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Creativity in a Changing Work Organisation

An Ethnographic Study of Practised Agency and Emerging Creativity

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates creativity and agency in a changing work organisation and knowledge-intensive work through an ethnographic framework. The focus is on the everyday interactions and practices of employees and the department responsible for human resources and personnel services. Creativity and agency and their interconnection are investigated through the exploration of everyday interactions and practices, in which conversational interactions at work provide one location for understanding the emergence of creativity in normal everyday work. This is done through five overarching research questions: (1) How do creative manifestations emerge in the ordinary practices of a work organisation? (2) What supports and potentially facilitates emerging creativity, and what does not? (3) What kinds of creativity are manifested in a contemporary work organisation? (4) How do employees perceive and experience creativity and the requirements for creativity? (5) What is the relationship between creativity and practised agency?

The findings show that creativity was manifested as emerging moments of individual contributions delimited by routine, and that these moments of creativity could become chains of different creative combinations. Novelty and value were produced by different individuals' original interpretations, which became creative manifestations when individuals decided to share their interpretations in social settings. Creativity emerged as discontinuous situational moments that formed a liminal progression along with and in relation to everyday practices, and its utilisation was based on an employee's ability to embrace these fleeting moments.

In conclusion, creativity was shown to emerge as and develop from simple ideas and insights that brought some novelty and value to the situation in which they were shared. Creativity and creative outcomes thrived in the conversations, which included a wide range of contributions. The emergence of different contributions was chronologically sequenced by interconnecting practised agency with creativity. This chronologically sequenced emergence of creativity, along with practices that were participatory, engaged and connected with the conversational culture, brought attention to the situational and temporal changes in practised professional agency impacting creative manifestations. The findings support the idea that primary personal creativity proceeds secondary social creativity, and that creativity can be addressed as a parsimonious phenomenon. Backtracking from observable and recognised creativity towards more minute contributions is a viable way to approach creativity.

Keywords: creativity, agency, ethnography, organisational development, personal development, professional practice

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Tämä väitöskirjatutkimus tarkastelee luovuutta ja toimijuutta sekä näiden välistä suhdetta muuttuvassa työorganisaatiossa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on lisätä ymmärrystä tietointensiivistä asiantuntijatyötä tekevien työntekijöiden vuorovaikutuksesta ja työkäytänteistä suhteessa luovuuteen ja toimijuuteen. Tutkimus lisää ymmärrystä luovuuden sosiaalisesta ilmentymisestä arkipäiväisen vuorovaikutuksen käytännöissä. Aihetta lähestytään viiden tutkimuskysymyksen kautta: (1) Miten luovuus ilmenee tavallisissa työkäytännöissä? (2) Mikä edistää tai estää luovuuden ilmenemistä? (3) Millaista luovuutta työorganisaatiossa ilmenee? (4) Miten työntekijät kokevat ja hahmottavat luovuuden ja siihen liittyvät vaatimukset? (5) Millainen on luovuuden ja toimijuuden suhde?

Tulokset osoittivat, että jokapäiväisessä vuorovaikutuksessa luovuus ilmenee pieninä hetkinä, jotka voivat tilaisuuden niin salliessa kehittyä suuremmiksi kokonaisuuksiksi. Olennaista on, miten näihin ajallisesti järjestyksessä ilmeneviin pieniin hetkiin pystytään tarttumaan arjen kiireessä. Luovuuden määritelmään liittyvät uutuus ja arvovaateet syntyvät yksilöiden tekemien tulkintojen kautta tilanne- ja kontekstisidonnaisessa keskusteluvuorovaikutuksessa. Haasteena on miten luovuuden ilmenemiseksi tarvittavaa aktiivista ja sitoutunutta toimijuutta voidaan tukea ja toisaalta välttää sitä ehkäiseviä toimintoja.

Luovuus ilmeni pieninä ja yksinkertaisina ideoina ja oivalluksina. Lisäksi luovuus oli yleisempää tilanteissa ja keskusteluissa, joissa osallistuminen oli aktiivista ja laajaa. Teoreettisesti tutkimus vahvistaa ensisijaisen ja toissijaisen luovuuden käsitteitä sekä ajatusta siitä, että työpaikoilla ilmenevää luovuutta on hyödyllistä tarkastella yksinkertaisena ja pienempänä ilmiönä kuin perinteisesti on ollut tapana. Tuloksia voidaan käytännön työelämässä hyödyntää luovuutta ja toimijuutta tukevien toimintamallien, rakenteiden ja työkulttuurien kehittämisessä, mikä auttaa vastaamaan nykypäivän nopeasti muuttuvan työelämän haasteisiin.

Avainsanat: luovuus, toimijuus, etnografia, organisaation kehitys, yksilöllinen kehitys, ammatilliset käytänteet

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At times, completing this dissertation has seemed distant, and it took longer than I ever imagined. Maybe because of that I now find it difficult to describe and even appreciate the feeling when the date for the defence is set on my calendar. The gratitude for the learning and development associated with the process is immense. Especially in this regard, I owe a huge thanks to my supervisor, Associate Professor Kaija Collin, who has been patient from the beginning, and supported, guided and trusted – at times thrusted – me along the way. During the final stage, when this last push to finalize this dissertation in the summer 2022 commenced, two colleagues, Dr. Susanna Paloniemi and Dr. Soila Lemmetty, agreed to read and comment my manuscript. The result would not be what it is without the most valuable and insightful comments and ideas from them.

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Tampere 02.10.2023
Panu Forsman

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1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was on creativity and agency and their interconnections. Both concepts have been the focus of scientific investigations over recent decades, but their relation is far from explicit and clear (e.g., Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Karwowski & Beghetto, 2018). Creativity has been framed as a concept that emphasises novelty and value, and it has been seen as a driving force for the economy (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Florida, 2002; Florida & Tinagli, 2004; Shalley et al., 2004). Often, this view emphasises the inventive and innovative sides of eminent and historical creativity (Amabile, 2017). In addition, creativity has also been framed as a construct enabling adaptive, ingenious and inventive action that is needed in daily life and functioning, and it has also been deemed an innate survival skill (Puccio, 2017; Richards, 2007a). Explicit accounts have stated that tomorrow's economic forerunners will be the organisations, groups and individuals that can mobilise, retain, develop and attract creative human capital (Florida & Goodnight, 2005; Florida & Tinagli, 2004). This is not a surprise, as it is a rather straightforward idea that creativity is essential for companies to create profits, which, in turn, contributes to, for example, the revenues for governments and, in part, to keeping societies running. In addition to this utilitarian view, the labour market forces a fundamental pragmatic predicament on the workforce and organisations, which are challenged by changes in an operational environment experiencing increases in the need for everyday learning and knowledge propagation and construction – highlighting the need to engage adaptive and proactive creative actions (Gube & Lajoie, 2020; Jung & Chohan, 2019; Noe et al., 2014).

1.1 Creativity is possible for and needed from everyone

Creativity is seen as possible for all individuals if the conditions are right (Robinson, 1999; Robinson & Aronica, 2010). Thus, creativity does not belong

only to the eminent and recognised creators and does not magically and mystically emerge to lone geniuses as a sudden insight from "nothing" (Sawyer, 2012). It is somewhat commonly agreed that creativity emerges from interaction (Glăveanu & Lubart, 2014; Hunter et al., 2007; Schuldberg, 2007; Woodman et al., 1993). Often, this means interpersonal interaction, but it can also be interaction with social and physical reality. Furthermore, context has been seen as influential for creative manifestations and the formation of creative identity and agency (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014; Karwowski & Beghetto, 2018). Social context also refers to a temporal and situational event in which agentic decisions and interpretations affect what individuals choose to manifest and thus what kinds of contributions they make (e.g., Puryear, 2015; Runco, 2015; Runco & Beghetto, 2019; Sternberg, 2006).

Agency as a core concept in the social sciences describes an actor's temporarily constructed engagement with the surrounding social setting (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Taylor, 1985). Human beings are inherently connected with their social surroundings (Taylor, 1985), and we are born in a specific historical time and place, where we gain agency at birth and form it through the different privileges and affordances attained in the development and socialisation processes (Archer, 2000, 2003). As a dynamic and complex construct, agency has connections to cultural, historical and temporal contexts, and it can be used to address and explain the interplay of reflexive and self-aware subjects and their surroundings (Archer, 2003, 2012; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). In addition, practised agency can change and transform surrounding physical and social settings. For example, active subjects can reimagine and reorientate objectives (Casey, 2006). By becoming an active agent through finding a personal project (Archer, 2000), a self-directed and determined individual emerges who is driven to change the environment along one's own "likings" (e.g., Bandura, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Agency has had positive connotations regarding creativity; for example, active engagement has been seen to lead to creative initiatives and manifestations (Littleton et al., 2012; Miell & Littleton, 2004; Sawyer, 2003a, 2007). In addition, emerging aspects of active interpretation and meaning making result in pragmatic and life-course agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Agency and agentic actions appear to be essential to understanding creativity, ingenuity and creative insights associated with daily functioning and survival, as well as with their future orientation (Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Puryear, 2015; Richards, 2007b). Agency connected with autonomy, self-directedness and self-fulfilment is seen as a driving force for change and the negotiating influences of surrounding structures (Casey, 2006; Fenwick & Somerville, 2006). Although innovation and creativity have been widely investigated, there is a lack of understanding of creativity in relation to practised agency.

1.2   Contemporary work calls for creativity and agency

Arguing for the importance of creativity and agency based on economic reasons is boring and even irritating to some. Thus, the argument is also that both are important for everyday functioning and survival, as well as for self-direction and self-realisation in a changing and volatile environment. Agency has been shown to have a positive impact on creativity, creative initiatives and ideas when developing existing work practices (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Glăveanu, 2010; Littleton et al., 2012; Miell & Littleton, 2004).

The importance of creativity and agency – the two key concepts of this study – is even more prevalent when broadly looking into the world in which we live and work. We live in a world of vast and rapid changes (Gratton, 2011; Robinson, 1999, 2011), and while we have previously had changes of revolutionary proportion, the knowledge-intensive work and demands for expertise in contemporary work are challenging almost all employees and organisations. Experts, particularly in knowledge-intensive fields, are expected to be self-directed, active and responsible workers (Lemmetty, 2020). Among similar requirements, it has been shown beneficial for employees to be engaged with spaces in which open dialogue, shared polyphony of diverse experiences and knowledge, as well as imagination, are fostered (Baerheim & Ness, 2021; Ness, 2017; Ness & Søreide, 2014).

In addition, demands for creativity and active agency are highlighted in the change of the previously linear progression from school to work, which has become a series of liminal renegotiations and knowledge propagations and construction (K. Beach, 2003). At the same time, labour markets have changed, and today, most jobs are described as requiring high levels of cognitive and personal skills (Giddens, 2007). The contemporary context appears to emphasise the need and demand for effective workplace learning as a challenge for contemporary organisations (Noe et al., 2014). According to Craft (2005, p. 53), distinguishing between creativity and learning is not easy when the constructivist[1] approach to learning is adopted. Learning and being able to adapt to new situations appear to be an eminent feature of contemporary society. An additional recent feature has been presented in the form of digitalisation, which is rapidly changing and challenging old existing work practices by creating new needs for agency and learning (Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2017). Moreover, recently, work and employment were globally challenged and changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced, for example, distance work on a massive level (Glăveanu et al., 2021). Within the construct of agency utilised here, a tenet for individual cognition and knowledge construction can be seen.

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[1] The constructivist paradigm utilises a metaphor of active construction as an explanation for knowledge acquisition and learning (Tynjälä, 1999). In addition, constructivist insight forms an epistemological stance in which meanings are constructed in and out of engagements with the world (Crotty, 1998).

However, it is acknowledged that individuals are not the only actors, creators or players on the stage (Glăveanu, 2013).

It is important to distinguish different perspectives that we have for doing, creating and installing changes and transformations and how people around us, the social structures with cultural entities and the artefacts surrounding us play their parts (Glăveanu, 2013). Similarly, focus has been placed on personal creativity as a primary form, preceding historical creativity as a secondary form (Boden, 2004; Runco & Beghetto, 2019). This all calls for a discussion and investigation of creativity as an outcome of the engagement of a self-reflexive and autonomous subject who brings their own interpretations and meanings into play (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Similar accounts and connections can also be made with creativity and learning (e.g., Beghetto, 2016; Beghetto & Karwowski, 2018; Glăveanu et al., 2021; Karwowski & Beghetto, 2018; Karwowski et al., 2020).

1.3   Everyday creativity and active agency in the context

The most important question is to whom things need to be novel and valuable (Amabile, 2017; Richards, 2007a; Runco & Beghetto, 2019; Runco & Jaeger, 2012) – in essence, *creativity or creative for whom*? Novelty and value, and thus creativity, at work need to be considered through more abstract levels and interpretations. We are living in a constantly moving and changing state, with an end that is not easy to predict or avoid. If we think about everyday life in respect to the novelty and value criteria because of continuous change and knowledge construction, it is practically impossible to say that life does not contain novelty (Low, 2006; Moran, 2010; Tanggaard, 2015). In addition, we are not in possession of the knowledge of what kind of world we will be living our lives in and what kinds of knowledge we will be needing along the way. Thus, the value of things often becomes visible only along the way, with a potential delay.

While there might be good guesses about what the future holds, there are no absolutes. Fitting descriptions about creativity have stated that it has been used simply to cope with the changing surroundings and other contemporary demands (Sawyer, 2013). If one would use their imagination, the conclusion would be that creativity would have surely enabled survival in situations where external evaluation was not needed or even available – including those situations in which we were creative but unsuccessful in the end. At the core of this is an idea from Dorothy Holland (1998), who states that "agency intertwined with imagination can overcome even the most hegemonous regimes". Locating the freedom needed in creativity within the individual mind and imagination is able to overcome the physical realities. Thus, when we have our agency, we are potentially creative.

It is somewhat generally agreed that creativity emerges from social interaction (Hunter et al., 2007) and, vice versa, that social emergence includes novelty but that this complex and dynamic system is difficult to explain (Sawyer,

2009). One assertation would be the idea that, with emerging creativity, the crux is on recognising the value and novelty in the context of various outcomes consisting of ideas, insights and interpretations. Often, subjective meanings are given by an actor in one temporal situation. This subjective meaning making is seen here as active engagement with the context. It is important to gather more information on engaging agency and creativity within the everyday work context and to find ways to support organisations and employees in the midst of the mentioned (and other) contemporary and emerging challenges.

Even when social structures are seen to have deterministic features, constraints and direction over individual action, the deliberate indeterministic action is due to active human agency, agentic reflexivity and free will (Archer, 2012; Brembs, 2011; Forsman, 2017; Forsman et al., 2014; Giddens, 1984; Wallace, 2006). The complex and dynamic nature of individuals and surrounding structures appears to be difficult to explain without examining both internal psychological processes and social-level phenomena (e.g., Sawyer, 2012). Aligning with this, by using the idea of private speech from Vygotsgy, Archer (2012) describes internal conversations as agentic decision making through which interpretations drawing from interpersonal interactions and personal past experiences restructure thoughts that become visible through practised agency at both the conceptual and perceptual levels.

When thinking about creativity as both internal and social-level phenomena and in relation to reflexive agentic considerations and internal conversations, a few things should be noted. For one, deciding whether or not to engage in decision making (Sternberg, 2006) and metacognitive considerations (Puryear, 2015) has been seen as important for creativity. In connection to this, Runco (2015) proposes that making creative manifestations involves a risk of rejection or ridicule. Therefore, an individual's withholding of creativity can be assumed to be a result of these considerations and risk evaluations, and thus, socially manifested creativity is simply just proof of creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1983a).

1.4   The scope of this study

In everyday life, many things we encounter may appear familiar and old. For example, work can include routine and chore tasks and can be done with rather fixed tools and algorithmic processes. In life, many things might be new and emerging. For example, we are often expected to do, learn, produce and essentially create. These include efforts that can be considered collaborative and negotiated, for example, when we agree on what and or how we do things. The focus in this dissertation is not life as a process or product, but the small details along the way that tell a story of creativity intertwined with everyday life in a work organisation.

There is a lack of understanding of creativity in relation to practised agency. This study offers a unique perspective and setting in which creativity as an important but ordinary everyday phenomenon is investigated. Creativity is

viewed as an asset for applying knowledge obtained from work and education – an asset that is available to all and is a key factor in becoming a professional in today's world. Everyday creativity should not be seen as an extra embellishment (Richards, 2007b, 2010). It should be essential for life, work, learning and seeing the possibilities (Craft, 2005) and should precede eminent manifestations of creativity and innovation (Benedek et al., 2018; Jauk et al., 2014). Furthermore, this study contributes to the discussion of the nature of everyday creativity. The theoretical framework is built on the emergence of manifested creativity intertwining with and depending on practised agency. Therefore, agency is seen as a mediating construct that explains the transition of the continuum from creativity of mind to manifestations of creativity in the social reality.

The context of this dissertation is the everyday life of the knowledge-intensive work of human resources (HR) and personnel services employees within a large public healthcare organisation, where one natural focus of creativity would be to investigate the production of inventions and innovations. However, as I seek here to bridge individualist and sociocultural approaches to creativity (e.g., Sawyer, 2012), the focus is also on the more personal level of everyday creativity and enactments of employees in the midst of their daily practices, in addition to the emerging inventions and innovations. The key criteria for creativity are novelty and value (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). The *first* term refers to uniqueness and originality. The *second* involves appropriateness, effectiveness and usability.

Through an ethnographic framework, the study aims to provide a thick description of the everyday reality and to produce an analytically generalisable theory through deep data-driven interpretations (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2007; Yin, 2014). This dissertation seeks to explore everyday practices and conversational interactions at work to understand the emergence of creativity and creative manifestations that appear in normal everyday work. Creativity and practised agency were explored utilising an ethnographic framework. This was accomplished through five overarching research questions:

1) How do creative manifestations emerge in the ordinary practices of a work organisation?
2) What supports and potentially facilitates emerging creativity, and what does not?
3) What is the relationship between creativity and practised agency?
4) How do employees perceive and experience creativity and the requirements for creativity?
5) What kinds of creativity are manifested in a contemporary work organisation?

The data for this dissertation were collected using an ethnographic framework and methods such as observations, shadowing and thematic interviews. The data consisted of field notes, recordings and transcripts and were supplemented with research diaries integral to the ethnographic data collection and analysis. In addition, organisational documents and other available written data from the organisation were used whenever possible. As the upcoming sections,

particularly the findings, show, through this research project, I have come to think that the real importance and essence of even sociocultural and systemic creativity is the intertwining with smaller individual-level details, interpretations and meanings given in daily work. Thus, while the aim was not to investigate life as such, the inherently connected nature of human beings and their surroundings, as well as the systemic nature of interactions, suggests that this was done analogically. Within the research data, interactions, in which even the small ideas, insights and opinions appeared to be important and at times somewhat novel and valuable, contributed to the emergence of creativity. It is interesting how and why some of these became so much more and appeared significant in their initial emergence as well as in the following further development, in terms of both practised professional agency and engagement.

The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, theoretical constructs, creativity, agency and their relationships are addressed, and a general framework is introduced. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research task and research questions, and Chapter 4 describes the methodological approaches and methods utilised in this study. Chapter 5 details the findings and relates them to the five research questions. Finally, in Chapter 6, the main findings are elaborated on in the discussion within the general framework, and a new perspective on how creativity intertwines with agency is suggested. Here, a deeper theoretical account is offered. This is done to discuss how this study contributes to the current field of creativity research. In the final chapter, theoretical conclusions and methodological considerations are also presented and concluding remarks are offered.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND OUTLINE

The key theoretical concepts in this study are creativity and agency. Both concepts and their proposed relationship are presented in Section 2.2. Next, before focusing on creativity and agency, the challenges and features of workers and experts in contemporary knowledge are elaborated in more detail in Section 2.1.

2.1 Contemporary work requiring creativity and agency

While substantial advancements have been made in both creativity and agency research, and vast amounts of scholarly knowledge have been generated, both concepts can be easily described as multidimensional and have been used in a diffuse and elusive way (e.g., Beighton, 2015; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Mumford, 2003; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Additionally, a group of contemporary creativity researchers have recently called for bridging individualist and sociocultural aspects of the phenomenon (Glăveanu et al., 2020). This same quest could also be set for agency, even when it is at the core of investigating the relationship between the individual and surrounding structures. The aim of this dissertation is to bridge this gap with an investigation of agency and creativity and their relationship.

2.1.1 Contemporary work environment

While the relationship between an individual and the surrounding society, including other individuals, is at the core of human agency, creativity and creative behaviour have only been a side story, with almost implicit acknowledgement in agency research advancements (Archer, 2003; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Arguments that acknowledge the change and increasing global complexity have called for new approaches and even a re-examination of existing social theories (Beck, 2016).

Similarly, our time has been described as liquid, fragmented and filled with uncertainty (Bauman, 2007). Societal change and development are daily topics, and while bigger narratives and stories are said to be forgotten in the postmodern world, it seems quite clear that the story of creativity as a remedy for all issues is important for Western welfare states. A bigger story tells us that human creativity has provided prosperity for previous generations, and it can be seen as providing future prosperity and a better tomorrow.

Research within the field of creativity research has proposed that a conceptual shift has taken place from an information society to a post-information society that requires a more multidimensional approach and acknowledgement, or at least the ability to understand and, in some aspects, accept the relational, even oppositional, positions and perspectives weaved into different conceptualisations (Glăveanu et al., 2020). While changes have occurred throughout human history, the contemporary work environment has moved from being more stable and predictable into a fluxing and changing field of continuous knowledge propagation and development (Gratton, 2011). Contemporary work and its environment are described as complex, constantly shifting and changing, which are seen as setting the general challenges for contemporary work and its employees (e.g., Gratton, 2011; Noe et al., 2014). This is in part due to digitalisation and the advancement of information and communication technology, the contemporary world of work is characterised by a huge flow of information with the availability of information (and misinformation) at an all-time high (Glăveanu et al., 2021; Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2017). Changing environment set requirements to navigate this in part by paradigms of lifelong learning, continuous knowledge propagation and development revolving around professional identity and agency negotiations (Eteläpelto, 2008; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Forsman et al., 2014; Vähäsantanen & Billett, 2008). One main feature of the change in the working life is the transition from a more linear life development and progression to a liminal and almost continuous flux between learning and work, including demands for continuous knowledge propagation, problem solving and a generally high cognitive load (K. Beach, 2003; Florida & Tinagli, 2004; Giddens, 2007).

In this context, employees are expected to be self-directed, active and responsible (Lemmetty, 2020). It has been suggested that at least half of all jobs today require high-level cognitive and personal skills (Giddens, 2007) and that the creative economy accounts for nearly half of all salaries in the contemporary world (Florida, 2002, 2005). In alignment with this, Sennett (2006, 2008) addresses economic change, workforce transformation and changes in knowledge society requirements. Similarly, it has been suggested that the demand for constant and specific skills has deteriorated and changed into fluid knowledge-based skills (Giddens, 2007, pp. 179–180). The demand for flexibility and the ability to cope with changes appears to be a leading tenet in contemporary working life and also pertains to connections with work (and general) wellbeing – which could be addressed, for example, through internalised motivation and self-determination theory (SDT; e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000) connected to agency theories.

One key question is whether employees are enabled and empowered to be self-directed enough to cope with the creativity demands that this flexibility, constant change and uncertainty produce. We live in a new age of knowledge and uncertainty in which competing theories, ideas and isms distort our relation to surroundings, and the key question is whether these requirements are addressed and supported in contemporary work contexts. The needed expertise in knowledge-intensive fields seems to be adaptive in nature (Gube & Lajoie, 2020; Jung & Chohan, 2019). Thus, it also appears that investigation of creativity and agency in the work context would be important to foster both, as well as for more eminent creativity, such as innovations and inventions, and for enabling and empowering professional agents' adaptation and coping in the changing surroundings of everyday life and work.

2.1.2   Required creativity in contemporary work

The shift in the contemporary work environment described above illustrates a need for creativity that is more than just inventions and innovations. The context described requires employees to be able to continuously learn, adapt and propagate knowledge and use their expertise in creative and adaptive ways. Thus, it is essential to first understand creativity as a multifaceted and connected phenomenon with various definitions and meanings. While there appears to be a disconnect between the different ideas and conceptualisations of creativity, the need for creativity and agency has been clearly emphasised in various policy papers and writings in national, European and global settings (Alasoini et al., 2012; Florida & Tinagli, 2004; OKM, 2010; Robinson, 1999; Työministeriö, 2005).

In addition, while numerous high-quality works have been published – ranging from handbooks (e.g., Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010; Sawyer, 2012) and review articles (e.g., Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007; Runco, 2004), some directly connected with work and organisational contexts (e.g., Anderson et al., 2014; Montag et al., 2012), as well as theoretical developments (e.g., Amabile, 1983a; Boden, 2004; Runco & Jaeger, 2012), among others – there are still many questions. The fundamental tenet of this broad literature – for example, that expertise is a requirement for eminent creativity – talks more about the standpoint and assumptions placed on creativity than about actual creativity itself (Reilly, 2008). Research also often connects with non-creative aspects (Simonton, 2013) that happen after the fact of creativity (Runco, 2015). If simplified, important aspects are overlooked, and creativity becomes elusive and even trivial (Beighton, 2015). However, what seems to be needed is a rephrasing of the required creativity and creative behaviour.[2]

At work, creativity has been described as fundamental to all advancement in areas in which change is expected, and creative abilities have been considered to expand economies, forms of business and types of work (e.g., Robinson, 1999; Työministeriö, 2005). We appear to live in an era of digital, disruptive and transformational changes and technologies – an age in which creative work has

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[2] This discussion is continued in more detail in Section 2.2.

become an integral part of the daily practices of various professionals (Beighton, 2015; Eteläpelto et al., 2007), a contemporary age in which the "once-in-a-lifetime" transition from school to work has changed into a continuous process of knowledge propagation, construction and reconstruction (K. Beach, 2003). Thus, while there ultimately has been a call and demand for new products, innovations and inventions that will drive the economy forwards and keep it running, there is also a need for everyday creativity and inventiveness that ensures our ability to function and manage in the vastly changing and developing environments.

While creativity has been emphasised as phenomena that provide a necessary edge, there is a lack of clarity as to what should be looked for. For others, it is the previously mentioned tangible inventions and innovations. For others still, it is the development and streamlining of practices and processes into a more productive form (Forsman, 2017). Generally, the most fundamental aspect appears to be that almost all contemporary workers need to be somewhat creative, and that kind of creativity is embedded in the flexibility, adaptability and functionality demands of the constantly changing work environment (e.g., Giddens, 2007). Our age of innovation, change and vast transformations raises the question of what creativity is and what it means to different people. Employees need practical creativity in order to function successfully amid increasing complexity and constant change (Runco, 2004). Despite the need for flexibility among employees across the board, research has focused on creative artistic and scientific professionals and other highly creative people. In addition, practical creativity should be extended to encompass not only functional creativity (Cropley & Cropley, 2010) but ideas and insights with novel and valuable properties that affect everyday actions, interpretations and knowledge propagation so that individuals develop new and different ways of either bringing changes or adjusting to changes that are emerging.

The dominant conversation offers creativity as a solution to various economic and social issues, but there is no generally accepted conceptualisation, definition or answer as to what creativity is on which to ground this claim (e.g., Florida, 2002). In addition, contemporary expertise is more adaptive in nature (Gube & Lajoie, 2020; Jung & Chohan, 2019) and calls for both creativity and agency. Furthermore, everyday functioning and survival are connected to these constructs (Puccio, 2017; Richards, 2007a). However, no clear lines of action exist. While the constructs of creativity and agency are elusive and even dissolved, both are clearly needed in contemporary working life. It appears that there is a rising need to understand the nature of creativity and the relationship between creativity and agency in contemporary working life and how it enables individuals to encounter, adapt and cope with the emerging changes and demands in their dynamic environments. However, the changing nature of work and the workforce seems to be at odds with this notion, since the required creativity involves flexibility and the ability to cope with changing and challenging surroundings, and the prevailing conceptualisations still lean on tangible performances and outcomes, polished routine tasks and core competences (Lemmetty et al., 2021). Therefore, there seems to be a need to

understand creativity as an everyday phenomenon within working life and to investigate how it is socially manifested in and along mundane work practices and changes.

2.2 Theoretical outlines for creativity and agency

This study addresses two main concepts – creativity and agency – and their relationship. Both concepts are complex and can be considered challenging due to the vast multidisciplinary approaches utilised in their investigation. The aim of this theory section is to recap the main points of the relevant scientific discussion connected to the phenomena under investigation. However, a conceptual shift from an information society to a post-information society requires a multidimensional approach and the acknowledgement of relational and even opposing aspects in the investigation of creativity (Glăveanu et al., 2020). Next, I present highlights from what I see as relevant in creativity studies; then, I do the same for agency studies. Finally, I elaborate on some connections between these.

2.2.1 Creativity

Creativity has been a focal point in numerous fields and disciplines with various definitions by influential philosophers, researchers and theoreticians in different historical periods (Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Runco, 2004; Runco & Albert, 2010; Sawyer, 2012). The start of the modern phase of creativity studies is often credited to Guilford's 1950 presidential address to the American Psychology Association (Guilford, 1950; Lubart, 2001; Plucker, 2001). The first part of this modern phase emphasised individualistic approaches, and the second half emphasised sociocultural approaches (Sawyer, 2012). In part due to the limited scope and focus on different approaches and single studies, differing and even opposing views on creativity have produced a distorted picture of a multifaceted and complex phenomenon (Glăveanu, 2014b; Glăveanu et al., 2020). Thus, while a single dissertation cannot provide a full review of all the aspects and approaches, I start by reviewing some larger issues in creativity research and elaborating on why broader theorising should be applied. Then, I depict the perspectives on the concept of creativity and elaborate on the discussion by focusing on the criteria and definition of the term.

2.2.1.1 A complex phenomenon needs complex theories

Some experts have stated that objective and definitive criteria for identifying creativity cannot be articulated (e.g., Amabile, 1983a) and that the essence of creativity is impossible to capture with only one variable (Sternberg, 1999, 2006). Aligning with this idea, Montag et al. (2012) claim that the term creativity refers to several different constructs, and they suggest that one should think of creativity as a research domain instead of seeing creativity as a unitary construct.

This is in line with Baer (2011), who argues that general theories are possible only as metatheory or as heuristic and composite theories connecting different theories together. Baer (2011) further discusses the distortion, distraction and disappointment created by the grand theories of creativity in his paper focusing on the limitations that domain-specific theories place on creativity.

Conceptually, this discussion relates to the more general discussion of research paradigms and the aims of scientific research interlined with the idea that scientific thinking is elegant[3] (e.g., Jaccard & Jacoby, 2020; Suter, 2014). In addition, the discussion may have been driven by the perceived need to support and facilitate creativity in contemporary societies (Sawyer, 2013). Thus, aside from the simplicity and neatness demanded as part of elegance, a source for the distortion is not only in the scientific practices and conventions but also in the fondness for simple and straightforward practices and guides (Sawyer, 2013), for example, in the rigorous rules providing frameworks that look for more realist objective truth in natural science, contrasted with a humanistic approach that adopts uncertainty weaved with subjective interpretations and meanings of a social constructionist perspective (e.g., Jaccard & Jacoby, 2020, pp. 7–11). A similar discussion is exemplified by the somewhat intertwining dimensions of scientific-oriented theory, which strongly relies on empirical support and metaphorical orientation that provide alternative and even speculative representations (Kozbelt et al., 2010, pp. 21–22).

Positioning and understanding one's own relation and orientation within a creativity research field is important, as this directs influences, accumulated knowledge, meanings and associations that we have with creativity (Sawyer, 2012,p. 390; see also Crotty, 1998; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2020; Wastell & Howarth, 2022). Aligning with this, a broad group of creativity researchers called for a multidimensional approach and accounting for the complexity of the creativity phenomenon while appreciating the importance and limitations of single studies (Glăveanu et al., 2020). Hennessey and Amabile (2010, p. 590) expressed a similar need for emphasis and to draw broader (*metaphorical*) connections:

> The staggering array of disciplinary approaches to understand creativity can prove to be an advantage, but only if researchers and theorists work together and understand the discoveries that are being made across creative domains and analytical levels. Otherwise, the mysteries may deepen.

A rather broad array of writers have argued that creativity has been made into a complex phenomenon with numerous explanatory elements but that this complexity has not been shown enough in research outcomes (Glăveanu et al., 2020; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). While different approaches to creativity have provided important insights into the phenomenon, the researchers have also made it clear that no simple answers exist in a field of polarised positions. It is somewhat easy to agree with Mumford and Gustafson (1988), who describe creativity as a syndrome involving a number of explanatory elements. Next, some selected approaches and aspects of creativity research are elaborated.

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[3] The elegance in science can be framed as precision, neatness and simplicity (e.g., the elegance of a mathematical proof or unified field theory; see e.g., Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a).

2.2.1.2 Many faces of creativity

Traditionally, creativity has been defined as the ability to bring something new into existence by reshaping or reconstructing – or generating novelties from – given mental or physical materials (Barron, 1955, 1969). An aligning formulation suggested by Boden (1995, 2004, pp. 1–10) proposes that three forms of creativity are combination, exploration and transformation. Considering these, a simple exemplar answer to the question "*How you create*?" would be, "*By making something new through exploring, combining or transforming existing things*", which would be easily described as a process that seems to be important.

Addressing creativity as a process is a rather common approach that was previously included in Guilford's 1950 address focusing on the creative process as a sequence of thoughts and actions leading to creative outcomes (Guilford, 1950; Lubart, 2001; Plucker, 2001). In addition to *process*, several other aspects labelled under P – such as creative *product*, *person(ality)*, *press(ures)*, *persuasion* and *potential* – have been used to formulate approaches (Kozbelt et al., 2010, p. 25; see also Rhodes, 1961). However, according to Glăveanu (2013), an issue with approaches that utilise these different Ps is that their conception allows different aspects of creativity to be studied in isolation but does not offer a realistic and holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Almost all definitions of creativity pay some heed to novelty and value (Barron, 1955, 1969; Puccio & Cabra, 2010; Runco, 2015; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). According to Feist (2010, p. 114), it is false to say that no consensual definition exists. As Lubart (1999, p. 339) put it more than 20 years ago:

> Creativity from a Western perspective can be defined as the ability to produce work that is novel and appropriate (Barron, 1988; Jackson & Messick, 1967; Lubart, 1994; MacKinnon, 1962; Ochse, 1990; Stein, 1953). Novel work is original, not predicted, and distinct from previous work. Appropriate work satisfies the problem constraints, is useful, or fulfils a need. Creativity can occur in virtually any domain, including the visual arts, literature, music, business, science, education, and everyday life.

In fact, things have come so far that the novelty and value used to evaluate creativity are also labelled the standard definition of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). However, while there is no dispute on this, there has been no real consensus on who is to evaluate what is novel and valuable or in relation to whom creative aspects should be evaluated (Kozbelt et al., 2010; Plucker & Runco, 1998; Simonton, 2012, 2013). In part, this has surely led to the discrepancy described earlier.

Clarity is important regarding the level of creativity we need to inspect when creativity is evaluated through novelty and value (Gruyso et al., 2011; Runco & Jaeger, 2012) – or when similar subjective views and evaluation criteria are utilised, for example, newness, originality or uniqueness, as well as appropriateness, usefulness and meaningfulness (e.g., Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007; Richards, 2010; Simonton, 2012; Weisberg, 2015b). Such questions as who is to evaluate and judge (cf. Long, 2014) and what is new and valuable in relation to whom or what are often neglected and sidelined – or at least deeper philosophical, semantic and origin perspectives – are bypassed.

Particularly during the first decades of creativity research coloured by individualist approaches, the creativity construct was developed through an emphasis on the measurement and assessment of the (often eminent) creativity of (often eminent) creators (Csikszentmihályi, 1996; Guilford, 1950; Plucker, 1999, 2001; Plucker & Makel, 2010; Sawyer, 2012). While measurement and assessment based on psychometric criteria has been seen as an active, dynamic and productive part of creativity research, it has in part accounted for often conflicting and divergent results (Plucker & Makel, 2010, pp. 48–51). One key question emerging from studies focusing on eminent creativity, for example, in the form of *established artists or scientists* (creative person) or *recognised inventions and innovations* (creative product), is how and if these insights gained from eminent creativity can explain creativity of ordinary individuals (Amabile, 2017; Amabile & Pillemer, 2012).

Lately, researchers have mostly agreed that the proper approach for assessing creativity is a multidimensional construct, by for example combining several tests, with a minimum of two (Kim, 2006, 2011). In addition, it is of interest to investigate creativity's connections with constructs, such as memory and executive functions (Sharma & Babu, 2017) and grit (Rojas & Tyler, 2018). Confluence models of creativity, such as the component model (Amabile, 1983a; Amabile & Pratt, 2016), developmental model or systems view (Csikszentmihályi, 1996) and investment theory (Sternberg, 2006), have hypothesised that creativity consists of multiple components. For example, the componential model includes numerous (personality) attributes, such as motivation, knowledge, ability and creativity-relevant skills. Although confluence models importantly connect with both non-creative and creative aspects, the product emphasis often conflates creativity with eminent high-level creations. Therefore, definitions based on characteristics of a creative product have facilitated empirically suitable, easy and objective measurements and assessments and are, in a theoretical sense, fundamentally incomplete (see Amabile, 1983a, 1983b; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

Somewhat opposed to the individualistic approach is the sociocultural approach, which arises from the notions that attempted objectivity in psychometric measurements has implicit subjective components, leading to the sociocultural realisation of the importance of consensus in the evaluation of creativity (Amabile, 1982, 1983b; Sawyer, 2012, p. 214). The sociocultural model of creativity has been increasingly applied in approaches that seek to understand creativity within the sphere of social interaction (Csikszentmihályi, 1996, 1997, 1999; Sawyer, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2015b). Observations revealing implicit subjective components in creativity assessments have led to the formulation of *the sociocultural model of creativity* (also known as the *systems model of creativity*), which consists of a *person* as the source of innovation, the experts of that creative domain as *gatekeepers* judging what is appropriate and can enter the field, and the members of that field as the *audience* responsible for disseminating and preserving the contribution (Sawyer, 2012, pp. 214–215). One key argument for the sociocultural tone is that, when assessment is based on the domain-specific contents by the people working within that domain, then creativity is

fundamentally and unavoidably social. As an attempt to answer the perceived challenges, sociocultural aspects have led to rewriting the language of creativity from Ps to As, and, for example, the five A's framework of *actor, action, artefact, audience* and *affordances* is proposed to advocate the situated and contextual nature of specific manifestations of creativity (Glăveanu, 2013).

While social, systemic and collaborative approaches to creativity have proven useful, additional attempts to distinguish between defining aspects of creativity, such as mini-c, little/small-c, pro-c and Big-C creativity, or between incremental and radical creativity have been made (Gilson & Madjar, 2011; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Kozbelt et al., 2010; Madjar et al., 2011). The above divisions are based on different conceptual dichotomies that have been produced to clarify elusive creativity with rather restrictive definitions. While different divisions and conceptualisations are useful, they only address certain aspects of creativity, not the whole phenomenon. One question is whether the difference between these creativities lies in the creative or non-creative properties that are related to them. In addition, even the smallest level of creativity follows the definitions based on product characteristics and some tangible manifestations without real consideration of what lies beyond.

In light of this, it is interesting to investigate how an actor (as the creator) relates to the surrounding society and the multiple others (as audiences and collaborators) in it (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). If we take a closer look at the systemic model of creativity, in which the perspectives of inspection are *person, domain* and *field* and what is called creative is defined through gatekeepers already adopted by domain and field, this widely adopted view is fitting to review highly creative individuals and groups that manifest eminent creativity, inventions and innovations. This is especially because, according to Runco (2015), the presentation of creative ideas is considered to carry a risk, as novel, original and unique ideas are easily opposed and rejected. Therefore, it appears that the decisions made by the actor in relation to any creative idea or insight are fundamentally important and essential in the manifestation of creativity (Karwowski & Beghetto, 2018; Sternberg, 2006; Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010). Additionally, while metacognitive consideration by the moderator has been related to creativity (Puryear, 2015), there has been little actual research on the decisions connected with creative manifestations (Ritter et al., 2012). A sociocultural model of creative identity has been proposed for field investigations of the needed enactments within interactions and dialogues (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). In addition, a formulation of ideational pathways has been made to focus on the dynamic movement of ideas within and between actors who are shaped and are shaping ideas in a dialogical relationship (Tanggaard & Beghetto, 2017). The discussion about the relationship between the actor and the surrounding social realm is revisited, especially in the upcoming sections addressing agency and the relationship between agency and creativity. Before that, we still need to briefly discuss *creativity as a socially manifested phenomenon, the definition of creativity* and *the subjective and objective level of creativity*.

2.2.1.3 Creativity as a socially manifested phenomenon

To simplify the above, two main approaches to creativity are the individualistic and sociocultural. The exemplar starting definition proposed that "*creativity is making something new through combining or transforming old things*". Additionally, the previous section ended with the idea that creativity emerges in an interaction between the actor (individual) and their surroundings (including audiences; e.g., Glăveanu, 2013; Hunter et al., 2007). All this has provided ideas about the phenomenon, but what is creativity, really? Is it some mental construct residing in the actor's mind or something observably manifested[4] in the surrounding social reality where the audience can dissect it? In line with this, Amabile (1983a, 1983b) argues that socially manifested creativity is just a distinctive sign or proof of creativity. "Manifested" refers to the fact that creativity is shown and demonstrated in life. "Manifested" also refers to the level of inspection, that is, manifested in the observable social reality. This can be interpreted in terms of the individualistic approach, meaning that creativity resides in the mental sphere (cognition) of the human mind, but what can be epistemically and operationally attained from this is the shared manifestations. Feist (1999) nicely elaborates on this idea:

> …creativity by definition is mysterious and beyond the pale of empirical scrutiny. That may be true concerning the process of creativity, but it fails to distinguish two other important and observable aspects of creativity, namely the person and product. The inner workings of the creative mind may forever be outside of direct observation, but the behavioral dispositions of the person creating are not. (p. 273)

Thus, the interpretation could be that what emerges and is manifested in the interaction is simply proof or a sign of creativity. This results in the conclusion that, in most cases, when we are discussing creativity, this involves proofs and signs of creativity in the form of manifested creativity.

It appears that these signs are easily conflated with creativity. This (almost Cartesian) divide between the hidden and shown creativity and the separation between creativity (*inside our minds*) and manifested creativity (*outside our minds*) has consequences for the theories of creativity (Glăveanu, 2011, 2014b; Glăveanu & Sierra, 2015; Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). For example, ideational pathways address this dynamic back-and-forth movement of creative ideas in the different realms from the partly hidden mental level of the actor's mind to being explicitly shown in social reality (Tanggaard & Beghetto, 2017). This is also the case for the mentioned decision-making requirements and metacognitive considerations. This idea is elaborated in a proposal that creativity arises in the mundane processes of everyday life and that everyone is fundamentally creative and that this is the way we handle unexpected situations in everyday life (Tanggaard, 2015). The problem might be that, even with the survival aspect of everyday creativity, it is overlooked as an extra embellishment (Richards, 2007b, 2010; Tanggaard, 2015). Furthermore, this might be overlooked by the individuals

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[4]Manifest: readily perceived by the senses; easily understood or recognised by the mind; to make evident or certain by showing or displaying (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b).

themselves, especially if they do not see themselves as associated with creative identity (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014).

In recent years, largely due to the accumulated understanding of perceived complexity and connectedness in social reality, interest has been directed towards everyday creativity and originality within everyday life, with a focus on, for example, everyday cleverness (Moran, 2010; Richards, 2010). In addition, it has been noted that individual creativity can be seen as a starting point for more eminent creative manifestations (Açıkgöz & Günsel, 2016). Similarly, Anderson et al. (2014) propose that creativity and innovation are integral parts of the same process, with the first typically connected with idea generation and the latter with idea implementation. Within the above, the idea that creativity as a process should be seen as a continuum is appealing.

2.2.1.4 Subjective and objective aspects of creativity

It has been pointed out that it is important to differentiate subjective from objective creativity (Csikszentmihályi, 1996, pp. 27–28), although this is rarely done at any level beyond tangible objective outcomes. Whether novelty and value are to be evaluated at the subjective or objective level is an interesting question that has impacts on the conceptualisation (Weisberg, 2015a, 2015b, 2018). In addition, different value appraisals have been considered problematic, as they are seen as subjective and are considered to become visible only after some time (Weisberg, 2015b). As noted, the rise of sociocultural and systemic approaches has been impacted by the notion that (expert) assessments are subjective in nature (Amabile, 1983a, 1983b; Amabile & Collins, 1996; Sawyer, 2012). Thus, for example, while, according to Lubart (1999, p. 339), the creative product can be evaluated by an appropriate group of judges formed from either peers or experts, this has been shown to be socially connected and subjective (Amabile, 1982, 1983b; Sawyer, 2012, p. 214). In addition, it has also been argued that even expert evaluators do not take into account who or what is new in their complex evaluations, and while operationally understandable, the conflation of creativity with social creativity is exclusive (Galati, 2015). To some extent, the discussion of the subjective and objective sides of creativity revises the earlier idea of creativity as a continuum. For one, Boden (2004, 2009) proposes a model in which creativity resides on a continuum where historical (objective)-level creativity is a special case of personal (subjective) creativity. Aligning with this, the theory of primary (personal) creativity sees social and systemic aspects as secondary creativity, even unnecessary (Runco, 1996, 2014, 2015; Runco & Beghetto, 2019). In other words, it might be wise to approach creativity in a more parsimonious way (Runco, 2003, 2009, 2015, 2017).

It is reasonable to theorise that those experiences about creative properties have subjective foundations that are only reflected in objective reality, regardless of the type of creativity. Focusing only on this objectively eminent and recognised creativity loses the subjective foundations of creative manifestations and, thus, the functionalities of our creativity in everyday life. This is especially clear when external evaluators who have no knowledge of the actual thought process base their evaluations on inherently subjective phenomena. While some arguments

segregate eminent historical creativity from more mundane non-eminent manifestations with claims that the latter cannot explain the former (see Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), the conceptualisation of creativity as a continuum, in most cases, clarifies the relation and location of different forms and levels of creativity. Everything muddles around the fact that creativity needs to be socially manifested, and while the view of creativity on a continuum (or as ideational pathways) offers a clarifying explanation for the development of a creative outcome as a process-like performance, it does not generally address the notion that creativity must be shown and validated to exist. The question is whether there can be such novelty and value in ideas that count as creative but are never socially manifested? The focus of this interest is on our ability to think differently and the potential of our imagination in endeavours to improve the functioning of society and work (Robinson & Aronica, 2010). It might be valuable to admit that we can have numerous important thoughts that count as creative but that are not manifested, or that the manifestations are ambiguous. Thus, while researchers usually separate different creative acts, such as creative ideation and implementation (Sawyer, 2010, p. 183), and make various categorisations from small-/little- to Big-Cs (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2015; Runco, 2004, 2014), they do not always explicitly state, for example, that individual creativity is seen as a starting point for creative outcomes and solutions in complex processes (Açıkgöz & Günsel, 2016) and that some parts of creativity might have been left unseen (Feist, 1999; Martindale, 1999). This side appears to be simply overlooked.

However, for some, creativity is all about new ideas emerging in individual minds (Glăveanu, 2014a, p. 2), that is, creating novel combinations of pre-existing mental elements (Martindale, 1999). As previously explained, the problem is that these appear to fall outside the empirical observations and are unfit for most operationalisations, but at the same time, there are also distinctions on different abstract and metaphorical phases of the creative process, such as ideation, incubation and implementation. Connecting creativity with a single idea or vocabulary from individualistic approaches can be seen as problematic, as it could be interpreted as a re-establishment of already refuted lone geniuses and lightbulb metaphors (Sawyer, 2012). Rather, it is proposed that there is a need to bridge individualistic and sociocultural approaches and aspects of creativity. Therefore, while creativity is often considered more than purely mental, extending it from psychological to social and material realities is needed for a holistic and overarching approach that addresses the complexity of the phenomenon in as trustworthy a way as possible (e.g., Glăveanu, 2014a, p. 81; Glăveanu et al., 2020).

When thinking about creativity as a continuum and considering the proposed parsimonious approach, most conceptualisations include numerous non-creative aspects, such as power and contextual knowledge. Although offering a linear trajectory for creative achievement is appealing, it does not include an explanation for the emergence of creativity or entail a differentiation between levels and forms of creativity. The creative act is more like a recursing process or performance (Montag et al., 2012), something that can be seen in a

collaborative emergence and cannot be reduced to intentions within individual turns (Sawyer, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2015a). Thus, there might be logic in treating creativity as a mental construct and social manifestations as proofs and signs of it that can be easily subjected to different operationalisations.

2.2.1.5 Creativity as a mental construct

The main argument in the previous section is that processes and outcomes are not the same as creativity and that this should be examined more closely. The key issue is the divide between theoretical and operational constructs, as there is no clear, definitive answer as to what creativity is (Amabile, 1983b). In operational definitions of novelty and value, various related or even synonymous terms, such as uniqueness, newness, original and surprising or appropriate and meaningful, have been used. As proposed earlier, many of these are often assessed based on more subjective rather than objective aspects. These aspects are not developed in isolation (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). When investigating creative behaviour, Karwowski and Beghetto (2018) note that individual understanding of creativity, as well as identifying oneself as creative, having creative confidence and valuation towards creativity, is likely to lead to behaving creatively. This all connects with the previously mentioned idea that creative manifestation depends on a decision to engage, interact and share one's ideas, insights and interpretations.

Insights into this approach regarding creativity as a mental construct also come from neuroscience, with technologies able to investigate brain activity and thus can also tell about creativity, although the focus in this research is often too high to really explain creativity (Gabora & Ranjan, 2013). Despite this, Fink and Benedek (2013, pp. 211–212) note that brain activity during tasks requiring creative cognition and tasks involving other types of cognition might be different. They also speculate about the possibility of investigating activity patterns associated with the productions of highly creative ideas as opposed to less creative ones. However, as previously noted, on a process level, creativity is a complex phenomenon, and this challenges brain imaging; thus, the critique placed on psychometrics could be applied here. Aligning with this, neuroscientists also propose that creativity is not a single trait but an emergent property of interaction clusters of more fundamental characteristics, including larger connections to cognition and intelligence as well as personality (Barbot et al., 2013, pp. 73–74). However, it is even more interesting to consider that microfeatures of experiences do not activate singular neurons or all activated neurons to an equal degree and that memory items share microfeatures that help activation as associations spread (Gabora & Ranjan, 2013, p. 23). From a creativity point of view, there are at least two really interesting points here: (1) *how associations and the spread of activation within memory help us formulate new combinations and ideas* and (2) *how memory, as a dynamic and reconstructive act, is in part creative itself* (e.g., Gabora & Ranjan, 2013). This research approach includes notions about interpretations containing non-obvious parts that involve the reorganisation of elements of mental representation generated by a stimulus or situation (Wastell & Howarth, 2022, p. 170) and connecting notions that are

observable differences in brain structures and that use brain hemispheres that affect creative behaviour (Bowden & Jung-Beeman, 2007).

2.2.1.6 Creativity at work

For example, everyday creativity has been operationally defined in terms of the originality and meaningfulness of either a creative product or process (Richards, 2010, p. 189). Since these multiple approaches present us with a multifaceted concept of creativity, it is important to understand where these different views and emphases have been drawn from. For example, in the field of creative arts, novelty often trumps value, whereas in innovation-based organisations, value is of equal importance (Dewett & Gruys, 2007; Gruys et al., 2011), showing the motif of perspectives and internalised values in that context. A work of art is naturally and most commonly evaluated based on its novelty or uniqueness, which is in line with our contemporary image of an artist, but this contrasts with the historical account of an artist (Sawyer, 2012). This might be one reason why creativity is often viewed in terms of tangible performance or outcomes, which arguably touches on only part of the creativity phenomenon.

Contemporary work organisations are challenged by change, adaptation and anticipation (forecast) demands that require high cognitive skills and knowledge and continuous learning that attempts to answer challenges created by the transforming environment (Malinin, 2019; Noe et al., 2014; K. Beach, 2003). The change in the work environment appears to emphasise the need for adaptive expertise as a form of applied creative thinking that supplements the more traditional and efficient routine expertise (Gube & Lajoie, 2020). This should make clear that creativity has numerous connections within the working-life discussion. However, the language given for different kinds of creativity at work, which offers varying semantic meanings and importance, appears to be part of the issue. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009), for example, attempt to expand and bridge the "dichotomic" distance between everyday and eminent creativity with ideas of mini-c and pro-c incorporated with learning, intrapersonal insights and professional expertise. Thus, the importance of creativity is not only connected with knowledge workers involved with knowledge creation, application and distribution but also all other workers, for example, those encountering and solving problems and/or creating new practices in their daily lives and expanding the scope of everyday creativity into professional levels (e.g., Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009).

Naturally, one aspect of productivity simply addresses creativity as a source of inventions and innovations. In the general development of labour division, work is divided into small, specialised groups of specialised workers and tasks, resulting in repetitive and monotonic "standard" workplaces, which might not be optimal for a creativity- and innovation-dependent work environment (Dul & Ceylan, 2011; Dul et al., 2011). When investigating creative performance at work, Madjar et al. (2011) notices that conformity with organisational identification predicts routine non-creative performance. When creative co-workers are added to these, incremental creativity is likely to follow. For radical creativity, resources, a willingness to take risks and career

commitment are the strongest predictors (Gilson & Madjar, 2011; Madjar et al., 2011). Aligning with this, we can consider the presented connection of creativity with expertise, which has a similar dichotomic feature. Gube and Lajoie (2020) note a differentiation between routine and adaptive expertise, in which the latter subsumes the former and allows the expert to use and apply their expertise in some new conditions rather than just efficiently utilising them in their conditionalised circumstances. When talking about contemporary requirements, a similar predicament is connected with highly educated workers and experts as education has been accused of killing creativity; however, this is often overstatement but is rather related to the impacts of a bureaucratic system that emphasises practising algorithmic procedures and focusing on being right or wrong (e.g., Karwowski, 2018). Thus, adaptive ability is suggested as a requirement for innovative expertise (and domain-specific knowledge is proposed in the consensual creativity theories discussed earlier).

When looking specifically at innovative work behaviour (IWB) in terms of individual and organisational factors, we can see the complex dynamics involved; however, within IWB, work centrality can explain employees' relationship to work, as it is central to their lives and represents an important boundary condition (Volery & Tarabashkina, 2021). In the work context, to foster the generation and implementation of creativity (and innovation), attention should be directed towards supporting the emergence of creative identity (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). In part, suggestions have been made to reframe the need for creativity to exceed specific industries and fields deemed creative or for it to be part of the creative economy, even to the point that we need to rethink creativity and how it is proactively embedded in the education system (Martin & Wilson, 2017; Wilson, 2009, 2010). Research has not focused extensively on administrative or managerial work, that is, the kind of work that contributes to or supports other major functions of organisations. Discussions have mainly concerned creative professionals or the creative core rather than "non-creative" workers.

2.2.1.7   Creativity in this study

It appears that the lack of a general agreement and definition in the scientific community, accompanied by the widening popular interest in creativity in contemporary society, has rendered the term and phenomenon of creativity elusive and somewhat trivial (Beighton, 2015; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Partly due to this, creativity research may be responsible for a situation of conceptual disparity in which society has downplayed everyday creativity and has coined what one might term eminent creativity (Richards, 2007b, 2010).

Creative work has thus largely been investigated from the perspective of eminently creative individuals (Amabile, 1983a; Amabile & Collins, 1996; Csikszentmihályi, 1996, 1997; Sawyer, 2012). While creativity is important for all and achievable by all (Robinson, 1999, 2011), it has not garnered much attention in the context of ordinary individuals (Amabile, 2017; Richards, 2007a; Tanggaard, 2015). It is worth noting that we are all able to generate original interpretations from our experiences, and when these interpretations are useful,

they qualify as creative (Runco, 2008). The problem this creates is that, for example, when expert evaluators are used, the level of inspection and the reference point used are external to the individuals doing the creation.

In this tradition, a common viewpoint is to see creative products – broadly defined as any creative outcomes or responses – as signs of creativity (Amabile, 1983a). Additionally, as depicted in Glăveanu's (2013) five A's model, these signs are perceived from various perspectives. However, this is not usually explicitly stated, and creative products and outcomes are evaluated through social perspectives and are generally conflated to represent all creativity, not seen as mere signs of it. Simply based on semantic meaning, creativity and manifested creativity are not the same. The above distinction of creative outcome as just a sign of creativity is of (ontological and) epistemological importance, and ignoring this might result in a conflation of creativity with creative outcomes.

However, even at the lowest level, a creative manifestation of that sort involves a risk, as novel, original or unconventional ideas are easily rejected by others and even the creators themselves (Runco, 2015). In addition, while decision making is related to creativity (Sternberg, 2006), little research has been conducted on decisions connected with manifested creativity (de Buisonjé et al., 2017; Ritter et al., 2012; Ritter & Mostert, 2017). Thus, creativity connects with the actor's metacognitive considerations regarding whether or not to engage (Puryear, 2015), which appears to be one of the first non-creative components to make all manifested creativity complex in this regard.

Within the contemporary discussion of workplace creativity, creativity has been seen as the production of novel and useful organisational products, services and processes (e.g., Lemmetty et al., 2021). This includes the development of practices and ways of working. However, increasing emphasis has been placed on the impact of creativity on everyday functioning and learning, as well as on adaptive expertise and even survival. The latter can be seen as personal primary-level creativity and the former as social secondary-level creativity. The key question regards *creativity or creative for whom* and the investigation of creativity needs to account for both individualist and sociocultural approaches.

The commonly approved standard definition of creativity utilises novelty and value. In everyday discussion, novelty appears to be overrated compared to more subtle change, development and transformation of "old ideas", as well as the re-creation, re-presentation and reconstruction of these. Contemporary work, especially in knowledge-intensive fields, appears to be complex and volatile, with continuous knowledge propagation and high cognitive requirements calling for self-directed, active and responsible employees who are able to utilise creativity at both the personal and social levels. This dissertation seeks to answer these contemporary requirements and utilises a contemporary description of primary (individualist) creativity and secondary (sociocultural) creativity (Runco & Beghetto, 2019), and the view of parsimonious creativity is adopted (Runco, 2009, 2017). These views are bridged with the aim of understanding everyday manifestations of creativity and practised agency and the relation of these through the description and interpretation of authentic work. Aligning with

common definitions, creativity is here evaluated through novelty and value. Creativity is understood through the model of primary and secondary creativity, this framework is depicted in Figure 1.

Individual, Individualist approaches
Emphasis on:
- *Personal, more subjective and individual account of creative processes and outcomes*
- *Cognitive mechanisms*
Creativity is: Novel and valuable for individual creator

Primary creativity starts with the individual constructing *an original interpretation* in dialogue with surrounding reality

- Individuals do **not necessarily manifest their interpretations**

    ⋯▸*Creativity can be basically mental, hidden and private*
    ⋯▸*Manifested creativity requires decisions and metacognitive considerations*

Shared Interpre- tations

Secondary creativity starts with social and historical others engaging in a dialogue with the shared original interpretation (= primary creativity)

⋯▸Others engage with the same individual process of a construction of a novel interpretation and meaningmaking related to the shared interpretation

Social, Socioconstructivist approaches
Emphasis on:
- *Audience or arbiters give an attribution of creative process and outcome, social recognition or consensus is required*
- *The social is always and already present in the individual*
Creativity is: Novel and valuable for social and historical others

Creativity is novel and valuable for individual creator

Seen, for example, in:
- Individual (private) exploration, combinations and transformations
- Personal (and private) interpretations, insights and ideas

Creativity is novel and valuable for social and historical others

Seen, for example, in:
- Collaborative exploration, combinations and transformations
- Shared personal interpretations, insights and ideas

FIGURE 1   A model of primary and secondary creativity

2.2.2   Agency

Aligning with Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agency is defined here as a temporally constructed engagement of an actor in the surrounding temporal

environment of structures and other actors. Human beings, as actors, are inherently connected to their surroundings (Taylor, 1985). In addition, agency is understood as a dynamic and complex construct that, as a phenomenon, is connected to the cultural, historical and temporal context location of individual experiences, and within these social surroundings, agency is mediated through the internal conversation to attain individual meanings, interpretations and reflexivity that allow observable autonomic and deliberate actions (Archer, 2003, 2012). The phenomena evolving around agency involve the ability to react, reproduce and transform the physical and social surroundings that individuals inhabit.

2.2.2.1 Grounding the agency discussion

Agency is a core concept in the science of the human subject and its relationship to surrounding social structures (Taylor, 1985). For Hitlin and Elder (2007), this agency-versus-structure debate is ubiquitous and misleading, especially if agency is seen as "merely" a placeholder for human freedom and individual volition. However, this discussion has some place here, as the philosophical discussion of agency includes numerous notions of freedom and the volition of a self-aware reflexive agent who is integrally connected to the surrounding society (Archer, 2000, 2003; Brembs, 2011; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Taylor, 1985; Wallace, 2006). We are born in a historically and temporally specific place and gain our agency and connected affordances through socialisation and culturalisation processes (Archer, 2000, 2003). To an extent, an argument could be made that we are grounded, if not even bounded, by the cultural, historical and temporal location in which we happen to be born. Thus, while at the core of the discussion is the possibility of actors interacting, mediating and transforming the contexts in which they are embedded, there is also a need to locate the discussion within its context and to look at the interplay of these social structural contexts (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Through this, we can anchor the meanings and interpretations within shared social understanding. Therefore, while there is a consensus that socioculturally mediated rules, precepts and outlines exist for people to follow, there are two camps of sociological theory that address this, with different perspectives impacting the theorisation of which we need to be aware when trying to interpret the intertwined nature of human agency.

The Weberian side views social objects as a result of intentional human action, while the Durkheimian side sees social objects as external and coercive with respect to the individual (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 74).[5] While intentional action is of importance, it is beneficial to remember and acknowledge that unintentional daily activities, including routines and habits with varying automated processes of mind, play a huge role in our humane functionality (Kahneman, 2012; Kahneman et al., 2021; Wastell & Howarth, 2022). The first aspect at play is the more deterministic view that emphasises the powers of social structures and even the laws of nature, such as discussions in neurological and biological

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[5] Intentionality is a concept that has also been used to tackle the caveats of creativity definitions. Serendipity and serendipitous are concepts that are used when addressing creativity emerging by accident or chance (see previous section).

psychology (Brembs, 2011; Giddens, 1984; Wastell & Howarth, 2022). Another almost complementary view relates to the autonomous action of "free agents" making rational choices for themselves and society to enable reproduction, change and transformation (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Eteläpelto et al., 2013). However, the distinction between determination and free action, mixed with assumed rationality, is not easy and clear.

While theories usually emphasise either the individual or the social, the point of focus should be on the relational duality between these two (Bhaskar, 2008, 2011; Billett, 2009). Thus, the interesting part is not the dichotomy of whether the activity arises as a result of an intentional human action or as an external coercion of the individual but to what extent these are in play (Bhaskar, 2008a). For example, the brute facts and elements of the physical world cannot be wished away, but essentially, we can, in part, overcome those with various artefacts, such as ladders, hearing aids and so on (Billett, 2009). Therefore, while natural facts exist independently, social facts do not, and in a sense, the latter must be upheld or renewed for them to stay erect. Overcoming different social and physical caveats and obstacles is a question of ingenuity and being able to adapt to and affect the contextual reality. This creates a cycle in which society, which pre-exists the people born into it, cannot exist independently of individuals who are affected by the conditions socialised within material continuity (Bhaskar, 2008a, pp. 75–78). We are born at a certain historical time and place, gain our agency from that sociocultural system and start to construct a realisation of our surroundings and ourselves (Archer, 2000, 2003). During this ever-long development process, different types of agency and perspectives on agency can emerge, which, for example, can be distinguished in the form of existential, pragmatic, identity and life-course agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

2.2.2.2 Temporarily bound and situationally grounded agency

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe attempts to theorise agency as problematic and often one-sided, as briefly depicted above. In addition, they note that scholars have placed selective attention on accounts explaining social interaction, which is explained through habitual, repetitive and "taken-for-granted" views. While habitual and routine actions are important, instead of these, they reconceptualise human agency as a temporarily embedded process of social engagement that is informed by the past but oriented towards the future within the flow of time. Within this, they understand contexts of action as temporal and relational, allowing for different simultaneous orientations for social actors. Thus, agency is defined as the temporarily constructed engagement with structural elements in which the interplay of habits, imagination and judgement happen and actors can, in part, both reproduce and transform surrounding structures with their interactive engaging responses (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Agency is often grounded in the actor's internal structures and processes, where it is, for example, conceived as an internal conversation with analytical autonomy in relation to observable interactions and external structures (Archer, 2003, 2012; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). However, there is a broad range of internal structures and processes that should be accounted for when considering

the engagements that actors have and initiate. Some of these connect and were also discussed within the section 2.2.1 addressing creativity. For example, metacognitive considerations and decisions are connected with making creative manifestations. This also concerns the discussions of identity and, for example, self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 2006), which are also important sources of meanings and interpretations needed for understanding the surrounding society and structures (Archer, 2007; Castells, 2009). While there is no space for a thorough discussion of the foundations of agency and human thinking (including insights on reasoning, decision making and judgements), aspects drawing from basic philosophy, psychology and neurology do assist when attempting to understand human agency as a concept and scientific topic.

One such aspect is the theory of bounded rationality coined in one form by Herbert Simon and later utilised by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (e.g., Kahneman, 2012; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) in their prospect theory (PT; see also Wastell & Howarth, 2022). Bounded rationality consists of three characteristics: (1) humans have limited cognitive capabilities, (2) available information is limited, and (3) decisions must be made within a limited timeframe. Therefore, it is good to remember that, while humans can be surely considered rational beings, this rationality is limited and bounded in nature, as is the intentionality versus unintentionality within daily actions. In addition, different limitations and processes connected with human reasoning and judgements are well phrased in various sources, and these are important when trying to holistically understand the phenomenon (e.g., Kahneman et al., 2021; Wastell & Howarth, 2022).

At the core of the agency questions is the human ability to understand and reflect on their own relation and position in light of the past, present and future and in respect to routine, repetitive and habitual actions and to the potential to act differently. For example, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) detail internal iterative moments through process components, such as selective recall and attention, leading to variations in the forms of recognition and categorial location. Much of this could also be reflected in cognitive and neuropsychological investigations of creativity. To understand the relation of the moment with internal structures and processes, an example of memory and anticipation is used in a form in which these are both shaped by the current moment as it becomes the past and the actor plans and reacts to current situations (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Thus, one challenge in agency elaboration is that it appears to be a complex, connected and temporarily and situationally relative construct. Thus, intentionality or deliberation in human activity appears to have some relation to practised agency, often referred to as active agency, for which the question is whether this is achieved by free choice or by considered interpretation drawing from the imposed limitations bounded or grounded in the surrounding physical and social structures. Our minds come up with ideas, but not in a vacuum, and we arrive in situations with baggage (Crotty, 1998; Taylor, 1985).

In Figure 2, much of the above is condensed into an illustration detailing agency as a dynamically fluid construct moving forward in the temporal and situational interplay of the social and individual.
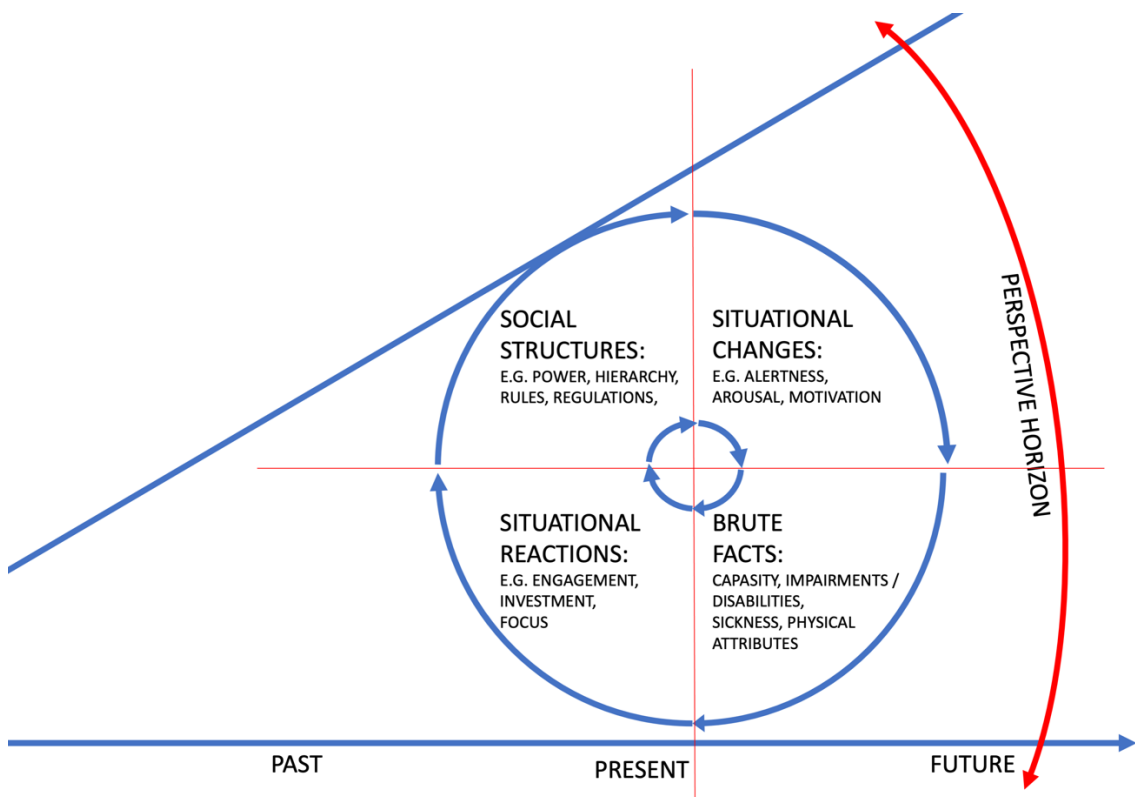
FIGURE 2   Situational and relational interplay of temporal agency

During this interplay, we are able to fixate on certain moments in the temporal trajectory, but only as an abstraction in our minds. In reality, we never stop and are in continuous movement. Thus, in principle, we are at any given moment in a certain (psycho-physiological) state, with a certain set of (psycho-physiological) attributes that, together with surrounding situational factors, lead to situational reactions (e.g., reflexive reactions, reflexes or habitual actions). We are also limited by our cognitive and physical capacities. The temporal and dynamic nature of human agency becomes visible through situational changes and reactions that are manifested and described, for example, as activity, attention, engagement and interaction. As agency is essentially part of our internal reflexive conversation, the change between active and passive agency depends on our individual meanings for and interpretations of our surroundings and ourselves in given situations. The relationship with the surroundings is inherent and intertwined.

2.2.2.3   Internal conversation

Ahearn (2001) defines agency as a socio-culturally mediated capacity to act. However, agency is not simply an act but, as described above, is more like an ever-evolving relationship between the individual and their surroundings – creation of interactional and interpretational meanings that could be framed as reflexive decision making. However, actions and the experienced ability to act

are at the core of the concept. While there has been differentiation between types of agency, such as existential, pragmatic, identity and life-course agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007), the ability to act depends on the individual's interpretations of situational realities (Archer, 2003). Actually, these types could be seen as providing a perspective that the individual takes when giving meanings and making interpretations, which in part affect their orientations and entail dimensions regarding their social realm and future (e.g., Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

At times, there might not be much reflexive decision making needed when individuals grow or drift into offered forms of identities or memberships (Piiroinen, 2014). It has been suggested that a more passive mode of agency refers to individuals to whom things happen, while an active mode of agency refers to individuals who make things happen (Archer, 2003, 2007, 2012; Forsman et al., 2014). It is important to reflect on the duality of powers in play. Considering this, it is easy to imagine the more deterministic reproduction of society and the even more radical transformation of it by varying initiatives of driven individuals who have attained the personal project, providing the motivation and means for driving the change (e.g., Archer, 2003). Different modes and types of agency could be described as dynamic, situational and temporal relationships that impact the interaction. Distinguishing between passive drifting and active engagement, and even agency as merely a sense of enablement, appears to be important (Archer, 2007).

It is interesting to think about how this active engagement and sense of enablement – as well as potential passive drifting – emerge. We are stratified but inherently connected social subjects who always occupy and exist in a specific position in society, and while being part of something does not automatically give one a strict identity, we each gain and form our agency rather involuntarily at and from birth when we become enmeshed into the structural and cultural properties of society (Archer, 2003, p. 261). As we become agents in a system that we share with others who have similar life chances[6] and can either reproduce or explicitly transform this system by becoming aware of what we want, learning to articulate this to ourselves and others, organising our actions to achieve it and engaging with social or cultural features to change or mould them (Archer, 2003, pp. 262–265). Intentional, deliberate and conscious acts, as well as unintentional, undeliberate and unconscious ones, are important, and we need to address both the more active and passive sides of agency. Agency, as an ability to act, emerges from a (morphogenetic) process between the individual and the surrounding structures (Archer, 1996, 2000, 2003).[7] In this process, the nature of relational interpretations depends on our internal reflexive conversations (see Archer, 2007, 2010, 2012) that affect our ability to function in society – including our experienced ability to act. It is important to distinguish between modes of agency

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[6] Whether we are privileged or unprivileged by some attributes like family wealth, skin colour, and so on.

[7] However, it is notable that we transform our surrounding structures to a degree by just being present, but it is in the state of active agency that our creative capabilities become meaningful, and this is the freedom we as human beings have.

(e.g., passive drifting and active engagement) and our sense of agency, as agency is not a mere act, but appears to be largely connected to our experienced possibilities.

Following Vygotsky's footsteps, Lantolf and Thorne (2007, pp. 198–199) point out that higher-level cultural tools of thinking serve as buffers for the person- and environment-mediating relationship between the individual and sociomaterial worlds. The buffers existing in our minds – in our thoughts – appear somewhat invisible to external observation and perceptions, but we often are awarded glimpses of the outcomes in our perceptual reality. In internal conversations, interpretations drawing from interpersonal interactions and past experiences restructure thoughts that become visible through practised agency on both the conceptual and perceptual levels (Archer, 2012). In other words, we can assume that this internal reality becomes manifested and visible (at least in part) through interpersonal interactions, but that, even along the tradition of sociocultural theory, we can see and understand that these underlying cognitive processes of inherently connected beings are analytically separate while, in part, indivisible from the sociomaterial reality to which we all are connected (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). However, it seems that, in part, we lack an empirical bridge between the internal and external and may well be inclined to accept that, at the moment, this is unattainable. One possible approach would be to use different perspectives, as suggested by Glăveanu (2013) through the five A's perspective model of creative action, as discussed earlier in section 2.2.1.7. In this model, by using actor, action, artefact, audience and affordance in relation to social and material existence on a temporal trajectory, one can form a functional theory and conceptualisation elaborating, for example, all aspects of creativity. However, this demands a flexible account of perspectives in a circular motion of the actor's perspective taking and reflective turns that narrow accounts of the agency referred to earlier.

Professional agency is not fixed or stable but is dynamic in nature and capable of reacting to situational and temporal changes (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). One essential aspect is how different social entities, such as professional roles, are internalised into professional agency or its components, such as professional identity (Castells, 2009). A similar discussion concerns creative identity-shaping creative behaviour (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). Ideally, it is important to grasp that, even when agency exists in the present, it entails a future orientation and relies on and builds up past experiences and numerous mental constructs and structures that are internalised in an individual mind. Furthermore, it might be wise to bear in mind that one can simultaneously be the actor and the audience, and while an artefact can be understood as an abstract entity, it can also be concrete, and action as an internal interpretation is not always invisible to external observations. Agency mediates internalised constructs based on internal conversation (or chatter) and decisions made, and it manifests these in social settings. It involves the interpretations and negotiations as agentic actions with the pre-existing precepts and outlines defining the situational context. A model

of agency as a mediating construct connected with the past, present and future is proposed and illustrated in Figure 3.
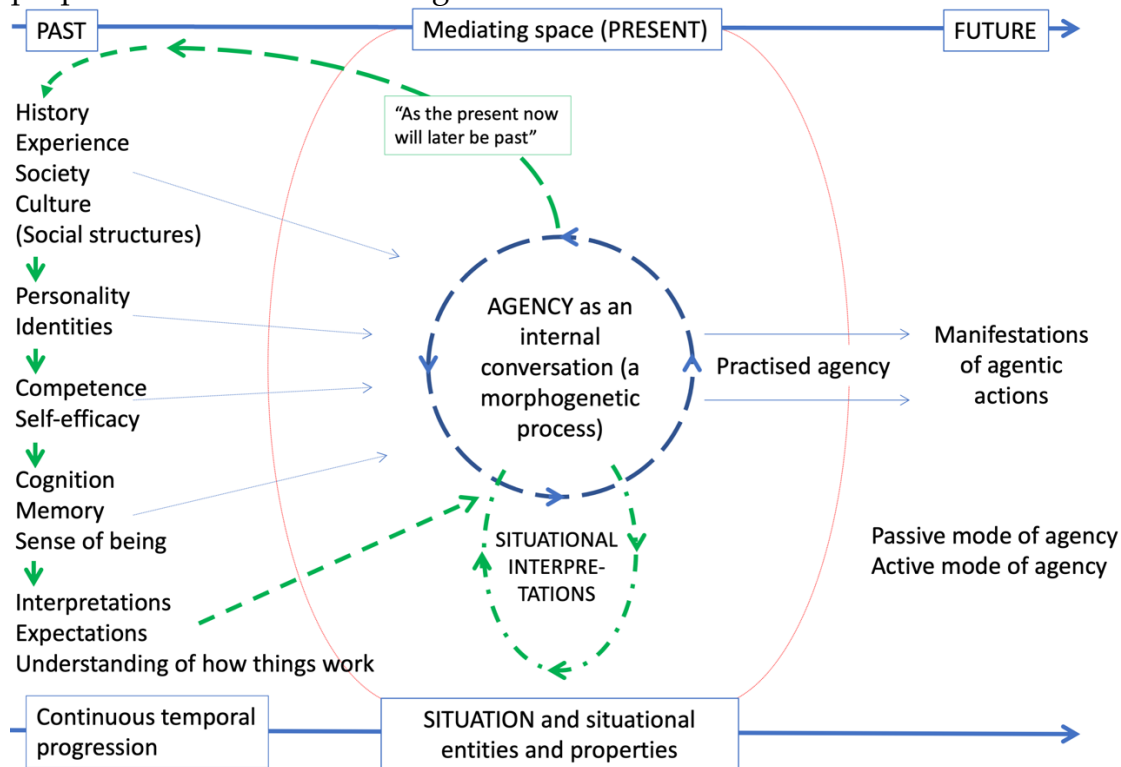
FIGURE 3   Agency-mediating capacities, experiences and orientations

Internal mental constructs need to be mediated into the surrounding social reality. For something mental to become socially manifested, this, in general, demands and concerns continuous internal circular reflexivity (illustrated in Figure 2). Moreover, without active interpretations and internal conversations, different meanings and interpretations of the creative would not exist, making it important to view these as connected phenomena. It is proposed here that agency might explain this complex interplay and allow a more parsimonious and simplified account of the existence, emergence and manifestations, depending on human activity. As a part of the wider conversation on agency, the term has been conceptualised as a temporally embedded process of social engagement that enables future orientation through the imagination of different possibilities, while, at the same time, accounting for the past and the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Robinson, 2011).

2.2.2.4   Agency and future orientation

Hitlin and Elder (2007) frame agency through an analytical scope and address all novel and routine situations and life pathways by providing *existential*, *pragmatic*, *identity* and *life-course* types of agency. If one thinks, like Bhaskar (2008, p. 80), that conscious human activity can partly be unconscious (or undeliberate, unintentional) in the reproduction or transformation of structures, this impacts the intentionality and rationality of human action, as depicted above. Therefore, while social structures can affect our judgements, so can our internal "freedom", which should be understood as a similar freedom of mind as imagination.

Holland et al. (1998) note that human agency intertwined with imagination can overcome even the most hegemonic regimes. Thus, while distinguishable differences in agency evolve from situations in which our traditions, routines and habits break or are insufficient, in these situations, which are seemingly increasing in a contemporary work environment filled with uncertainty, we need to rely on our ability to imaginatively see things differently along the progression of the day, as the more passive reproductive and more active transformative sides (or modes) of agency are in play (Forsman, 2017; Forsman et al., 2014).

While we acknowledge that the existence of entities like cultures and institutions that "precede us" (as we are born in a specific historical place and time) makes current social constructions pre-existent and thus for us and in part independent of us, the core of human agency is found within the dynamic relation of the individual and surrounding society and structures. Thus, when we interact with our surroundings, according to the constructivist paradigm, we are constructing meanings. However, we are not purely creating something from nothing; we are working with the world and its objects (Crotty, 1998, p. 44). This connectedness clouds our experience of "freedom" through different regulatory systems (e.g. state/social stratification) that subordinate us, leading to deterministic views of reproduction theories. However, whether we are in control or controlled is an entirely different and bigger discussion (Brembs, 2011; Gazzaniga, 2011; Wastell & Howarth, 2022).

The transformative structure-changing nature of agency demands an ability to see things differently, to see different possibilities, connections and combinations – as this enables change and transformation. For future-oriented intentional action, the future we can imagine, predict and expect in our creative imaginative mind is essential. In Figure 3, the agentic interplay described earlier in Figure 1 opens up the potential perspective horizon through interpretations of internal conversations that enable potential transformation or reproduction. While the progression here is inevitably forward on a temporal trajectory, the future perspective that we hold may remain the same or change from "what is" to "what can be". However, this may depend on the realisation of alternatives and potential possibilities that differ from what is. The theoretical underpinnings of this consist of the social and individual duality of agency in a world of social structures and physical realities. We have our past and we are for only a brief moment in the present on our way towards the constantly moving and escaping future. Agency is realised through individuals' internal reflexive conversations that began in the present, only to become interpretations of the near past (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2012). Active engagement enables the transformation of surrounding structures, which can be seen as opposite ends of the perspective horizon, that lead either to the reproduction and upholding of something that exists or to the transformation or creation of something new (Archer, 2012). One way to analyse agency is through sociocultural and discursive reality, where agency can manifest itself in various ways, ranging from the creation of something new to upholding existing or even resisting change (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Professional agency is practised in different ways within different habitual

practices and power relations, and in professional settings, agency is exercised when subjects influence, make choices and take stances on their work and professional identities. The present becomes the past, and the future becomes the present, as depicted in Figure 4.
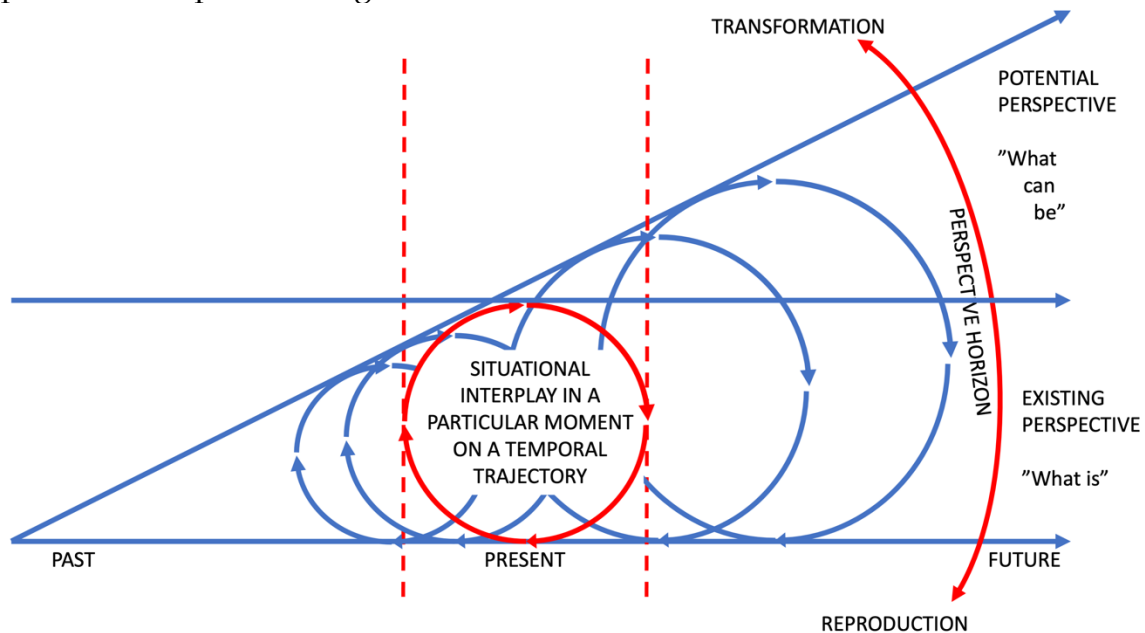
FIGURE 4   Temporal trajectory and future perspective

While we are, in principle, free to practise our agency, we are also constrained by our essentially free but limited interpretations of ourselves and what surrounds us. Thus, whether we are free depends more or less on the rational considerations that we draw from what we are and have been experiencing along the temporal progression of life, in which we are never stopping in the present but are constantly moving into the future through the complex web of situations that form our lives.

2.2.3   Creativity and agency

Agency is a core concept in the science of the human subject (Taylor, 1985, p. 43), but it has not been overtly or explicitly studied in connection with creativity or creative manifestations. However, if we look at the seminal articles referred to here, "What Is Agency?" by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) mentions creativity seven times and creative 18 times in its bread text. "Time, Self, and the Curiously Abstract Concept of Agency" by Hitlin and Elder (2007) has two actual mentions of creativity and three for creative, while "What Is Agency? Conceptualizing Professional Agency at Work" by Eteläpelto et al. (2013) has two mentions of creativity and eight for creative. Generally, in most cases, the connection to creativity and creative is also expressed via connected conceptualisations of change, transformation and adaptation. For Hans Joas (1996), the situationally embedded creativity of action is essential for the study of interaction but also for accounting for variability and change in the capacity for imaginative and critical

interventions in diverse contexts. These expressions are well fitted to the creativity addressed as everyday phenomena intertwined with life.

Eminent creative achievements – including creative persons, processes, products or places – are complex compilations of numerous creative and non-creative properties and entities that, on their own, may not be especially amazing, wonderful or even revolutionary. As part of more complex creativity, however, these smaller creative properties and entities appear fundamental. In contrast, when the focus is placed wholly on the complex compilations, these are often forgotten. Therefore, a parsimonious view that focuses on the essentials of creativity has been proposed to be fruitful (Runco, 2009, 2015, 2017) and primary to secondary creativity trajectory (Runco & Beghetto, 2019), as social interaction (Hunter et al., 2007) could be investigated as being intertwined with agentic engagements. In complex views, aspects such as utilisation and implementation that also require non-creative properties are sometimes induced and even emphasised. For example, creativity relates to decision making and risk evaluation regarding whether to share or present an idea or insight that might be considered novel, original or unconventional (Runco, 2015). These metacognitive considerations relate to the meanings and interpretations that emerge within internal conversations.

When creativity is conceptualised as essentially a construct residing within the individual, this individual is the only viable reference point to be used in the primary evaluation of creativity. From a parsimonious point of view, agency appears as a mediating construct that enables various manifestations of creativity that are to be considered only as distinctive signs of creativity, not creativity itself (Amabile, 1983a). These signs are to be considered creative manifestations, which, in their various forms, are embedded in the interaction between the individual and their surroundings and emerge in the interaction through the reflexivity of individuals (Archer, 2012). Everyday creative manifestations form the basis of what is commonly evaluated and used to judge what is creative based on varying criteria. While this evaluation happens at the social level, it comprises only social-level creativity. What is essential is that creativity is "new, good and appropriate" at the level of the individual (i.e. the creator) and that this creativity may be subjected to various levels of investigation and its "newness, goodness and appropriateness" evaluated in the chosen context (e.g., group, situation, history) and level (person, field, domain). Creativity is primarily a subjective construct that should be regarded as such in relation to the creator, while creative as a secondary and social construct may be used to refer to something more specific if defined with restricting criteria. This allows us to distinguish between the different entities and properties connected with these complex phenomena, ranging from the many non-creative aspects related to manifested creativity to the experienced sense of agency and its practice. For this, the dynamic and complex interactions of the individual and social realms must be considered. Creativity, as with agency, is simply and essentially a mental construct that is subsumed in all its manifestations. Thus, creativity connects more with creative potential than tangible outcomes, and the entanglement of the location and

emergence of those is problematic for creativity research. Formulating manifested creativity as a sign of creativity might help unravel the mystery of creativity.

> A "mindscape" for creativity is a free, fertile, imaginative, unfettered thinking space where all things are possible. Developing an appropriate mindscape for creativity is vital because our beliefs are filters on the world we experience. (Best & Thomas, 2013, p. 37)

The previous sections established that, while such a mindscape for creativity exists in theory in human agency, it is subject to certain restrictions regarding the nature of our agency and the interconnectedness of individuals with their physical and social surroundings. Creativity is more than mere performance and outcomes – which as an idea is an essential part of seeing how creativity is intertwined with agency. This practice emerges through a reflexive internal conversation that is part of the transformative and generative nature of agency. With this in mind, it was proposed that creativity is an individual mental property that can be manifested in the objective realm through practised agency. While Robinson and Aronica (2010, p. 67) suggest that imagination is not the same as creativity, imagination is often used as a synonym to express a need to progress to another abstract level of meaning making and interpretations that appear as entirely internal without anyone noticing. Robinson (2011, p. 17) continues his elaboration of imagination by emphasising the unlimited powers of creativity to enable individuals to address things not present to their senses, to revisit and reinterpret the past, to enhance our perception of the present and to create many anticipations of the future. The above aligns with agency literature that sees creativity intertwining with agency and our internal conversations (Archer, 2010, 2012). A similar assertion has been made with the five A's model of creativity, which provides statements on the different viewpoints that affect the interpretations made with and within any particular situation (Glăveanu, 2013).

Creativity has been suggested as being mediated through and connected positively with the practice of professional agency (Miell & Littleton, 2004; Sawyer, 2007). This becomes visible in views that emphasise future orientations and the imagining of alternative possibilities (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Previously, creativity was proposed as a separate and subsequent but integral part of socially manifested creativity. This served as an attempt to simplify and counter the social demands and requirements placed on higher-order creativity connected with the non-creative aspects and utilisation of creativity. However, the trajectory from creativity to socially manifested creativity requires a mediating construct, which was proposed to be agency. In its most general and simple sense, creativity can be understood as ideas and insights that contain novel and valuable entities or properties. If a general theory of creativity is pursued (Lubart, 2001), this sort of parsimonious approach and low-level investigation (Runco, 2015) appears viable. This model, illustrated in Figure 5, emphasises practised agency that leads to a decision or action that, in

turn, leads to manifested creativity in the form of some sort of contribution-making creativity.
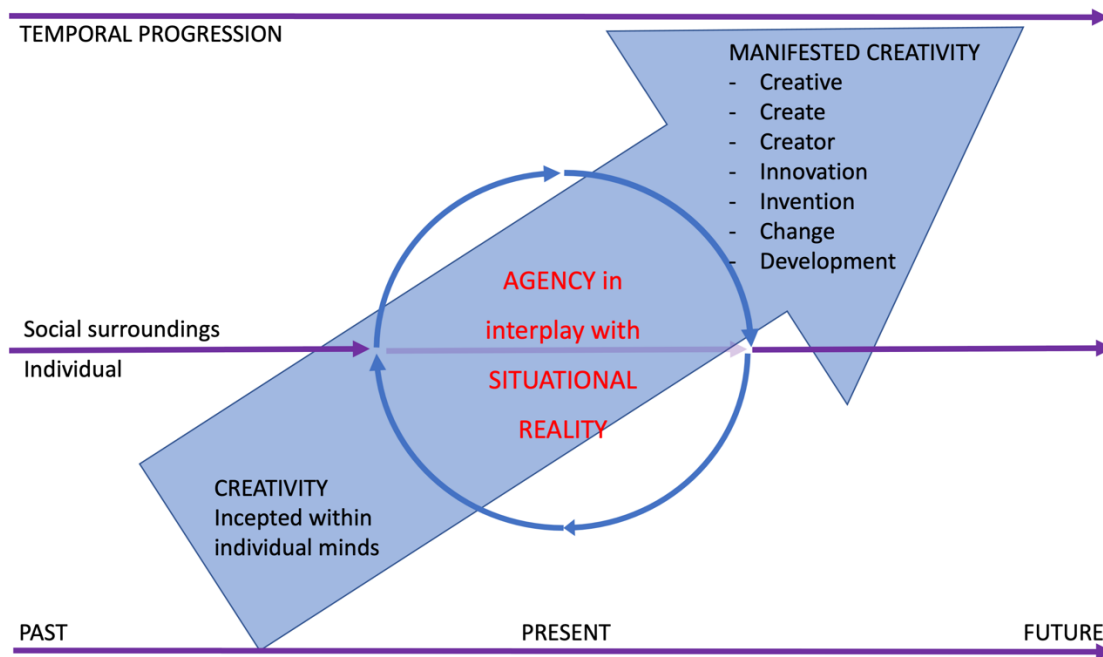
FIGURE 5   Agency mediates creativity into manifested reality

Based on this, actual creativity resides in our minds and is realised through the agentic interplay between the individual and social, based on which contributions are given through temporally progressing interaction. A key aspect here is that creativity is realised and transferred to the objective world by means of a decision or action, initiated by practised agency, to express it in some manner. It has been suggested that, to be considered creative, we have to do something concrete, put our imagination to work and make something new in order to come up with new solutions to problems (Robinson & Arinoca, 2010, p. 67): "We may not be able to predict the future, but we can help to shape it" (Robinson, 2011, p. 17). Our nature allows us to see differently and interpret differently; that is, it allows us to be creative. Theoretically, creativity appears to connect with agency. Essential to agency is that, while we are directed by our interpretation of rules, regulations, social conventions and norms, they are also interpreted by us. We can choose to override them.

2.2.4   Summary of the theoretical framework and outline

It was previously asserted that there is no overarching or holistic explanation for how creativity is mediated into observable signs and proofs and no explanation of how it connects with the social realm. However, it was proposed and admitted that different perspectives appear important for the conceptualisation of creativity. In a theoretical sense, human (professional) agency was offered as a mediating tool to address the disconnect between the internal and external sides of creativity that bridge the individualist and social approaches to creativity. Additionally, reflexive internal conversation as an assumption explaining the

missing cognitive processes in social interaction was provided as a lead for the interpretive framework to understand creativity and the emergence of creative manifestations. This is related to the finding that a personal project provides the motivational and self-directed components that drive changes and development.

When trying to bridge the individual and external social aspects of creativity, the idea of the creative continuum offers a way to conceptualise creativity from personal primary creativity into social secondary creativity (Runco & Beghetto, 2019; Montag et al., 2012; Sawyer, 2012; Glăveanu et al., 2020). On this continuum, most of the discussion revolving around the concept of creativity appears to conflate creativity with some tangible and socially acknowledged eminent manifestations of it. However, these socially acknowledged manifestations of creativity do not constitute the whole phenomenon, and we need to take broad everyday creativity into account. In other words, socially manifested creativity includes only a part of creativity, for which we rely on the model of primary and secondary creativity. This dual nature of creativity creates a theoretical demand for exploratory research. In addition, contemporary society has changed with respect to knowledge propagation, with constant reformulation and reconstruction demands forming a need for adaptive expertise that is better able to apply existing knowledge and learn amongst changing and volatile settings. This change has moved creativity away from the traditional view of creative achievements connected with processes to the view of it being an embedded part of the challenges and changes in everyday surroundings, which warrants this study. The creativity phenomenon remains diffuse and unclear, and there is a need to explore it more closely. Creativity may become socially manifested in observable reality if the individual chooses to share it. Thus, it is important to also focus on agentic actions involving creative manifestations. Admitting that only a portion of creativity is manifested could be used to clarify, reinterpret and elaborate existing views and conceptual issues that creativity research has encountered.

Research on creativity based on a fresh point of view that considers the agency perspective is crucial. Although innovation and creativity have been widely investigated, there is a lack of understanding of creativity in relation to practised agency. It is important to understand that, while we can evaluate only what exists, this does not mean that there is nothing more. This study offers a unique perspective and setting in which creativity intertwined with agency is an important but ordinary everyday phenomenon. Creativity is viewed as an asset for applying knowledge obtained from work and education, which is an asset available to all and is a key factor in becoming a professional in today's world. Furthermore, this study contributes to the discussion of the nature of everyday creativity. The theoretical framework is built on the emergence of manifested creativity intertwining with and depending on practised agency. Therefore, agency is seen as a mediating construct that explains the transition on the continuum from creativity of mind to manifestations of creativity in social reality.

3 RESEARCH ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section, I briefly describe the research framework and context and provide and elaborate on the research questions. The driver for this study, as described in the previous sections, is the concern that current research emphasises either individualist or sociocultural approaches to creativity and that the tendency is to emphasise eminent manifestations in forms of, for example, innovations, inventions, new products and practices. While all of these are important in light of the developing and evolving society we hope to have, we could also assume that there is an increasing need for adaptive and creative everyday behaviour in contemporary society and work characterised by vast changes and transformations. Therefore, the disperse and discrepant outcomes in creativity research warrant the use of a multifaceted and exploratory qualitative methodology, especially as the relationship between creativity and agency has been unclear.

To achieve its aims, this study utilises an ethnographic methodology in its investigation of creativity and agency and their relationship in the midst of everyday work in a contemporary work organisation. The power of ethnographic research lies in the observation of social life in natural settings (i.e. in fieldwork), and through the reflexive and circular progression of data collection, analysis and interpretation, this method is expected to allow one to arrive at a "thick" description and interpretation of everyday reality (e.g., Angrosino, 2008; D. Beach, 2005; Davies, 2008; Hammersley, 2005, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Moeran, 2006). As a subset of qualitative research methodology that draws from a long line of anthropological traditions of cultural studies, ethnography offers a unique approach for investigating creativity and agency in a natural work context and is an approach that, with high time and resource consumption and an explorative tenet, has not been widely used but is called for in this case (Atkinson et al., 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). One of the aims here is to investigate practised agency and the emergence of creativity in the everyday life of a particular work organisation. For creativity, this means the need to examine the location of novelty and value used as the criteria to evaluate what is creative

and, thus, what kinds of creativity are manifested in work. In addition, investigating and reflecting on the employees' perceptions of this matter are valuable. Ethnographic research is used here to describe, structure and theorise complex cultural phenomena and processes and their implications for individuals and communities (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2007; Paloniemi & Collin, 2010). As for agency, the focus is extended to the nature and form of interaction and engagement, leading to the emergence of meanings, including the contributions and manifestations deemed novel and valuable by someone, as is often done in ethnography (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Kakos & Fritzsche, 2017). Through an ethnographic approach, this study sought to cover everyday life in one particular work organisation and its employees and everyday work practices. The research framework, methodology and methods are discussed in detail in Section 4. Next, the study's research context is described, and then, the research questions are detailed.

3.1 Research context and target organisation

This study aimed to investigate creativity and agency and their relationship in a contemporary work context, where the theoretical framework suggests the eminent need for both. With the apparent lack of and demands for research bridging individual and sociocultural approaches (Glăveanu et al., 2020), qualitative and exploratory approaches providing clarity and elaborating on concepts, involved processes and phenomena would appear to be in place. With this in mind, the research context chosen for this study is one organisation and its HR department personnel in a Finnish healthcare district. The organisation in question and its HR department were undergoing extensive changes to reform their established habits and routines, which appeared to be business as usual for the modern knowledge-intensive work that the organisation represented.

All employees were expected to take part in the renegotiating and restructuring of tasks and responsibilities. The idea was that the change process created an opportunity for profound organisational reconfiguration, with the aim of developing everyday practices, and that this created, for all employees, creative requirements and demands that were similar to the previously described general contemporary requirements and challenges. There were both external and internal reasons for the reform, and in essence, it was considered to reflect the volatile work context and its changing, transforming and developing nature, which was referred to and reflected on in the theory section. At an individual level, this involved, for example, restructuring tasks, duties and responsibilities. While an individual requirement and expectation of active participation in the restructuring and renegotiating of tasks and duties could be recognised, this was not happening in a vacuum but in collaboration with colleagues, management and leadership. At the individual and collective levels, knowledge propagation, construction and reconstruction were also required, as employees were expected to redefine, reconceptualise and even redesign their everyday practices.

These different developmental demands were addressed in various ways and in various locations by various individuals and groups and included everyday practices at work, as well as formal training in different conversational situations and forums. For the most part, requirements were answered in regular daily activities but also with specific developmental events and meetings connected to the reform process. As a guiding framework, this study adopts Senge's (1997, 2010) idea that every organisation needs to develop into a learning organisation. Thus, regarding the specific reform process, this is a recurring business with the usual type of development structure.

Next, an outline of the study is provided. Then, the reform process is briefly detailed, and the scope of the study is defined.

3.1.1   Reasons this organisation was chosen

This organisation and context were chosen because they were estimated to provide a variety of different forms of work that seemed to fit the theoretical outlines of contemporary work and demands in general. Some of the employees required expertise that involved highly knowledge-intensive tasks and duties, while others appeared to present a more traditional arrangement of labour, with routine and chore tasks that relied on precision and repetition.

The data were collected from the whole organisation and the HR department, but the focus and interest were directed at the two largest subgroups affected by the reform: education and employment services. Both subgroups employed roughly 30 individuals, with one managerial leadership position in each group. The education services employees had backgrounds in vocational (i.e. usually healthcare) professions, educational sciences or a combination of the two, whereas the employment services personnel had backgrounds in finance, management and accounting.

The reform was not a singular or even a concise event but appeared to be a more continuous change process affecting all levels and aspects of the organisation, and in the end, it continued throughout the data collection period and long after. As previously noted, it was almost a business-as-usual type of systematic development. The change process, which spanned several fiscal years, affected the daily lives of all employees, and it eventually became part of everyday practices as almost a cultural aspect that was nothing special. It consequently elicited expressions of engaged and active participation and, in contrast, change fatigue, explicated as a lack of motivation to participate. In practice, most of the activities of this change process took place as part of both regular and specific developmental staff meetings.

As a research context, the HR department was a distinctive unit with specific tasks and duties. This decision to investigate only the HR department's efforts to provide service and training for the whole organisation allowed for narrowing the focus and helped significantly limit the research process and context so that they were manageable. The department exists as support services in the field of employment management (e.g. recruiting, contracts, payroll, education and training); thus, it is dependable and functionally, at the core, connected with the

parent organisation. The employees in the department were mainly coordinators or secretaries and constituted groups of experts and specialists in their respective fields. However, the work, especially collaboration, exceeded the borders of the suborganisation, and in multiprofessional teams, employees from among the personnel of the whole organisation were occasionally present. The work of the specialists consisted largely of repeated and were somewhat given tasks that involved habitual or routine actions, while the experts operated in a more self-directed manner, in part freely regulating and even creating their own tasks, duties and practices. The leader, the managers and key experts in the department had academic degrees and several years of experience in the field. Moreover, they may have worked in the department for several years, or possibly even decades.

At the time of the study, due to a historical lack of grand-scale changes in day-to-day duties and the personnel and the relatively small size of the department, all of the employees knew each other on a first-name basis. However, especially within the education services team, their work could be described as dissolved, dispersed and project-like, with multiple challenges and demands impacting the work at any given time. Both services had distinct yearly cycles with routine and chore tasks (e.g. onboarding, recruiting, professional training, budgeting and salary payments and contracts). The existing official hierarchy was not visibly practised or upheld; however, bigger decisions and changes had to be sanctioned by management.

This study was designed to investigate creativity through the manifestations emerging along with and within everyday practices and processes of work. In this context, this included processes within which tasks and duties had to be reformulated and restructured. Furthermore, work was characterised by constant creativity demands, including insightful and adaptive behaviour. These demands were defined, in part, by the ongoing development and change process and, in part, by the everyday requirements placed on the employees. For example, employees were expected to come up with new solutions to problems. In addition, they were expected to produce outcomes that contained creative entities or properties, such as written documents.

3.1.2 The reform process

At the time of the data collection, the organisation was undergoing reform involving renegotiating, reformulating and restructuring individual and collective tasks, duties and responsibilities, including service end products. The main reason for the reform can be described as an imposed external change in the organisation's operating environment and in the healthcare district itself. Thus, by definition, the organisation in question was considered a prime example of a changing contemporary work organisation in the midst of a changing work environment that was required to react to and enact the perceived and planned changes. This reform included the restructuring and redividing of work in a manner that involved and included all employees in various development meetings and challenges. The reform could thus be described as the aim to develop through bottom–up knowledge propagation in which all employees

were expected to take part. Reform was evaluated as analogical, with change and development demands in contemporary work, and as a component that would ensure that intentional negotiations and renegotiations demanding creativity and engaging agency would emerge. We can often see similar yearly processes looping in organisations that struggle to change and develop according to the requirements interpreted from a work environment with any form of knowledge- and information-intensive work.

Even with the defined reform process, which, on the whole, lasted well over a year, everyday work continued as usual. It would also be useful to note that, while the reform was considered to ensure some observational events in this study's interest areas, the main observations were conducted in regular everyday settings. In addition, the reform meetings could easily be described as regular or periodical development meetings or intensive projects that exist in most organisations. Thus, the reform process would easily translate into the strategic focus of setting goals, aims and meaning for planned activities in organisational development. Analogically, in the public sector, these would emerge amid regulation, directives or legislation changes. In the private sector, similar events could occur during simple operational environment analysis or technological development. In my own field of (higher) education, this all seems to be quite business as usual in the form of regular curriculum development and reformulation of work practices (e.g., digital pedagogy, learning design, hybrid teaching).

The aim of the change process was to produce employee-driven development in which formerly dispersed subunits were gathered under one umbrella, this process included an external consult. Expressed values, appreciation and motivation regarding the reform process and change were experienced, understood and internalised in various ways. In a sense, this appeared to be due to the length of the process and the attempt to drive the cultural development programme and collaborative culture building, which could be described as a change from a static bureaucratic organisation to an organic living form – with conversational, discursive and collaborative practices, as these became gradually visible in the work organisation and culture in question (e.g., Forsman et al., 2014; Hatch, 1997). The essential question is how this new work culture was internalised as a part of one's professional identity and being (Archer, 2000; Castells, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Moreover, it was quickly eminent that, in the everyday praxis, all employees were asked to find solutions and make decisions that were somewhat novel and valuable to carrying out their duties – even those that did not clearly connect with the reform and change process. Creativity demands clearly did not connect and did not confine themselves within the reform and change process. Therefore, while, at first, the reform situation – with its renegotiations, reformulations and reconstructions potentially highly demanding creativity – was the reason why this organisation was considered a good place for this research, it became apparent that the everyday interactions were as important or even more so. Therefore, the task became a cultural analysis looking at the human

interaction processes framed by the complex social surroundings (Spindler & Hammond, 2012).

In a way, while this is a case study of a single work organisation and focuses on only two subgroups in that organisation, the context of work and the daily challenges and demands seem to be analogous with contemporary descriptions of the ever-changing and fast-paced work environment. This investigation in the natural context of overlapping cultures and communities can be seen as deriving from diverse fragmented practices and processes that are seamlessly integrated into everyday life (Soukup, 2013). This warrants framing the reform and change process as business as usual among the practices of a changing and learning work organisation (see Eteläpelto, 2008). This study aims to address the lack of a multilevel approach in workplace creativity, agency and their connections.

3.2   Research questions

The aim of this study was to investigate and develop an understanding of the concepts of creativity and agency and their relationship by examining them in a contemporary work context. While this study and its conceptualisation go somewhat against the grain of contemporary creativity research with its theoretical aim of bridging the individualist and sociocultural approaches, by utilising the concept of agency, it aims to provide an understanding of the everyday phenomena and relevant processes. These aims are addressed through the following five research questions:

1) How do creative manifestations emerge in the ordinary practices of a work organisation?
2) What supports and potentially facilitates emerging creativity, and what does not?
3) What is the relationship between creativity and practised agency?
4) How do employees perceive and experience creativity and the requirements for creativity?
5) What kinds of creativity are manifested in a contemporary work organisation?

With these questions in mind, the study aimed to produce a comprehensive description and deep interpretations of creativity as a phenomenon and the intertwined and connected processes involved in it. To achieve this goal, this study sought to explore everyday practices and conversational interactions at work to understand emergent creativity and creative manifestations through these. Conceptually, creativity was considered to exist on a continuum in which it is influenced by non-creative attributes after and, potentially, before it is socially manifested. Within this framework, agency was seen as incremental for potential manifestations. Thus, the overall aim of the project could be framed as

an investigation of *what is occurring in everyday life of a single work organisation, and how and why manifestations of creativity emerge in the everyday reality of it.*

It is worth noting that creative manifestations were considered signs of creativity, not creativity per se. The eminent, sociocultural and systemic levels for evaluating creativity, which focus on the field- and domain-level inspection of creativity criteria (i.e. the novelty and value), were considered a starting point for more elaborate investigation, basically providing a superficial idea of what is deemed creative at first. This was also the case for individual remarks and representations of creativity. While fully embracing the importance of eminent creative ideas, inventions, innovations and such developments, the research problem evolved so that the eminent and recognised creativity within this framework were considered to arise from small and mundane notions that were seen as equivalent to agentic actions and decisions that become visible when the individual engages and makes contributions of any sort in interactions with their surroundings. An important distinction in this elaboration of creativity was made between what is considered creative and what creativity really is. This will be elaborated on later in the findings and conclusions sections. Therefore, while it was considered that one can observe only socially manifested creativity, investigating these manifestations and scrutinising them was suggested to reveal something of the nature and origin of creativity. However, while it was assumed that not all creativity became visible, the focus was directed at small and mundane notions that were considered to have the potential to develop into socially and historically noteworthy contributions. This approach is largely based on the idea that creative properties are intertwined with active human agency, which has been implied in theoretical writings and previous research.

The scope was broadened with backtracking from episodes containing aspects of recognised or eminent creativity, tracing the aspects in question back to everyday work practices within the organisation. It should be noted that, in identifying everyday creativity and creative practices, a low threshold was set for what could be considered "creative"; thus, novelty and value were considered largely through the concept of a more subjective primary creativity perspective in contextual settings (Runco & Beghetto, 2019). In following this course, one important aim was to determine the creativity that might be identifiable in the progression from minute or mundane contributions towards secondary socially recognised creativity and to also understand what self-reflexive remarks and self-reflexive methods might reveal about creativity, even when creativity is not revealed or manifested on the spot.

For clarity and as a further reminder, this study largely dwells on the low everyday subjective levels of personal primary creativity, although it acknowledges the trajectory and potential of these ideas to develop further into secondary and even eminent levels, as presented in previous sections. To address the lowest levels of situational and contextual creativity, the smallest entities are looked at and reflected on by considering previous organisational knowledge and the participants' reactions and remarks, as well as by connecting the knowledge and materials gathered. In this trajectory and everyday practices, it is

important to investigate how individuals contribute to emerging and manifested creative entities and whether engaging and active agency can be considered a mediating construct in the empirical data, as the theory suggests. While operational restrictions need to be implied, this also needs to translate into the language we are using. The focus on lower levels of creativity was considered useful, as historically eminent manifestations of creativity have been subjected to numerous studies, whereas the proposed framework and mundane levels of creativity are relatively new areas of interest. Furthermore, this approach differs from the traditional product of a characteristics-oriented performance and outcome view by moving closer to the suspected origins of creativity. This was further elaborated on in an attempt to distinguish between creative and non-creative attributes in the emergence of creative manifestations.

This study tackles the lack of qualitative empirical exploratory research in an aim to understand and interpret creativity and agency and their relationship, which spans beyond the prevalent performance and outcome views, as well as bridging individualist and sociocultural approaches. The research was based on an ethnographic methodology that has certain limitations and strengths. A key limitation is that the research was essentially a case study of a single organisation. However, as a strength, the target organisation was subjected to a deep exploratory investigation that enabled a thick description and interpretation characteristic of ethnographic research. The organisation (an HR department of a Finnish healthcare district was in the midst of a change and development process demanding active engagement and participation from all employees. Therefore, the organisation was considered a good fit with respect to the contemporary demands of the work environment. In addition, this context presented a situation in which creativity was expected to emerge and offered a fruitful environment for the investigation of everyday creativity. As exploratory research utilising an ethnographic framework, this study aims to produce a thick description and interpretation of creativity in an authentic work context.

4   METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The aim of this study was to identify and describe practised professional agency and emerging creativity and their relationship in the everyday work context. This aim directed the selection of the appropriate research framework. In this section, I describe the research design considerations, actual methods I utilised and the data collection and analysis process, with needed contemplation on epistemological, ontological and methodological premises (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 28). Therefore, in addition to providing the simple guidelines used in the empirical fieldwork and analysis, more general reflections and reasoning are presented with philosophical and theoretical considerations, including some autoethnographic descriptions detailing aspects and events of the research process.

4.1   Philosophical framework

The philosophical backbone of this study follows the principles of critical realism, which asserts that knowledge, even scientifically produced and sound, can be incomplete, imprecise and conceptually relative, yet considered truth-like (Archer, 1998; Bhaskar, 2008a, 2011; Lawson et al., 2007). Here, critical realism offers an ontological backbone for the theories, methodologies and methods used in investigating actors' agency and social structures (T. Edwards & Kakavelakis, 2022). The basic assumption in critical realism is that agency is enabled and or constrained by social structures, which, in turn, are reproduced or transformed by those actions (Porter, 1993). From an agency point of view, this means that we are born in a certain geo-historical time and place and gain privileges and baggage in that context, while, through reproduction, we uphold the continuity of society and mould and transform it into our liking (Archer, 2003). Furthermore, all things, especially theories and scientific ideas, need to be reflected in light of their historical, social and cultural contexts. Simply put, human beings do not exist or come into being in a vacuum (Taylor, 1985). Thus, it was reasoned that

this framework was suitable for describing and interpreting not only events themselves but also why they occurred (Porter, 1993).

The approach followed here acknowledges that ethnographic research has a background in anthropology, and the idea has been posited that anthropologists are capable of purely objective scientific insight (Goldstein, 1991). However, instead of this, critical realism has produced one scientific interpretation of the world as one way of disclosing the world (Vandenberghe, 2022). With cyclical reflexive description, understanding and interpretation of entities, meanings and structures, the produced knowledge is continuously refined (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2007; Davies, 2008; Goldstein, 1991; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The described process can be seen as revolving around the role of the researcher and having strong connections with the trustworthiness of the research. The position and the role of the researcher are further elaborated in Section 4.2.1 and Section 4.3.

According to Dupré (2001, p. 109), understanding human nature involves systemic networks through which culture flows. To further complicate things, it should be noted that we mostly operate in highly complex systems and multidimensional structures that make accurate measurements and predictions difficult – even when we try to constrain things with artificial rulings and setups (Gazzaniga, 2011, p. 117). According to this view, even miniscule deviations and the tiniest errors in measurements can change the outcomes. However, even within complex and volatile surroundings, everyday life is likely to be taken for granted as reality by subjects, as they are continuously living it through their thoughts and actions and maintaining and transforming reality through those and interactions with others (Berger & Luckmannn, 1967, pp. 19–22). Thus, even with their inherent insecurities and uncertainties, accounts and actions reflect the subject's perception of reality.

To bridge the differences between the internal and external (one of the aims of this study), we must understand that the brain (and the human being as a general biological entity) functions somewhat automatically and that our consciousness and general conscious experience is, in general, an after-the-fact experience (Gazzaniga, 2011, p. 127). Berger and Luckman (1967, p. 20) explain that consciousness is always intentional and directed towards objects (or others). Furthermore, while observed real-life manifestations are generally posterior to mental activity and structures, both the preceding and resulting effects of these demonstrate the reality of those manifestations (Porter, 1993). When contemplating this, it should be remembered that electrochemical signalling in the nervous system, especially in the brain, is fast and measured in fractions of seconds, while organic observable activities are considerably slower.

It is worth noting that, while internal changes within human beings are connected to social reality, social and cultural entities and properties depend on individuals and their internal entities to uphold the external reality. Thus, if individuals would stop reproducing society or culture or the aspects of them, society and culture as such would eventually vanish (Taylor, 1985). Artefacts detail that culture could still exist without any living members, but its essence

would be lost. Due to the time aspect and the complexity of the social and cultural entities and properties, it follows that a complete and overarching examination of the matter is beyond the scope of this or any other study underlining the temporal and relational nature of reality, which makes critical realism a good fit for adopting both relativist and positivist tones (Vandenberghe, 2022).

The above is in line with what was earlier named as the *creative continuum*, for which the key assumption is that both the primary creativity and internal conversations of the human agency function are within an individual's internal interpretations (Archer, 2007). While the internal aspects are left unobservable (for external observations), the effects of these are not (Vandenberghe, 2022). We are able to observe the expressed and manifested outcomes and can interpret and speculate on them with the self-reflexive remarks and answers that individuals give. Furthermore, within the ethnographic approach, in addition to investigating how informants construct accounts, we can assess the accuracy of these accounts in relation to the surrounding social context and situation (T. Edwards & Kakavelakis, 2022; Hammersley, 2018). It is relatively easy to accept that we are on a certain level, often not talking about objective reality, but about some version of "objective reality" that is sharp enough to allow meaningful interactions at one's subjective or shared intersubjective levels.

Our minds are not connected to our surroundings, but the connection or interconnectedness is mediated by the subjective agency, which operates with constructivist knowledge propagation and through which the senses provide embodied experiences and the body has the ability to interactively connect with the world. This does not affect the fact that many things in our surroundings are objectively observable (Crotty, 1998). To some extent, societal and individual aspects of this "objectivity" are reflected in notions of Billett (2009), who addresses "*brute facts*" that fundamentally affect individuals' abilities to act, function and use their agency. With respect to the relativist tones and constructivist epistemology, interpretations and meanings are not created from nowhere or nothing but have roots in existing physical reality (Crotty, 1998). However, considerable freedom and variety seem to exist in perspectives and interpretations that we can have in relation to this existing reality.

As the study aimed to identify, describe and even differentiate between practised agency and various levels of emerging creativity, as well as to elaborate on their relation, the research task could simply be to investigate creativity as a part of everyday work via an ethnographic study of analytically separated but inherently connected individuals and social structures (Archer, 2003; Taylor, 1985). The philosophical framework of critical realism was seen as capable of offering the ontological and epistemological foundations fitting for providing connections with what is theorised as what we experience in real life (Archer, 2003; Bhaskar, 2008; P. K. Edwards et al., 2014; Yin, 2014) and can provide one view of "objective" reality hidden behind the immediately visible social world (Singh, 2018).

4.2 Ethnographic framework for creativity research

Even though there is a long history of creativity research history, a qualitative, multifaceted and exploratory methodology appeared to be called for to allow for disperse and multifaceted findings and a competing conceptualisation that could lead to a disperse and even shallow understanding of creativity (Long, 2014). In addition, it has been suggested that everyday creativity that can emerge virtually in any activity is often overlooked as an extra embellishment (Richards, 2007a, 2010) and that we still lack an understanding of everyday creativity in the life and work of ordinary individuals (Amabile, 2017). While sociocultural considerations do place importance on the individual, in a way, when providing insights into why and how the individual acts in relation to the situation and context (Lemmetty, 2020), in creativity research, this does not warrant overlooking the individual or individualist aspects, but simply reminds us to investigate the individual holistically in their material and cultural context (e.g., Glăveanu et al., 2020), as is done here with, and the ethnographic approach is able to grasp the cultural characteristics of the organisation, such as autonomy, freedom, guidance, shared information, flexibility and easy-going nature that frame employees' opportunities and interpretations (Lemmetty, 2020). Here, ethnography is applied to dig deep into the selected organisation and to form and elaborate on an understanding of everyday life within it. The aim was to obtain insights into everyday work practices and organisational reality through an exploratory approach and by constructing a data-driven understanding of professional agency and emerging creativity and the relationship between these two constructs in the studied work organisation.

4.2.1 Research design and ethnographic research strategy

In the previous chapters, I illustrated a case for creativity as an elusive and, at times, unspecified construct that is evidently needed within ordinary everyday practices and processes of work organisations. It was also shown and claimed that the issue with creativity – the concept and construct – was (and often is) with the vague and elusive prefixes and suffixes connected to the term. Creativity is often referred to as a general phenomenon, and even when the discussion is directed with prefixes or suffixes clarifying the context, the general focus is on, for example, historical creativity that leaves lower-level personal and psychological creativity out of the investigative equation. This is done when external evaluators are used as gatekeepers utilising field and domain knowledge as a frame of reference when considering what is creative and what is not (see Csikszentmihályi, 1996; Sawyer, 2012) and generally when innovations and inventions are emphasised. The same is also seen in psychometrics when the reference point is external to the individual. Even if *the systemic model of creativity* is implemented, with individual, field and domain perspectives used to explain the phenomena, the reference point of evaluations and judgements are based on existing field- and domain-level perspectives and knowledge. These cannot

attain the *whole of creativity* but only *sociocultural creativity* and only a part of creativity. In this study, ethnography is seen as a research strategy that is employed with a variety of commitments and methods (Hammersley, 2018).

Ethnographic research can be described as an interaction between the researcher and subject in which data collection and analysis are parallel aspects of the research process (Burgess, 2006; Hammersley, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Hence, at their best, the nature and trajectory of ethnographic research and its data collection are described as a continuous interaction process initially started with negotiations aiming to attain access to and research permission from the organisation in question and ending with final meetings and interviews – including everything from the beginning to the end and almost beyond. The roots of the ethnographic approach, particularly the fieldwork, can be traced to the Chicago School and insights of George Herbert Mead (1934–1983) that elaborate the relation of self, thought and society as a product of meaning making, interaction and the use of symbolic language (Deegan, 2001; Mead & Morris, 1983; Wellin & Fine, 2001). There is no one way to apply ethnography, and it is best described as a framework or approach with a degree of freedom that allows the use of additional complementary approaches (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2007).

One (and maybe unique) feature is that the data processing and, in that sense, data collection exceed the actual data collection settings through the complementation and polishing of field notes and by writing the research diary after the actual situation. This also contains a caveat of the evolution of ideas, insights and interpretations made on the spot, and the researcher's thinking in general also connects with the dynamic nature and fallibility of the human mind and memory (Wastell & Howarth, 2022). Thus, one commitment in ethnography is the idea of having a dynamic and somewhat uncertain process, with the insight that observations in natural settings will elicit more insightful and informative data than situations strongly structured by the researcher (Hammersley, 2018).

The idea in ethnographic research is to go to the subject and participate in their everyday life – to observe reality as it is presented to the subjects in the case and identify cultural meanings and practices (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p. 20). The assumption is then that, with direct observations, the researcher can produce accurate documentation of what people do, how they do it and why (Hammersley, 2018). The participatory and interactional nature of ethnography also allows the researcher to discuss and confirm the observations and interpretations with the subjects. Another obvious caveat of ethnographic research and its data collection is often a lengthy process. In the case of the current study, the actual data collection took almost a year and a half. In real life, based on my own experience, the ethnographic research process is even more intertwined and parallel with its separate parts than methodology books elaborate (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). For example, at the beginning of the process, the data collection, analysis and the direction of the inquiry were all carried out simultaneously – at least after the initial negotiations to gain access to the organisation. However, the intensive nature of ethnographic observations,

whether direct or participatory, makes observations more likely "valid" and correctly interpreted, as the context's sensitive and constructive nature and the involved subjects can be reflected in those (Hammersley, 2018). It has been noted that the researcher cannot arrive at the context fully free of previous baggage; thus, here, my position and background as researcher are made visible to allow interpretations and judgements of the accuracy of the accounts made by the research. Figure 6 summarises the general features of the research process and illustrates the progression of the study process and the relationship between its different parts.
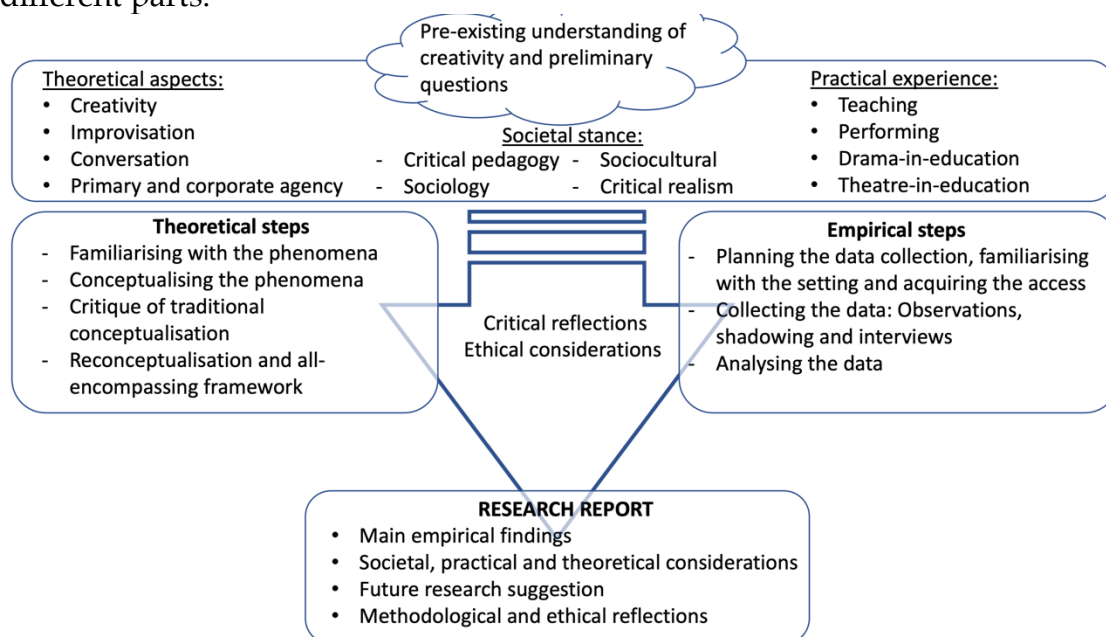
FIGURE 6   Summary of the research process

It should be assumed that past experiences were involved and directed the original interest and research plans. Past experiences, especially those involving *drama-in-education* and *theatre-in-education*, need to be acknowledged, as they have a connection to the empowerment of existential and practical agency and a view of the creativity of conversations that draw from improv and jazz ensemble contexts (Sawyer, 2001, 2003a, 2003b). While the theory section does not really draw from those traditions, the views of empowerment and enablement give a distinctive nod towards classical ideas like Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974). In addition, while not mentioned or referred to explicitly, the idea of liminal spaces in drama and theatre would fit and almost essentially connect with the power of creativity and imagination (Holland et al., 1998) in existential, life-course and other forms of agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007), as well as the constructivist paradigm detailing the relativist epistemology and ontological realism and explaining how nothing is actually created from nothing (e.g., Crotty, 1998). As part of the evolving nature of the research, after a more systematic reading and reformulation of the research task and problems, some of the original background was dropped or adapted. Similarly, the reading continued, along with the data collection and writing, and it overlapped, exceeded and preceded some of the analysis, making the whole

process more liminal than linear. This surely shows in the lack of temporal linearity and in the clarity of this report, but it was also important for the development of the thinking.

In a qualitative study, especially that involving a data-driven explorative approach, the research problem and questions can change and be strongly reformatted during the fieldwork stage; for example, the pre-fieldwork research was knowingly aimed at improving or reformulating problems (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, pp. 21–25). In hindsight, it would be fair to describe the changes within this study as significant. As noted above, mixing empirical material with several chapters was intentional and was used here to provide a better structure and discussion for the data and theory, with a relatively broad body of text. In the following, I use autoethnographic techniques (e.g., Holman Jones & Jones, 2008; Soukup, 2013) to illustrate this process to the reader and for myself. The portions intended and written in italics from here on in this section are excerpted vignettes from my research journal.

4.2.2 Ethnographic research as a case study

This research process started with uncertainty, not entirely concerning the subject or researcher, but with general cloudiness regarding access, situational and contextual awareness, understanding and knowledge that was later developed and resolved. Figuratively, it was a plunge into dark water, guided by a vague assumption and assurances that it was safe. In the original plans, the idea and importance of creative components in life were clear but lacked, for example, the connections and understanding of concepts like human agency. Therefore, as seen in Figure 6, the trajectory towards clarity moved from practical origins to theoretical understanding. A good excerpt clarifying the mess where this all started is from the very beginning of my research journal (dated 4 months after my acceptance to the doctoral programme).

> *I sit* [in the office] *at my computer and wonder what I should do. I have trouble reaching the person in charge* [and getting answers] *that could grant me permission to enter the organisation* [for my data collection]. *I am almost panicking, as even if I get an answer* [and would be granted an audience], *how can I convince them of the importance of my research and that they should endorse it. I barely believe myself. I know that the one in charge has a research background* [in the social sciences]. *That is a definite plus. I could gain access through pure solidarity or mere scientific significance.*

The above description underlines some of the uncertainties that existed during the research process. It was, in a sense, a hard time, as so much depended on single things, and the journey was just at the beginning. This excerpt illustrates the considerations of an aspiring researcher at the beginning of an uncertain task.

The process was filled with liminal phases, in which theory writing, analysis and even data collection overlapped and moved back and forth between various functions. This could also be easily and, in reality, a description of a learning process, and there are parts of the process that I, as a researcher, wish I

could change. However, in a sense, these have served a higher purpose in line with the nature of ethnography, where the researcher is essentially like an anthropologist being submerged into a new environment and culture, systematically learning what it really is and how to understand, describe and interpret it.

The aim is to achieve a deeper understanding of creativity, especially in a workplace context mediated by professional agency, and to provide a more broadly acceptable conceptual understanding of creativity based on empirical evidence and theoretical elaboration. One could claim that this aim is difficult to achieve and that the methodological approach is not conventionally used for creating and supporting such claims, or generating theory or generalisations. However, Yin (2014, pp. 187–189) notes that, when the chronological structure of both descriptive and explanatory purposes are achieved, the theory can be found and supported from this sequencing. This case study involves theory development and analytical generalisations that seek to advance theoretical concepts and create new ones (Yin, 2014, pp. 37-41). For Hammersley (2005), ethnographic research is about what people do and say in a particular context, while ethnographic research is interested in the nature of a certain social phenomenon *and/or* sociocultural phenomenon through the members of the investigated group.

Thus, while the context-sensitive nature of things is taken into account (Hammersley, 2018), the idea is that there are insights and interpretations that warrant broader generalisation (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Here, one could say that ethnography as a practice was used to confine the data collection tools under one methodological umbrella and that the nature of the case study was due to the strategy used to assemble the data and to draw inferences from it (Gomm et al., 2011; Hammersley et al., 2011). In the methodological literature, this setting is described as the difference in the intention of the methodology – which, with ethnography, involves looking inward with the aim to uncover tacit knowledge and everyday practices – and that of case studies – which look to delineate the nature of phenomena through detailed investigation of individual cases and their contexts (e.g., Yin, 2014).

Again, when considering the suitability of the chosen approach, ethnographic research as a mode of inquiry was seen as looking into everyday life and thus fitting for the ambiguities of real life and the *hard-to-specify* constructs under scrutiny here. Supporting the choice, Yin (2014) lists reasons for using ethnographic and case studies: (1) patterns and context have a role in achieving knowledge, (2) research questions consist of "how" and "why" questions and have a contemporary focus, (3) a controlled study environment is difficult to arrange, (4) explanatory operational links need to be explained over time, and (5) the aim is to form a holistic and real-world perspective. As the descriptive and exploratory method fit nicely here, the reason for choosing an ethnographic case study would be due to the following aims: (1) to trace the interpersonal sequences over time, (2) to describe subcultures and (3) to discover

key phenomena – which all connect here with manifestations of novel and valuable entities and properties in a real-life work context (Yin, 2014, p. 8).

4.2.3 Operationalisation of novelty and value

As major evaluation criteria for creativity, novelty and value are so well approved that they are offered as the standard definition of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). However, the question regarding to whom things must be novel and valuable is not necessarily presented or elaborately approached. For example, with the systematic view of creativity, "to whom" changes from the individual to the domain and field, which are emphasised with value seen through social and eminent outcomes and outputs that are secondary (Csikszentmihályi, 1996; Runco & Beghetto, 2019).

Another philosophical issue is that, most of the time, the evaluation is subjected to some entity or property that has emerged at some earlier point in time. As Amabile (1983a) postulates, we focus on creative manifestations, which means explicitly that the things that we are evaluating are only signs of creativity. The conceptual formulation proposed here is that creativity, at the general level, refers to the moment of emergence when novelty and value are first presented and that the manifested creativity later resides in these manifestations as the existential evidence of this that can be later evaluated, but that these real-life manifestations should and are not to be conflated to comprise all creativity. In addition, while the creative continuum (and, thus, also creative process) is easier to understand as a hierarchical and chronological proceeding, there is no assumption, or need for assumption, about predefining the temporal position of the creative manifestation, as added novelty and value properties at any point would be sufficient for the process to be deemed creative – for example, the idea was conceived yesterday and then presented or written down today.

As defined earlier, this study aims to explore and identify both social macro-level and personal micro-level creativity and to elaborate on that subject by bridging understanding (i.e. by developing a deeper and broader understanding) between the different aspects, especially the personal and sociocultural aspects, of the complex domain of creativity. At the same time, this study adopts the primacy of micro-level creativity and sees macro-level creatives as secondary based on the provided description of the creative continuum (Amabile, 1983a; Boden, 2004; Runco, 2014a) – a view that could also be labelled as a parsimonious approach (Forsman, 2017; Runco, 2015). Therefore, it is underlined that, without a simple prefix or suffix, such as personal or historical creativity, and without explicit emphasis on the perspective evaluation and judgement of the creative product or process (creativity as a product or process) or elaborated semantic meanings connected with it, it is misleading at best, and plain wrong at worst.

All definitions of creativity pay heed to novelty and value (Kozbelt et al., 2010; Puccio & Cabra, 2010). In the present study, the threshold for the recognition of creativity was set very low. The aim was to grasp the elements that might be essential to contributing to the emergence of solutions – on the one hand,

manifestations of novelty, newness, originality or uniqueness, and on the other hand, manifestations of value, appropriateness or utility. For example, theory could be interpreted as suggesting that value could be found simply in moving interaction in a new direction. Overall, as a researcher, I wanted to track down solutions, ideas, views and opinions that transformed situational aspects. I took the view that, although the lowest level of creativity is subjective in nature, it might still evolve into a more objective realm and even into recognisable and eminent creativity. My interest lay primarily in this kind of emergent creative trajectory, one that would lead from mundane everyday contributions to recognised and eminent creativity; hence, it seemed appropriate to focus on subjective elements, that is, on the employees' own ideas, views, opinions and solutions. Starting from this low threshold, the incidents that presented creative properties could be elaborated, with note taken of emergent creative aspects that appeared to lead to observed creativity. By this means, I sought to discover creative trajectories that would illustrate creativity in everyday work practices, with a focus on the beginning, not the end.

In evaluating what was creative, an essential element was the novelty and value pertaining to situational and temporal contributions. In fact, the evaluation was arrived at via contextual cues provided by the participants themselves; such cues included reactions to contributions, expressions of revelation or self-reflexive remarks. The trajectory of low-level creativity towards high-level creativity in work practices was openly observed. In the first instance, the newness of contributions was invisible to the observer. There was no external way to evaluate whether the individual insights that resulted in actual contributions (i.e. ideas, opinions, views or solutions) were pure, adapted or creative; thus, all contributions were considered important. At a subsequent stage, it was possible to evaluate contributions via situational and temporal cues in which products, ideas and other creative expressions were presented. As the creative evaluation of the majority of mundane and personal contributions was temporal and situational, the evaluation process was conducted through backtracking by moving from eminent and recognised contributions and then back to their initial unrecognised or underlying expression. It did, indeed, seem possible to identify eminently creative and recognised properties pertaining to work practices. However, it should be noted that, even if an "eminent" product was identified, the emphasis was still on the low-level everyday creativity that gave rise to it.

Through rigorous observations (using recordings to support backtracking), it was possible to determine fundamental and lower-level creative properties – namely, novelty, originality, uniqueness and so on – and to identify different modes of creativity. The individual contributions and inputs illustrated creativity. This creativity emerged and was identifiable through ideas, views, opinions and solutions. Through analysis, categories illustrating the different modes of creativity were formed. These modes illustrate creative trajectories within everyday work practices.

4.2.4   Ethical practices and reflection

Ethics connect moral questions of what is right and what is wrong, as it deals with both practical and normative aspects that should be considered (e.g., Tännsjö, 2013). In the broadest sense, the decisions regarding what to study and how are the most relevant considerations the researcher and reader should have. As implicitly outlined in the introduction and theory section of this dissertation, creativity research is mostly dominated by quantitative methodologies, and discrepant insights from this provided one reason why I became interested in applying a qualitative methodology here. Originally, the plan was to utilise mixed methods, but eventually, things evolved into an ethnographic design. Since there is not much disagreement on the importance of creativity in contemporary discussion, there is not much contention on what to study in that regard. Thus, ethical consideration is more about how to study the issue, and this refers to agency and its relationship to creativity and agency as well. As the research processes involve numerous ethical considerations like this, I try to be as open about the choices and decisions in the following sections, especially when describing and reflecting on the data collection and analysis processes. For the framework and design, the decision to utilise the ethnographic approach appeared reasonable, especially due to the intention to grasp the everyday aspects of the phenomena. The qualitative approach, in general, was an obvious choice, as it allows for both an exploratory tone and a reflexive complementation of previous and dominantly quantitative information and knowledge.

While social research, especially ethnography, revolves around relationships between researchers and informants, there are also numerous other individuals and collectives in play (Davies, 2008, p. 54). Many ethical considerations were addressed, discussed and enacted before the actual study or its data collection commenced. For example, in this manifold process, access to the organisation that eventually became the basis for the research context was negotiated. This involved numerous negotiations and agreements with the organisation and individuals, during which the concrete actions and progress of the study were discussed in advance. In these meetings, the organisation and planned participants were told in detail about the subject and the aim of the research, including the original schedule, the planned purposes of how and for what the data would be used, including the privacy statements with data-storing practices. Much of this was drawn from instructions and normative practices, such as the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity guidelines (www.tenk.fi) and the University of Jyväskylä's "Premises of Responsible Conduct of Research". Most importantly, the research plan was approved by the ethical committee of the target organisation, and all the participants signed informed consent forms as part of the process. Both legal and professional codes of conduct and ethics were followed.

Aside from the official and more preparatory aspects, research ethics concerns can arise in the actual practices of the inquiry. No actual participatory practices in the planning phase could be utilised, but the target organisation

welcomed the original plan rather enthusiastically, with the hope that it would benefit from the findings. Nonetheless, multiphase negotiations and introductions described above and later emerged along the process.

Both the observer and respondents may introduce mal-/misconstructions, but usually, and in this case, the employment of hermeneutic practices and the dialectic process are used to safeguard against this (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In addition, with the preliminary findings and day-to-day reflections, various participatory practices and interactions were engaged. This occurred in most formal settings, such as meetings and events where preliminary results were presented and commented on by the target organisation's employees. In day-to-day activities, while the research had been detailed at the beginning, a certain reflexivity on my part, as researcher, needed to be upheld, as, at times, aspects needed to be re-explained if, for example, confusion (i.e. in the informants) was observed (Davies, 2008). Much of this was resolved through the natural daily discussions and interactions. In addition, on several occasions during the data collection phase, I was mistakenly identified as an intern or another type of student related to the healthcare field due to my youthful appearance. These potential misjudgements and misidentifications raised a potential ethical question, which, when encountered, was clarified with discussion on the spot. Similarly, when privacy issues spanning outside the scope of the study, such as personal health or care matters, emerged within observation situations (usually meetings or phone consultations), I was asked to wait outside for that part of the situation.

Generally, while participants had the opportunity to comment on preliminary findings, they were in no way responsible for the correctness of my interpretations and insights. As proposed above, the hermeneutical cycle as a practice should steer towards sufficiently correct descriptions and interpretations. An overall ethical guideline could also be framed as "doing justice for the targeted research participants, organisation and phenomena". Thus, attention has been placed on reflection about my potential biases and prejudices, and in the following sections, I attempt to reveal these. However, as the reader will later see, one must confess that being reflexive is a difficult task, and on many occasions and with various influences at play, insights and reflections emerge in hindsight. Actual trustworthiness and overall ethical considerations are discussed in detail in the final sections.

4.3   Data collection

In this section, I describe the data collection process utilised in this study. While the ethnographic approach used included numerous information sources and data collection tools for acquiring knowledge, the key characteristics of ethnographic research were observation and participation, and the most important feature was the first-hand exploration of the research setting (Atkinson et al., 2007, p. 5). I visited the organisation and leader a few times before the actual

introduction of the research to the employees. During these meetings, major restrictions and expectations from the organisation were handled, and the research plan was approved. Initially, the research was introduced to the employees, and informed consent forms were collected (these were complemented along the way when new employees were encountered). The data collection in general lasted almost two years, during which I visited the organisation regularly. As depicted later, the fieldwork included various methods. There was a main phase for data collection, during which I had several weekly visits for observation and shadowing the daily lives at work. After that, I engaged in complementing data collection visits that included interviews with employees identified as key informants. I discuss these aspects in the following sections.

4.3.1   Fieldwork and data collection methods

Data collection and analysis have been described as parallel aspects of the ethnographic research process (Burgess, 2006; Hammersley, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The data here form a large data set that was collected over almost two years using multiple methods, including observations, shadowing and interviews; written organisational documents were also collected during this period when available and (also later) used to obtain information (Burgess, 2006, pp. 294–295). The data consisted mainly of field notes and jottings made during my observations and shadowing in the organisation. These were accompanied by time-stamped audio recordings of interaction and conversation situations, such as staff meetings and negotiations, when recording was suitable and permitted. According to tradition, I reserved time to record (write) extra notions complementing those made "at the moment" during and after the observations. Due to the nature of ethnographic research, the analysis and direction of exploratory interest were partly liminal with the data collection, as it was rightly possible to direct the investigation as knowledge of the unknown settings cumulated.

The field observations and shadowing usually lasted from a few hours to even full days (which happened later only on special occasions, such as daylong development meetings). From a practical point of view, half a day of observations at one time was exhausting, largely due to the nature of continuous engagement and the need to reserve time to complement field notes and jottings. Transcripts of the field notes and jottings span over 50 sheets and include several additional illustrations (with single spacing and 12-point font). There are over 25 hours of recordings with transcriptions from the relevant parts that focus on the informal and formal interaction and negotiation situations in the everyday life of the organisation, including meetings related to the organisation's development process. The main data collection phase with the observations and shadowing lasted over a year and a half but, in practice, took place in a few months of "sprints" that consisted of more active participation in the organisation. At the end of the observations and shadowing, thematic interviews were conducted to

grasp employee perceptions of creativity and agency, as well as to reflect on some insights about the observation and shadowing data.

Intensive participation, which took place during the main phase, meant that I had to be physically present in the everyday life of the work organisation and aimed to collect multifaceted and unique data (Moeran, 2006). In reality, this often meant, for example, "half a day" of observations, with all the extra needed, such as clarifying field notes and organising data, on top of that. During the main phase, the aim was to record all staff meetings for both main employee groups and, when possible, the development days directed for the whole department. Due to the single-researcher approach, only selected parts of those days could be observed. The data collection, data, analysis and research context are described to offer an elaborate view of both what was investigated and where. A good cover of staff meetings, training days and workshops were achieved.

Given the method of shadowing individual employees' everyday work and the observation of group events (e.g. meetings and breaks), my position as researcher could be regarded as "liminal" (i.e. existing on a threshold), meaning that I moved between peripheral and active membership (i.e. active as a researcher) of the communities observed (see Angrosino, 2008). According to Hammersley (2005, pp. 40–41), a tolerance of difference is demanded in ethnographic research, depending on the researcher's role, which is usually relatively powerless in the settings being investigated. While an outsider and unfamiliar with the work organisation and context, I was subject to various kinds of engagement with the organisation during the data collection process.

> *Today, I realised that I have at times focused on the totally wrong thing. The discussion* [consult] *was on the basic principles of interaction, and I was just drawn into it. Few pages of scribbles and notes of stuff that I know* [only substance]. *And nothing about what happened or how people reacted, half an hour just wasted.* (Development day for whole department)

According to Hammersley (2005), ethnographic research is about focusing on what people do and say in a particular context. Having a background and interest in education, psychology and personnel development, and perhaps also having listened to lectures at university, proved at times to be a problem for me as a researcher, as the substance in the development meetings, especially the cases of unilateral discussion ("lecturing"), drew my attention away from the actual target to the unilateral speaker. Similar phenomena appeared when "nothing really happened", such as in situations where a single individual took a strong lead and the interaction was visible and/or hidden, or when the interaction was digital and hidden from direct external observation. There was nothing else to do than try to wait patiently. Thus, it might be that all the chosen situations were not optimal, but through tolerance of difference – which here means that I was required to tolerate powerlessness and changes in participation practices and interaction in line with the demands presented by the varying situations (Hammersley, 2005) – the right situations were eventually achieved and found. While the data collection was over in a little less than two years, it continued for more than two years with its contingencies, such as meetings with the HR

department staff concerning the preliminary results and complementary discussions on those.

4.3.2 Data collection in practice

The data collection started with a meeting with the head of the HR department to establish permission and guidelines for the collection of data. During this meeting, the department head provided information (e.g., structure, relations and positions), based on which the data collection could be scheduled and planned. Additionally, preliminary research permission was granted, followed by an agreement that a short presentation would be given to the employees and their individual consent would be requested.

> *I had the meeting with the "director" today. Luckily, my supervisor was with me, and she knew "D" professionally. I think this helped a lot. Everything was easy, unlike I had feared. My worry about access was pointless; it proved that they have an active collaboration with "Applied Sciences", and it is quite normal that "students" participate in everyday life there. Maybe the stress did something good. I presented my idea and forms as planned, and then, we discussed for a while. After June, I can start.* (Meeting with the director)

During the first months of data collection, which could be defined as a pre-fieldwork period, I negotiated access to the target organisation. During the negotiation period, I became more familiar with the department, its organisational structure and functions and the employees occupying it. After the first observations and discussions with the HR department heads and managers, insight into the structural and functional features of the organisation became more lucid, and the focus of observation was directed at two functionally different but structurally and sizably similar groups within the department. The focus was chosen to preserve limited resources and to enable more elaborate data collection on the limited target group. During the observations and shadowing, I had an opportunity to engage in conversations with department employees to elaborate on rising issues and gain details or corrective notions on perceptions made. I also received material on the development process and the organisation, which provided background information detailing, for example, the organisational structure, objectives and schedules and the aims of the development process.

At the beginning of the main phase, I participated in general meetings within the organisation. In these meetings, I was in the position of direct observer, which assisted with familiarisation with the research context and the surroundings. The meetings were of two types: meetings with the whole staff and team meetings of smaller groups. As an observer, I shifted between descriptive observer and focused or selective observer (see Angrosino, 2008; Hopwood, 2007) in different meetings and settings.

> *I position myself in a corner seat of a large square table in a relatively small meeting room, which is filled by the table. I confirm from the participants that it is OK for me to record the meeting for my research and then fall back to silence. I quickly*

scribble up the participant list and seating. Luckily, I remember their names without asking. I've learned something, at least. The pace of the meeting is fast. They must be in a hurry. I click the indexes for my recording and try to keep up with the action. I try to forget the substance and focus on the (inter)action. It is hard, as this time, they are talking about a subject that I could really contribute to. I keep my mouth shut. Still, it is hard to focus and keep up with all the notions and ideas. At times, I note that I have been pondering their problem instead of observing their interactions and practices. Afterwards, I feel exhausted. I feel I need to hurry home and go through my notes and scribbles to transcribe them. (Team meeting)

I was generally openly invited to meetings and to be among the employees. The organisation was undergoing considerable staff changes, and a number of interns, students and other researchers were coming and going, which helped me blend in and not stand out as a "new face". Furthermore, due to my appearance, age and other external cues, despite representing myself truthfully, I was taken to be an intern and, as such, was often able to be present in organisational situations. However, my position as researcher was quite powerless, and even though this setting was not particularly difficult, it evoked emotions and demanded patience. The above excerpt also illustrates the importance of, for example, recordings as support for field notes and the later analysis. The use of indexes to facilitate recording allowed for more free orientation within situations and a combination of rather complex note taking. In most cases, the transcripts were made immediately after the observation, which facilitated the making of additional remarks due to memory cues associated with the recorded material. Here, my position or role as researcher could be defined as peripheral member researcher, verging at times on active member researcher (see Angrosino, 2008).

Excited. I'm outside checking the place, date and time from a handout. I am in the right place, but still feel extremely nervous. I don't exactly know what to expect or how I'll be welcomed, even though I have read the emails, documents and handouts extensively. Luckily, the department leader is at the door and warmly welcomes me and introduces the managers and the consultant, whom I have not yet met. I walk into the hall, grab a coffee and continue my way to the meeting room, introducing myself to anyone new along the way. In the room, I try to retreat to the sidelines – to observe. At this point, I have trouble connecting names with faces, although I have met some of the people before. The meeting is getting started, and people are invited to sit down. I wait and choose a chair that is left vacant. I end up in the middle of the left side of a rectangular table formation, with everybody facing each other. While I'm scribbling and trying to sketch the seating order, the chairman announces that we should start with a short introduction of the participants, as there are new faces present. I have no idea what or how much to say. I am panicking inside and still sketching the seating. (Development meeting)

The data consisted of handwritten field notes, which were converted into an electronic format after each observation session. In this process, I recorded additional remarks to accompany the original notes, selectively made audio recordings to allow a more precise analysis (e.g., of meeting interactions) and used time stamps to connect the recordings with the field note jottings, scribbles

and transcripts. This allowed me to go over events repeatedly and compare the notes with the authentic audio data in more detail. Time stamps proved to be useful for connecting the rapidly made and, at times, diffuse notes and scribbles.

4.3.3 Participatory observations and shadowing

In addition, during the main phase, employees from different units were shadowed and observed during their workdays. Participatory action could be seen to make attainable more tacitly known, hidden and even vague sociocultural knowledge that affected behaviour, communication, meaning making and values (Powell, 2012, p. 37). At this stage, I participated in the life of the organisation mainly as a passive listener, but I was also able to present questions and engage in conversations during observation.

> *The room is small and filled with the constant sound of a keyboard. Luckily, the morning coffee break is soon at hand, as the first hours have been a bit boring. I make a note that I should ask about the nature of the work, as this time, everything the subject does seems to be purely individual and isolated. However, I don't know exactly what is being done on the computer and question myself as to what I can observe here at all – perhaps the pace of the keyboard strokes. The work seems, at times, to consist of fairly conventional desk work. The only interaction, after some initial casual conversation with me, has been a few phone calls and voluntary explanations about what has been done and why. I follow the employee through the corridors, listening to explanations of the locations of different functions and the health benefits of daily stair walking. This chit-chat is good; it gives me insights into the employee without posing questions.* (Shadowing)

Through natural interaction, I gained valuable information and insight about everyday work that would probably otherwise be unattained. In the actual data collection phase, I participated in general meetings within the organisation in the passive role of direct observer.

> *The group gathers around the person at the computer. I follow the action on the screen projection on the wall. Things move fast. Suggestions and changes happen so fast that I've no time to make proper notes or even quick scribbles of them all. I feel I'm missing a lot of important information. Later, at home, while transcribing the notes and the recording, I think I should ask if I could use a video camera to record the meetings, to improve my data, or maybe I could record the screen action to see the process more clearly.* (General meeting)

As described, the research process developed as it progressed. Similarly, the tools used were changed along the way. Different recording systems were used and tried until optimal solutions were found.

To get to the big picture and comprehensive theory, one must also take into account the details and even smaller minute events. If these minute things are overlooked, we can only obtain a partial account of what is really occurring in our everyday lives and, in this case, in the workplace. However, the reality is that, even with this guideline, the picture will be partial and incomplete. The main

claim that will be elaborated throughout the findings chapter is that minute things play a significant role in affecting the outcomes that emerge from everyday interactions. Furthermore, in this study, the focus was on the way in which employees corresponded with these different, if even minute, openings presented by others present in the situations and how this affected the outcomes and manifestations. Meetings appeared to be important in organisational ethnographies. In her account of the matter, Schwartzman (2012, p. 38) notes:

> Nothing could be more commonplace than meetings in organizations, but researchers have chosen to look behind rather than at meetings. In the West we believe that meetings should exemplify our basic values of pragmatism, task orientation, efficiency, and rationality. We are frustrated when we find that meetings do not seem to accomplish or display these values.

In the current research, meetings were in focus, as they were seen to offer a concise, confined and intentionally constructed setting for detailed observations and analysis. Being able to participate in numerous different meetings with different goals was essential for data collection. However, while meetings were in focus, they were not everything there was, and it required looking behind and over the meetings into the context and the surrounding situations and events where the meetings were held.

4.3.4   In-depth interviews as complementary data

At the end of the active observations and shadowing, 20 thematic interviews, ranging from 60 to 90 minutes, were conducted and recorded by me. I selected the interviewees to gain an even and informative distribution of different employees seen as key informants holding unevenly distributed cultural knowledge (Emerson, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This selection was directed by the observation and shadowing data, which also informed some of the themes discussed. The qualitative interviews targeted the cultural reality of the subjects, and based on the postmodern view, the constructive nature of the interview process builds on our social reality; thus, these interviews emphasised the aim of utilising this data collection method to elaborately collect employee perceptions and interpretations in a more systematic manner compared to the ad hoc discussions during fieldwork (Kvale, 1996, 2007).

An open approach was selected to obtain cultural knowledge, and the aim was to achieve a conversational atmosphere, tone and flow for the interviews. Thus, the thematic interviews followed a free structure in which the course was directed along five themes (Kvale, 1996). Themes consist from (1) basic background information including education and work background, (2) description and reflection on current work tasks and duties, (3) work culture and arrangements including processes, practices and interaction, (4) views relating experienced and stated demands place on own and work in general, and (5) views and definition relating creativity and being creative. While thematic interviews are, in theory, located between more structured and open deep interviews, the open manner that the thematic interviews utilised here allowed

them to be more in depth, as even with the guiding themes, they were in essence open. The interview themes arose partly from the theoretical background of the study and were partly derived from the ethnographic observation and its parallel analysis. The main themes introduced for all interviews were creativity, activity and engagement, with notions of employees' own work, including descriptions and interpretations of included tasks and duties in the past with reflection into the future. Similarly, the work culture in each employee's own team and within the whole organisation was brought up if not automatically addressed in the interview discussions.

In general terms, the interviews usually started with the theme of work history and experience, including education and training. With an educational tone induced by my affiliations, this part usually included some reflection on the importance and meaning of educational background and professional development and learning from there on. Additionally, in the beginning, it was usually emphasised that interviewees could offer their own insights and propose topics, mainly to facilitate and allow active participation in the interview process. This was carried out to ensure that they could direct the conversation and contribute as they saw appropriate and share insights as they emerged. Within the reserved timeline, the conversation was directed towards everyday life in the organisation, and at a certain point, themes were introduced if the discussion did not naturally introduce those. Topics ranged from everyday work practices and employee relations to developmental issues and past and future changes, including individual conceptions of the structure and hierarchy of the department.

Regarding the nature of the theme interview, I had only a minimal set of questions, and most of the time, the themes were sufficient to engage in flowing conversation. The interviewee selection was based on observations and shadowing, and its aim was to come up with a representative set of key informants. About half of the employees from the selected subunits were interviewed with 90-minute deep, loosely constructed (open) interviews, which allowed for in-depth discussions. Transcriptions were made from these interview recordings.

> *Be patient. 1, 2, 3... Wait for it. The answer is probably coming. I am doing my interview with one of the selected key informants. Interviewing is the most familiar part of my data collection, as I have done this before, and we are almost at the end of the main data collection period. To my mind, the most important thing is to be silent and give room for the interviewee to answer. I've been at ease because the conversation has been flowing effortlessly, and I am pleased that the questions seem to be general enough. I am trying to avoid directing the conversation as long as it stays within the themes. Though, just now, I'm a bit troubled because we're running over time and the batteries of my recorder are failing. Luckily, and thanks to modern mobile technology, I should be able to use my phone as a recorder for the rest of the interview. Hopefully, technology will come to the rescue this time.*
> (Theme interview)

4.3.5   Key points and timeline of the data collection

Data collection in qualitative research is often somewhat open ended, as the aim is to gain enough data to reach "the saturation point", after which no new significant entities and properties emerge and no new information is gained. The selection of the observation and shadowing subjects (basically the individuals with which I had most interaction) were selected based on the discussions with the leader, staff listings shared at the beginning of the research process and insights gained during the observations and shadowing. First, the aim was to select an initial number of subjects that would ensure a good introduction to the realities of the work organisation. This included employees from all positions. Second, with the ongoing observations and shadowing, the subject group was enlarged with subjects deemed or pointed out as interesting by myself or other subjects. Along the way, the data collection practices and subjects were organically reflected on as being saturated with respect to the original research problem and questions, although one must note that the major data processing and analysis took place only after this conclusion. I suppose one could always find out more, but the main data collection ended after it was deemed that it served its purpose. It is important to remember that in-depth interviews were planned to complement and probe preliminary findings after the actual observation and shadowing phase was complete. Table 1 provides a recap and summary of the data collection and data with respect to the timeline of the main data collection period.

TABLE 1   Summary of the data collection and timeline

Time	Methods	Event	N	Data
1st Spring	Participant observation	Meeting with the leader	1	Notes, jottings and documents
1st Summer	Direct observation	Meetings: Whole organisation	10	Recordings, notes, jottings and documents
1st Autumn–2nd Summer	Direct observation	Team meetings	20	Recordings, notes, jottings and documents
	Participant observation	Employee workdays	18	Notes, jottings and partial recordings
2nd Spring–December	Thematic interview	Interview with key informants	20	Recordings and notes
1 year later	Follow-up discussion	Feedback, check-up and reflection on preliminary findings	1	Recordings and notes

As the research tools used are based on communication and observation of different situations ranging from informal and unconventional situations to organised interviews and settings, it is important to use multiple methods that serve as a source of additional information (Burgess, 2006, pp. 294–295) countering the remedies of individual research disciplines (Charmaz & Michell, 2001, p. 168). This waws implemented by entering rich ethnographic data from observations and shadowing aimed at understanding the context and content, while thematic interviews subjected to data-driven content analysis were used to

map practical creativity from the outside (Charmaz & Michell 2001, pp. 167–168). As noted, qualitative interviews target the cultural reality of subjects, and the postmodern view emphasises the constructive nature of the interview process and its building of our social reality. Our realm builds on a qualitatively complex construction that is based on action. Thus, the interview process builds the social realm and aims at understanding and interpretation (Kvale, 1996, pp. 29, 38–58).

> *Today, I had a presentation for the department staff. They took it surprisingly well. Even the past leader stuff. Per the feedback. I seem to be correct. At least they claimed that it sounds believable and fitting. Hopefully, it helps them, and they can utilise some aspects to change things.* (After presenting preliminary results to staff)

4.4   Analysis and methodological underpinnings

The aim of ethnographic analysis is to describe and explain the research target in unbiased ways (Hammersley, 2005, 2018). In contrast, the case study is a strategy for assembling the data and drawing its implications (Gomm et al., 2011; Hammersley et al., 2011). It would be fair to say that the analysis here began with the very first interpretations, notes, annotations and transcripts, or what D. Beach (2005) describes as building and collecting material for a textual corpus constituting the database for generalisation, synthesis and theoretical elaboration. This textual corpus was thoroughly organised at the beginning of the actual analysis by using what could be referred to as an indexing process. The analysis began with an intensive reading process that was followed by the manual labour of "cutting" the data into pieces and rebuilding them to see what was going on (D. Beach, 2005). As the aim of the analysis was to gain information about a sociocultural phenomenon with actions, interpretations and insights regarding individuals through and as members of society (Hammersley, 2005), the process required large bodies of data to be combined and to meet before actual implications could be drawn. Therefore, while the first stage of this analysis involved extensive reading and organisation of the data to extract the parts relating to practised agency and emerging creativity, these parts and fragments were thereafter scrutinised, subjected and combined to produce an almost all-inclusive textual corpus used in the analysis arising from this procedure. The philosophical framework of critical realism was considered fitting with respect to the key concepts, the theoretical and methodological choices and the analytical tools applied, which allowed for the needed separation and integration of objective and subjective manifestations of creativity (Archer, 2003, 2007, 2010; Atkinson et al., 2007; Burgess, 2006; Sims-Schouten et al., 2007; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014, pp. 24–25) notes that ethnography can be seen as inwards looking, that is, uncovering the tacit knowledge of culture, while case studies often look to outline and define the nature of phenomena through detailed

investigation of cases in certain contexts. Both traditions are visible in what follows.

4.4.1   Data collection intertwining with analysis

In the three-fold analytical framework, the ethnographic approach (Atkinson et al., 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) was complemented with conversation analysis (CA; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Michell, 2001). This enabled analytical generalisations and the formulation of chronological sequences detailing practised agency and emerging creativity (Yin 2014, pp. 40–41). This methodological framework offered both a rich and situated view and a more clearly detailed scrutinising of small moments of interaction (Duque Raley, 2012, p. 129), and with ethnography, I aimed to describe and explain the research target in unbiased ways (Hammersley, 2005) and to build iterative explanations (Yin, 2014, p. 149). Novelty appeared in different forms of social emergence, ranging from ideas, insights, associations, combinations and reformulations demonstrated along practices performed to demonstrate manifestations of creativity. It was considered within metacognitive direction, adaptation and control of actions, thoughts and processes in both fluid and crystallised situations. To further elaborate on these, conversational analysis revealed the detailed steps and practices in the process, while additional interviews revealed employee insights and allowed for reflection and interpretation when possible.

During the data collection, I reminded myself to take notes and write annotations and interpretations of those. While field notes often alone provide rich and meaningful data, these notes were also accompanied here through audio recordings when possible. This proved, especially in intensive discussions and interactions, a useful practice, as these situations easily drew the observer into the rapid discussions and activities piling into complex webs of multivoiced and overlapping situations (Duque Raley, 2012). While I wrote the field notes, recordings were, at times, time stamped to connect them with parts of the field notes. Recordings were also used to confirm understanding and notes at the end of each data collection session. The practice of combining field notes and recordings also extended the possibility of further analysis and also enabled me as a researcher to go back and check the contents of my field notes in detail. Through the field notes, additional notes made after each data collection session and recordings, I formed the data set used here. This data set constituted the basis for analytical generalisation, synthesis and theoretical elaboration that was developed through an exhaustive indexing process of intensive reading, "cutting" the data into pieces and rebuilding to see what was happening (D. Beach, 2005; Yin, 2014). The process of building the data set, and the data analysis in general, moved recursively through six phases: (1) familiarising and transcribing the data, (2) generating coding, (3) collating codes, (4) reviewing these groupings, (5) refining the groups as defined themes and (6) producing the report by selecting the extracts and generating the final analysis connecting the research with the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Observation and shadowing data addressed

the interaction culture of the organisation well. However, it was also important that employees' insights and interpretations could be connected to this. Therefore, as a final phase of the actual data collection, 12 thematic and loosely structured deep interviews were conducted (Kvale, 1996). This set of interview data was also subjected to the described six-phase analysis, and the two data sets constructed the data corpus used. I selected the interviewees to gain an even, informative distribution of key informants holding unevenly distributed cultural knowledge (Emerson, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

4.4.2   Ethnography with conversation and thematic analyses

This study used an ethnographic framework supplemented by detailed conversations and thematic analyses to ensure a deeper exploration of practised agency and emerging creativity, including creative manifestations, and to enable more evidence for the interpretations raised from the data. Ethnographic analysis offered the backbone needed for exploring and describing employees' practices. The complementary analysis was used to enhance the detailing of their work context, practices, action, direction and, thereby, the staff's emerging creativity and creative manifestations following these everyday interactions. This was done to produce a detailed description of the communication structure and the quality of the interaction, from which point the analysis process moved through initial exploratory preposition to revision and comparison of analytical insights and findings with the rest of the data. The focus was not only on what kinds of practised agency led to creative outcomes but also more broadly on what kinds of creative entities emerged and how various creative entities emerged.

The ethnographic analysis showed how novelty and value emerged through everyday interactions and active participatory agency and was supplemented by a detailed analysis of conversational interactions in ordinary staff meetings. Here, CA focused on the turn-by-turn unfolding of talk in interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Sidnell, 2009), with the objective of identifying the sequential phenomena in detail. This was accomplished by using the timelines of interactional streams relating to the speakers and their different contributions to conversations (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; ten Have, 2007). This was then reflected in the general description and interpretations of ethnographic analysis.

Conversation analysis (CA) progresses from identifying interesting phenomena to formally describing the occurrences in sequential contexts that lead back to the data collection focus (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). This supplementary analysis of "turn construction units" (TCUs), connected by "transition relevance places" (TRPs), is used here to describe discursive interactions that enable a comparison of practical activities that clarify the relevance of structures in interactions. TCU represents here an entire speaking turn by a speaker enabling an ordinary conversation organisation. TRP is the place of TCU completion where speaker is potentially changed, TRPs can include turn allocation by the speaker or in a sense meeting structure. In the present study, CA of ethnographic data provided answers to research questions by

revealing how practised agency leads to the emergence of creative manifestations in conversational interaction and the main focus was on what could be seen as unscripted transitions and turns. In addition, the turn and turn-taking structure provided by CA, combined with descriptive insights from fieldnotes, provided evidence of the observed chronological sequencing detailing the location of novelty and intrinsic value within the interaction. On the whole, it also detailed the developmental path to which novelty and value were often exposed.

Both ethnography and CA focus strongly on external observations and interpretations, and these methods allowed for grounding employee perceptions and experiences of practised agency and emerging creativity, creative manifestations and conversations addressed in the interview data. It bears to be reminded that the ethnographic data also include this type of employee insights, perceptions and experiences through my natural first-hand interaction's (e.g., conversations and employees' self-reflexive remarks) in the research context as well as in the second-hand materials (e.g. organisational documents and messaging).

First, the following findings section offers a detailed description and interpretation of practised agency and emerging creativity and details the types of creative manifestations and their relationships with conversational interactions and organisational culture. In the beginning, the data corpus is used to address conversation as an essential foundation for creativity. Then, the observation data are elaborated on to reveal differences in conversational interactions. From the whole data set, two selected staff meetings are subjected to a detailed CA to address the differences and are used to illustrate the sequences and order of events. Finally, reflections are presented regarding the findings on employee perceptions drawn from thematic analysis of the interview data, which is used to allow glimpses of employee experiences connected with creativity and conversation interactions.

Following the identification of key incidents, in line with the need to pursue a grounded ethnographic analysis (Emerson, 2004), all parts of the data that implied agency and creativity were tagged. As stated in the aims and theoretical outlines, the cap of creativity research is especially eminent in low-level creativity, as it is considered an important indicator of the everyday creative experience and behaviour in life and work; this is also the case for more eminent and easily recognised creativity that has already been explored in the broader body of existing research. Creativity was identified mainly through situational novelty and value. Perceivable creativity was addressed through observation and shadowing, while subjective creativity was addressed through self-reporting behaviour, such as instances of explaining, pondering or thinking out loud. In addition, eminent and recognised creativity, including more fluid and crystalised forms (i.e. the most obvious manifestations, such as outcomes and products, as well as the more mundane ones, such as ideas, opinions and interpretations) were used as a starting point for backtracking. Throughout this process, it was considered possible to trace the origins of creativity and address the relationship between practised agency and emerging creativity. Following the preliminary

content analysis, which is epistemologically coherent with the approach used in the dissertation, a data-driven approach was used to move deeper into the data. Fragments were grouped thematically, and these groups formed more distinct data sets. In general, the thematic analysis consisted of (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) data code generation and (3) accessing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2018). Ethnographic enquiry is descriptive (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), and with the fresh perspective that grounded analysis offers, emerging categories can be found (Charmaz & Michell, 2001). Thus, here, ethnography is complemented and sharpened with thematic analysis.

The two parts of the data set – the ethnographic and interview data – were used separately but in hierarchical order. First, the ethnographic data were used to offer a thick description, for example, in this report, through autoethnography and, in the findings section, through vignettes offering a description of the work environment in each situation. Furthermore, the ethnographic data directed, along with the theoretical background, the interest themes of the interviews (Kvale, 1996). In addition, the data from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, and the findings were examined against the ethnographic data. The use of intertwining and complementary analysis methods produced a rich and complete description of creativity as a phenomenon connected with, or rather mediated by, professional agency.

Ethnographic research can be complemented with the use of different methodologies, and here, the analysis was sharpened by the application and adaptation of a grounded analysis that drew from the same roots as ethnography (Charmaz & Michell, 2001, pp. 164–167). The ethnographic part aimed to obtain insights into everyday work practices and to gain a deep understanding of the reality of where work is conducted by entering that setting. This complementation was achieved and utilised in the findings (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2) through the analysis of the interview data collected at the end of the ethnographic data collection. The manifestations of agency and creativity were assessed from the thematic interviews, thus offering a more outside evaluation of the subject (Charmaz & Michell, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1968; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Here, the method was applied to construct a data-driven understanding of practical everyday creative practices in the organisation. For example, part of the data was subjected to an additional two-fold analysis. First, CA was used to elaborate on the discursive interaction. Then, a data-driven content analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted to connect the emerging categories of the employees' experiences and thoughts with the observed reality.

The application of CA focuses here on turns-at-talk (Sidnell, 2009) – that is, the turn-by-turn unfolding of talk in interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). This was done to elaborate on the observed emergence of everyday creativity in ordinary interactions at work. Selected transcripts were examined to reveal detailed sequential phenomena using a timeline of the interactional stream to relate different participation contributions to each other (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; ten Have, 2007). CA progressed through three steps, from identification of interesting phenomena to formal descriptions of their occurrence in the

sequential context leading back to the data (Hutchby & Wooffitt 2008). These were investigated to identify the TCUs and the connecting TRPs and organise the turn taking in the discursive interaction of the conversation in question (Hutchby & Wooffitt 2008). A comparison of such practical actions within meetings in which language is used enlightens the relevance of different structures relating to group interaction (Sidnell, 2009).

When manifestations of agency and creativity were then identified and assessed from the data corpus (Glaser & Strauss, 1968; Strauss & Corbin, 1997), these were used to create emerging abstract categories through systematic and rigorous analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz & Michell, 2001; Dey, 2007). Coding was conducted without a predefined coding scheme, and emergent categories were formed through constant comparison between incidents coded and not yet coded. These emerging categories formed a hierarchically ordered structure of subcategories, while data fragments could belong to different categories (Kelle, 2007). Thus, theoretical sensitivity towards emergent categories was needed, but it is acknowledged that researchers are not expected to be able to empty their minds (Kelle, 2007). Here, this meant that a conscious effort needed to be made to avoid pre-existing concepts in substantive coding because, as Dey (2007) notes, such preconceptions can limit the researcher's capacity to listen to the data. In this study, substantive codes were selectively coded through comparison and were finally compared and combined through theoretical codes. Following this, scholarly knowledge about agency and creativity was eventually combined with the theoretical codes arising from the interview data (Kelle, 2007).

4.5   Summary of data collection and analysis

Different types of data triangulation and complementary analysis methods were used to enhance the credibility or trustworthiness of this study (Patton, 2002). The method was applied here to gain data-driven knowledge of practised professional agency and emerging creativity within the organisation under examination. The work was based on systematic coding of the data, starting with intensive reading and highlighting of, for example, all notions of creativity and a creative sort found in the interview transcripts. Similarly, agency and creativity connections were tagged from the data corpus. Following this, the highlighted data were subjected to further detailed abstract categorisation until a rough theory of practised agency and emerging creativity in the organisation was offered (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). All descriptive and built knowledge was eventually considered using theoretical sensitivity. This included rough theories and synthetic definitions and theorisations of agency and creativity in the target organisation and a comparative reflection of these with contemporary theories and findings.

Situations demanding creative work (i.e. problem solving) were identified and named from the observational data to enable reflecting on that aspect of the recognised professional agency and work environment. This socially manifested

creativity was then elaborately reflected on regarding the definitions, with the intention of evaluating the recognition of creativity with respect to the support and possibilities offered within the organisation. In this study, the complex data collection posed multiple ethical considerations for me as a researcher. In principle, participants were not at any risk, participation was voluntary, withdrawal was possible at any time, the process was openly presented, and updates were communicated along the way; thus, no participants were coerced into the research. However, there can be no certainty as to how the presence of the researcher affected the meetings and general interaction, although nothing to imply any such an impact was shown. Participants were told, and they indicated an understanding of, what they were participating in, why the research was being done and what impacts the study might have on them. Most importantly, the participants' privacy was respected (Creswell, 2003).

Generally, in writing reports, one must be careful not to falsify or invent findings and to write the reports in a manner that makes it possible for the reader to judge the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2003, pp. 66–67). This research process involved several key forums and events that supported its credibility and process in general. First and most importantly, this work was performed in regular liaison with faculty-appointed supervisors and seminars. In addition to the supporting discussions, courses and meetings within a university context were conducted, and discussions and meetings were held with the target organisation in question. In these sessions with the target organisation, the preliminary results were presented and discussed, thus member checking was practiced (Gall et al. 2005). Furthermore, the findings have also been included in paper presentations at several scientific conferences and doctoral school meetings. All of this, as well as many other unmentioned opportunities, have offered places for reflexive discussion and consideration that have helped improve the credibility of the whole project. In part, this has been addressed here with an open description of the research process and with added insights from autoethnographic excerpts. In addition, to make my influence as researcher visible, it is important to reflect on the results (Gall et al., 2005), a factor which is addressed in more detail in the discussion. The credibility, or trustworthiness, of a qualitative study can be assessed in various ways, but ultimately, the reader will base their conclusions on the rigour and quality of the practices used by the researcher and the description of these. The credibility of research is increased with data and the use of multiple methods (i.e. data and methods triangulation; Burgess, 2006) to counter possible issues (Charmaz & Michell, 2001).

Ethnographic methods were deemed appropriate for digging deep into organisational practices and to formulate an elaborate understanding of employees' everyday lives. This was done by me as the author and as the researcher participating in the everyday life of the work organisation for around two years. The first half year can be described as a less intensive familiarisation and negotiation period that provided the access and basic information of the organisation that directed the next data collection phase. The intensive participation and data collection lasted over a year and a half and was followed

by interviews. The data collection methods included observations, shadowing and interviews (Burgess, 2006, pp. 294–295), which ran parallel with the analyses (Hammersley, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) that redirected the process as it progressed.

To collect the data, I participated in general activities and meetings within the selected organisation, and I also observed and shadowed employees from different units of that organisation throughout their ordinary working days. I was interested in capturing practised agency and creativity as phenomena embedded in employees' everyday organisational lives and interactions. This participation differed in different phases of the research and within the different phases. Data collection was conducted through the practice of participation in their reality, a practice that demanded tolerance of differences to achieve the sensitivity to make meaningful observations (Hammersley, 2005) and acceptance of the liminal role, that is, the role between that of active and peripheral member of different groups (Angrosino, 2008). As an outsider in this particular work organisation, I was able to experience various levels of engagement during data collection. In their daily lives, employees engaged in numerous interactions that were considered to reveal cultural information. Participatory action can make tacit, hidden and vague sociocultural knowledge, communication, meaning making and values attainable (Powell, 2012).

Multifaceted data illustrated different forms of practised agency – namely, existential, practical, identity and life-course agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007) – and led to various manifestations of emerging creativity. Similarly, tracing and dissecting these situational events and practices – and their temporal progression in, for example, conversational interaction – revealed intelligent creativity practices in the direction, adaptation and control of individual actions from more fluid everyday situations to crystalised knowledge, depending on developments and innovations (Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010). In this case, engaging participation deepened the gathered data in this manner, but I also experienced that it eased the interaction and made it more natural on a general level.

The data's credibility was enhanced with data and methods triangulation – such as three levels of data collection methods and three levels of analysis (i.e. ethnographic, conversation and thematic analysis narrowing grounded theory) – which is widely used to remedy issues that arise in individually applied research (Burgess, 2006; Charmaz & Michell, 2001). In practice, this meant that, during the data collection process, I made decisions that I deemed necessary for successful data collection. First, of course, this was realised in the direction of my focus and participation. I was not able to catch all issues and focus on everything; I had to make swift decisions about what to pay attention to. Second, by using and developing my use of digital tools, such as audio recorders and a video camera, I was able to gather data that enabled different forms of analysis and, at a minimum, served as a memory aid to accompany my field notes. In addition, observation and shadowing data were supplemented by collecting all available data artefacts (e.g., agendas, memorandums, notes). In addition, when possible, I engaged with conversations to clarify and confirm my interpretations, which,

at times, happened automatically through natural interpersonal interaction. Cultural practices and interactions detailed various aspects connecting to different aspects of practised professional agency and emerging creativity in the organisational context in the data collection and analysis, as detailed in Figure 7.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Data Collection	2.1. **Observations of meetings and interactions** • Meetings with leaders and management • General meetings with whole organisation • Team meetings **Direct & participant observations:** Notes, jottings – supplemented with recordings → Transcripts • Data set 1: observations	**2.2.1. Shadowing individual employees** • Following employees during workdays **2.2.2. Observations continued** • Team meetings **Participant & direct observations:** Notes, jottings – supplemented with recordings → Transcripts • Data set 2: shadowing • Data set 1: observations (ext.)	**2.3. Interviews with key informants** • Deep interviews aiming to grasp insights and interpretations of employees • Key informants used to gain unevenly distributed cultural information • Data set 3: interviews
Data Analysis	**3.1. Rough contours of themes.** Organisation of field data set 1 (*observations*) suggested a need to focus on levels of creativity that appeared meaningful for manifestations emerging from interaction → Starting to produce think descriptions → Initial ethnographic & thematic analyses directed the subsequent data collection	**3.2. Preliminary analysis** • Producing memos and coded themes • Meaningful interactions and engagements from data set 2 (*shadowing*) revealed particularities of the interaction culture	**3.3. Final analysis** • Concurrent analysis of data corpus leading to combining theories with codes and themes • Ethnographic & thematic analyses directed to conversational analysis of selected meetings
Reviewing Literature and theory	**1.1. Development of the initial puzzle** How the literature makes sense of creativity and being creative in general and in organisational settings. Everyday creativity often seen as extra embellishment (Richards, 2010) while also framed as a prerequisite of creativity (Açıkgöz & Günsel, 2016). Creativity is emerging in conversation (Sawyer, 2003). Ethnographic framework, fieldwork and data collection, and analysis (Atkinson et al., 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).	**1.2. & 1.3. Returning to literature** Trying to reconnect with the literature and theories, directing the focus with: Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), Conversational analysis (Hutchby, I., & Wooffitt, R., 2008), Chronological sequences (Yin, 2014), Use of key informants (Emerson, 2004).	

Figure inspired by figure 1 of Corley and Schinoff (2017) being inspired by Harrison and Rouse (2014, p.1263)

FIGURE 7   Data collection in relation to theory and analyses

For me, ethnographic research is about seeing the big picture, describing it and creating an analytically generalisable theory through deep interpretations. One trait of an ethnographic flaneur is to tell a story that provides a full interpretive description of the journey through which the social system is inspected. This is a story of everyday creativity intertwined with practised agency or, more exactly, about creative agency (*i.e. professional agency mediating individual engagement and activity within social interaction containing novel and valuable entities*) that all employees manifested in one way or another. The story told here interconnects and was already started in the previous chapters, especially the theory and methods sections. Here, I go into minute details with empirical evidence, and later, in the discussion, I even try to make some assumptions, suggestions and connections with existing and future research to elaborate the blanks that are noticed. As you might have already noticed and interpreted, and will now see illustrated with empirical evidence, much of this story focuses on the changes created by minute inputs and reactions resulting from the individual employee agency or agentic engagement of employees and the social interplay of these active (or passive) engagements. The empirical data are presented here through deep descriptions and interpretations and will be followed by a discussion and conclusions in the following chapters.

This study is about creativity, agency and their relationship, and these were investigated through an ethnographic research design utilising five overarching research questions. In the following findings section, I provide my empirical account of one work organisation and answer the questions presented.

5   FINDINGS

In this study, creativity, agency, and their relationship were studied in a changing work organisation with the purpose of understanding creativity as an everyday phenomenon. In general, this study suggests that engagement and active agency are important components mediating individual interpretations, insights and ideas in the shared social settings and facilitating the emergence of creativity – and, at times, directly manifesting creativity. In this organisation, creativity was found to emerge and be elaborated through conversational interactions. Different meetings at the organisation appeared to be sociocultural settings for agentic action and creativity, through which various acts and accounts demonstrated creativity as mundane phenomena and an essential component of everyday work. In work, agentic engagements were important, as through these, employees stacked up new materials for interactions, collaboration and even individual work. The findings suggest that conversational culture has an important function in enabling employees to enact existing creativity demands. Without continuous propagation, the dynamic reality of work would not have been possible.

This findings section has two main parts. The first subsection (5.1: "Dialogical culture elicits creative manifestations") targets the three research questions: (1) How do creative manifestations emerge in the ordinary practices of a work organisation? (2) What supports and potentially facilitates emerging creativity, and what does not? and (3) What is the relationship between creativity and practised agency? The second subsection (5.2: "Employee perceptions and the modes of creativity") targets questions (4) How do employees perceive and experience creativity and the requirements for creativity? and (5) What kinds of creativity are manifested in a contemporary work organisation? In these subsections, I first analyse conversational interaction and conversational culture in the target organisation and its different work groups. This frames the sociocultural settings for creativity and agency. In the second subsection, the investigation focuses on employee perceptions and the variety of creativity manifested in everyday work. The key point is that different kinds of creativity emerged from and existed in slightly different aims and engagements, but a

model of creativity as a cyclical everyday process intertwining with different levels of social reality was apparent.

5.1 Dialogical culture elicits creative manifestations

In the next subsections, through remarks on the conversational culture, I first describe meetings as sociocultural settings and then describe conversational interaction as a creative process. I then make visible the chronological order in turn-by-turn interactions illustrating the perceived practised agency of different employees that affects the emerging creativity. As summarised in Figure 8.

5.1.1 Sociocultural settings
Meetings appeared as sociocultural settings that were in part prearranged and impacted situational expectations and enactments.

Creativity emerges in interaction, and conversations are an important location for these interactions. While conversational culture can elicit creativity, prearranged and partly scripted sociocultural settings impact employee interpretations.
Professional agency appears fundamental in describing and interpreting how creativity emerges and is manifested. Practised professional agency explains the relation between an employee and sociocultural settings and can be used to investigate engagement and enactments.
Shared contributions as an outcome of practised agency are fundamental for manifested creativity.

5.1.2 Creative conversations
Sequential order of conversations showed **practiced professional agency** as important for situationally **emerging creativity**

Creativity is emerging within everyday practices. In conversational interactions, employees' abilities to control, direct and adapt their actions (and reactions) led to manifestations of novelty and value from the micro to the macro level that were incremental for emerging creativity
(1) **At first**, creativity is almost unseen in employee actions and reactions
(2) **Then,** micro-level possibilities occasionally developed into eminent outcomes through employee engagements and collaboration
Everyday micro-level creativity was common, but it was largely unutilised and unconsciously realised

5.1.3 Conversation culture
Conversational culture and organisation of work impacted what kind of **practiced professional agency** was manifested.

Suppressive and supportive cultures can be recognised based on the conversational interaction practices.

(1) Employees with mechanical and routine tasks, and non-conversational tradition, seem to struggle with creative requirements
← *Hinders interaction and reduces shared contributions*
← *Work was seen through individual responsibility*
(2) Dialogical and conversational culture supports creativity
← *Fosters interaction and increases shared contributions*
← *Conversations and interaction were seen as part of work and collaboration as 'business as usual'*

5.1.4 Chronological order
Turn-construction units be used to elaborate conversational structure showing the location of **everyday creativity**

Inspection of turn construction units (TCU) aligned with the conversational cultures
Construction of turns, and especially the use of "transition relevant places" (*TRP*), illustrated activity and engagement affecting emerging creativity

1. Active utilisation of TRPs fostered creativity
2. Lack of TRP utilisation hindered creativity
3. TCUs give structure, order and temporal progression for observed interaction and emergence
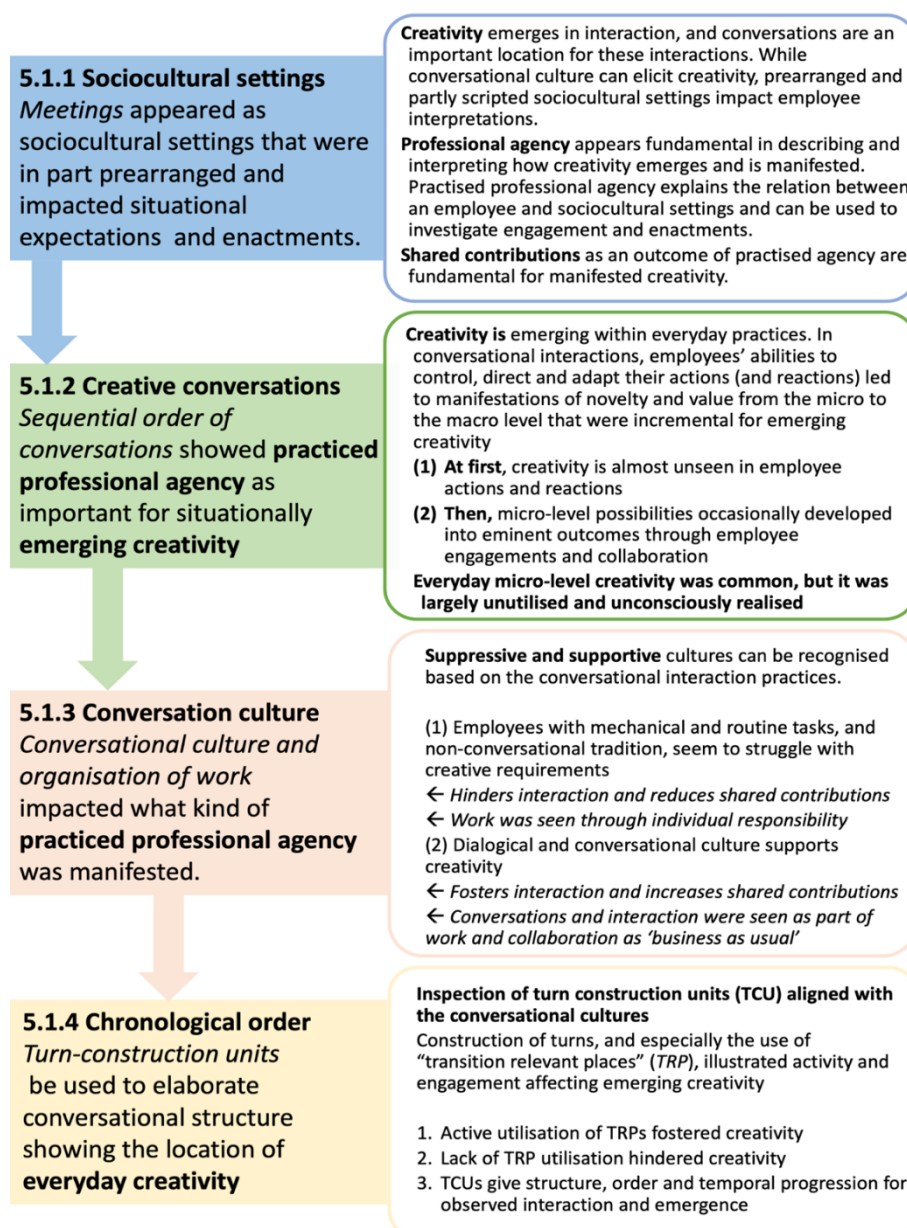
FIGURE 8   Sociocultural settings and emergence of creativity

Basically, Section 5.1 and its subsections lay out conversations as creative processes aligning with Sawyer's (2001, 2012) notions of the improvisational and emergent nature of everyday discourses. In doing this, I concentrate on conversational culture and visible differences affecting emerging creativity in the context of this study. The atmosphere connecting traditions and historical interpretations is connected to the practised processional agency. Lastly, I address the conversational components within dialogical interaction that illustrate the chronologically sequential progression of everyday discourse.

5.1.1 Meetings as sociocultural settings for creativity and agency

Meetings can be conceptualised as communication events embedded within a sociocultural setting as a constructive social form where particular routines composed of specific agents express their attempts to make sense of their reality (Schwartzman, 2012, p. 39). Meetings in this organisation usually had a prearranged structure and meaning stated in their agendas (*e.g. whether it was a regular staff meeting focusing on daily issues or a developmental meeting addressing questions linked to the change process*) and reported in memorandums. Conversational culture that supported engaging agency in meetings elicited creative manifestations as part of active natural interactions and conversations that were framed as important places for these interactions connected with creativity. This connectedness was visible in eminent creative entities but also in hidden properties of small moments of interpersonal interactions, ranging from micro- to macro-possibility thinking.

With a focus on engagement and shared contributions, the analysis highlights turn taking, which is seen as fundamental to productive conversations. Through an examination of sequential organisation, a deeper understanding was gained of the produced decisions and contributions in relation to emerging creative entities and properties. With this investigation, prearranged and expected structures became visible and illustrated socially expected scripts for interaction. Meetings were clearly connected to the surrounding social reality. Within interactions, conversational culture and practices influenced the manifested and emerging creativity. Conversation structures and practices were observed in different groups and, in the following subsections, are closely presented through selected staff meetings for both subgroups. Overall, conversational interactions consisted of distinct phases and subphases in which participations and contributions differed. The phases and differences in those are used to illustrate practised professional agency and the individual relationships to the surrounding structures.

While a wide range of verbal and non-verbal communicative actions was present, the engagement, re-engagement and changes in conversational partners were considered the most important due to their ability to manifest different contributions, including creative manifestations. As noted previously, individuals do not exist in a vacuum. Thus, the study subjects' expectations of the situations appeared to direct the emerging interactions. Employees did not enter meetings without previous experiences and existing knowledge; thus, the

context and surrounding situations were paid attention to. For example, things that appeared new and valuable in one meeting might have been addressed in a previous one that the employee had attended. However, this was not always explicitly or even implicitly expressed. Information flow and exchange were systematic and complex at best. While formal meetings in particular appeared somewhat scripted, the interaction was in essence free and at times almost chaotic and overlapping or, opposingly, almost non-existent if participants chose not to engage. In the first case, the outcomes were more diverse and creative, while in the latter, the outcomes were often unilateral and less creative. Active and engaging agency, as manifested in conversations and discussions, increased the number of shared entities and properties, which increased the likelihood of the emergence of creativity. Decisions and interpretations leading to engagement or the lack of it appeared to be due to numerous reasons, which are addressed in the following sections. The interactions and conversations reported here happened in a particular environment that comprised the traditions and culture present in each situation. Thus, it is important to remember that the interactions and meetings did not happen in a vacuum and that the employees did not arrive in these "empty-handed".

In the data, ideas were seen as outcomes, and basically, these were qualified as creative when they contained some novel and valuable properties or entities – even before any eminent implementation and realisation of these ideas, except the expression, were achieved. Generally, situations included numerous moments in which novel and valuable properties and entities were manifested. These agentic practices could be described as containing direction, adaptation and control as distinct actions in everyday work or by ordinary employees, as well as actions that included the acquisition of new information and finding and crafting new relations and abstractions within a situational context. When the data were inspected (with this frame of creativity as expressed ideas containing novel and valuable entities or properties) along its natural temporal progression in that situation, it was clear that novelty and value had distinct locations and connections with practised agency. Conversational culture and practices that illustrated appreciation through shared contributions supported and facilitated creativity. Without active agency, creative manifestations could not have emerged into a shared reality. The following focuses on whether and how the activities contributed to the emergence of creativity.

5.1.2   Conversations as creative processes

Situationally, most conversations brought novel aspects to the shared reality. In particular, situationally novel aspects, such as entities and properties brought to the discussion from employee's personal experience and knowledge, transformed and directed the conversational interaction. For example, these included the adaptation of existing solutions into novel situations and challenges, as well as general coping with the changes in the work environment and creating new information and knowledge through simple acquisition and accumulation with either a recognised need or purpose that provided directing, adaptive and

controlling practices that resulted in emerging creativity. Thus, while novelty can be emphasised over utility in the operationalisation of creativity, the above description sees novelty as a utilitarian part of interaction, thus giving it intrinsic value. Some of this stays at the day-to-day interaction level and some develops further; however, what seems important is the actions of individuals creating these entities and properties of novelty within the interaction. Everyday interactions and conversations appeared as locations for creativity to become visible through practised agency, which could be framed as an organic emergence of novelty and value.

To illustrate this, four condensed scenes from a one-interaction episode were chosen as an example to show the meaning of emerging newness and the intrinsic directing value given to it in a simple everyday event. This excerpt is based on observations and discussions held during the observations.

> *In the first scene, an employee is starting to work on a task given before. This task is about making, employing and analysing a staff survey, but for the employee, this task is new and thus feels challenging. First, before choosing the action, the employee analyses and evaluates the task, reflects on individual experiences, the past and existing knowledge related to the task. The employee has answered many such questionnaires before and has actually worked in teams devising these, but has never had a chance to really be a part of making one. Having some experience crafting questionnaires makes the employee cautious. Making a bunch of good questions with good choices is not easy. In addition, the employee is also relatively new in this particular job and this workplace and thus has limited experience and tacit insights into it. It would not be wise to adapt questions from a totally different context, especially without explicit knowledge of the origins of the questions.*
>
> *After some reminiscing and computer searches, the employee stands up and goes to look for input from colleagues. This decision to seek help and assistance is the first step in acquiring some novel information to resolve the problem at hand. However, the thought process leading to the conceptualisation that questionnaires need to be calibrated for a*
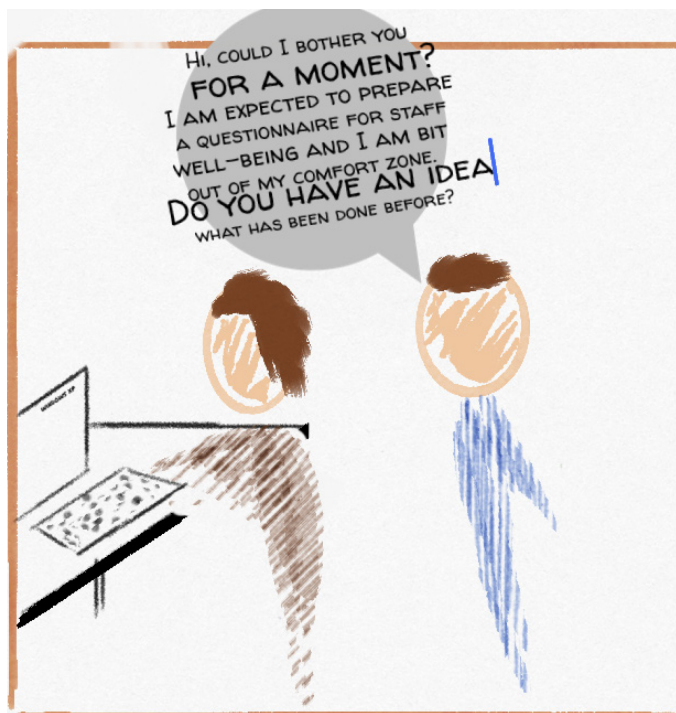
context could also be considered a first step. Likely, there are other similar ideas that have been overlooked and unnoticed.

The first colleague the employee talks to does not have a clue about the real practices or real insights about previous questionnaires in the workplace but recollects that there have been such questionnaires and that those felt a bit overwhelming to fill out. Actually, it was a bore. While this first discussion has not really offered any concrete solutions or assistance for the employee's problem, it has offered some new information. First, there have been such questionnaires before, and these were not really communicated successfully to the staff. There are also motivational aspects to be considered when describing and interpreting this sort of activity. With this accumulated knowledge, the employee still feels unsure but optimistic; perhaps, there are more things that could be useful with this task.

In the second scene and room, while continuing with the same inquiring style, the employee finds a colleague who has much deeper knowledge of what has been done in the past. This colleague has a long history and condensed tacit, even crystalised, knowledge and offers insights affirming the lack of a formal and systematic process in attaining this kind of data. However, the discussion also elaborates the reason behind this tradition, which they *jointly suspect resides in the tradition of small and independent units and work groups that have operated in relative autonomy and because the whole staff has never really known each other that well. This colleague actually has access to a previous template and survey report that are both given to the employee as material to be used for the task at hand. They discuss the differences in questions and how these could be interpreted as implications for these to aid in the comparison of different results. Through this, they affirm that there should be a more systematic approach for these questions and that old questionnaires should at least be referred to when crafting the new ones. In addition to the insights elaborating on the organisational practices and traditions, the employee with the task has gained new materials and resources in the form of old documents he has been previously excluded from. He has also gained a realisation regarding the misalignment of the data management system and user privileges in this organisation.*
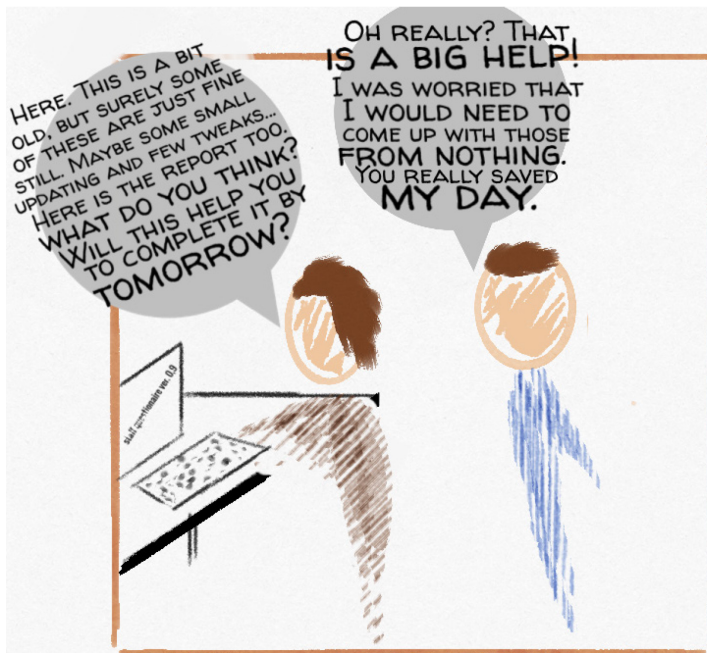
In the third scene, this discussion also elaborates on an exchange addressing the actual questions and proving that there are many usable questions from the old questionnaires that could be used in the new version of the survey. The first reaction is that a previous questionnaire could easily be adapted to accommodate the current need and, after a closer look and considerations, reflect employees' own previous experiences and knowledge. However, they also address in the collegial discussions and clearly note that, to some extent, there is a need to update the questions and wordings, as well as the general readability and appeal of the questionnaire, even if this would make the comparisons with the old one more difficult or even impossible. In addition, using the previous one as a model would not fully answer the need at hand. Nonetheless, this scene emphasises the drag experienced by the task. Similarly, different metacognitive considerations (e.g. how to direct one's own actions and need to control those) also become visible in it. The simple affirmations created by the almost-ready template and the preformulated questions, combined with the recognised need for upcoming creative problem solving, reformulate the task into something that could be easily resolved after some reformation, which could also save some resources and provide a concrete image of a questionnaire that could be used.

With two small discussions (scenes two and three) and the exchanges in those, the employee has gained insight into how this matter has been previously addressed, and he has examples of previous questions that can be adapted and complemented. He also has a report detailing previous answers and interpretations made at that time.

In the fourth scene, as a result of this discussion (exchange) held with an open door, another colleague, who is just passing by, enters the situation with insight that coincidentally provides some critical acknowledgements about the previous questionnaire and flaws in its questions. Apparently, a bigger issue was later acknowledged in the discussions held after the results of the survey. The problem was that, in the small groups, individuals could easily be recognised through the answers they gave and the background information that was collected through

the old questionnaire. As a result of this discussion, the employee preparing to make the questionnaire makes notes reminding himself that background information, such as age and gender, easily identifies individuals to people with insights about the organisational structure and subgroups when the results are given and reported in task-/duty-based grouping.

This all has happened through the quite normal conventions of daily interactions and small talk, with a few polite and courteous questions to colleagues who have had different experiences and perspectives on the matter and different access to the materials connected with the problem. Through quite normal actions, and directing, redirecting and adapting those, the employee manages to accumulate his own
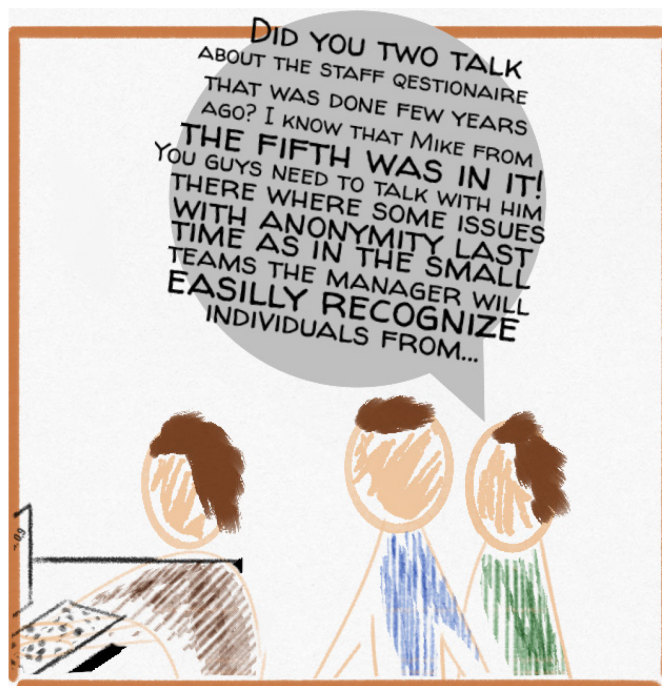
knowledge; in other words, through the accumulation of new knowledge, he produces new information, perceives new connections and relations and basically builds his own understanding and a big picture of the issue. There is really nothing more than a regular progression of the natural life described there as a series of chaining reactions to situational cues. If any of these three colleagues would have reacted differently, or simply would not have had the time for these interactions, the outcome would have been different.

Generally, the conversational interactions described in the scenes present various forms and practices of exchange that would, for the most part, qualify as mundane. The nature of these interactions warrants a label of organic emergence, emphasising the way that novelty and value appear to manifest. While novelty and value are apparent in situational development, these often go by unnoticed or are only implicitly remarked upon, and it seems that, with our intentional reflection or priming, these small entities and properties stay hidden.

To be fair, the variety of the exchanges was broader than described in the excerpt, but the point illustrated is in active engagements that created space for new information and connections to be manifested. Some of these were more predictable, some less. However, it is worth noting that the interaction in real life was not as clearly scripted as it was in the episode excerpt. There was more of what could best be described as a change. In the excerpt, one employee intentionally went in looking for some answers and ideas about how to tackle the

task at hand, while others responded to those direct and indirect inquiries as they saw fit. Responses depended on the interpretations that others made at that moment. In a broader sense of the entire data, events ranged from occasional to semi-intentional encounters at corridors, coffee breaks and even in formally structured and hierarchically structured official meetings. Some created engagements that led to interactions. In most cases, the meaning of these interactions and exchanges, especially the expected outcome, was not as clear or unambiguous at the beginning of the engagement as it was in the episode with four scenes detailing the preparatory work for the questionnaire task, which had a somewhat clear intention and aim. Different actions and behaviours in general life and work appeared to hold the potential for meaningful interactions and to create significant associations with work tasks and duties when engaged in professional contexts.

Most of the time, it was clear that, on the individual employee level, this connected with learning and creativity. For example, the employee described as the subject in the episode excerpt clearly learned about the history and traditional practices in that workplace during the process. While many or even most of the insights depicted could be associated with, for example, basic research skills (and the transfer of those to the real-life context in another area), these appeared to be created on the go. By becoming aware of the particular work culture and its nuances, the employee was able to critically reflect on and think about the task in relation to the expected outcome. While only shortly referred to, this employee had experiences from previous work organisations that enabled engagements which led to the emergence of novel combinations and rearrangements of knowledge through these interactions. These were novel and valuable in those particular situations.

As previously stated, what these situational conversations had in common was that they almost all contained some added *situational novelty* from various sources, such as previous experiences and artefacts. Situational novelty was also seen by the participants (by proxy, *interpretation based on situational reactions*) as being valuable in light of simply progressing the interactions and opening up different perspectives on the matters at hand. The key was that different individuals brought their own perspectives and personal histories into the interactions, creating a place and opportunity for a broader range of associations and connections. In the excerpt, the examples were simply *the knowledge of* and *the existing access to* the previous questionnaire. The outcome was immaterial but later materialised in different work versions, especially in the final questionnaire. In addition, it could be graphically expressed that a lot "was left on the floor of the cutting room", meaning that only a fraction of what was created and learned in these interactions ended up in the final product. What seemed to be the creative reality within these situations was that this interaction fed this cycle by generating small accumulative associations, ideas and interpretations that had novel entities and/or properties – not really the questionnaire, which in honesty looks like any other questionnaire if one does not look beneath the surface. In the excerpt, this creativity is shown as the generation of knowledge and learning

about the previous questionnaire, first, at the level of the employee making the inquiries and, second, in the shared understanding and individual memories of the participants, and then in the synthesising all of this. It should also be acknowledged that the outcome of this episode is also a new, shared and, to some extent, original organisational entity.

Aside from the contestable newness,[8] a general notion would be that these inputs appeared to be hugely important, at least in light of moving the conversation and interaction forward. In the excerpt, all engagements were reacted to favourably, but in many other cases, the questions were not listened to, the answers did not focus on the matter at hand or the situation was simply avoided, for example, with a polite reference to a time-related reason – "*I have a meeting starting and need to hurry there. Sorry!*" In the latter cases, no material was provided to work with. The resulting observation was that practised agency can support or hinder interaction and thus impact the creative and non-creative processes favourably or not. Towards the end of conversational interactions, even with or without clear closure, the novelty connected to the situational intention had a generally clear intrinsic value for the interaction, even if only to move the discussion forward. For the most part, active and engaging participation enabled more potential change, development and transformation generated by shared ideas, associations and insights from the participants. While one could think that this sort of use of resources would be bad, it appears that daily work, at least in this organisation, is so filled with these requirements and that these requirements are vague. There is little chance that all could be answered with rigid preparation and algorithmic procedures that would be easy and quick to follow.

5.1.3   Conversation culture

In the simplest terms, a grounded interpretation was that conversations are an important location interaction where creativity can emerge. While the conversations with active and engaging participants in particular were shown to be largely creative, this does not yet elaborate on the environment and context in which creativity emerged and was manifested. In addition, there was a visible difference in how successful these engagements were. The findings show that different conversational cultures clearly affected the emerging creativity in the conversations and everyday life of the target organisation. This could even be framed that, in part, the environment and conversational culture directed how employees perceived their participation and engagement, essentially framing their potential practised agency in a deterministic view. This impact was observed in the way in which various – even if marginally new and valuable –

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[8] Arguments for existing creativity in the above came from the lack of a social script and clear direction and the fact that entities such as the previous questionnaire were introduced as situationally new (see Sawyer, 2001). Essentially, in situations that were directed by a script, there was much that would count as improvisation or adaptation that warranted some interpretation. This recognises creativity as primarily a personal-level phenomenon and secondarily as a social phenomenon (Forsman, 2017; Runco & Beghetto, 2019).

creative manifestations emerged and were shared within the discussions. In some respect, different conversational cultures retained recognisable features that were characteristic and even labelled for different groups and subgroups – so much so that they could be considered typical for those groups and warrant naming the groups with these labels.

While one should recognise the complexity of the reasons behind the differences in active and engaging participation, two descriptively distinct and illustrative conversational cultures were recognised: (1) *dialogical conversation culture*, in which all participants were highly engaging and shared their interpretations (including even highly original ones) equally, openly and bravely, and (2) *unilateral communication culture*, in which different power and hierarchical structures were almost artificially reproduced from the outdated situational and temporal praxis from one moment to another, and which clearly influenced the interaction and sharing within it, making participants withdrawn, silent and appearing passive.

Next, a general description of the research context is provided to connect the conversational interactions and engagements with emerging creativity and creative manifestations. The everyday practices of the authentic work are elaborated within the setting of the particular organisation's own history and traditions. The following vignettes in the next two subsections provide thick descriptions of a representative part of an ordinary workday in both services elaborating the named conversational cultures, which were compiled from different data sources (e.g. field notes, taped meetings and interviews). The names are pseudonyms, and identifying details have been altered to ensure anonymity.

5.1.3.1 Dialogic conversational culture

Vignette 1 offers an example of the everyday conversational interactions of education services employees and clearly shows the ease with which employees converse, revealing this to be an important work tool.

Vignette 1

Work in education services unit

Maria's work partner, Julia, arrives at 8 a.m. at their shared workspace, and Maria decides to take a break from writing drafts to speak with Julia. Whenever possible, they engage in small talk about the latest news or events before talking about work-related stuff. Maria thinks that relaxed conversational habits are important. They have fixed partners in the education services, which suits Maria well, as it eases communication and knowledge exchange. She has worked with Julia for almost three years now. Soon after their informal chat, both begin to concentrate on their own workstations, and the room is filled only with the noise coming from their keyboards.

At 8:45 a.m., Maria makes coffee and prepares for the upcoming staff meeting. Someone knocks on the door, and Maria opens it. Erja has arrived early. She works on the second floor and explains that she thought it made no sense to go up before the meeting. Maria and Erja start to informally discuss the educational requirements for new staff members as they get the table, coffee and papers ready.

The rest of the team arrives, and the room is instantly filled with conversation as people grab coffee, find their seats around the table and start mundane chatter. Maria prefers to start

meetings with an informal coffee break. The conversation reveals that someone visited the cemetery last weekend and that so many mosquitoes were there that it was almost impossible to prepare the flowers. The atmosphere is free, the conversation is intense, and everybody participates in some way. At 9:15 a.m., Maria asks for everyone's attention and introduces the meeting agenda. The others are silent as they listen to her introduction. They start with current work situations and project phases, followed by a list of future projects that need to be scheduled and divided. The conversation continues to be free and participatory as people offer their opinions. They are used to sharing what they think.

Overall, the employees in the education services unit had clear flexibility in their organisation of individual work and could actually appear self-directed in many ways. Conversation and interactions were rarely seen as pointless, nuisances or consuming. There was a certain flexibility in scheduling the day, although it appeared that the workload was a huge constraint on this freedom. An abstractness in the work and the related organisation created a feeling of an organic structure in which the employees were able to follow quite a natural direction and exert control over their own job. Naturally, they had fixed deadlines and demands that needed to be met, but it was not dictated how and when, as long as they fit in the parameters. Some of these were strict, for example, obviously arranging a training session for other in-organisation entities. However, like in many knowledge-intensive enterprises, they could also use their own discretion and, for example, decide what and when they wrote, planned and engaged, which could make the work fragmented and relatively borderless.

The education services employees appeared to be more conversational and creative in their work compared with the administrative employment unit. Generally, the education services unit seemed to have a productive take on changes and transformation challenges. Their conversational tradition showed through almost a constant chatter that existed in their everyday lives in their work settings. The spaces occupied by this group were not big open platforms but consisted of adjoined rooms for 2–3 people and even single-person rooms. The relative freedom, creating fragmentation and even distractions, meant that people were coming and going according to their tasks and own direction. This mobility was also described as something positive in creating spaces for encounters and interactions.

As previously mentioned, the spaces occupied by this group were rarely silent. While open spaces were, by mutual agreement, defined as no-conversation zones, this agreement was not followed in strict practice. However, no actual (substantial) complaint regarding this lack of peace was expressed during my observations or in the interviews. Actually, the groups had their own practices regarding the search for work peace. As one employee described, and others later more subtly referred to, silent cues were used to indicate when an individual needed a peaceful moment to concentrate on their work. An example of a rather simple person–artefact interaction[9] and interpretation was observed in the use of

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[9] It also appeared to be important to focus on this intrapersonal, interpersonal and person–artefact interaction and interpretations.

environmental cues as a means of non-verbal communication to indicate the availability of and the opposing need for peace in an open-concept office in normal daily life. When explaining the observed habit of sometimes closing and at times leaving doors open during the workday, an employee said that it was a way to communicate one's availability to colleagues. An open door meant that (almost) any interference was welcome, but a closed door sent a message that there was something important (or something that required concentration) going on and that no interferences were welcome.[10] Similar things were non-verbally communicated with, for example, headphones or other cues. While this example does not include "real high-level" creativity or any "radical" novelty, it illustrates an individual's ability to create new ways to communicate and influence their working environment – mainly their control over their work and actions. The employees were free to practise their professional agency to some extent and control and plan their work to express their desires and needs. The work culture seemed to be influential, and differences in culture seemed to produce meaningful differences in manifested creativity. A more conversational work culture produced different amounts and qualities of creative properties and entities when compared to a non-conversational work culture. In addition, some subculture differences existed in the way in which contributions were expressed.

One common-sense practice, as noted above, was to use doors to indicate this need. Most of the time, interpersonal interactions happened almost constantly when doors were wide open. Employees interacted by quickly asking opinions and comments for brief questions, but they also engaged in more lengthy conversations regarding pending issues. Remarkably, the whole group appeared rather open to this kind of working culture of constant interaction. What was notable was the openness to these interactions, even when that interaction did not necessarily target the employees' own work at that particular moment. The work culture almost stereotypically reminded one of dialogical interaction, with employees actually trying to step into the shoes of their colleagues and seeing and imaging things from their perspectives. In many cases, different aspects that arose within the conversational interactions showed their value in directing the conversation rather than in actual tangible outcomes. There were also indications that the benefits of these conversations, while not necessarily always focusing on the phase or problems of the work of the target employee, were not given only to the instigator of the interaction. Things were also returned to the discussion from different interactions, and this made it particularly difficult to evaluate the value at a general level, as all things could have been developed further in a different situation. Similarly, the novelty was, in all cases, generally considered a situational and contextual phenomenon that

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[10] While some might disagree, saying that doors have been left open or closed as a form of communication since the door was invented (as a common-sensical practice, it does not fit with certain definitions of creativity), I do agree and accept the employee's remark that this is an example of creative practice. As a practice, it created a contextually novel and valuable way of intentionally communicating with colleagues that was not recognised as something that was "copied" as such from previous experience or knowledge. This might be due to the situational meaning given.

was not evaluated as a grand historical novelty but as a sort of forward-moving combination or adaptation of something that was based on some entity or property that had existed before but was formed into something new. Only occasionally did things appear completely new, even in the small confined level of a situation and context. What became visible was something that could best be described as the temporal continuity of life in general. However, this also proved to be problematic, as it created a situation in which novelty and value requirements were easily fulfilled at the situational level but would not really lead to a tangible outcome or product that could later be properly evaluated from some acclaimed objective perspective. The changes that were seen as creative entities or properties were often rather subtle and gradual conceptual changes that were almost hidden in conversational interaction, and only in rare cases were real sociomaterial products and outcomes shared in reality that exceeded the individual interaction with each other. One must, of course, understand that, by making this emphasis, I am pointing out that the observed subtle and gradual entities were counted as such, but their everyday life meaning was interpreted as rather significant, and in interaction, it appeared to have such importance that it could not be bypassed in attempts to reach creativity in everyday life.

5.1.3.2 Non-conversational work culture

Vignette 2 contrasts somewhat with the first one in its representation of a less talkative employee of the administrative employment services unit whose workday largely comprised routine mechanical tasks. This group had distinctly different conversational practices and relied on individual work in which independent effort was emphasised and that had more traditionally structured office work. Here, characteristically, even work-related interactions forming any disruptions, breaks and such for manual labour were treated as nuisances.

Vignette 2

Work in employment services unit

Anna has vocational qualifications in business and administration, a field in which she has been employed for over 30 years – in reality, all her adult life since she started as a summer intern in payroll-related duties. She has worked in her current position for a year and in employment services for seven years.

Work rotates around monthly paydays, which means that the work is scheduled and periodic. Basic work tasks involve many mechanical calculations that must be repeated. The work is divided so that everyone doing similar lists and calculations has basically the same workload. The workload is heavy, which becomes obvious every time something unexpected happens. In this context, the team uses a partner system means that at least two members know each other's tasks and duties to ensure that all tasks are done on time.

Routines are a significant component of completing the required tasks within the expected timeframes. One implication of the partner system is that, when someone is sick, the absent employee's workload usually falls on the relevant partner, which means even tighter timetables in already tight schedules. In the yearly cycle, employment changes, contract renewals and holiday periods create a higher workload, as they result in work situations in which routines are disturbed.

Anna complies with office hours by arriving just before 8 a.m. She turns her computer on and heads for a cup of coffee, which she drinks at her desk while going through her to-do list. It

is a full day. A meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m., but otherwise, the day is filled with independent work, as pay slips must be done today and changes in employees' compensation have to be checked. At this time, the majority of her workday involves checking pay slips and hour books. She knows her pay slips, lists and books by heart, so, if no irregularities exist, a visual examination is sufficient. In reality, she has no time to stop and check everything thoroughly. Her work is hectic, and she has neither time for extra hassles nor room for mistakes.

Ultimately, the work is stressful. Anna does not like breaks in her daily routines. Meetings, for example, are not particularly useful, and most of the time, Anna is silent, thinking about the tasks ahead. This week has been so crazy that the unit employees have not had time to sit down for coffee breaks in their social space. Instead, they quickly grab their cups of coffee and continue to work.

Compared to education services work, the work in the administrative employment service unit was much more concrete and conventional. Employees arrived in the office and entered their rooms or cubicles, opened their computers and started simply doing their jobs, and at the end of the day, they left. There was a quite clear traditional structure in this arrangement. Mostly, this work happened in the same location, on a particular desktop computer with the same applications and papers, with the tools provided by the employer. The work was descriptively a 9-to-5 type.

Aside from the daily arrangements of work, another contrast between the education services and employment services units was the apparent difficulties in meeting the clearly creative development challenges embedded in the change process. In general, one obvious observation was that this tradition led to an interaction culture that could be described as non-conversational and actually an avoidance of interactions. Characteristically, most of the interactions, besides the non-job-related ones that the employees engaged in during lunch and coffee breaks, were purely human–artefact interactions. Typically, even the actual staff meetings and work-related group situations lacked visible engagement.

The work was mostly done in front of an employee's own computer. The control utilised in this service unit group was based on written rules, regulations and statements that were established by the management. If some rules, regulations or statements remained unclear for the employee, they did not necessarily have real power to make individual interpretations or decisions, as the matters needed to be handled according to the same procedures. To some extent, even if they had this power, they appeared to opt to ask for confirmation or an actual ruling to direct their actions. It appeared that this was not just to secure their own position but as an internalised habit enforced by earlier organisational culture enacted by previous management. In addition, most of the time, interaction with colleagues to find a solution to a problem was not feasible because all same-level employees possessed the same powers in practice, and there was no one to take the leadership and decision-making role. Occasional debates were engaged, but the interpretation would be that a lack of control over one's own and shared responsibilities largely inhibited these – and could lead to situations in which these were perceived and dealt with simply as an annoyance and waste of time. Even the group manager was, at times, in a position in which questions were redirected to higher levels in the hierarchical administrative chain.

However, in some cases, some employees had previously obtained answers to their questions and shared these answers to help others. However, no established system existed to direct employees in this practice, and it appeared to be a more random and voluntary practice that emerged in some staff meetings and random engagements.

This so-called lack of conversational practice and space showed up in individual working practices that were coloured by human–artefact interactions essentially involving employee, computer and organisational documents and rulings. These rather generalisable characteristics of this group's work culture, in which basically all employees worked almost all the time solely on their computers, illustrate in this that the same employees were experiencing difficulties in answering creative challenges in the form of problem solving and collaborative knowledge propagation. It appeared almost painfully clear in the observation situations that they would need support and direction in addressing tasks. It was also painstakingly clear that this was not an easy task to accomplish. First, consultants in the reform process utilised various activities aimed at supporting employee participation and engagement. Second, supervisors' managerial and leadership practices were similar, and both employed modern tactics aiming to create belongingness and a collaborative work culture and to facilitate and support the same shared values and practices. None of this seemed to work.

Their highly crystalised expertise was fitting for the explicitly specific task they were doing from day to day, but they were struggling to adapt and apply, and even direct and control, their actions within the requirements connecting more abstract knowledge and formulations. This created frustration and opposition, which were shown in the reactions to and superficial treatments of these tasks. This also led to silence and a lack of interaction in meetings. They were sort of locked in a passive drifting mode of agency, as they aimed to simply accommodate and follow simple and clear instructions and guidelines.

5.1.3.3 Differences in conversational cultures

A good note is that this organisation and the groups in it did not really have any modern online collaboration platform (e.g. Slack, MS Teams) and only relied on emails, telephone and face-to-face interaction. Generally, in the employment services unit, almost any breaks in their concentrated work were treated as annoyances. However, while it was somewhat difficult to perceive an exact reason for this at the instance of observation, a few themes arising from actual work seemed to explain this attitude. First, the workflow in their computer system was rather lengthy, to the point that disturbances would easily lead one to lose focus, and this slowed the whole task significantly. In general, employees in the employment services unit experienced the time and performance pressures more strongly. This experience and computer system was also criticised in discussions that could be labelled as ethnographic interviews (Schwartzman, 2012, p. 56), where the system was revealed to be rather old and rigid and that mistakes in the processing, for example, of a pay slip would lead to a situation that only restarting the whole thing would help. Second, breaks were an

annoyance because of the frustration that employees experienced with the hierarchical system and because of the lack of possibilities to use their own reasoning. Mostly, this became visible in accounts that more active employees expressed during the shadowing, for example: "*This could be done in an efficient way if we would agree on this together, but most of us are not interested in developing our work and just want to get the things done as soon as possible.*" It was clear that, while some employees saw the benefit of interactions and engagements, they felt disempowered to change the old way of doing things, and the culture in the employment services unit was most characteristically described as "*the ghost of a past leader*". Third, and maybe the most significant issue overlapping both above, was expressed as a mismatch of workload and resources. There was simply no time for things like development, reflection or even critical thinking during the mechanical routine chore that appeared to be their work.

The lack of interpersonal interaction and the above issues connected with it led to a situation in which perspectives were not visibly taken, and the few engagements and shared notions appeared to be rather uniform. Things were seen as rigid and unchanging, with no individual or group control over the actual developmental trajectories. This was also addressed in accounts reflecting on the history of the unit. Already at the time of data collection, their current leaders and managers had operated for several years, and the environment was perceived as unchanging. This experience of an unchanging environment became visible in accounts of the mentioned "*the ghost of a past leader*". This leader, who had controlled these service group employees with an iron fist, dictated all tasks and duties to the letter and directed the whole service by his own vision. This and a work culture in which employees depended on (preferably written) authorisation and mandate did not allow for real individual variation and deliberation, which contrasted this group with another. All of this visibly affected the conversational interaction and culture, both of which were almost absent. Subsequently, different perspectives were not taken into account, and no contributions were made to change this. In the employment services unit free conversations connected mainly on the non-work subjects, and even those were minimal – as on some occasions, the employees even skipped breaks to keep up with their tasks and duties.

The most striking differences between the two groups were in their conversational habits and traditions, expressed through their everyday practices and interactions. While they were a part of the same organisation and the department's general culture, which naturally had some impact on a general level, and generated a certain uniformity, both services had distinct, identifiable characteristics of their own conversational culture and conversational environments that manifested in their daily practices and processes, as illustrated in the above sections. There were three key differences that appeared to define the observed and analysed environmental differences: (1) unilateral versus collaborative decision-making processes, (2) the amount of employee engagements and employee contributions and (3) the communal habits,

traditions and practices arising from a shared history, culture and atmosphere, which connected more with the particular group than the whole organisation.

It needs to be noted that, while emphasising the differences between these two groups, I do place them in a favourable–unfavourable dichotomy, and in reality, both groups shared and represented naturally similar and identical features in different situations, although stereotyping them in this manner is truthful. They also served their own purposes, and to some extent, the practices were a fit for those particular work demands. However, while the group differences have been emphasised here, even within different groups, similar situational and temporal changes existed and, at times, made differences elusive. Overall, the emergence of novelty and its manifestations and representations in situations that depended on the activity and engagement of the individuals present. Based on the discussions between individuals and groups that included the researcher, this individual activity and engagement proved to be important, depending on the situational and temporal aspects, which, in part, were dictated by the more overall organisational tradition and history, especially that of the work group culture.

It was not only about the entities and properties of the situation, but also those that individuals brought to those situations. Note that these were not necessarily evident and thus all were not acknowledged, even when entities and properties were obviously engaging for the participants, whether this became visible instantly at that moment or later after the moment in the remarks of an individual employee noting, "*I thought that but did not say.*" These entities and properties included, among other things, emotions that affected the way in which employees engaged with others in these situations. The clearest emotional connection was offered with frustration that connected with feeling powerless in relation to the discussion: "*it would not have mattered anyway.*" Descriptive remarks also indicated that one's physical state impacted how employees engaged. One employee explained their ambivalence regarding the expected activities: "*The matter was interesting, but I was so tired that I chose not to participate.*" What appeared to be descriptive for these groups was that employees coming from the non-conversational tradition brought the non-conversational practice with them, as did the conversational group. This affect appeared so clear that I would be willing to claim that even an outsider with a prepared framework would be capable of grouping employees correctly according to these tendencies. It is fair to note here that the negative baggage is emphasised, as it acted against the expectations within these situations and that, moreover, it might have had a greater influence and in a broader sense on the development, learning and career progression that was inspected here than what was visible in their relation with their surroundings.

These observer conversation cultures manifested differences in structures and practices that seemed to affect individual considerations and also provided motivation to actively participate in discussion and interaction more generally. In the dialogic conversational culture of the educational services unit, remarks in the interviews and conversations emphasised the possibility of affecting the

environment, with clear indications of an impact: "*I can have a say in how we do things, and we have discussions where we decide the tasks.*" In contrast, the unilateral group with the more traditional hierarchical work structure and non-conversational culture included notions of dispossessed privileges and experiences of an inability to make an impact, which was also manifested through frustration. Here, it is good to remember that the organisation of the work was also different in these groups. In the dialogical culture, which is reminiscent of mutual appreciation, equal participation and valuation of different perspectives, it was difficult to recognise differences in position or status, while in the unilateral culture, these were clear and openly visible, both in physical reality and in remarks like, "*The manager decides the tasks, and we follow the list* [of duties] *and do our own share.*" One simple interpretation would be that, in the first, the cultural practice reminds us of shared responsibilities and power connected with the contemporary discussion of management and leadership, while the latter reproduces more the traditional distribution of power and practices based more closely on a pure organisational position.

It needs to be acknowledged that these distinct groups representing different conversational interaction cultures were physically located in different places, and while general distinctions about overarching culture tendencies are made here, the location of the employees differed, which, while clearly visible from the beginning, later became more nuanced and connected with specific situations and contexts contributing to the opportunities for and the realisation of conversational interaction. This means that, for example, while employees from the more hierarchical cultural tradition expressed frustration with abstract and open-ended tasks, and thus had less visible active participation while waiting for external direction and decisions, they also problematised these practices. This was experienced to the point that, when participating in abstract development tasks in general development meetings and exercises, as a group, they noticed and noted that accomplishing these was more difficult, time consuming and challenging compared to other groups. To be fair, the dialogical group expressed similar but opposing ambivalence. A visible and clear example is that, in the dialogical culture, the conversation atmosphere allowed for lengthened conversation that included numerous side paths and unrelated topics, while in the other culture, lengthy conversations were treated as an annoyance and at times as a waste of time. Ambivalence came from the understanding that time in general is a restricted resource and that lengthy interaction is not always the most suitable activity. However, the benefits were often seen as surpassing the problem.

Despite the apparent emphasised differences and divergence in conversational interactions and culture, these also made visible the clear chronological sequences of small connected, but nevertheless somewhat independent, moments that directed and redirected the interpersonal and person–artefact interactions along everyday temporal progression. Chronological sequences became especially visible in the moments that elaborated unilateral processes and activities of the individual by redirecting or

evolving those into more collaborative and collective practices and processes. This never happened without a small moment of contribution from other participants. The nature of these contributions appeared meaningful for the direction of the interaction – or in another sense, the lack of it. This will be elaborated on in the next subsection.

5.1.4 Chronological order of manifestations in interactions

Based on the observations, a clear chronological order of how creativity emerges and is developed can be isolated. This section details how practised agency and emerging creativity are manifested in an environmental context in chronological order based on interactions[11] using applied CA. The key findings in the previous sections indicate that even the socially manifested radical and historical level of creativity was originally a small emerging moment of individual contribution following engagements that manifested entities and properties in the social realm and after an individual decision to do so (i.e. an individual's decision to share an original interpretation), which is largely in line with the theory of personal creativity and micro-possibility thinking. During the analysis, practised agency and emerging entities and properties were observed to form sequences and manifest almost in turn. This emergence was seen as connected to the situational and temporal progression of, and the demands posed by, the surrounding social reality of everyday work and the natural (conversational) interaction within it. It is useful to notice that the location of novelty and value can be in any of the turns or even in all of them, as it was enough if one turn included novelty that was then enacted on.

Aligning with previous sections, this part emphasises the meaning of the conversational culture, and here, the investigation continues and is deepened by focusing on the conversational interaction as one location showing practised agency and emerging creativity (i.e. the sharing of the original interpretations, ideas and insights) within an everyday work context. It was also found that different situational and temporal interpretations affected this practised agency and thus emerging creativity with respect to the general conversational culture and subcultures that were found and presented in the previous sections. It was shown that conversational practices have a huge impact on how collaborative creativity emerged and was experienced in the everyday context, and conversational interaction will be examined in detail here.

The focus is on the details of turns and turn taking in both addressed groups, and I analyse the characteristics and differences in them. The subsections here are in thematic order to better illustrate the continuum in and between them. Chronologically, all of these form clear chronological linear processes that, when examined closely, were always liminal with situational and temporal changes of

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[11] For the first question (how two major criteria of novelty and value were used loosely), these were evaluated situationally with reference to contextual cues and reflexive remarks from participants. There was no particular level of novelty or value that was sought or that the entities or properties should have exceeded. It was considered to be enough that some novelty was manifested and that some value was added to the situation.

complex societal reality. The key points are that construction units are subject to transitions, and transition-relevant places can be used to investigate and describe the emergence of creativity with respect to practised agency. Before moving forward, one should recall the illustrative episode of the observed interactions and the nature of the discussions from the graphic script presented in the first findings section (5.1.2).

5.1.4.1   Inductive insights from the graphic script

When the episode in the graphic script in Section 5.1.2 is simplified, it can be broken into a discussion of clear hierarchical order: 1) starting the interaction, 2) others listening to the starter and then interacting, 3) others commenting, even overlapping, and in this manner 4) deepening the conversational interaction, manifesting their engagement and enabling the creative manifestations through the novelty of their ideas, insights and interpretations within the situational context. When this was inductively analysed in the data corpus, different phases were revealed to have numerous possibilities that impact and affect what can emerge – which aligns with contingency theories. This is detailed next within the episode of the graphic script. This simplification is made to exemplify the turns and turn-taking nature of what, in reality, occurs in an overlapping manner.

In the simplified scenario, one was talking, and others were listening (maybe giving some indication of this with their behaviour, but while what happened in their minds was outside empirical observations, this assumption was later verified by their following reactions). Presumably, much more was happening – that is, what eyes could not see, what was less visible and what was just left outside the observer's attention. When the abovementioned was inductively reflected upon, this analysis suggests that evidently (1)[12] what one was saying (2) evoked reactions, associations and interpretations – among other things. From time to time, these reactions were similar, in the sense that the listener appeared to evoke rather similar or almost identical mental representations that were then manifested. In many cases, especially when the mental representation was not explicitly presented (in 1), the reaction, association and interpretation (in 2) could have been very different. The clearest situational creativity occurs in these moments when the conversation transforms, and at times, the whole direction and driver of the moment changes. The momentum moves from the elaboration of x to the elaboration of novel emergent y. This can evidently happen within just one turn or more subtly along many twists and turns and changes.

The natural assumption and interpretations here are, of course, that the individuals' backgrounds, experiences and knowledge affect these interpretations, as well as the ways in which they were expressed. Noting this distinction illustrates the interpretative and creative nature of this interaction. These interpretations also affected how the colleagues (2, 3) listened, understood and interpreted the employee's (1) talk – and thus how they interpreted, ultimately understood and saw the matter at hand. In the empirical observations,

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[12] 1 indicates the employee in the graphic script, 2 is the first colleague, and so on.

this was evident in the differing overlapping comments illustrated in their individual reactions. Naturally, there were cases in which no overlap occurred and in which only one showed a reaction. Similarly, there were cases in which overlapping and even conflicting reactions were demonstrated. To elaborate on this, chronological progression and turn-taking structure, an applied conversational analysis elaborating chronological sequences and conversation was used to analyse conversations in the education services [13] and the administrative employment service[14] units.

5.1.4.2 Use of transitions in the education services team

Vignette 3

General description of staff meetings in the education services unit

In conversational staff meetings, the service group leader regulates conversations so that the required agenda is fulfilled, but, otherwise, this leader gives the present individuals the freedom to speak. Speakers in the team make one statement and indicate participants who can provide the desired confirmation or carry on with the subject. These situations flow naturally, with a moderate overlap in conversation. Positioning in team meetings is free, and the team's focus is on the individuals speaking. The conversation's direction actively changes, and confirmation is given with gestures and vocal commentary. The non-verbal communication that passes among listeners in this group appears to be an indication of attention rather than a lack of it. Group engagement with given tasks is easily perceptible, as they are all active and talkative.

As Vignette 3 describes, staff meetings appeared to engage the education services employees, and they were participatory. In these conversational meetings of the education services team, different transitions occurred constantly as the participants engaged actively with the agenda. The use of TCUs varied, including different inputs from different participants, and the team employed both free and direct TRPs, which were often fully utilised[15]. This meant that, in both cases, the answers were deemed full and engaged with contextual and situational contributions. While the use of direct questioning, such as TRPs, was apparently effortless, the answers appeared to be considered but not too self-conscious. No visible awkwardness existed in the presentation of ideas, insights, interpretations or opinions, not even when confronting superiors with different viewpoints. While the focus on TCUs and TRPs paints a picture of a functionally suitable communicational structure and high-quality interaction, it does not really tell anything about the substance in the interaction. However, what is notable is that the apparent flow of interpersonal interaction was staggeringly smooth; it appeared to produce many contributions with both novel and valuable entities or properties that could be counted as manifestations of small or low-level creativity and even more eminent and radical creativity.

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[13] With dialogic conversation culture.

[14] With non-conversational work culture.

[15] TCU is a fundamental segment of speech while TRP mark the potential space where turn can be allocated to another speaker, or the current speaker continues with new TCU. Here these are used to provide the structure for the conversations and to investigate engagement and roles in conversational interaction. Overlap is seen natural.

Next, in a more concrete example, overlapping and challenging engagement changed a regular staff meeting's direction, illustrating conversational traditions and atmosphere. The starting point of this regular staff meeting was a hasty request that demanded that all service groups produce redefinitions of their end products and, if needed, rename those. In Excerpt 1, while employees' frequent talking would overlap with the manager's presentation, this offered contributions and provided food for thought that appeared to be essential in directing the meeting's progression and addressing and processing the issues on hand. There is nothing particularly strange in the previous, but when the focus was directed at the level of individual contributions, and the interaction was slowed down, it became visible that rather small entities or properties were easily recognisable and clearly interpretable as significant to moving and developing the interaction/discussion forward.

Excerpt 1		
From the beginning of the education services staff meeting (*legend[16]*)		
1	M:	*Well, (0.2) should we begin? (0.5)*
	→1	*Today, our agenda includes scheduling and end-product naming so that it can be presented –*
2	E1: →2.1	*Haven't we already defined –*
3	M:	*– so this can be presented in next week's meeting with other groups.*
4	E1:	*– it already?*
5	E2: →2.2	*Yes, yes (0.2). Last summer, we discussed this.*

In the first (1) TCU (see Excerpt 1), the manager (M) presented the agenda (point →1), which was questioned on two occasions (points →2.1 and →2.2) by two different employees (E1 and E2) in an overlapping manner. These small events led to a transformation of the agenda and the formation of a proposition to change the original decision suggested in the meeting agenda, all of which represents active engagement. This small adaptive manifestation was based on a single employee's insight, which was almost simultaneously supported by another employee, who indicated an understanding of the presented idea. As can easily be seen, there was nothing completely new produced in Excerpt 1, but it illustrates an everyday change that often emerged in routine conversations. Changing or transforming something was not automatically considered creative; rather, from the manager's presentation of the agenda, the employees recognised a past event, critically stating, "Haven't we already defined it already?" This kind of engagement (i.e. basically challenging the leader) describes the small interplay of shared contributions in interactional change and transformation. However, rather mundane reformulations and reinterpretations appeared important for the clarification and definition of the question and shared understanding. This could also be considered active practised professional agency, as the employees took a

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[16] First number indicates a *turn* (also referred to in the text as TCU). The following *letter* and potential *number* identify the individual responsible for that turn. Arrow with a number marks a *point* where a meaningful event occurred. Within the turn content, numbers in brackets indicate breaks counted from the timeline of the recording.

clear initiative and control over directing the progression of this meeting or simply testing their and others' interpretations and/or semantic understanding of, for example, interpretations and insights. On other occasions, when this was not done, meetings progressed as planned, and employees later expressed their frustration in other ways, as they felt that time had been wasted in addressing something that they had actually doing twice or more already. At times, there were later clear misunderstandings and interpretations that would have required deeper elaboration and discussion. Next, this excerpt and the related notions are contrasted with the regular staff meeting of the employment services team.

5.1.4.3   Use of transitions in the employment services team

The unilateral flow of meeting interaction, that is, the lack of visible interpersonal engagement in interaction – also characterised in previous sections with two accounts of the ghost of the past leader – was the dominant feature perceived in the employment services team. Even when feedback and responses from the group's employees were hoped for and really looked for, the employees often stayed quiet, and most of the responses were of a conforming nature. This was almost like a waiting game that the manager always lost.

Vignette 4
General description of the employment services staff meeting
The staff meeting resembles more of a presentation or monologue than a conversational meeting. Only the manager speaks, and everyone listens. Only six conversational breaks occur in the one-hour staff meeting, and only one of these breaks becomes sequential and involves more than two individuals. In other cases, the questions asked are confirmatory, and the answers are short and specific.

While it was not perceivably the intention, the meeting in Vignette 4 and in many other cases in this services group resembled more of a presentation than an interactional conversation. The illustrative feature of these meetings is that they could easily be staged as one-man plays relying on monologues. This can be generalised as a dominant feature of the group, as it appeared to be a rule that this services team manager did most of the talking in all their observed meetings. While the meeting structurally resembled the education services team meeting, visible interpersonal engagement was missing, and almost no observable conversational interactions occurred. The lack of interpersonal engagement made the flow of information unilateral and positioned the employees in a passive role solely as receivers. This also made their position seem unengaged. It was clear that the outcomes from these meetings were not collaborative products and did not draw as much from collective knowledge as from other team's meetings.

However, while the manager often made efforts to introduce both free and directed transitions in direct and open questioning, calls for presenting different ideas and developing needs and by laying out problems that need solutions, these TRP offerings seldom functioned as transitions, and when they did occur, the other TCUs following the transitions were limited to short utterances or gestures (e.g. nods) that distracted the participants from the conversational

interactions. It is hard to say why the interactions and transitions were this way. There were lengthy pauses after different kinds of questions and offerings, as perceivably adequate time was often given to create ample time to respond. However, the only functional transitions were distinctly those in which the current speaker continued. This kind of unilateral decision making (i.e. where no contributions were made) and lack of engaging interpersonal interaction is presented in Excerpt 2.

		Excerpt 2	
		From the middle of the employment services staff meeting	
1	M:	→1	*So then… (0.5) well… (0.2) that card reminded me of that. How does the timetable sound to you? (2.5)*
2	M:		*So that everyone… (0.2) all those goals… (0.2) exactly or… (0.5) so the goals check-up must be done by the end of September? Should we go through (0.8) that development plan on knowledge management and education? (1)*
			[Several lines omitted]
3	M:	→2	*When I come back from vacation… (0.2) is it 6 September? Then, from that date on, but we'll have until the end of September (0.2). I will do the basic paperwork, and we can go through that then (1.5).*
4	E1:	→3	*When is everyone present?*
5	M:		*Well, I thought that it would be nicer to go through it then.*
6	E1:		*Yes.*

For the most part, while the use of free transition breaks was common in the employment services meeting and the manager used pauses when speaking, the lack of self-selected turn taking following free questions appeared to characterise the interactions. In remarks and in the interviews, some employees from this group indicated a disconnect and a lack of motivation to explain this passive behaviour towards reform challenges and tasks. In Excerpt 2, the manager offered free transition places (points →1 and →2), but as employees (E) did not really engage, these only led to the manager as the current speaker (M) continuing. The conversation was unilateral, and it lacked engagement. The minimal overlapping was cautious and happened only occasionally (point → 3). One thing often evoked reaction, though: potential openings to end meetings and save time, which likely was due to the observed workload, but was also potentially due to the expressed lack of control over work.

While the manager offered places for participation, responses were minimal, and often, silence was the only result, which led the manager to continue and form conclusions without others' contributions. The lack of conversation appeared not to be due to a lack of opportunities created by the manager but to be because these opportunities were not taken. Since employees did not make use of the offered transitions, no visible and observable creative manifestations or other contributions occurred except the speaker's, showing that the components for change, transformation or adaptation were missing. The unilateral flow of meeting interaction seemed to restrict the outcomes from the meetings in an important and fundamental way. Particularly when the

employee's contributions were expected (which was in general stated as the case by the change process mandate in the whole organisation) but were not offered (which was most evidently the case in the employment services group), the only real source for any novel (and potentially valuable) entities and properties was the managerial inputs and contributions during the progression of the meeting. However, this was not pointed out in any way in any later meeting or developmental reformulations. The inability to break the cycle of low engagement and the drifting style of agency led to a lack of ownership in relation to outcomes, and this was shown as a disconnect from the subject matter.

5.1.4.4 Conversation as a place for creative contributions

While both managers apparently ran their meetings in the same way (with the clear aim to go through and complete the agenda), the observations showed that only the education services' interactions really produced outcomes that included observable changes and transformations that involved novel and valuable entities or properties that would qualify the use of the label collaborative creativity (i.e. generated by more than one source). It is notable that confirmation and approval were offered at times in both groups, but these only formed support for contributions that contained novel and valuable entities or properties. Variations and realisations in TCUs and transitions offered the possibility of individual contributions and creative manifestations and, thus, contributed to the emergence of creativity through the sharing of ideas and opinions. The employees' decisions not to make use of transition opportunities acted as a constraint and prevented the desired interactions.

While observations and analysis clearly showed that conversational interactions and the practised agency within those had a fundamental effect on emerging creativity and especially on creative manifestations, no all-inclusive explanation could be found for why some employees made contributions and others did not. Similarly, while collaborative creativity emerged within the active interaction of several (two or more) participants, individual direction, adaptation and control resulted in outcomes that would qualify as creative. In this context, CA proved to be a useful tool for showing the collaborative nature of creativity emerging within interaction and that could also be used in a practical manner by administration and managers (even if as a lighter version). CA provided data on interpersonal interaction and on the quality of conversations in staff meetings. The focus of the analysis points out that a lack of shared contributions had an effect on the outcomes that should be reflected in the set goals of the meetings. Even without a focus on what was created or on the actual substance of the meetings (as the analysis was only used to evaluate emerging novelty and value within the situation), CA provided a structure for conversation that can be seen in this situation's characteristics for creative interaction. This structure does reveal that, in these situations with active and engaging interaction involving several employee's interpersonal attention in a favourable way, the engagement and following contributions are especially important in cases where the aim is to produce collaborative and/or bottom–up–driven creative change, development or transformation outcomes.

The findings suggest that placing the focus on functional transitions and the general structure of meeting interactions can reveal characteristics about the potential quality and nature of the outcomes of those. There were also indications that this all could have significant impacts on wellbeing (through e.g. SDT connections) and experiences of cultural belonginess – feeling like one is at home. On a practical note, the structure can be used to guide managers to observe their interaction habits and to develop their practices. In a contemporary setting, this could also potentially be automated, as current technology allows for both automated transcripts and analysis. On a higher organisational level, these would also clarify the structure and procedure in which the decisions and other outcomes were produced. In these particular meetings, this sort of consideration was not visible, even in later encounters. The data suggest that, at least in this context, participation and engagement were assumed, falsely, to be automatic and natural for employees in the meetings.

5.1.4.5   Chronological order by sequential analysis

A detailed sequential analysis was conducted to elaborate more closely on how creativity emerges and where, and a sequential analysis of interactions was conducted to reveal the chronological order and location of novel and valuable properties or entities (see Yin, 2014). Creativity appeared to be a rather simple and straightforward, insignificant thing that was already noted to emerge within interactions through active engagements with different participants, for example, emerging when someone said or did something that added entities or properties with novelty and value to the situation. For what it is worth, when assessing whether the process or situation contained creativity, it did not matter at what point or points of interaction novelty or value was added in. To some extent, it was also irrelevant how much and on what level the novelty and value that was added; however, this naturally had an impact on the level and perspective on which creativity was eventually manifested and found, and naturally whether the outcome was considered creative by the participants. This seemed to relate to the perception and definition of the construct addressed in Section 5.2.

In most cases, the minimal value and the less visible micro-possibility were intrinsic and actually written inside the interactional process, as described in Section 5.1.1. However, this interpretation is rather fundamental. In contrast, when novelty was addressed as primarily subjective phenomena that were manifested at a personal level in that particular situation, it became elusive. This kind of novelty did not necessarily have a long-lasting influence, but it did naturally possess the potential to form and transform and actually fundamentally change the experimental knowledge base of the individuals present. Elusiveness appeared to be in unaccountable micro-possibilities installed in all directions, adaptations and control exercised within the situation – and also actually in a broader sense. Interaction was inherently potentially creative.

Novelty exceeding this situational interpretation was a whole different case and usually something that could later evolve into something more eminent. This was, in a sense, unobservable at the moment, but due to the in-depth immersion into the work and the use of numerous data sources, some observations and

interpretations of this can be made. The first examples are novel and valuable entities or properties that first emerged at some other occasion in a similar process but were brought into this different situation within experiences and previous knowledge. Without insights about these, the connectedness of the work processes and interactions – that is, the flow of information from one situation to another – would have been left aside. Thus, while even within a situation, all individual directions, adaptations and control retained at least the micro-possibility of thinking, as the information flow and people moving between situations moved these micro- and macro-possibilities from one situation to another. [17] Analogically, this observation could be descriptively reflected on through the spreading associations in our neural networks (i.e. brains), where more detail in coding creates more potential for overlapping, which creates more routes to connect the present with the past and enables the adaptation of those or the engaging of creative thinking based on those (see Gabora & Ranjan, 2013). The assumption follows that individual backgrounds affected and produced a variety of internal reactions that were left outside of observations.

5.1.5   Recap of sociocultural settings for creativity and agency

Section 5.1 and its subsections have answered the following research questions: (1) *How do creative manifestations emerge in the ordinary practices of a work organisation?* (2) *What supports and potentially facilitates emerging creativity, and what does not?* and (3) *What is the relationship between creativity and practised agency?* Overall, creativity emerges in interactions, and this was explicitly addressed in conversational interactions. While it was shown that conversational culture can hinder or elicit creativity, the actual emergence was clearly connected to practised professional agency, which interpreted and decided contextual engagements.

First (in Subsection 5.1.1), meetings in the organisation were framed as sociocultural settings for creativity and agency, where prearranged structures and scripted expectations showed that nothing happens in a vacuum. Thus, the characteristics of a setting could be found, but since individuals brought their experiences and expertise into the situations, and while conversational differences varied from one situation to another, there were even subsituational changes that affected active engagement within interactions and discussions. **Then** (in Subsection 5.1.2), the primacy of novelty and its intrinsic value in conversations was underlined through employees' practice of professional agency in an active and engaging way (i.e. to control, direct and adapt their actions). This was especially evident in tasks and duties that depended on emerging creativity. **Third** (in Subsection 5.1.3), conversation cultures and differences in in-house tradition, history and subcultures were presented, and the impact of these was elaborated. Tradition and historical burden appeared to be highly hindering and influential in this organisation, to the point that one

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[17] Addressed also in Forsman (2017).

investigated group was still under the overwatch of "the ghost of a past leader". Supporting conversational culture and actively participating in professional agency seemed to predict emerging creativity, especially the collaborative type. In addition, the sociocultural setting had a huge impact on the manifested professional agency. Finally, as **fourth** (in Subsection 5.1.4), conversational interaction and interactional reality in the organisation were created in chronological sequences, where practised agency could be investigated and became visible. While emerging creativity could be seen as situational and as moving and emerging between these situations, agentic actions were illustrated with turn taking and transitions and showed how things can be enacted. As a sign of practised agency, the utilisation of transitions in conversational interaction was observed to be important for emerging creativity.

Overall, one can say that conversational activity and engagement seemed to indicate and be essential for productive interaction. A simple truth was that saying something with novel properties or entities out loud was enough for creativity to be induced in shared reality. The decision to engage and contribute was a result of practised agency. What was usually evaluated and seen to exist was the act of following these small ideas, which were polished and developed in the temporal and situational progression into more recognisable emerging creative entities (in this case e.g. ideas) that had a social-level impact. In the broader picture, this understanding from subsequent observations seemed to suggest that active engagements spread beyond the immediate situation and drew from the historical workloads, traditions and experiences of the participating groups and individuals – that is, the local interaction and conversation culture and even the communal traditions and preferences. Observations and analysis made it clear that group differences also impacted individual employees' practices and actions.

Different work cultures led to different types of direction, adaptation and control, which were perceived and, in the analysis, shown to impact information formation, learning and knowledge through hindering and supporting elements. In this setting, it was clear that, if the expectations at the organisational level did not match the subculture, this resulted in dispositions. These rather general notions are potentially so obvious and even banal that they seem to create opposition and neglect. Similarly, like everyday creativity is seen as an extra embellishment of more eminent creations (see Amabile, 2017; Richards, 2010) or less visible micro-possibility thinking is left in the shadow of larger observable events, objects and properties are more easily deemed creative (see Clack, 2017). Without individuals and their original interpretations in the form of shared contributions, there was no creativity or even an indication of its potential. In the next section, employee perceptions and different forms of manifested creativity will be addressed.

5.2   Employee perceptions and different modes of creativity

In the next subsections, I first detail employee perceptions of creativity and work culture that impact creativity by answering research question (4) *How do employees perceive and experience creativity and the requirements for creativity?* Then, I describe and interpret the different modes of creativity revealed by the analytical process that, with the overall findings section, answers research question (5) *What kinds of creativity are manifested in a contemporary work organisation?* In principle, employees usually struggled to define their work as creativity or to need it. This appeared to largely connect with semantic interpretations of eminent forms of creativity. More nuanced and everyday forms of creativity were eventually brought into discussions through the reflection and elaboration of everyday practices and demands. Employees perceived creativity as vague, everyday phenomena that were needed in their everyday work. The vagueness of creativity can also be described as the existence of multiple creativities. Thus, creativity as workplace phenomena is plural. Different forms of creativity, aside from the more parsimonious creativity, were revealed to consist of several thematic and more complex functional modes of creativity in the everyday work practices of the HR department: *(1) inventing, (2) doing, (3) analysing, (4) negotiating and (5) storytelling modes of creativity.* This explicates the conflict perceived in the employees' perceptions, which explains the difficulties in recognising creativity as a part of their everyday actions. The key difficulty with parsimonious creativity and small entities and properties was that they did not seem to fit the generalised idea of what creativity is. Thus, the preliminary insight from employees was that they were not creative, and only after intentional reflection did they see that small everyday creativity infested their daily practices. I first detail the employee perceptions in Subsection 5.2.1 and then dissect the modes of creativity in Subsection 5.2.2. I begin both subsections with a summary of the findings.

5.2.1   Employee perceptions of conversations and creativity

In the following, I present the employees' perceptions of creativity and conversational culture in their work environment based on a set of thematic interviews. I first concentrate on their accounts of creativity and then on the cultural aspects, elaborating on their experiences of interaction, on how creativity is manifested and what affects these. For most of the employees, creativity was not at the core of their daily tasks and duties – at least according to what they stated when they were directly asked. However, they were expected, especially in the reform and restructuring situations, to participate in and contribute to creative processes aiming to change and renegotiate, for example, the current division and model of work. According to the interviewees, creativity had both abstract and material manifestations. In addition, two illustrative subcultures emerged, as shown in the previous section. The first subgroup was a dialogic conversation culture of a self-directed and empowered group that manifested

engaging practised agency in their answers. The second group was a non-conversational work group with restricted actions governed largely by a past leader's ghost and mechanical tasks. The main findings regarding the employees' perceptions and experiences on creativity and creativity demands and requirements at work are reported and summarised in Figure 9.

When asked, employees appeared to focus on macro-level creativity, but especially implicitly described also micro-level creativity as essential

- Macro-level emphasis appeared to resonate with creativity myths and ideals of eminent and artistic creativity
- Small micro-level creativity became perceivable through reflection
- This was mostly only implicitly remarked

Employees generally acknowledged creativity requirements but were discrepant in relation to those and struggled to define creativity coherently.

Reflection and reflexivity was needed

- **First** employees saw creativity as macro-level phenomena, **but when reflecting** on the requirements of work, different more fluid and micro-level perceptions emerge
    → Ultimately, creativity was seen as a natural part of everyday work
- Conversations, conversational interaction and work culture was seen as important location for emergence of creativity, which was seen as
    (a) depending on shared ideas, insights and opinions
    (b) giving the ability to utilise different perspectives, and broader experience and knowledge base
- Employees from both work groups connected creativity with interaction, but only the conversational group gave a clear emphasis and importance for micro-level creativity and changing perspectives

FIGURE 9   Employee experiences and perceptions on creativity

5.2.1.1   Perceptions of creativity manifested at work

The interviewees indicated that creativity had abstract and material manifestations for them. At first, employees' answers illustrated a division

between more mechanical work and creative work, but they always indicated that some aspects of their work were creative: "*There is that mechanical part, working on a computer and just answering things, but there is that communicative part that is not just mechanical, when contrasted with just saving and recording things.*" *(em8 [18])* When discussing the presence of creativity in everyday work, most interviewees at first had difficulty grasping this interactional and conversational abstract side of the concept, and they mostly focused on creative outcomes, emphasising the lack of creativity in their daily work. The interviewees described this through such answers as, "*My work is based on routines. It doesn't involve much creativity*" *(ed2)* and "*I just do my share and that's it, and my work is just mechanical; there is no creativity needed.*"*(em1)* The interviewees had difficulty describing creativity and thought it was non-existent in everyday work based on routines and mechanical repetition. However, when the interviews delved more deeply into tasks, duties and practices in everyday work, the interviewees' take on creativity became more abstract. At a later point, many returned to open-ended questions asked at the beginning of the creativity theme, such as "*How is creativity present in your work?*" or "*Is creativity needed in your work?*" The interviewees offered answers such as, "*You have to use creativity. This wouldn't work otherwise.*" *(ed9)* Another example was, "*You are allowed to use creativity in this job, for example, when drawing conclusions or deciding something.*" *(ed14)*

Creativity appeared, at first, to connect primarily with concrete manifestations and included notions like "*designing forms and such*" *(ed11)* or "*planning and creating things*" *(ed2)*. Later, the interviewees broadened their understanding to contain abstract mental formulations that made creativity more elusive and deeply embedded in work tasks. One key aspect emerging from their answers was in making decisions and directing their own and others' actions. In addition to daily managerial duties that demanded the ability to adapt to existing practices and come up with new practices, it was also noted that creativity was used when structures demanded a specific background for a position, but the recruited person did not have that: "*We had to think what the title was, as the planner needed university studies; then, we came up with 'coordinator'.*" *(ed2)* Furthermore, the interviewees repeatedly associated this abstract and embedded formulation of creativity with their work persona and specific individuals. This was expressed by emphasising various perspectives on different things. Answers included the following: "*People see the usefulness of* [new] *things differently*" *(ed9* and "*Everyone has their unique views and opinions.*" *(ed4)* These replies moved towards an abstract view of creativity, in which even broad definitions such as "*anything your imagination can produce*" *(ed12)* were given for creativity. Some answers also expressed this vague form by just talking about creativity without any specific explanation of what was meant: "*You can use creativity by yourself, or in your team, in processing those things.*"*(em7)* While creativity was at first perceived as concrete and material, it later evolved into abstract representations connected with views, ideas and opinions presented in conversations and daily

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[18] Subjects are identified with anonymized identifiers with letters (ed for education and em for employment) detailing the unit and number detailing the individual.

interactions. This creativity connected most clearly with development and produced changes in the organisation. It was also pictured as a component of being proactive and reactive in changes occurring in everyday change. The clearest examples of this were given when different respondents described arranging education events and training for masses in which *"multiple timetables and overlaps occur and need adjustments and changes that you need to do in that spot. That requires creativity." (em15)* Implicitly, creativity was also hinted at in almost all collaboration and cooperative practices.

5.2.1.2   Perspectives on "self-directed" conversations

The interviewees indicated that free and agentic – in essence, self-directed – conversations led to productive engagement, suggesting that active and engaging conversations were the main tools used to generate participation and contributions. Here, self-direction refers to their expressed internal interpretations of the situations. This practice realised insights resonating with internal conversation as a source of agentic direction. The answers connected with this included similar reflexivity in remarks reflecting the requirements of everyday work and making the connections with micro-level creativity. As one employee said, "[Conversations] *usually do get fully developed, as I see it. And I think that we are, or we prefer, that things get handled thoroughly – we do our work as well as we can." (ed6)* Creativity and agency here connect with the ability to take and understand different perspectives as a part of collaborative meaning making. An open and self-directed conversation culture connected clearly with practices that also indicated the construction and reproduction of communal practices that were seen as important in the work community. This also manifested in remarks that emphasised mutual trust, in that, *"I can say anything and just directly tell it as it is." (ed2)* While this was mostly presented as a thing that covered both professional and non-professional topics, it was emphasised that, with professional topics, there were no barriers at all: *"Well, we can bring anything to the table, and there has never been a work-related topic that we could not discuss through." (ed11)*

The interviewees described the conversational culture through practices. One employee said, *"We negotiate and then decide." (ed6)* Another reported, *"We have always found a solution, and we have never needed to vote on it." (ed2)* However, they also emphasised structural characteristics. Several interviewees pointed out that a lean hierarchy with an involved and actively participating manager leads to equality in conversations. A manager expressed this as follows: *"If we have a hierarchy, it is only the managerial responsibilities that I have. I feel that we are equal as adult experts." (team leader)* This cultural aspect was also emphasised as a visible trait of the group that had been noticed from the outside and that had spread to collaborative relations. *"I see these as beneficial as such and that this affects our position and relations within our organisation. Surely, it affects, so that we are easy to approach and that the people would generally sense it. If we would be different, highly hierarchical, or so, they would sense it, too." (ed4)* While culture was generally illustrated in answers as a positive aspect that created a work environment in which employees could actively, for example, participate and share the workload,

one clear negative aspect in the highly conversational and self-directed environment was the time consumption needed for conversational practices and that the work continued outside office hours: *"When there is no time for that during the day, when do you it? It the calendar is full until 16, then you do it then* [after work hours] *or, for example, between 7 and 8." (ed6)*

The importance of communal tradition and conversational culture also appeared to be meaningful in ordinary employees' responses about having experiences of being equal to and respected as co-workers with collective yes-we-can notions. The work demands were met as a collaborative practice, where *"others bring their ideas* [which is a relief] *when you have trouble creating your own" (ed12).* A conversational atmosphere encouraging freedom of speech was repeatedly described as the norm for the dialogical group. One interviewee suggested, *"We are quite equal, and we can say positive and negative things, have conversations about anything and express our opinions."* Another employee said, *"We are all experts in our field, so we bring our perspectives into conversations."* The emphasis on equality was thought to lead to conversational interactions in which an appreciation of others' ideas and insights kept conversations flowing and the employees engaged.

5.2.1.3 Experiences of the past leader's ghost

Interviewees connected their passive presence observed in formal meetings to traditions, practices and history. In the interviews, they spoke about hopes for change, reasons for behaviours and an awareness of failures. The interviewees pointed out that *"*[conversations] *could be much more interactional. People should be more active and share their opinions or say what they think." (em1)* One employee added, *"I have been thinking about it. I always think about how to elicit good ideas. I've been hoping to change this conversational situation." (em8)* To some extent, these accounts were also connected with surrounding structures and traditions. For example, strategies were seen to strongly direct and even dictate what could and should be done: *"We only arrange trainings that are in strategy, that define our job strictly." (em15)* However, this was also illustrated as a source of distraction and conflict, as *"some trainings that are not in strategy are still needed, and we must also arrange those" (em7).* So, while employees felt that they could make individual decisions and that they needed to practise creativity in arranging their work, they were at the same time controlled by a structural organisational environment. They used their creativity within certain outlines dictated by bigger decisions. For some, this structural direction was shown as an automatic process that provided guiding signposts for their actions, but for others, these appeared as restricting and confining entities that affected their ability to answer the challenges presented in their current jobs and the development tasks in the reform at hand.

One of the clearest and most direct explanations for the observed tendency towards passivity was a former repressive and authoritarian manager with a clear vision of everyone's tasks and duties. Notably, this past leader was still an influence years after their retirement, since employees suggested that this was an

influence and a reason for passive traditions. One interviewee said, "*People have learned to be silent and obedient and not to say anything.*" *(em7)* Still another reported:

> *It was similar with the previous one. Back then, the manager spoke, and we just listened, so we are used to doing it like that. We can talk about work stuff, but we are really quiet, not used to talking. The previous manager had a quite strong personality. It is hard, as we are now expected to comment on things, and we aren't used to it. (em13)*

The interviewees also emphasised the strong and stable traditions. One staff member said, "*Yes, our duties are quite stable. When I came here long ago, there were the same tasks. I think it has been over 10 years with the same ones and the same people doing them.*" *(em3)* These kinds of tasks were also described as dull and "*tiresome*". The interviewees also experienced stability as a desired state of being: "*It's a sin to want something new, to want to learn*" *(em1)*; "[Since they are] *retiring soon, they don't care about thinking up new things so much*" *(em13)*; and "*Changes, those that happen, come from the outside, so they are experienced as threats.*" *(em7)* It was also noted that some employees seemed to enjoy the more mechanical routine tasks that did not need visible creativity. One employee said, "*For some, it* [the mechanical routine] *seems to be okay; they choose tasks that do not involve this artistic stuff like colours and that.*" *(em1)* Another stated, "*For some, it might be a liability if this* [creativity] *would be demanded, but I like it.*" *(em13)* In addition, changes were described as threats and risks that contained notions of personal advancement, as advocating change was the opposite of maintaining a consensus about interpreted communal desires. One interviewee said, "*But, as I have experienced this, I think that some of them don't even want to do anything else. Some just want to stick to their clear, basic duties.'* *(em13)* One employee reminisced about these kinds of tasks, bluntly saying, "*Why would I return to that? It needs to be something new if I leave from here.*"*(em3)*

While this risk-and-threat perspective was emphasised, numerous opposing views were also expressed. Rigid tasks and duties were depicted as a problem that could only be resolved through change, a way to stabilise workloads and a result of an intentional withholding of new ideas to protect existing practices. Intentional withholding is a form of preventing opposed changes, and this strategy appeared to be a distinctive difference in the education services' environment. Interviewees' answers indicated that, while creativity existed and was desired and manifested, it was not always possible, mainly because of heavy workloads and rigid practices.

5.2.2   Modes of creativity

Through the observations and analysis, it became prevalent that employees and the work organisation manifested various kinds of creativity with different practical functions and forms. Here, these manifestations are described through analytically generalised modes of creativity. First, it needs to be highlighted that the manifestations of everyday micro-possibility thinking appeared incremental for emerging creativity. At the everyday level, these possibilities emerged

constantly but were partly unseen and overlooked. This is in a more general proportion connected with employees' control, direction and adaptation of actions. These situations were often bypassed, but when engaged, they showed situational novelty. With respect to the different functions, the inventing mode was more practical, while doing was more concrete. Both appeared to emerge quite spontaneously in routine work – at times, even without significant effort or attention. Ideation at the everyday micro level of creativity was so common that it was rendered somewhat invisible. While inventing and doing were manifested, at the minimum, as a single almost automatic occurrence of novel property or entity, the analysing mode appeared to be connected to more abstract functions and was illustrated more in processes like the emergence of joint moments with back-and-forth movements between ideas, insights and interpretations. Analysing, which had quite an exact temporal nature, included reflection and critical thinking in both a retrospective and future-oriented manner. For example, through the explanation and justification of their decisions, employees manifested the creative processes that led to the way they had directed their actions.

When moving towards more complex modes of creativity, we encounter negotiating and storytelling as more collaborative and reciprocal modes that rely heavily on the feedback of others. In the organisation under study, negotiating was, in principle, a broader and more interconnected process that contained the aspects of analysis achieved at the individual level for some employees; this included including the justifications and argumentation needed to achieve the engagement of other employees. Engagement was built through shared perspectives, often adding novelty that was introduced within this natural conversational interaction. Within conversational exchange, the accumulation of entities and properties impacted the outcome of the collaborative process with creative features. In storytelling, the influence of others was more indirect. For example, perspectives were largely created by the author, as were the connections provided. While drawn from the social reality, these were interpretations of the author that contained that position, while others present formed the audience, who had the autonomy to interact and make storytelling a collective process. Interactions were situationally directed and warranted, forming, for example, summaries, recaps and synthesis. In these cases, confirmation and approval from others were usually needed, and even divided authorship was possible. Individual formulations – for example, even corporate strategies, event descriptions or media entries that were an individual responsibility – were the products of a sole author. Figure 10 summarises these findings, which are then elaborate in the subsections 5.2.2.1–5.2.2.6.

5.2.2.1–.2 Inventing & doing modes
became visible in products, practices and processes that contained novel and valuable entities and properties. These were utilised when employee controlled, directed or adapted their own actions in a novel way, and value was intrinsic.

Manifestations of **everyday micro-level possibility thinking appeared incremental for emerging creativity** in more general proportion connected with employee control, direction and adaptation of actions.
1) At **everyday level,** these possibilities emerged constantly
2) They were partly **unseen and overlooked**.
3) When engaged, they showed **situational novelty**
4) Inventing was abstract and doing was more concrete
5) Both appeared to emerge quite spontaneously along routine work, at times even without significant effort
Everyday micro-level creativity was so common that it was rendered as somewhat invisible.

5.2.2.3 Analysing
While previous it could also have a perceivably practical tone, the analysis focused, at a minimum, on one single aspect, which included novelty. Analysing introduces a more abstract and broader reflection of one's ideas, insights and opinions. This made justifications more likely and audible.

While **inventing and doing** were manifested in minimum as with single almost automatic occurrence of novel property or entity, **analysing appeared to be connected and more process like emergence of joint moments with back-and-forth movement between ideas, insights and interpretations**. With temporal nature, analysing included reflection and critical thinking in both retrospective and future oriented manner.

For example, when explaining and justifying their decisions, employees through this manifested the creative processes that lead into the way they had directed their actions.

5.2.2.4 Negotiating
While previously it could also have collaborative aspects, **negotiation** was more clearly framed in the interactions and reciprocal reflections of several engaged employees. In addition to the mere sharing of ideas, insights and opinions, these were just   d and argued to others.

Negotiating was in principle a broader and interconnected process of several employees that contained the aspects of analysis achieved at individual level.
1) Justifications and argumentation was needed to achieve the engagement of other employees
2) With these shared perspectives, additional novelty was introduced within natural interaction
3) Accumulation of entities and properties impacted the outcome of collaborative process, containing creativity

5.2.2.5 Storytelling
Storytelling appeared in relation to other employees, who acted as an audience, but not in active reciprocal engagement. Storytelling seemed to indicate a more abstract level of understanding, in which other's perspectives were intuitively accounted for and reflected on.

In storytelling, the influence of others was indirect.
1) Perspectives of others were largely created by the author
2) Connections, while drawn from the social reality, were interpretations of the storyteller
3) Others formed audience with autonomy to potentially interact forming a participatory storytelling (performance)
4) Interactions were situationally directing and warranted
   a. For example, in summaries, recaps and synthesis, confirmation and approval was needed – divided authorship
   b. Individual formulations of products – for example – even corporate strategies, event descriptions or media entries that were on individual responsibility – sole author

FIGURE 10   Modes of creativity with their practical implications

5.2.2.1   The ideation and inventing modes of creativity

This mode became visible in the products, practices and processes of the department, giving rise to novel ideas or diverse formulations. For example, from the previous excerpts connected to the questionnaire building, one can see that the inventing mode of creativity was utilised when an existing text was used as

a model for a new questionnaire. Furthermore, inventing entered what could be described as artistic embodiment through decisions involving the preparation of different products, such as cover pages, presentations and materials for those, and even posters meant for an actual audience. In conversations, inventing often emerged through tasks that demanded reformulation or reconstruction. The evidence here suggests that the inventing mode of creativity was connected with individuals but that it was practised and intertwined with the social settings of everyday work. I could have used terms such as ideation or innovative practices, and in reality, there is little difference between idea creation and presentation, but there is a weight in these terms that was not fitting. In a practical sense, it was apparent that the inventing mode was used in work as a somewhat agreed-upon practice that led to refinement and creation through the sharing of usually multiple ideas, interpretations and perspectives. While there were no observations of real cases in which this mode of interaction was evident between individuals and manmade artefacts or other natural objects, it is highly likely that this kind of emergence happened and the lack of it was due to the operational setting. In some cases, it would be natural to assume that this kind of *inspiration* happened.

Below, the inventing mode of creativity is addressed through examples in which shared constructs were produced and agreed upon. In Example 1.1, a conventional meeting conversation evolved into a moment in which the aim was to invent different ideas for the use of an electronic access control key (i.e. the fob key); it involved building on the notifications produced automatically by the fob key. The group worked on a chart containing a number of such notifications. They were trying to develop it further by clarifying the functions and end products mentioned in the chart. We can see how – via sharing that multiple contributors invent on the basis of their different backgrounds and experiences – a coherent, but expanding, view of an everyday object can be arrived at.

Example 1.1

Group (Leader – L1; employees E2, E3) inventing process in a formal meeting conversation

The chairperson (L1) controls the meeting situation through an agenda in which one area of focus is to particularise different reports produced by the department. In this particular situation, the group explores different reporting functions used in the wage payment period of the organisation – this conversation takes a direction towards the use of an electronic access control component (i.e. a fob key), and reports produced by the system are discussed. This results in a formal meeting conversation activating all employees present.

L1_HRD: So how should these reports be? Why are these done? As a product, these are justified if someone uses these. Well, as products these gain the meaning from our strategy.

** Several lines omitted – Discussion about other end products lasting a few minutes. **

L1_HRD: You had drafted this time registration. Let's see what there is. I had also placed this as an end product. This is it (showing electronic fob key); this is the end product.

E2_HRD: What end product?

L1_HRD: The fob is for electronic access control, and the meaning is to keep track. Well, to keep track of the working time. The working time and access control.

E3_HRD: Work time…,

Amanda: Hmmm. Actually, the access control is not.

L1_HRD:	The fob is one end product. Or actually, the software produces the… These reports, shouldn't these fob reports go here. (Points to field on the chart with mouse pointer.)

** Pause for a few seconds – General confirming utterance from the rest of the group. **

L1_HRD:	Does this come automatically?
Amanda:	They make everything. Make different responsibilities themselves.
E3_HRD:	So, everyone makes their own area of responsibility themselves.
Maria:	XX makes them. I have gotten them from her. Yes. XX makes them.
E3_HRD:	No.
L1_HRD:	Well, let's put a question mark here.
Maria:	XX makes them, but is it so that… If one asks? I have thought that that's the way it's done. (Laughing.) Maybe I don't know how.
E3_HRD:	Different areas of responsibilities can make those themselves.
L1_HRD:	We can work on that a bit more.

As shown in Example 1.1 (a group-based inventing process within a formal meeting conversation), the end product was redefined. The fob changed from a simple key to a notification system with possibilities that were initially unseen and unknown based on the situational cues and reactions. Hence, the fob key was at first regarded purely as an end product (lines 11–13), but its function was later developed into notifications with new functions, which are themselves end products (lines 19–21). A point to note here is that, within the everyday interaction, these notions could have appeared trivial or irrelevant; nevertheless, without those notions, the development of different fob key end products, functions and notifications would have been inadequate. It might have been apparent to anyone with relevant experience that fob keys were used to log in to the workplace and to track working hours, but within the discussion, this fact emerged as a crucial revelation: the consensus on the matter led to a more detailed inventing event, covering the various electronic identification capabilities of the fob key.

As shown in Example 1.2, which covers group refining concerning the notification categories, the same discussion was deepened. The inventing process was directed at attaining all the functions pertaining to the fob key and thus at inventing appropriate category names for the various fob key notifications.

Example 1.2
Group (Leaders – L1, L2; Employees – E2, E3) refining for the names of reports

E3_HRD:	Toss the access control. Actually, it is. It is a time and attendance process.
Amanda:	No. It relates to the fob key. As they apply it for new employees, they first define the areas of access, the admittance, and the main objective is the access control.
L1_HRD:	So, it actually isn't at all.

** Several lines omitted – Short repeating discussion about access and attendance control. **

L1_HRD:	So, that means that time and attendance is one part, and access control is another.
Maria:	And that this gives us a work time report.
E2_HRD:	But there are also car park things. Car parks are controlled with the same fob key.

** Several lines omitted – Employee describes parking issues. **

L1_HRD:	So, some have been critical about the use of fob keys. But the time report comes when one logs in and out. Also, this allows flexible access control. That also touches upon parking facilities.
Amanda:	Hey. There is also a lunch function. It is used to control the employee discount.
L1_HRD:	So, that means there is a control and access function in the fob key report. And you said? Parking?

Amanda:	Employment discount.
L1_HRD:	Then, the control functions are time report and these discount reports. And the access function controls the admittance. Is there more?
Maria:	Well, there are our affiliates.
** Pause for a few seconds **	
L1_HRD:	Some have admittance? (Pause.) But not others?
L2_HRD:	Yes, some have admittance.

As Example 1.2 shows, the functions of the fob key and the notifications gained from it were clarified, and a consensus was reached. The control functions (i.e. time, payroll and access) that might be considered obvious (lines 1–3, 6, 8) were supplemented with less clear access functions extended also to external areas (line 6, 9). The refined formulation, moving from mere access control to time and attendance processes (line 1), provided a novel formulation for this situation. The function of the key involving access within internal areas was clear to participants through daily use but was not clearly considered at first. This was due to the nature of the work in the department, in which security was not emphasised to the extent that it was within the organisation as a whole. The novel utilities of the access function were further elaborated in the following discussion, in which the use of an outsourced service (the parking facility) was connected to the functions of the fob key. In addition to this novel external access function, the fob key was noted as serving an identification and work time functions (line 19-20).

The data indicated that groups and individuals could adopt an inventing mode of creativity when, for example, deliberately producing a creative product. The product could be a concrete artefact (i.e. refined category names for notifications) or an abstract idea (i.e. shared meanings leading to such naming) or a creation of something new or adapted but highly trivial (e.g. a personnel feedback questionnaire).

Previous practice here became a resource for producing a novel and valuable solution for a task; hence, the inventing mode of creativity might seem to involve a practice (at the individual or group level) representing a thoroughly traditional idea of creativity. However, the inventing mode of creativity was practised within an embedded social interaction, within which shared ideas and opinions influenced emerging ideas and opinions. When transformed into more concrete action, the inventing mode could be transformed into a doing mode. While having its roots in practical reality, this mode comes closer to the traditional view of "the artist" and "innovator".

5.2.2.2 The doing mode of creativity

In respect to observations, there were those who were able to adapt, accommodate and absorb almost anything on the go in a reactive and even proactive way. Most of the tasks and duties within the department involved more than merely inventing things (bearing in mind that things could be done in either an abstract or a concrete manner). The doing mode of creativity is apparent in the vignette, in which one can see cover and poster production, with elements of traditional artistic creativity. When employees were conducting non-mechanical

adaptation, the doing mode was clearly intertwined with the inventing mode of creativity, with the latter providing notions of what and how to adapt. This included, for example, reflections on comments made, plus demands and expectations connecting the individual process to the surrounding environment. Furthermore, an awareness of tradition – involving, for example, the templates that should be used – affected these considerations. They could either limit or fuel the inventing and, thus, the doing. Note also that another task in the vignette (i.e. constructing the survey summary) manifested the doing mode of creativity, connecting it with the more mundane inventing mode.

Creativity was expressed in daily situations, especially those that demanded change, development or reformulation. Furthermore, creativity was clearly present in situations in which the use of something was deliberate or expected (involving a clear need for a creative solution). Example 2 below covers the individual creative work of crafting a presentation. The situation included several creative aspects.

| **Example 2** |
| Individual creative work of crafting a presentation |
| Maria usually reserves the first hours of a workday for tasks that demand concentration and individual effort – such as the preparation of personnel feedback presentation. She feels that it is important to report the feedback correctly, but that it is as important to make the presentation sharp and still informative enough, while also being entertaining and easy to understand. Where to position the headline? How big should the font be? How about the subtitles and the text? The same presentation should be suitable for upper management and leaders, as well as for employees in lower-level labour. She struggles with the wording of selected examples so that they will be neutral enough, but still informative, and most importantly will not point out the individual managers from the feedback. If I use this sample, what will it say? While she enjoys this preparation as it leaves her – what she calls artistic freedom – she makes a mental note that she should check the solutions with a colleague before the publication, in case the wording might be interpreted as condescending – what else could she use? |

The creativity in this example depended partly on the nature of the employee's daily work, on the self-realisation involved in the work and on both individual and collective abilities. Maria – whose work as education coordinator consisted largely of planning and designing educational practices – was adapting existing practices, going beyond accustomed routines and arriving at valuable solutions (i.e. development). The doing mode of creativity seen in Example 2 constituted the actual "handprint" of Maria in the final product, which involved the headlining, the fonts and so on (lines 5–6). Doing also involved the actual generation of examples and quotes (line 8) and the overall wording (lines 9–13). Thus, doing as a mode of creativity was connected with both the inventing and analysing modes of creativity. In Maria's task, creativity was clearly visible and recognised when the task was reflected on and talked over. If one considered the matter in a merely cursory manner, the manual labour involved in the creative practice might easily stay hidden (i.e. unrecognised), and the mundane creative properties might be lost to view. The creativity in question also came across as an individual effort, even if the data showed clear connections to other

contributors and other modes of creativity (involving collective efforts and manifesting the intertwined nature of work practices).

5.2.2.3 The analysing mode of creativity

The analysing mode was implemented via a variety of interpretations of different inputs. Example 3 illustrates how the survey summary was fine-tuned. It involved a process of collaboration. One can see how an apparently trivial remark proved to be valuable for the product under discussion and to be novel with respect to the original thinking involved. The example illustrates the analysing mode of creativity.

Example 3
Fine-tuning the survey summary through collaboration
When revising the survey summary, Maria's colleague Amanda notes that, although anonymity is basically achieved, the group of specific managers is relatively small and that she at least can recognise one particular manager from the feedback. Although a relatively small notion is made with high organisational information, this appears to be meaningful for the presentation, as it actually leads to the refinement of the presentation so that sensitive feedback, at the end, does not point towards one individual or small identifiable groups.

The data showed that the analysing mode of creativity promoted certain underlying connections that were needed for deeper reflection and a higher level of creativity. Example 3 shows how a small but significant notion, based on Amanda's organisational knowledge (lines 1–3), led to an awareness of defects in achieving anonymity. The analysing mode of creativity produced more refined contributions through reflection, with individual and shared backgrounds affecting the interpretations arrived at. As seen in Example 3, Amanda's notion would have remained unseen by most of the employees; nevertheless, it was significant because of her knowledge of a particular group, whose manager she recognised. She arrived at the notion using what is interpreted here as the analysing mode of creativity. One can say that this contributed to Maria's product, offering originality and appropriate value through reflexive practise taking multiple perspectives into account. Furthermore, it directed the development of the summary.

The analysing mode of creativity appears important in deliberate creative practices in which a relatively open stance towards interaction and the meanings of inputs given by others produce shared interpretations, and these, in turn, contribute to work practices. If situations lack an open stance, the contributions may not be received or accepted. The analysing mode of creativity is closely connected to the more interactional negotiation mode of creativity, as indicated below.

5.2.2.4 The negotiating mode of creativity

Negotiating involves both individual and collective practices, but because individual practices remain covert if not talked about openly, it is reasonable to address the negotiating mode of creativity as a group practice. One can view the analysing mode of creativity as a more individual aspect of reflection when it is contrasted with the negotiating mode of creativity. In the study data, the

negotiating mode of creativity occurred within analytical inventions that were derived from the inventing and analysing modes of creativity shared amongst the participants. This resulted in a collaborative creativity that contributed to the product that Maria eventually executed. Example 4 below illustrates employees' collective contributions to a conversation situation. Here, the negotiation mode of creativity is shown to entail the open stance of the analysing mode of creativity, supplemented with more reflective conversational aspects.

Example 4	
Workers' collective contributions in a conversation situation	
Consult:	There are different levels in the examination of this data, and the organisational knowledge affects this hugely. For example, this small group (points to the form), there are only a few male employees in this field, so the male–female division is skewed. So we should consider whether the gender should be removed fully from this summary?
Leader:	Is there a reason not to (directs the question to Maria)?
Maria:	Not to my knowledge.
Consult:	Ok. I think we can leave that division out. But then there are these questions about managers. This is quite sensitive and partly unnecessary. There might be some troubles…
Leader:	I think that it is fairly decent?
Consult:	Well. Mostly, it is, but the managers' point of view is not actually included in this? There is no consideration of what needs to be done and what is required? Only the individual view comes from this. This might be quite rough?
Leader:	Does it emphasise management too much? Can we ask this in a controlled way?
Consult:	I think that this, if it's supposed to be open for all, is too rough a question, especially without any notion of managers' responsibilities. As such, these are too much for employees to read – and especially if there is any way that one could identify themselves, and I think there are still those sorts of issues.

In the negotiating mode of creativity, the participants' views were shared on the basis of justifications. This is the case in Example 4, which presents an argument concerning the groups being too small (line 2), along with a justification for the view taken (lines 3–4). The negotiating mode provided the connections needed for more elaborate and coherent developments. The data showed employees providing their own views of how to connect ideas that would act as mediators in a meeting situation (e.g. in negotiations). This practice functioned largely by virtue of the social atmosphere, which was interpreted in relation to and in accordance with individual experiences. The result was a critique, mediated by negotiations, that offered interpretations and connections that could develop the subject further, so long as the critique was not suppressed by others. This practice demanded an open stance in which one's own views and opinions were not negatively judged. In the observations conducted in the study, conversational situations that lacked arguments or reflections expressed in a range of views and opinions also lacked emerging creativity; hence, the negotiating mode of creativity can be seen as an essential part of organisational creativity. When the inventing, doing and analysing modes of creativity did not reach the level of the negotiating mode (which involves reflection and argument), development and innovation tended to be limited and one-dimensional in nature.

The essence of perceived creativity appeared to be that it was originally manifested as entities and or properties that were primarily subjectively creative.

The active and engaging practice of professional agency involved these temporal and situational variations and interactions as parts of processes that became creative. What appeared to emerge were chains of ideas, insights and interpretations that influenced the manifested (collaborative) creativity. Strong engagement in conversational practices resulted in heightened emergent collaborative creativity, while passive participation appeared to hinder creative manifestations and uphold existing habits and routines.

Ideas, insights and interpretations that were originally entities and properties of individual minds were observed through manifestations that resulted from an employee's choice to share and express either by revealing their inner thoughts through verbal communication or via other forms of observable output, such as crafting, building or painting. What we see is what we get, but that is not all that happens in the act of creation. Analysis focused on the dissection of situational creativity as a process, which resulted in chronological sequences that were connected through control, direction and adaptation acts within a given situation. This kind of manifested creativity appeared by nature to be a social construct and not a property of an individual mind. However, by the time the product emerged in the social interaction, backtracking and tracing the situation to its earlier stages revealed that the novelty and value, and thus the creativity invested in the entities or properties, had already emerged within the situational context. When these observations are simplified, it can be seen that these emerging engagements were manifested as chains of connected ideas, insights and interpretations, which contained different entities or properties, some novel. A simplified illustration of this chain reaction is shown in Figure 8.
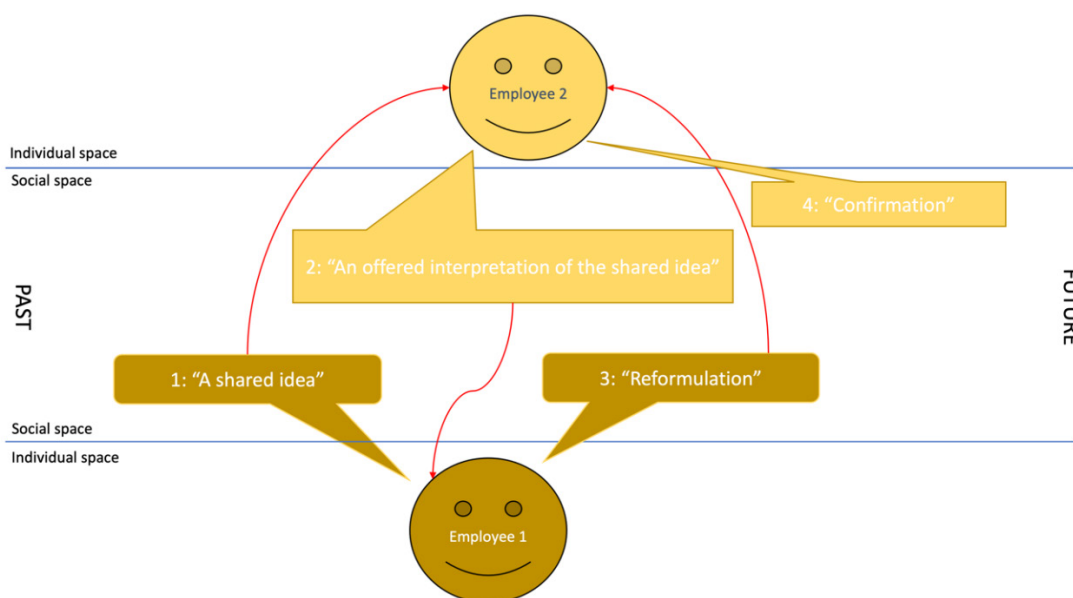

FIGURE 11   Chaining idea evolvement in turn-by-turn interaction

These chaining ideas, insights and interpretations involved obvious critical reflections and considerations that were not always feasible to observe. However, at times, these became more visible through different forms of commentary/explanatory speech that made it possible to examine parts of more

complex interaction processes. Actually, these instances made the difference between a creative and non-creative process at the everyday and micro-possibility thinking level quite elusive because, at the minimum, one small creative interpretation and reflection led to interactions in which emerging creativity was manifested. However, each single chaining moment could contain creative properties, as discussed earlier.

5.2.2.5 The storytelling mode of creativity

This mode demanded a wide understanding of the relevant subject, plus an attitude that directed interest in a reflective manner (in this respect, similar to the negotiating mode of creativity). The storytelling mode of creativity also required the other modes, such as analysing and negotiating, but in a way that differed from the other modes. The storytelling mode made it possible to build the "big picture", and it offered story-like explanations. In Example 5, the storytelling mode draws on two perspectives: (1) "who we are and what do we do" and (2) "the things we produce and the services we offer". These overlap and are not clearly delimited.

Example 5
Employee (E1) exploring the meaning of the concept and refining the understanding
Stories in the development programme often connect with the aim of reform. In development situations, a single employee or even a group of employees focuses on their own tasks and duties and then moves on to the refinement of those. There is no shared understanding of what is done and why – at least not before the story behind the development and reform demands are told. One of the creative tasks is to clarify the general aims of the development programme at the employee level. In this case, the strategy text explains how and why development and reform are needed and implied – and what this means to every individual. The "big picture" here is that HR processes need refinement as it is increasingly difficult to hold on to the existing know-how in the public sector.

> E1: Experts leave. Why? Do we have an atmosphere problem or something? Is HRD participating enough? What can we do?
> (Several lines omitted.)
>
> E1: The really good ones. They always have other options and takers. We need to imply a strategy where they come, can and remain – CCR. One issue is resources. The working hours are "bad". Many things must be taken care of. Also, the economic situation gives HR a negative brand in a contemporary situation. We must emphasise the positive.
> (Several lines omitted.)
>
> E1: It is impossible to make perfect predictions, but we must be more openly listening – to keep our antennas ready. Society will reflect, so at least multiculturalism is one we most definitely must take into account. Should we prepare that?…

In Example 5, the storytelling mode of creativity draws on a combination of things said earlier by different contributors in different situations. It illustrates the combinatory nature of creation. The issue at hand was the brain drain and the difficulty of the public sector in competing with the private sector. It was claimed that the private sector had better resources and finances, that it provided better benefits and that it possessed more flexibility. The mundane end of the story in Example 5 was that the department had to be more proactive. The understanding demanded in the storytelling mode of creativity drew on the analysed and negotiated contributions of different participants. The study data indicated that the storytelling mode of creativity can be important in creating larger entities pertaining to strategy, future direction and planning. The

formation of the stories, or story-like summaries, appeared to benefit from a wide understanding, which, in turn. depended on other modes of creativity and on shared contributions. The narratives produced also broadened the views of employees within the organisation (e.g. the education secretaries), who gained a deeper understanding from the summary, which encompassed areas outside their daily practices.

As a meeting practice, the storytelling mode can be described through emerging webs of ideas, insights and interpretations shared and elaborated on in a dynamic interaction process. Figure 11 illustrates a simplification of an interaction in a staff meeting where the agenda presented a problem. All five employees received a brief about the problem from the agenda. First, Employee 2 shared a preliminary idea about how to solve the issue. Four others interpreted and reacted to this idea. From here, ideas, insights and interpretations accumulated, especially those that are shared are reacted to. Finally, a synthetised solution was provided and agreed upon by others.
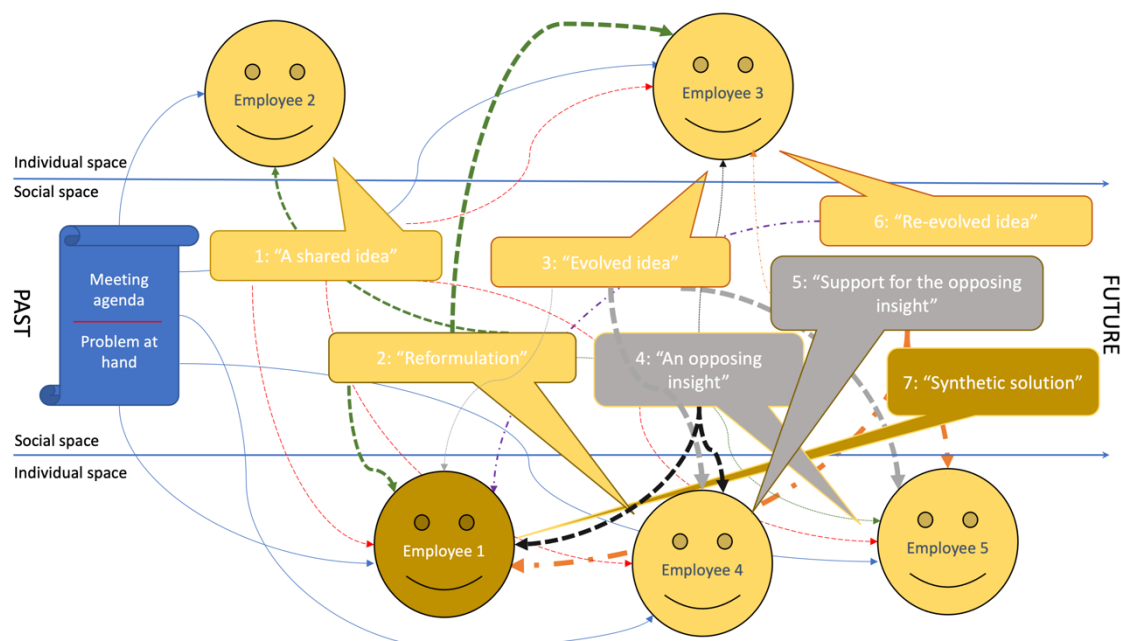

FIGURE 12   Chaining and overlapping turn-by-turn interactions

As part of an organisational narrative, the storytelling mode of creativity was essential in the creation of a vision for the future. In the storytelling mode, other employees served as the audience, like in a more traditional performance analogy or, as shown in Figure 11, in a more interactive capacity. However, each maintained their own perspective on the matter.

5.2.2.6   Synthesis of the modes of creativity

The findings relate to emerging creativity and illustrate the different modes of creativity within everyday work practices. Creativity was encompassed in individual ideas, insights and interpretations relating to different socially shared views, opinions and solutions (including creative behaviours and outcomes) that emerged through individual engagement in collective practices. While these

practices became visible cases of problem identification, managing and solving, more mundane activities also entailed creativity. The emerging creativity displayed ranged from idea creation, the emergence of insight and combinatory interpretations to the more elaborate refining of existing material or immaterial products pertaining to work practices. At its best, creativity manifested in a visible maker's mark (resembling uniqueness, individuality, originality) and involved something tangible, such as a written account, including what could be close to a poetic tone, issued in such a way that entities (e.g. a paper, a presentation, a solution or simply an idea) became one's own. At the minimum level, creativity was merely an unstated idea or scribble at the bottom of a notepad, something that did not evolve towards any shared contribution (e.g. as a statement, a table or document presented at a meeting). Overall, creativity appeared to form different thematical modes that connected a bit differently with the existential levels of creativity theories. In optimal examples, creativity emerged as a gradually progressing iterative process in which all different phases were adequately elaborated, but in everyday reality, often novel and valuable entities and properties just entered the stage and were left there. Thus, different phases received different amounts of attention in different temporal situations. However, a simplified model of a cyclical creative process aiming to respect the dynamic nature described in different modes was produced.

In principle, creativity depended on the emergence of the initial idea, and the social manifestations of creativity depended on that idea to be shared. In Figure 12, this model is pictured as a cycle of idea creation, interpretation and evaluation, which, as liminal processes, overlap at different levels.
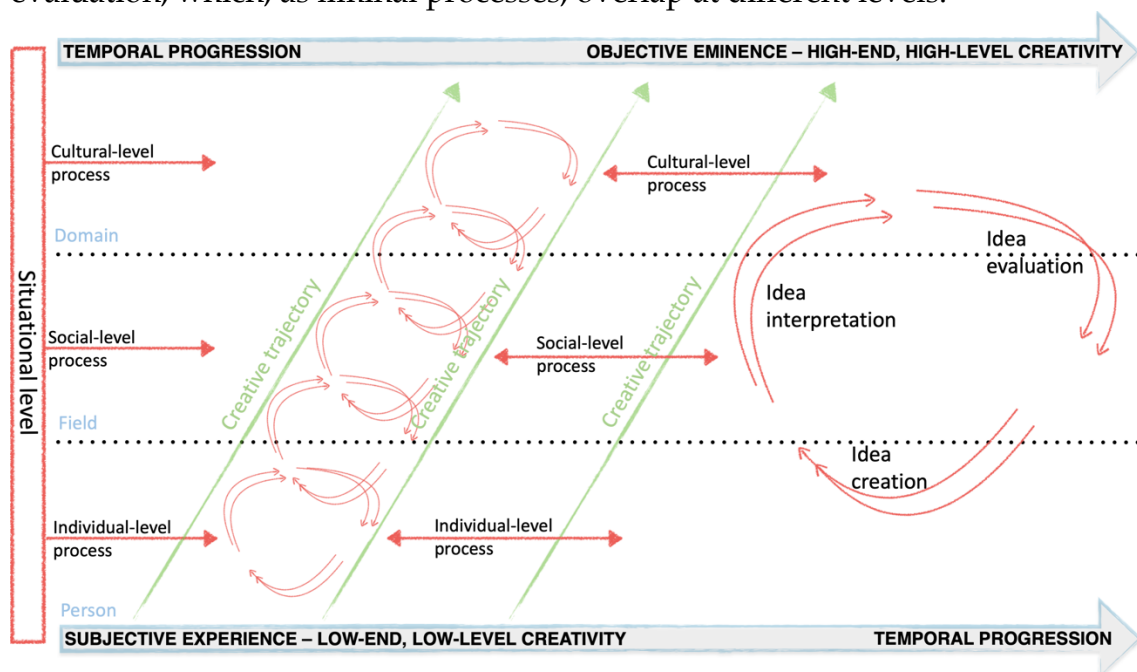

FIGURE 13   Framework of everyday creativity as a cyclic process

For example, in the summary of a previous questionnaire (see the scenes in Section 5.1.1 and Examples 2–5 in this section), the process was repeatedly evaluated and interpreted at different levels, and a new item eventually emerged.

At first, this cycle directed an individual action that then led to social interactions and then the emergence of a new item from this process. In Example 2 (p. 121-122), individual effort was shown to lead to interpretations and evaluations that led the employee to seek help from colleagues. Then, when the summary was presented to co-workers and their evaluation and interpretation re-created (see Example 3, p. 122) parts of the initial idea, this cycle further broadened into a more distinctly social-level evolving idea through collaboration. Thus, creativity emerged in different forms at different levels.

At the personal level, creativity resided within the individual realm until the employee decided to share the idea. At this level, I must assume that only parts of the processes were manifested and shown in the observations but were reflected and elaborated in both freeform and interview discussions. These also became visible in implicit expressions of daily progression. At the social level, shared evaluations and interpretations (i.e. ideas) manifested emerging creativity through a creative trajectory when collectively processed. The creative trajectory illustrated in Figure 13 shows the continuity of the everyday creative process from the individual, to social interaction and even to potentially cultural levels. The inventing and doing modes of creativity can connect with the emerging creativity on solely an individual level that is not necessary to be manifested or implemented at the field or domain level, although both can also be collaborative forms. The trajectory provides a framework for addressing this process-like phenomenon, including the cyclical loop of ideation to creation to interpretation, where smaller entities and properties could be framed as resources for novelty and value spreading and could emerge into those upper levels of social reality, depending on the interpretations and evaluations emerging within the situational developments. The analysing, negotiating and storytelling modes were more clearly connected with the social level (i.e. also the field and domain in the work context), although both could surely also have emerged at the individual mental levels of manifestations (although this was not in the scope of this data), as these were also more clearly connected with the concrete implementation of creativity. However, what seemed to be characteristic was that the dynamic manifestation cycle forming from creation, interpretation and evaluation was the same at all levels; just the number of perspectives and participants differed. When this was adjusted to fit the cyclical process and different levels of creativity, one could formulate that the creative modes occupied different situational forms manifested in everyday work.

5.3   Summary of the findings

Creativity and agency and the relationship between them were examined in an authentic work context through an ethnographic framework (*utilising data collection tools like observations, shadowing and interviews*). The investigation focused on the interaction in the case organisation, especially conversational interaction, indicated and seen as locations of emerging creativity. The analyses

were completed in a three-fold setting in which ethnographic analysis was complemented with conversational and thematic analysis, drawing on applied grounded methods. The investigation focused on the emergence of employee responses and self-reported insights.

First, the findings suggest that creativity should be seen as everyday phenomena connecting with all levels of work. Creativity was manifested in everyday interactions. According to the findings, all employees appeared to be creative, but this did not always lead to distinctly perceivable creative outcomes. Creativity was essentially associated with small emerging moments that could be located in distinctive places in the chronological progression of everyday life. While the employees' creativity showed that creativity could also emerge independently in isolated work, mostly emergent creativity was manifested in and connected with (conversational) interactions.

This study suggests that conversations were an important activity and location in which creativity could emerge and was manifested. Within the work in the studied organisation, conversational culture was seen to elicit as well as hinder creativity and practised agency. Meetings were framed as sociocultural settings that contained a prearranged structure impacting the interactions in those settings. Active engagement in (conversational) interactions affected the emergence of creativity and how and if creativity was manifested. Contextual interpretations of culture and traditions appeared to influence engagement and, thus, the creative manifestations or withholding of those. Employees' individual professional agency demonstrated through interpersonal activity and engagement appeared as defining and mediating constructs that enabled creative manifestations' transformation into creative outcomes. Individuals' original agentic interpretations that were manifested through ideas, opinions and insights containing some level of recognisable novelty and value appeared to be key to creativity. This manifested connectedness with the situation and context, which implied a dynamic agentic interplay between the individual and structure. However, for some, the environment was more determining and restricting, while others were able to enact agency even in restricting situations. Thus, while all employees appeared creative, there were distinct differences in actual creativity manifested in the daily progression of work.

Through practised agency, employees could bring novel and valuable entities and properties into the social reality. In fact, it appeared that creativity had intrinsic value in conversations that were attained through both observation and interview data. Everyday conversations, and even mundane interactions, served as locations for exchanges where organic emergence could happen and where manifestations of creativity could result. As creativity was manifested in (conversational) interactions, practised professional agency was revealed as relevant. Without active engagement in interactions, a lack of shared contributions resulted in a lack of manifested creativity. Conversations were strongly affected by the environment and conversational culture that directed the interpretations and engagement of the employees.

Organisations need to pay attention to the work culture and how and with what values their employees are directed to interact and collaborate. One fundamental question is what values and habits are internalised and what are not, and what becomes part of the shared social norms and roles that transfer to individual professional identities that drive professional agency. However, there appear to be individual differences and structures to be considered and negotiated. In general, employee groups seem to benefit from a conversational and appreciative culture, which translates into practices that accept the set aims and goals in an organisation. Contemporary work emphasises collaboration, and because of this, fostering, for example, a dialogic culture is essential.

When conversational interactions were investigated in detail, a clear chronological order was seen, and this indicated that novelty and value, and thus creativity, could emerge in any location along the interaction. In addition, it was clear that the utilisation of transfers and transfer-relevant places could be used to trace creativity in discussions and in the broader frame of investigating conversational culture. It appeared that social stereotypes and the understanding of creativity as an artistic endeavour distorted employee perceptions. The existing idea of creativity affected how it was seen and expected, but through reflexive discussions, a more parsimonious idea of creativity emerged, and the value of everyday creativity was also highlighted in employee perceptions. Similarly, the interviewees' descriptions of manifestations and subcultures explained why creativity was more constant – even a norm – in the education services' conversational traditions, while the employment services' practices created an atmosphere that restricted creativity. The findings suggest that, when creativity was seen as bigger and unrelated to everyday work, it was less demonstrated in everyday life. However, when it was embraced and seen as connected and possible for the self, it was demonstrated more.

Creativity was manifested in different forms, ranging from more parsimonious to complex properties and entities. Five modes of creativity were framed as practical examples of complex everyday creativity. In simple terms, the first three relied on practised professional agency that was manifested in situational interpretations and engagements, such as the simple control, direction and adaptation of employee activity happening as a part of regular processes. However, manifested creativity was also framed as independent creative processes that were cyclical and recursive in nature. When practically dissected, all are approached through the minimum needed for emerging creativity to fit into the parsimonious and primary creativity view. Thus, while modes of creativity were presented individually, they formed an overlapping and intertwined process in reality. It is worth noting that, while the descriptive notion of an overlapping and intertwined process is given, only one mode of creativity is sufficient to make the whole creative process. Thus, in line with this study, the focus is still on the everyday and micro-possibility thinking level of creativity.

6 DISCUSSION

In the simplest terms, this study aimed to satisfy my own curiosity and to further our sociocultural understanding of creativity. By describing the circumstances, especially the surrounding social and cultural factors in which individuals live and work, the findings show a context that is complex and multifaceted and filled with stakeholders and varying powers. In part, the complexity of the context is surely responsible for the discrepant and even competing accounts of creativity in previous research (e.g., Amabile, 1983b; Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Sternberg, 1999, 2006), as well as in this case. Next, I discuss creativity and agency and their intertwined natures in the context of everyday work. As the aim of this study was to provide deep descriptions and interpretations of creativity as everyday phenomena intertwined with practised professional agency, I elaborate on the research findings in relation to these constructs and existing theories. For practised professional agency, I bridge individualist and sociocultural views on creativity (Glăveanu et al., 2020; Sawyer, 2012) and provide a framework of parsimonious creativity intertwined with practised agency that can be utilised to further investigate adaptive and creative expertise (Gube & Lajoie, 2020) and the everyday creativity of ordinary employees (Amabile, 2017). I begin by providing a big picture with general interpretations and suggestions. Then, I contemplate the idea that the perspective on creativity should more integrally contain engaging agency and that we might need to employ a parsimonious view of creativity when aiming to answer key contemporary challenges involving the changing work context and the more explicit need for adaptive and creative expertise. I also detail how contextual, situational and cultural aspects impact practised agency reflected in emerging creativity. The section ends with a discussion of the societal and theoretical implications of the empirical findings with ethical considerations.

6.1 The big picture

This study set out to explore agency, creativity and their relationship. The deep description and interpretation characteristic of the ethnographic approach was complemented with applied CA and grounded theory (see Charmaz & Michell, 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wetherell, 1998). This helped highlight the minute details of the practised professional agency forming sequential conversational interactions, through which the chaining of parsimonious creative moments led to socially manifested creativity and which, as a framework, also depicted all complex forms of creativity framed with modes of creativity in this sociocultural setting. In essence, creativity was possible for all employees, but it was manifested and perceived in practice in various and even vague ways. In everyday work, organisational meetings and discussion spaces provided locations for employees to engage and interact with matters that they felt were important and appropriate. However, often in formal meetings, agendas and previous memorandums defined, framed and even restricted the topics, which challenged the active and creative agency of the employees.

Sociocultural settings are not closed circuits, but individuals have their own history and volition, which impacts the dynamics. This baggage, which is formed from, for example, desires, narratives, sociocultural understanding and constructed realities that we have (and share) in the contexts in which we live and work, is important. For example, what are the stories of creativity that we encounter, internalise and share, and how are these eventually utilised when we are making sense of the requirements and challenges in which we have to engage? Can we, for example, enact the contemporary expectations to adapt and create if we rely on a structure or ideal of creativity as an artistic endeavour or if we have internalised an idea that creativity is something that is reserved just for special individuals? Are we brave enough to engage and share our novel, unique or surprising insights when others might oppose and even ridicule those? While much of this revolves, in part, around how we talk about and perceive creativity and creative challenges, this is not only about the organisational culture and history, although, according to the findings, these also have a huge impact. At the core of the problem are complex individual experiences and interpretations relating to creativity and creative expectations. While much of this baggage is largely bypassed here, I acknowledge that these aspects are mediated by human agency and internal conversations that are related to identity, self-efficacy, and so on (see Section 2.2.2 and Figure 3 for details) are important (e.g., Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014), and without dwelling on these, their importance is clear in the findings and warrants future research. However, with a focus on practised professional agency without too much consideration of the internal dynamics explaining the exact reasons and motives, the importance of agentic engagement for manifested creativity is prevalent.

Engagement simply leads to situations in which ideas, insights and interpretations are shared. Often, these situations introduce some added novelty

and value. In conversational settings, this novelty takes the form of intrinsic value. The findings illustrate the characteristics of sociocultural settings, conversational culture and group dynamics that facilitated engagements in interactions. The characteristics of hindering interactions were also found. One such characteristic is the understanding and framing that is given for the concept of creativity, namely, whether it is seen through the "paradigm" of the eminent Big-C or the everyday small-c. Within this problematisation, different stakeholders, ranging from the actual actor and action to the produced artefact and the audience, also have different perspectives on creativity, which challenges the discussions, expectations and requirements at work. Overall, at work, we should ensure that we have a shared understanding and practices with a clear aim. We should simply discuss and agree on what creativity means for us, or at which stage of the process we are in, whether in the ideation phase where disruptions created by novel ideas, insights and interpretations are welcome or in the utilisation phase where these might be seen as an unwelcome distraction. In most cases, when reflecting both on the general characteristics of contemporary work with fast-paced changes and agency requirements and on the specific characteristics in the organisational settings of this study, with reform requiring reconstruction, restructuration and reformation of tasks and duties, a framework of parsimonious creativity with practised professional agency should be utilised. This framework and suggestions are elaborated on in Section 6.2.

6.2   Everyday creativity is needed and should be supported

The descriptions and interpretations relating to the conversation (and interaction) culture impacted how creativity demands were enacted by the employees. Employees actively sought and made interpretations of expectations and socially acceptable behaviour. When they lived in a setting that had active and engaging behaviour as the standard, they enacted it themselves. Similarly, when more passive and externally steered behaviour was the standard, this was reflected in the chosen and demonstrated behaviour. A lack of clear creative identity and empowered professional agency seemed to inhibit creative engagement and the use of active agency. An open conversational culture that seemed to be a source for creativity at work was also connected with broader communal habits that generated a sense of belonginess and meaning for everyday work. While these both created a risk of heightened workload and the misuse of resources, they seemed important for the emergence of creative manifestations. With the employees in this creative category, a creative path of employees' personal development was also manifested and led to most of them manifesting creativity and its meaningfulness as a part of their daily work. These accounts were explicit in the stories that emphasised variation and significant changes in career paths and demonstrated ability to critically reflect own professional development on an abstract level. This appeared to frame creativity as a force that would help them overcome different challenges at the work. For these employees, structures

were just directing signs of what would and should be done, which was an implication of strong and engaging professional agency. For employees with less empowered professional agency, these structures seemed to be inflexible and forceful rulings that dictated their work in a way that they themselves would not be able to move.

6.2.1 Eminent creativity clouds the everyday creativity

It was found that some employees strongly associated creativity with eminent creativity, while other employees appreciated the small everyday aspects of the phenomena. Innovations and inventions are not wholly synonymous with creativity, but these represent the ideals of what could be framed as artistic, scientific and technological creativity that are reserved for special and even genius individuals. This view appeared harmful in situations in which creativity was required from individuals who thought that they were not creative and who reflected on ideals of eminent creativity as a reference point. This resulted in stressful reactions ranging from simple frustration and disorientation to desperation. How we conceive and semantically understand creativity impacts meaning- and sense-making processes in workplaces. As depicted, this impact appears even stronger than the described perspective of everyday creativity as an extra embellishment (e.g., Richards, 2007b). Some employees did not just overlook everyday creativity but simply did not notice it on spot, and much of creativity thus stayed hidden, unutilised and simply wasted. At the same time, other employees did embrace and enact everyday creativity at the small level, utilising these when responding to their daily challenges. When emphasising creativity as a work-related skill and need, it is important to ask how many creative ideas are needed for a given innovation, invention or practice to emerge, or how many ideas are left unsaid and forgotten every day. We should be explicit in how we talk about creativity and focus on establishing reflexive practices that illustrate and explicate the more mundane aspects of the phenomena.

The emphasis on eminent innovation and invention appears to be less important when compared to the parsimonious creativity of every individual and work community in our contemporary world of change and uncertainty. While small and mundane creativity appears to be embedded in all of life and more complex processes, researchers need to distinguish and separate creativity from the creative entities and properties often evaluated as such. This appears to be a skill that we should support and practise in workplaces. In this study, all employees were expected to participate in the creative reconstruction and reformulation of work practices. Employees were often expected, knowingly or unknowingly, to adapt to changing situations and to rise to them in a liminal progression instead of a traditionally linear one, suggesting that we should restructure our language of creativity when aiming to support these kinds of requirements.

Creativity is clearly important in a multitude of contemporary respects, ranging from continuing demands for development and coping with vast societal changes in everyday life to coming up with life-changing inventions and

innovations of historical significance. While performance and outcome views are important for monetary value appraisals, value is in essence subjective, and a performance and outcome focus clouds expectations of what creativity really is. In reality, everyday creativity with added flexibility and an adaptive nature can also be more important in economic measures. One bedrock could be to narrate, understand and emphasise personal primary creativity instead of (eminent and historical) secondary creativity (Boden, 2004; Runco & Beghetto, 2019). In practice, we should more explicitly discuss what creativity is and what is meant by creativity demands. Employees need to be empowered and supported to express their ideas, insights and interpretations in conversational settings as a way to enact the requirements and demands set for them.

Beighton (2015) conceptualises creativity as an interdependent part of a dynamic process. This aligns greatly with the idea that there is not much that separates the creative process from an ordinary process (Lubart, 2001; Mumford, 2003). This view fits with the proposed idea that there is a need to bridge individualist and sociocultural views when mental or psychological creativity resides within an individual before a social contribution or (observable) manifestation is made. Mental creativity is a prerequisite in contemporary society, but is not as clearly associated with value in the way that eminent manifestations deemed to be creative are. Too often, creative is conflated with what is interesting or new to or fitting to the scheme that the person or group assessing it has (Beighton, 2015, pp. 23–24, 29). In the contemporary environment, economic and monetary value appraisals are highly prized and thus receive keen emphasis in creativity research. Therefore, it is only natural that creativity directly (whether implicitly or explicitly) concerning inventions and innovations is highlighted, but this might place an overly high standard on creativity as a construct. Furthermore, when creativity exists on a trajectory from personal to historical creativity (Boden, 2004), people are inclined to focus on the historical, even though personal creativity can have just as distinct an effect on the everyday level, rendering such an emphasis unjustified (Glăveanu & Sierra, 2015).

6.2.2   Perspective on creativity impact what we see and share

There has not only been an increasing interest in everyday creativity but also in the notion that we do not really understand the phenomena as connected with ordinary work (Amabile, 2017; Richards, 2007a, 2010). While creativity is emphasised in current global policies and research (Alasoini et al., 2012; Florida & Tinagli, 2004; Giddens, 2007; Robinson, 1999), often these do not clearly state what is meant by creativity or what kinds of creativity are really needed. What appears clear is that creativity pervades all aspects of life (Robinson & Aronica, 2010; Runco & Albert, 2010; Sawyer, 2006) and has a pre-eminent place in work in Western societies (Robinson & Aronica, 2010; Runco & Albert, 2010; Sawyer, 2003a). While creativity is overwhelmingly seen as a tangible outcome or a performance, working life requires more than just performance and outcomes.

Life trajectories that used to be linear have become liminal – that is, moving across thresholds – as routines and habits have fractured (K. Beach, 2003; Puccio

& Cabra, 2010), placing a consequent stress on many employees through change, development and learning requirements. This is problematic because, while everyday creativity has been investigated in the fields of arts and crafts (Vachhani, 2013) and in the work of creative professionals (Mostert, 2007), it has remained understudied in other fields, although, for example, this study showed the importance of everyday creativity among the ordinary work of ordinary employees. Similarly, Pachucki et al. (2010) found that mundane practices are an important source of creativity. In addition, everyday creativity with openness to experience bridges the gap between creative potential and creative activity and achievement (Jauk et al., 2014). Furthermore, it has been shown that a diversity of life experiences positively contributes to collaborative creativity (Pluut & Curşeu, 2013) and that the exchange of knowledge and ideas forms a basis for organisational innovation (Liu, 2013). It has also been found that individual creativity can lead to organisational creativity (Jiang et al., 2012).

In the utilisation and operationalisation of creativity, this study followed the standard definition of creativity with novelty and value as key criteria (e.g., Runco & Jaeger, 2012) but recognised that a low threshold for both should be attained. This resulted in the insight that novelty has an intrinsic function in the everyday interaction of ordinary work. When reflecting on the ideas that manifesting novel ideas, insights and interpretations risks being rejected or even ridiculed (Ritter et al., 2012; Runco, 2015; Sternberg, 2006), it is important that we also place our focus on the conversation and interaction culture in contexts where creativity is required. A classically related example is the rationale used in operationalisations of creativity introducing, for example, value or utility to exclude playful, silly and even crazy ideas (Kaufman, 2015). Thus, while a well-established view has been that creativity emerges in interaction (Hunter et al., 2007), this study suggests that we should focus more on the conditions and connections of complex interactions in which creativity is manifested.

It is suggested that parsimonious creativity can and should be conceptualised as a small emerging moment subsumed in the processes and practices. Within these processes and practices, practised professional agency and active engagements appeared to be fundamental for emerging creativity. It is necessary to emphasise that different participants had their own perspectives from where the interpretations were made. Furthermore, no creative property or entity (e.g., idea) is socially manifested in its original form, but the form it takes as it is adjusted and represented in that particular situation, with interpretations drawn from that. As a part of a more complex process, creativity has been conceptualised through the five A's, in which creativity is depicted as being dynamic and affected by the existing perspectives of all stakeholders. For example, while the performance and process views creativity as a dynamic phenomenon, these mainly investigate manifested creativity and align with static outcomes. Instead of tangible manifestation, creativity might be conceptualised as an opening of the perspective horizon, for example, as to what the future can be, which aligns with a trajectory ranging from personal primary to historical and social secondary creativity (Boden, 2004; Runco & Beghetto, 2019). Glăveanu

(2010, 2013) rewrote the static and disjointed person-process-product-press framework as a dynamic and interrelated actor-audience-action-artefact-affordance framework. These five A's focus on manifested creativity but bring social aspects with the effects of different perspectives connected with general conceptualisation into the discussion. The five A's framework is fitted on the temporal trajectory of socially manifested creativity (Figure 14).
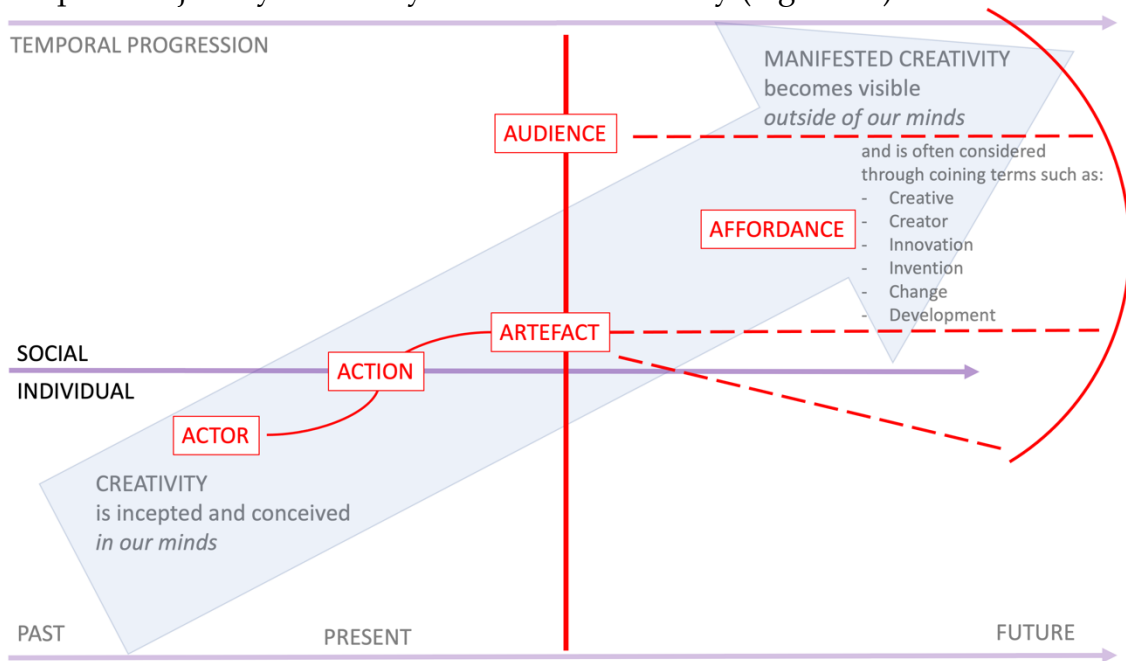

FIGURE 14   Five A's model on a trajectory of manifested creativity[19]

While the emphasis is often on the tangible outcomes and entities that have led to a situation in which creativity is almost synonymous with creative performance or outcome, we can see that the stakeholders have different roles and perspectives, as the model in Figure 14 depicts. For example, while an actor could see the creativity in action, it could be different for the audience. An artefact could be different for different members in the audience, as was the case with the fob key addressed in the data. The term creativity accords with originality, for example, in relation to 1) a person's own previous work and output, 2) their peer group and 3) anyone making an outcome uniquely original (Robinson, 1999). The five A's model brings into discussion the effect that different perspectives have on the interpretation and evaluation of manifested creativity. Similar problematisation can occur with the systems view of creativity when field- and domain-specific requirements change what is considered creative.

Little research has been conducted on decision making in connection with the sharing of new ideas (Ritter et al., 2012). Therefore, the focus here was directed at conversational interactions that were considered potential places for manifested creative entities and properties. It is worth noting that it can be assumed that actors as creators can decide to share or withhold creative ideas, insights and interpretations and that these decisions are based on some

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[19] Five A's model based on Glaveanu (2013).

evaluation of the risks involved (Runco, 2015; Sternberg, 2006). With this outline, the expressed everyday practices and conversational interactions at work helped create an understanding of emergent creativity and creative manifestations in everyday interaction, especially staff meetings. According to Burnard et al. (2006), a multitude of different choices and possibilities are at the core of everyday and little-c creativity. This aligns fully with the findings of this study. However, while one must acknowledge that an individual can also withhold creativity, and this is not externally observable, this can be attained through, for example, interview data and personal remarks. It is also worth noting that intentional withholding is a form of active practised agency that can connect with different perspectives relating to "self-interest", such as avoidance of risk.

6.2.3 Engaging agency leads to the emergence of creativity

While there are increasing accounts of everyday creativity (Amabile, 2017; Richards, 2010; Tanggaard, 2015), as well as attempts to bridge the created dichotomies and conceptualisation (Glăveanu et al, 2020; Runco & Beghetto, 2019) and to broaden the discussion about the evaluation criteria for creativity (Simonton, 2012, 2013; Weisberg, 2015a, 2018), there is still work to do. The elaboration of practised professional agency and emerging creativity can play its part here. One of the research questions focused on the relationship between practised professional agency and emerging creativity. Agency was understood as a dynamic process in which the individual, through internal conversations, addresses different capacities and resources, makes situational interpretations within and along their temporal perspective and connects agency with the volition and freedom of the self-reflexive agent (Archer, 2003, 2012). This study suggests that the impact of practised agency is at least bifold. First, there is the connection between reflection and the engagement that produces the ideas, insights and interpretations within the situation. Second, there is the decision and reflection to share these ideas, insights and interpretations. Thus, agency is involved and intertwined with the manifestation of creativity by producing the entities and properties and by sharing these in sense- and meaning-making processes.

Analytically, the focus was on participation, engagement and contributions and was directed at temporal shifts within different meeting discourses and how these shifts were distributed. Agency was identified through observable acts and behaviours, and creativity was manifested in novel and productive ideas. It was found that professional agency was practised in various ways in team meetings and that the nature of practised agency appeared to affect emerging creativity. For example, shifts in position – brought about by temporal progression and situational changes in professional power related to employee expertise – indicated opportunities for employees to present their ideas and opinions. Temporal and situational aspects affected the positions of individuals in the meetings. It was also found that environmental aspects, such as degrees of freedom and conversational atmosphere, supported the practice of agency and thus further elaborated on the emergence of collaborative creativity, while a

tradition of regulation and non-conversational practices had a lasting damping effect on agency and creativity. Passive modes of agency led to a lack of dialogue and thus minimal change in ideas, opinions or views and, ultimately, unidirectional knowledge distribution. This was most evident in one team with a highly regulated tradition and history, where a lack of participatory moments and active engagement produced minimal collaborative creativity throughout the meeting. In contrast, the spontaneous engagements of the more conversational group achieved varying and even creative solutions through interaction.

The study indicated that professional agency underwent temporal and situational changes relating, for example, to the meeting agenda, which influenced individual agency differently in different situations as the meetings progressed. Comparisons of different circumstances in relation to power, equality and traditions revealed the importance of professional agency for collaborative creativity. Therefore, while manifested creativity and practised professional agency were situational and temporal and changed as the practices and processes of staff meetings progressed, there were wider reasons for the manifested practices. Practised professional agency was observed to be participatory and engaging in nature; thus, collaborative creativity and the ability to produce desired novelty and value depended on the combination of ideas and opinions. Creativity and collaborative creativity therefore occurred more regularly and frequently in meetings that challenged participants to use their professional agency and expertise. However, participation and engagement changed along the way and was, in part, directed by external cues and, in part, by internal interpretations of these and personal investments. This was interpreted to indicate that there was a need to review the situational conditions in which active practices of agency were demanded. In collaborative settings, the critical characteristics appeared to be freedom in cases of sufficient allocation of time and conversational practices that enabled the sharing of ideas and suggestions without restraint and had reason for engagement. The study showed that ideas and opinions appeared more regularly in meeting situations that challenged professional expertise. The findings suggested that, when idea generation or other creative practices were expected of employees, the resulting empowerment facilitated engagement, participation and collaboration. In collaborative settings, creativity appeared to be characterised by degrees of freedom, with time allocated for the unrestrained exchange of ideas, opinions and suggestions through engaging conversations and related to professional agency. Although the focus was on professional agency and collaborative creativity (the latter characterised as complex), the study's findings and suggestions are in alignment with the other studies and theories – if read in a favourable manner in a dialogical tone.

The findings based on the observation data presented a detailed description and interpretation of the effects of conversational interactions on creativity and creative manifestations by elaborating on everyday practices and experiences. Creativity appeared to be embedded in and to emerge within the processes and

practices in which individuals engaged and participated in their everyday work. At a general level, creativity and creative outcomes thrived in conversations based on a wide range of contributions. Creativity emerged as, and developed from, simple ideas, insights and interpretations that had some novelty and value for that situation and were shared in it. One could say that discussions with some novelty in tasks or situations always ended up being recognised as creative.

6.2.4 Parsimonious creativity can lead to complex entities

For its part, the practice of professional agency involves temporal and situational variations that influence the emergence of creativity. In a broader sociological discussion, this connects with reproduction theories as well as deterministic interpretations of social structures (e.g., Giddens, 1984). In the context of this study, engagement in conversational practices resulted in emergent creativity, while passive practices maintained the habits and routines. The formulation of chronological sequences and the scrutinising of small moments of interaction enabled the inspection of the locations of novelty and value from different perspectives (e.g., Yin, 2014), especially when creativity had perceived intrinsic value in enabling the change and transformation. The location of parsimonious creativity was clearly found in a single moment within an interaction. From an interaction point of view, it appeared that developing and changing from the original premises provided insights into what was new and valuable for the person sharing it at that moment, overcoming the established structural powers of habits and routines. Any later evaluations, such as newness and value for others or the whole group (e.g., the audience, other actors), were subsequent to this.

The basic sequence of creativity at the personal level would thus be short and at the social level long, and without additional newness, the later creative process would focus on the implementation and utilisation of creativity. Within this framework, creativity could be seen as a more parsimonious phenomenon. The chaining of these parsimonious creative moments that appeared in each situation independently moved from the primary personal level to the secondary social level, constituting a more complex creative process later (Runco, 2015; Forsman, 2017). Interestingly, similar insights have been discussed in brain research of overlapping microfeatures that evoke associations that can activate and thus spread from one idea to another, resulting in reconstructions that can contribute to creative endeavours – whether in the form of an idea, production, assessment or adaptation (Gabora & Ranjan, 2013). Fink and Benedek (2012) found that, if a person is exposed to ideas that they have little knowledge of or ideas that have no semantic connections to the person, the generation of ideas is less effective. This would seem to indicate that whether ideas are common or moderately creative is a matter of subjective interpretation based on previous experiences and knowledge that support the idea that creativity does not emerge in a vacuum and that individual sense making and meaning making impact what can emerge. In addition, Chen et al. (2011) suggest that individual initiative and skills affect individual creativity. What appeared to be the case in the context of

this study was that employees as experts in a contemporary knowledge-intensive field had a great amount of existing knowledge and know-how to connect with expressed new ideas and had the appreciation and skills to engage in that sort of conversational interaction, while employees with routine and mechanical backgrounds lacked that experience. Thus, for employees to be creative, some ideas and knowledge need to be possessed for them to be creative, and this emphasises learning and development (continuous knowledge propagation) demands in contemporary work.

An issue is that manifested creativity appears to be due to its nature as a mostly social construct and not a property of an individual mind. However, by the time the product emerges in social interaction, the creativity invested in it has already emerged. This temporal delay between emergence and manifestation appears to induce the misapprehension that the creative result originates from the social group. This can be proposed to be due to the chaining of manifested creativity. It would be difficult, and untruthful, to state that this transition is simply a matter of decision (Sternberg, 2006). Simplified, this engagement can be viewed as a chain of interpretations based on entities or properties encountered and the reflections or reconstructions following these, as illustrated in Figure 15.
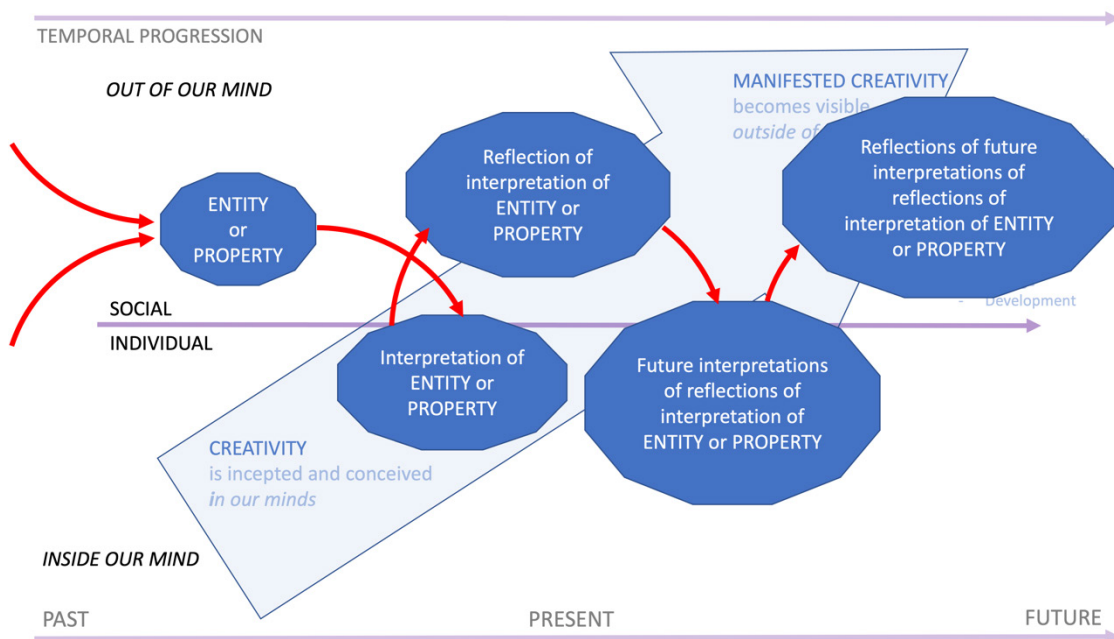

FIGURE 15   Chaining interpretations and reflections

These chaining interpretations and reflections make it possible to examine parts of complex processes. The difference in creative and non-creative processes is, at the minimum, one small creative interpretation and reflection by one participant in one position of the chain. However, each single chaining moment can also contain creative properties, which can be introduced by all participants.

We can become knowledgeable about ideas and insights –the thoughts of individual minds – through outputs that the individual chooses to share and express either by revealing their inner thoughts through verbal communication or via other forms of observable output, such as crafting, building or painting.

What comes from there depends on the engagement and activities that involve the different interpretations and choices that an actor makes. The need for creativity, manifested creativity and engaging practices of agency is clear in various work environments. As previously explained, inductive interpretations indicating that creativity emerged in a sequential process that did not necessarily follow rigorous patterns or specific locations were provided. Thus, in Figure 15, for example, is a framework that suggests that creative manifestations emerge in sociomaterial reality through individual and interpersonal interactions – as has been generally accepted (Hunter et al., 2007) – but that creativity should be seen as parsimonious (also Forsman, 2017; Runco & Beghetto, 2019). This could be framed as a statement that creativity at work emerges in interactions because of practised professional agency. In addition, it was proposed that what was novel and valuable depended largely on the perspectives taken, as elaborated, for example, by Glăveanu (2013) through the five A's perspectival model of creative action. In this study, the emphasis, however, is that the actor, as the creator, is the primary point of reference for novelty (and value), which aligns with the idea that primary and secondary creativity (Runco & Beghetto, 2019) provide the starting point for the framework of chronological chaining of parsimonious creativity on a creative trajectory or continuum. Nonetheless, it was also noted that creativity does not happen in a vacuum. Practised agency is affected by the interpretations and reflections relating to the surrounding society, and in this study, conversational culture in particular was described as influential in shaping everyday actions.

6.2.5 Connections between creativity and practised agency

While creativity and creative manifestations were primarily interpreted and identified in a situational context, the contributions proved to be dependent on the wider historical and cultural framework. The wider framework for interpretation helped distinguish between key differences in the work environment. Divergence in conversational interaction and tendencies led to unilateral and contrasting collaborative decision-making processes. Against this background, the importance of contributions and manifestations became visible, and it was suggested that these aspects were affected by communal habits, traditions and practices. It was surprising how rigorous and strong the impacts of historical baggage were on the practised agency, which became especially clear in the findings connecting the old authoritarian leader who had micromanaged the team to the point that it still had difficulties with active self-directed engagement. Similarly, while the lack of interaction and contributions made information flow and decisions unilateral, this also illustrated streamlined and effective conversational interaction, which was valued as it saved time. However, this functional practice was also evidently lacking in shared creative ideas, insights and interpretations and appeared rather unproductive from the point of view of change and development.

In contrast, situations that represented active engagements – small adaptive manifestations based on at least a single individual's represented insight –

illustrated the interplay involved in the emergence of shared constructions needed in change and transformation situations. In conversational interaction, engagement tended to lead to offerings, where one individual presented an idea or insight for others to respond to (e.g. approve, accept, defy or exclude). While the findings clearly show that conversational interaction had a fundamental effect on emerging creativity and manifestations, this part of the study offers no definitive answers to why some employees made contributions and others did not, because while the settings were the same, different employees reacted differently in those. However, as suggested by the findings, clear differences were manifested and recognised on a group level. Moreover, the conversational analysis did not answer why some transitions were realised and conversation thrived, but others did not. However, it was noted that there were distinctive differences within the organisation that highlighted more interactional and more individual working practices and habits and could be used to formulate reflexive insights.

To find answers to why others were more active and engaging and to overcome methodological deficits, interviews were utilised to gain support and deeper insights related to the data, and the findings showed that creative manifestations emerged within conversational interaction. This part showed that creativity was an elusive construct that was described in both abstract and concrete ways – and as pointed out in previous, the impacts of social stereotypes and, for example, myths related to creativity impacted these. Overall, it is important to note that this ambiguity created distractions for creative endeavours, as some employees obviously thought that this requirement did not fit or touch their areas of expertise, nor connected with their daily practices. In part, this also illustrated internalised values and practices impacting internal reflexive conversations. Initially, most of the employees had difficulty recognising creativity in their work, but after dwelling on the matter, they decided it aligned with views that stated creativity was essential to their work. This demanded a shift in their conceptualisation from concrete to more abstract formulations of creativity. Similarly, the interviewees first associated creativity with a specific individual and work persona, but later connected the construct with imagination ("anything your imagination can produce") and with the general demands of everyone's ordinary work. These interviewees emphasised the importance of free and self-directed conversations and engagement in situations manifesting creativity. Asking someone to be creative might thus serve as a hindering entity simply because the concept is semantically and practically understood through artistic or eminent creativity. This was related to statements that described threats and risks connected with, for example, presenting opposing or conflicting views.

The interviews provided accounts of individuals deciding to share some ideas while withholding others. Importantly, these accounts move actual creativity from observable reality to the individual's subjective realm and to a moment before creativity becomes manifested and shared. Manifested creativity had clear connections with the conversational atmosphere and appeared to

benefit from practices that supported idea production and sharing. A conversational atmosphere was followed up by the employees' activities and engagement, basically directed by their practised professional agency. While this was in line with contemporary collective, collaborative and cooperative views of creativity, it also suggested that researchers must also be overtly aware of what has been said as well as what was left unsaid. If organisational or team culture does not support active engagement, it makes the productive use of one professional agency, especially in relation to change, transformation and other creative endeavours, difficult. However, while quite small manifestations were seen as distinguishable signs of creativity, especially when the interview data indicated and explained that these did not cover the whole phenomenon, work organisations should obviously take notice of the structural and cultural contexts and features in relation to their intended aims. While creative ideas and insights emerged and were at least partly manifested on the individual level here, not all were necessarily manifested and made visible to others in their shared social reality. The main obstacles to creativity related to emotional and power issues connected with tradition, in addition to structure and culture. Engagement and active participation seemed to be essential for the emergence of creativity, but in passive situations, groups and teams, many things were easily left unsaid. Therefore, it was suggested that, for example, managers should structure meetings and work situations in ways that support interaction and thus enhance potential creativity. The realisation of creative potential was seen as an essence of manifested creativity that should be considered in more detail in the future.

6.3   The trustworthiness and ethics of this study

This study employed a deep exploratory research setting with a framework of a trifold analysis involving ethnographic, conversational and thematic methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). This methodological approach enables both traditional deep description and a rich situated view sharpened by analytical generalisations, providing a clear chronological sequencing that elaborates the emergence of creativity in social interaction (Yin, 2014). A key methodological implication is that this study shows that ethnography is suited for producing clear chronological sequences for such a complex phenomenon as creativity and for depicting its emergence in an everyday context. Therefore, while ethnography is well suited for describing complex processes to their fullest, it is also suited for building sequential models of these processes, thus providing the location of parts included in these processes. Socially shared novelty, in particular, can be given a distinct location, which, by the standard definition of creativity, is used to evaluate what is creative. Methodologically, this gives the sociocultural approach a tool that still fits the epistemological position but more carefully acknowledges and considers the psychological function and meaning of the individual mind in creative interactions in social settings. Using ethnography and the complementary

analysis can provide a more precise conceptualisation of a social phenomenon with the temporal sequences evident in interaction.

Several guidelines for writing and evaluating qualitative research have been offered (Morrow, 2005; Pratt, 2008, 2009; Twining et al., 2017). For example, according to Morrow (2005), assessments should be based on the pragmatic underpinnings of the study and the standards of the discipline. General guidelines do apply. The quality, credibility and trustworthiness of research depend on the coherence and consistency of the research process. While both qualitative and quantitative research are understood and valued differently within different fields (Twining et al., 2017), they should both form a rigorous and systematic process. In qualitative reporting, this is particularly important, as the researcher is required to open the process, decisions and choices made in a manner that enables the evaluation of the whole process.

6.3.1 Selection of the topic and methodology

This study offers considerable insights into creativity. This is largely due to the open, even critical, explorative stance taken towards existing mainstream creativity research. In that research, the traditional emphasis has been largely quantitative, upholding a hegemonic discourse and mainstream perspective that produce unidisciplinary approaches and a lack of critical contributions (Blomberg, 2016; Josefsson & Blomberg, 2020). One description of this study and its partly critical stance could be that it goes somewhat against the grain of traditional creativity research. The explorative starting point and the methodological choices fit this, and the study adopted an ethnographic approach with observation, shadowing and interviews as the main data collection techniques and a data-driven purpose to understand the phenomena in "a new way". The use of multiple data sources, field notes and transcripts, complemented with recordings and additional organisational documents, supported this aim, and these improved the trustworthiness and credibility of the study and enabled a more detailed analysis, thus further improving its trustworthiness.

Creativity was investigated through a theoretical stance of critical realism. A qualitative ethnographic approach was chosen to address the need for explorative and interpretative research. The adopted theoretical stance and research frame define the assumptions that direct how the world is assumed to be and can be investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In terms of the ontological and epistemological discussion, the study addresses the essence and nature of creativity and what we can know about the phenomenon. The underlying tenet illustrated in the study is the tension between creativity and what is socially manifested from it. In hindsight, this tension could have been the focus of the entire study, but with all the decisions and theoretical developments in place, it would not have been right for the research to change these preliminaries. While this tension was not expected as such, it appears, in hindsight, rather clear and even common or layman-like at this point. Therefore, while there are many things that I as a researcher would now do differently due to the accumulated

knowledge and understanding gained along the way, this study makes me think about placing a more rigorous philosophical emphasis on this, but on the whole, this is what it is and I stand by it.

The most obvious limitation of this thesis is set by the ontological and epistemological standpoint that makes the generalisability and straightforward transfer of findings problematic (Twining et al., 2017). Ethnography and case studies can be and are used here to integrate emerging categories into theoretical frameworks (Charmaz & Michell, 2001). Therefore, the most important contribution of this study is its insights into the theoretical reconceptualisation of creativity based on empirical findings. Descriptions of everyday reality provide a fresh view of creativity within the work organisation. Interpretations drawn from the empirical data offer a reason to dig deeper into the conceptualisation of creativity. These stand out as the most beneficial line for future research – to continue the line of inquiry to establish the ontological and epistemological questions related to creativity (Blomberg, 2016). It appears to be fruitful to distinguish between creativity and mere proof of it (i.e. socially manifested creativity).

6.3.2   Limitations and strengths in data collection and analysis

Different kinds of ethnographic data were used to describe and interpret organisational reality. The data also addressed the employee's experiences, opinions and ideas through interviews and additional discussions. Through this, rich and deep data were obtained. However, as a researcher, I acknowledge the subjective nature of this sort of qualitative data, which I have attempted to make explicit in this report (Morrow, 2005; Twining et al., 2017). For Morrow (2005), certain qualities, such as immersion in the data, attention to subjectivity and reflexivity, the adequacy of data, and issues related to interpretation and presentation, are indispensable. When successful, these are definite strengths for research. However, to a certain level, I feel that these are also always limitations. In a sense, personal experiences of, for example, immersion with the data are rather impossible to transfer into writing or into the form of a traditional research report that could fully honour the whole process. Twining et al. (2017) address the same issue with reference to the challenges of reporting the diversity and complexity of nuances in qualitative research. Perhaps the most important question, though, is whether the empirical evidence provided in the study is sufficient and well presented.

This issue also spans the analysis. Generally, the analysis in ethnographic research is described as intertwined with the whole process, starting from the initial inception of the research (Atkinson, 2005; Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). This is also true for Davies (2008, p. 231), who explains that analysis becomes more formalised at the stage of withdrawal from the field when distancing both physically and intellectually. This means that the researcher is required to carry out a dual-level analysis. This duality makes part of the analysis elusive. However, the approach of backtracking from recognised and eminent creativity to minute contributions seems to be a viable way to approach creativity. This

distancing from initial observations to more detailed analysis was the strength of this study and was, in practice, enabled the use of recordings tied to field notes that supported the first-hand observations made through participatory observations. Without this, only the product could have been recognised, leaving the actual creativity – the insightful idea – unrecognised.

It became clear early on that it is not plausible to claim that all creativity can be observed externally. It was therefore made theoretically visible that observations could grasp only distinctive signs of creativity. These were also addressed through interviews that were used to confirm descriptions and interpretations based on observations. Further research on this issue should be conducted, potentially with self-reflexive methods. The findings aligned with and gained support from the theoretical conceptualisation that suggested that creativity resided *within the individual* and what emerged was a manifestation of this creativity. Although not everything about change is creative, many mundane aspects of everyday work practices entail creative properties, and they can evolve into recognised and eminent creativity. The low threshold made it possible to identify the elements that were essential in contributing to new and valuable solutions. In hindsight, the explorative and interpretative qualitative approach could have been, and should be in the future, complemented with mixed or quantitative methods that could confirm and establish the findings at a broader level. These could include, for example, questionnaires and surveys to gain more diverse data. Furthermore, more explorative qualitative research focusing on the tension between creativity and socially manifested creativity should also be conducted in different contexts.

The trustworthiness and credibility of the study were enhanced through the use of multiple data sources (Morrow, 2005; Twining et al., 2017). This was also achieved by the multiple analysis frameworks used, which also included multiple rounds that sharpened the outcome. After completing the first round of ethnographic analysis and presenting parts of my findings at academic conferences, I received valuable comments that redirected and deepened the initial analysis. In addition to this, numerous seminar discussions, doctoral school meetings and member checking in the meetings with the target organisation contributed to the development of the analysis and thus also added to the credibility of this study. At times, they also distanced me from the data, which can also be viewed negatively. This naturally also includes the writing process. Furthermore, the findings were discussed with the target organisation after the analysis to confirm the descriptions and interpretations of the researcher. Different reflexive activities in general better the trustworthiness of the study.

6.3.3   Limitations of the study.

Like all studies, this thesis has its limitations. The aim has been to form a coherent story in the form of an arch, which I consider to signal the trustworthiness of the whole study. Reflexivity is characteristic of ethnographic research (Davies, 2008), and I have attempted to write this monograph to illustrate this. Furthermore, I have attempted to engage in ontological and epistemological discussions

throughout the sections when needed to offer insights about the nature of creativity. Ethnographers, as I have done, go into the field to examine and learn about cultures and structures and, by focusing on both what people say and do, to understand how everyday practices constitute and reconstitute organisational and societal structures (Schwartzman, 2012). The limitations and strengths of this thesis reflect this subjective process and how I managed to describe and explain my choices and practices along the way. In future, especially considering the limitation of being essentially an ethnographic case study, I hope that I and other researchers can strengthen the findings and insights with future investigations developing and confirming the findings in different contexts and with additional cases.

6.4   Key implications of this study

Within the contemporary field of creativity research, elusive conceptualisations are failing to produce real discussion or an all-encompassing definition; a reconceptualisation and redefinition of creativity is therefore needed. Creativity appeared to exist on a continuum that forms an entire spectrum of creative practices. On this continuum, non-creative individual and domain- and field-related properties connect with emerging and manifested creativity. Since individuals are inherently connected, and there is no way to disconnect individuals from their surroundings or from previous experiences, creativity in everyday work practices can be considered collective or collaborative in nature but still as an essentially individual construct that is mediated into reality by practised agency. Regarding the work context, we thus need to place attention on practised professional agency. A lack of attention to agency might be the reason why creativity is easily related to external objects. However, at the core of the construct is the trajectory from primary to secondary creativity, basically somewhat aligning with creative thinking. With the highlight on parsimonious creativity, this study depicted a complex system in which creativity depends on and emerges as a chain of small shared contributions consisting of ideas, insights and interpretations. Such contributions may be, and often are, overlooked when an emphasis on higher-order forms of creativity or complex performance or outcomes predominates. An emphasis on creativity that relies on definitions based on the characteristics of a creative product may lead to unilateral exchanges that lack the open stance, reflection or argument that are really needed to address creativity, especially regarding the creative interaction required in the framework of contemporary work in changing and volatile contexts.

How we perceive and define creativity affects everything. It affects what we mean when we say something is creative, and it gives meaning to our interpretations when someone expects us to be creative. This study showed that a view of parsimonious creativity – a creativity that is in the small moments that manifest within everyday practices and processes – is plausible and that only parts of creativity enter our shared everyday life. This emphasis on the form and

location of creativity does not aim to undermine the importance of systemic views and how creativity, for example, enters the field and domain (Csikszentmihályi, 1996), but gives an account that could be used to separate the essential from the non-essential in much of creativity research. Thus, creativity should be investigated as a relational aspect of practised professional agency, a component that investigates individuals in relation to their surroundings and, for example, practices that restrict or facilitate creative ways of working or functioning in work contexts. Creativity appears to be a mental property that brings something new and different to our social reality, targeted by interpretations of active and engaging professional agency, which is a form of agency that can be framed as creative. Thus, creativity intertwines with internal and agentic sense- and meaning-making processes. This is not to say that creativity has not been measured in ways that are meaningful, but rather affirms the ontological and epistemological assumption that creativity can only be attained via indirect means and that social manifestations of creativity are simply proof of creativity. Therefore, we should be aware that, when we discuss creativity, we rarely discuss the whole of creativity but simply social manifestations of creativity.

The findings suggest that, in everyday work, we should focus on enabling agentic engagement and supporting employees' abilities to enact creativity demands presented in contemporary work. In part, this would mean reframing the conceptual understanding and establishing a shared understanding of the importance of different perspectives in the knowledge and information propagation process. A core example in the data was the appreciation that the team with the dialogical conversation culture showed. Thus, for organisations seeking to enhance creativity and innovative behaviour, the suggestion would be to aim to build a conversational culture that is dialogical. In a methodological sense, and for future research, the utilisation of the conversational analysis framework used here could be further investigated in the manner of algorithmic recognition and machine learning to establish an automated confirmation of the nature of conversational interactions. Aside from conversational culture, a key insight for contemporary work organisations would focus on the empowerment of employees to overcome the risks involved in sharing original ideas (Runco, 2015). This would translate into the development of professional agency in a direction where possibility thinking and thinking differently would be supported by different managerial and pedagogical practices that could simply involve making different perspectives and viewpoints visible.

7   CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate creativity, agency and the relation of those in an everyday work context with an exploratory approach. According to the findings, creative manifestations emerge along daily interactions as a result of practised professional agency, and creativity is in everyday interaction seen through a parsimonious view (Runco, 2009, 2017), with a mini-c flavour connecting with ideas, insights and interpretations shared in interactions. Aligning with Runco and Beghetto (2019), who described unique individual experiences and personal interpretations as primary creativity that is not necessarily dependent on or even concerned with social audiences differentiated from social secondary creativity emerging from engagement of audience with the outcome of primary creativity, this study builds and emphasises the idea that we need to engage in reflexive conversation about what we mean by creativity and being creative.

It is easy to maintain that there was creativity in every employee, but this was not always and evenly manifested and utilised to generate (shared) creative entities and properties in everyday work practices. This was related to and influenced by the perceived and reported perceptions and understanding of creativity. This study aligns with Hunter et al.'s (2007) conclusion that creativity emerges in interaction. Within this emergence, professional practised agency is the fundamental mediating construct explaining the actions and engagements leading to the social manifestation of creativity. Basically, practised professional agency explains the relationship of individuals with the surrounding social structures, framed with a concept of sociocultural settings, in which internal insights, ideas and interpretations produced through internal reflexive conversations are shared with other stakeholders (Archer, 2012). In sociocultural settings, individual reflections and considerations as meaning- and sense-making practices are impacted by different cultural and historical baggage formed from experiences, as well as the other stakeholders and their reactions.

As sharing novel ideas, insights and interpretations entail a risk of rejection (Ritter et al., 2012; Runco, 2015; Sternberg, 2006), a safe environment for sharing is important. In the findings, this was framed through the conversational culture that appreciated engaging conversations. With the framework of primary

creativity and individuals' abilities to think differently (i.e. to develop their own ideas, interpretations and insights instead of being given ones) we are approaching what Burnard et al. (2006; see also Craft et al., 2007) elaborates through possibility thinking. Their answer to methodological challenges of imaginative activity is that, at best, only partly observable is what is transacted in the posed questions, among other aspects involving the creative process. Here, these aspects of imaginative activity were seen in the shared ideas, insights and interpretations, and there we can see creativity emerging for the first time in everyday work interactions. However, the employees said in the interviews that they intentionally withhold ideas, insights and interpretations, and thus, it is clear that not all creativity is socially manifested. Thus, a self-censorship in relation to manifested creativity would be something to investigate further.

When manifested, creativity emerges as ideas, insights and interpretations, and the conversation structure and sequence analysis offered a practice to analyse and explain how creativity emerges in and from conversation. This has drastic implications for everyday work and potential emerging creativity. First, shared ideas and insights broaden discussion and lead to collaborative contributions that manifested creativity. Second, the absence of shared ideas and insights results in minimal creative contributions and unilateral decisions. These can be explained through differences in the conversational atmosphere and the appreciation of shared ideas, aspects that appear to prevent or contribute to creative manifestations and the (social) emergence of creativity. Differences in workplace cultures, traditions and conversational tendencies appear to act to either open or close doors in the process of sharing and making contributions, which either inhibit creativity, thus making interactions unsuccessful, or develop successful collaborative conversations that produce insights. While creative products, individuals and processes are important, these only cover a small portion of creativity in work contexts as it appeared that creative manifestations were based on quite small shared creative ideas and insights. Thus, creativity is not a process; instead, entities or properties can make processes creative.

Creativity is an internal property or entity that an actor can manifest in the context in which they exist and have access. Individuals are inherently connected with their surrounding reality, which transmits to that property or entity. The internal creative property or entity in question can be an idea, insight or interpretation, and novelty should be primarily considered as a reflection of the existing knowledge of that actor. This aligns with Runco and Beghetto (2019), who note that this is simply "granting creativity to individuals who initiate the process". Whether this internal creative property or entity is turned into a socially manifested sign of creativity depends on the practised professional agency of an actor who relies on reflexive internal conversations that mediate the connection with the surrounding social reality. While these multidimensional aspects do emerge and are part of the social world, this formulation allows for a parsimonious account of creativity. This idea embraces and considers life as a creative enterprise (Low, 2006) and establishes that creativity is in fact part of life itself and that it is part of thinking and acting in new ways (Tanggaard, 2015). As

relatively novel tasks and situations exist in contemporary knowledge-intensive work, and based on the findings and self-reflexive remarks, employees are using and obviously need to use their metacognitive capabilities in the direction, adaptation and control of their daily activities in a way that contributes to emerging creativity through the use of their professional agency. This should be supported and investigated more in contemporary work contexts in future.

If we want to embrace the full potential of experts in contemporary knowledge-intensive fields and domains, it is suggested that we need to engage in discussions that reflect the parsimonious view of creativity. Parsimonious creativity as a primary form of creativity is manifested and emerges through practised professional agency. We need to support and facilitate agentic engagement. As complex secondary phenomena, creativity is built as chained parsimonious moments. Additionally, in the future, we should investigate how this line translates into eminent and historical inventions and innovations.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Luovuus muuttuvassa työorganisaatiossa – etnografinen tutkimus toimijuudesta ja luovuudesta

Tutkimuksen tausta ja tavoitteet

Tässä väitöskirjassa tutkitaan etnografisen tutkimusotteen avulla luovuutta ja toimijuutta sekä näiden välistä suhdetta muuttuvassa työorganisaatiossa. Tarkastelun keskiössä on luovuuden sosiaalinen ilmeneminen sekä siihen liittyvä vuorovaikutus osana arkipäiväisiä työkäytäntöjä. Luovuus jokapäiväisenä ilmiönä on jäänyt luovuustutkimuksen kentällä sivurooliin, eikä siitä tai sen merkityksestä tavallisten ihmisten elämässä tai työssä tiedetä vielä paljoakaan (ks. Amabile, 2017; Richards, 2010). Tieteellisessä tutkimuksessa luovuus määritellään usein luovan tuotteen tai lopputuloksen kautta, jolloin luovuuden määrittelyt ovat kiinnittyneet pääasiassa lopputuotteen ulkoisiin arviointeihin (Amabile, 1983a; Hennessey & Amabile 2010). Luovuudelle annettu yhteiskunnallinen merkitys on kasvanut, ja ilmiön tutkimus on lisääntynyt, mutta vielä ei ole saavutettu yksimielisyyttä siitä, mitä luovuus on tai miten sitä tulisi arvioida.

Niin yleisessä kuin myös teoreettisessa keskustelussa arkipäiväinen luovuus on usein sivuutettu keskustelusta arvottomana puuhasteluna (Richards, 2007, 2010). Lisäksi luovuudesta kirjoitettaessa usein sivuutetaan luovuuden olemusta ja perimmäistä luonnetta koskeva pohdinta, ja vakiintuneet arvioinnissa käytetyt vaatimukset uutuusarvosta ja hyödyllisyydestä otetaan annettuina ilman tarpeellista kriittistä pohdintaa (ks. Kozbelt et al. 2010; Piffer, 2012; Puccio & Cabra, 2010; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Kriteereinä käytettyjen vaatimusten kohdalla onkin olennaista vähintään kysyä, suhteessa mihin, keihin tai keneen arvioitavan kohteen tulee olla uusi ja hyödyllinen. Tätä kysymystä voi lähestyä esimerkiksi Runcon ja Beghetton (2019) esittelemän ensisijaisen ja toissijaisen luovuuden teorian avulla. Ensisijaisen ja toissijaisen luovuuden teorian lisäksi luovuus on esitetty samankaltaisena jatkumona, jossa yksilöpsykologisesta luovuudesta lopulta kehittyy sosiaalisesti ja historiallisesti tunnistettu luovuus (ks. Boden, 2004; Montag ym. 2012; Anderson ym. 2014).

Monimutkaisten prosessityyppisten määrittelyjen sijaan yksinkertaisempi lähestymiskulma saattaisi olla hedelmällinen (esim. Runco, 2015; Simonton, 2012; 2013). Yksinkertaisessa lähestymisessä keskitytään luovuuden vähimmäisvaatimuksiin ja pyritään sivuuttamaan ei-luovat osat monimutkaisissa malleissa. Yksinkertaisen näkökulman vetovoima perustuu näkemykseen siitä, että useimmat luovuuden tutkimukset keskittyvät todellisuudessa tilanteeseen varsinaisen luovuuden jälkeen (Runco, 2015), jolloin huomio kiinnittyy pääasiassa luovan idea jalkauttamiseen, käytännön toteuttamiseen tai hyödyntämiseen luovuuden sijaan (Simonton, 2012, 2013; Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010). Yksinkertaisen lähestymiskulman mukaisesti luovuus voidaan nähdä suureellisten keksintöjen ja innovaatioiden sijaan myös pienempinä arkipäiväisinä muutoksina, joiden voidaan

osaltaan katsoa haastavan nykykäsityksen siitä, mitä luovuus todellisuudessa on (Glaveanu & Sierra, 2015).

Luovuustutkimuksessa on usein keskitytty luovien erityisyksilöiden tarkasteluun (esim. Amabile, 1983a; 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Florida, 2002; Sawyer, 2012), vaikka luovuuden katsotaan etenkin nykytyöelämässä olevan korostetun tärkeää ja mahdollista kaikille yksilöille (esim. Robinson, 1999). Luovuuden ajatellaan ilmenevän vuorovaikutuksessa (Hunter ym., 2007). Vuorovaikutuksessa ilmenevän luovuuden kannalta on olennaista ymmärtää, että luovan idean, ajatuksen tai oivalluksen esittäminen sisältää riskin tulla torjutuksi (Runco, 2015). Näin ollen onkin selvää, että myös metakognitiiviset taidot ja yksilön sisäinen harkinta ja arviointi on liitetty luovuuteen (esim. Puryear, 2015). Myös esimerkiksi päätös jakaa omat uusia ja mahdollisesti ainutlaatuisia ja yksilöllisiä ideoita, ajatuksia ja tulkintoja sisältävät prosessoinnit ovat luovuuden kannalta olennaisia (esim. Sternberg, 2006). Vuorovaikutukseen liittyviä ilmiöitä tulee tarkastella erityisyksilöitä laajemmassa kehyksessä.

Tässä tutkimuksessa luovuuden ajatellaan ilmenevän yksilön jakaessa ideansa, tulkintansa tai oivalluksensa sosiaalisessa kontekstissaan, ja siten luovuuden nähdään välittyvän sosiaaliseen todellisuuteen yksilön toimijuuden kautta. Toimijuus ymmärretään tutkimuksessa yksilön todellisuussuhdetta määrittävänä prosessina, jossa ulkoisesti havaittava toiminta tai toimimattomuus määrittyy yksilön sisäisen keskustelun kautta tilannesidonnaisten ja omaan henkilöhistoriaan perustuvien tulkintojen avulla (esim. Archer, 2012). Olennaista toimijuuden käsitteessä on yksilön ja ympäristön keskeinen purkamaton suhde (Taylor, 1985), sekä tähän suhteeseen liittyvät erilaiset orientaatiot, joihin kuuluvat mm. tulevaisuus suuntautunut sekä kehollinen näkökulma (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Suhteessa luovuuteen toimijuus toimii välittävänä ja käsitteellistävänä rakenteena yksilön menneisyyden, nykyisyyden ja tulevaisuuden välillä, sisältäen esimerkiksi käsityksen tulevaisuuden erilaisista mahdollisuuksista ja toimintaan sekä yksilöön kohdistetuista odotuksista. Luovuuden kannalta olennaista on toimijuuteen liittyvä tulevaisuusorientaatio (Hitlin & Elder, 2007) sekä tähän liittyvä kyky kuvitella erilaisia mahdollisuuksia, kulkusuuntia ja perspektiivejä maailmaa tarkasteltaessa (esim. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Glaveanu & Tanggaard, 2014; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Toimijuuden merkitys luovuudelle on sen tarjoamassa mahdollisuudessa nähdä ja kokea toisin suhteessa vallitsevaan tilanteeseen, ja suhteuttaa tulkinnat todellisuuden kokemukseen sisäisen keskustelun kautta. Toimijuuden merkitys korostuu etenkin silloin, kun ajatellaan luovuuden ilmenevän yksilön ja ympäristön vuorovaikutuksessa. Toimijuuden merkitystä ja yhteyttä arkipäivän luovuuden ilmenemiseen ei työn konteksteissa ole tästä näkökulmasta juurikaan tutkittu.

Tutkimuksen toteutus

Luovuuden tutkimuksessa korostuu määrällinen tutkimusote, ja huomio kiinnittyy usein luovuuteen sekundaarisena ja sosiaalisena ilmiönä. Saadaksemme tietoa luovuuden todellisesta luonteesta, laadullinen ja uutta ilmiötä kartoittavaa

tietoa tavoitteleva tutkimusote on tarpeen. Tässä työssä lähestymistavaksi valittiin etnografinen tutkimusote (Atkinson ym., 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), jossa etnografista analyysiä täydennettiin temaattisen- ja keskustelunanalyysin menetelmin (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wetherell, 1998). Tutkimuskohde valittiin sen tarjoaman toimintaympäristön perusteella, jonka katsottiin kuvastavan nykypäivän työelämän vaatimuksia sekä edellyttävän luovuuden arkipäiväistä käyttöä. Aineistonkeruumenetelminä havainnointi ja varjostus mahdollistivat tutkimusotteen mukaisen analyysin ja pyrkimyksen tutkimuskohteen syvälliseen ymmärtämiseen ja tulkintaan (esim. Atkinson ym., 2007). Ulkoisen havainnoinnin rajoitteita pyrittiin huomioimaan toteutettujen avainhenkilöhaastattelujen sekä keskustelu- ja kokoustilanteiden nauhoitusten kautta (Emerson, 2004). Tutkimusta ja aineistonkeruuta ohjasivat seuraavat pääkysymykset:

(1) Miten luovuus ilmenee tavallisissa työkäytännöissä?
(2) Mikä edistää tai estää luovuuden ilmenemistä?
(3) Millaista luovuutta työorganisaatiossa ilmenee?
(4) Miten työntekijät kokevat ja hahmottavat luovuuden ja siihen liittyvät vaatimukset?
(5) Millainen on luovuuden ja toimijuuden suhde?

Tutkimuksessa pyrittiin saavuttamaan mahdollisimman syvä ja selkeä ymmärrys organisaation toiminnasta yli vuoden kestäneellä aineistonkeruulla. Ajallisesti tutustumisvaiheen jälkeinen havainnointi ja varjostusaineisto muodostavat aineistonkeruun päävaiheen. Tähän vaiheeseen liitettiin myös nauhoituksia, jotta tarkempia analyysejä mahdollistavia menetelmiä pystyttiin käyttämään. Pääaineistonkeruuvaiheen lopuksi tehtiin teemahaastatteluja, joiden kautta tutkija pystyi teoriapohjaan perustuvien teemojen lisäksi tarkentamaan ja käsittelemään havainnointivaiheen aikana esiin nousseita ilmiöitä.

Tutkimuksen viitekehys perustuu kriittiseen realismiin (Archer, 1998, 2003; Bhaskar, 2008, 2011), jonka perusteella luovuuden ja toimijuuden ytimen tavoittelemista vain epäsuoria menetelmiä käyttämällä voidaan pitää metodologisesti haasteellisena. Luovuudesta voidaan tavoittaa vain sen todellisuuteen tuodut ilmentymät, manifestaatiot, joiden katsotaan olevan todiste luovuudesta. Näin ollen esimerkiksi keskusteluissa ja haastatteluissa tuotetut puheenvuorot voivat ilmentää ja sisältää luovuutta tuoden sen näkyväksi. Koska tutkimuksen kohteena ovat luovuuden ilmentymät, tutkimus vaatii tarkkaa refleksiivistä otetta sekä vahvaa aineistoperustaista tulkintaa. Etnografisen tutkimuksen vahvuus onkin sen kyvyssä tuottaa vahvaa empiriaan perustuvaa kuvausta ja tulkintaa, sekä tarkastella sosiaalista todellisuutta läheltä. Lähestymistapa sopii työorganisaation suhteiden tarkasteluun ja siihen, miten yksilöt niihin osallistuvat ja niitä muokkaavat. Viitekehys sopi siis niin aiheen tarkasteluun, kuin myös valitun tutkimusotteen taustalle (esim. Edwards, O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014).

Tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että luovuus ilmenee pieninä hetkinä, jotka ilmenevät yksilöiden vuorovaikutuksessa tekeminä kontribuutioina. Nämä pienet

luovat hetket limittyvät organisaation vakiintuneiden toimintatapojen ja rutiinien väleihin. Luovuus ilmeni selvien prosessinomaisten jatkumoiden sijaan yksittäisissä hetkissä, joihin tarttuminen ja joiden hyödyntäminen näyttäytyi merkittävänä luovuuden kehittymisessä ensisijaisesta yksilötason ilmiöstä toissijaiseksi sosiaalisen tason ilmiöksi. Pienet luovat hetket voivat ketjuuntua normaalien vuorovaikutusprosessien aikana monimutkaisemmiksi ja suuremmiksi kokonaisuuksiksi.

Keskusteluvuorovaikutus voidaan tutkimuksen pohjalta ymmärtää luovuuden ilmenemiselle luonteenomaiseksi kohdaksi. Luovuuden olemukseen liittyvät riskit, esimerkiksi uuden ja omituisen torjumisen riski, sekä yksilön näihin liittämät arviot näyttäytyvät merkityksellisinä. Ne osaltaan estävät ja tukevat luovuuden sosiaalista ilmenemistä. Luovuuden estyminen liittyy osaltaan itsesensuuriin, johon vaikuttaa suurelta osin organisaation tilannesidonnainen keskusteluilmapiiri ja -kulttuuri. Olennaista on huomata, että keskusteluilmapiirille ja -kulttuurille annetut merkitykset muuttuivat tilanteiden vaihtuessa ja eri ryhmien välillä. Esimerkiksi erilaisia mielipiteitä ja näkökulmia arvostava dialoginen kulttuuri edisti luovuuden ilmenemistä vahvistamalla aktiivista ja osallistuvaa toimijuutta. Vastaavasti työ- ja keskustelukulttuuri, joka ei sisältänyt aikaa, tilaa eikä arvostusta keskustelulle ja mielipiteiden jakamiselle ollut, ehkäisi luovuuden ilmenemistä ja esiintymistä.

Tulokset osoittivat, että luovuus ilmenee yksinkertaisina ja pieninä ideoina, joista se voi jatkaa kehittymistään kohti jotain suurempaa ja helpommin tunnistettavaa luovuutta. Jos keskustelun avauksia ei esitetä, on tämä kehittyminen hankalaa ja käytännössä mahdotonta. Luovuus ilmeni organisaatiossa käytännöllisen tekemisen ja ideoinnin tasoilla kasvaen ajoittain osaksi neuvottelun, analysoinnin ja tarinankertomisen prosesseja. Tutkimuksessa havaittiin myös, että ns. luovat työntekijät pystyivät käsittelemään työn haasteita ja vaatimuksia paremmin. Tulosten pohjalta saadaan vahvistusta ajatukselle, että luovuuden arviointiin liittyvät kriteerit ovat perimmäiseltä luonteeltaan subjektiivisia. Arvioinnin rajoittaminen esimerkiksi tietyn kentän sisällä jo olevaan tietoon esimerkiksi ulkopuolisen arvioinnin kautta rajoittaa sitä, mitä luovuuteen käsitteellisesti kyseessä olevassa kontekstissa liitetään. Luovuuden käsitteen monimutkaisuus vaikutti myös siihen, millaisia näkemyksiä työntekijät esittivät oman työnsä luovuudesta ja miten he ylipäätään määrittelivät luovuutta.

Luovuus ja luovat lopputulokset kukoistavat sellaisissa keskustelutilanteissa, joissa useat ihmiset esittävät paljon erilaisia kontribuutioita. Tilanteissa, joissa kontribuutioita ei esitetä, ei myöskään luovuutta ilmene samassa mittakaavassa. Tämä tulee luonnollisesti parhaiten näkyviin, kun tarkastellaan yhteistoiminnallista luovuutta, joka jo määritelmällisesti kohdentaa tarkastelun tilanteisiin, joissa useat ihmiset osallistuvat toimintaan. Yksilön luovuus välittyy havainnoitavaan todellisuuteen toimijuuteen perustuvien päätösten ja niitä seuraavien näkyvien tekojen tai tekemättömyyden kautta. Välittymisessä näkyy yksilön oma käsitys siitä mitä luovuudella tarkoitetaan ja mitä luovuus on. Toimijuuden tukemisen lisäksi onkin myös olennaista käydä keskusteluja luovuuden luonteesta ja määrittelystä siten, että myös arkipäivän luovuuden jakaminen ja

siihen liittyvät koetut riskit tulevat huomioiduiksi. Etenkin tällaisia tilanteita tulisi tulevaisuudessa tutkia toimijuuden käsitteen avulla, sillä tutkimuksen perusteella näyttää uskottavalta tarkastella toimijuutta luovuutta välittävänä tekijänä. Jatkotutkimuksissa voitaisiinkin pyrkiä hahmottamaan ja kehittämään menetelmiä toimijuuden tukemiseksi luovuutta edistävänä tekijänä. Tutkimuksen perusteella on selvää, että ensisijaisen luovuuden ja sosiaalisesti ilmenevän sekundaarisen luovuuden välille on tehtävä käsitteellinen ero. Tätä suhdetta on jatkossa syytä tarkastella lisää, sillä keskittyminen vain sekundaariseen sosiaalisesti ilmenevään luovuuteen jättää luovuuden ilmiöstä ison osan tarkastelun ulkopuolelle. Luovuuden ilmiön ymmärtämiseksi tulee ymmärtää luovuutta sosiaalisesti ilmenevän luovuuden takana.

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