to decentre our perspective of what things are and envision what they might be.

Isn't every object already an artefact? Umberto Eco (1989, p. 21) famously argued that every work of art, for as 'closed' and 'finished' as it appears to be, is in fact an 'open work', available for (re)definition and (re) interpretation with each and every new 'reading' of it. We can extend his argument about works of art. *Any* object is, to some extent, experienced anew every time we use it; there are, for example, no two times when we use a jug in the very same way. Of course, the creative quality of these new uses varies. To use the object as an artefact means, however, to use it in a *reflective* manner (see also Chap. 17). It means to envision other possibilities for action while perceiving or manipulating the object, even when this manipulation respects conventionality. The artefact is as open to our action as the thing is, with a significant difference: The thing invites immediate uses, based on physical, perceivable properties, while our interaction with an artefact is free from the here-and-now due to our capacity to symbolise and anticipate. In this sense, when we creatively manipulate material entities as things, the quality of being creative is necessarily attributed to our action and its products from the outside. We might be creative, but we are not aware of this because we are too immersed in the action and the thing itself. Artefact use requires detachment and engages our capacity to imagine (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015; see also Chap. 8).

The exercise for artefacts takes us back, actually, to the one for things. The invitation is, again, to try first to touch things around, with your eyes closed, and to be open to any new experience that arises. Then these experiences can be turned into new meanings. What uses are inspired by relating to things as things? How many of them go beyond the conventionality of the object? Are these surprising in any way? Are they meaningful? Can one consider the same material entity, at the same time, through the prism of all these different meanings and uses? What does this kind of relationship feel like? How does it transform not only thing/object but the perceiver him or herself in the process?

Materiality and Creativity

To create "is to act in the world, or on the world, in a new and significant way" (Mason, 2003, p. 7). It cannot be thought of outside of the relation between person and world, both social and material. And yet, creativity theory is virtually mute when it comes to the issue of materiality. The focus remains on the mind, forgetting that the mind itself extends into the world in order to think, to remember, to create (see also Chap. 21). Objects are not just there for us to represent and manipulate symbolically; the materiality of the world sets practical constraints of which creators in any domain are well aware. At the same time, the things around us are fundamentally open to our action. We can, within the frame of existing physical constraints, use them for almost everything. But we don't. Cultural conventions play a key part in this kind of 'narrowing' of possibility for what objects are (or, more specifically, what they are for). And yet it is precisely *culture* that can free our action and make it truly flexible. A thing can be acted on in many ways, but all 'trapped' within the here-and-now of perception and movement. An artefact is acted on, at one and the same time, physically and symbolically.

This observation is important from a developmental point of view. While children are born into a world of things, from their perspective, the adults around them actively guide them towards understanding and using material entities as objects. A jug might attract the child's attention and curiosity but the mother will most probably show it to the child first, name it and then demonstrate how it can be held. Children then go on to use the cups, bottles and jars in their play sets in a similar manner. But, through symbolic play, these cups, bottles and jars can acquire, once more, an openness that goes beyond what they are as conventional objects: If needed, they can turn into spaceships, or boats, or houses. They become artefacts. This achievement is made possible through interaction with adults. As Vygotsky noted, "the path from the thing to the child and from the child to the thing lies through another person" (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 532).

A serious engagement with the issue of materiality in research requires us to observe the dynamic relations between people (children and adults) and their environment and to try to theorise them. I have argued here that we engage with material entities either as things, objects or artefacts, and that this has great consequences for creativity. What I am not implying, however, is a strict separation between these categories, or a hierarchy

between them. Artefacts might be both outcomes and springboards for creative action but they would not exist as such if we didn't first learn to manipulate things as objects. Finally, we should not underestimate the role of things themselves for creativity (hence the title of the present chapter). When objects resist our action and surprise us, they often do so from their position as things. The 'thingness' of the material world often intervenes in creative action and, at times, it is precisely what gives it its creative turn. Relating to objects as things deconstructs our perception of what they are or should be. In this sense, *the path from object to artefact, in creative work, might actually lie through the thing*.

References

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context*. Westview Press.

Costall, A. (1995). Socializing affordances. *Theory & Psychology, 5*(4), 467–481.

Crilly, N. (2023). Design research and the study of the possible. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 46–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221128218

Eco, U. (1989). *The open work*. Harvard University Press.

Gibson, J. J. (1966). *The senses considered as perceptual systems*. Houghton Mifflin.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2010). Principles for a cultural psychology of creativity. *Culture & Psychology, 16*(2), 147–163.

Glăveanu, V. P., Lubart, T., Bonnardel, N., Botella, M., de Biaisi, M.-P., Desainte-Catherine, M., et al. (2013). Creativity as action: Findings from five creative domains. *Frontiers in Educational Psychology, 4*, 1–14.

Harris, D. (2023). Non-binary possibilities of creative agency. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 99–104. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699231166485

Heidegger, M. (1971). *Poetry, language, thought* (A. Hofstader, Trans.) (pp. 161–184). Harper & Row.

Magnani, L. (2023). Possibilities in an abductive perspective: Creating affordances as cognitive chances. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221142718

Mason, J. H. (2003). *The value of creativity: An essay on intellectual history, from Genesis to Nietzsche*. Ashgate.

Moran, S., & John-Steiner, V. (2003). Creativity in the making: Vygotsky's contemporary contribution to the dialectic of development and creativity. In R. K. Sawyer et al. (Eds.), *Creativity and development* (pp. 61–90). Oxford University Press.

Pickering, A. (2023). Another future. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 190–193. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221128225

Shweder, R. (1990). Cultural psychology—What is it? In J. Stigler, R. Shweder, & G. Herdt (Eds.), *Cultural psychology: Essays on comparative human development* (pp. 1–43). Cambridge University Press.

Tanggaard, L. (2013). The sociomateriality of creativity in everyday life. *Culture & Psychology, 19*(1), 20–32.

Valsiner, J. (2013). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. Sage.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). The history of the development of higher mental functions. In R. W. Rieber (Ed.), *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky, vol. IV* (pp. 1–251). Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). *The essential Vygotsky* (R. W. Rieber & D. K. Robinson, Eds.). Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Zittoun, T., & Gillespie, A. (2015). *Imagination. Developing culture and minds*. Routledge.

CHAPTER 24

Translation

Vlad Petre Glăveanu

What does translation have to do with creativity? For most of us, translation signifies the process of translating something from one language to another or, more generally, the process of moving something from one place to another. What is needed in both cases is precision. When translating a text, we generally aim to produce an equivalent 'copy', at the level of meaning, so that people who read the text in both languages are able to understand more or less the same thing. When we move objects from one place to another, we also expect them to remain intact, identical to themselves. Sameness and clarity are implicit requirements for any (successful) act of translation; they are also, for many, the exact opposites of creativity.

I have previously discussed how *difference* is a condition of possibility for creative expression (see Glăveanu & Gillespie, 2014; see also Chap. 6). My argument in this chapter is that translation always implies difference and thus, to some extent, creativity. Words, images, or objects are never the same when 'translated' and integrated into a new context. The very process of translation is essentially one of *transformation*; its outcomes are objects transformed, partially because of the process of translation itself,

V. P. Glăveanu (✉)
School of Psychology, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: vlad.glaveanu@dcu.ie

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_24

partially because of the new contexts they come to inhabit. Even two words that refer to the same thing might very well prompt different affective associations for speakers of different languages (see also Chaps. 9 and 26). Saying the same sentence, like 'It is raining' multiple times gains new meanings each time it is uttered, and radically different ones. The first time, it is likely to be taken as a piece of information. The second time, it suggests that the speaker assumes he or she was not heard properly. The third time, it implies insistence—there are specific actions expected on the side of those who are being addressed. The fourth time, the reaction of the audience is sure to be one of puzzlement. Fifth or more times repeating the very same sentence would be interpreted as alarming and, maybe, eventually, as humorous. Sameness of expression, a multitude of possible meanings.

Why is the process of translation creative? To understand this, we need to go back to the etymological roots of the word 'translate'. The Latin *translatus* means 'carried over' or 'carried across'. The essence of translation is, thus, movement and movement itself denies sameness (see Chaps. 14 and 18; also Glăveanu, 2020). There are many processes at stake in the act of translation, some taking place as the translation occurs (e.g. interpretation, questioning, and so on), others following it. For Venuti (1998, p. 5), translations "inevitably perform a work of domestication". Simultaneously, the translation is a new object for its context of origin and a 'domesticated' reality for its receiving context. This effect is easily exemplified by language but, in many other instances, the 'domestication' at work is not immediate; it requires further (creative) processes of adjustment and transformation. The Impressionists translated natural and city landscapes into new, bold images that were not immediately appreciated by the audiences of their time. They are, however, commonplace for most of us today. Difference becomes sameness, unfamiliarity turns into familiarity, the unknown becomes known just to allow other creative cycles of translation and re-assimilation to take place.

In essence, the process of translation is one of *communication*. And, just as in the case of communication, a message is never identical for sender and receiver. People, messages, channels, and contexts are all dynamic realities (Hook et al., 2011), and this makes room for difference and ambiguity, which require creative solutions if communication is to continue. Often, we actually rely on these differences in understanding and small acts of miscommunication in order to infuse everyday language and interaction with humour, playfulness, and the quality of sociability. The

above offers a good argument why we need to consider translations, just as we do communication and creativity, in a temporal perspective. Very often our focus is only on what has been translated (the outcome), in a static, a-temporal way. At best, we consider the process of translation itself, which can take minutes, days or years. But the creativity of translation doesn't stop here. Once translated, texts or images become part of continuous processes of communication and feed into creative work. Ultimately, the very act of making sense of something, the basic process of *interpretation*, relies on translating that thing into codes that we can understand. Translation, just as creativity, is ubiquitous.

Translating Words

Many of the reflections above concerning the nature of translation and its relation to creativity come out of a personal experience of translating poems from Romanian, my native language, into English. These are poems I had written many years before and wanted to share with friends interested in poetry.[1] Although I approached this task enthusiastically, I soon came to realise the complexity of translating poetry into another language—an effort constrained by the need to keep meanings, build similar images and, sometimes, reconstruct rhymes. Despite my best efforts, initially, to create poems in English that would be the exact equivalent of their Romanian counterparts, this aim proved utterly impossible. The differences that emerged were at first looked at with suspicion. Does the new text capture adequately the meanings of the old one? Then the pleasure of discovering new, related meanings, emerged. Finally, the act of translation was approached with the excitement of discovery. The initial text still mattered but the outcome displayed different ways of relating to it. Besides the words themselves, there was also a feeling of the poem, a mood or experience that needed to be captured and 'passed on'. For instance:

Melancolie
Cu degetele tremurânde,
Șterg iarna de prin poezie,
Împrăștii ploile și reci și ude,
Și las albastrul veseliei crude

[1] Those interested to read some of the outcomes of my occasional, and not always inspired, poetic activity can visit www.vladglaveanu.ro.

Cu ton de gri răzleț—melancolie.
Melancholy
With trembling hands
I'm wiping off
The winter from poems I see,
I chase the rain,
Too wet and cold
And only leave the blue of joy
A hue of gentle skies—melancholy.

More and more, it became clear that translating poems word-by-word would be meaningless and their translation needed to be, in fact, a complete *re-creation*. This was the case with one of my poems entitled 'Joc (Colaj)'—in English, 'Play (Collage)'. As the title suggests, this poem includes a playful alternation between two popular children's songs. In Romanian, the first one is usually sung to snails, asking them to come out of their shell, while the second is (or, at least, it was when I was a child) a common rhyme about a small fish from the Pacific Ocean that helps children assign roles in games of tag. For as familiar as these are to Romanian audiences, the two rhymes make no sense in English. However, they have their own local 'equivalents', such as *Mary Had a Little Lamb* or *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*. The result:

Joc (Colaj)
Melc, melc, codobelc,
Din Oceanul Pacific,
Scoţând coarne boureşti,
A ieşit un peşte mic,
Şi s-a dus la Dunăre,
Iar pe coada lui scria,
Să bea apă tulbure,
Ieşi afară dum-nea-ta!
Play (Collage)
Mary had a little lamb,
The itsy bitsy spider,
Little lamb, little lamb,
Climbed up the waterspout.
Everywhere that Mary went,
Down came the rain,
Mary went, Mary went,
And washed the spider out.

Is the second poem a translation of the first? Many might say no, despite the fact that they have the same title; they are more like two versions of the same idea, built using the same construction principle. Nevertheless, they did come out of an effort to translate a poem from one language into another that ended up creating it anew. The feel of the poem, however, remained largely the same. This illustration of radical recreation might not be very common, but the translation of literary texts is full of similar stories of difference and creativity. Unsurprisingly, we find a growing interest in the past decades in the strategies of translators and their creativity (see the volume edited by Beylard-Ozeroff et al., 1998). Authors such as Niska (1998) even talk about 'translational creativity', thus legitimising the work of translation as a creative type of activity. As arguments, the authors cited above point to the fact that a translator's job is never reduced to the mechanical process of looking up words in a dictionary. A good translation goes beyond words and is concerned with meanings, the vividness of the text, as well as its cultural significance (see also Chaps. 6 and 9). Each text is unique and, as such, each translation of it is equally *unique*. Answering critics who argue that translations are tied down by the source text and essentially re-creative in their activity, Kussmaul (1991, p. 93) notes:

> Of course, translators are not as free in their productions as writers are, but in the first phase of the creative process they must have the same ability of recognizing a problem, of gathering relevant information and of forming initial hypotheses about possible solutions as any creative person.

What about creativity in non-literary translation? Do we still praise creativity in translation when it comes to translating food labels or school texts? What about legal documents? Having multiple versions of the same law applied differently because of differences in translation is surely not ideal. And yet, how does one read and understand the text of a law mechanically translated from one language to another, without accounting at all for the local (cultural and linguistic) context? Questions about creativity in legal translation are increasingly common (see Pommer, 2008; Šarčević, 2002). Scholars publishing in this area tend to agree that translators of legal texts can, and should, be creative while still respecting the constraints of their profession; moreover, they often need to be creative *in order* to uphold these constraints.

The debate as to whether translators are capable of balancing these different requirements (i.e. rigour and creativity, preciseness and expressivity) are part of what Venuti (1998) called "the scandals of translation". Importantly, these scandals are not linguistic but cultural, economic, and political. This is because the act of translation needs always to be understood in a broader, societal context. In this context, one should pay close attention to what is being translated, how, and for what purposes. Indeed, a focus on translation teaches us about more than language; it "occasions revelations that question the authority of dominant cultural values and institutions" (Venuti, 1998, p. 1). A translation can make something more widely available but, at the same time, it can help us question it and see it as *one* instance among *other* possible alternatives (see also the notion of the meta-position in Chap. 15). It helps us recognise any text or image as an artefact and relate to it as such (see also Chap. 23). All this because, as repeatedly argued here, no translation is ever final or definitive.

Translating Images

The essentially flexible relation between 'originals' and 'translations' is even more obvious in the case of images. For many centuries, the arts have tried to copy nature in representational works that strongly resembled their sources of inspiration. Ancient Greek sculptures often surprise us with how well they capture the anatomy and, above all, the movement and expressivity of the human body. Still life paintings—particularly the ripe, decaying fruits and flowers of the *vanitas* genre, reminding viewers of the transience of life and wealth—delight us with their attention to detail. Later on, societal transformations, including technological advances (such as the invention of photography) led, early twentieth century, to the emergence of modernist currents in art (Dow, 1917; Meecham & Sheldon, 2000). Art began, violently at times, to break with its models and offer its own interpretation of nature and society. From the delicate colours of the Impressionists to the bright tones of fauvism and the elegant geometry of cubism, art stopped 'translating' reality *as is* and started focusing on it *as it appears to be* or *as it can be*. The real became infused with the possible and the latter led the process of art and meaning-making. From reproduction to recreation, the work of past and present artists can be considered in light of translation processes, actively connecting the external world with the interiority of creators and their audiences and connecting artists with each other and with shared ideals.

Art as translation. Perhaps a bold claim, since I am sure not all artists would agree they are 'merely translators' of a certain reality or state of mind. Many would even deny the existence of a 'model' to be translated into a new, artistic medium. But this view falls prey to the old Romantic conception of artists as the sole originators of their creations; the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* or God-like creation. Contemporary art and design, especially after the revolutionary movement of pop art, are much more comfortable, however, re-connecting with their sources, from everyday objects to personal experiences and memories (Kaufman & Rowe, 2023; Crilly, 2023; see also Chaps. 11 and 23). This is even more the case with craft or folk art. In Chap. 5, I referred, for example, to the practice of decorating eggs for Easter in Romania. This old tradition is based on embellishing eggs' shells with motifs, geometric or figurative, often depicted in colours such as red, yellow, and black (for details, see Gorovei, 2001; Glăveanu, 2013). Learning and practising the craft requires thus not only drawing skills, but also knowledge of motifs which, in many cases, is transmitted within families from one generation to the next. The eggs decorated by others are important sources of inspiration, and it is common even for experienced decorators to deliberately try to copy interesting patterns in order to keep them and use them later, in their own work. One such example has been captured with the help of a subjective camera, worn by the artisan, and it is included in Fig. 24.1.

What the folk artist Niculina Nigă is trying here is to translate an existing motif, on the egg placed in front of her, on her own egg, initially with the use of a pencil. The difficulty of copying a pattern exactly is reflected by the frequent use of the rubber. The interview with Niculina, based on this segment of the video, explored her intentions and understanding of the situation. While an outside observer might find it problematic not to achieve a good translation of the model from one egg to the other, she was not concerned by this. In fact, her declared goal was to capture 'the main idea', not its details, and it was fine to make small changes to it since, in fact, they will be made in any case later on when, 'from a single [model] I make several'. Other artisans explicitly talked about the tremendous difficulties posed by attempts to remake exactly the same egg, to make a perfect copy of it. Deviation and transformation, in the micro, is the norm of human activity rather than the exception, including in craft. Translation, in this case, is not only meant to lead to new creations but it is, itself, a recreation of the 'original' just like the 'original', in turn, *translates older*

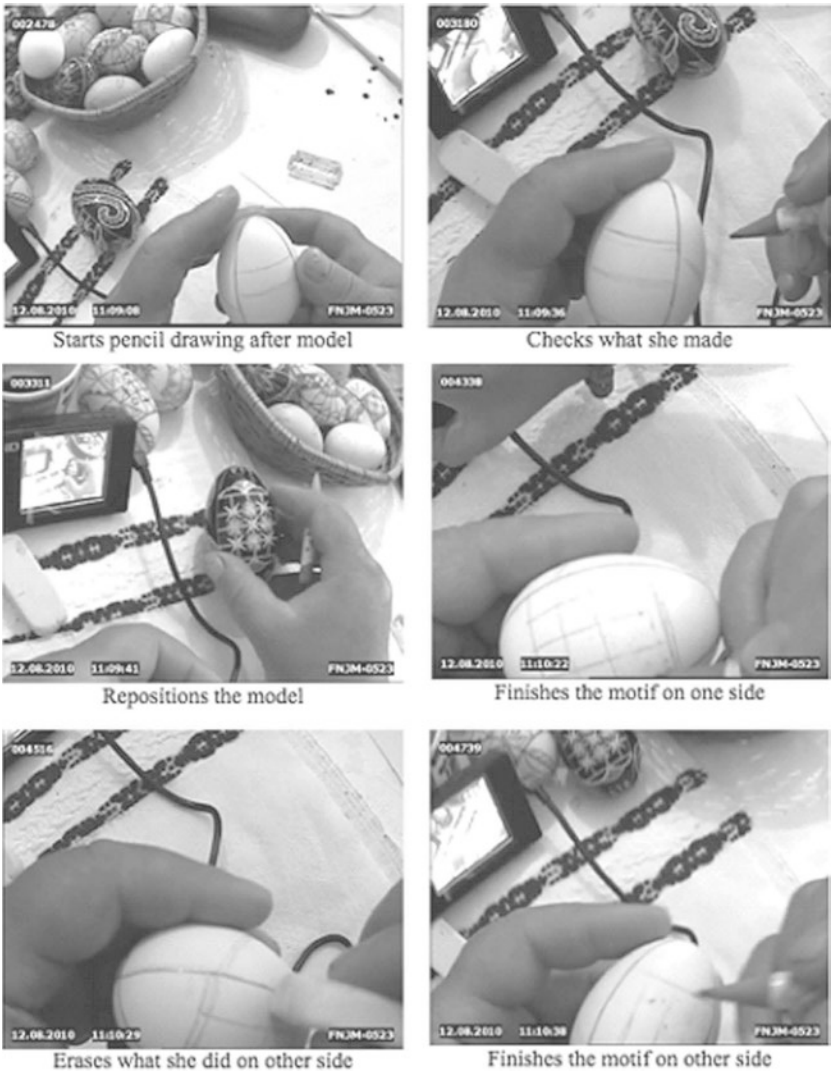

Fig. 24.1 Translating a motif on a new egg (Niculina Nigă). (*Source*: Adapted from Glăveanu and Lahlou (2012, p. 159))

motifs in its own, unique manner. Tradition moves on, through creativity, in a seamless way, without borders or separations.

'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote'

Let's end with an extreme, fictional example that is, at once, unsettling and highly illuminating. The title of the section is the one of a famous short story by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1998). In it, Borges offers us a brief but vivid review of the work of Pierre Menard, a fictional twentieth-century French writer. While reading this review, we learn about the many works of Menard and, in particular, about one of his greatest achievements, in the eyes of the narrator at least—the re-creation, line by line, of a few chapters from Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. From the start, this statement can only intrigue us. Here, *Don Quixote*, the creation of Cervantes, becomes the work of Menard. He is not merely reproducing or copying the great work but, effectively, becomes its *author*. How is this possible?

Borges's text raises, in his characteristic manner, meaningful questions concerning authorship, interpretation, and historical context. His short story, I argue, is also very important for us in our understanding of the link between translation and creativity. This is because, in this narrative, Menard is not simply translating the words of Cervantes from one piece of paper onto another.

> Pierre Menard did not want to compose another Quixote, which surely is easy enough—he wanted to compose the Quixote. Nor, surely, need one be obliged to note that his goal was never a mechanical transcription of the original; he had no intention of copying it. His admirable ambition was to produce a number of pages which coincided—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes. (Borges, 1998, p. 91)

His act of translation is, ultimately, one of creation. Menard did not copy words mindlessly; he wanted to experience them, to imagine alternative stories and meanings only to be able, in the end, to disregard them, returning to the exact text of Cervantes. Most importantly, *Don Quixote* was written in seventeenth-century Spain and is expressive of this origin; its meaning can only be different 300 years later, when Menard supposedly (re)wrote a few of its chapters. Too many things have happened, including the Quixote himself, to receive it in the same way. In this sense,

Borges notes, "the Cervantes text and the Menard text are verbally identical, but the second is infinitely richer" (p. 94). The 'translation' here surpasses the original not by being different but precisely by being *the same* at a different time and in a different place. What better, more poetic argument can we bring to support its vigorous creativity?

References

Beylard-Ozeroff, A., Králová, J., & Moser-Mercer, B. (Eds.). (1998). *Translators' strategies and creativity*. John Benjamins.

Borges, J. L. (1998). Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote. In *Collected Fictions* (A. Hurley, Trans.) (pp. 88–95). Viking.

Crilly, N. (2023). Design research and the study of the possible. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 46–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221128218

Dow, A. W. (1917). Modernism in art. *American Magazine of Art, 8*(3), 113–116.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2013). Creativity and folk art: A study of creative action in traditional craft. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 7*(2), 140–154.

Glăveanu, V. P. (2020). *Mobilities and human possibility*. Palgrave.

Glăveanu, V. P., & Gillespie, A. (2014). Creativity out of difference: Theorising the semiotic, social and temporal origin of creative acts. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from cultural psychology* (pp. 1–15). Routledge.

Glăveanu, V. P., & Lahlou, S. (2012). Through the creator's eyes: Using the subjective camera to study craft creativity. *Creativity Research Journal, 24*(2–3), 152–162.

Gorovei, A. (2001). *Ouăle de Paşte. Studiu de folclor* (2nd ed.). Paideia.

Hook, D., Franks, B., & Bauer, M. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The social psychology of communication*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Kaufman, J., & Rowe, D. P. (2023). The show must go on: Functional, quality, and possible needs for theatre and the creative arts. *Possibility Studies & Society, 1*(1–2), 113–117. https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699221145632

Kussmaul, P. (1991). Creativity in the translation process: Empirical approaches. In K. M. van Leuven-Zwart & T. Naaijkens (Eds.), *Translation studies: The state of the art* (pp. 91–101). Rodopi.

Meecham, P., & Sheldon, J. (2000). *Modern art: A critical introduction*. Routledge.

Niska, H. (1998). *Explorations in translational creativity: Strategies for interpreting neologisms*. Workshop paper, 8 August, Stockholm University. http://www.oocities.org/~tolk/lic/kreeng2.htm

Pommer, S. E. (2008). No creativity in legal translation? *Babel, 54*(4), 355–368.

Šarčević, S. (2002). Creativity in legal translation: How much is too much? In A. Chesterman, N. G. S. Salvador, & Y. Gambier (Eds.), *Translation in context* (pp. 281–292). John Benjamins.

Venuti, L. (1998). *The scandals of translation: Towards an ethics of difference*. Routledge.

CHAPTER 25

Upcycling

Charlotte Wegener

Persistently, we take natural resources, turn them into valued products and, after a while, consider them trash and dispose of them. A sustainable alternative to this sequence is upcycling: the perfect mix between '*upgrading*' and '*recycling*'. To upgrade is to add value and to recycle is to reuse. In the simplest terms, upcycling is the practice of taking something considered disposable or redundant and transforming it into something of greater value. Therefore, when we upcycle, we create something better out of what is already at hand. Upcycling counters the argument that an object has no value once it is disposed of, or that it must be destroyed before it can re-enter a new circle of production and value creation. In 'Plastic bags: Living with rubbish', Hawkins (2001) argues that disposal is the logic of mass production: "Mass production of objects and their consumption depends on the widespread acceptance of, even pleasure in, exchangeability; replacing the old, the broken, the out of fashion with the new. The capacity for serial replacement is also the capacity to throw away

C. Wegener (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: cw@ikp.aau.dk

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_25

without concern"[1] (cited in Emgin, 2012). The main idea of upcycling is to revitalize and revalidate old material by placing it into new configurations and by suggesting new ways of using or acknowledging it while, at the same time, displaying the transformation process as a main value-adding feature. Thus, upcycling poses a socio-material perspective on creativity as processes concerned with re-assessing and recombining as a route to novelty and value creation. An upcycling motto could be: *Don't throw anything away. There is no 'away'*.[2]

Upcycling is not just a design approach. It is a movement claiming that permanent disposal is an illusion. Waste, despite costly destruction or storage, does not simply disappear. An alternative to this 'getting rid of' mentality is 'sustainability', understood as processes in which the essence of the old continues to exist (Petridou, 2020). The upcycling process and mindset demonstrate the interrelation between old and new, and even dissolve 'old' and 'new' as distinct categories in a value hierarchy (old is bad, new is good) in a way that is relevant to creativity in general. In upcycling, the past is embedded in the present, the future is already here (see also Memory), and value is a matter of creative handling of what is at hand, be it things, ideas or people. The short version is that creativity does not follow the logic of linear progression from new to old. The extended version is this:

A Three-Course Dinner at the Auto Repair Garage

I am attending a conference in Amsterdam. The formal conference programme has ended, and the participants are heading to the conference dinner out in the city. We have been instructed to meet at a boat-trip sales booth by the canals. It turns out that we are going to reach the designated restaurant by boat. After some time, with the city lights vanishing behind us, we reach a wrecked wooden threshold, cross a trodden and withered lawn in front of an abandoned factory building and, finally, enter a tall, grey building. It is an industrial space with high ceilings, metal staircases to other levels and an open kitchen at one end of the space. The first thing that captures my gaze is a Ferrari Testarossa parked on ramps over an inspection pit. The next things are a table for two and a red Volvo Coupé

[1] For the history of rubbish, see Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt, 1999).

[2] http://posters-for-good.tumblr.com/post/23043193776/dont-throw-anything-away.

from the 1960s. We cross a spacious, almost empty, hall with a concrete floor and enter the backroom. Evidently, someone has driven an old Porsche 911 in here while still leaving space for long tables with seats, enough for all 50 of us. There are wine glasses behind glass on galvanized shelves and an entire wall covered with pallets which form a wine rack for hundreds of bottles. We are definitely in an auto repair garage. We are definitely in a restaurant too! During the excellent three-course dinner we keep talking of how it feels to be in this building, and we keep noticing old material used in new ways. There are, for instance, enormous spotlights for working at night in one of the corners. A glass cubicle once used for workers' lunch breaks now serves as the shop window on the chefs' busy work at the stove. The entire interior and each object tells a story, twisted, ambiguous and revitalised in a new setting and serving new functions. These things are not re-cycled. They are *up-cycled* (for a similar example, see Fig. 25.1).

Recycling is the destruction of, let's say, soft drink cans to make new cans. Upcycling is hundreds of can lids crafted into purses and bags and

Fig. 25.1 Hotel De Goudfazant in Amsterdam. (*Source*: By Frans Goddijn, 2015; image licensed under Creative Commons)

launched with a story of how the cans were collected in the slums, crafted into colourful items by women in a grassroots company run with the help of microloans, and how the money is being used for the schooling of their children (see also Craft). The purses, just like the restaurant interior and all other upcycled products, are modern while keeping the feeling of their previous life. They are highly aesthetic and useful, but what really makes them cool and attractive is not only their appearance, but also the upcycling *story*. The remaking process and the ethical statement of embracing sustainable consumer behaviour is a vital part of the commodity. Upcycling makes, not novelty itself, but the *relation* between the past and the future into the main object of interest. This translates nicely to socio-material questions that include the relations and the pasts and futures of humans, as we will do shortly. To further understand the upcycling practice and mindset, however, we must look at its history.

From Cradle to Cradle and 'Designing for Abundance'

The term 'upcycling' was coined by McDonough and Braungart (2002/2010) in their book on ecologically intelligent design, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. Upcycling is related to the 'greener living' phenomenon featuring the repurposing of things formerly identified as garbage. An upcycled product has a strong aesthetic appeal that is contemporary and innovative, and that has improved eco credentials. What makes upcycling distinct is precisely the incorporation of the transformation process into the product. Upcycled products are not just 'better' than the original; they also incorporate the aging process, telling stories such as 'production with zero waste', 'small is beautiful' and 'start local, but think global' (Earley, 2011). As explained by Richardson (2011), recycling rarely achieves the aim of no waste, because reprocessing materials requires energy and water, often resulting in a downgrading of the material's constitution. By reusing components, the need for recycling is reduced, and hence materials, water and energy can be saved in the process. Thus, upcycling is both a practice and a mindset; a new way of thinking about and working with the lifecycle of things—both as a designer and as a consumer (see also Chap. 23).

Upcycling is the creation of something new out of something old, but it is first and foremost the *story* of the re-invention or re-habilitation

process. Try googling upcycling, and you will find upcycled houses made of old shipping containers, plastic bottles or woodchips that are by-products of other production sites. The constructors of the 'Junk House' present their strategy this way:

> Using a combination of Google Maps and local contacts, the designers and clients scoured areas within a few square miles to find scrapyards, unofficial junk piles, strange surplus trash and more—they also polled friends, family and colleagues to collect parts like broken umbrellas and busted billboards.[3]

Google on, and you will find upcycled textiles for furniture and clothes, empowerment projects in the slums and an abundance of ideas for your own everyday upcycling practice, such as turning paper, plastic bags or old household items into lampshades, coat racks and jewellery. You will even find upcycled Shakespeare (Iyengar, 2014)!

The recent upcycling trend goes even further and claims that we should not just aim at becoming carbon neutral. In their second book *The Upcycle: Beyond Sustainability—Designing for Abundance*, McDonough and Braungart (2013) address resource scarcity and sustainability primarily as a matter of *design*. This is a radical change from a mindset of deficit to one of abundance. Their overall message is that human beings are not parasites but creative partners of the Earth. They challenge the idea that the Earth is a loving, nurturing, maternal entity. In fact, they argue, "Mother Nature is much more brutal and destructive than human beings. […] Belief in Mother Nature's benevolence fuels the idea that people exist separately from their physical world, which is unspoiled and sacred" (McDonough & Braungart, 2013). What they want is to turn our understanding of the human role on Earth upside down: Instead of protecting the planet from human impact, why not redesign our activities and actually improve the environment? We can have a beneficial, sustainable footprint, they argue.

The main necessity is a new 'design-for-reuse' approach in which the total life of a product is considered at its conception (Richardson, 2011). Thus, designers can build *additionality* into products so that they give more than they take. An abundance mindset encourages a cultural perception that a product is considered a modular assemblage of reusable parts and that every component has many incarnations. Many products are

[3] http://dornob.com/billboards-umbrellas-junk-dwelling-upcycles-local-scrap/#ixzz3R9iXcolm.

considered to be defunct and are thus discarded when the weakest component breaks down. This 'from new to old' mindset is, however, replaced with a design approach of component modularity that allows products to be deconstructed and reconstructed in many different ways, thus reducing the volume of materials entering waste and recycling streams. Limited supply and high demand, as well as the constraint of designing from a limited palette of parts, are seen as a positive challenge by designers. These ideas take us back to a socio-material conception of creativity which dissolves the old-new distinction in all aspects of life.

Socio-Material Upcycling

While the primary focus in studies of upcycling is how to reconsider waste in the production of goods, scholars are increasingly interested in creating connections among the technological and social issues of sustainability in meeting the complex challenges of modern societies. In earlier work with a colleague (Wegener & Aakjær, 2016, p. 3), we used as an example a short narrative (for an elaborated empirical analysis, see Petridou, 2020):

> "Lesbos, Greece—Piles and piles of discarded rubber dinghies on the shore. A huge orange graveyard of life jackets. Thousands of refugees in tents, many of them without their bags, and with only a few belongings rescued from their dangerous sea crossings. Textile student Floor Nagler from Amsterdam is there as a volunteer. She notices the material waste and the human need, and starts connecting them. Bringing back 20 kilos of rubber material and the story of refugees who are going to travel long distances without any bags to carry their sparse belongings, she consults an artist friend. Together, they design a bag made from one folded piece of boat material, held together with rivets and clipped shut with buckles from life vests. Price: $3. Floor and her friend return to Lesbos and embark on a weeklong bag-making workshop. One participant is Raida, a 13-year-old refugee from Iraq. She does not understand English, but learns by watching how to punch holes and fasten the seams Journal of Comparative Social Work 2016/2 4 together. Finally, she attaches black life vest straps to the bag and slips the finished product over her shoulders.—We made the bag ourselves, she says with a big smile. The project is called 'It works', and it becomes a part of Oddysea, a new Greek organization that aims to make bags and wallets out of discarded boats and vests, and to sell the finished products to benefit migrants. The workshop week has passed, but Floor and

her friend leave the patterns and tools so other volunteers and migrants can continue the project."

The rethinking of material waste is the starting point. However, during this project, the creativity and dignity of people become the main drivers for change. Expertise in textiles and an artist's perspective are needed even to see waste as a resource which can be transformed into something beautiful and useful but, equally, so are the quest for simplicity and an entrepreneurial mindset. The textile student and her artist companion have launched an upcycling idea and a collaborative practice so cheap and simple that others can take over and continue when they leave. The upcycle process and product are tied neither to the initial participants' expertise nor to external money or technology.

As this example illustrates, concepts of waste and sustainability are expanded to include not only environmental matters, but social matters as well. The socio-material conception of upcycling is relevant to how we can think about and work with potentially marginalized groups, people who are often categorized by deficiencies and the societal problems they pose rather than by their strengths and potential. Upcycling thus involves recognizing and nurturing potential value and insisting on dignity and creative expression as guidelines for human interaction. It comprises socio-material, creative practices concerned with the lifecycle of things, emergent organizational forms and mutual efforts for change across social groups (Wegener & Aakjær, 2016) springing from a vision to reintegrate waste into social life—not only things but also ideas and people that might otherwise be rendered superfluous (Petridou, 2020).

Ideas as Modules

The idea of value creation based on things, ideas and people easily ignored or categorized by the problems they pose is addressed, albeit sparsely, in studies of innovation and creativity. Here, I will elaborate on a single term used in management studies: *knowledge brokering* (Hargadon, 2002; Hargadon & Sutton, 2000). This term is used to explain how successful innovators systematically make use of old ideas as the raw material for new ideas, thus stressing the role of interactions across organizations, professions and domains as a core business strategy to enhance creativity and innovation. Knowledge brokering encourages people to "use their in-between vantage point to spot old ideas that can be used in new places,

new ways, and new combinations" (Hargadon & Sutton, 2000, p. 158). A successful business innovation strategy is thus to capture ideas from a wide variety of sources, play with them, and imagine their use in other contexts (Tanggaard & Wegener, 2016)—just as in upcycling processes.

Hargadon (2002) notes that many definitions of creativity and innovation recognize the presence of old ideas, yet this point is often downplayed in efforts to identify and describe the events that produce revolutionary change. As a result, he states, dichotomic pairs using such terms as *revolutionary* versus *evolutionary, radical* versus *incremental, discontinuous* versus *continuous* are common. The problem is, however, that these descriptors often confuse the idea's impact with its origin. With reference to Basalla, he argues that "revolutionary innovations often come from very evolutionary origins" (Hargadon, 2002, p. 51).

In order to understand the processes of evolutionary revolution, he suggests that the relation between old and new can be better understood in a 'small worlds perspective' (Hargadon, 2002, p. 54). Drawing on social network theory, Actor Network Theory and 'the small world phenomenon' (Watts & Strogatz, 1998), he regards domains as communities with shared knowledge and schemas, inhabited by people experiencing their own domain as 'a small world'. Thus, the creative act is the process of moving ideas from where they are known (and perhaps categorized as useless or trash) to where they are not. Once sensitized to this gold-mining mentality, we can consciously connect to other 'small worlds', transport ideas from one domain to another or scan foreign domains for 'modules' (ideas) with novel application potentials. Just as with the upcycling mindset, this involves moving things from the category of garbage to the category of useful—a vital part of creating a new commodity (see also Business as usual). Hargadon (2002, p. 54) characterized his idea by quoting the science fiction author William Gibson who, when asked how he developed his futuristic visions, replied: "The future is already here, it's just unevenly distributed". What he did was to find interesting new technologies used in one domain and imagine worlds in which everyone used them. Hargadon (2002, p. 54) concludes:

> To suggest people think 'out of the box' is to suggest people can think without prior schemas and act without prior scripts. From a small worlds perspective, people don't think out of the box, they think in boxes others can't see.

Conclusion

Focusing on the 'old' and its actual and potential value is not a denial of the newness and value criteria of creativity; rather, it is a reflection that opens up new perspectives on both newness and value. Upcycling points to creativity as the ability to look into other worlds, reconsider value and envision future value. It carries the message that creativity is not a matter of newness and value per se; rather, when resources move and combine with other resources in other domains, "they become novel for their unfamiliar origins and valuable for their established elements" (Hargadon, 2002, p. 55). Iyengar (2014), whom I cited earlier for the upcycling of Shakespeare, notes that the act of upcycling is both cheeky and reverent. It salutes qualities of the past and, at the same time, seeks to create a desired future. Upcycling is a kind of *nostalgic futuristic creativity*. As creative human beings, we can all pick up and transport 'idea modules' across domains and, accordingly, add to the upcycling spiral. There is an abundance of 'waste' matter out there ready to be rescued from recycling!

Back in the upcycled auto repair garage in Amsterdam, I practised the ability to transport modules across worlds. On my way home, I wrote the story of the three-course dinner in an interior that reminded me of both my childhood and the future and saved it in a new folder which I named 'Upcycling'. It had no immediate application value. One year passed, and it might have ended up as waste in the recycle bin on my desktop. It seemed to be of no use. What I eventually did, however, was to treat it as a module. I just needed to wait—and scan foreign domains (that is, my co-editors and *their* small worlds)—in order to produce this chapter and write about 'ideas as modules'. Would you like to know the story of how it actually sparked the idea of the entire book? For this, you would need to go right back to the beginning and read the editors' chapter 'Why do we need a new vocabulary for creativity?'. As any good story of creativity teaches us, we often need to look back in order to keep moving forward.

References

Earley, R. (2011). *Upcycling textiles: Adding value through design*. Paper presented at the KEA's Towards Sustainability in the Fashion and Textiles Industry, 26–27 April 2011, Copenhagen.

Emgin, B. (2012). Trashion: The return of the disposed. *Design Issues, 28*(1), 63–71.

Hargadon, A. B. (2002). Brokering knowledge: Linking learning and innovation. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 24*, 41–85.

Hargadon, A. B., & Sutton, R. I. (2000). Building an innovation factory. *Harvard Business Review, 78*(3), 157–166.

Hawkins, G. (2001). Plastic bags: Living with rubbish. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 4*(1), 5–23.

Iyengar, S. (2014). Upcycling Shakespeare: Crafting cultural capital. In D. Fischlin (Ed.), *Outerspeares: Shakespeare, intermedia, and the limits of adaptation* (pp. 347–371). University of Toronto Press.

McDonough, W., & Braungart, M. (2002/2010). *Cradle to cradle: Remaking the way we make things*. North Point Press.

McDonough, W., & Braungart, M. (2013). *The Upcycle: Beyond sustainability – Designing for abundance*. Macmillan.

Petridou, E. (2020). Refugee life jackets thrown off but not away: Connecting materialities in upcycling initiatives. *Exploring Materiality and Connectivity in Anthropology and Beyond*, 228–246.

Richardson, M. (2011). *Design for reuse: Integrating upcycling into industrial design practice*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Remanufacturing, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK.

Tanggaard, L., & Wegener, C. (2016). Why novelty is overrated. *Journal of Education and Work, 29*(6), 728–745.

Watts, D. J., & Strogatz, S. H. (1998). Collective dynamics of 'small-world' networks. *Nature, 393*(6684), 440–442.

Wegener, C., & Aakjær, M. (2016). Upcycling–A new perspective on waste in social innovation. *Journal of Comparative Social Work, 11*(2), 242–260.

CHAPTER 26

World-Making

Charlotte Wegener

I am writing in the garden. I have no plans, no deadlines hovering. I can stay in this chair under the parasol all day, tomorrow too if I like. I move into the sun to take a picture of the dog on the lawn. My coffee cup is in the foreground, and I carefully ensure that the shade of my black laptop is within the frame too. I want the picture to tell the story: late-summer warmth, slowness, writing. I look at the picture before I send it to my writing friend and notice that the shadow of my fingers holding my phone to take the photo is part of the picture too. I send it with the caption 'shades and shadows of writing' (Fig. 26.1).

This piece is written as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). Writing as method implies an ontology of becoming through writing in which the writer and the words are always already a part of reality that "is constantly enacted and performed in situated practices, and therefore constantly enfolding, expanding and multiplying" (Pallesen, 2017, p. 4). Notwithstanding the blurred boundaries between genres and Richardson's numerous citations and heirs, there is still a customary

C. Wegener (✉)
Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: cw@ikp.aau.dk; https://vbn.aau.dk/da/persons/122517

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2_26

Fig. 26.1 Shades and shadows of writing. Author's photo

division into 'academic' and 'creative' writing. Accordingly, this chapter suggests world-making as a new word in the vocabulary of creativity and does so by seeking to perform a *creative, academic writing*.

World-Making

Most of what goes on does not turn into text. We *have* to exclude, because the world is infinitely complex and chaotic; to bring some kind of order to the chaos, we discard some pieces of information, emphasize others and suggest they belong to certain categories—in this regard there is no difference between life and writing (Highmore, 2018). If we take it all in, if we don't categorize life, we go insane. But writing as inquiry allows for experimenting with inclusion and exclusion and for categorizing differently, and not least for trying out how the words themselves, the writer's material, pull and push ideas and perceptions as we create worlds with words. Writing as inquiry affords intensified attention to what is *not* in the text:

Things and actions that might cast shadows and create shades (see Chap. 20).

There is a vast vocabulary available to the writer, and we can use only a tiny bit of it. We discard, emphasize and categorize (e.g. as academic or vernacular) words as we write, and we can do this creatively by allowing ourselves to "play with language while we wrestle with ideas" (Webb, 2010, p. 2). Words are not neutral translators of life, and instead of always pursuing the 'right' signifier I want to *complicate* the inquiry as did St. Pierre (2021, p. 78), who decided to "become a stranger in my own language and learn some of what it was hiding". In the following, I write to connect the nearby and the far away, the (so-called) academic and the vernacular (Pelias, 2016; Wegener, 2022), not to overcome the gap between the world and what can be captured in writing, but to claim 'world-making' as a new word in the vocabulary of creativity, by *doing* socio-material writing as an everyday creative inquiring practice of 'making the world' (Tanggaard, 2013, p. 20).

Writing as world-making invites curiosity toward the shades and shadows, encourages listening to the words themselves and learning from them (see Chap. 9). It is writing as a 'slow ontology' involving modes of scholarly writing that are *not unproductive* but are *differently productive* (Ulmer, 2017, p. 201). Richardson characterizes academic language as a constitutive force that creates a particular view of reality and the Self, claiming that "there is no such thing as 'getting it right', only 'getting it' differently contoured and nuanced" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 478). I suggest that writing is more than a view of reality; it is reality in the making. And there are always new ways to complicate the inquiry, new worlds to make.

Celebrating

There are words in abundance. They make themselves available, but behold: They writhe if I squeeze too tight; they play dead right before my eyes if I try to force an agreement. In an essay on the relation between reality and writing, David Foster Wallace reminds me that "words are both symbols for real things and real things themselves" (Wallace, 2012, p. 263; Chap. 23). My squeezing and forcing to make them perfect signifiers sometimes makes me forget to listen and learn from them, forget that I cannot get it *right*, but can get it *differently* nuanced and contoured (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). So let's start by celebrating the words:

I love sentences, commas and indentations.

Dashes and dot, dot, dots... I love apostrophes' swishing of their tails. I love Q in print and even more in longhand. I love

- Bullet points,
- Brackets,
- Tiny footnotes and
- Words in italics indicating this is
  - A book *title*
  - The *name* of a journal, or
  - This is *very important*

I love capitals. I use them to SHOUT. I love quotation marks showing that somebody 'said so' or that I don't really 'mean this'. Quotation marks say this is true or not really true after all (context should tell which). I love long words and elegant words and words I will never be able to pronounce. I can write *monosyllabic* with ease but have never dared to include it in a conference presentation. I love words I don't understand because English is not my mother tongue, even though I keep looking them up. I love words that are plain and words that are *opulent*, the meaning of which keeps eluding me (I always imagine 'swollen'). I love words I have used wrongly for years only to find new layers of meaning when I realized I was mistaken. I wrote about my 'veld' of inspiration many times before I found out I had wanted to say 'well'. It was uplifting to suddenly imagine my inspiration coming from a vast landscape instead of a hole in the ground.

Meandering

So, words can object, rebuke and teach. What about data? St. Pierre (1997) puts forward the idea of 'transgressive data' involving what she terms emotional data, dream data, sensual data and response data, among others. These are 'out-of-category' and usually left out in qualitative research methodology, she says. Inspired by St. Pierre, I have built a habit of chronicling dreams.

Last night, I dreamt I was entering a bakery and looking at the abundance of bread and cakes on display under the lit counter. I decided on a square bun, pointed it out and asked the girl behind the counter to butter

it. As she leant in and cut it in two, her face opened up in surprise. Then she showed me the cutting surface, and it was full of letters:

O LL HO II I H OO O LLL L H

'Our campaign keeps resonating', she said proudly.

I write in my sleep, that's for sure. Or the words write me. There is an inquiry going on and I sense a theme. These encrypted letters say: 'decrypt us'. But I don't know how. Before I fell asleep (and went to the bakery), I watched an introduction to elliptic curve cryptography on YouTube.[1] What I learned is that I need a trapdoor function. A trapdoor function allows me to go from A to B easily; however, I can't start with the value B and go back to A. With a trapdoor function, then, it is easy to go in one direction and almost impossible to go in the other. One way to do it is to take two random prime numbers and multiply them together, and then I get this very big number. The issue is this: Multiplying them together is easy; that is the movement from A to B. But to factor those two original prime numbers out, moving back from B to A, is difficult, even impossible. Accordingly, the data is strongly encrypted. "That's kinda the really basic fundamentals", the excited instructor tells me (Fig. 26.2).

I arrived at elliptic curve cryptography because I read Dayan (2006), a professor in word and music studies, and his reflections on Chopin's music. Dayan asks if there is indeed a (much debated) Raindrop Prelude written by Chopin and concludes that those of Chopin's preludes in which the music sounds like the tapping of rain are definitely *not* the Raindrop Prelude. There *is* rain in Chopin's music; however:

> So, the rain should be perceived in the music, not in a static sense, not as a signified, but *as it is translated*, in the process of its own transformation into something else; the music is full of the rain only to the extent that the rain becomes unrecognizable; and that is its value. (p. 10)

Dayan says that this is an elliptical explanation. Elliptical. I know the word but have forgotten the exact meaning. I look it up:

> An elliptical sentence refers to a sentence with missing information and is grammatically correct only if the necessary information has been supplied previously or can be drawn from the context of the sentence.[2]

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCvB-mhkT0w
[2] http://www.freeworldu.org/static/grammar/ellipticalsentences.aspx

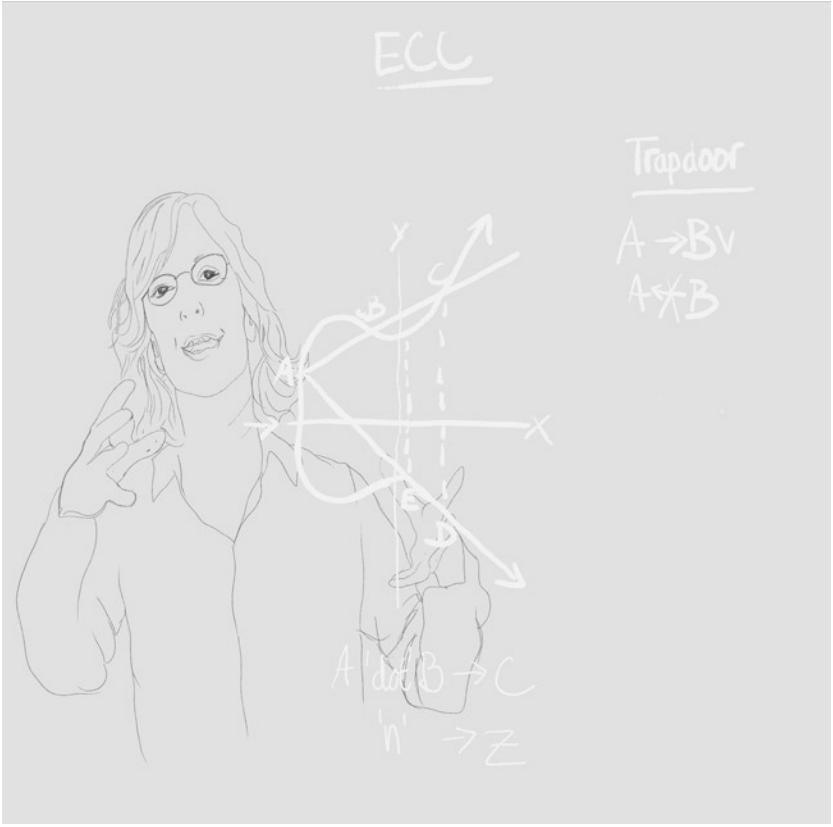

Fig. 26.2 Elliptical aesthetics, Julie Kordovsky, instagram @kordovskyimages

I was meandering into knowledge with absolutely nothing but metaphorical implications to me. Dayan's analysis of Chopin's music was supposed to be my goodnight read, but now I ignored my bedtime, followed the links at random and delved into ellipsis, elliptical construction and the fact that 'elliptical phenomena seem to be able to shed light on basic questions of form–meaning correspondence'.[3]

Instantly, I like 'elliptic curve cryptography' for its aesthetic qualities: The three words create a rhythm, the ellipsis and its vectors a sculpture.

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellipsis_(linguistics) now a 'parked domian'

And I find it immensely satisfying *not* to repeat the verb 'create' (there is no need to say 'the ellipsis and its vectors *create* a sculpture', because in the previous sentence I wrote 'create' and prepared the reader to fill in the missing information). I master elliptic writing, but I will never master elliptic curve cryptography.

Betraying

When I found Dayan's book *Music Writing Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida*, I knew instantly I had found a treasure about writing and creativity. The book is about music and how to write about it, and it is about literature. It is about music as experience and about being in the world through music; about the idea that we must approach music through literature and literature through music, obliquely. It is about compositional methodologies, music as a site for the study of meaning, intellectual inquiry and human experience. Dayan says that when those words—music and literature— 'rub against each other', they 'acquire a resonance':

> …as we write on the subject of music, we must fold into our style the inappropriateness of the medium in which we do so. For when we think about music, about what it is and what it does, we work with words; and in this process, there is a sense in which we have to betray our object. (Dayan, 2006, p. 2).

If academic language is a constitutive force, I can continually try out what language does, and not least what I want it to do—experiment with the worlds I am making (Tanggaard, 2013). This is a kind of writing *through* materiality because the world is always wider, and the words are always more than signifiers. With St. Pierre's (2021) complication of writing I can turn my attention to the shades and shadows. I can write what happened and attempt to fold into the style what it meant. In composition, pace, rhythm. In trying out words casting different shades. In sections rubbing against each other. I know very well what is happening and that I betray the object as much as it betrays me, but if I pin it down, I betray it even more. It turns into a lie.

In an essay by Philip Pullman introducing Milton's *Paradise Lost,* he writes about this kind of teaching that destroys children's joy of literature, when 'poor poems' are interrogated in the 'torture chamber of the classroom' until they confess: "and what they confess is usually worthless, as

the results of torture always are: broken little scraps of information, platitudes, banalities" (p. 56). Academic texts are supposed to do that—pin it down: We call it framework, analysis, findings. Pullman tells us that as a child he learned to love *Paradise Lost* before he had to explain it. His teacher made them read aloud in the classroom before analysing: "Once you do love something, the attempt to understand it becomes a pleasure rather than a chore, and what you find when you begin to explore *Paradise Lost* in that way is how rich it is in thought and argument".

Love First, Then Thought and Argument.

Dayan writes about George Sand, born in 1804, one of the best novelists of her generation in France. She and Frédéric Chopin were lovers, and in the years they lived together they both created many of the works for which they remain most famous. "Sand listened to Chopin playing", Dayan writes, "especially playing as he composed or improvised, endlessly and with endless fascination". Her ideas are conveyed in a "peculiar indirection in style which allowed them to survive in a certain French tradition for a century and a half, despite their paradoxical and heterodox nature". Once used to them, Dayan says, "their idiosyncratic logic acquires a life of its own in a corner of one's mind; at least, so I have found. But they continue to resist reduction to the register of academic argument" (p. 1).

I put on Chopin's *Sonata for Cello and Piano Op. 6*5 with Sol Gabetta and Bertrand Chamayou and listen to all four movements, not just the slow and intensely beautiful third (Largo) movement that I have delved into over the years. Gabetta's version is indeed Largo ('very slow'), and I used to prefer a slightly quicker version by Johannes Moser and Ewa Kupiec. But as words appear on my screen and I indulge in writing as a slow ontology (Ulmer, 2017), the quality of Gabetta's pace is evident. The cello notes do not merely translate into a melody; they vibrate before the sound reaches my ear (see Chap. 3). Bow on strings in my belly.

Love first.

Translating

I return to Dayan. The French literary tradition that Sand took to its maturity refused to recognize clear boundaries between the literary, the critical and the musical. This went on until WW1 and then "gradually, as the modern concept of the human sciences took hold, critical discourse fenced itself off from the literary" (p. ix). In a review of the book, Gritten (2011) notes that Dayan cares deeply about words "both for what they

mean and for how they sound and read. In this respect, merely to read this book for its conclusions, for what it can communicate, is to miss everything the narrative has to offer when engaged more broadly".

Dayan says: "What has been translated into music can never be translated back into words; the translation is removing its object permanently from the land of the living" (Dayan, 2006, p. 10). OK. There *was* rain, and what Chopin did in his compositions was a "movement of expansion, from the particular to the general, from the real to the metaphorical or mythical, from the physical to the divine or the ghostly" (p. 9). The rain ceases to exist, the music does not imitate rain and yet the music is full of rain.

This is the creativity of world-making through writing—to make the particular into something larger, to perform a movement of expansion. Simultaneously, I (like any writer) must carefully decide what to include from infinite complexity and chaos, and not least keep on good terms with the words and let them guide me, as they are always on the verge of refusing to act as signifiers, always suggesting something more or something else (see Chap. 24). When we write, we go from A through the trapdoor, and we arrive at B; one more text composed of material we noticed, considered appropriate and translated into a certain composition. We may have listened to the rain as we wrote, without paying attention, or paying attention but choosing not to include. Nevertheless, it may still be there in unrecognizable form, producing meaning.

Concluding

This actual piece of world-making has included an attempt to capture the writing process in a photo, in a dream about encrypted letters, in looking up ellipsis and in celebrating the words. It has also included Dayan's writing on Chopin and Chopin's music. Infinite layers of material and potential meaning. This is elliptical writing: Life has been translated, and the text can never be factored out. What 'really happened' is forever lost, permanently removed from the land of the living. It is now solidifying into words, not imitating life and yet full of life. It involved slow writing and slow being (Ulmer, 2017). It involved a double process of encrypting as I was moving from A to B. Meanwhile, I have sought to factor out the numbers, moving from B back to A, to inspect my material in the land of the living. Yet I arrive at B. Life forever trapped in text.

In the twilight, a hedgehog rolls up on the lawn at the dog's barking. I take the dog inside and call my daughter to join me. I find the torch and, squatting, we watch the hedgehog in the cone of light as it slowly unrolls and lets us see its face. We recall what food hedgehogs tolerate: Not milk, but dog food should be fine. Then it runs into the shrubbery with a rattle. I turn off the torch and resume writing under the parasol in the light of the screen. Later, my daughter floats by and wishes me goodnight, a butterfly wingbeat into the string of words.

Midnight is near. I don't know why I am still up, still in the garden, wrapped in a blanket, my amplifier softly providing Chopin's nocturnes. This is just the way it is: Shadows and shades in the sunlit garden, a shy hedgehog unrolling in a light-cone, intensified listening in the dark. A nocturne is a composition evocative of the night. It is dreamy and formless. A nocturne *is* a form, though, not invented by Chopin but made popular by him. Now comes my favourite, No. 2 in E Flat. It's time to go to bed. I need the E Flat one more time and press repeat.

The text is done, the words tucked in. A world.

References

Dayan, P. (2006). *Music writing literature, from sand via Debussy to Derrida*. Ashgate Publishing.

Gritten, A. (2011). Music writing literature, from sand via Debussy to Derrida. By Peter Dayan. *Music & Letters, 92*(3), 501–504. https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcr044

Highmore, B. (2018). Aesthetic matters: Writing and cultural studies. *Cultural Studies, 32*(2), 240–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1298641

Pallesen, E. (2017). Documenting the invisible – On the 'how' of process research: (Re)considering method from process philosophy. Methodological. *Innovations, 10*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799117745781

Pelias, R. J. (2016). *Performance: An alphabet of performative writing*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315422770

Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2008). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 473–500). Sage Publications.

St. Pierre, E. A. (1997). Methodology in the fold and the irruption of transgressive data. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 10*(2), 175–189.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2021). Post qualitative inquiry, the refusal of method, and the risk of the new. *Qualitative Inquiry, 27*(1), 3–9.

Tanggaard, L. (2013). The sociomateriality of creativity in everyday life. *Culture & Psychology, 19*(1), 20–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X12464987

Ulmer, J. B. (2017). Writing slow ontology. *Qualitative Inquiry, 23*(3), 201–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416643994

Wallace, D. F. (2012). Twenty-four word notes. In *Both flesh and not: Essays* (pp. 261–280). Penguin Books.

Webb, J. (2010). In between writing: Philosophy and catachresis. *Text, 14*(Archive), 1–10.

Wegener, C. (2022). Rhythms of writing: Processes of connecting (with) words. In B. Simpson & L. Revsbaek (Eds.), *Doing process research in organizations: Noticing differently* (pp. 59–79). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192849632.001.0001

Index[1]

[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

V. P. Glăveanu et al. (eds.), *Creativity — A New Vocabulary*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41907-2