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# Creativity-in-action, Arrangements and Affects in the Creative Industries

Margot Leclair

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# THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

de l'Université de recherche Paris Sciences et Lettres  
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Préparée à l'Université Paris Dauphine

## Creativity-in-action Arrangements and Affects in the Creative Industries

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# Creativity-in-action

*Arrangements and Affects in the Creative Industries*

Margot Leclair

Sous la direction d'Isabelle Huault

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\*\*\*

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## PROLOGUE EN FRANÇAIS

*« Tu ne peux plus créer vraiment. Ce qui se passe aujourd'hui, c'est que tout le monde fait la même chose... Tu es vite canalisé par ça on va dire (...) Le commercial est très présent ».*

(Lucile, styliste)

*« Si on lit les articles sur style.com, à chaque fois à la fin, les articles, c'est 'and this will go well with buyers, I'm sure it will be a success in the shops'. Est-ce qu'on peut parler d'autre chose ? A chaque fois à la fin d'un paragraphe, si c'est une bonne collection, on lit 'ça va marcher'. On parle plus commercial qu'on ne raconte une histoire (...) aujourd'hui c'est beaucoup plus produit qu'avant. C'est ça. La création est morte, vive le vêtement ».*

(Blaise, directeur artistique)

*« Moi je vois bien ce qui se passe en essayage. Tu vois elle demande 'les crochets, ils coûtent...? - 100 euros pièce - Bon, on va en mettre que trois' ».*

(Anne, assistante maille)

*« A les écouter [les commerciaux], tu ferais toujours la même collec'. Tu referais toujours ce qui marche. Quand tu fais un nouveau truc et que ça marche ils ne l'ont pas vu venir, donc du coup l'année prochaine il faut refaire la même chose tu vois. Enfin bon...et après ils vont te mettre des quantités énormes, donc ça ne sera pas forcément le même succès non plus. Je ne sais pas, c'est bizarre...d'avoir des recettes comme ça pour avancer. Bref, je ne sais pas trop sur quoi ils se basent, mais je trouve que ça manque de projections en général. Mais du coup, la pression du chiffre c'est hyper important ».*

(Tony, styliste freelance)

Cette thèse étudie les rouages du quotidien qui constituent et permettent le travail créatif au sein des industries dites créatives. Le point de départ de la recherche repose sur le constat d'une « *conversation improbable* » entre motifs créatifs et motifs économiques (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017), à l'image des extraits d'entretien ci-dessus. Ces derniers témoignent de l'influence des préoccupations économiques sur le processus de création au sein des industries créatives - ici l'industrie de la mode. Nous posons la question de savoir comment des forces supposément contradictoires (Tschang, 2007) se déploient au quotidien pour les acteurs sociaux dit créatifs.

Plusieurs recherches ont mis en lumière les différentes réactions des individus créatifs dans un tel contexte, parfois jusqu'à la résistance (Caves, 2000; Jones et al., 2016; Linstead, 2010). Dans la lignée de ces travaux, nous avançons une réflexion sur les acteurs créatifs et leurs démêlés au sein des industries créatives. Tout au long de ce document, nous offrons ainsi une plongée dans les

industries créatives aujourd'hui et plus précisément dans le travail des acteurs créatifs face aux contraintes économiques qui jalonnent leurs actions. Cette thèse nous amène finalement à proposer une nouvelle vision de la créativité, non seulement autour des aspects matériels, incorporés et affectifs qui la composent ; mais également au travers des différentes tactiques qui la soutiennent, entretenant l'ambiguïté et permettant de naviguer dans la complexité.

### *Le créatif et l'économique - un couple curieux*

Cette thèse prend d'abord pour appui la littérature de recherche qui souligne le débat en vigueur dans les organisations créatives, entre art et créativité d'un côté, et économie et management de l'autre (De Fillippi et al., 2007; Lampel et al, 2000). Tout au long de ce travail, la créativité au sein des industries créatives a été envisagée comme une pratique mêlant à la fois création et économie. En effet, la plupart des acteurs créatifs - ou pour le moins labellisés comme tels - doivent agir au sein de règles économiques définies. Ce que l'on nomme « économique » renvoie ici à l'ordre de marché capitaliste et aux mécanismes attenants dont le profit constitue la pierre angulaire.

Nous examinons le concept de créativité au travers du travail de ces acteurs sociaux labellisés créatifs. Parcourir la littérature sur les industries créatives permet de saisir à quel point leur travail peut se voir coloré par des pratiques et politiques économiques variées. Un paradoxe central caractérise alors la production créative dans ce contexte : les justifications économiques tendent à évincer les motivations créatives, venant potentiellement compromettre les ressources essentielles à la production créative (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

Connaître le succès rime souvent avec organisation et persistance vis-à-vis des forces du marché (Caves, 2000; Hirsch, 2000). Par conséquent, les organisations dans ces industries tentent de mettre au point différentes manières de gérer les aspects créatifs. Le paradoxe émerge ici dans cette quête vers le succès créatif : le choix entre d'un côté la protection de marchés établis et un flux de revenus stables ; de l'autre la production de pièces radicalement nouvelles, perturbatrices pour le marché et les revenus de l'entreprise (Jones et al., 2016).

C'est cette tension qui implique des exigences souvent divergentes entre créativité et commerce (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). Les intérêts économiques entraînent en effet ce que Tschang

(2007) nomme la rationalisation des industries créatives, qui contraint une créativité souvent basée sur des actions improvisées. Des forces économiques telle que l'intégration verticale ou la consolidation d'une industrie entre les mains de quelques conglomérats influencent fortement l'innovation (Mezias & Mezias, 2000), via des décisions fondées principalement sur le marché.

Pourtant, la créativité provient d'individus dont bien souvent le talent et les contributions - précisément ces apports nommés « créatifs » - ne peuvent être organisés ou contrôlés, ou du moins uniquement jusqu'à un certain point. Le succès dans les industries créatives dépend donc de ce point précis, comme un équilibre constamment revu entre impératifs libertaires et impératifs économiques (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000).

Les conflits entre ces différents aspects semblent alors décisifs, avec pour conséquence la prédominance récurrente des intérêts économiques. Les implications deviennent dès lors préoccupantes à la fois pour les organisations des industries créatives, mais plus largement également pour tout un ensemble d'organisations qui opèrent dans des environnements compétitifs où la créativité est valorisée (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017).

Plus précisément, l'ambition de cette thèse est d'explorer les micro-actions et interactions ordinaires (entre humains, et entre humains et objets) qui caractérisent le travail créatif sous contrainte économique. Les différents signaux que sont les émotions, les ressources, les corps - sous-jacents comme en surface - seront examinés conjointement avec les préoccupations économiques, au travers d'une relation comprise comme constamment enchevêtrée et sans cesse renouvelée.

Par ce travail, nous discutons les compréhensions orthodoxes et formelles de la notion de créativité (Amabile, 1988, 1996 ; Ford, 1996 ; Shalley et al., 2004 ; Woodman et al, 1993). Comprendre la notion de manière alternative signifie pour nous sensibiliser davantage aux aspects animés, ressentis, incorporés et souvent passés sous silence de la pratique créative (Raunig, Ray & Wuggening, 2011). Par cette lecture, nous espérons ainsi rendre davantage compte de la complexité de pratiques créatives aussi contraintes qu'ambigües.

Partant de là, les industries créatives représentent un terrain stimulant pour examiner les paradoxes et tensions auxquels les acteurs créatifs doivent faire face (De Fillippi et al., 2007). Reconnues comme « *si spécifiques dans leur besoin d'amadouer art et business* » (Jones et al., 2005: 893),



ces industries sont organisées autour de la production et circulation de « *biens non-matériels, dirigés vers un public de consommateurs pour lesquels ils servent une fonction davantage esthétique ou expressive que clairement utilitaire* » (Hirsch, 1972: 641). Les conflits et tensions entre les impératifs d'une création sans cesse renouvelée - de différents genres, formats et produits - d'un côté, et la viabilité économique de l'autre s'illustrent au sein de cette économie créative de façon évidente (De Fillippi et al, 2007).

C'est par ailleurs une incertitude démultipliée qui caractérise les industries créatives, par rapport à d'autres industries (Menger, 1999). La demande est fondamentalement imprévisible (Crane, 2000; Hirsch, 1972). Un nombre élevé d'études relève ainsi qu'entre producteurs culturels, « *personne ne sait* » ce qui constitue le succès (Caves, 2000), « *tous les succès sont des coups de chance* » (Bielby & Bielby, 1994), et souvent ceux qui sortent du lot envisagent leur réussite comme un heureux hasard (Denisoff, 1975).

Dans les industries où les biens sont utilitaires, les producteurs développent généralement un consensus sur des standards de qualité spécifiques et souvent mesurables. À l'inverse, dans les industries créatives les standards tiennent davantage de l'idéal abstrait plutôt que d'un ensemble d'attributs bien spécifiques (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). Dans ce contexte, les maisons de production développent une connaissance sur ce qui a fonctionné dans le passé, et essaient naturellement d'appliquer cette connaissance au projet en cours. Mais ces efforts n'ont que peu de valeur prédictive (Caves, 2000).

La connaissance tacite compte davantage dans ces industries. Le talent, la créativité et l'innovation sont des ressources cruciales dans l'équation du succès (Jones & Fillippi, 1996; Miller & Shamsie, 1996). Néanmoins ces ressources sont amorphes : elles ne peuvent être définies clairement, elles émergent de sources inattendues et perdent de leur valeur pour des raisons qui demeurent le plus souvent obscures.

Le dévoilement des facettes habituellement cachées de la création devient alors un enjeu de recherche. Confronter les coulisses à la scène, c'est aussi confronter des systèmes économiques, des jeux d'acteurs, des représentations et des pratiques dont la connaissance participe à rendre intelligible la fabrique de la création en industrie créative.

Curieusement, les recherches qui examinent les interactions et manières de travailler dans ces industries se font encore rares (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). Peu de travaux ont prêté

attention aux micro-activités à travers desquelles l'organisation de la création émerge et se déploie. En réponse, cette thèse propose une immersion dans le banal et le moins banal du travail créatif, notamment au travers des difficultés rencontrées par les acteurs créatifs au sein de ces industries.

### *L'industrie de la mode -(pas) si glamour*

Un mot maintenant sur l'industrie de la mode, qui constitue notre terrain d'enquête.

*« Autoproclamé pays de la mode (...), la France traite pourtant ces sujets avec le mépris et la légèreté de ceux qui ont trop d'assurance. Tout est sans doute trop facile dans le pays qui a vu éclore Gabrielle Chanel, Christian Dior et Yves Saint Laurent...Rares sont ceux qui prennent le temps d'expliquer qu'il y a là une forme d'expression, qui dans ses meilleurs moments, tutoie l'art. Que cela raconte tant de choses du monde tel qu'il bouge. Et que c'est un domaine de savoir-faire et une source d'emplois que la plupart des pays du monde admirent et nous envieient (...). Mais ce discours, décidément, passe mal et la mode, ici, ne rime souvent qu'avec colifichets, gros sous et futilités. Autant de choses « sales », pas élégantes. Dommage ! »* Éditorial Le Monde Magazine-Septembre 2014.

Nous entendons par « mode » un espace économique, créatif, technologique, professionnel, social, patrimonial et politique ; mais aussi un espace de mise en scène et de communication des apparences. Les pratiques de travail dans ce secteur, aussi variées qu'ordinaires, sont souvent contestées et directement critiquées (Huopainen, 2016). Le « monde de la mode » est généralement perçu comme un phénomène associé à la frivolité, relié au divertissement visuel et aux images sensationnelles - bref, à la surface des choses.

Pourtant, derrière le raccourci de la simplification, le monde de la mode non seulement se révèle multiple et complexe mais aussi découvre des dynamiques sous-jacentes aux sociétés contemporaines (Godart, 2011, 2012). C'est un secteur qui se déploie à la confluence d'une grande diversité d'activités collectives (création, production, commercialisation, diffusion, etc.) et d'une multitude d'acteurs sociaux (producteurs, créateurs, artisans, photographes, mannequins, bloggeurs, vendeurs, consommateurs, etc.).

En réaction, nous prenons volontairement cette question de la surface et du superficiel au sérieux. Dépassant les analyses qui soulignent les bipolarités du système de la mode, nous privilégions plutôt une interrogation des tensions et des flux qui le traversent et des allers-retours qui le caractérisent, afin de saisir au mieux ces dynamiques qui participent à la fabrique de la mode.

Ce sont donc les mécanismes, les imbrications et les flux qui nous intéressent, bien plus que la médiatisation du secteur qui souligne excessivement la dimension de spectacle. Une telle exposition éclipse les « coulisses » du secteur - au sens notamment de la représentation théâtrale choisie comme perspective par Goffman (1973) - ou du moins les rend opaques (Blache-Comte & Monjaret, 2017).

Ce qui nous intéresse ici tient donc du travail en amont souvent invisible, au sein d'un milieu où dominant le visible et les apparences. Nous affirmons que sous l'éclat et le superficiel, la mode inclut des pratiques et des processus riches et multidimensionnels, qui nous invitent à penser sa nature émergente, chaotique, puissante, nuancée et intrinsèquement complexe; abordant des enjeux autant sociologiques qu'organisationnels. Comme nous le verrons, ces dynamiques permettent d'enrichir notre compréhension de la créativité au sein des organisations, et plus généralement de la manière dont la valeur est créée dans le contexte des industries créatives.

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En France, le « PIB créatif »<sup>1</sup> (estimé à 54 Md€) représente 2,7 % du PIB global du pays. S'il se trouve derrière le secteur de la Construction (101,5 Md€), il est au coude à coude avec le secteur des Transports (53,5 Md€). Il occupe ainsi une place non négligeable dans l'économie française. Sur ce PIB créatif français de 54 milliards d'euros, la mode et le luxe représentent 33%, suivis au loin par l'industrie du spectacle (15%), le livre et la presse (13%), la publicité (10%), l'image et son (10%), l'architecture (7%) comme les arts visuels (7%) et enfin les arts décoratifs (5%).

L'industrie de la mode est donc une activité économique majeure en France, loin devant des industries aussi emblématiques que l'aéronautique ou l'automobile. Le chiffre d'affaires direct du secteur est de 150 Md€, le nombre d'emplois correspondant de 1 million (directement - 580 000, et indirectement - 420 000)<sup>2</sup>. Dans un contexte économique où de nombreuses filières

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<sup>1</sup> Étude du Lab de Bpifrance-2013. Le PIB créatif intègre dans le périmètre du PIB culturel, les activités de Mode / Luxe / Beauté et d'Arts décoratifs.

<sup>2</sup> Étude de l'IFM "The true scope of Fashion Industry"-Oct 2016

productives subissent une concurrence croissante, les activités liées aux secteurs de la mode et de la création s'affirment comme un pilier important dans l'économie française, par le poids qu'elles représentent et par leur visibilité sur les marchés mondiaux.

Néanmoins, le secteur de la mode ne dispose pas d'un code d'activité clairement établi dans la nomenclature de l'Insee. Les interrogations sont dès lors plus substantielles, le secteur de la mode pouvant être défini stricto sensu uniquement par l'activité des maisons de haute-couture et au sens le plus large comme la création, la production et la distribution de tous les textiles, chaussures, maroquinerie, parfums et bijoux. Nous faisons le choix de suivre cette dernière option.

Dans cet ensemble de la mode, 43% du chiffre d'affaires est destiné à l'exportation<sup>3</sup>, et les entreprises françaises représentent à elles-seules aujourd'hui un quart du chiffre d'affaires mondial de l'industrie du luxe.<sup>4</sup> Le rayonnement à l'international est donc économique (le numéro 1 mondial LVMH est une entreprise française), mais aussi symbolique (Paris, capitale de la mode) et les perspectives de développement importantes à l'étranger comme sur le territoire français. En janvier 2016, Lyne Cohen-Solal (présidente de l'Institut National des Métiers d'art) a présenté au gouvernement son rapport intitulé « *La mode: industrie de créativité et moteur de croissance* », où la mode est explicitement identifiée comme « *un secteur stratégique pour l'économie française* ».

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En recherche, la littérature sur les industries créatives inclut le secteur de la mode, et permet ainsi de resituer ce dernier comme partie de l'économie créative plus largement. Lorsque l'on s'intéresse au secteur de la mode d'un point de vue sociologique ou même philosophique, la tension dorénavant familière entre art/créativité et économie/commerce s'impose d'elle-même. Celle-ci repose en grande partie sur une construction romantique de la production esthétique ; dont la fonction première serait de prendre la distance nécessaire, en vue de critiquer la société à laquelle elle se réfère (Adorno, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2002).

Si l'on dépasse cette notion romantique du travail créatif et que l'on rend davantage compte des aspects à la fois fonctionnels et symboliques du vêtement, on appréhende alors l'industrie de la mode comme située précisément à la frontière entre entreprise commerciale et entreprise créative (Caves, 2002).

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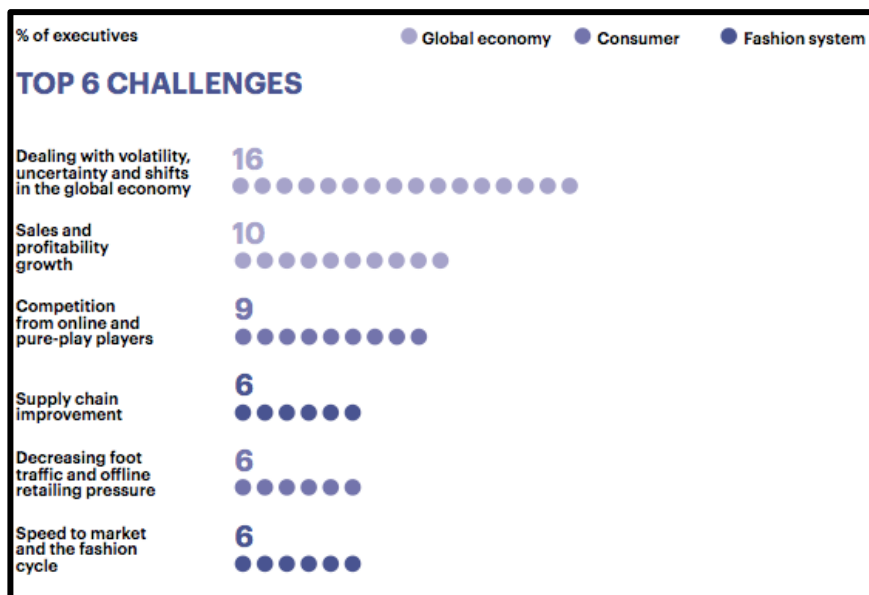
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.entreprises.gouv.fr/secteurs-professionnels/textile-mode-et-luxe>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/3244-la-mode-et-le-luxe-secteur-d-excellence-francaise>

Au niveau de l'organisation, le processus de développement de l'objet de mode est dirigé par une série de jugements à la fois esthétiques et commerciaux. À mesure qu'ils évoluent le long du processus créatif, les différents acteurs impliqués émettent des suppositions non seulement quant au vêtement en lui-même, en construction ; mais aussi autour de considérations plus générales, d'ordre socio-culturel - comme les tendances, les styles de vie ou encore l'esthétique de marque. Ces différents acteurs s'appuient également sur les attributs plus personnels que sont le goût, les capacités créatives ou encore le jugement commercial.

Au sein de cette économie ancrée dans les tissus, les textures et les expériences incorporées ; au regard également de l'évolution d'une proposition de mode vers un produit à la fois fonctionnel et séduisant ; la préoccupation des managers envers l'efficacité, le contrôle et les intérêts commerciaux peut se trouver en porte-à-faux par rapport aux designers.

Autrement dit, l'industrie de la mode semble adaptée et pertinente pour examiner les pratiques associées à la créativité sous contrainte économique. « *La mode est morte* », voilà comment la spécialiste des tendances Li Edelkoort résume l'ambiance actuelle du secteur dans son récent manifeste (2015), en référence aux pressions économiques qui transforment le design de mode en une suite de propositions commerciales. En effet, dans un tel contexte de croissance et de mutation, les cadres du secteur désignent les fluctuations et l'incertitude de l'économie globale comme leur plus grand défi pour 2017<sup>5</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> The State of Fashion 2017-A report from Business of Fashion & McKinsey&Company

L'État de la mode 2017 dénonce ainsi une crise de la créativité dans l'industrie, formulé comme suit : « *La manière dont les différentes pressions sur les acteurs du monde de la mode vont parvenir à l'équilibre demeure, pour le moment, un problème en suspens* » (p.19).

À la vue de la promotion globale de la mode, on connaît finalement très peu de ses coulisses, sculptées par du travail quotidien, des processus réguliers et des systèmes invisibles. Ce travail de recherche propose donc d'examiner les relations complexes constamment renégociées par les designers entre priorités économiques et envies créatives : entre les clients dont ils dépendent pour leur budget, le monde de la mode auxquels ils appartiennent et avec lequel ils interagissent régulièrement, et enfin leurs inclinaisons personnelles.

Construite à partir d'une vision processuelle du monde qui insiste sur l'action, la multiplicité et le mouvement, cette thèse pose ouvertement la question « que se passe-t-il derrière les portes d'un studio de création ? », où des objectifs à la fois créatifs et économiques s'entrecroisent.

Ceci étant dit, nous reconnaissons pleinement les zones d'ombre et le caractère mystérieux de la création en général et de la mode en particulier (Wilson, 2007), une richesse à nos yeux. Sans porter atteinte au noyau dur ou à l'âme du secteur, nous pensons qu'il est possible de déconstruire et de clarifier les expressions de ce monde, ancrées dans la création, le capitalisme, l'affect et la socio-matérialité, la temporalité et la continuité ; et même plus généralement de réfléchir à ce que nos conclusions de recherche disent de la société contemporaine et de ses industries dites « créatives ».

### *Positionnement de la thèse*

C'est dans une perspective processuelle que nous nous situons lorsque nous posons la question de savoir comment s'articulent les relations entre motifs créatifs et économiques, dans les organisations créatives. Par rapport à cette double question de l'économique et du créatif, c'est selon nous la force des approches qualifiées de processuelles que d'avoir mis au centre des investigations l'évolution de l'objet. Pour cette recherche, nous avons observé les productions créatives « en train de se faire ». L'organisation est entendue comme le résultat d'un ensemble de processus qui permettent l'action en ce qu'ils contiennent de dimensions cachées - sociales,

politiques, discursives ou autres.

Les nombreuses heures à la fois d'entretiens et d'observations ont permis de voir se déployer un mode de formation de l'objet de mode non réductible uniquement à la matière, au social, à son essence créative ou à son aspect commercial mais bien plus à l'ensemble de ces réalités qui s'expérimentent et se définissent de concert. L'organisation de la création telle qu'observée passe ainsi par un processus continu de bricolage et d'émergence où les corps, les surfaces et les matériaux s'entrecroisent et se répondent. Dans ce contexte processuel, substance et surface, imaginé et réel, esprit et corps ou encore création et commerce ne sont jamais complètement exclusifs mais toujours parties d'un ensemble, et en tant que telles enchevêtrées et imbriquées.

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À la lumière des relations complexes entre créativité et économie, nous explorons alors la manière dont les acteurs gèrent cette même réunion et les potentielles tensions qui en découlent. Nous pouvons ici nous référer au « nouveau » et à « l'utile », deux éléments qui caractérisent la créativité (Amabile, 1988) ; et ainsi poser la question : dans quelle mesure aujourd'hui l'utile pèse-t-il plus largement que le nouveau dans l'acception contemporaine de la créativité, au sein des industries créatives ?

À la faveur de notre précédent exposé sur l'importance de l'aspect à la fois situé et encadré des pratiques, nous n'essaierons pas de produire un énième modèle de la créativité. Cette thèse vise plutôt à proposer une vision de la créativité d'un point de vue non-fonctionnaliste. Le fil de la création se voit alors déroulé comme un phénomène organisationnel empirique, où les éléments à la fois mécaniques et incorporés prennent tout leur sens.

Aussi, plutôt que de se concentrer sur les caractéristiques de l'acteur créatif, ou sur les éléments clés de l'environnement organisationnel dans lequel les activités créatives se précisent ; nous nous concentrons sur la relation entre les acteurs créatifs et leur contexte organisationnel au travers d'une approche processuelle. La priorité sera accordée à « *la manière dont les idées des créatifs voyagent* » (Sgourev, 2016: 115), pour ainsi souligner le cheminement des actions situées des acteurs créatifs.

Nous procédons comme suit. En premier lieu, nous nous appuyons sur un état de l'art des recherches sur le thème de la créativité dans ces industries, créativité entendue comme un processus se déroulant au sein d'une organisation et de ses contraintes. Une revue de littérature principalement en *organization studies* nous amène ainsi à discuter certains postulats sous-jacents et autres éléments tenus pour acquis, quant au concept de créativité au sein du « dispositif » que

constituent les industries créatives (Reckwitz, 2014).

Cette vue d'ensemble de la littérature se focalisera sur plusieurs enjeux : non seulement l'internalisation des mécanismes économiques qui se traduisent en tensions potentielles pour les acteurs créatifs ; mais aussi la domination des pratiques économiques, dans les faits, au cours du processus de création. Nous baserons notre propos plus précisément sur les recherches que l'on nomme critiques, qui mettent en évidence l'influence des préoccupations capitalistes dans le contexte actuel d'une société néo-libérale, et leurs conséquences sur les industries créatives.

De cette bibliothèque des idées, nous retiendrons donc la controverse actuelle relative au lien qui relie pratiques économiques et pratiques créatives. Pour certains, la réunion de ces pratiques signifie tensions entre forces irréconciliables, pour d'autres c'est une mise en relation qui renvoie plutôt à des compatibilités et tensions qui finalement se nourrissent mutuellement.

L'ambition de la revue de littérature est donc de clarifier le débat autour de cette question du lien entre préoccupations créatives et économiques, en identifiant et en présentant de manière nouvelle les idées et chercheurs principaux qui contribuent à la discussion. Cela nous permet notamment de clarifier non seulement le débat autour des tensions potentielles qui entourent les acteurs créatifs, mais également leurs réactions face à ces tensions.

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C'est via une approche qualitative que nous abordons ensuite cette question. Sans démarrer d'une question de recherche figée ou de cadres théoriques rigides (Dumez & Ayache, 2011), nous partons d'un problème au sens de Popper (1979) et d'orientations de départ (les « *orienting theories* » de Whyte, 1984) pour aborder ce problème. L'idée généralisée et partagée auprès des acteurs créatifs de l'industrie de la mode est que la donnée capitaliste est une contrainte qui affecte négativement leur créativité. Nous nous sommes donc intéressés aux pratiques qui se développent en réaction à l'économie de marché et à ses règles.

Ces indications de départ nous permettent de nous *orienter* dans les données, sans pour autant structurer outre mesure le matériau et donc les résultats. Pendant ces mois de recherche, nous avons suivi les principes de la théorie enracinée (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) au travers d'une analyse inductive.

À partir des observations sociologiques et théoriques précédemment soulevées sur le secteur des industries créatives, plusieurs questions ont émergé : comment les sujets créatifs autonomes se



forment-ils ? Comment perçoivent-ils les facteurs économiques ? Quelles sont les conditions de leur formation et, s'ils doivent être considérés comme « acteurs » dans un champ créatif donné, quelle liberté d'action est la leur ? Quels sont les astuces silencieuses et subtiles, les mécanismes de résistance, manœuvres et stratagèmes que ces acteurs déploient pour permettre la production et la diffusion de la création en organisation ?

Nous posons plus précisément les deux questions de recherche suivantes :

Comment les acteurs impliqués dans le processus créatif gèrent-ils les contraintes économiques, au sein des industries créatives ?

Quel type de pratiques ces acteurs créatifs développent-ils vis-à-vis de telles contraintes ?

Notre intention n'est pas la description minutieuse de processus créatifs complexes et par là même insaisissables au détail près. Nous posons plutôt ces questions dans l'optique bien définie d'accéder aux pratiques du quotidien des acteurs créatifs dans une organisation, pour ainsi en raconter les manières de faire, d'agir, l'ici-et-maintenant des organisations créatives.

Au travers d'un focus empirique sur l'industrie de la mode, notre but n'est pas seulement d'en apprendre davantage sur les sujets créatifs de premier plan, mais aussi sur les « voix silencieuses » à l'arrière-plan, qui souvent ne bénéficient pas du label « créatif » mais travaillent pourtant de manière tout autant créative, dans l'ombre.

À cet effet, 41 entretiens et de courtes périodes d'observation non-participante ont d'abord été menés avec différents acteurs créatifs du secteur de la mode, comme première étape exploratoire de la thèse. À partir de ces données plusieurs pratiques ont été identifiées autour de trois grands ensembles : un jeu avec le marché, une singularité cultivée, et la recherche d'autonomie.

Nous montrons ainsi comment le futur créatif dépend notamment de la capacité imaginative du créatif à transcender les barrières des images existantes, en recherchant par exemple l'autonomie dans une création hors les murs de l'organisation. C'est également dans la continuité d'une patte créative singulière - qui s'exprime alors sur un temps autre, souvent plus long, que l'ancrage créatif s'impose. Les pratiques identifiées révèlent également le goût pour l'exploration de champs hétéroclites. Éclectisme, découverte et engagement comme autant de points d'ancrage qui escortent la création hors des sentiers rationnels économiquement.

Dans cette première partie, le travail du sociologue français Michel de Certeau (1984) vient conforter l'examen de ces pratiques. Nous nous basons notamment sur ses travaux autour des tactiques du quotidien que toute personne développe pour gérer l'intrusion des forces

commerciales et médiatiques dans sa propre vie. Le travail de Michel de Certeau nous permet ainsi de souligner un élément essentiel : la dimension tactique des pratiques identifiées.

Ainsi, la première partie des résultats de cette thèse tient dans cette mise à jour d'une modalité bien particulière d'articulation entre motifs créatifs et économiques, décrite et saisie au travers de la notion de tactique créative. Comme nous le verrons, l'ensemble intégré des différentes tactiques créatives identifiées évolue progressivement vers le maintien d'une zone de flou entretenant un champ des possibles. Ambiguïté, flou et ainsi *trouble du créatif* aménagent la marge de manœuvre nécessaire pour créer.

Néanmoins, la lecture analytique de ce que nous pouvons observer sur le terrain au travers des grilles de Michel de Certeau - l'usage renégocié via la tactique - ne permet pas de saisir entièrement le matériau collecté en entretiens, et plus particulièrement la dimension plus matérielle des choses. Un élément semble manquer dans cet effort de compréhension du travail créatif, quelque chose qui tient plutôt du lien que les designers entretiennent avec le tissu - maintes fois cité en entretien - et plus généralement de la matière. Alors que Certeau nous permet d'éclairer le débat, ce faisant il en révèle également les failles et manquements ; et l'analyse apparaît alors comme inachevée, ou simplement à son début. C'est cette phase de transition, autour de l'intuition du matériel, qui nous amène donc vers la deuxième étape de notre partie empirique : le travail ethnographique.

Dans cette deuxième partie, nous avons donc fait le choix de nous concentrer sur un designer et son équipe rapprochée, plutôt que de saisir la pluralité des différentes réalités situées du secteur de la mode. Partant que l'on ne peut rien savoir de la mode, et que l'on ne peut rien savoir non plus de la créativité dans la mode, tant que l'on ne va pas voir et observer les processus concrets de formation et de qualification de ces articles de mode en studio, nous avons donc décidé de prolonger le terrain en cherchant un stage en maison. Une telle démarche nous semblait permettre l'exigence d'une méthode empirique pour aborder l'une par l'autre les questions de l'article créatif et de l'article marchand en redonnant qui plus est toute sa place à l'aventure du travail de chaque vêtement, des prémisses aux derniers jalons.

En suivant de près à la fois le travail d'un designer et son organisation à travers temps et espace, cette thèse propose une connaissance dense, détaillée et approfondie du processus incertain de création en contexte lucratif. Cette deuxième étape - une observation participante de 3 mois dans un studio de création - a permis de dénouer l'intuition autour du tissu et des matériaux, pour aller plus loin dans l'exploration des éléments qui constituent l'*organizing* quotidien dans la mode.

L'observation des aspects émergents et *in situ* de la création nous a permis de rester proche des micro-actions quotidiennes composées de ressentis corporels et affectifs. Nous avons ainsi pu observer le rapport par l'affect que chacun semblait développer vis-à-vis du processus créatif - le transport par l'exaltation, la fièvre, l'agitation ou encore le désarroi ou l'inquiétude; pour finalement démontrer à quel point les acteurs créatifs habitent leur studio, et plus généralement leur monde créatif, sur le mode affectif.

À l'évidence, les acteurs créatifs ont intégré et continuent d'intégrer la contrainte marchande. Pourtant, un tissu à la texture surprenante, une conversation avec un pair ou encore une expérimentation à l'issue inattendue peuvent les emmener plus loin, vers un terrain de jeu où les préoccupations économiques s'oublient.

Cette aire de jeu ne se veut pas simple réceptacle de l'action en cours mais devient bien plus une situation active qui définit l'orientation de la création. Dans cette aire de jeu, les intérêts des acteurs et les opportunités fournies par l'environnement se rencontrent, se répondent et se définissent mutuellement, dans un rapport simultané et réciproque.

C'est précisément par cet espace (l'aire de jeu) que s'insinue une différence indécodable dans la relation que le système économique entretient avec ces opérations dont il prétend assurer la gestion. Une fois dans l'aire de jeu, les acteurs créatifs ne se posent qu'une question : vais-je être capable d'achever ce que j'ai commencé ? Non pas la collection ou la production créative dans son ensemble, mais bien plus cette action précise en cours de création. On pourrait dire en cours de réaction : ce sur quoi ils travaillent dans l'instant, avec ce qu'ils ont en tête, dans les mains, dans les gestes ; en réaction à ce qui les entourent, ce dont ils sont imprégnés et qui continuent de les imprégner.

Dans ce visible et moins visible, le corps joue le rôle de médiateur de sens. Chaque élément possède sa qualité dynamique propre et dans ce jeu la corporéité se donne comme jointure et non plus comme simple pôle physico-dimensionnel. Les gestes retracent l'expérience de la perception. Dans ces circonstances, les perspectives sensibles empiètent sur l'intelligible. Il s'agit d'entendre un problème, de voir une question, de manipuler la solution. Entendre, voir et manipuler - à l'image d'autres actions par les sens - signifient alors saisir un rapport de forme, de profil et d'espace.

Ouvrir l'espace qui relie une personne à une autre et communiquer par les gestes, unifier par les gestes au travers d'une production créative qui se construit en restant indéfinissable par les mots

(selon la variabilité des points de vue). Le processus créatif, qu'il soit individuel comme collectif, est donc dans ce sens une succession de gestes. À partir du premier geste se déploient amplifications, détournements et gammes différenciées, jusqu'au geste final.

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En résumé, ce sont d'abord les grilles d'analyse de Michel de Certeau qui ont permis de mettre en lumière les différentes tactiques des acteurs créatifs, formats d'action dont le rôle est clé pour comprendre le fonctionnement des organisations créatives. À l'image d'une huile qui fluidifie le mécanisme, les tactiques déployées au quotidien par les acteurs créatifs permettent de fluidifier les frottements entre inspirations créatives et aspirations commerciales. Nous avons renommé cette forme d'action « le trouble du créatif ».

Ensuite, l'approche ethnographique nous a permis de contextualiser et d'incarner encore davantage les pratiques créatives, pour ainsi porter notre attention sur les contextes socio-matériels et affectifs à travers desquels ces pratiques surviennent. La création, c'est avant tout se confronter au faire, à l'action. La confrontation à l'aire de jeu (composée de tissus, d'expérimentations, d'interactions) rappelle à l'ordre créatif et non à l'ordre économique. À l'inverse, un isolement affectif et sensoriel signifierait une fin de la créativité et de la création en cours.

Ainsi, au travers des différents chapitres de cette thèse, nous espérons avoir rendu sensibles les ressorts essentiels de tout processus créatif, vers une connaissance plus compréhensive de ce phénomène aux multiples facettes matérielles et affectives, soutenu par divers arrangements que les acteurs créatifs déploient au quotidien. En conclusion de nos travaux, nous proposons le concept de « créativité-en-action » (imitant Bruno Latour et sa « science en action », 1987), une définition incarnée et matérielle de la créativité au sein des industries créatives, faite d'arrangements et d'affects.

Finalement, c'est via l'examen des pratiques des acteurs créatifs qui nous avons pu proposer une nouvelle vision de la créativité. Cette vision passe donc par le jeu avec la matière, par le tâtonnement et les tentatives, par la succession de gestes jusqu'au rendu final. Le processus créatif est dépeint comme à la fois permettant mais aussi nécessitant les interventions multiples et simultanées d'humains et de non-humains, vers une construction commune et en cours.

Au vu des circonstances - des attentes élevées, des budgets à l'inverse au plus bas, un travail intense et une vitesse toujours croissante -, les acteurs créatifs naviguent dans la complexité en

entrant dans une aire de jeu où la passion du matériau, les expérimentations créatives et les interactions prévalent. L'acteur créatif « s'enroule », se love dans son environnement. Nous mettons ainsi en évidence l'importance de cet espace comme force qui vient contrebalancer celle de l'agence (l'acteur créatif). C'est cet espace qui autorise ou neutralise les productions ; à l'image des matériaux disponibles qui se font intermédiaires suivant lesquels la création prend forme.

À partir de là, la scène du travail créatif - pourtant très centrée jusqu'ici sur l'individu - se peuple rapidement. La réalité créative devient un système de relations, où chaque entité porte l'empreinte de ses relations avec son environnement. Si l'action créative se situe dans un système de relations, l'interaction en constitue dès lors la pierre angulaire.

La substance relationnelle de l'action (de l'humain, de l'objet) est alors définie par la perspective que chacun prend sur le comportement d'autrui ; et sur les conséquences à en tirer pour orienter son propre comportement et ses décisions, dans l'action conjointe. Par moments même, l'intention gestuelle peut demeurer opaque à elle-même jusqu'à être reprise par autrui et rendue ainsi compréhensible. Ainsi, le mouvement est incarné par le corps créatif en gestes, qui laisse traces et empreintes et « rebondit » selon ce qu'il trouve dans son aire de jeu.

Pour finir, nous soulignons l'asymétrie entre rôles marchands endossés par les acteurs créatifs. Par exemple à quel point les rôles marchands sont plus volontiers endossés par les designers à l'ouverture de l'aire de jeu (dans le rôle de l'acheteur, des tissus par exemple) plutôt qu'à sa fermeture (dans le rôle du vendeur, aux salons). La fermeture de l'aire de jeu, scellée par l'échéance, signifie non seulement la clôture du jeu mais aussi l'examen final de la proposition créative.

### *Le mot de la fin*

*« L'inconvénient des mots, c'est d'avoir plus de contour que les idées. Toutes les idées se mêlent par les bords; les mots, non. Un certain côté diffus de l'âme leur échappe toujours. L'expression a des frontières, la pensée n'en a pas. »* Victor Hugo dans L'homme qui rit.

C'est pourtant avec des mots que nous avons dépeint le quotidien et les réalités du travail créatif à but lucratif. Que pouvions-nous en dire qui ne soit ni déduit, ni préjugé, mais appuyé sur des données empiriques aussi précises et solides que possible ? Nous avons donc proposé un récit. Nous nous sommes ce faisant donné les moyens, non pas de formuler une définition de la créativité ; mais de reconfigurer et la question de l'articulation entre créativité et contraintes économiques, et en son sein la question du processus créatif, via cette forme du récit.

Les longues heures d'observation ont ainsi été racontées par l'histoire du quotidien du studio. Plus que les mains, les visages et les dialogues ; réussir à retracer les gestes, les expressions et les intonations. Tout au long de ce travail, nous espérons avoir rendu fidèlement compte du travail créatif « en action », ainsi renommé, pour laisser le lecteur imprégné des aspects incorporés, matériels et affectifs du monde étudié. La spécificité et l'intérêt d'une telle approche nous semblent être sa transversalité, qui favorise un travail de compréhension non plus linéaire ou binaire mais par strates, avec des dynamiques de flux et de tensions.

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Si l'on revient au titre de cette thèse : « La créativité-en-action, arrangements et affects au sein des industries créatives ». En un mot, nous démontrons comment des arrangements tactiques autour du travail créatif permettent de compenser les tensions rencontrées entre justifications créatives et justifications économiques. Du fait de ces arrangements, un *trouble du créatif* est entretenu par les acteurs créatifs pour se ménager un espace personnel ; et ainsi atteindre une aire de jeu où être créatif signifie créer *en-action*, au sein de forces à la fois matérielles, incorporées et affectives.

L'ambition de cette thèse n'est pas de fournir pour la énième fois une définition fermée de la créativité - qui, nous l'espérons ne sera jamais complètement saisie ou rationalisée. Proposer une définition stricte nous semble être à rebours d'un travail de recherche. Il ne peut exister de définition unique et définitive pour un terme comme celui de créativité. En ce qu'ils ont de vains et subjectifs, les enjeux définitionnels ont donc été assumés comme tels.

La créativité est à la fois intemporelle, sans localisation, toujours en circulation et en renouvellement, tout en restant attachée à des cultures, des époques, des territoires et des traditions. La créativité cherche à proposer de l'original et de l'utile, et se réinvente donc en fonction des évolutions sociétales.

C'est un processus, un temps long. Aussi, nous nous sommes attachés à la notion de processus

créatif. Notre ambition était plutôt de reconfigurer cette notion de processus créatif, de mettre en lumière certains de ses aspects passés sous silence et, au sein de ce processus, d'examiner le lien fragile entre motifs créatifs et motifs économiques.

En substance, l'image excessivement dichotomique des relations que les acteurs créatifs maintiennent avec le dispositif économique s'est ainsi diversifiée au cours de notre recherche, en suivant trois voies : une recherche de la problématique adéquate pour articuler les données, une description de différentes tactiques déployées au quotidien par les acteurs créatifs, et enfin une extension de l'analyse aux opérations de création connotées matériellement et affectivement.

Ce faisant, nous proposons une réponse à Thompson et al. qui dénoncent les manquements d'une compréhension approfondie des rouages internes des organisations créatives, et plus précisément de « *ce lien manquant entre conception et consommation* » (2007: 625). Les efforts de recherche destinés à examiner empiriquement la nature détaillée des tensions entre aspects créatifs et aspects économiques sont peu courants (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). Aussi, nous proposons un récit en profondeur du travail créatif, au plus près des expériences effectivement vécues; et développons par ce récit une compréhension plus fine de ce qui apparaît au sein et en cours de l'*organizing* créatif de façon plus générale.

La création réside essentiellement dans ce processus incertain et émergent, où des sédiments créatifs apparaissent progressivement dans une aire de jeu collective ; et finissent par se déposer en vue de l'échéance. Ces éléments signifiants détiennent la clé d'une compréhension en profondeur du travail créatif sous contrainte économique. Nos résultats et leur potentiel de généralisation intéresseront, nous l'espérons, à la fois les chercheurs comme les praticiens.

À l'aune de cette analyse, nous espérons ainsi contribuer à la littérature existante sur les industries créatives d'un point de vue processuel, en soulignant le rôle des arrangements et des affects le long du processus créatif.

Dans cette perspective, nous espérons plus exactement contribuer au débat sur la créativité organisationnelle actuellement en vigueur au sein des *organization studies*. Les traitements formels et désincarnés de la créativité ont rarement pris en compte non seulement l'aspect significatif de l'incorporé, de l'affect, des espaces et temporalités en mouvement, mais surtout - et dans la continuité -, des entremêlements éclectiques de ces derniers.

C'est précisément dans la mise en lumière de cet ensemble que nous voyons une contribution théorique potentielle et pertinente. Finalement, cette thèse vient contraster les compréhensions plus orthodoxes de la créativité en organisation, et en développe une compréhension multidimensionnelle, à la fois dans la matière et le corps, au moteur affectif essentiel ; et soutenue par différentes tactiques.

Enfin, une dernière contribution se situe cette fois-ci davantage au niveau des *fashion studies*. En visant les marges, précisément au-delà des démonstrations superficielles du milieu, nous proposons une compréhension en profondeur et « de l'intérieur » des activités quotidiennes et organisationnelles du secteur de la mode.

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A photograph of a clothing rack in a store. The rack is filled with various garments, including sweaters, shirts, and jackets, hanging on wooden hangers. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a bokeh effect with out-of-focus lights in the background. The overall atmosphere is cozy and inviting.

# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

*"You can't truly create anymore. What's going on today is that everybody's doing the same thing... And you quickly end up being channelled by that dynamic, in a way. The commercial aspect is everywhere."*

*(Lucile, designer)*

*"If you read the articles on style.com, they all end the same way: 'and this will go well with the buyers. I'm sure it will be a success in the shops'. Can't we talk about something else? If it's a good collection, at the end of each paragraph what you can read is 'it's going to work'. We are more talking about business than we are telling a story (...) today it's much more product-centred than before. That's it. Creation is dead, long live the garment."*

*(Blaise, artistic director)*

*"I see very well what goes on in the fitting room. You see, she [main designer] asks: 'the crochets, how much do they cost? - 100 euros each – Well ok, we'll get only three for this dress.'"*

*(Anne, knitwear assistant)*

*"If we'd listened to them [the sales representatives], we would do the same line all the time. We would do again whatever works. When you do something new, and it works, they didn't see it coming, so, the following year you have to do the same again. Anyway... and then they are going to ask you enormous quantities, so it might not be the same success either. I don't know, it's weird...to have recipes like that to get going. So yeah, I'm not too sure on what basis they work, but I feel like it lacks overall projection. So in the end, the pressure of the figure is extremely important."*

*(Tony, freelance designer)*

This research investigates the daily workings of creative actors within creative industries. From these interview extracts, we notice how business and economic interests might drive to a certain extent the creative process in creative industries -in this case, fashion industry. The starting point of the research is the evolution of those industries, increasingly driven by a broader, ongoing tension between forces for creativity and forces for economic interests (Tschang, 2007).



Many have noted that so-called creative individuals of creative industries tend to resist or disregard economic preoccupation (Caves, 2000; Jones et al., 2016; Linstead, 2010). Tensions arise between profit maximization and creative forces (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; Lampel et al., 2000). Our objective in this research is to explore this 'unlikely conversation' (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017), how those supposedly opposing forces play out in the daily life of creative actors. Throughout this work, we investigate empirically the detailed practices that they develop to be able to create in this very specific setting which creative industries constitute.

### *The Creative and the Economic - an odd couple.*

The Ph.D. departs from the research literature that underlines the on-going debate arising in creative companies, between art/creativity on the one hand and economy/management on the other hand (De Fillippi et al., 2007; Lampel et al., 2000). Most so-called creative actors (as we assume they are creative) have to operate both within and through economic rules and boundaries to effect creative propositions. Economy here broadly refers to a capitalist market order, and its operations for profit determined by competition in the market. For the purpose of this thesis, creativity within creative industries was thus broadly approached as an intense creative and economic practice.

Literature review underlines how creativity can be coloured by various practices and politics. Exploring activities reveals a central paradox of creative production: economic rationale tends to crowd out creative motives, and potentially endanger the vital resources to creative production (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007). According to this perspective, conflicts between the economic and the creative seem inevitable and likely to result in managerial dominance. This has troubling implications for organizations in the creative industries and also for a broader set of businesses said to be operating in competitive environments that value creativity (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017).

The ambition, with this thesis, is to explore micro-level actions and ordinary interactions (human and non-human), emotions, resources, bodies, signals, the underlying and the surface of creation; together with economy as they become enacted and entangled. Along the way, we try to challenge ordered and formal understandings of the notion of creativity within creative industries. Directing towards more critical understandings of the notion raises greater awareness of the moving, felt, embodied and 'darker sides' of creative practices (Raunig, Ray & Wuggening, 2011),

which feels about doing justice to the complexity of ambiguous and constrained creative practices.

With this in mind, creative industries represent a stimulating empirical field for investigating paradoxes and tensions creative actors have to deal with (De Fillippi et al., 2007). Known as "particular for the need to appease art and business" (Jones et al., 2005), those industries are organized around the production and circulation of "non-material goods directed at a public of consumers for whom they generally serve an aesthetic or expressive, rather than clearly utilitarian function" (Hirsch, 1972: 641). The conflicts and tensions between the imperative of a relentless creation of new genres, formats and products on the one hand, and economic viability on the other hand occur within the creative economy in a most striking fashion (De Fillippi et al., 2007).

Besides, those industries are characterized by a stronger uncertainty than other industries (Menger, 1999). The demand is fundamentally unforeseeable and getting the favours of the gatekeepers is never guaranteed (Crane, 2000; Hirsch, 1972). A high number of studies show that, among cultural producers, "nobody knows" what will constitute a success (Caves, 2000), "all successes are strokes of luck" (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) and even the successful ones see their success as a "crap game", a game of luck (Denisoff, 1975).

In industries where goods are utilitarian, producers usually develop a consensus on specific and often measurable standards of quality; whereas in creative industries standards are abstract ideals rather than specific product attributes (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). Producers know a lot about what has succeeded in the past, and they constantly try to extrapolate this knowledge to the project at hand; but these efforts achieve minimal predictive value (Caves, 2000). Tacit knowledge is more important in these industries, and talent, creativity, and innovation are the resources that are crucial to success (Jones and De Fillippi, 1996; Miller and Shamsie, 1996). But these are amorphous resources: they cannot be clearly defined, they emerge from unexpected sources, and they lose their value for reasons that remain unclear.

Simply put, two paradoxes are described in the literature on creative industries.

The first one relies on the coexistence of contradictory phenomena in the achievement of success: a 'star-system' phenomenon and a 'nobody knows' phenomenon. The success of a product on the market is extremely uncertain, it is either you win, or you lose. Despite an abundant production in those industries, the uncertainty of the product's value from the

consumer point of view fosters the consumption of relatively similar products (the 'safe bets'). As a consequence, we see a 'superstar' economy developing, where a "relatively weak number of people earn enormous amount of money and seem to dominate domains they enter" (Rosen, 1981, p. 845).

The second paradox, on which this Ph.D. focuses, shows the market as a starting point of a tension between creativity and economy. Organizations seek to develop new ways of uncovering and managing creative inputs. However, creativity comes from individuals whose talents and inputs can be organized and controlled only up to a certain point. Success in the creative industries thus depends on finding this point, on striking a balance between freedom imperatives and economic imperatives (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000).

Yet research that explains interactions and ways of working within creative contexts as consequences of these conflicting tensions is scarce (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). As a response, this Ph.D. offers to dive into the mundane and the not-so-mundane, usually hidden from public view, when it comes to creative actors' struggle within creative industries.

### *The fashion industry - (not) so glam.*

An introductory word now on the fashion industry. In 2016, the industry is projected to reach a staggering \$2.4 trillion in total value<sup>6</sup>. If it were ranked alongside individual countries' GDP, the global fashion industry would represent the world's seventh largest economy<sup>7</sup>. More specifically, fashion industry is a major economic activity in France (revenues: 13 billion euros, total exports: 8.5 billion euros, jobs: 57 031<sup>8</sup>). French companies represent 1/4 of all revenues of the industry at a global level<sup>9</sup>.

The creative industries literature has helped to situate fashion as part of the broader creative economy. However, each creative domain has quite distinct processes and patterns of economic activity. When viewing fashion from a sociological or even philosophical perspective, we recognize this now-familiar tension between art/creativity and economy/commerce, largely built

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<sup>6</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, McKinsey FashionScope

<sup>7</sup> International Monetary Fund, "List of Countries by Projected GDP", October 21, 2016, <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/coun-tries-by-projected-gdp.php>

<sup>8</sup> Key Figures-Union des Industries Textiles-2015-2016

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/3244-la-mode-et-le-luxe-secteur-d-excellence-francaise>

on romantic notions of aesthetic production, where the function of art/creativity was to distance itself and critique the society it references (Adorno, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2002).

Going beyond this romantic notion but rather acknowledging the functional and symbolic aspects of clothing, we understand the fashion industry is still sitting at the boundary between a commercial and a creative enterprise (Caves, 2002). Fashion products have cultural, symbolic and economic value and navigate a complex system of creators, producers, arbiters and diffusers before being purchased at retail by consumers (Caves, 2002).

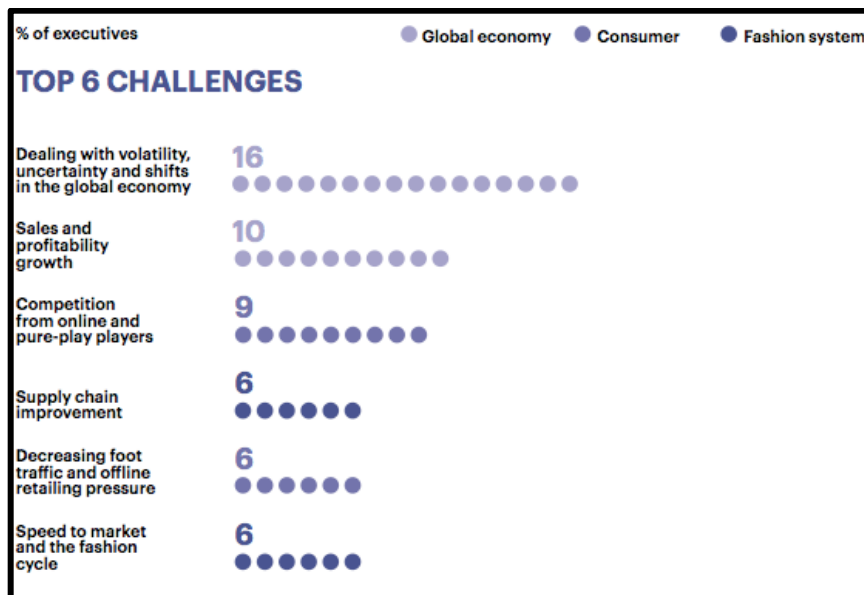
At the organizational level, the product development process is governed by a series of aesthetic and commercial judgments. Designers, merchandisers and managers speculate about broad, socio-cultural aspects of clothing such as fashion trends, customer lifestyle and brand aesthetic; while simultaneously relying on personal attributes such as taste, creative abilities and commercial judgement as they move through the creative process. In this economy based on fabrics, textures and bodily experiences, managers' concern for efficiency, control and commerciality can be at odds with designers' concern for the transformation of a fashion proposition into functional and appealing product.

Now added to that, we obviously know that fashion's various mundane and sometimes questionable working practices are a matter of debate. The world of fashion is commonly thought of as a frivolous phenomenon connected to visual amusement, beauty and sensational images (Huopainen, 2016). However, under the superficial gloss, fashion presents some rich and multidimensional practices and processes that invite us to reflect upon its emerging, chaotic, powerful, nuanced and inherently complex nature that addresses both organizational and sociological issues (Godart, 2010, 2012). As we will see, these dynamics might enhance our understanding of how creativity happens within organizations. This, in turn, will reveal something about how value is further created in the context of creative industries.

In other words, the fashion industry seems to be an appropriate field to inform on the practices associated to creativity within economic constraints. 'Fashion is Dead' said trend forecaster Li Edelkoort fairly recently in a manifesto (2015), referring to the economic pressures turning fashion design into commercial propositions. And indeed, in such a context of growth and



mutation, fashion executives name volatility and uncertainty of the global economy as the biggest challenge for 2017<sup>10</sup>:



As the recently published State of Fashion 2017 underlines, mentioning a 'creativity crisis': "How the various pressures on fashion players will reach equilibrium remains, for now, an open question" (p.19).

Seeing the global promotion of fashion, we know very little about the 'back room' behind the fashionable window (Huopainen, 2016), a room made of daily work, processes and systems. This Ph.D. offers to examine the intricate relationships that are continuously being negotiated by designers between economic priorities and creative envies, between the clients upon whose budget they rely, the fashion world to which they belong and with which they interact on a regular basis, and their personal inclination. While acknowledging for the 'mysterious' part of fashion (Wilson, 2007), we still think it is imperative to consider, deconstruct and try to clarify fashion's processual attempts; deep-rooted in creativity and capitalism, affect and socio-materiality, temporality and continuity.

### *Positioning the Ph.D*

Now moving on to the framework of the Ph.D, we can here highlight important questions concerning creative actors within creative industries -now again, in this research we assume they are creative. In light of the complex relations between creativity, economy, and the potential

<sup>10</sup> The State of Fashion 2017-A report from Business of Fashion & MacKinsey&Company

significance of critical approaches in this; we explore the reunion of creativity and economy, and investigate how it plays out in the product development process of creative organizations. Thinking about the 'novel' and 'useful' characteristics of creativity that Amabile (1988) underlines, we might wonder to what extent the 'appropriate' and 'useful' weigh more than the 'novel' in the definition of contemporary creativity within creative industries.

Given the previous argument in favour of the importance of situated and embedded practice, we could not, nor have sought to, offer a detailed 'model' of creativity. While trying to avoid the theoretical injunction, this Ph.D. follows a framework which aim is to build a view of creativity from a non-functionalist perspective. Rather than focusing on the characteristics of the creative actor or the features of the organizational environment in which creative activities take place, we are focusing on the relationship between creative actors and their particular socio-material and affective contexts using a process-based approach. Priority should be given to describe 'how the ideas of creators travel', says Sgourev (2016). The ambition with this research is to highlight the situated doings and real-life workings of creative actors and account for their travel along the way of economic forces and constraints.

The research proceeds as follows. Focusing on creative actors within creative industries, it takes as a starting point an overview of the state of the art of research on creativity -in terms of a process happening within an organization and its several constraints-, in the broader field of organization studies. We discuss certain underlying assumptions about creativity within creative industries' apparatus (Reckwitz, 2014), that matter for this study. The overview of the literature focuses on several issues: not only the internalisation of economic mechanisms that translate into potential tensions for creative actors, but also the domination of economic practices on the creative path. The latter implies drawing more explicitly from research by critical scholars, who denounce the influence of capitalist preoccupations in a society undergoing neo-liberalisation.

The literature review reveals current controversies around the relationship between economic and creative practices. For some, the encounter of those practices means tensions between irreconcilable forces, for others it means compatibilities and nourishing tensions. The ambition is to clarify the debate around that question by identifying and presenting in a new way the principal ideas and scholars composing it. It will provide a better understanding not only of the potential tensions that surround creative actors, but also of their reactions to them. How to articulate

economic and creative practices is a question that is formulated in the literature (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017; Jones et al., 2016), but still unsettled.

Qualitative research does obviously not depart from scratch, neither does it depart from a fixed research question and rigid theoretical frameworks. It departs from a 'problem', within the meaning of Popper (Popper, 1979), and from guidance points of departure to tackle this problem (Humez & Ayache, 2011). Following grounded theory with an inductive analysis, it is by departing from the previous sociological and theoretical observations on creative industries that general questions arise: Do creative subjects 'play the game', or not? What kind of trajectory do they adopt towards the economic system?

We focus on the practices undertaken to deal with stylistic inconsistencies and to accommodate seemingly contradictory urges for creative freedom and economic success. More specifically, we aim at analysing the practices that are developed towards the economy and its rules. The approach is deliberately very inductive, the subject matter discussed along the lines of the following set of interrelated questions: How are autonomous creative subjects formed? What are the conditions of their formation and, if they are to be considered as 'actors' in a creative field, what freedom of action is actually theirs, anyway? What silent and subtle tricks, resistance mechanisms, manoeuvres and brainwaves are carried on to allow the production and diffusion of creation in organizations?

Settling down on two research questions, we ask:

How do actors involved into the creative process deal with economic constraints?

What kind of practices do those creative actors develop regarding such constraints?

While not intended to be a description of complicated creative process, the thesis broadly asks those questions in order to capture creative actor's daily practices, and say something relevant about their ways of doing in the 'here-and-now' of organizations. With an empirical focus on the fashion industry, the aim is not only to learn about the creative ones on the foreground, but also about the 'lost voices' that are not given the epitaph 'creative', but work in an exact same creative way in the shadow.

To do this, 41 interviews and short periods of non-participant observation were carried out with various creative actors of the fashion industry, as a first exploratory step of the Ph.D. From those

data a set of various practices was identified. In this part, the work of the French sociologist Michel De Certeau (1984) comforted our investigation of the practices, and we drew on his developments around the daily tactics that people develop to deal with the intrusive forces of commerce in their everyday life. Certeau's work revealed important things in the agenda: the tactical dimension of the identified practices.

Yet, his reading of what was happening on the field -the making use and transformative part of creative work- could not entirely grasp what came out of interviews, more specifically the material dimension. Something was still missing in the attempt to understand creativity, revolving around the relationship that designers had with the fabric. And as much as Certeau enlightened the debate, there were still some lacks and shortcomings in the analysis. This is what takes us to the second step of the empirical part, an ethnographic work.

In this second part, we have chosen to focus on one specific fashion designer and her proximate team rather than trying to account for a plurality of different, situated fashion realities. Departing from the idea that we can hardly know what is happening in fashion as long as we don't observe a studio life from the inside, we then decided to keep up with the field by looking for an internship in a fashion house.

This second step -a 3-months participant observation in a design studio- helped us unravel the intuition around fabric and materials; and thus broaden the knowledge, throughout a critical exploration of the particularities and constitutive elements of everyday fashion organizing. Our inclination towards investigating the emerging and 'here and now' sides of creation directed us towards staying close to everyday practices, bodily encounters and 'micro-level' actions of the research subjects.

To conclude, it is firstly Certeau's lines of inquiry that helped to shed some light on the various tactics of creative actors, as a form of action that plays an important role in creative organizations. We called this form of action 'creative fuzziness'. Secondly, the ethnographic approach contextualized creative practices by paying attention to a 'playground' that creative actors enter, made of socio-material and affective forces.

Those two conclusions helped assess a comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted and emergent phenomenon that is creativity, backed by various arrangements of creative actors in

creative industries. In the end, we suggested the concept of creativity-in-action (mimicking the 'in-action' of Latour's "science-in-action" -1987), an embodied-material and affective approach of creativity within creative industries. Creativity-in-action reveals a creative process allowing and demanding multiple humans and non-humans to become part of the work in progress.

### *A final word*

Finally, the ambition is not to provide for the umpteenth time a definition of creativity, hopefully never seized and rationalized; but rather to reconfigure that notion of creative process, and within this process, of the fragile relation between creativity and economy. Throughout, we wish to do justice to creative work 'in-action', as we call it, and leave the reader with an embodied-material and affective sense of the studied world.

The unduly dichotomous picture of the relations creative actors maintain with the economic apparatus diversified during research in three different ways: a search for adequate problematic to articulate the data (1), a description of some tactics held significant (2), and an extension of the analysis of those daily operations through some ethnographic work in a designing studio (3).

If we now go back to the title of the thesis: "Creativity-in-action, arrangements and affects in the Creative Industries". In a word, we explain how tactical arrangements around creative work make up for the tensions experienced between creative and economic rationales. As a result of those arrangements, a *creative fuzziness* is maintained by creative actors to manage some personal space, and within such space reach a playground where acting creative will mean create *in action* -among material, embodied and affective forces.

In this regard, we provide an answer to Thompson et al. (2007) who point to a gap in understanding of the inner workings of creative firms, a "missing link between conception and consumption" (p.625). Attempts to investigate empirically the detailed nature of these supposedly essential tensions, the specifics of how the competing pillars interact, are not common in the research literature (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). With this approach, we might offer in-depth accounts of creative work that are closer to actual lived experiences, and develop finer understanding of what happens in and during emerging creative organizing more broadly.

In that respect, this Ph.D. hopes to contribute to the extant literature on creative industries from a processual perspective, by looking at the role of arrangements and affects along the development of creative processes. All those meaningful things are the key to understand creative work within economic constraints.

More broadly, this work hopes to contribute to the organizational creativity debate occurring within organizational studies. Whereas straightforward and disembodied treatments of creativity have rarely considered not only the significance of materiality, embodiment and affect, but also the eclectic entanglements between them, this is where we see a potential and relevant theoretical contribution.

Finally, third contribution would be to the emerging field of fashion studies. We contribute with deeper, 'from the inside' understanding of fashion's everyday organizing activities, beyond the shallow or frivolous surface of fashion. These, we hope, could interest both researchers and practitioners alike.

The ambition, for this research, is to understand how creative actors can create within surrounding systems and their various economic constraints. The focus is on the different practices (individual and collective) that actors involved into the creative process develop regarding the economic constraints, in order to create.

Research Questions:

- > How do actors involved into the creative process deal with the economic constraints?
- > What kind of practices do creative actors develop regarding those constraints?

The aim is to explain the concrete conditions of the making, the openness to new capacities, and expose what is usually hidden from mainstream research on the topic. The work tries to reveal the adjustments creative actors are engaging into in the detailed course of their actions. To that end, a literature review is firstly carried out to contextualise the constraints that surround creative actors in an economic frame. An empirical study (interviews and ethnography) is then conducted, in a creative industry that appeared to be very relevant regarding the issues at stake, the fashion industry.









# 1. MOTIVATION & FRAMING

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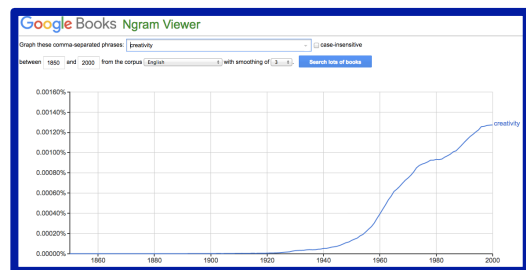
# 1 MOTIVATION & FRAMING

Creative actors, creative industries, creative processes...creativity is a rich and evocative notion that comprise multiple layers and diverse, contextual cultural and disciplinary-related associations. For that reason we choose here not to provide a 'complete' or 'true' representation of creativity, but rather to expose the various notions that gravitate around the concept, and what we understand by them within the scope of this research.

## 1.1 Unravel the definitions

Creativity is above all a catch-all word, used to foster generalized approval, "*so not only do we have creative industries, a creative economy, creative thinking, creative accountancy, but also a host of registered businesses and domain names which have incorporated creativity into their titles*" (Spencer, 2015: 112).

Ngram viewer is a linguistic application provided by Google and traces the evolution of the frequency of a word throughout time, in printed sources. A quick research on creativity leaves no doubt: creativity seems to be a very popular concept those days.



As a consequence it is nowhere and everywhere at the same time. It has been devalued through over-use (Spencer, 2015), and its meaning has undergone a series of re-evaluations, making it challenging to find any absolute definition. Aware of the fact that creativity remains impossible for us researchers or practitioners to ever fully experience, capture, manage, organize or govern, we might nevertheless account for the various psychological and sociological views of the notion.

### 1.1.1 Creativity- what does it mean, in the first place?

The word 'create' appeared in English as early as the XIVth century to indicate divine creation. However, its modern meaning as an act of human creation did not emerge until after the Enlightenment -XVIIIth century.

In psychological studies, creativity is something that can be taught and developed, and which is more widely distributed than typically believed. Located in specific parts of the brain, creativity is characterized by various attributes that can be trained by several techniques, such as lateral thinking, divergent thinking or also flexibility and openness to risk and serendipity (De Bono, 1967; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Runco, 2007).

Since Guilford's seminal lecture at the 1950's congress of the American Psychological Association, psychological studies of creativity have been flourishing (Reckwitz, 2014). Meanwhile, the growing use of the concept of creativity in popular and scholarly literature has been mostly based on an intrinsically 'positive' definition (Sgourev, 2016), where creativity happens to be the process of generating something new and valuable.

In a summary of scientific research into creativity, Mumford suggested: *"Over the course of the last decade, we seem to have reached a general agreement that creativity involves the production of novel, useful products"* (Mumford, 2003: 110). More recently, and in Sternberg's words (2011), creativity is depicted as the production of *"something original and worthwhile"*.

Yet, emphasizing the positive function of creativity necessarily draws attention away from the fact that *'any act of creativity is in its essence a deviation: from the established ways of doing things, from the routines, norms or expectations that govern much of our social life'* (Sgourev, 2016: 103). Indeed, being creative also implies *"escaping from existing perceptions and concepts to open up to new ways of looking at and doing things. It has to do with reconceptualising systems and ideas as well as creating new ones from scratch"* (Provost & Sproul, 1996: 103).

Although social psychologists, most notably Csikszentmihalyi (1996), have called for a more systemic approach to creativity that goes beyond the individual as a generator of novelty, it is mostly sociologists who advocate incorporating the social dimension of the creative process. Creativity is here so to say a basic requirement of the social (Joas, 1992).

Be it social interactions, social practices, communication or social processes, the impact of social relationships, norms and values on the emergence of original ideas and their recognition is of interest to sociology (Sgourev, 2016). Creativity is to be envisaged from a different angle compared with the ubiquitous psychological analyses of the phenomenon. Whereas in psychology one might be objectively creative, being creative is a very subjective notion in sociology, arbitrarily decided - socially and culturally.

Subsequently, the sociological approach to creativity is distinct in its assumptions. Creativity is not predetermined by personality and by individual traits but is supra-individual (Sgourev, 2016). It is not individuals that produce ideas but much more the network 'flow' through individuals (Collins 1998).

In its core, creativity is either way a response to opportunities, or to their lack. It develops at the interstices of social worlds, and the individual agency unfolds in a context of higher-level social processes, which provide or deny opportunities to be creative. As a very specific social and cultural constellation itself, creativity is a product of the social, above all in modern and postmodern times (Reckwitz, 2014).

Still, far from confining us in a description of successive creative states and conditions, psychological and cognitive research on creative work invite us to enrich our conception of action. As no theory alone captures the complexity of creativity, combining previous ideas from both sides helps us remember the undeniable role of personality (e.g. George and Zhou, 2001), peer networks (e.g. Collins, 1998) and the socio-cultural field (e.g. Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1984) in creativity. But what requires particular attention are the interdependencies between them—how personality traits interact with networks and field-level norms in shaping creative outcomes (Sgourev, 2016).

Within organizational studies, many studies refer to the work of Amabile (1988, 1996, 2013). Originally focusing on individual creativity, Amabile's research expanded to encompass individual within organizations. Her componential theory of creativity is grounded in a definition of

creativity as the production of ideas or outcomes that are both novel and appropriate to some goal.

Similarly, in this research we use the term creativity to both refer to the output (with unique and interesting qualities) and to the activity that generates the output (ie: creative thinking). Following on, a provisional definition of creativity can be found in the organizational studies literature with Plucker, Beghetto & Dow who present creativity as "*the interaction among aptitude, process and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context*" (2004: 90).

### 1.1.2 Creative industries - so hype.

The rhetoric of creativity encompasses specifically designated 'creative industries', and 'creatives' (Caves, 2000), as well as a much wider idea of 'the creative' at work in all kinds of organizations and occupations (Bilton, 2006). The focal point of this Ph.D. is creativity approached within systems and organizations - those much valued by sociologists - rather than individual creativity. Therefore, we focus on the creativity of actors within industries that are purportedly organized around the need for their outputs -and therefore their employees- to be creative.

By creative industry, we understand "*industries which are concerned with the creation, production and marketing of cultural or immaterial creative content*" (UNESCO definition). These industries "*go beyond cultural industries traditionally understood that are publishing, cinema, music, radio, television, performing arts and recently video games, they also include architecture, design, advertising, crafts, fashion or cultural tourism*" (loc.cit).

Facing a real craze, the hype around creativity needs to be put in context, and in particular related to ongoing government and corporate strategic responses to globalized challenges, in the contemporary knowledge economy. Whereas conventional economies trade actual commodities, physical products, money, or capital; the knowledge economy implies production, commodification, and economically beneficial use of a merely abstract entity -knowledge (Rosenthal, 2011).

Creative economies and industries can be considered subsets of this new economy living on thin air (Leadbeater, 2000). Perhaps in the most pronounced fashion, Florida (2002: 4) boldly claims



that creativity "*is now the decisive source of competitive advantage*". The current shift towards knowledge-based societies has turned creativity into a source of strategic advantage in the contemporary managerial and political lexicon.

In such a context, supporting and establishing the new becomes an issue of political regulation and planning. In an intensified way since the 1970s, a widespread and heterogeneous apparatus of creativity has been emerging in western Societies (Reckwitz, 2014). It crosses the boundaries of different social fields and gives them a form which not only encourages but mainly obliges to creativity. As a consequence, contemporary governmental policies -national, regional, industry-driven- have set out to extend, evaluate and monetise the creative (DCMS, 2001; Flew, 2012).

In that context of creativity rebranded as the engine of post-industrial economies, creativity and so-called creatives have become desirable, socially and economically. The figure of the creative as exceptional creator of innovation in modes of production and forms of living circulates today in various discourses of social transformation (Von Osten, 2011). Workplaces are specifically designed to attract and affirm creative talent (Hesmondhalgh, 2012). Consequently, the ideal creative may be imagined as a member of a smoothly-functioning team of passionate and diverse talents, a member of the '*new creative class*' (Florida, 2002).

In this context of aesthetization of economy and economization of aesthetics (Bouquillion, Mieg & Moeglin, 2013), creative industries have gained visibility in western societies. For a long time considered by public powers, scholars, and managers as apart; creative industries are nowadays understood as laboratories of organizational practices that should be studied and understood for inspiration.

### 1.1.3 Creative actors - cannot be heroes.

The chosen position for this Ph.D. is an interpretive one, by studying and understanding the perception that organizational actors have of their own creativity. But these actors are not in weightless conditions, they are embedded in a given structure. And here we are going back to those supra-individual influences highlighted by sociologists (Sgourev, 2016).



The analysis builds on the theoretical framework of the social embeddedness perspective on creativity (Burt, 2004; Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Godart, Shipilov & Claes, 2013; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). Although our level of observation is the organizational actor, the level of analysis is the organizational system. By definition, a system includes both components and interactions, and the 'whole' of the creative process must be viewed as much more than a simple sum of its parts (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010).

Many actors are usually involved in the creative process. Indeed, creators are the result of a long training and learning process, and behind great names of creation hides a multitude of creative actors whose roles and functions are diverse (Giusti, 2006). Although the importance of the single and unique creator has decreased with Howard Becker's work (1982), it seems as if it nowadays comes back under cover of notions such as leadership or entrepreneurship.

On the contrary, we understand creativity as a socialization process. The actors are understood within an organization, interplaying with each other and with networks, via their own practices. Those practices are either constrained or authorized by the organization. And the practices of ones interact with the practices of others. Organizations are understood as dynamic and interactive nexuses of arrangements rather than paragons of rationality.

Appropriately, the validity and genuine organizational value of the heroic approach has been much critiqued in recent years (Baer, 2010; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). This contributed to a tendentially increased recognition and popularity of more structural models of creativity, which substantiate collaboration and process-oriented organizational structures "*beyond individual, person-based approaches towards collective, process-based models*" (Bilton, 2010: 5).

Thus, we take as a room for manoeuvre to study not only individual, but also collective practices involved during the creative process. In that so, we depart from the 'lone genius' literature to discuss with the literature focusing on more architectural models of creativity. Rather than a solitary act, creativity is a complex social process where personality and identity at the individual level interact with structural factors at the level of the network and institutional fields (Sgourev, 2016).

Existing theories on the creative process in organization focus for instance on the interactions. Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin (1993), in line with Amabile's componential theory (1988), depict a

creative behaviour that depends on the characteristics of the group and of its individuals, interacting in a given environment. Organizational creativity is understood as an output that depends on interactions within the group.

A few years later, the evolutionary approach was provided by Ford (1996). The creative capacity of an organization is more than just individual inputs. Communication networks, internal and external, also count. Organizational settings are composed of intertwined group, organizational, institutional, and market domains. Intentional action and evolutionary processes that legitimize action interact to facilitate creativity (Ford, 1996).

These approaches all reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, the optimisation of creativity to meet organizational goals. Organizations have indeed been trying to find solutions to fruitfully implement creativity and balance the innate tensions between creativity, control, and organizational structures (Bilton, 2007). More recently, creativity has thus been examined as a process happening within an organization, adapting to its several constraints (Caves, 2000; Linstead, 2010; 2012).

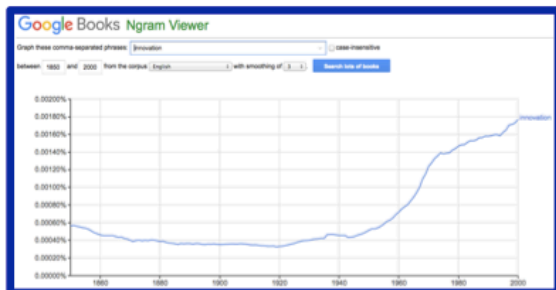
However, there are too few empirical studies to date that directly address the organizational issues that creative actors confront in creative industries (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). Critical scholars have increasingly paid attention to creative labour and have revealed issues about the forms of exploitation and inconsistency with which it is associated (Nixon and Crewe, 2004).

Still, various scholars point at the lack of critical appraisal of the creative rhetoric (McGuigan, 2009; Osborne, 2003; Steinert, 2003). Creativity within creative industries could more and more be apprehended in a non-functionalist perspective, by questioning the very often taken-for-granted and obvious nature of its definitions and measurement tools, and by revealing its characteristics of social object 'built' within games of multiple actors and legitimization issues.

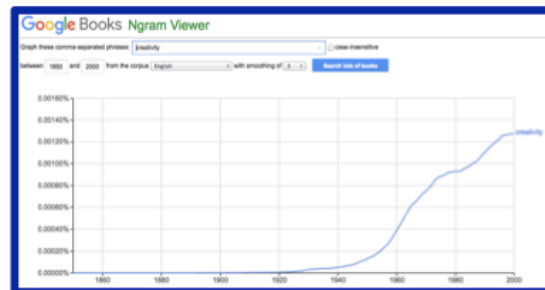
Then, understanding creativity means understanding the various systems that contribute to its development and manifestation: from the biological to the cultural, from individual expression to social dynamics (Glăveanu, 2010). The often confident promise of popular management books on 'managing creativity for success' have to be challenged by more local, minimal and contextual specified images. Consequently, this is a Ph.D about creative actors within creative industries, the mundane and the not-so-mundane, usually hidden from public view.

#### 1.1.4 Creative or innovative ?

##### Innovation



##### Creativity



In this research, we proved to be interested by the context of creativity at the organizational level, and the concept of creativity as defined by the generation of new and useful ideas for creative products, in the context of creative industries. The link with innovation then quickly develops. Evidently creativity has a strong affinity with innovation, so let's now turn to how we understand their interplay.

The fine line between creativity and innovation within organizations is blurry (Mumford, 2000). The two concepts are often used interchangeably in the literature. Consequently, it is important to analyse both concepts in the context of this research. Comparing the two Ngram viewers, we notice how innovation, like creativity, seems to be a very popular concept those days. The interest given to both notions has risen sharply around the 1970's.

Going back to the 21st-century-creative-fuss we mentioned earlier, we remember how creativity seems to be a term very much linked to late modernity (Reckwitz, 2014). It is not quite the same with the notion of innovation, which has been frequently cited for much longer than creativity - much older than 21st century buzz. Anyway, creativity and innovation constantly remain associated, both accepted as basic cultural norms in contemporary societies.

The United Nations (2008) outlined that creative industries were among the most dynamic emerging sectors in world trade by stating:

*"There is thus an economic aspect to creativity, observable in the way it contributes to entrepreneurship, fosters innovation, enhances productivity and promotes economic growth". (p. 11)*

Post-industrial organisations, understood as knowledge-based organisations, see their success and survival depend on creativity and innovation. As Jones and her colleagues underline, "*the central challenge of creative industries is ensuring continuous innovation*" (p.752). Subsequently, we might wonder where the fine line between both exactly is. Although creativity and innovation are distinct constructs (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), there is an emerging consensus that creativity has to do with the generating and communicating of meaningful new ideas and connections, and innovation has more to do with the use and implementation of them (Isaksen & Akkermans, 2011).

- *Creativity -upstream*

The role of creativity as a driver for innovation has been clearly identified (Jones et al., 2016). Designing, inventing, developing and/or implementing new ideas has its foundation in the creative process (Isaksen & Tidd, 2006; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993), and many say creativity precedes innovation (West, 2002). Correspondingly, creative industries are understood as innovation contexts (Jones et al., 2016). Creative actors are the originators of innovations, they are able to mobilize others, assemble resources to support them, build coalitions, develop organizational arrangements, and legitimize the innovations within the prevailing order (Patriotta & Hirsch, 2016).

Creativity and innovation can be regarded as overlapping constructs between two stages of a process, namely idea generating and implementation. So we understand innovation cannot take place without creativity. However, there can be, on the other hand, a purely creative organization without innovation, in the sense of creativity for its own sake (Rosenthal, 2011). And even while approaching creativity as aiming for innovation, there can also be some creative work that never 'converts the try', meaning never succeeds in coming into the creative industries market.

As creative as a given work can be, uncertainty rules and this may at times lead to dead-ends -on the market. Creativity is innovation-in-the-making, if we might say so. While being an attempt at innovation, it is sometimes not sufficient to engage with it -or not interested to do so. Therefore, we understand that innovation is generally recognized as the exploitation of a creative idea with an economic intention.

- *Innovation -downstream*

"Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things."

Theodore Levitt-American Economist

Appropriately, definitions of innovation implicitly or explicitly include the notion of creative (novel and useful) ideas being successfully implemented by a larger group. In Amabile's words (1988:126), "*Innovation is built on creative ideas as the basic elements. Organizational innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization*". The term 'implementation' is used broadly to encompass elements of developing ideas and putting them to use.

Continuing this line of thought, West and Farr (1990) define innovation as follows: "*the intentional introduction and application within a role, group or organization of ideas, processes, products or procedures, new to the relevant unit of adoption, designed to significantly benefit the individual, the group, organization or wider society*". It appears that the context in which a new idea, product, service or activity is implemented determines whether it can be regarded as an innovation within that specific context.

And there lies an essential part of the definition: the audience. Innovation involves "*teaching audiences something new: a new symbol, a new form, a new mode of presentation*" (Becker, 1982: 66). In their search for market success, creative professionals are faced with audiences looking for products that are novel and able to entertain, surprise and provoke (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). In a sense, a given innovation is the story of some creative work succeeding on market.

As previously presented, this Ph.D. focuses on the potential tensions between creativity and economy. Creativity is the first step, associated to ideation, followed by -if any- innovation. We want to focus here on creativity, as the tensions appear to be maximal at the beginning of the process and innately fade along it: organizations are always, in the end, delivering an output, making tensions pull away or at least settle down onto something.

So the more we progress in the process, the more the paradox is solved by the organization which is, *in fine*, always delivering a product. Most current definitions of innovation do include the development and implementation of new ideas. But what is of interest to us is the creative process *behind/before* innovations, the development and the production of creative work, rather

than its concrete implementation. For that reason, we chose to focus on creativity and will refer to creativity, and not innovation, in the Ph.D.

In the following section the notion of creativity is discussed and examined through its relation with economy. This is when the political enters on stage. What we understand, throughout the review, is how such a term -'creative'- can be constructed by various practices and politics. We draw upon diverse and varying theoretical discussions to make sense of the relation. By so doing, we finally develop our own approach to this blurry and slippery notion of creativity.

## 1.2 The Creativity critical debate

Multiple theoretical discussions are mobilised and identified as needed perspectives that work to challenge and complement each other, and thus reveal the multiple faces and understandings of creativity. This genealogy of creativity will help us outline its constant shifting to finally stabilize our own working vision of creativity, one that is tactical.

### 1.2.1 The too-obvious contradiction between creative work and economic demands.

Following this line of thought, the creative actor is then the opposite of his/her business counterpart, whether it pertains to the identity, discourses or logics of action (Flew, 2012). Koivunen (2009) reveals the contradiction between the two figures that are 'the genius' and 'the manager', the 'bohemian-artist' versus the 'conservative organisation-man'. Caves (2000) has also accounted for the inherent contradiction between creative work and humdrum commerce:

*"The entrepreneur who organizes purely humdrum production faces this problem: Can I recruit inputs needed to turn out a given product at a cost less than what buyers will pay for it? In creative activities, the good news for the entrepreneur is that creative inputs come cheaply. The bad news is that the traits of the product and the terms of employment of the creative inputs must be negotiated at the same time, and with persons unwilling and perhaps unable to precommit their creative choices"* (Caves, 2000: 5).

Creative industries have to face tensions as they must simultaneously articulate trade constraints with creativity. This intrinsic contradiction of creative industries is reflected into the creative process, as it is translated into a dilemma for creative actors who have to deal with economic values and creative values.

Several scholars mention the gap between managerial tools and creative priorities. The underlying assumptions of the two areas that are creativity and economy would be contradictory and clash violently (Koivunen, 2009). If we are to believe the traditional textbooks of management, business world would be dominated by rationality, planning and control (Koivunen & Rehn, 2009).

The creative and the business sub-systems have different interests and priorities, creative contributions are combined with more monotonous contributions. But agreements that bring together these contributions are intrinsically problematic: creative actors defend their points of view, and approval remains uncertain until all costs have been covered.

Flew (2012) talks about the unpredictable nature of creativity in terms of financial gain, and how organizations position themselves with the sole aim to manage, without actually resolving, the uncertainty and risks issues. He highlights the dispute between creative ideals and risks that markets and their flexibility involve, especially with the 'winner takes all' system of creative industries.

As a consequence of those far-off *professional ethos*, creative people have a negative vision on the notion of management (Paalumäki & Virtaniemi, 2009), or even reject the association of their art to the market, at the risk of tarnishing its purity (Heikkilä, 2008). Becker (1982) depicts creative actors as “mavericks”, unique extreme cases who violate established conventions in a given creative industry.

By adopting an economy-oriented discourse, companies express the regulative ideal of a managerial creative. Creativity in this case is seen as a process, which means it can be managed and structured, along with deadlines and therefore more efficient. This is problematic because it fails to address a few assumptions. For instance, it presumes that creative processes are orderly and dismisses the potential for disruption or disagreement, which arguably is essential and an unpredictable part of the creative process.

Creativity here is understood as an efficiency-enhancing tool, simply put into the general toolbox of management, where its use is determined, as for the rest, by the shareholder value. Bilton reflects on some of the subtleties and tensions within that realm, stating it as such :

*"So creativity has to be something that is different from what's happened before, but it also has to be, to add value to solve a problem. But what is interesting is there is a sense that those two tendencies work against each other a little bit. If you are too new, then you start to become too far off, move too far away from the problem. But if you are too fixed into the idea of solving a problem, you're less likely to think laterally and come up with new ideas. So I became interested in this bisociative idea of creativity...the idea that in order to be creative, you need to be able to do two quite different, even contradictory things simultaneously"* (cited in Cain & Henriksen, 2017: 2)

Jones, Anand & Alvarez (2005) also refer to a certain tension, while examining the link between what they call “manufactured authenticity” and creative voice. They talk about a dynamic tension between on the one hand authenticity seen as an individual’s creative voice (ability to resolve problems in unique and distinctive ways), and on the other hand authenticity carefully crafted to create a *personae of an artist*, with a view to attract the attention of the customers, critics, gatekeepers and other artists.

On that topic also, Linstead (2010) worked on the understanding of the historical tension between creative employees and their employers, and the continuity of contradiction. He mentions the ambivalence of the relation between commercialization and creativity. Organizations value creativity but at the same time devise ways to kill it. Linstead mentions commodification and “the dilemma of commodification” that creative artists experience, working in a commercial system.

Finally, some other scholars have highlighted the organizational constraining forces of those economic systems. Amabile et al. (1996) and Wynder (2007) found that organizational forces might decrease the creators' intrinsic motivation and sense of freedom which are decisive in high-creativity projects. These forces also shape creativity by restricting the activities of creative individuals or teams as shown by Moeran (2009). When creativity is crowded out from work through economic and managerial practices prioritizing predictability and control, *"risk, play, desire, and adventure are lost"* (de Certeau, 1997 -cited by Hjorth, 2005: 397).

But this question of dealing between the two rationales becomes even more significant, when it pertains to the current context of a blurring of boundaries between creative and economic values. While in previous literature the polarization between creativity and economics was sharply delineated, in other studies the relationship is multidimensional and hence more complex.



*A blurring of boundaries between the two.*

As Bilton (2007) puts it "*boundaries and constraints are not merely a challenge or stimulus but an integral part of the creative process*" (2007: 79). Other studies outline the more positive aspect of some external forces on creativity. Ford (1996), Elsbach & Hargadon (2006), and Stobbeleir, Ashford & Buyens (2011) emphasized the active role of managers in creating the encouraging environment and providing feedback that creators need.

Acknowledge for the 'uncreative' processes and activities that take place before and after the creative act reveals that creativity is not all about being this kind of "*inspired, full-on, always-on genius*" (Bilton, 2007: 80). An encouraging environment might include various resources that sustain creativity in organizations (for example environmental resources in Harvey, 2014; social resources in Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003).

So what we observe is an interspersion of the different rationales. Jeffcutt & Pratt (2002) refuse what they call « the process of essentialising dualisms ». They encourage avoiding the traps of the commonly repeated notion that creativity and economy are oxymoronic. Indeed, the interactions between creative-oriented teams and business-oriented teams are many, and it would actually precisely be from these interactions that creativity could come to light (Vilén, 2009).

In that case, the creative tension intrinsically carries some dynamics that are necessary for creation, leading to new combinations. Dichotomies must be treated like an inherent part of an on going process in which movement to create is created (Koivunen, 2009). Guillet de Monthoux, in his book The Art Firm (2004), advocates to collapse the art-economy boundary by demonstrating its historical permeability and performance.

Simply binary oppositions are not sufficient in the "*dilemma of commodification*" (Linstead, 2010). Too much is emergent, fragmented and non-hierarchical, Linstead explains; and as a consequence authority is often elusive. Becker notes how sometimes focus is guided by looking for trouble, "*for it is only in trouble that the forms of cooperation necessary to make art will be found*" (1982: 16). Flexibility might be needed as well. A creative slack will allow creative professionals to design within a perimeter of vagueness and ambiguity, necessary to create (Cohendet & Simon, 2007).

\*

Historically, artists have always had to earn a living in some way or another. In Renaissance Italy, the Catholic Church commissioned paintings and sculptures from particular artists (Koivunen, 2009). In 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, royal families employed artists in their palaces, while in the following century wealthy merchants also began to patronize artists. The interplay between the two is by no means new. In the continuity, nowadays it requires reconciliation of the expression of creative values with the economics of mass entertainment (Lampel, Lant, and Shamsie, 2000).

Nowadays, the key feature of creative industries is not only that creative goods and services are produced, but also that their production is embedded in a context of economic use (Eikhof, 2007). Creativity, both for mavericks and integrated professionals, is a social activity where the gifted person needs collaborative support to produce and diffuse works of art (Becker, 1982; Brass, 1995). The inspiration of talented creative actors reach consumers' hands -eyes, ears- only with the aid of other inputs -the "humdrum commerce" mentioned by Caves - that respond to ordinary economic incentives.

With all due respect to romantics, the collective dimension of creation is present in every industry of creation. Becker (1982) describes these actor networks and their influences on creation throughout the concept of "world of arts". He gives the example of the importance of the butler, who wakes up the writer Trollope, in XIXth century. Far from the traditional image of the creative individual, we understand the butler contributes to creation, in a certain manner, as he participates in triggering the creative energy of Trollope:

*"It was my practice to be at my table every morning at 5:30 a.m; and it was also my practice to allow myself no mercy. An old groom, whose business it was to call me, and to whom I paid £,5 a year extra for the duty, allowed himself no mercy. During all those years at Waltham Cross he was never once late with the coffee which it was his duty to bring me. I do not know that I ought not to feel that I owe more to him than to any one else for the success I have had. By beginning at that hour, I could complete my literary work before I dressed for breakfast."*  
Anthony Trollope quoted in Becker, 1982, p. 27.

Becker thus demonstrates that creation relies on a collective-action line, where the creative individual sits in the middle of a network of actors that constitute the "art worlds". In that perspective, the creative actor is not an exceptional individual with tremendous ideas, but rather a part of a labour system that can be analysed. For example, the generic at the end of a movie, which describes the individual contribution of the different professions, is an example of the

organisation of labour as initiated in the film industry. The 'uncreative' activities surrounding creativity then become vital to the creative process. As Bilton underlines:

*"It is important to think of a way of articulating all the bits that are not about pure ideation of the creative process. It involves trying to acknowledge those other parts of the process. And then at an organizational level, it's recognizing that the person who appears to be making no creative contribution to a team might actually be really important. It might be that their presence makes other people be creative. Or that they're very good at recognizing other people's ideas and moving them on just a bit in the way they respond or ask another question...it is an acknowledgement of what's going on"* (cited in Cain & Henriksen, 2017, p.4).

\*

While trying to propose new genres or new categories of creative goods, firms must bear in mind that most products in creative industries succeed by differentiating rather than by being revolutionary (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). Alvarez, Mazza et al. (2005) talk about "optimal distinctiveness". Actors need both inclusion to get resources and differentiation to obtain acknowledgement for their talents. Academic inquiries have emphasised the critical role of a range of business activities and players (e.g., dealers, agents, production companies, distributors) as complementary to the creative endeavour in producing and getting creative work to public (Caves, 2000; Hirsch, 1972; White and White, 1993).

When it comes to the practical business of creating and selling creative goods, firms must proceed with both polarities in mind. Undeniably, a balance has to be found, as too much economic concern can kill creativity and vice versa. If firms pursue the goal of mass entertainment they should not lose sight of artistic values. If artistic values dominate, economic survival dictates that market realities cannot be ignored indefinitely.

According to Le Theule (2010), the two worlds must be reconciled, as there cannot be any organization dealing with creation without management. Bourdieu also reminds us that 'creative industries' is not such an oxymoron: "*culture is interested and economics is cultural*" (cited in Swartz & Zolberg, 2004: 6). Any creative work needs a creator and a set of materials and human resources. For creativity to exist and be sustainable, there must be a group of receivers that recognize it and carry it out. The manager is part of this human organization, with its tools.

Economy and aesthetics might then become conversant (or not) within organizations (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). Tensions should not be avoided, Austin and his colleagues explain. They

are ever present, but there should not be any ascendancy, and this is what makes and maintains the relationship a conversation. Conversations discourage any dominance in such a way that economy and aesthetics might constitute, at one point in time, an "ensemble" (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). Understood as a conversationally intensified sociality, an ensemble prepares a space for collective becoming. Conversation might then be supported and nurtured within the organization, through its conversational practices and abilities, and through the actions of its members.

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In light of the reflections presented above, we now understand that fusion between economy and creativity becomes the daily experience of creative sectors. Due to their nature, creativity and business may call for loose coupling solutions where creative and business sub-systems are distinctive yet responsive. Loose coupling as a pattern allows behavioural discretion and enhances experimentation and innovation (Orton & Weick, 1990), which are essential for creativity (Alvarez, Mazza et al., 2005).

With this in prospect, it is interesting to notice that the term « hybrid » is used by several scholars: Selwood (2009) and Eikhof (2009) show the hybrid nature of creative production, especially in what is considered the « pure art » sector (theatre for instance). Here creativity is as much in the juggling of resources and norms as it is on stage or in galleries. Koivunen (2009) speaks about "the hybrids", referring to the individuals "*who have a foot in both areas*" (p. 27).

According to Rehn (2008), creative fields themselves become more and more hybrid. He takes the example of new music bands that choose self-management. Similarly, Toma et al. (2011) use the expression "entreprises artistes" ("artist companies") to refer to a new type of business held by artists. Artist should not wait for the charity of those who are willing to support the arts, but rather merge into the business world.

But this relationship between economy and creation is also, in part, a question of the beliefs and understandings that prevail about these forms of making. The relationship exists as much in narratives and conceptualizations that persists to this day as it does on the studio floor. In that context of interspersion, some critical scholars offer an alternative of a narrative, and go further by denouncing a prevalence of the economic practices on the background of capitalist issues.

Those critical ideas hold potential in further developing our theoretical and practical understanding of creativity.

### 1.2.2 A neo-liberal comprehension of creativity

Although it is impossible to entirely escape the structure within which we actually think, or the context within which we very are, what is essential is the awareness of the foundations of our thoughts (De Cock & Rehn, 2009). Having said that, the notion of creativity is neither neutral, nor self-evident or positive. It is always affiliated to a moral and ideological context (De Cock & Rehn, 2009).

*"When the arts and culture per se become the focal point for capitalization, when culture broadly becomes absolutely imperative to economic policy (...), when art is instrumentalized so that it begins to provide a model for working lives, and labour processes, **what in the past was considered the icing on the cake, has now become a main ingredient of the cake**". (DCMS, 2001. Quoted in Mc Robbie, 2011. Our bold).*

In the mid-1990s, a messianic rhetoric from both government and industry attempted to redefine creativity, creative economy and creative industry. Political speeches became performative speech acts. Every corporate activity had to acquire and earn the adjective 'creative' – including accounting, financial engineering and management. The creative industries "hype", as Mokre (2011) calls it, followed, and still follows, four principles.

First, narratives about the creative industries work from the assumption that creativity is an important economic factor. Second, all the definitions of the creative industries are too broad to really seize the concept. Third, statistical data -based on those broad definitions- is raised to prove that creative industries are not only a crucial economic sector but also one with limitless possibilities. Finally, consequential positive prospects for employment, economic growth, and success in international competition are related to creativity, with profits and work satisfaction promised.

On the public scene, no effort of differentiation seems to be operated between economic and cultural aspects, as we may read in the Report from the Council of the European Union (2006-

quoted in Minichbauer, 2011. Our bold):

*"Creativity is an important source for competitiveness in a knowledge-based society (...). It is important, however, **not to see culture and the market, creativity and competition as contradictory**. On the contrary, creativity and innovation need to be present in all policy areas."*

Steinert (2003) and Osborne (2003) talk about the commodification of creation, analysing the creative industries' ideology praised by some experts (intellectuals for instance). The present-day "creative turn" would only be a smokescreen that hides a true contemporary indoctrination (Osborne, 2003).

Going back to the eighteenth century, creativity was at that time defined as the central characteristic of the artist. In the emerging capitalist form of society, the artist then became an 'exceptional subject' with the concepts of 'aptitude' and 'property' combined with the traditionally male notion of genius (Von Osten, 2011). In this light, conceptions of 'creative talent' and what it meant to be creative served bourgeois individualism, as a more general description of activity which meant to transcend or elude economic determinants (Von Osten, 2011).

McGuigan (2009) goes as far as to suggest that creative industries nowadays are a demonstration of neo-liberal 'cool capitalism', where expressions of protest and rebellion are incorporated again in a form of cultural capitalism (Rifkin, 2000). The creative 'potential' gave rise to power, and is now a micro-political operation that consists in making its potential "*into the major fuel of an insatiable hyper-machine for the production and accumulation of capital*" (Rolnik, 2011: p. 29).

Within this new creative era, the paternalistic public hand is replaced by the invisible hand of the free market (Mokre, 2011). It is no longer "*the logic of the market versus a broad access to culture*", but rather "*the market provides broad access to cultural goods*" (Minichbauer, 2011). Creative industries can be described as a 'winner takes all' system, which implies harmful consequences: a creative product becomes N°1 and so a monopoly is established, which sustains the interests of big industries like music, film or fashion (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002).

Interestingly, we notice that the discourse of creative self-realization is marked in its preference for the US psychology language, and its evasion of the critical vocabularies associated with Europeans (Von Osten, 2011). Indeed, the intellectual field of critical aesthetics -associated with

the Marxist philosophical tradition- undermines this ideology of individual creativity and disputes the myth of genius. In the late 1970s, the discourse of creative self-realization was still an achievement of emancipation from the markings of Fordist and disciplinary subjectivity. Fortunately today, after almost three decades, we are critically able to observe this rationale of cognitive capitalism operating within subjectivities.

#### *A Prevalence of economic practices on creative practices*

Following this line of thought, economic practices are omnipresent in the organisation. The intervention on the creative process happens for instance through copyright laws, which undermine the creative subject with the transfer of rights to large corporations (Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Several authors notice the current incursion of management into creativity. Boltanski & Chiapello (2005) or also Bilton (2009) have denounced the way employers tend to minimize the alienation of creative people through “soft management” techniques. Nixon (2009) explains that industries shape a particular type of creative subjects through their organizational structure, recruitment process and culture. However, nobody knows what will constitute a success:

*"The fact that the artist works outward to realize and reify an inner vision partly explains why nobody knows. The artist does not know and cannot pre-test whether her creative vision will prove equally compelling to others. Still worse, she cannot tell whether her conception has been successfully extracted from her inner vision and turned into an external creative product. The quality of the vision and the effectiveness of its realization are both up for grabs." (Caves, 2000: 5)*

The creative worker constantly has work in-progress, his/her projects continually remain unfinished and are actually impossible to finish if apprehended as constant research. The contrast is sharp with the contemporary image of creativity according to which the creative process leads to productions and results, measured per unit of capital. In that context, creative goods are impressively varied and are apparently free of direct censorship, but nevertheless exhibit a strong tendency towards uniformity (Ray, 2011). In that respect, creativity should stay the result of a personal working and thought process, not formatted by a well-known -capital-oriented- manner of working and thinking.

Capitalism and its creative imperative (Jeanes, 2006) do not inhibit the development of ideas, but rather force a process that has to take place within the "dispositif of creativity" depicted by Reckwitz (2014). In late modernity, this dispositif is a widespread constellation which systematically encourages and produces creativity. Creativity now is not only a universal requirement of the social, but also a social, cultural and historical product, intimately linked to modernity (Reckwitz, 2014). Our present time would be structured by a particular version of what Reckwitz calls a "social regime of the new", characterized by aesthetic practices and processes of aestheticization.

Those previous arguments parallel to Eikhof & Haunschild's ideas (2007). Eikhof and Haunschild make the distinction between on the one hand, the economic practices and on the other hand artistic practices, both as backgrounds of two types of creative resources. They base their argument on Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977, 1990) according to which individual practices are driven by specific rationales. Resources contributing to creative production contain at the same time cultural capital and social capital, and are supported by economic practices (for social capital) and artistic practices (for cultural capital).

But the economic practices (which exist because of the launch on the market of the creative work) endanger the artistic practices and thereby the resources the latter imply for creative production. Indeed, the quantifiable business rationale would be stronger and more robust than the artistic rationale, which is more vague and non-measurable, and this would inevitably provoke the domination of the first one on the second one (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

Other creative industries studies on non-profit professional theatres (Voss et al., 2000) or also on Hollywood's film studios (Epstein, 2005; Mezias & Mezias, 2000) have demonstrated that the tensions between creative and financial plans are most of the time settled by the domination of one specific force -the pursuit of financial security and stability. As Epstein notes of Hollywood's main studios: "*The main task of today's studio is to collect fees for the use of intellectual properties they control...It is now essentially a service organization, a dream clearinghouse rather than a dream factory*" (2005: 107. Cited in Tschang, 2007).

In that context, we might wonder about the working conditions associated with creative production.



### 1.2.3 Everyday realities of creative work

Creative work is increasingly recognised as work, with governmental technologies accounting for creative subjects – artists, technicians, entrepreneurs –, in data sets where earnings and occupations can be surveyed. In oppositional mode, critical scholars have increasingly paid attention to creative labour and have raised questions about the forms of exploitation and exclusion with which it is associated (Nixon & Crewe, 2004; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013). They frame creative work in relation to other kinds of exploitative or precarious work, while maintaining a focus on the distinctive features of the creative (Gill, 2002).

Creative actors are then depicted as part of a bigger economic apparatus that influences their creative work. Raunig (2011) describes those creative actors as prisoners, employees of the institutions of creative industries. For instance, knowledge is accumulated during the unpaid hours but not remunerated separately, and consistently called on and used in the context of paid work (Lorey, 2011). Those who create find themselves confined within structures in which their creativity is repressed by the very form of dependent work- labour relationships and networks. Yet an increasing number of people work in the creative industries and want to work there (Mokre, 2011). Artists, inventors and "digital bohemians" have acquired a special and almost magical status that is remote from the somewhat perilous and short-term daily realities of most work in those industries (Linstead, 2012).

As previously seen, the discourse of creativity is marked by its evasion of the critical vocabularies. This entails the suspension of critique in favour of hope, with expectation that there will be some tangible reward in such a form that it will promise both status and security. Even if they create for work, creative people may accept low pay, extremely demanding working conditions, not to mention precarious employment (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2009). As Raunig (2011) underscores, "*enjoy your precarity!*" is the new command behind the balancing revalorizations of the contemporary creative industries.

If such a command is to stick, it needs "*appeal, allure, mystique*" (Raunig, 2011). This is when the figure of the creative rebel intervenes, alongside with self-exploitation, which becomes trendy. Creative industries generate role models for people who are to just become what the system needs. The majority of creative actors, originally apprehended as resisting, then turn into educated employees.

Let's take the example of freelance people. Freelance people consider themselves lucky enough to get a flexible schedule, but as a consequence have no time off. Freelance arrangements become normative, no day is like the last, and labor itself becomes a lifestyle to consume (Mears, 2011). In that context, unstable working conditions are not only instituted, but most of all creative actors desire them and understand them as a free and autonomous decision (Lorey, 2011).

This informed and chosen acceptance of precarious employment conditions can be explained by the need to go further than the modern and patriarchal division in reproduction and wage labour -in the fordist tradition. Lorey (2011) calls those creative workers the "voluntarily precarized virtuosos", explaining how such workers accept those working conditions because of the belief in their own freedoms and autonomies, associated with "*the fantasies of self-realization*" (p. 87). As Mokre explains, creative workers have internalized the difficulty of their choice. She suggests the concept of "governcreativity", to understand what is at stake here. Creative workers feel as a kind of *avant-garde* and pride themselves on not getting stuck in classical jobs (9-to-5), although some probably spend a 9-to-9 working day.

The dogma of neoliberal times is here understood as successfully implemented, as a form of governmentality (in Foucault's terms): "*Bear the risk for your own life and be proud of it!*" as Mokre summarizes it (2011, p.117). Passion becomes an excuse, with a spirit of sacrifice that originates in the love of the profession. The behaviour of creative actors is not regulated by a disciplinary power but by governmental techniques established in the neoliberal notion of a self-regulating market (Von Osten, 2011; Mokre, 2011). These techniques do not discipline or punish, but rather rally and encourage. There lies the trick.

Yet in reality creative workers struggle to work. One example of this could be the applications for funding (public support). Those applications are complicated and time-consuming, and as a consequence often won by successful and big companies. Still, the "must-try harder" ethos (Mc Robbie, 2011) supports patterns of self-blame rather than critical claims. "Disciplined creativity", as Raunig & Ray call it (2007), implies that the independent artist is an agent of modularization rather than a site of autonomy. The creative ones are released into a specific sphere of freedom, described by Raunig as "*where flexibility becomes a despotic norm, precarity of work becomes the rule, the dividing lines between work and leisure time blur just like those between work and unemployment*" (2011: 199).

In such a context, the new role model of creative worker shall be as flexible and contingent as the market is. The distinctions between paid and unpaid work are blurred (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011), and unpaid positions such as internships may be institutionalised as a way to get a foot in

the door of the industry (Siebert & Wilson, 2013). The language of workplace rights is frequently marginalised or silenced altogether, and forms of collective organising such as unionisation are often unavailable or rejected (Blair et al., 2003).

As a consequence, identifying as artists with a vocation, creative professionals often work in what they see as non-creative jobs, perhaps part-time or intermittently, to fund their creative practice (Menger, 1999) and wait for the one big hit or big job (Mears, 2011; Von Osten, 2011).

Hence we understand that these precarious working conditions do not imply more politicization from creative workers. Virno (2004: 51) talks about "de-politicized" workers. New ways of political organisation adapted to the working conditions of creative workers should be imagined (Mokre, 2011). Gaps and openings for critical autonomy still exist, although the dominant system is consistently mending these gaps (Ray, 2011). Creative workers, seeking autonomy, are more and more prevented from any practice "*that could change the dominant trend or aim radically beyond it*" (Ray, 2011: 172).

Nevertheless, as in any hierarchical system, the dominant process is weakened by its inherent tensions and antagonisms. A possibility of resistance, as Raunig argues (2011), is inherently renewed in creative industries nowadays. Spaces of difference and resistance try to emerge, and we will come back to that.

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So this overview helped us understand what constitutes the reality of daily tensions surrounding creative actors. It documents the struggles of new economy workers who, as Ross indicated, in their "cool hip-hop heaven" had to come to terms with the price to pay for their no-collar jobs (Ross, 2004). The hype of the creative industries is embedded in a certain neoliberal political and economic paradigm, which entails the economisation of creative practices. The economical background depicted reflects on the notion of rationalization defined by Tschang (2007: 989) as "*the predominant focus on business interests or productivity-oriented production processes, usually at the expense of creativity*".

The evolution of creative industries, as Tschang argues, tend to be driven by a deeper, continuing tension between forces for creativity and those for rational (e.g.: business) interests. And this rationalization context has consequently reduced the individual's creative scope. Tensions appear, such as the tensions between profit maximization and creative forces (Glynn, 2000); and those

between individuals and broader structures, when individuals assert themselves during the creative value-creation process (Lampel et al., 2000).

So now we know that creativity within organisations is not free play. Throughout our work, we will talk about those rationalization forces to refer to the encompassing context surrounding creative labor within creative industries. Play occurs within and in response to constraints (Linstead, 2012). Our central inquiry relies on the handling of these constraints and tensions by the most concerned of the story, the creative actors themselves. Although the previous studies recognize such situations, they do not provide much insight into how the co-existing forces are sustained. How is creative work maintained in such a context?

Due to these tensions, the question of the discretionary space left for creative work arises, together with the practices developed by creative actors seeking this personal space. It is not clear how the existence of multiple forces can translate into a certain stability for creative actors, more precisely in the work they accomplish through their day-to-day activities. Building on the insights outlined above, our aim in this research is to consider how particular practices can allow the daily work of creative actors within lucrative organizations. A few scholars have already written on that topic, and in what follows we unfold their reflections.

#### 1.2.4 Daily practices associated to creativity within organisations

As we have seen, current controversies exist around the nature of the relationship between the different poles. For some, bringing together economy and creativity means tensions and incommensurable forces, for others it means compatibilities and nourishing tensions. The debate is not settled and as such reveals a favourable context for a study. The question of how contracts work between creativity and commerce is nested within the larger question of the relationships between creative actors and commercial inputs (Caves, 2000). We are now shifting our focus on the reactions of creative actors with regard to the potential tensions, pressures and constraints encountered during the creative process within rationalization forces (Tschang, 2007).

On that topic, some scholars approached creativity as governed by deliberate decision and strategies (Bilton, 2011). For all its apparent contrariness and complexity, creativity would not be just an inspiration or a spontaneous discovery, but a much more conscious and deliberate management process (De Fillippi, Grabher & Jones, 2007). Being creative then implies the

management and solving of paradoxes that require to deal with seemingly contradictory practices (De Fillippi, Grabher & Jones, 2007; Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000). Below, the following scholars illustrate the complexity surrounding the many and scattered practical activities attached to creativity within creative industries.

Creative actors have to balance needs for legitimacy by complying with norms, while making efforts to create unique identities (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). The adoption of creative ideas in a domain leans on gatekeepers that have the right to make decisions about what is acceptable (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Glăveanu, 2010). It is not enough for creative workers to imagine new ideas as they also need to incorporate them into actuality, through acts of agency in the here-and-now, and this remains a challenge (Baer, 2012). Bringing novel and creative ideas – different from what is usual – requires that the gatekeepers of this 'usual', individuals that often invented and benefit from existing ways of doing things, embrace new ways of doing things. Unsurprisingly, this often creates resistance (Baer, 2012; Hjorth, 2012). Since established decision-makers have to weigh up the benefits of investing in risky new endeavours over other investment options, creative actors need to present them with a clear case to pursue the development of their ideas.

Reflecting upon the 'how' of creativity and its levers within creative industries, Jones and her colleagues (2016) explore the various roles of creative actors within those industries. They identify different positions that reproduce, modify or create new conventions: mainstreams, mavericks, misfits and amphibians. By identifying so, they insist on agency, and more specifically on the agents' trajectories that might exist among those different positions, leading to new creative practices.

Creative professionals should not be entirely mainstreams, nor entirely mavericks (Slavich & Castelluci, 2016). It is a strategic fluctuation. Patriotta & Hirsch (2016) underline the role of amphibians, who know how to operate both inside and outside, becoming intermediaries. Able to compromise alongside boundaries, amphibians make that link between the various forms of agency through synthesis (Patriotta & Hirsch, 2016). In the end, the greatest creative productions would come out of the interstices between positions.

Alvarez, Mazza et al. (2005) also answer this issue around tensions through agency. They rely on the social psychological notion of “optimal distinctiveness” which states that “*social identity is*

*viewed as reconciliation of opposing needs for assimilation and differentiation from others?* (Brewer, 1991). Their work is about the cinema field and they talk about “*art and business as two complementary forces that forge the iron cage of the cinema field*”. According to them, while creativity puts pressures for exclusivity and idiosyncratic style and movies, business lends its support to film directors capable of attracting audience and of generating profits.

"Optimally distinctive" film directors are those who reconcile the need for creative differentiation and audience appeal (Alvarez, Mazza et al., 2005). Mavericks, as an extreme case of differentiation, are usually unable to get audience appeal, or if they manage to achieve that, they tend to lose their unique status (Becker, 1982). Integrated professionals, as an extreme case of assimilation, tend to give up idiosyncrasy for inclusion and legitimacy in the field, and yield rather conventional artwork. Consequently, optimal distinctiveness provides a more balanced approach to action in an isomorphic field that reconciles the need for idiosyncrasy with the need to get resources from the field, in order to keep producing artwork.

Keeping up with the cinema field, three practices are put in place by creative actors to reach optimal distinctiveness (Alvarez, Mazza et al., 2005).

First, film directors couple art and business in several domains, in order to increase control. This is called role-consolidation. Second, film directors enlarge control and involvement through role-versatility (see also Menger, 1999). The creative person's working time and earnings are divided among the creative activity itself (film directing in this case), art-related work (e.g., management tasks in artistic organizations), and non-art work (any occupation, not related directly or indirectly with film making, mainly as a source of income). Third, film directors form long-term partnerships with trusted and committed producers and sometimes establish their own production companies. The latter is clearly an inclusion mechanism as production companies, formally registered entities, are recognised as legitimate players in the field, entitled to get bank loans or subsidies and to negotiate and sign binding contracts with other players in the field.

But there's one limit that arises from getting away from the expected iron cage through those practices. Ironically, it's the forging of own iron cage. Alvarez, Mazza et al. (2005) outline how uniqueness, over time, may become a restricted space made up of own rules and standards that constrain creativity. By increasingly controlling the coupling of creativity and business, film directors ultimately may forge their own iron cage.

In the same vein, Guy Julier (2009) considers how designers actually play with the two forms of identity (management & creativity) in order to legitimize their practice. As good design is difficult to quantify, it is by appropriating managerial codes and rhetoric, and by re-positioning themselves literally and metaphorically from “design studio” to “design office”, that designers can valorize their work to sceptical clients.

On that topic also, Eikhof & Haunschild (2007) raise the question of the potential means of safeguarding artistic practices. Professional creative artists have to find a way to articulate the two kinds of practices (economic and artistic, both as backgrounds of creative resources) in order to ward off the endangerment of the artistic for the benefit of the economic.

To deal with the paradox, creative actors invest in economic and social capital but at the same time in cultural capital, to counterbalance. For instance they adopt a 'bohemian' lifestyle, rejecting *bourgeois* norms, values and way of life. While having to live out of their creative work, creatives often accept low pay, extremely demanding working conditions and precarious employment. Such patterns are also seen within established professions such as architecture, where members often reflect on architecture as a lifestyle and persona rather than as a job or career (Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009).

The construction and negotiation of personal and professional identities, as well as the performance of creativity through dress and demeanour, body language and body art, compound the complex understanding of what it means to be a 'creative worker'. Eikhof & Haunschild (2007) notice that despite the importance of the paradox, no routine for the protection of artistic practices has ever been institutionalized. Creative actors must constantly renew or revive their own position between the creative field and the economical field, reinforcing by themselves their cultural capital to balance both.

In a different field, Sgourev (2013) looked into Picasso's career and his role within the rise of cubism. He reveals how Picasso's detachment and evasiveness enabled the protection of creative independence, constantly confronted with efforts by critics to identify a consistent pattern in his work. His reticence and mystical aura (creative force) wielded an immense influence over the artistic universe despite a stated disregard for what customers want (economic force). Indeed, his

commitment to creative independence and his extraordinary knack for experimentation not only made him an audacious model but also placed him in an indeterminate structural position.

It is precisely this specific ambiguity that enabled him to manoeuvre between insider and outsider roles, being at the same time the main focus in the creative motivational networks while also strongly associated with the rise of the new movement of cubism, with little direct intervention. In a similar way, in the fashion industry, Cristobal Balenciaga was nicknamed "*the invisible man of fashion*", often described as "*an enigma, which paradoxically served his publicity better than any other scandalous echo*"<sup>11</sup>.

On the group level, Sgourev (2013) also mentions the Salon Cubists that pursued tactics of self-promotion which combined individual and collective goals. These included obtaining a distinctive 'group' profile at the fairs, staking out a unique position in the aesthetic debate through articles and manifestoes, and securing a public forum in the press (Cottingham, 1998). These tactics were similar to those of the impressionists decades earlier (White and White, 1965), campaigning for the legitimacy of their group based on adherence to a common style, and trying to overcome their lack of resources by rendering that style comprehensible and acceptable to critics and the public at large.

Thus, we understand that creativity in organizations is coloured by politics, and pursued by means of certain practices, playing between forces, norms and resources (Selwood, 2009; Eikhof, 2009; Seitz, 2003). The previous studies illustrate the importance of understanding how micro-level creative actors interpret and work through rationalization forces.

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Ultimately, our ambition with this overview was neither to condemn nor celebrate the creative industries, but rather to remind how important it is to hold on to the ambivalence of creative work. Tensions are ever present, but a conversation has to emerge. This 'unlikely conversation' (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017) allows economy and aesthetics, at one point in time, to constitute an ensemble.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: Le Monde Magazine -August 1951



Generosity and courage from representatives of both poles are conditions established by conversation that make an ensemble possible, combined with an open attitude towards 'living with' opposing rationales, rather than installing safeguards (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). It is this ongoing form of conversation that provides the vital, ongoing context for more tactical activities aimed at producing periodic creative outcomes. The purpose of this Ph.D. is precisely to acknowledge for those tactical activities.

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# 2. EMPIRICAL SETTING

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## 2 EMPIRICAL SETTING

*"A natural selection operates in fashion: via internet, magazines, showrooms...and especially via commercial success and money!"* Henri, a fashion photographer

The following part demonstrates that the fashion industry is the right field to inform on the general problematization, while highlighting the complicated business of the ever-changing fashion context. Fashion here is treated as a system in itself, that is a persistent network of beliefs, customs and formal procedures which together form an articulated social organization with an acknowledged central purpose (White & White, 1993).

In defining a fashion system, the minimum requirements for its existence are someone who produces a fashion in dress and someone who consumes it (Kawamura, 2005). No matter what's its size, a fashion system seems to present certain basic features, and designers have to engage with those. In what follows, we begin by reviewing the literature on the fashion industry (*fashion studies*). In this review, we highlight the recurring themes, important actors and institutions of the domain.

All along this, the analysis is enriched by secondary data collected from specialized and non-specialized press on fashion (see detail in appendix 1). Some stories from secondary data are loosely connected to the research questions, but still illustrate the richness and complexity of the fashion context, and say something interesting about designers and their teams. Following Becker's advice on dealing with secondary data, we reflected on "*where the data came from, who gathered it, what their organisational and conceptual constraints are, and how all of that affected what the table [or in our case articles and media] we're looking at displays*" (1998, p.103).

This first step allowed us to do a first thick description to fully understand the context, meaning fully understand the "*significant structures through which the studied actors perceive, interpret and act on themselves or on others*" (Geertz, 1973). The following step was to go on the field and collect data to inform the research questions. Hopefully both steps make complete sense one after the other, the following paragraphs allowing to place the field material in relevant context and hence setting the foundation for the story that starts to unfold from there.

So let's start with a few words on choosing fashion domain as a field of inquiry. Indeed, it could appear surprising to choose an industry where creativity is praised and often showed off. The fashion system began in 1868 when the structural relationship between a designer/couturier and a client was reversed (Kawamura, 2004). Nowadays, fashion has become a fascinating multidimensional, multinational multi-million euro economy of aesthetics (Huopainen, 2016). We often hear about the creativity of fashion designers, and speeches of people from the field usually underscore the creativity of the industry.

This ideologically underpinned creative, glamorous and polished image is, to a significant extent, created by the fashion workers and fashion insiders themselves. It is created by everyone who participates in fashion's affective economy. Fashion industry almost represents the archetype place for creation. In that sense, choosing that industry almost seems too obvious, not very subtle even. But a critical posture precisely questions the obvious. For, as Erving Goffman said, the vital secrets of a spectacle are visible backstage (in this case: in studio). What we try to question, from a critical viewpoint, is precisely the taken-for-granted creativity of the industry.

As we are in a "creative" (by definition) industry, is creativity that obvious? Aren't we going to find out about practices that people develop to be able to create, while involved with the economic apparatus? Observing those kind of practices in an industry claiming its creative side actually appears even more interesting than in any other industry. And if the fashion sector quite brilliantly captures ever-changing paces, shifting values and trends of our modern society with its focus on status, performance and surface; its more critical theoretical potential has still gone surprisingly little noticed (Huopainen, 2016).

*"The question of fashion is not a fashionable one among intellectuals...Fashion is celebrated in museums, but among serious intellectual preoccupations it has marginal status. It turns up everywhere on the street, in industry, and in the media, but it has virtually no place in the theoretical inquiries of our thinkers. Seen as an ontologically and socially inferior domain, it is unproblematic and underserving of investigation; seen as a superficial issue, it discourages conceptual approaches"* (Lipovetsky, 1994: 3-4).

This might be explained by what is often associated to fashion's constructed images and coolish attitudes, a low intellectual reputation. With a bias towards strength, masculinity and rationality (Hjorth, 2005), organization studies have taken a particular direction, now dominant in the field. In that respect, fashion and its edgy and restless demonstrations are easy to condemn, treated as a woman's topic (Kawamura, 2005) and still regarded as intellectually subordinate to other 'more

serious' research topics. "*Instead of moralizing about fashion, we should be studying and trying to understand it*", says Czarniawska (2011: 600, cited in Huopainen, 2016).

Studying the fashion industry is one step on taking that path, leaving this very rational and masculine paradigm where studies on large-scale industries are preferred (O'Doherty et al, 2013). We choose to focus on our "*société du spectacle*" (Debord, 1967), shedding some light on its norms and assumptions- ideologically underpinned. Within this *société du spectacle*, fashion is a key phenomenon, one step on the way of understanding our contemporary societies in more critical ways.

In the end, fashion is a phenomenon that engages almost all of us. In the movie *Devil Wears Prada*, adapted from Weisberger's book<sup>12</sup> (2004), there is this key moment that better than a long argument illustrates how all of us need to dress up in our daily lives, and how this makes us part of a global fashion system.

In the following extract, the editor-in-chief of a prestigious fashion magazine puts in perspective the comment of her new intern on the elitism and disconnected aspect of fashion.



Editor-in-chief and her team are in main office, trying to find the next outfit for the front page of the coming magazine.

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12 Weisberger, L. (2004). *The Devil Wears Prada*, Broadway, New York.



[dialogue starts]

*Editor-in-chief:* Where are the belts for this dress?

*Style Assistant:* Here. It's a tough call. They're so different.

(the intern laughs)

*Editor-in-chief:* Something funny?

*Intern:* No, no nothing it's just both those belts are exactly the same to me...You know, I'm still learning about this stuff and a...

*Editor-in chief:*

This s-t-u-f-f?

Oh, ok I see.

You think this has nothing to do with you...You go to your closet and you select I don't know that lumpy blue sweater for instance because you're trying to tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care about what you put on your back, but what you don't know is that, that sweater is not just blue. It's not turquoise, it's not lapis, it's actually cerulean and you're also blithely unaware of the fact that in 2002 Austero Lorenza did a collection of cerulean gowns...and then I think it was Yves Saint Laurent, wasn't it?...who showed cerulean military jackets. [Talking to the assistant] I think we need a jacket here. [Getting back to the intern] and then cerulean quickly showed up in the collections of eight different designers and then it filtered down through the department stores and then trickled on down into some tragic casual corner where you no doubt fished it out of some clearance bin. However that blue represents millions of dollars and countless jobs...and it's sort of comical how you think that you've made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry...when in fact you're wearing a sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room. from a pile of s-t-u-f-f<sup>13</sup>. "

[end of the dialogue]

The comical of the situation thoroughly helps in spreading the message. Whether we want it or not, and even though it plays out with an air of elitism, fashion should not be trivialized but on the opposite deserves to be taken seriously, considering the impact of the industry.

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13 Video extract: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ja2fgquYTCg>

Following on from there, fashion's assumptions may be problematized further, and fashion studies gain from more research. As Huopalainen boldly puts it "*fashion scholar could certainly benefit from a more confident just-do-it mentality*" (2016: 47). On a scholarly level, fashion studies are an area still in the process of structuring and in the grip of fundamental questioning, like the agreement on the founding fathers, on a common core of interests and references; and the rooting or the hindsight about the different methodological approaches (Crane & Bovone, 2006; Giusti, 2009; Tseëlon, 2010).

Those studies are also characterized by a chronic lack of empirical research (Giusti, 2009). In particular, further light needs to be shed on fashion's less spectacular, mundane, habitual and everyday aspects. Getting access through research to fashion insiders' everyday work experiences is key. Nonetheless, there are exceptions and the existing literature already says a lot on the industry (see for example Godart, 2010, 2012). On organizational grounds, as for other cultural industries (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000), the management of complex fashion industry projects is the result of a delicate balance. So instead of keeping on unfolding careful explanations on why fashion industry is so accurate, we will now just let the industry speak for itself.

## 2.1 Fashion industry - *power relations, uncertainty and institutions*

Fashion is one of the world's most important industries, driving a significant part of the global economy. In 2016, the industry is projected to reach a staggering \$2.4 trillion in total value<sup>14</sup>. If it were ranked alongside individual countries' GDP, the global fashion industry would represent the world's seventh largest economy<sup>15</sup>.

Fashion Industry is also a major economic activity in France (revenues: 13 billion euros, total exports: 8.5 billion euros, jobs: 57 031<sup>16</sup>). French companies represent 1/4 of all revenues of the industry at a global level<sup>17</sup>. The french industry may entail small independent french fashion designers as well as old fashion houses of the *Haute Couture*, potentially owned by big financial

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<sup>14</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, McKinsey FashionScope

<sup>15</sup> International Monetary Fund, "List of Countries by Projected GDP", October 21, 2016, <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/countries-by-projected-gdp.php>

<sup>16</sup> Key Figures-Union des Industries Textiles-2015-2016

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/3244-la-mode-et-le-luxe-secteur-d-excellence-francaise>

groups. Consequently, designers are most stratified in the French system of fashion: couturiers who design Haute Couture, designers who design Prêt-à-porter, and company designers who design for the mass-produced apparel companies (Kawamura, 2005). This group classification began with the institutionalization of fashion -we will come back to that later in the document.

Therefore the fashion market includes different segments, each of them aimed at different types of consumers and characterized by different production processes. Doeringer & Crean (2006) suggested a pyramid as an articulation of those segments. At the top of the pyramid lies the *Haute Couture*, characterized by extremely high prices and a short life cycle, one year at the most. The creativity of Haute Couture models and the quality of the material employed make it unique, and put it aside as a segment. Their clients are stars, museums, private individuals and -very important- the House's archives. Bourdieu (1984) offered a detailed description of Parisian Haute Couture by studying the structure of this field -the polarization between conservative and innovative fashion houses, and the ensuing field dynamics.

Underneath the Haute Couture, we find many Ready-to-Wear segments: the *collections de créateurs* (designer collections) expensive and high quality but which models are not unique, then the *collections intermédiaires* (bridge fashion), which diffusion is larger and prices more moderate. "*Ready-to-Wear makes the cash*", says a fashion photographer interviewed on the topic, "*especially through accessories, or best sellers like Kenzo's tiger sweatshirt*". Last, at the bottom of the pyramid we find the fast fashion with moderate prices.

Encompassing the whole, Godart (2010) talks about the industry as "a singular social object", at the crossroads of arts and economy. As an industry, fashion is characterized by this fundamental duality, Godart explains. Indeed, it is at the same time an economic activity, with the production of products, and a creative activity, with the production of symbols- the "label" of top creators converting passive objects into magical and symbolic ones: Godart is here referring to the work of Bourdieu. As an industry, fashion may be represented as a flow of goods produced by fashion houses, which serve as interface between "upstream" suppliers, and "downstream" consumers (White, 1981, 2002).

The fashion industry is a prototypical creative industry that can be used as a good illustration for how creative innovations emerge (Caves, 2000; Crane, 1999; Crane & Bovone, 2006; Godart & Mears, 2009). Indeed, sales and profit in fashion are largely derived from, and thus are highly

dependent on, creative innovations. As we may read on the website of the *Fédération Française de la Couture du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode*:

*"Fashion societies, which have placed creation at the centre of their strategy, have become actors of globalisation by increasingly developing their exportations."*

On the sharing between commercial demands and aesthetic demands, Isabelle Guichot, former CEO of Balenciaga, says: *"The whole chemistry of fashion is to allow a vast and free space for creation (...). It is about naturally arouse interest and desire while at the same time having an economical model that is solid behind"*.

Globally speaking, the industry follows a few principles, syntheses of theoretical and empirical data on specific aspects of fashion, as described as such by Godart (2010). Those principles are as follows: the principle of affirmation, of convergence, of autonomy, of personalization, of symbolization, and of imperialism. Let's go back to each of them.

According to the *principle of affirmation*, individuals and social groups imitate each other and distinguish themselves from each other by using signals, with clothing. What we learn from the *convergence principle* is that although styles have different origins, their production and their translation into designs happen in a very few fashion houses located in a few cities. The huge variety of those styles is reduced to a few trends regularly repeated.

Moreover, fashion houses are partially autonomous from their political or economic environment in terms of aesthetic choices - *principle of autonomy*-, and it is the fashion designer that occupies the most important place of the industry, at the heart of it -*principle of personalization*. Godart also outlined the dominant role of brands in the relationship between fashion producers and consumers -*symbolization principle*-.

Finally, the *principle of imperialism* refers to two ideas: the first one being that fashion industries have a very specific organization. The second one that we observe a systematization of fashion phenomena outside of industrial contexts.

At this point, and in the context of our research, principles that interest us the most are the principles of convergence, of autonomy, of personalization and of imperialism. Indeed, as we will

develop further in our reflexion, those principles fit with our readings and secondary data collected on the topic.

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In what follows, we describe the fashion industry's structure.

First, let's go back to the model developed by White (2002): a market is constituted by multiple networks that connect an upstream of suppliers to a downstream of customers through market interface made of producers. The fashion industry can thus be considered an interface that links a set of suppliers, for example textile makers, to customers all over the world (Aspers & Godart, 2013). Thus, producers may be luxury fashion houses such as Yves Saint Laurent, ready-to-wear firms like Hugo Boss, or mass-market chain store producers such as Zara. These producers are organizations (Giusti, 2009) in which creative teams draw their inspiration from several sources- for example, art (Hollander, 1993; Riot et al., 2013)- to design items that will please customers.

Focusing on the producers, Blumer's work (1969) is an attempt to look at the creative process as one of gradual decisions of several actors, acknowledging the tension between art and commerce that exists at the heart of fashion. Fashion appears to be a window on economy and capitalism, in our *société du spectacle* (Debord, 1967). Far from being counter culture, it sits at the heart of late capitalist endeavour (Clarke & Holt, 2017). Indeed, any domain in which we find fashion can be seen as an opportunity for profit making (Godart, 2013). In that sense, fashion is of interest to the organization studies, as so much of contemporary capitalism relies on the production of affective value, glamour and captivation (Huopainen, 2016).

*"Fashion is the favoured child of capitalism. It stems from the latter inner characteristics and expresses its uniqueness unlike any other phenomenon of our social life in our time"* (Sombart 2001: 225)

The aesthetic expertise is seen as what allows designers to deliver a work that corresponds to their commercial objectives, aligned with the house's positioning (Barkey & Godart, 2013). Strategic questions are essential and sometimes public. For example the brand *Carven* stopped their Haute Couture division, claiming they wanted to position the House as "*the number 1 ready-to-wear brand affordable and feminine*". Conversely, the brand *Vicomte Arthur* is known as wanting to go upscale, aiming at luxury. Another example is the group Prada, which was introduced into the

Hong Kong Stock Exchange by public admission, *"because this is where the money is, and not in Paris anymore"*.

More specifically, strategic capacities are often identified internally. For a fashion house such as Chanel, it means sustaining its relations with its suppliers, retaining its employees with scarce competencies, recruiting and training apprentices, keeping a good financial state. Such strategic issues obviously represent a concern for designers, as seen in the following quotes:

*"I cannot allow myself to not put embroideries on a collection, as behind lies the work of 3000 employees in India"*  
Dries Van Noten, artistic director

*"We want to ensure the continued existence of traditional methods and savoir-faire, even if we know it we are here to make profits"* Bruno Le Page, artistic assistant, maison Haute Couture Sorbier

*"I would really like it (the collections) to work, to sell, also so that people earn a living, so that everything goes on"*  
Karl Lagerfeld, artistic director

The economic aspect can be of a real struggle sometimes, as shows the recent stopping of the ready-to-wear collections of Jean-Paul Gaultier (last collection : spring 2015). In a letter to the magazine Women's Wear Daily, he explains he took this decision *"because of commercial constraints and the frenetic rhythm of collections"* with *"no time left, no freedom nor necessary time to find ideas and innovate"*. The magazine then reveals that the House *"has got difficulties transforming its creativity into profits"*.

Another form of pressure bearing down on creativity comes from the way new designs are sanctioned for production. Fashion designers are being encouraged to take more input from the buying and merchandising teams to react to what is selling, rather than defining what will sell through forward-looking design risks. As such, all aspects are seen from just one perspective, which is how to produce better figures. This repulsion of risk *"has brought the fashion machine to a halt, in order to be replaced by item selling"* says Li Edelkoort in her manifesto Anti-Fashion (2015). Many designers talk about those pressures, formulating fears:

*"The most important is not the turnover, but rather to stay creative and independant"* Chitose Abe, artistic director Sacai

*"Business is a threat that impoverishes creation. No mistake is allowed, as a consequence no risk is taken. We absolutely have to come back to creation"* Albert Elbaz, former artistic director of the house Lanvin

*"I heard a finance director explain that 'designers should not have any say'. Today those who are right are those who do marketing and science"* Franck Sorbier, artistic director of the house Maison Sorbier.

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Besides, like all creative industries (Caves, 2000), the fashion industry is characterized by a higher level of uncertainty (eg, Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Godart & Mears, 2009) than other industries. As a reaction, several institutions mitigate the uncertainty in this industry- also called the “fog of fashion” (White et al. 2007, p. 194)- to facilitate the production process (Kawamura, 2005).

Events and rituals are a stage for interactions and trades in society. There are, in particular, key moments such as “tournaments of values” (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2011) where stakes are admittedly high since reputation and worth are on the table. Fashion magazines (Moeran, 2006) or fashion museums (Steele, 1998) help diffuse fashion knowledge to the population. Fashion schools create a common understanding of what fashion is, for example, in an urban setting (Rantisi, 2002a, 2002b).

Fashion fairs constitute “temporary clusters” (Bathelt & Schuldt, 2008), and help the exchange and diffusion of fashion ideas. Forecasting bureaus diffuse industry-specific knowledge about trends and styles to producers (Godart, 2012). Even if they do not admit it so easily, all fashion producers seek the support of forecasting bureaus or other intermediaries like platforms. Similarly, they keep in mind that their work is displayed through those intermediaries:

*"Now putting a fashion show together is also like what is gonna be the first image on style.com"* Dries Van Noten, artistic director of the house Dries Van Noten

*"After a show, of course I am very interested in reviews, everybody wants to know what people think about it"*  
Dries Van Noten

In that same sense, Albert Elbaz talks about the *"necessary photogenic side of creative work"*, very conscious of its diffusion on medias.

In some cases, garments are traded via several steps before consumers can purchase them, and these intermediary traders have influence on what is available in retail (Entwistle, 2009). Garments are the output of the production process but they become fashion items if and only if they are accepted first by fashion editors, other gatekeepers and, above all, by final customers (Aspers, 2010).

*“Fashion designers permanently fight to preserve and increase the control of their 'jurisdiction', meaning everything we could call their exclusive activity zone, especially with regard to the other jobs around creation, to managers and fashion manufacturers, and also compared to clients who all try to impose their taste in terms of clothing.”(Godart, 2010: 67)*

All the more that those fashion designers precisely construct their own identity around their creative proposition. Indeed, the creative dimension is part of their professional ethos, they are hired for it. Thus, the dilemma is even stronger as we are touching here at their own personal identity, versus an actor that might as well be creative, in any kind of organization, but is not hired for his/her creativity. Here the actor is 'officially' creative, there is a professional contract and informal agreement around that creative dimension.

## **2.2** Fashion houses - *frenetic rhythm, brand names and creative assessment*

We consider fashion as an economic ecosystem in which designers play a crucial role. Yet such crucial role is only a fragment of an extended value chain (from producer to consumer), that reflects a multi-trillion dollar industry employing an estimated 26 million people globally (Hines & Bruce 2007). This economic ecosystem operates both globally and locally according to its own dominant logics.

Within this ecosystem, a fashion house is an organization in which a creative team (usually led by a creative director) design collections -at least- twice a year. To be able to produce globally and be profitable, some houses design intermediaries collections, known as the "cruise" (before spring collections, in december) and the "pre-fall". Experimenting with fashion cycles is not new. The pace of fashion has accelerated greatly in recent years, with many brands increasing the number of collections - now averaging six per year- and ratcheting down the lead times for pieces, even at



the luxury end of the spectrum.

*"Since time is short the design process is compressed and therefore the creative elite make clothes and no longer fashion, they have no longer time to consider a conceptual approach, which might transform the silhouette, no longer time to transcend dominant trends",* says Li Edelkoort, in her manifesto Anti-Fashion (2015).

A designer such as Raf Simons, who was designing just 2 collections a year about 5 years ago, can now design up to 10 collections per year: 4 for his own brand, 4 for the CK brand- of which he's artistic director, and two other collaborations with luxury brands.

Another strategy to be profitable is diversification (in furniture or accessories for instance). But then, again: *"Luxury designers are requested by the brand's marketing to focus on product and need to give most of their creative energy to bags and shoes and are rather resigned concerning the creation of clothes; therefore their small collections of garments can be seen as an elegant and at times intelligent communication backdrop for the accessories"* (Li Edelkoort, 2015).

Those strategies combined with other pressures has led to an unprecedented level of turnover among creative directors for several major luxury and fashion brands, with many designer exits and arrivals at Christian Dior, Lanvin, Calvin Klein, Saint Laurent, Ermenegildo Zegna, Berluti, Balenciaga, Oscar de la Renta, Brioni, and Carven, amongst others.

Indeed, although biannual fashion shows of New York, London, Milan or Paris are the opportunity for fashion designers to demonstrate their artistic talents and dazzle the public, fashion houses are also battling daily against very concrete decisions, like the fixing of their selling prices, the geographic localization of their factories, the definition of their distribution channels or also the implementation of their advertising campaign.

Sidney Toledano, CEO of Christian Dior Couture, compares the house to a nuclear power station. In such a station, the artistic director represents *"the heart, the necessary heat, the energy"* and *"concentric circles composed of marketing and commercial teams"* raise around him. A creative heart would exist, surrounded by business declensions. This approach is interesting to reflect on the constraints: on which level of concentration do they intervene, is it rather on the outermost circles?

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Also, fashion happens to be much more accessible nowadays than in the past. As a photographer in the industry explains, this "democratization" of fashion happened via two angles. First one is the arrival of fast fashion brands on the market, deliberately copying the Haute Couture. Second angle is the development of internet, allowing videos of a fashion show to be on the web a few minutes after its presentation.

This wider access to fashion led to a greater fashion-awareness of people, that in turn led to greater requirements, in terms of delays, collections rhythm, etc. Modern fast fashion behemoths like Zara and H&M have built global empires by offering cheap copies of high-end fashion. At the same time, the reduced time between cycles has also led to an increase in alleged plagiarism, and the pressure to create new collections is as much a concern for mass-market players as it is for luxury brands<sup>18</sup>.

Legal protection for fashion design varies significantly in different countries. In the US, for example, fashion designs are exempt from copyright protection. Complicating matters, copycats have become faster and faster. When images of runway collections are shared across the internet in close to real time and factories churn out knockoffs in a matter of days, copies can hit the market before originals.

Today, knockoffs are more rife than ever before. Fast fashion companies have built multi-billion-dollar businesses reproducing the latest catwalk creations for a fraction of their original price. And copying exists among luxury brands too — in the past few years, various companies including Saint Laurent have faced lawsuits from other fashion houses<sup>19</sup>.

Much high street stores utilize just-in-time manufacturing with such intensity that a turnaround for collections can be as little as 3 weeks, resulting in disposable clothing that is designed to be worn less than 10 times (Claudio, 2007; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). As a consequence, in the current western-dominant fashion system, a few powerhouses have managed to install a race to the bottom in which excrescences such as strenuous labor circumstances, mass consumerism and disposable fashion are egregious side-effects.

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<sup>18</sup> Nicole Puglise, "Fashion brand Zara accused of copying LA artist's designs", The Guardian, July 21, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2016/jul/21/zara-accused-copying-artist-designs-fashion>

<sup>19</sup> Pike, H. *The Copycat Economy*. on [businessoffashion.com](http://businessoffashion.com). March 2016

Going back now to the 'inside' of a fashion house. One of the key issues of the designing process is time. As the deadline approaches, the collections have to take (final) shape. At that moment, they completely dictate the calendar. The whole fashion house is in rush, and general mobilization happens. As was observed in a documentary on the *Balmain* Fashion House, even in the administrative offices employees participate. For instance, the fabric buyer ends up altering clothes, unravelling a fur pullover. She explains "*At that moment [end of collection], everyone lends a hand, so we can make up for delay, it's good*".

Consequently, the end of a collection is associated to a great feeling of pride and successful conclusion. In the same *Balmain* House, a corridor is dedicated to all the final outfits, nicknamed "the Glory Corridor". For some, such a frenetic rhythm should not drive fashion design, as it "*produces a fashion that is less creative, more industrial. (...) Fashion and industry are two whole different worlds*" (Azzedine Alaïa, artistic director of own house).

The collections are generally displayed at fashion shows to the press, buyers, and selected clients (Barkey & Godart, 2013). Many rituals punctuate a fashion show, such as the designer coming out on stage at the end of the show. Of importance also are the photographs of the show. If catwalk photos all look the same -close-up front shots-, they nevertheless convey the specific power of a house -an identified creative touch, a logo in the images, a risk taken with surprising unusual models.

A fashion show is thus a key moment for any fashion house. The "PR" (Public Relations) has a key role in it, supervising the whole organisation of the show. The work of the PR is to draw attention on the designer's work, manage shopping for magazines, recruit the public for the show...and more generally, make the work available to the public. Around the PR revolves a huge cost structure: the minimum budget for a fashion show is around 100 000€. Such an amount is invested as key persons come to the show. The buyers give grades to the different outfits and then pre-order. The journalists mark the outfits and then do their "shopping" for photo-shoots.

Buyers and journalists have a lot of power, and the choices they make influence the final collection. Indeed, the creative team makes some final modifications on the collection taking into account their feedback. Talking about the Milan Fashion Week of Sept 2014, an Italian journalist deplores the influence of the press. Describing a "*despotic realm of fashion*", he argues that "*the whole*

*italian fashion domain cannot be taken hostage like this, by a few fashionistas". Aiming at them, he asks "hey, you, journalists of the international press: please stop being implacable for the only pleasure of being implacable"*<sup>20</sup>.

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Fashion houses are the main competitors in the fashion industry- they are the brand names customers recognize, and they attract all the attention of the media (Breward, 2003).

A ranking of fashion houses is compiled, every season, by the leading French fashion trade magazine *Journal du Textile*. This ranking is international in scope, based on assessments by 70 international buyers working for leading retailers (Barkey & Godart, 2013). Each season these buyers award points to fashion houses and are specifically asked to assess the creativity of the collections.

The *Journal du Textile* compiles a rating based on the points awarded. The ten highest-ranked fashion houses are distinguished as "masters". This ranking is used internationally by fashion recruiters to spot up-and-coming designers and by investment banks to assess the performance of fashion houses (see Hsu & Hannan, 2005; Rao, Monin & Durand, 2005). It is particularly important as the industry of fashion relies on its exportations -french exports of the sector in 2015/2016: 8.5 billion euros.

To better grasp the landscape of fashion houses, Barkey & Godart (2013) conceptualized three governance regimes, as the correspondence between concrete power relations and organizational structures of fashion organizations.

First, fashion organizations that compete on their own in the market are designated as kingdoms (e.g.: Chanel). Second, fashion organizations which are characterized by the existence of a corporate center are empires, operating a portfolio of fashion houses. In such empires, the corporate center does not compete on its own in the fashion market- e.g.: LVMH. Third, some fashion organizations are understood as federated arrangements, where the corporate center can compete on its own in the market. For example, Giorgio Armani and Emporio Armani, two lines

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<sup>20</sup> Blog Business of Fashion, september 30, 2014.  
<http://businessoffashion.blog.lemonde.fr/2014/09/30/milan-dans-les-affres-du-passe/#xtor=AL-32280270>

of Armani, each have their dedicated fashion show and practically act in the market as separated fashion houses. Armani strongly regulates these sub-brands, yet they display relatively distinct projects and appeal to different customers (see White, Godart & Corona, 2007).

For Barkey & Godart (2013), federated arrangements, as an hybrid regime of governance, generate the most creative organizations. Indeed, while on the one hand it is true that business group affiliation protects affiliated organizations against the vagaries of inherently uncertain creative processes, thus favouring change and creativity. On the other hand hybridity gives an edge over other forms of governance: a mix of direct and indirect rule, the large but bounded autonomy of affiliates, the existence of a flexible but institutionalized structure, the integration of multiple projects, and mobility at the top...all those elements which allow some level of tension and conflict and thus increase the creative process (Barkey & Godart, 2013).

It is here interesting to go back to the "principles" pointed out by Godart (2010) regarding the fashion sector. One of the principles was the principle of imperialism. Imperialism in the fashion industry is characterized by an organizational evolution, with the emergence of many conglomerates and holdings. Godart is describing five types of actors in the sector: The multiple-brands empires (e.g.: PPR & LVMH), big brands of garment stores (H&M), Watchmakers (Swatch), single-brand garment groups (Abercrombie & Fitch Co), and groups specialized into the multiple-brands distribution (Macy's).

In such a context, coordination of the market happens not only through informal exchanges between actors, professional associations and big fairs, but also through the financial management of empires. The financial side then becomes an essential part for designers to work. As a fashion journalist interviewed said: *"Designers do not just need a better visibility, what they truly need at the beginning is a work infrastructure (facilities) and a commercial support"*.

On that topic also, Azzedine Alaïa, talking about the group Richemont: *"A fashion designer cannot work without the support of an industrial group. Nowadays, constraints are stronger. To convince a factory to produce clothes, quantities have to be big enough. Fabrics have to be ordered one or two years in advance"*. Obviously designing for those groups has some implications, as Raf Simons (hired by Jil Sander, and then Dior) summarizes: *"if you're married to Prada, you have to make high heels, if you're married with Arnault, you have to make a bag"*.

The principle of convergence (Godart, 2010) is also interesting here. In the garment fashion domain, the convergence principle is maintained by a centralisation mechanism that allows professionals to canalize evolutions they have difficulties controlling (Godart, 2010). This means that, although styles and designs created and produced by fashion houses have many origins, they are filtered and produced by a limited number of companies in a limited number of geographic places.

In France, "Le Sentier" is known as a major place for french fashion. Constituted of a few streets in the central area of Paris, it is an international commercial crossroads of fashion where companies from all over the world come daily to purchase. At the Sentier, manufacturers, wholesalers, subcontractors and various companies of fashion build, receive and daily send their articles in every corner of the globe.

Interestingly, the industry is organized so as to mostly reduce the risk: styles and designs are canalized through well-organized production and manufacturing processes. Craft work is most of the time replaced by industrial work, with solid performance. The following anecdote illustrates the predominance of the industrial model in the field. One of the seamstresses interviewed once reported, about a piece she was working on: "*I was sitting at my work table, bent over my sewing, when someone in the studio came to me and commented my work: 'Oh, the finishing touches are incredible! It looks like it's industrial work'.*" Again, those organizational filters represent a threat for some: "*watch out for the generalization effects that suppress creativity*" says Chitose Abe, creative director of Sacai. We might wonder then to what extent designers nowadays really have a say in such a context.

### 2.3 Fashion designers - *star system and silent voices*

Designing as an occupation is a modern phenomenon that began with the institutionalized system of fashion in 1868 (Kawamura, 2004). The personalization of the fashion industry started with the Parisian designer Charles F. Worth (at the end of the 1850's), and deeply changed the structure of the industry by putting forward the designer and its 'signature' (Godart, 2010).

Nowadays, for some the most significant public figures and most influential organizational leaders of the high-end fashion houses are their 'creative directors' - the individuals in charge of

defining the houses' bi-annual collections - rather than their CEOs (Godart et al., 2015). These creative directors, who can sometimes have a different title such as 'artistic director', can either be the founders of their own house (e.g.: Marc Jacobs is the founder and creative director of Marc Jacobs) or work for a house founded by someone else (e.g.: Albert Elbaz was the creative director of Lanvin that was founded in 1889 by Jeanne Lanvin).

Industry stalwarts such as Marc Jacobs, Karl Lagerfeld, Giorgio Armani, Tom Ford, Miuccia Prada exert enormous control over their houses' creative vision and collections, as well as set the tone for the entire fashion industry- they are "*the primary creators of fashion within the fashion industry*" (Sproles & Burns, 1994: 45).

Sometimes a mass market brand hires a well-known designer to create a collection for the brand, this is called a 'collaboration'. For instance the 'collab' between the mass market brand UNIQLO and the french designer Inès de la Fressange led to many successful collections. Although creative directors of somewhat less known fashion houses (e.g.: Alice Roi, Antonio Berardi) have less industry influence, they still wield almost complete control over their houses' collections, generating and implementing ideas concerning styles, colors, fabrics, or patterns for example (Kawamura, 2005).

*"Also it is important to remember that (creative directors) are not the only players; (they) are and must be portrayed as 'stars' in the production of fashion"* (Kawamura, 2005: 57)

Godart (2010) also talks about a "star system phenomenon". Fashion designers are everywhere in the medias and more broadly in culture. For instance, Michael Kors happens to be a judge in a reality-show, the image of Karl Lagerfeld was used in road safety campaigns, and movies are filmed about designers like Coco Chanel or Yves Saint Laurent. In addition, creative directors are personally evaluated by fashion buyers and journalists, based on what they are able to produce for their fashion shows. Inevitably, this leads to high interpersonal competition among creative directors of different houses (Blumer, 1969).

Simply put, the process of generating and implementing creative ideas in fashion is very centralized and is attached to the person of the creative director. The power of fashion designers is an object of popular fascination and they are often referred to as "emperors" or "kings" (Barkey & Godart, 2013). Examples include the Paris-based German Couturier Karl Lagerfeld,

who is nicknamed "Kaiser Karl" because of his influence on the field (Orth, 1992); the Italian designer Valentino, referred to as "the last emperor" of fashion in a 2008 documentary film by Matt Tyrnauer; Aldo Gucci, the son of the founder of the Italian house Gucci was known as "l'imperatore" (Petriglieri and Stein, 2012); and the early 20th century French designer Paul Poiret, who called himself the "king of fashion".

A good example of the role played by the creative director as the defining force of a high-fashion collection comes from the 1995 documentary, *Unzipped*, about the life of American designer Isaac Mizrahi (Godart et al., 2015). In this documentary, Mizrahi is shown preparing a collection that is inspired by the 1922 silent documentary film *Nanook of the North* and the 1935 adventure film *The Call of the Wild*. The designer's vision about this collection becomes associated with him individually. As Godart and his colleagues (2015) explain, his team supports this vision, for example by scouting the press to see what other designers are doing, or by handling relations with suppliers and buyers, but he is the one translating his visionary idea into actual design.

For fashion designers, the foundation of their own 'signature' constitutes a consecration and successful realization. Very often arises the question of the succession within the fashion house. A tension then exists between designers and fashion houses, which can be understood as a stylistic compatibility problem. Guillaume Henry, artistic director of Carven, states that "*it is the job of the designer to adapt to the house, and not the opposite*". For designers, it is then a matter of positioning oneself with regard to the stylistic heritage of the house. For the house, and more precisely for its executives and shareholders, it is a matter of preserving this heritage without covering up the creativity of fashion designers that represent the brand.

Here again, the example of the Balmain House is interesting. At *Balmain*, the creative heritage of the brand is of importance in the artistic signature. The initial creations of Pierre Balmain are now mascot elements, like the coloured fur. Olivier Rousteing, the actual artistic director, talks about the "*tradition de la jolie madame*", this "*Balmain Lady that Pierre Balmain brought to the french society*". "*This is something I always have in mind, but twisted in my own way, with my generation and with my ideas*" he says, while evoking the leather, "*soul of the house, print of the brand*". To stay in the Balmain House continuity, "*creations are the prolongation of past collections*", without losing sight of the commercial side: "*but also so our customers recognize us, find their way around the new collection*".

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So we understand that the attention of medias focuses around a few designers presented as central actors in fashion. Yet in reality, the creative act does not come from a single individual (Giusti, 2006). Although collections of big fashion houses are managed by artistic directors, each director works with a team composed of many creative actors. Task division varies from one house to another, and can be organized around product lines (masculine or feminine lines) or around the different steps around the creative process (documentary research on a given style, drawing of models,...). Creative teams include between 4 and 40 persons (Godart, 2010).

As a matter of fact, the personalization of fashion is more of a symbolic phenomenon that should not hide the reality of the work in the industry. The work of the fashion designer does exist thanks to the economic and industrial activity behind, which allows the production of garments. Every fashion house is a company oriented towards profit and is in that respect composed of different functions that we find in any company: human resources, management control, press relations and web departments (Godart, 2010). In the case of the fashion industry, those functions take a particular dimension as they have to take into account the unpredictability inherent in any creative proposition.

Concerning the production, the designer does really produce garments very rarely, it is rather the dressmakers (for the Haute Couture) and the workers (for the Ready-to-wear). And even from a creative viewpoint, designers are surrounded by other professionals. Not only other designers, but also models and fashion photographers, two professions that are emblematic of the domain in public's eyes.

Therefore, personalization of fashion does not mean that fashion relies on a few key-persons, but rather that a common belief gives those people a dominant place in the creative process. This belief into the ultimate value of the designer is a founding principle of modernity (Godart, 2010), for example found in the belief of *men of genius's* existence, like Mozart (Elias, 1991). The creative genius is often highlighted, putting aside the organizational reality of fashion. Indeed, creators are the result of a long training and learning process, and behind great names of creation hides a multitude of actors whose roles and functions are diverse (Giusti, 2006).

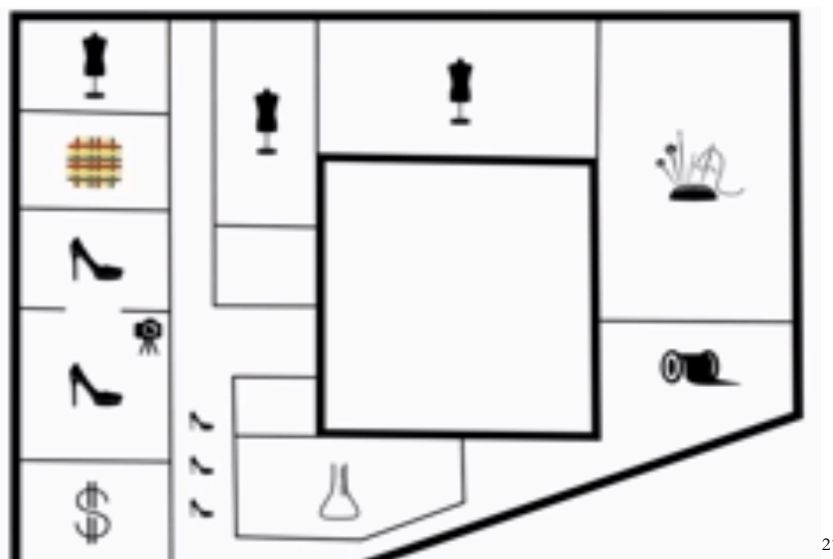
The constraints evoked above for fashion houses and designers also apply for those 'hidden' voices behind the designer. All the more since the web of constraints do not only include the

commercial aspect and the standardization, but also the constraints adjoining the ego of the designer. Indeed, interviews with those actors revealed that it is not unusual to see a two months-work being cancelled at the last minute, according to the designer's change of mind:

*"In that case seamstresses are very sad, they often cry because they work on a model relentlessly, and it happens to be cancelled at the last minute because the designer does not like it"* Helen, dressmaker

So although Fashion industry is an industry where individualism reigns, and where every piece of creation gets “named”, with this research we decided to focus, on the opposite, on the whole iceberg: its emerged as its immersed part. Fashion items are designed by creative teams, typically led by a creative or artistic director, and composed of several designers, assistant designers, apprentices and interns (Godart, 2012). We included the whole spectrum of those individuals in our empirical inquiries.

Here again, let's illustrate this idea with the Balmain House. The following is a map of the offices of the Fashion House, all on the same floor of a Parisian Building:



As a result of its fragmentation, creative work is often difficult to capture in its collective dimensions, gratifying the single act and subject to a denial of its very planned, hierarchical and sometimes conflicting nature (Buscatto, 2008). In opposite ways, this map reveals the different

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<sup>21</sup> From the documentary "La Ligne Balmain", Loïc Prigent, ARTE GEIE, BANGUMI, 2014

actors along the line of the creative process. Starting on the lower left side are the marketing offices, then, going up, the office of Olivier Rousteing, the creative director, with a small studio photo. Next to him is his assistant, the "*hard disk of the collection*", in his own words.

The assistant "*knows everything*", especially the practical and logistic aspects regarding the collection. She is precious for everyone, people always go to her when they have a question concerning anything about the collection. Then a bit more up we have the "laboratory of experimentations", with tons of fabrics. Next, the office of the model-makers, the dress-makers studios (elders and interns), the stock of fabrics, the kitchen lab (for dyeing fabric for instance), and the "Glory Corridor", where garments pile up, as previously discussed.

This map allows us to place concrete terms on the whole creative team. The daily activities of all those silent actors obviously derive to a certain extent from the designer, who asks for a certain fabric, a certain alteration, etc. Everything seems to be rhythmic with the work of the artistic team: fittings, stopping of a model, changes, new opinion...which arrive cascading on the model-makers, the dress-makers, the interns, in a way dependent on those requests in terms of work hours for instance.

Yet those 'silent voices' are key characters, and their creativity and knowledge of great value. For instance, the most *savoir-faire* the model makers have, the most power they hold. Similarly, although the *petites mains* -as dress-makers are called- usually don't have a say on the artistic direction, they definitely have a say on the technical aspect of creation, thus impacting the designs. Given the very competitive hierarchy of workers in haute couture (*petites mains*, *premières* and *secondes d'atelier*) based on hard work and virtuosity, the technique is often impressive: plaiting of leather and plastic, dyeing of linings. Their work is meticulous, and sometimes a real puzzle. At Balmain, a dress-maker explains, after 50 years in the house: "*I still learn things, I discover things, sometimes you have to find a system to embroider, sew on the material (...) it's like you have to be an engineer*".

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More broadly speaking, creative actors in fashion industry also interact with a given external context. The creative activity also depends on a broader ensemble of social relations. In concrete terms, economic relations depend on factors that go beyond the supply and demand, and include many factors, especially statutory and of one's identity. We go back here to our previous assertion of the social and economic embeddedness perspective on creativity.

Creativity depends on a multitude of social relations. As the American sociologist E. Currid shows (2007), creative actors cannot exist isolated and need a social base to exist, urban zones being the privileged place for creativity as it offers a strong density of exchanges and opportunities. This is what H. Becker calls "the art worlds" (1982): a work of art, a painting or a shirt are not produced in an ivory tower (Godart, 2010).

In the case of fashion, thousands of people are involved, such as designers, manufacturers of textiles, garments, buttons and cosmetics, wholesalers, retail buyers, publicists, advertisers and fashion photographers among many other fashion professionals. As a fashion photographer fittingly explains, creative workers are not just called 'dress-makers' but 'creative directors', precisely because of this representation necessity, alongside with the business and management aspects. The job implies a whole other bunch of activities as a supplement to the creative one.

Let's now move on to this bunch of activities, and focus on the processes implied during this collective and negotiated creative process.

#### 2.4 The creative process - *collective and rationalized*

According to the director of one of the biggest Parisian fashion schools, the creative process includes "*the whole initiative that initiates in getting information, and then goes from product design to its production until its visual presentation in the form of fashion shows, shop windows, catalogues, etc*". The creative process also implies a whole part on getting information on stylistic trends (Godart, 2010). Indeed, designers share the information during receptions, parties, cocktail parties and other professional events (Currid, 2007). Then, agencies or forecasting bureaus exist, whose role is to drive out and make available styles to come for the professionals: *Nelly Rodi* in Paris, or *Worth Global Style Network* in London.

The role of the media for the diffusion of styles also has to be mentioned, especially professional press (The *Journal du textile* in France, or *Women's Wear Daily* in the US) and specialized blogs (*businessoffashion.com*). Finally, different fairs like *Première Vision* play an undeniable role. An international dialogue brings together spokespersons of weavers and style agencies to collect information on the trends that will mark the fashion season. International industrial representatives are gathered together for two days by the Fashion office of *Première Vision*, and

validate the main lines of research for their collections, and the display of their fabric on the fair forums (Godart, 2010).

These different coordination mechanisms illustrate the idea that the diffusion of styles in fashion is characterized by the existence of a "collective selection", drawing more specifically on the terms of the American sociologist H.Blumer (1969). This selection leads professionals of fashion to filter trends according to a taste they develop on contact with their peers or different sources of information. As stated by Godart & Mears (2009), market constraints influence the formation of collective taste. It is a fashion designer's task to predict and read the modern taste of the collective mass.

Correspondingly, creative innovations will be affected by individual's embeddedness in professional networks (Godart, Shipilov & Claes, 2013) and their general networking ability (Baer, 2010). Social embeddedness provides valuable professional information and tacit knowledge about how to generate ideas and implement ideas, as these tend to be codified and transmitted through informal relationships (Uzzi, 1996).

A fashion photographer we interviewed talked about "clusters", as groupings of artists from the same generation, working and exchanging information between themselves. In France, this can be illustrated by what is known as the "Palace generation", a grouping of artists from the 1980's who all went to the same nightclub, "Le Palace". K.Takada, K.Lagerfeld, T.Ardisson, C.Louboutin, A.Putman...*"this generation is now very powerful, controlling the art and the fashion worlds"*, fashion photographer explains.

Similarly, a fashion journalist deplors the situation in Milan, denouncing the power of the 'dinosaurs' of the domain, *"preferring internal wars to protect their own respective fief (...) Italy does not really like change, there is always a dinosaur to block the way"*. As a consequence, *"young designers that live from hand to mouth are often treated with condescension by powerful press tycoons who only look for new blood for their own benefits (...) even Giorgio Armani, who, each season offers his Teatro to a future talent, limits his encouragement to the organizing of a fashion show"*<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> On Business of Fashion.com, 30/09/14.

Focusing on fashion producers, Godart & Mears (2011) shine a light on the factors that influence the way they make decisions. A commonly shared explanation is that personal tastes define creative and aesthetic preferences (Horyn, 2008). As those producers work in fashion, an industry in which the belief of a creative 'genius' is strong, they often justify their work through the rhetoric of taste, understood as the concrete realisation of their personal and emotional reactions to beauty.

This expertise is central in the fashion industry, and fashion producers believe into that 'vision' for, as Bourdieu (1992) explains, they have to believe in the rules of the game (the *illusio*) if they want to play. Evolving in the fashion sector, fashion producers believe in the autonomy of what they do. Yet in reality it seems to be very different, with social conditions tremendously influencing their actions and choices.

Indeed, and aligned with our previous argument on the social embeddedness of actors, Godart & Mears (2011) show that while the producers present the *selection of models* (the particular case they study) as a question of taste, or personal preferences; their decisions are in fact defined by mechanisms of information-sharing in social networks. Fashion producers' decisional processes are a question of strategic choices based on status rather than on personal taste, even when their rhetoric refers to personal taste (Godart & Mears, 2011). They obviously need to have a global vision of the industry before making choices.

Two mechanisms of information-sharing then allow producers to make their choices (Godart & Mears, 2011). They share information through their social networks (1). And they realize their aesthetic taste according to some statutory reflection (2). Subsequently, it is through their social networks that producers have access to meanings proper to those networks (Corona & Godart, 2009; White, 2008; White, Godart & Corona, 2007).

As far back as 1969, in his study of fashion buyers Blumer underlined a remarkable convergence towards preferences for the same new trends. Although in their discourse buyers put up with expressing their personal taste for garments they found "sensational", in reality such garments are precisely the same ones as the new and trendy ones.

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So now that we have seen the "external" part of the creative process (getting information from the domain), let's move on to what is happening *inside the organization*. Drawing from a detailed empirical study led in six different companies, from luxury designs (Cerruti, Trussardi and Marzotto) to fast fashion (JFK, Henriette Conferioni), Mora (2006) analyses creative work from the perspective of what she calls "diffuse creativity". The term "diffuse" here refers to the principal characteristics of the fashion innovation process: its collective nature, its negotiated aspect, and its context of "network enterprise" (Powell, 1990).

Those characteristics follow from the fact that creative work always happens in a negotiated interaction between a fashion house and subcontractors, in a framework called "network organization" by sociology of organizations -typified by reciprocal patterns of communication and exchange. Consequently, Mora (2006) suggests this concept of "diffuse creativity", focusing on the wealth coming from collective work and the multiplicity of influences that bring their brick to creation.

Still, such a concept of "diffuse creativity" hides the structured and organised action led by designers internally. To this effect, Giusti (2011) helps us in understanding the organization of the work inside the organization. She followed the whole conception work of a new fashion collection, trying to sketch the ideal-type features of the organization of design activity in fashion. She called this ideal type "studio work" ("*le travail en atelier*").

The "innovation journey", as she calls it, is presented as a complicated routine. The studio work is based on coordination obtained through the creation of mediating conception objects and the imposition of deadlines, using loosely coupled technology and personal authority, and not a hierarchical structure or written norms. It also relies on a planned system of openings and closings of a technical core, to integrate pertinent variables from the external environment and enrich the designs.

To know more about the creative process, we also looked for new data by diversifying the sources of information. An interview with the director of one of the big fashion schools in Paris led us to additional empirical information. Indeed, according to him and to the networks in which he belongs (associations of fashion schools' head professors and of fashion professionals), the creative process is nowadays more and more being rationalized.

Competencies between creation and management are intertwining: the product manager contributes to the creative propositions and the creative actor has to integrate values of rationality and efficiency in own work (Godart & Mears, 2011). It started in the 1980's, with globalisation, production delocalisation and the emergence of marketing concepts. More and more one can witness the rationalization of structures and processes regarding jobs linked to creation: new organization of studios, re-positioning of artistic direction in organization charts (directly linked to head office), increased control of brand identity within companies.

Professional profiles intervening along the creative process are obviously conditioned by these ways of rationalization. Fashion designers that work within creation studios have to integrate the brand codes in order to anticipate the model selections, keep an eye on the budget, the calendar and the organization requirements, prescribed by the collection managers. This is how in the end a job description corresponding to a function of fashion designer asks to:

*"-Participate in the creation and elaboration of a collection plan with the actual team, while respecting the product and marketing plan*

*-Propose themes, mood boards, new forms, colour ranges, material, drawings...while adapting these propositions to the brand's requirements.*

*-A fashion training is required, with a strong artistic sensibility and a commercial sense<sup>23</sup>."*

Although the proposition is formulated for a creative profile, commercial and marketing competences are required.

The emergence of the function of 'director of collections' in fashion house's charts also belongs to this rationalization phenomenon. Even if he or she does not draw, the collection director gives an orientation to the House's creative proposition in all its forms, with a strong control on brand's elements that take place at the heart of the creative process. Business culture seems to have today permeated the whole universe of creation.

*"It is without doubt the perversion of marketing that ultimately has helped kill the fashion industries. Initially invented to be a science, (...) it has gradually become a network of fearful guardians of brands, slaves to financial institutions, hostages of shareholder interests" (Li Edelkoort, in her manifesto Anti-Fashion, 2015).*

Bottom line is, designers are required to have a marketing sense so as to be able to communicate

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23 From a Parisian Head-Hunter agency



with the decision-makers -collection director and product managers. More and more is required from young designers, like mastering computers, perfectly know fabrics and the product from a technical viewpoint, speak english, know how to work with a team, be strong-will, flexible, adaptable, with humility and a capacity to face challenge; and obviously be talented.

If young designers are recruited for a creative potential, the reality of their first years in professional life brings them to limit their spontaneity to execute the work required, in the service of the House's creative proposition; while taking into account the brand image and the constraints related to costs, quality and the market. Then, their possibility of professional evolution depends on their faculty to integrate this information into the daily practice of their function.

To sum up, a minimum of knowledge on what structures a company and the market is necessary. Designers are expected to be able to communicate with the company bodies and boards on the one hand, and with the technical staff and the suppliers on the other hand. The profound changes that the fashion sector encounters brings the creative process to progressively integrate values of efficiency and rationality, traditionally associated to marketing and control functions.

Nonetheless, there is little empirical evidence in the literature on how these most recent changes in the production of fashion shape the industry, and even less about how all those different forces in the field of fashion affect product design and development at an operational level. This is what this Ph.D project endeavours to focus on.

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This whole part on the empirical setting was here to justify that the fashion industry is a well-suited context to study the practices associated to creativity within the organization. The theoretical issues identified in the first part of the research, out of any industry nor context, are predominantly found in the fashion industry. Indeed, fashion industry turns out to be a relevant scenery that puts into relief the creative and economic rationales, peculiar to creative industries.

Simply put, we found out that at the heart of fashion seems to lie down a tension between creative endeavours and economic interests. Characterized by uncertainty, the industry relies on many institutions that regulate creative work, like professional associations or fashion fairs. Creative work has to be accepted by many gatekeepers such as journalists or buyers. Also, fashion houses have to daily battle against very concrete commercial decisions and are evaluated and ranked on their creativity. Tension and conflict are part of the daily routine of creative actors, who see their styles and designs canalized through well-organized production. Design has to be thought of as a process that requires a global vision of the industry before generating and implementing ideas. To that end, networks provide valuable professional information. Designers have to observe and get observed. With regard to this context, we understand that all the creative actors that work on the design process in the fashion industry have to permanently juggle to articulate a personal creative zone with a given economic reality. The 'hidden' creative actors, in the background, also have to deal with the ego of the designer, and the last minute changes or cancellations adjoining.

So this overview puts into light the multiplicity of constraints hanging over the creative process and actors. We thus understand that the nature of constraints may vary. Consequently, we imagine that practices may also vary, accordingly. But what catches our attention is the possible forming of practices in reaction. We may think about the work of Howard Becker here. In his book, *Tricks of the trade* (1998), he gives the example of studies on prison life. Hardship in whatever context probably leads to the collective development of cultural practices aiming at relieving it. But, as he explains, the nature of the hardship may considerably vary, and so do the practices. But what is essential is *the systematic forming of practices in reaction*. In similar ways, we are interested in the systematic forming of practices (by creative actors) in reaction (to their economic environment).

Thus, the Fashion Industry seems to be accurate for this research, as it entails issues that particularly reflect on the initial questioning: How do fashion designers deal with those (different) tensions, how do they overcome them? What are the different practices that the fashion designers develop to be able create?





# 3. METHOD

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## 3 METHOD

### 3.1 A Process-based view as an overarching paradigm

As creative logic is too fixing and static compared to a reality perpetually fluxing and changing, we take an interest in Robert Chia's call (2015) for a process research, following the process philosophy. The ambition therefore becomes not only a description of creative processes by a term; but rather to think, theorise and analyse creative processes using process ontology.

This approach has its roots in the philosophies of Whitehead (1929/1978) and Mead (1932) and in organization studies in the writing of Chia (1999), Cobb (2007), Hernes (2013), or more recently the Oxford Handbook of Process Philosophy and Organization Studies (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014). Following such an epistemological stance will broaden the explanatory potential of our empirical research findings.

Theorists of organizations have either apprehended organizations as pre-existing structures to activities, or either considered organisation as the result and condition of collective activity. Many theoretical streams have developed this second approach by providing the study of activities as a starting point to understand the emergence of organisational phenomena. Within such view, the processual approach tries to account for organisational phenomena by firstly paying attention to what people do and not on structures that would have an existence a priori (Chia, 1999; Hernes & Weik, 2007; Langley & Tsoukas, 2016).

For the theorists of organisations drawing from processual thinking, conception of organisation as entity is misleading. By paying attention to the temporary and fragile results of processes and not on processes themselves, constitutive of those results, one does not describe the organisational phenomenon but only its objectification. Many scholars like Bergson (1907/2009), Whitehead (1929/1978) or Latour (2006) warned us against the temptation to understand the world through entities that we define. Identifying and localising entities in time and space does not allow describing the processes that continuously produce and reproduce entities that we perceive.

Process Research is thus defined in the recently published Oxford Handbook of Process Philosophy and Organization Studies as *"learning to see the world in its multiplicity, nurturing one's receptive capacity so one can abide with the world, belong to it or stay with it, and direct the forces of the event in an intensive process of becoming that creates by differentiating the quality of the new"* (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014: 4).

The 'becoming' is the overriding principle of a process world-view. Process thinking directs us towards differentiation rather than identity, and becoming rather than being. Process-organizational life is perpetual becoming, surprises and affordances make the best of it (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Every belonging to a situation is a participation in a field of potential, within all the multiplicities that the situation holds together via its many relationships (Holt et al., 2014).

Breaking from dominant scientific and individualistic conceptualizations, it is only by first acknowledging that the primary condition of human existence is this ambiguous, fluxing reality, and not some pre-ordered condition; that we can approach creativity as dynamic, constantly constructed through social interactions, and embodied in organizational practices (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003). Actors and organizations are simultaneously consubstantial and empirically inseparable. Thinking process is about maintaining an openness towards this multiplicity of things surrounding creativity.

As such, processual research serves a threefold purpose (Hussenot, 2016):

- 1: It allows considering the organisation for its activities and not as economic entity. Organisation is therefore defined as the process organising collective activities. While following activities to apprehend organisational phenomena, processual research helps to go as much as possible beyond classical dualisms such as 'individual versus collective', or, in the case of this research, 'commercial versus creative'.
- 2: Processual approach provides a theoretical alternative to apprehend emerging and innovative phenomenon that cannot be understood within classical categories of organisation studies. In the background, the ambition is to understand current evolutions of various creative practices and thus fuel discussion in organisation studies.
- 3: Activity, emergence, interrelation and creativity now lie at the heart of the discussion. Processual approach then means new ethics for collective activity, focusing on diversity, otherness and experimentation.

Once we start thinking from experience, organisation becomes "*both a given structure (i.e. a set of established generic cognitive categories) and an emerging pattern (i.e. the constant adaptation of those categories to local circumstances). Institutionalized cognitive categories are drawn upon by individuals-in-action but, in the process, established generalizations may be supplemented, eroded, modified or, at any rate, interpreted in oftentimes unpredictable ways*" (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002: 573). Process-thinking, in that so, is constantly reminding us that a "line of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) is always a possibility, when attempts to stabilise and fix are always instable and bound to change.

The central tenets of process theory are then consistent with and have the potential to contribute substantially to this research. Following this ontology of becoming, we acknowledge for the activities, collectives and movements, rather than static entities, to understand how creative ideas are developed and implemented along the designing of a new collection. Specifically, we work from the assumption that creativity per se always represents a fleeting and restless process of "becoming" (Deleuze, 2007) and, as such, persists in being impossible to fully seize.

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In recent years, there is increasing empirical evidence to suggest that creativity is a contextual, distributed and socially embedded phenomenon rather than a static entity that creative persons hold or produce (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Harvey, 2014; Glăveanu et al., 2015). As such a multiplicity, creativity resists becoming locked into the fixity of thingness. These studies indicate that it is the interrelationship between actors and their environment that influences the process of how creative ideas develop in particular social contexts. Departing from this world without entities, this research advocates looking beyond the single creative actor and entering the invisible and visible creative activity revolving around him/her, processual, dynamic and collective.

Doing process research then becomes more like following, a going with things, rather than attempting to capture and fix them. As such, we believe a processual approach to the study of creativity does justice to its movements, multiplicity and situated doings.

*"The story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It makes it. One understands it, then, if one enters into this movement itself...The storyteller falls in step with the lively pace of his fables. He follows them in all their turns and detours, thus exercising an art of thinking" (De Certeau 1984: 81)*



The only way to approach creativity seems to be through its fluidity, made of contradictory moments, movements, bodily postures, specific endeavours and rituals, and all this in continuous flux, constantly changing. We aim at creativity within and through lived relationships.

This can be very complex, and changeable, whilst all the time researchers are being keyed into the demands of making apparent: the approach they took, the rationale for doing so, and the knowledge being produced (Holt et al., 2014). As much as possible, we will try to stay with the things and present a research not from a distant viewpoint but rather as being part of it, alert to the dynamics of the social, and self. Acknowledging here for creativity's processual flows, we still commit to the problematization and deconstruction of the phenomenon, trying to get as close as possible to it.

### 3.2 General design

As an introduction to this part, we would like to specify that not everything can be explained about this methodology. It also consisted of partial, blurred and hard to grasp influences, once settling down on one determined methodology was avoided. As much as we tried to back things up with readings, protocols, and in the end a picture in mind of what being on the field would be; it happened very differently, and the unexpected was completely part of it. The following section is also a tentative in acknowledging for this unexpected.

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To answer the research questions about how the creative actors deal with the surrounding economic tensions, we started with exploratory interviews to see how creative actors reacted to the economic context from a discursive viewpoint. We then moved on towards some ethnographic work, to deepen a point that appeared quite enigmatic during the first phase: the more material and physical aspect of creativity.

### 3.2.1 An inductive approach

First of all, this research was oriented according to a grounded approach of theorization (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which explains the preliminary exploratory part. Grounded theory is a research approach or method that calls for a continual interplay between data collection and analysis to produce a theory during the research process. At the beginning, the object of the research wasn't clearly defined.

To claim for such an inductive strategy while accessing the field does not mean we went on the field without any theoretical overview or background. The idea was rather to discover new propositions than to test propositions formulated in advance (Becker, 1958). "*Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis*" (Patton, 1980: 306).

Qualitative research does obviously not depart from scratch, neither does it depart from a fixed research question and rigid theoretical frameworks. It departs from a 'problem', within the meaning of Popper (Popper, 1979), and from guidance points of departure to tackle this problem (Dumez & Ayache, 2011). One of the founder of the qualitative approach called those guidance points "orienting theories" (Whyte, 1984, p. 118), which are not theoretical hypotheses but rather frameworks that allow an orientation within the data, while being sufficiently loose to not structure the data, hence the results (Dumez & Ayache, 2011).

From an epistemological viewpoint, the research tried to re-examine the nature of knowledge produced -in this case, on the topic of creativity. Gibson-Graham (2008, 619) refers to "weak theory" which involves "*refusing to extend explanation too widely or deeply, refusing to know too much*". This approach counters uniting theories that tend to fix social structures. By giving more space to the possible, the proliferation, and the imagination, it resists having to face existing dominating models (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

We adopted this emerging strategy of research (Mintzberg, 1979) relying on the principle of "sociological imagination" (Mills, 1959).

*"The sociological imagination consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and of its components. It is this imagination, of course, that sets off the social scientist from the mere technician." (p 214)*

Such an approach allowed us to build our understanding around the properly contextualized experiences of those involved in the creative process, rather than imposing a particular framework upon them.

*"The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. By such means, the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues." (p 7)*

As such, we tried to produce thick as in faithful descriptions. What mattered to us was the very precise interpretation of interactive situations, between people using concepts close to their experiences, and not general-order-type concepts. Those concepts are those with which people themselves or their relatives are able to think, imagine, and apply to themselves and to others. In the process, literature was used as a reading grid to the accumulated descriptions. The objective was to see how such readings might give a less naïve sense to the events we could observe but also how those same events might illustrate theoretical grey areas.

### 3.2.2 Being interpretive

In the end, this inductive method allowed us to understand the subjective interpretation that individuals give to their own actions, thus following the approach known as 'interpretive'. We tried to understand the subjective point of view of an actor involved, trying to interpret what this actor meant through his actions:

*« All worldly truth rests ultimately on direct individual experience. There is no escape from this iron-clad fact of the human condition, and it is a truth which must be kept constantly in mind and must form the basis of all social research, as well as of all worldly, practical hu-man endeavour » (Jack Douglas, 1976: 6 -cited in Chapoulie, 2000).*

So the adopted approach was interpretive, inspired more particularly from the tradition of 'symbolic interactionism' or 'sociology of Chicago'. More than abstract social categories, interactionists start from individuals or groups of individuals (Blumer, 1962). Following Weber (and his *verstehen*), they believe a social action is oriented towards others. This research could be described as 'interpretive' in that it heeds Weber's (1922) call for an understanding of individuals' motives and motivations.

Individuals do not only respond to others' actions as a stimulus, but also interpret, define and re-define them: their answers rely on the meaning they attach to those actions and to their actions-to-come. Following interactionists means listen and take into account the perspective of the people met. The objective is to understand their organisational and social world. By 'interaction', what they mean is not only face-to-face interactions, but also interactions that do not underlie any contact (Chapoulie, 1984).

In this research, the use of ethnographic observation is called upon to validate, with the collaboration of participants, the meaning of their representations and practices. On the opposite of general theoretical constructions, founded on universal concepts; interactionists develop a critical interpretation of expressions charged with connotations, those that are used by the people interviewed as well as those proposed by theorists. It is all about analysing, and not adopting, the different actors' viewpoint:

*"The sociologist has had historically a function as an interpreter...it is helpful to distinguish between the description and the interpretation of social relationships. On the interpretative level we would mainly raise questions which every day language covers by the word 'why'." (Lazarsfeld, 1948: 7-8)*

But being interpretive does not solely mean understanding the meaning individuals put into their actions, it also means replacing current interactions in their context, reintroducing phenomena that may or may not be perceptible from the individual's point of view. Obviously the idea is not to get a grip on abstractions disconnected from reality, but rather replace the observations in a more global context, certainly with an unveiling ambition.

*"What we experience in various and specific milieux, I have noted, is often caused by structural changes. Accordingly, to understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them. And the number and variety of such structural changes increase as the institutions within which we live become more*

*embracing and more intricately connected with one another. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieux. To be able to do that is to possess the sociological imagination." (Mills, 1959: 13)*

### 3.2.3 The 'lost voices' of the industry

Following an inductive and interpretive approach was also a way to allow unveiling possibilities, putting into light the "human variety" Mills talks about (1959). It allowed the voices of central as well as marginal actors to be heard -all actors involved along the creative process on the creative side.

*"What social science is properly about is the human variety, which consists of all the social worlds in which men have lived, are living, and might live (...) the human variety includes the variety of individual human beings, these the sociological imagination must grasp and understand." (Mills, 1959: 135)*

Fieldwork was thus a way to study what is not statistically represented. In fashion industry, typically, the workers that are renamed "*petites mains*", those seamstresses that never appear, especially not during fashion show. Yet a new collection cannot happen without them, while it can without bloggers or journalists. Notably, this research is about how visibility might be accorded to people -such as seamstresses- that are not in a dominating situation, who do not have access to official communication channels; and in that so pays attention to what is not visible as outside of the legitimate perception of scholars (Chapoulie, 1984, 2000).

Fieldwork indeed allowed "polyphonic" restitutions (Belova, King & Slija, 2008), without suppressing the voices of those who don't benefit from statistical representativeness.

*"Perhaps the variety is not as 'disorderly' as the mere listing of a small part of it makes it seem, perhaps not even as disorderly as it is often made to seem by the courses of study offered in colleges and universities. Order as disorder is relative to viewpoint: to come to an orderly understanding of men and societies requires a set of viewpoints that are simple enough to make understanding possible, yet comprehensive enough to permit us to include in our views the range and depth of human variety" (Mills, 1959: 133)*

This approach led us to collect different types of qualitative data, from diverse sources. As Yin (2012) explains, qualitative approaches are pertinent to study new phenomenon in a real-life context, when frontiers are not clearly defined. The difficulty to understand interactions between individuals, organisations and the market in the context of creative industries led to a necessary global approach of the organisation, in order to understand the ins and outs. Also, this choice might be justified by the descriptive design of our questioning. As Dumez (2013) emphasizes, qualitative approaches offer multiple possibilities in terms of description, as they allow to deeply describe a phenomenon.

A final word now about the critical aspect of the methodology. The ambition with this study was to describe, to comprehend. It did not aim at foreseeing certain behaviours or prescribe efficiency norms for the creative organisation. Purposefully based on empirical investigation, the methodology was not critical as in imagining alternative possibilities, but rather as in unveiling certain grey areas of the sector, questioning the status quo. Account for the lost voices of the industry and counter-balance the hyper-muscular figure of the heroic designer allowed to deconstruct the excitement of popular fashion understanding, and reach for mundane and lived experiences of creative actors.

\*

After having explained the general design, the following part addresses the different steps of the empirical phase of the research. I am now switching to the first person singular, as it appears to me coherent with a non-exteriority position regarding the object of research. In line with Huopalaainen (2016), I believe that we, as researchers, could do even more to find ways to write that are personal and scholarly at the same time, trying to approach knowledge as situated in the living (hence personal) experience of the world.

*"The use of the first person is more than a cute convention or a self-deprecating call for attention. It is more than just an assertion of fieldworkerchutzpah or blind ignorance of a world-out-there. At its core, scholars are turning to the self in order to discover not only truths about their own experience but about the world out there"* (Venkatesh, 2012: 5)

The ambition with this Ph.D is to provide close-up descriptions from my perspective, as a critical researcher spending a moment in a creative studio -an outsider inside-, to better grasp fashion doings, moment-by-moment, on the spot. The use of the first person is here both a vantage point of critique and a mode of exposition (Venkatesh, 2012). I will come back to this non-exteriority

approach. Meanwhile, the first person singular will be employed in all the extracts referring to fieldwork.

### 3.3 Exploratory part

#### 3.3.1 Data collection

For this exploratory phase, I collected data using three techniques: (1) unstructured, one-on-one interviews; (2) secondary data; and (3) non-participant observation. This heterogeneity responds to the triangulation and complementarity requirements. I relied on the interviews with creative actors as the main source of data. The observation, documents, and literature served as important triangulation and supplementary sources for understanding the sector, identifying any discrepancies among interview participants and as a means of gaining additional perspectives on key issues that unfolded through the interviews (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

*Secondary data: Fashion schools, fashion week, specialized and popular press*

To develop an understanding of the origins and context of the fashion industry, I collected documents from various fashion schools libraries. Articles in the popular press and books were important sources of background information too. As a complement, I went to visit two Parisian fashion schools and interacted with the members (students, teachers, administrators). Not only did these documents provide a secondary data source but also proved helpful as a tool for engaging participants in discussions about creativity (see also Appendix 1 for detail).

Similarly, I spent some time following a fashion photographer during fashion week (September 2014), which helped me understand the web of actors who play a critical and powerful role in the industry, like journalists or buyers from leading retailers. Although these data were not extensively used, they made up for my 'library' of research (Hjorth, 2005) and helped me

appreciate and fully dive into the context in which creative processes are enacted. Mills (1959) summarises those first moments as such:

*"From what I have said, you will understand that in practice you never 'start working on a project'; you are already 'working' either in a personal vein, in the files, in taking notes after browsing, or in guided endeavours. Following this way of living and working, you will always have many topics that you want to work out further. After you decide on some 'release', you will try to use your entire file, your browsing in libraries, your conversation, your selections of people -all for this topic or theme. You are trying to build a little world containing all the key elements which enter into the work at hand, to put each in its place in a systematic way, continually to readjust this framework around developments in each part of it. Merely to live in such a constructed world is to know what is needed: ideas, facts, ideas, figures, ideas." (Mills, 1959: 222).*

### *Interviews and observations*

I interviewed 41 informants who participate directly or indirectly in the fashion industry. The open-ended interviews lasted 60-90 minutes. 31 of them were creative actors, either dress-makers, modellers, stylists, creative designers or creative directors- all levels of the industry mixed up, from Haute Couture to small independent houses. 10 of them were "contextual actors" - e.g.: a blogger, an investment banker specialized in fashion brands, a fashion photographer. The interviewees never saw the questions in advance, and the interviews always loosely followed an interview guide that I adjusted on-the-moment and according to the person, allowing for spontaneity and flexibility.

Due to the secondary data previously depicted, and to the interviews piling up, I became very familiar to the issues I was discussing and could more and more ask deeper and accurate questions while progressing with the research. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, except for the few who did not accept being recorded. In the beginning, purposeful sampling logic was used. Later in the research process, purposeful sampling technique was complemented by snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). Interviewees would suggest other people that they thought I should talk to, rendering the theoretical sampling both deliberate and emergent.

This recruitment logic resulted in attracting fashion persons from different segments: *Haute Couture* and *Prêt-à-porter*, and therefore different traditions. In doing so, the findings revealed a



more nuanced, varied approach to product development, providing richer detail about practices at and across the boundaries of current classifications.

Indeed, contemporary designers are known to work in significantly different ways, both conceptually and practically (Breward, 2003). It is only to be expected that the responsibilities, work routines and practical doings of designers depend on their market position and the scale of the business. Today, designers are obviously a diverse and heterogeneous group of workers, and there is no universal or unique figure of the fashion designer (Volonté, 2012).

In this thesis, variation on that segmentation characteristic was purposefully allowed, since I wanted to uncover a common "theoretical motor" (Überbacher, Jacobs, & Cornelissen, 2015) that would explain what enabled these different fashion actors to produce creative propositions, in an organizational context. I also allowed for variation on age, years of experience, and level of recognition in the domain; although it should be mentioned that overall the informants possessed high levels of recognition.

Following Yin (2012), interviews were used as occasions to conduct a non-systematical observation of the organisation. It happened several times that I asked for a tour of the offices or ateliers at the end of an interview -when interviews were done at work, obviously. Although very short and occasional, those observations were very useful to understand and learn the ins and outs surrounding creative process.

#### Interviewees Profile

	CREATIVES Sector	Status/Company	Function	Time
1	Fashion Haute Couture	entrepreneur & freelance	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	2.30h
2	Fashion Ready-toWear (RW)	freelance	<i>designer</i>	2.30h
3	Lingerie	employee	<i>artistic direction</i>	1.10h
4	Luxury & Design	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	1.20h
5	Fashion high-end RW	freelance	<i>designer</i>	2.30h
6	Fashion Haute Couture	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	1.15h
7	Fashion Haute Couture	employee	<i>modelist</i>	1.25h
8	Fashion high-end RW	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	1h
9	Fashion high-end RW	employee	<i>assistant designer</i>	1.35h
10	Fashion high-end RW	intern	<i>assistant designer</i>	1.30h

11	Fashion high-end RW	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	1.50h
12	Fashion Haute Couture	employee	<i>studio direction</i>	1.20h
13	Fashion RW	freelance	<i>designer</i>	2.30h
14	Fashion & Design	freelance	<i>designer</i>	1.10h
15	Fashion high-end RW	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	1.10h
16	Fashion & Design	freelance	<i>designer</i>	1.50h
17	Design	freelance	<i>designer</i>	1.40h
18	Fashion high-end RW	employee	<i>designer</i>	1.40h
19	Fashion RW	employee	<i>designer</i>	1h
20	Fashion high-end RW	employee	<i>assistant designer</i>	1h
21	Fashion Haute Couture	employee	<i>shoe designer</i>	1.15h
22	Ethical Fashion & Design	freelance	<i>designer</i>	1.50h
23	Fashion Haute Couture	employee	<i>seamstress</i>	1.15h
24	Fashion high-end RW	employee	<i>designer</i>	2h
25	Jewellery	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	50 minutes
26	RW accessories	entrepreneur	<i>CEO</i>	50 minutes
27	RW accessories	entrepreneur	<i>artistic direction</i>	50 minutes
28	RW & Costumes	entrepreneur	<i>designer</i>	50 minutes
29	Fashion Haute Couture	interim	<i>seamstress</i>	2h
30	Fashion high-end RW	employee	<i>assistant designer</i>	2h
31	Fashion high-end RW  OTHER	entrepreneur	<i>CEO and artistic direction</i>	1.45h
32	Fashion & Luxury	Director	<i>Investment fund fashion sector</i>	1h30
33	Fashion	Director	<i>Fashion School (Paris)</i>	2H
34	Fashion & Design	Blogger	<i>Blogging</i>	1.15h
35	Fashion & Design	Blogger	<i>Blogging</i>	1.30h
36	Fashion	Entrepreneur	<i>Logistic for various brands of fashion sector</i>	50 minutes
37	Fashion	Director	<i>Recruitment agency (for creatives)</i>	1.30h
38	Fashion & Design	Scholar	<i>Fashion school (Paris)</i>	1h
39	Fashion	Director	<i>Incubator -Fashion designers</i>	1.20h
40	Fashion	Employee	<i>Showroom sales-luxury brands</i>	1h
41	Fashion	Consultant	<i>Consulting missions -ready to wear brands</i>	1h

The interview protocol contained questions about the informants' daily activities, with a focus on the practices they deploy at work, to better comprehend the formation of aesthetic choices in the economic settings of the fashion industry.

These interviews were supplemented by 3 instances of systematic observation -approximately 20 hours of observations -in a young designer's incubator. Efforts were made to get as close as possible to the subjects in the organization: not only interviews but also observation, photography, work shadowing...with a tight focus on micro « episodes » of creativity, for example a single meeting, or a few sentences of conversation.

Although I did not actively participate in the activities of the participants, I asked questions and conducted informal interviews during the 3 days of observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1994). Following the '*objet de création*' and what circles around it was the guideline of observation to avoid losing ground on the field. Field notes were written down immediately after each observation. In the end, the whole period of observation was transcribed in a written form: practices, interactions, exchanges, anecdotes etc.

Being able to be on the field, and daily observe the practices was also a way to go beyond a potential well thought-of discourse -collected during interviews. Indeed, among creative workers often circulates the overly constructed 'professional narrative' around the loss-of-creative-freedom topic. Many times we may read in mainstream press the classical difficulties encountered by creative workers with regard to the 'mean' market and the pressure they have to face.

Alvesson (2003) encourages scholars to be reflexive regarding the interviews. Certain behaviours and discourses seem to fit with what he calls "moral storytelling": a tendency to make good impression and to systematically justify own actions' merit and appropriateness. Observation was a way to get round that difficulty in the exploratory part, and go further in terms of findings.

Throughout the data collection, I sought to constantly confront the basis of the data to the theoretical background previously gathered. These round-trips allowed me to continuously hone the interviewing and observation techniques and develop new directions for inquiry. As previously seen, secondary information was used to refine the thinking and improve the inferences' soundness.

### 3.3.2 Data analysis

Having left the field, I began the analysis by becoming highly familiar with all the data, reading and rereading the transcripts of interviews, field notes, and collected materials. The analysis followed established techniques and procedures for naturalistic inquiry and grounded-theory building (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001) and consisted of a series of steps (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). At that point, I considered the "*répertoire*" with which the creative actors operate in their own way.

From there, facts were not understood as data from my calculation, but rather lexicon of their practices. The Gioia methodology was then used for its systematic inductive approach to grounded theory development, preserving the processual nature of creativity-in-the-making. All of the data has been coded in an inductive bottom up way so that the themes identified closely align with the data.

In the first step of the analysis, interview transcripts were coded. The coding began with the process of open-coding where I assigned a code to each line of text. These codes accurately described the meaning of the text segment and helped organize the data by breaking up the text into manageable blocks. These comprised phrases, terms or descriptions of practices offered by participants, all revolving around the micro-dynamics of creation within the organisation to which they belong.

Such descriptions included, among several others, comments on the constraints, narrations of their daily habits, stories of the interactions they have with the people they work with, and expressions of appreciation or disdain for the commercial context they work in. These formed the first-order codes. I constantly compared *coded documents* to theoretical work and drew possible conceptual patterns in-the-process. Each time a new round of iterations was initiated between theory (to enlighten and to substantiate conceptually an empirically observed pattern) and data sources (to provide missing information for further induction).

The 2nd step of the analysis involved looking for codes across interviews that could be collapsed into higher-level nodes. For example, several comments came out on creative consulting developed outside of the organisation, or on designing of stage costumes for private individuals

in parallel, and those were grouped into a node labelled "Multiplicity of projects". In this 2nd step, I always tried to retain the language used by informants. The higher-level, or "tree nodes", were then refined through triangulation of sources (interviews, observation, secondary data) to produce *first-order categories*.

The 3rd step of the analysis involved looking for links among 1st order categories so that I could collapse these into theoretically distinct clusters, or *second-order themes*. This was a recursive rather than linear process, I moved iteratively between the 1st order categories and the emerging patterns in the data until adequate conceptual themes emerged. For example, categories containing instances in which actors talked about being elsewhere geographically, and being elsewhere temporally were collapsed into a theme labelled "isolation".

The 4th step of the analysis involved organizing the second order themes into the *overarching dimensions* that eventually underpinned the theorizing. At this point, three dimensions emerged strongly here: *playing the game of the market (1)*, *cultivating one's uniqueness (2)*, *seeking autonomy (3)*. The point here was not to elaborate a theoretical model or a definite list of tactics to mould the different practices, but on the opposite to specify schemes of operation and to look for possible common categories between them, and to see if, through those categories, it would be possible to give full account of such tactics.

Voluntarily, in its relevance to its concrete object, the analysis was then dedicated to a continuous moving back and forth between theory and practical, from peculiar and circumstantial to general, an analysis as a true reflection of the moving reality it tries to seize.

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Finally, formal interviews certainly present some interest, as they allow seizing the legitimizations and rationalizations provided by individuals, inviting them to be reflexive in a way. It is also an opportunity to better understand their global perspectives, as the formal setting of the interview offers a more abstract vision of their practices, regardless of the local situations (Becker, 1958).

Yet power relations are present in interviews, inevitably understood as artificial social situations (Alvesson, 2011). Consequently, the interviews and discussions I have achieved in the first exploratory part might leave the reader quite far from the way each individual, regardless of

his/her discourses or practices, lives his/her creative work in the reality of its creation, in own individuality, singularity, everydayness.

More precisely, it appeared to me that a lot of interviewees mentioned the importance of the fabric. I needed to see more of that aspect. The complexity and subtlety of the tactics that I started to observe with interviews required some more investigation. Going back on the field through ethnography was then an opportunity for me to go beyond the knowledge of ordinary practitioners, that Certeau depicts "*as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms*" (1984: 93). Spending some time inside a designer's studio represented an opportunity to focus on a single case, as a miniature.

*"Classification and its systematization are not anymore the focus point, as primary concern is now to render actors' representations. It is necessary to pluralise, to move the focal as to account for very diverse histories, each with its specificity. Obviously, global context is not to be left apart, but the writing form will favour the miniature. The miniature format allows to reveal the thickness of existential situations and contexts of action, while also allowing to question disruptions, underlying and adjoining tonalities, hidden motives and results"* (Dosse, 2007: 452).

With this in mind, an ethnographic work was approached as a way of seizing the more "miniature", moving and diffuse aspects of creativity, the more unpredictable and vague aspects of the work, and the changing relationships between individuals. It was in that sense an opportunity to reintegrate the informal relations, perspectives contradictions, and symbolic aspects of interaction in the analysis. And through all that, go beyond the economy versus creativity dichotomy that I had difficulties avoiding so far, welcoming nuances and giving "*full attention to the not-yets, the didn't quite-make-its, the not quite respectable, the unremarked, and the openly 'anti' goings-on in a society*" (Hugues, 1962: 53).

In that respect, I tried to stick to complexity, and avoided as much as possible simplifying it, as reducing it would mean reduce understanding (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001). Ethnographic work represented an opportunity to welcome such complexity.

## 3.4 Ethnography

*"To accomplish greater things, one must not be above men, but among them."* Montesquieu

Ethnography – or, to emphasize its processual nature: *ethnographying* (Tota, 2004) – typically means having a prolonged and intensive engagement with the research setting, following actors, issues and materials as they move through time and space.

I spent three months in the studio of the high-end Parisian designer Ellen Estali<sup>24</sup>. As I will develop further in the document, the company Ellen E. proved to be an interesting case, iconic for the situation of independent designers. Although in fashion theory the presentations of haute couture have received plenty of scholarly attention, less celebrated fashion organizing remains insufficiently researched (Huopalainen, 2016). Such a case does inform the reader on the creative process, while answering the research question. General constraints are illustrated in a singular manner at Ellen E, and correspond to the problematic, as designers they have to face the tensions previously identified with literature and exploratory work.

### 3.4.1 Data collection

Chief designer (Ellen) is intensely active in all work phases and everyday doings of work: those related to design processes, fabric manipulations, manufacturing, sales, fairs, communication and so on. The choice of focusing on an independent designer, in the margin of mainstream design - owned by financial groups- is of particular interest. As Hugues (1951) explains, studies that relate to groups that are in the margin, outsiders or of low status compared to mainstreams, constitute a privileged field of observation. Their members are less likely to maintain a façade and present valued symbols to scholars than high-status groups with privileges, dominating the industry.

Evidently, a designer's personal involvement in the multifaceted design process of any house might vary greatly. Some designers are actively involved in design-related and 'hands-on' work

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<sup>24</sup> Obviously fictitious name for the purpose of the research

(Huopalaainen, 2016). Other designers act as visionary leaders or artistic directors tied to a team of assistants who take care of the manual and practical doings. And obviously there are others who do a little bit of both. It goes without saying that I cannot draw any enveloping finding based on this culturally clear-cut, limited and subjective ethnographic proposition.

Nevertheless, the case presented provides for a potential answer on how independent designers continuously negotiate the intricate relationships between commerce and creation. I believe accordingly that other small and independent fashion companies or creative organizations from western high-cost countries might work from premises reasonably similar to those of the studied designer. And a good sign of this is that my findings are consistent with those of Huopalaainen (2016), who studied a similar case (independent fashion entrepreneur) in Scandinavia.

### *Entering the field*

As previously seen, I was really clear about the necessity of an observation, while conducting my research. Indeed, an observation was an opportunity to take the research much further, and go beyond the too much 'thought-of' discourses I encountered. I wanted to study the daily work life of a fashion designer, get the inside track of it. I felt that I could not do much if I stayed outside of houses. Because each informant colours his or her description with personal biases, and because different informants will give different accounts of the same events, I could never guarantee the absolute accuracy of what I pieced together from several informants.

Importantly, Blumer (1962) warns us on the arbitrariness of categories held as variables, on the illusory nature of standardization, and on the uncertainty of the relation between behaviours in situ and responses collected during interviews. In that sense, there is no substitute for being there and observing the events. It was only if I could manage to get acquainted with fashion workers and learn first-line and first-hand what their problems were that I would then access the minimum necessary comprehension.

The ethnographical method is prescribed for the study of organisations in a special issue of the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly* on qualitative methods (Van Maanen, 1979). An ethnography represents an opportunity to eschew the spectacular, focus on the seemingly



inconspicuous. Going back to that whole "hurly-burly" of human actions -as in Wittgenstein's words-, the research meets some of the suggested ways in which processual scholars are encouraged to attend to the empirical settings under their gaze.

For instance, Helin & colleagues (2014) note that "*process philosophy encourages us to follow the goings-on of organisation, finding a world of swelling, falling away, erupting, and becalming without rest*". In other words, taking inspiration from process philosophy in empirical work necessitates attunement to the "sound and fury" of activity as it unfolds, paying as close attention as possible to the relational twists and turns, and letting them speak by attending to the how, without bracketing what they might be saying a priori (Bazin & Korica, 2016).

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September 2014 is when I started looking for a design studio that would accept me for the ethnography. It took me one year and 41 interviews of fashion-industry-people, while trying to understand the fashion industry, to finally fall on someone who'd accept integrating me as an intern. In the middle of this quest -march 2015-, one big parisian fashion house accepted me (to begin in April 1st), to finally cancel the day before I was supposed to start.

Those hazardous months say a lot on the field (Geertz, 1973; Favret- Saada, 1977) - fashion industry in our case. I always felt a discomfort coming from the interviewees once I started asking about entering their company. I think a lot of those reactions come from the fear of the copy and confidentiality issues. The interest of having access to all those data then appears even more essential, as it is extremely difficult for an external observer, who does not offer any compensation with a commercial aim or a communication use, to tackle the issue of creation (Giusti, 2011). In my field work, I encountered a strong hostility towards the research project, that mostly translated into contempt.

Nowadays, with an even more institutionalized field (Giusti, 2009; Kawamura, 2005), and so even more careful about maintaining the belief (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Delsaut, 1975), the world of creation seems from now on even more closed to an external look that reveals its impulse, even so this look only pretend to be scientific.

Luckily, after 1 year of digging, I interviewed a designer who accepted that I "*come have a look from the inside*". She -as a girl, it is- said yes after some negotiations. I was so happy when she said yes I

did not know what to say for a few moment. I carried on with the conversation for a little while, but I was petrified she would change her mind and was almost relieved when she put an end to the conversation. I just had to see with her in the coming days for the details.

Integrating the company would mean do my best to follow and understand the whole spectrum of actors involved on the spot, being as discreet as possible while also offering my help. Fortunately, I had the chance to discuss with Ellen the timing of my observation. I needed to have access to their calendar, to know when would be the best moment to come. After a few exchange of views, it seemed that November -2015- would be the most appropriate moment. Indeed, once fashion fairs have passed, a more or less slack period of a few days starts, when they tidy up the whole place. Arriving right after that moment, when everything starts all over again, seemed like a perfect timing.

The three weeks announced became three months. Even if three months may appear short regarding other ethnographic works, time length is not insignificant in that it corresponds exactly to the time spent on the designing of a new collection. The new collection is then the node of this study, to foreground practical activity and emphasize the ongoing processual nature of creativity "in the making" (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003).

As expected in the beginning, it is in the end a more smaller and discreet fashion house that accepted to open its doors rather than bigger ones. Now, in retrospect, I think that I owe my success (a positive response for an observation) to the fact that I directly spoke to the top-person. I had to face a lot of refusals, before this, and often it was not from the top-managers, but rather from all the persons surrounding them. A fashion photographer once said to me:

*"The problem is, with the fashion environment, that it's polluted (...) To really get to the designers, the people that really 'make' the business, generate collections, richness...you have to go through a whole army, the second circle, admirers, secondary brands, people far less important, but who gravitate in the environment...those people are the pretentious ones, the ones that block"*

This "blocking second circle" this photographer is talking about, added to the difficult economic times, might be a good explanation for the many refusals I had to face -not forgetting also the unfamiliarity with the world of research. But let's not comment too fast. On my side also, I might not always have had the right approach. In addition, cultural reasons might as well be involved, seeing that in other countries access appeared easier (see Huopainen, 2016, in Scandinavia).

## *Preparatory Phase*

Before entering the field, it felt like I was losing my time. With hindsight, I'd say it's a necessary time. The months I had before entering the field were for me an opportunity to conscientiously prepare for it. Getting the internship agreement, identifying the key people. I guess those series of obstacles have to be accepted before entering the field. I decided not to force time, not to get impatient with the company within which I felt it could work. I also took that time to find the reasons why doing an ethnography seemed important for this research.

An external observer, *a fortiori* a researcher, is not very welcome at the beginning. Obviously I did such investigations for the purpose of my research, but also to face interlocutors who do not necessarily know about ethnography or any investigation method in research. Yet *a posteriori* those same interlocutors became inclined to discuss, and were happy to take stock of the reality of the field and the lived experience.

So I don't believe that the success of an ethnography is limited to the field, *ipso facto*. Rather than a spontaneous conception, I tried to establish, upstream from the field, series of questions and practical plans of action that would allow realizing an investigation as a production of scientific data. The preparatory phase was an opportunity to find out more about the organization I was going to enter; and what, precisely, was I going to look for, once there. The steps included the definition of the phenomena I was going to observe, feasibility issues, ethnographic relation, focal spot -focus on a few actors or global vision- and the matter of temporality.

Experiment from the field is not idiosyncratic. On the opposite, observed singularities lead to generic facts that may become integrated into other generic facts described, conceptualised and interpreted by other scholars. So with regard to the existing literature on the topic, I tried to determine what such an ethnography could possibly bring that would be new and pertinent, and what answers to the points that seemed unsolved in the identified state of the art. This exercise helped me a lot to structure my mind. Those are the words I wrote then, the week before entering the field:

*"The creative process within an organization implies different identities, logics (creative versus economic), especially within creative industries. The literature reviewed reveals a favourable context for a study, as current controversies*

*exist around the nature of the relationship between the different worlds at stake. For some, bringing together economy and creativity means tensions and incommensurable forces, for others it means compatibilities and nourishing tensions. The debate is not settled.*

*My central inquiry precisely relies on the management of this duality inside the organization: How is creativity maintained in such a context? Within those big schemes and meta-constraints translated into tensions arises the question of the discretionary space left for creativity.*

- *What kind of practices (individual and collective) do actors involved into the creative process develop regarding the market and its rules ?*
- *What are the different 'ways of creating' within economic structures, how are the constraints tamed, diverted ? trickery, dream, laugh ?*
- *How do creative practices insinuate tiny margins for play, spaces of freedom, organizing the counterparty for mute processes of the economic arrangement ?*

*I will try, first, to better understand the relation actors have regarding the market, to then succeed in learning more about their ways of 'dealing with' market mechanisms. It will be a matter of, I presume, ways of action, silent practices and creation manners within the economic context, in order to transcend the binary archetypes (creation versus economy) and enter a median space of more complex practices.*

*The first phase of exploratory research allowed me to highlight a few interesting lines to keep in mind during observation: the notion of reflexion underlying creation, the appropriation of the commercial dimension, diversification of the creative proposition, symbolic isolation, openness on the outside or importance of the human factor. From those readings, I will try to remember the particular focus on the different spaces and occasions surrounding the actors, within a mercantile system that they assimilate and which assimilates them externally."*

### *The ethnography in practice*

My transcript of the field tries to be authentic and honest as possible as to provide the most accurate image of what is going on in a design studio on a daily basis, while allowing space for the most classical questioning of the discipline concerning the value of experience, the reflexive steps and the ethnographic relation into the process of knowledge acquisition.

Going on the field led to a series of questions: How do I produce knowledge from that? To what extent is the experience of the field constrained by rules, and how would those influence the knowledge process? What kind of processes should the collected data go through, so as to go from point A (ethnographic investigation) to point B (scientific text). What space for the ethnographer and her subjectivity in the conducting of the investigation, and the analysis?

While being on the field, readings of 'ethnographic alumnis' helped me a lot answer those questions. Those included readings about ethnography and ethnographic experiences (Becker, 1998; Favreet Saada, 1977; Foote Whyte, 1943, 1984; Jaumier, 2015). And another part of my reading focused on the more methodological aspects of ethnography (Emerson, Fretz & shaw, 1995; Jarzabkowski, Bednarek & Lê, 2014; Neyland, 2008). In order to keep some spontaneity to my sentiments, I followed the ethnographic writing advocated by Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995).

In the end, ethnography is always about writing. Writing is putting to the test the categories of meaning, the intuitions generated. For Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995), it particularly means producing a thematic narrative that's convincing rather than well-coded. If evidence lies in the construction of convincing text in which the authenticity of the author's field experience is made accessible to the reader (Jarzabkowski et al., 2014), then I choose to substitute a powerful story to an ever-greater number of data extracts or frequency counts of the codes and themes developed.

The social scientist (whether anthropologist, psychologist or organizational theorist by affiliation) claims to see what the objects of their studies cannot see (de Certeau, 1984). They claim that they can formalize and 'know' the lived assumptions of daily practice, while actual practitioners have no such access to (their own) 'truth'. But when those practices of lived experience are transcribed into 'knowledge'; they are tamed, rationalized and symbolized (Letiche & Statler, 2005). Practices lose their spontaneity, immediacy and unpredictability. Theorizing definitely makes social reality coherent, ordering it in a way that makes sense of it. But all this would be at the cost of reducing practices to what they are not.

In Letiche & Statler's view, practices never produce objective truth or theory. At best, practices leave narratives and stories in its wake. Subsequently, there can be no 'true' descriptions of practices, because descriptions require a researcher's perspective that controls the text and provides order and purpose. Then again, Letiche and Statler advocate for results that should not be in the form of an argument, but a telling.

Practices observed should not be re-presented, but evoked. In that respect, it seems that practices must remain inseparable from the time of its experiencing. They must not be strategized into a principle or concept, but must be left as raw experiential possibility. Stories of practices are thus entirely appropriate, whereas theories of practices may appear inappropriate.

So the mainly descriptive orientation of the ethnography can be explained by the concern to inform on social diversity, badly apprehended by the main typologies built out of statistical means (Dosse, 2007). Ethnography then becomes a possible alternative to counterfactual approaches which, through their will to objectivate, might miss the actual dynamic of social processes, actors' creativity and the role of meanings in the structuration of the social world.

The gap is implied with the ethnographic approach, as classification and its systematization are not critical in it, primary concern being to render actors representations. Attention is drawn to pluralisation, focus is moved to account for various lived realities, each in its specificity. Still, different articulations of sensations, contingencies and affects of everyday life so often remain difficult for ethnographers and researchers to put into words.

Obviously global context is not put aside, but the writing preference here goes to one specific story. This format allows density to appear, of existential situations and contexts of action, but also raises questions around breakdowns, ancillary and underlying shades, hidden motives and results.

Careful to respect social phenomena's own dynamic, ethnographers offer an inductive rather than deductive approach, refusing to postulate the nature of the observed phenomenon a priori. Context is preferred, as well as the singularity of situations, turned into a narrative plot of actions towards the understanding of their meaning.

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Having decided to work on "vignettes" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2014), it is through vivid portrayals (Erickson, 1986) of specific incidents -such as a conversation (Rouleau, 2005), a critical event or moment in the field-; or particular practices or routines, that I hope to illuminate a theoretical concept emerging from the data. In the end, ethnographic writing is different from a stylistic point of view, as being determined in a political way -it claims for legitimacy in representing reality-, and in an historical way -descriptions may change.

Geertz used the word "fiction". Not while trying to say that what is written is wrong, but rather that the truth being described is partial -constructed and shaped in a certain way. Vignettes will allow the reader to spot the semantic shifts I operated between the underlined extracts and the interpretations given. In that so, it is an explicit way to make the interpretive journey seen.

Finally, in order to maintain some spontaneity to the story, I decided to not proceed to systematic coding on the collected data -coding was effectuated in a very floating way. On the opposite, I chose to follow the methodology of ethnographic writing promulgated by Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, within the interactionist and interpretative traditions, in order to produce a thematic narrative focused on the field notes. The story was analysed thematically, but in a relatively loose manner (Emerson et al, 1995).

With this ambition, I started with the observations I considered most revealing and edited the field notes' extracts corresponding. I then proposed interpretations of their meaning and progressively connected them to other observations illustrating the same phenomenon, ending up in fine with a sequence of "*thematically organised units of excerpts and analytic commentary*" (Emerson et al, 1995: 170).

### *Ethnography & Fashion*

Following "the goings-on of organisation" (Helin et al., 2014) in fashion industry, I am aligning my work with the ethnographic tradition in fashion studies, following precursors such as Blumer (1969), Davis (1992), or later Kawamura (2004), Giusti (2006) and Mears (2011). Inspired by their ideas, I have myself tried to understand and relate to the everyday workings and felt experiences of a fashion designer and her proximate team in nuanced way, while closely following them in the studio, at manufacturers, or at other random places they needed to go to.

Underlining the problems scholars have in studying culture and creative behaviours, Mears present various complementary methods (2014). While interviews are depicted as valuable, serving as a barometer to point to the things that matter, according to her the mechanisms of how and which things matter call for a different set of tools. Reflecting on ethnography, she writes, "*ethnography enables observations of resonance in action, and it captures the salience of emotion in meaning-making processes*" (2014: 305).

Going even further, she advocates for 'observant participation' (following Wacquant, 2004), an ethnography experiment in which the researcher's body comes to grasp in vivo the reality it tries to seize. Taking seriously the subjects' point of view is one thing, but deep immersion in their field sites is clearly another. Researchers should be able to pick up and learn specific embodied dispositions (Mears, 2014). Importantly, the observant participant's measurement tools are self-reflexive field notes, which measure a distance of the researcher's former and current self and body.

In representing the backstage world of the fashion modelling industry with her book Pricing Beauty (2011), Mears gives some tips and tricks for ethnographers who attend to their own backstage practices in the fashion system, a system known for "*keeping secrets in its closet*" (2011: 263). Paving her own modelling way within the editorial circuits (high fashion) and commercial circuits (mass market), she underlines the economics, politics and arbitrariness behind the business of glamour, most notably how a right 'look' is discovered, developed and packaged to become a prized commodity. All along this, Mears introduces ethnographic work as "precarious", focusing on the practical risks of trying to be both insider and outsider (2012).

Indeed, part of the ethnographer's job is to get as close as possible to the lived realities of a set of people (Mears, 2012). In their stumbles and missteps, ethnographers in full immersion can find rich analytic insights, Mears explains. Consequently, she encourages reflexivity on own experience. In that, she is in line with the "reflective turn" in contemporary ethnography (Venkatesh, 2012), where scholars are drawing on the use of the self to generate insights, establish patterns, and bring the voice of their research subjects to light. Self-reflection can assist in the process of refining instruments of data collection such that reliability and validity are increased (Venkatesh, 2012). Using the first-person is one step on that path.

The ethnographic method then allows researchers a personal, indeed physical, connection, through day-to-day activities, to the world of their subjects; including their skills, categories of differentiation, capacities for judgment and valuation, their disciplining routines and moral rules, and their fears and desires (Mears, 2011). The acknowledgment of oneself within the site -as an embodied, living, feeling being- allows researchers the self-reflexivity that can interrogate and advance understandings of particular social worlds. The acknowledgment of oneself also includes being aware of one's own theoretical determinants: "*Go native but go native armed, that is, equipped with your theoretical and methodological tools . . . with your capacity for reflexivity and analysis on this*" (Wacquant, 2011:88).



Basically, to unearth the creative actions in a glamour industry is to do the work of demystification. Research does this diffing, of organizations, players, conventions and relations that when put together constitute the world under study: *"In this way we are like becklers in a magician's audience, the spoilers who reveal the backstage tricks, thus rendering perfect sense to what would be otherwise enchanted"* (Mears, 2011: 25). For Mears (2012), fashion ethnographers demystify what may seem like miracles into mundane human interactions. Although highly visible and celebrated, fashion is still invisible as a form of work.

Indeed, Paris couturiers and designers operate a gate-keeping system that is not only exclusive and rigorous but also highly demanding (Kawamura, 2004). Before Mears, several scholars have attempted to enter the field, and have thus pioneered on the topic.

To position my research, in what follows I will refer to such fashion ethnographers' empirical studies, on the fashion industry and its designers in Paris, New York and London.

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Most analysis of designers are for the most part social-organizational and not aesthetic (see for example Crane in 2000, and the social position of designers). Fashion then is not defined as something more special and the great works of genius. Following on such observations, I understand fashion as a very specific field to dive into; with many actors of the field lying, hiding or pretending information, sometimes creating and maintaining myths. Reaching a form of objectivity is definitely difficult in that context.

As Kawamura underlined, the significant shift over the XXth and XXIst centuries is that contemporary scholars started to conduct empirical research for their studies (2005). This is how objectivity was aimed at. Fieldwork and direct engagement of sociologists with their objects of study slowly became the dominant modality through which theory was organized, data were amassed, and concepts were refined (Venkatesh, 2013). As far back as 1962, Blumer proposed the methodology of "symbolic interactionism" to study fashion. One must attain a close and full familiarity with the world one is examining; meaning interviewing designers and fashion professionals, investigate their relationship with the fashion organization and institutions and how they interact with other fashion professionals in the same institutional and individual networks.

Following on from this, fashion has been studied empirically as an institution or an institutionalized system. Individuals related to fashion, including designers -among many other fashion professionals-, engage in activities collectively, participate together in producing and perpetuating not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture, which is sustained by the continuous production of fashion.

### *Clothing Production, Fashion System, and the designer's activities*

Departing from Baudrillard (1970), and drawing on interviews with designers and fashion editors, Davis for instance (1992) showed how our ambivalent world reveals itself through fashion. Fashion and status are intertwined, and fashion is key element of the economy, with choices that reflect deeper social and cultural forces. Also, in her book *Fashion-ology*, Kawamura (2005) focused on the institutional factors in the social process of the making of a designer, providing some answers to the creativity question. She debunks the myth of the genius designer, and provocatively explains that fashion is above all a belief.

However, most of those studies do not elaborate on the internal structure of the system they depict. The various sociological perspectives evidently help see the processes and institutions of fashion production in detail but deviate our attention from the material object of clothing and dress (Kawamura, 2005). The distinction has to be made between the production process of fashion and that of clothing, as clothing does not immediately convert into fashion. The differences between the two can be clearly drawn as follows:

*"Clothing is material production while fashion is symbolic production. Clothing is tangible while fashion is intangible. (...) A fashion system operates to convert clothing into fashion that has a symbolic value and is manifested through clothing"* (Kawamura, 2004: 1)

As a matter of fact, a concise description of the designing process in Haute Couture and Prêt-à-porter is actually outlined by Kawamura in her work on Japanese designers in Paris (2004, chapter 4). But the various elements she describes; such as patterns, prototypes and fittings, only get the status of 'technical' elements, presented to better understand the technical foundations behind the two worlds that are *Haute Couture* and *Prêt-à-porter*.

On the other hand, in my research I insist on those objects and underline their importance in the designing process. I am concerned with the manufacturing, pattern-making or draping processes that are taken to create an item of clothing. In a way, I began my empirical research from where Kawamura left off, exploring the 'behind-the-door' scenery of a clothing production that operates within the fashion system under her study.

My research dives into clothes as a material production rather than fashion as a symbolic production. Evidently, the designer I observed for this research is operating within the fashion system and its economic downsides. Yet the object I am focusing on is not the fashion system but rather the clothing production, and more specifically the link between both: how this designer produces clothes within a given fashion system (and its economic constraints).

I won't focus on the symbolic value that garments produced in the studio endorse, but rather on the previous steps before those garments enter the symbolic sphere; their birth and rise, in the studio. By so doing, I aim at bridging the gap between the micro (daily designing in studio) and macro (under market constraints) levels:

*"Having an eye for the future of fashion is simultaneously an act of seeing and of understanding a field at the macro level—a whole system of aesthetic possibilities and status hierarchies in fashion—and at the micro level, in the interactional and corporeal sense of resonance" (Mears, 2014: 308).*

Fashion is legitimate to study as a symbolic cultural object (as done by many) but also as a manufactured thing produced in and by social organizations, Kawamura reminds us (2005). For Leopold (1993) as well, a fashion system takes part in the clothing production process. She argues that fashion incorporates dual concepts of fashion as a cultural phenomenon, and as an aspect of manufacturing with the accent of production. And she, too, emphasizes the important role of clothing production and its history in creating fashion. This is precisely what I am focusing on with this research, the behind-the-door of clothing production, more specifically the designing part of it.

*"Very few have attempted to look carefully at the organizational setting in which fashion is produced" says Kawamura (2005: 33). As an answer, the ambition with this research is to approach the making of clothing, in the fashion system depicted by many ethnographers. In other word, while Davis for instance focuses on fashion as a cultural symbol (1992), and Kawamura on "the social context of*

*the institutional development of fashion"* (2005: 40), I decide to focus on the clothing production, understood within this social context.

In the end, those previous studies I mentioned, while connecting fashion and ethnography, provided a more richly textured picture of fashion industry, and constituted a great source of inspiration for my ethnographic work. Complementary to those studies, I decide to elaborate not on the structure of the system itself but rather on the internal structure of it, and the processes that creators go through within the system.

In that sense, I align my investigation with that of Giusti (2006), who, added to her exploration of fashion system as an art world, sketched an ideal-type of working method in the studio (le *"travail en atelier"*). Having spent some time in fashion houses and fashion fairs (between years 1998-2000), Giusti reveals the organizing behind the creative process, and relates it to the identity construction of the designer in the Fashion system. Sticking to the everyday practices, she develops the connection between those practices and their representation.

By presenting thick material throughout this thesis, I try to do justice to an ethnographic approach for the fashion sector, by proposing stories and images that illustrate the daily intensities and complexities of the designing context. Those stories reveal something interesting about a designer and her proximate team, who try to make their creative production valuable and significant, for themselves as much as for the outside world.

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*"Thinking is a struggle for order and at the same time for comprehensiveness. You must not stop thinking too soon -or you will fail to know all that you should; you cannot leave it to go on forever, or you yourself will burst. It is this dilemma, I suppose, that makes reflection, on those rare occasions when it is more or less successful, the most passionate endeavor of which the human being is capable"* (Mills, 1959: 225)

To conclude, I quickly realized that I would never be able to be perfectly prepared. Many more readings could have been done, much more information collected. But this also allowed me to remain adaptable, with the largest scope possible of questioning and questions in series, actionable according to the possible observation situations. As quoted by Whyte, Dr. Joshua Lederberg, a distinguished biomedical scientist, says *"research has to be opportunistic because you don't*

*know what you are going to discover. The things you discover may not be what you set out to do*"<sup>25</sup>, and the same idea has been expressed in various ways by other natural scientists.

This suggests staying flexible and open to new opportunities. In tracking my own thought processes, I drew on the general rules for thinking about thinking suggested by Whyte (1984). Reading about his own idea-generation process helped me figure out ways to make that move from data to ideas, while staying flexible and open to new opportunities.

### *Collecting the data: the position of the observer*

On the field, I found the position of the observer really uncomfortable and was happy to participate actively in the daily activities of the studio. This also helped me build very good relations with the people I was observing, overstepping the suspicion of the beginning. A real relation developed. In scientific articles, one reads a lot about 'interaction', and not 'relation'. But it is a real relation that develops, to me. And I think this relation is possible while researching.

I believe that producing knowledge inevitably goes back to commitment and affect (there again), at some point. The personal side of things is part of that "research mystery" Alvesson and Kärreman underline (2007, 2011). Anyway, the diary was in that context a way to keep a minimum of distance from the field, a tool towards that "*subtle balance between detachment and participation*" (Hughes, 1970: 420). And this distance did not only occur on the field, meaning on the given place, the epistemological distance happened all the time: on the field and after that in the writing.

So I felt that my work -producing a data corpus- happened through the relation built on the field. The way it worked for me was to be taken in the relation -different from being absorbed by it-, so as to avoid essentializing the field and the relation on it. The writing helped not being absorbed. Making progress through the days and through the work done within the studio, I realized that the relation in the process of being built was the raw material for the ethnography.

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<sup>25</sup> New York Times, January 9, 1984

Although never identifying to the field, I became really close to the persons I worked with on the field. Obviously the sincerity of the relation might be questioned, as a human relation. The relation has to help produce scientific data, in the end. But interacting with those same persons on the field and sometimes provoking a discussion on the thoughts I had helped me a lot figuring out my place and status. The reciprocal questioning I would provoke also helped open experimental spaces. This is also how I remained excited and involved about that designing activity I was lucky to witness throughout the whole time, far from becoming 'dispassionate' (Whiteman, 2010).

Although emotional encounters in ethnographic work remain surprisingly silenced (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015; Huopainen, 2016), I am personally well aware of how intense the experience was, and how this impacted the research. Confusion, exhaustion but also excitement and amusement were part of the field. At days I just felt like dropping the research to be able to fully *be* there, entirely present in the studio, and not always with my other (studying) self and this voice in the back of my head ("should I be taking note of that?").

Genuinely interested by the clothing world, I sometimes felt like dropping the researcher hat for one or two days to fully enjoy being there, among clothes, fabrics and inspiring elements. Just leave the notes behind for a moment. This is actually what I did to experiment -one day or two- but it did not work as that researcher's hat sticks and keeps looking, thinking, studying, wandering and wondering.

Furthermore, the external position raised the question of apprenticeship. On the field, I was in the posture of someone learning. This apprenticeship goes through the practice of certain things, and it is a very infantilized position. Having spent a few days on the field, Ellen quickly realized I could be of use for more than preparing the labels and making cardboard boxes. Not that I was expected to hide in a corner or anything like that but I certainly was very pleased when she taught me how to draw the line following the patronage on the fabric, to then cut the fabric.

Ela also taught me how to sew buttons. I had to learn quickly, soon realizing that they would not put up with the posture of ignorance the whole time. And this remark also works with the vocabulary they used on a daily basis. As a newly enrolled Ph.D. student facing this elusive and intangible complexity, the dominant feeling was many times confusion and worry. I quickly had

to learn the vocabulary and use it myself while interacting with the manufacturers for instance. I tried anyway to always stay aware of the place they assigned me to.

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At some point towards the end -and after the end, a question arose: make read or not make read my written account of the field. On the opposite of what is usually prescribed, I never felt obliged to share my interpretive authority with the participants of my ethnography, and chose to not make them read the written versions of my work. Obviously, and even though I don't often see the comments and reactions of participants in the final versions of written ethnographies, this prescription happens to give weight to the arguments and the analysis.

Feminists sociologists for instance value equality and sharing in the knowledge-production process. Many have argued that ethnography represents a methodological ideal because the researcher and the subject can work together and share in the craft of sociological knowledge. If I have been privileged to gain exclusive levels of access, this does not mean I have been able to account for all that happened before my eyes. I cannot say I had a grip on the many modalities, complexities and regards in my thesis. Accordingly, it appears paradoxical to me to unveil some unconscious phenomena that participants might actually reject or deny, and then to obtain their consent and approval.

My final work would definitely be very different, if I'd considered reading it to the people who trusted me during the observation. In particular, some information was delivered through a moment of trust, or personal confession: I won't take the risk to say to Ellen (the main designer) what Ela (the assistant designer) thinks about her way of doing this or that.

*"It is easier to get the 'informed consent' of individuals on which one works if questions stay relatively harmless or even 'picturesque'" (Bourgois, 1995: 41-42)*

From the moment I clarified with them what my purpose was during those 3 months (observe the creative process), I felt free of any other justification or need of approval. And I never felt in a positional advantage or particularly powerful relative to them, holding information -actually much more the opposite, as they were the key to my access to the field. In the end, it turned out fine, they did not seem to really care about what I was writing.

## *Temporality and Time*

Ethnographers usually do not construct their data by asking people to do something for them, like filling up a form, or answer a few questions. On the opposite, they are most of the time dependant of the right 'moment', while researching, and they have to wait for it to happen -those events that may be of theoretical importance (Becker, 1998). A lot that was happening on the field was latent, and in that sense seemed to slip out of my hands. It was as if nothing happened but anything could happen.

I recall my first impressions took after blank. This can surely be explained by the weight of evidence, as the work most actors do on the field pertains to the implicit. They do not necessarily know what they know. So very often it is only after a few days, or after having read for the 5th time my field notes of the day that things eventually made sense.

But understanding the field, as well as entering it, took time. My temporality as a researcher was not the temporality of the people I worked with. They work. I am on a different timeline, added to that the fact that I know I will leave. Two temporalities are confronting, and such a practice mobilises patience. I was not productive the whole time, there happened to be days where I would do nothing, waiting all day long for the production to arrive from the manufactures.

Interestingly, I performed many different identities on the field: scholar, hard-working intern, fashion novice, cheap labour force, curious employee, etc. Otherness could be tiring, and every now and then I felt like I did not understand a lot, and that they would not help me understand or take a moment to explain. But eventually things came loose, after some time. At certain points ideas emerged, and going on the field also turned out to be a breath(er) in the contemporary and academic general speed<sup>26</sup>.

Lastly, it should be specified how data was analysed. More explicitly, how categories of analysis were built, how heterogeneous elements were transformed into relations between concepts.

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<sup>26</sup> In a curious twist, as I was still witnessing a speed but that was not mine (ie: fashion speed).



### 3.4.2 Data analysis

The analysis was based on an iterative process of reading and scrutinising the material -diary was encoded in a loose manner- and a constant reflection on what emerged as intelligible in the field for those participating in it and for me as a researcher, as suggested by Alvesson & Deetz (2000), Hammersley & Atkinson (2010) and Madden (2010).

The process was more messy than linear, representing a critical and reflexive style of working. Empirical observations were related to emerging and already present ideas and information, about creativity, organization and economy; by reflexively moving back and forth between theories and data in a continuous and moving manner.

Keeping up with the interactionist tradition, the end product takes the form of a set of notions - what Blumer calls "sensitizing concepts"- and a list of questions; rather than a catalogue of definitive affirmations on relations between these or those aspects of the social reality I am trying to account for. While contrasting definitive concepts with sensitizing ones, Blumer explained:

*"A definitive concept refers precisely to what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed benchmarks...A sensitizing concept lacks such specification of attributes or benchmarks and consequently it does not enable the user to move directly to the instance and its relevant content. Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look" (1954: 7)*

Sensitizing concepts can be tested, improved, and refined (Blumer, 1954). Abstractions illuminate by crystallizing experience, intensifying it through grammatical or aesthetic organization, rather than generalizing everything in a common denominator light.

In the findings part on ethnography, I present the key points of my reflections and therefore the key findings through vignettes. Using the vignette is a way to introduce and unravel the complex practice of detailed content design for the readers.

*The choice of the vignette.*

There is no one best way to present ethnographic work. The vignette is based on a choice made that, as with every methodological choice, leaves out other possible ways of representing field material. It may give a false sense of impersonal and neutral representation, as if the author was not participating in such a representation (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). I do not wish to convey such neutrality, and the justification for choosing to construct the vignette to present the empirical material is threefold.

First, the vignette achieves the descriptive strength of ethnographic work, giving readers an impression and a feel for the setting and the people involved and what they are doing. Second, vignettes are commonly used in books on fashion practices (see Kawamura, 2004) and also as a pragmatic strategy for presenting data in journal articles (see Carlile, 2004; Orlikowski, 2002). Finally, the vignette provides a "situational focus" (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 202). It conveys the layered and complex practice under production in a way that is congruent with the themes and issues that emerged from the analysis; therefore enabling the contribution to the study of situated practice. In this sense, it represents a good cross section of the nexus of practices at hand (Nicolini, 2012).

This decision to represent for the reader the episodes that gave rise to my interpretation entailed another decision: to restrict the stories reported only to those that I regarded as representative of other similar ones which, for reasons of space I cannot report here, and which would anyway have been repetitive. Following Nicolini's (2012) suggestion, I "zoom in" on the practice for a thick description of what is happening. I also "zoom out" to reflect on what this complex practice under production is, how it came about and what it is performing and making intelligible. In the following part -on findings-, the reflections are developed via interplay with the theoretical stimuli from relevant literature. Back and forth between fieldwork and headwork. Referring to the literature at this stage may be unusual but it demonstrates in practice the iteration and articulation between concrete empirical material and theoretical abstractions, as suggested by Van Maanen et al. (2007), and following Mills:

*"The purpose of empirical study is to settle disagreements and doubts about facts, and thus to make arguments more fruitful by basing all sides more substantively. Facts discipline reason; but reason is the advance guard in any field of learning." (Mills, 1959: 205).*

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# 4. FINDINGS

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## 4 FINDINGS

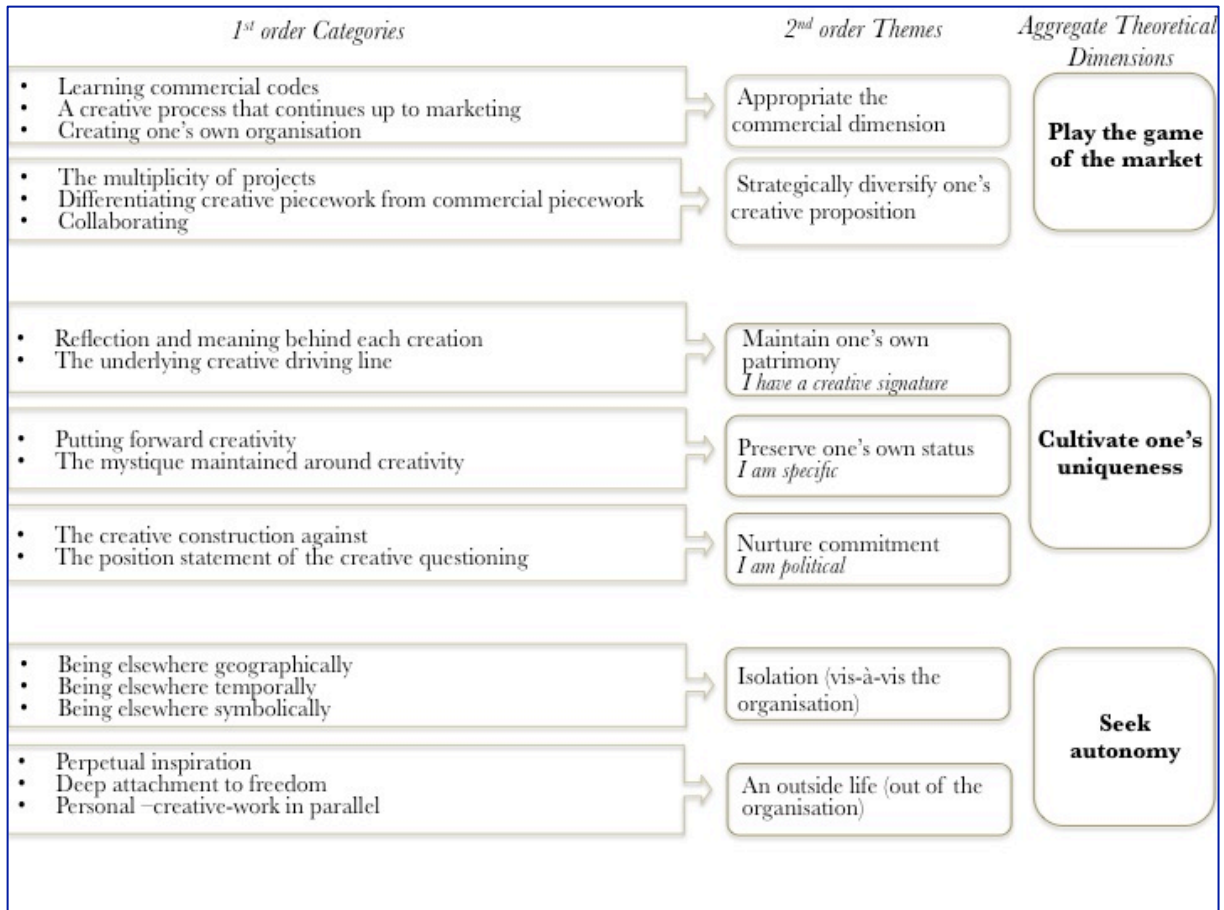
### 4.1 From exploratory part: the Fuzziness of the Creative

The following table illustrates the final data structure from the exploratory part, showing the categories and themes from which we developed the findings and the relations between them.

We found that in order to do the required work, creative actors use three sets of practices to trigger creativity within rationalization.

First and foremost, creative actors cope with the organization by *playing the game of the market*. They appropriate the commercial dimension in some way, and strategically diversify their creative proposition. Next, another observed practice is about *cultivating one's uniqueness*. By maintaining one's own -creative- patrimony, one's own status and one's own commitment, the creative actor reminds everyone he is the creative one. Finally, it is by *seeking autonomy* that creative actors create: they withdraw from the organization geographically, temporally and symbolically and have a vivid creative outside life alongside their work.





Those three dimensions are not in opposition, they meet, they are complementary. By no means they should be perceived as boxes or types we could group, arrange or organize creative actors depending on their style. The production of a typology of practices would be a reduction of the inherent complexities and antagonisms.

Identified practices should rather be understood as keys for understanding the way creative actors create, navigating between those. They facilitate and strengthen the creative and economic rationales creative actors have to deal with, thus providing a way for logics to co-exist and separately guide the behaviour of creative actors.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study is not to develop a set of general rules that apply across all cases. Instead, we look at the detail of thought and action surrounding specific events and periods in the experience of designers creating clothes; to understand the larger systems of meaning reflected in them -in this case in relation to the economic surrounding environment.

Below, we describe our findings in greater detail (see also representative data in Appendix 2).

### *Play the game of the market*

Firstly, creative actors cope with the rationalized organization by playing the game of the market.

- **Appropriate the commercial dimension**

They appropriate the commercial dimension and use it as a tool, a support device for their creation. We can explain it through three observations.

First, **creative actors learn and know the commercial codes**. The fashion designer knows the business discourse and is often able to switch between roles and use role enactments to obtain degrees of freedom. As this creative director explains, *"I love it, to play the seller, the business woman...it's a role. You learn it on the field. It feels a bit like being an actress at certain times"*. The role is a resource in two ways: as a means to claim, bargain for, and gain membership of an acceptance by a social community, and to getting access to social, cultural, and material resources necessary for the pursuit of the creative actor's interests (Baker & Faulkner, 1991).

Knowing the commercial rhetoric is a way to socialize, create common interests. The designers socialize their decisions with key stakeholders in the company to further their projects. Through these interactions the designers gauge the interest of others and work to understand the priorities of the various actors involved: *"At [name of the brand], if a meeting is too long, we stop, and immediately recover into clients' shoes"* (model-maker). Consequently, they tailor their communications to gain the support of key actors within the company, to keep on developing their designs.

Commercial knowing becomes an instrument, as the right language is crucial to communicate what often are unexpected and difficult messages to the business. Thus, mastering the commercial rhetoric gives the creative actors the empowerment and freedom to push the boundaries: *"Garment have to be visual. Usually, visual stuff is what's working with guys from communication"* (model-maker).

Such practical efforts are used to transmit their ideas across boundaries. When members of a community of knowing refine their domain-specific knowledge and practices, it increases their incompatibility with other communities of knowing (Boland & Tenkasi, 1995). On the opposite, designers in those cases communicate regularly with key stakeholders in the company to maintain an understanding of their interest. Later on, the accumulated knowledge and mastered rhetoric might be used to facilitate the negotiation of new concepts: "*We keep looking for innovative material, that bring some, you know, benefit to the consumer, so that she or he feels comfortable, and that it stays aesthetic*" (stylist).

Also, by proving to know commercial codes, creative professionals destabilize and bring surprise: "*I am obsessed with our digital images*" (designer). In a way, commercial identity is not legitimate for them, in a creative organization. It cannot be considered for creative professionals, for the smooth running of an organization divided in departments, each with their corresponding logic. In that sense, their behaviour is subversive: "*I am always inquiring about the n-1 figures. I really want to be connected to the customers' demand*" (assistant stylist). What would be expected from them is much more complaining against commercial constraints, render their struggle apparent:

Evidently, creative actors know that the end of business also means the end of creation -or at least, living out of it. Being realistic about it, in most cases they learn how to integrate a principle of cost efficiency in their calculation. It's always in the corner of their head. Is it going to be relevant, or not. Will it have some resonance in the outside world, or not. Job experience is of course part of commercial reflexes.

Moreover, for some **the creative process continues up to marketing**. "*Marketing is the final step of design. It is what reaches out to the audience and encourages them to go into the stores*", says Tom Ford, artistic director of own house. Creative actors know what the business tools and steps are, and they conceptualize and create thinking about those and sometimes participating in those. They anticipate on the communication for instance, by proposing a certain visual presentation of their creation: "*Those past 10 years, with internet, we learnt how to make clothes that are rectangular. Seriously, as the screen is rectangular-shaped, make some clothing that is nice and sweet for the screen you know*" (designer).

Business is seen as something that influences while also enables them to develop their creation, even more now that they learn commercial codes through a bigger and bigger porosity with the

marketing department: *"The creative work, it really stops when you're doing the photo shooting...the design-setting, the way you show your clothes, it is also part of the creation"* (artistic director).

Being aware of those market mechanisms is also a way to use tricks, anticipating commercial demands. For instance, a designer is often asked to cut models in the collection, judged as additional or too creative by the commercial team. By anticipating on this commercial practice, the designer is going to use a trick and produce an excessive amount of pieces precisely produced to be cut later, and hence respond to the injunction of cutting models in the collection.

Here we understand the cunning spirit of actors that populate creative worlds. Get as much information and intelligence as possible, the safest, most confidential and most recent information. This is a vital issue in the competition. It is a question of constantly knowing about the last modifications of the rules of the game and the game with the rules (Moulin, 1992).

Creative actors sometimes go as far as the marketing of their own person (orchestrated by the fashion house, or by themselves). Karl Lagerfeld recently launched a video of himself acting out, dialoguing with Gabrielle Chanel's ghost. The marketing construction in those cases refers to the designer as creative celebrity and totally relies upon the myth of creative genius in order to arouse audience curiosity. Fashion exhibitions and publishing increasingly portray the fashion designer as a talented and extraordinary human being.

More and more exhibitions around fashion take place. To name but a few: Yves Saint Laurent (Petit Palais, Paris, 2010), Jean-Paul Gaultier (Grand Palais, Paris, 2014), Dries Van Noten (Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 2015), Alexander Mc Queen (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2015), Balenciaga (Palais Galliera, Paris, 2017). In many cases, the designer image is also promoted for commercial ends.

Additionally, some creative actors decide to **fully embrace the business side and create their own organization**. With their own funds and often another source of support, they launch their own brand. Having their own fashion house enables to bundle and manage artistic and business inputs from within. Long-term partnerships with collaborators prevail, as this creative director explains: *"I am extremely faithful. I've had the same suppliers for the 13 years I've been working on my own, same manufacturers, same employees. This is what's most important, to me. They know you, you know them"*.

Usually, what happens is that creative actors recruit in their private circles, often friends and family, to help and accompany them: *"This is when I activated my friendship network, as I call it, when I started"* (designer-entrepreneur). Though ubiquitous in creative domains, such pairings are not necessarily stable and require constant nurturing and mutual commitment.

Having own brand also means face copy. Nowadays, a "copycat economy"<sup>27</sup> is damaging an increasing number of designers. Again, being aware of such market mechanisms -copy mass-market chains- is also a way to confront them. While ideally the law could be stepping up to protect designers, some designers have tackled the issue by using technical fabrics and complicated designs that are difficult to reproduce (at a low price).

Surfing on marketing tools, other designers have recently used social media to publically call out knockoffs, with some success. Chanel recently withdrew a range of Fair Isle-patterned sweaters after the Scottish designer Mati Ventrillon complained, through a Facebook post, that the luxury brand had visited the factory and then plagiarised her prints and designs.

While creative actors appropriate the commercial dimension by learning commercial codes, controlling the creative process up to marketing and sometimes launching their own label; it is also by strategically diversifying their work propositions that they play the game of the market.

- **Strategically diversify one's creative proposition**

To keep generating high margins on own work - meaning sufficient autonomy-, there is a need to diversify own activity. Professionals learn how to balance their activity between gainful projects and stimulating projects -with dubious benefits. In what follows, we expose that creative actors play the game of the market by diversifying their creative proposition through a multiplicity of projects, through a differentiation between creative piecework and commercial piecework, and through collaborations.

Firstly, most **creative professionals embrace creative action in many ways, through multiple projects**: work on costumes, on evening outfits, on capsule collections -limited

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27 Pike, H. (2016). The Copycat Economy. On [businessoffashion.com](http://businessoffashion.com), March, 14th.

editions- for other brands...but also as fashion adviser for Asian brands or sometimes even interior decoration or architecture: *"I work on various projects such as event uniforms, stage costumes, creations for advertising, joint venture, capsule collections. I also create decorating objects, I draw figurines that have more to do with illustration and also material or drawings to frame...countless projects, really, and all simultaneously. In a way they nourish each other"* (stylist). And this is how a balanced budget is overall achieved.

In reality, a tiny minority of professionals 'make a name', and through it, enjoy continuous income from reputation (Menger, 1999). Most of creative professionals rely on diversification to compensate for this reputation default in a given context of budgetary needs. Consequently, to be ready for every eventuality of a commercial failure, creative professionals carefully develop different lines alongside of their main creation -e.g.: accessories alongside garments.

Additionally, **creative professionals differentiate very clearly their creative work from their commercial work**, and 'dose' their creation accordingly: *"As (brand 1) does not really make profit, I decided to start another line in parallel (brand 2). Brand 2 takes some elements out of the substance of brand 1, while also entering everyday casual clothing"* (artistic director). Designers prove to actively engage with their work when they realize their main creative pieces. This involvement manifests itself through the 'no-counting of working hours' for instance, often evoked in interviews.

In opposite terms, there is no real pride taken out of propositions derived from diversification. Often interviewees justify their diversification choices by invoking some economic obligation. In that respect, a strategy of volume is often associated to a diversification logic, to make it really profitable.

Creative work as such is thought of as a pyramid: *"So you build a collection in a shape of a pyramid. At the bottom of the pyramid, you have all the essentials, that's your basis, you're going to sell those, all the time. And at the top, usually you have some pieces that are creative. Which are also there for the image, right. Still, this is where you can find some creativity"* (model-maker).

The bottom of the pyramid comprises the commercial pieces whereas the top of the pyramid is devoted to creative pieces, also called 'image pieces', which guarantee popularity and recognition for the brand: *"We are going to make 10 commercial piecework, and 3 unmarketable piecework. Trust me, the 3 we are not gonna sale are the ones that will explain our history in 20 years"* (artistic director). Those three

pieces this artistic director is talking about are 'creation for creation's sake', one could argue - following the art for art's sake concept of Robert Caves (2000).

What is more, this pyramid -to be found internally-, can also be found in the external reception of the creative production -in the image it vehicles. This hierarchy established by creative actors is performative in the sense that it performs the market. Consumers take pride in wearing creative clothes rather than commercial ones. Economic values tell us much about social ones.

*"Production and diffusion companies can be placed on a continuum with two extreme poles that are, on one side, the short-cycled symbolic goods production, managed as ordinary economic goods; and on the other side, risky and lengthy production of long-cycled symbolic goods. Diversification operates in-between those short and long cycles."*  
(Bourdieu, 1977b: 3)

Production that comes out of those diversification processes are perceived as of degraded 'creative quality'. In this "economic world reversed" (Mears, 2011), the incentive is to reject economic incentives, and the interest lies in economic disinterestedness. Still, diversification is usually tolerated (a minimum amount at least) by professional community, as a result of economic difficulties experienced by most designers -especially independent. Professionals do not have a negative view of diversification when most of them have been forced to rely on it, at least at the beginning.

Also, the economic crisis context is often raised to excuse for the frequency of diversification activities. In other terms, the evaluation of the economic context by the professional community of designers influences the perception this same community has of the practices that are reprehensible, or not.

Nevertheless, non-acceptable profits exist, when realised on pieces that are judged as too far from creation, and which constitute the majority of the offer. In that respect, the economic calculation always incorporates socially originated norms (Vatin, 2009). And symbolic capital is key in the equation, invoking other logics than the sole capitalist logic: *"In such a commerce, which follows a logic very close to the pre-capitalist economy, economic profit strictly speaking is second compared to the accumulation of symbolic capital, for which a necessary - if not sufficient- condition is economic disinterest"*  
(Bourdieu, 1977b: 3).

Finally, strategically diversify one's own creative proposition also means **collaborate with the outside**. To engage in an on-going collaboration with a trusted partner reconciles classical tensions (e.g.: lack of time) between manufacturers and designers. Collaborations also exist with other creative professionals, like craftsmen or other designers: *"Those partnerships, it is something that really opens me up, to the outside world. If I got to choose actually I would do more of them"* (artistic director). Those collaborations are not only seen as an openness -nourishing the creative, but also as a way to share the risks: *"by so doing we share the financial risks. And sometimes, actually, only the partners take the risk"*.

Recently, the luxury brand Hermès remained in the public eye by hiring a philosophy graduate as "Creation and Image Department Counsellor". The philosophy graduate works almost every day with the artistic director, on the current themes or forthcoming inspiration. In a very discreet way, big names of the industry require the help of philosophers to 'make sense' of their creative productions and legitimize their price to an elitist clientele. The abstract and somewhat elevated language philosophers use is very attractive for luxury brands, G. Lipovetsky explains, as currently very little used in advertising. And this is precisely what luxury brands are looking for, create some gap with the rest, use some abstract language to deepen that gap.

So far we've seen how creative actors cope with the rationalized organization by playing the game of the market. In addition, we also observed how within that game creative actors keep cultivating their uniqueness.

### *Cultivate one's uniqueness*

Creative actors cultivate their uniqueness in three ways: they put forward their -creative- patrimony, status and commitment.



- Maintain one's own patrimony - *I have a creative signature*

Within economic logics, maintain one's own creative patrimony over time is a way to guarantee the continuity and space for one's own creative work. Creative professionals defend their own style, which comes from a much thought-of and very personal reflection. As this artistic director explains: *"It wasn't enough, to just go for it, in fashion. I needed to give meaning to my designs. So I started writing for months, before going for it"*.

Often it seemed that they had an ulterior motive -might be unconscious-, something more to do with the world in general: *"Designing engenders questioning, inevitably"*. In contrast with dreamy inspirations, creative interviewees' inspirations often related to societal matters. They gave the impression of being overall strongly rooted in today's world. Such inspirations might represent a specific form of communication, when looking for an external assent or echo, be it positive or negative. They are capable of provoking pleasure as well as anger, applause and acclaim as well as heckling.

So what we do know from interviews is that for creative professionals **there definitely exists a meaning behind each creation**, and continuity between meanings leads to a specific creative signature. The creative proposition allows professionals to achieve a rise in singularity and be involved in a system of reputation. Interviewees also describe the personal development they have gained from their work. They relate to their experiences on past projects to make sense of the new creative experiences they encounter, and decide on their next steps: *"I just found it more interesting to think about all that, rather than just do some styling exercises (...), I thought it was interesting to question, what do we tell, what's the story, and why...I think it matters, it is important to do it. And that's it"* (assistant stylist).

As a consequence, **a strong underlying driving line** takes shape over time. A creative history is built with creative propositions. A lot of creative professionals insisted on the necessity to be coherent while creating. Long-term is often mentioned. The coherence between creative propositions structures the creative patrimony and allows the creative person not only to be recognizable, but also to stay focused on creative rather than economic logics: *"In your work you have to follow a driving line throughout collections, it has to stay like you want it, your own way...(...) it is very important because with all the major trends, you can easily deviate"* (stylist).

Maintaining one's own patrimony is also a way to be different from the other creative people. Indeed, trying to look different ultimately makes everyone look the same. This is also called the 'hipster paradox' -solved into an equation by French mathematician J.Touboul<sup>28</sup>. Creative minds end up conforming to other creative professionals in terms of attitudes, behaviours and outfits. Being a creative hipster involves following creative -given- codes. Then it becomes a story of identity loss, and not about one's own personal identity anymore. All creative people at some point might look and behave alike. Cultivating and claiming one's own patrimony is a way to get around such pitfalls.

- Preserve one's own status - *I am specific*

Moreover, by **promoting creativity** in their speeches, creative professionals preserve their specific status. It seems as if they wanted to be understood as genuinely different. They know that creative organizations need their creative input, and they build this space up through narratives: "*In the morning, I draw. And this is capital. It fuels all the rest*" (stylist). Creative people interviewed insisted on their status of 'creative', especially not like any organizational pawn: "*Being creative is not like any other job, such as accounting, like it is 5pm ok-I-can-go-and-come-back-monday*" (assistant stylist). Most of them seem to feel like a kind of avant-garde, not holding a 9-to-5 job (but probably 9-to-9 working hours).

In the interviews, what came out more precisely is not that they strongly rejected a 9-to-5 job solely because this regimentation of time seemed paternalistic to them. Rather, it seemed they could not bear either business culture and its social dynamics ("*People play a game, that's weird*" one of the interviewees said, a few months later he went freelance) or the idea of having subordinated themselves to a hierarchical working relationship. Evidently, provoking and evoking a potential 'drama' between the two groups (the creative ones, and the rest) might also become a way of encouraging the 'belonging' in which creative becoming is made incipient.

So creative actors interviewed proactively and continuously stressed how different they were, from the rest of workers. Listening to creative professionals you would believe they are the first

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<sup>28</sup> Touboul, J. (2014). The hipster effect: when anticonformists all look the same. The Mathematical Neuroscience Laboratory, CIRB/Collège de France.

leg in the organization, that it is from them that everything happens: *"Designers, it's like the first thing...so that other people can then do their job"*, an artistic director once said during interview. But what drew our focus is that in reality it does not happen that way. Facts contradict speeches.

The commercial action plan is really the first step, and draws the guidelines for design: *"We are briefed by the commercial team, they provide us with a plan for the coming collection, with various themes and topics we have to develop, and colouring guidelines too"* (creative director). The so-called 'creative blank page' never happens. A creative director receives the commercial action plan, based on previous year's results, and has to start from it.

Anyway, this is how creative professionals put forward their creative missions and status, certainly herein maintaining the creativity 'worship' happening in organizations. The creative professionals interviewed all seemed to connect and form a whole, as a complicit group in own disenfranchisement, all relying on a very strong sub-cultural ethos.

Their specific status is also protected through what we call **the mystique around creation**. Indeed, creative people interviewed rarely fully explain how they create, why they create. It seems difficult for them to put into words their creative work: *"It's really difficult to explain, to describe...because this is part of who I am, what I like, how I perceive things..."* (model-maker).

Creativity remains an enigma, and partly because of the lack of subjective account of how creative professionals negotiate their creative identity that reaches beyond superficial sentiments (Hackley & Kover, 2007). They sometimes talked about intuition: *"this, I cannot explain. There are so many aspects of it, so many different entries to it...what a shame to reduce it in one sentence"* (designer).

We are far from rationality and the lexical field of efficiency and productivity we encounter in most else places in the organization. Creative professionals thus transform an appropriate information in a non appropriate one. They are often reluctant to talk about their own creative impulses and processes, certainly sensing that any discussion might dilute their claims to authenticity and independence.

*"How do you preserve your creativity?"*

*-Because we don't talk about it. nope. nobody talks about it"* (artistic director)

Staying in the 'grey zone' seems to bring about more freedom, while allowing ambiguity.

So far we've seen how cultivating one's uniqueness as a creative person happens via maintaining one's own creative patrimony and one's own creative status. It also happens through nurturing some commitment.

- Nurture commitment - *I am political*

**The creative construction often positions itself *against* something**, and the creative questioning serves as a vehicle for a position statement. The creative person is often in opposition, either against the marketing department -if he is an employee, or against big fashion groups and conglomerates -if he has his own house. In interview, many times the resentment at the internal structure of the sector and the overbearing influence of management ideologies came out. Such a resisting claim seems to provide the necessary distance from these ideologies to enable creative work.

Throughout interviews, creative projects were often presented through many negative terms. It was all about positioning against a dominant or instituted form, criticized either as imposing a one-sided discourse or paradigm, or as having lost its own creative essence. Creative actors are thereby notifying about their positioning as a creative commitment. Passion is defined by defining what is profit. In both cases, the economic system is personified: "*Commercial have...issues...and ways of looking at and understand the world that are different...The industrial one wants to manufacture as much as possible, the commercial one wants to sell as much as possible, and there are others, us, who try to tell stories*" (freelance designer).

Recently, the artistic performances of Olivier Saillard, the director of the *Palais Galliera* (Paris museum of fashion) created the buzz. One of them for instance was an humoristic performance orchestrated with Violeta Sanchez, a former model. For twenty minutes, at the APC premises, they made various outfits out of one single blazer. All the different outfits revealed some aspects of actual fashion, and the art of knowing how to '*retourner sa veste*' (constantly change sides) of many fashion brands, focused on economic profits. 'The Impossible Wardrobe' (with Tilda Swinton at the *Palais de Tokyo*) or also 'Models never talk' (with five former models at the *Centre National de la Danse*) are other performances that illustrated the demands and desideratum of creative people from fashion sector.

Sometimes **the creative proposition itself entails a position statement**, like not following the calendar of the system, trying to invent new codes for the milieu or even protest for ecology. "Resistance" is a word that we heard a lot in interviews. All those actions are initially done to allow creation, but turn out to play a part for the collective. Designing then becomes a medium for political activism and societal critique -taking the opposite approach to traditional means of critique: *"From the moment you express yourself in a given domain, you take position. With respect to your peers, at first. And then, more broadly, with respect to current issues"* (stylist).

Today, a growing number of designers oppose 'fast fashion' or increasingly do work that is based on collage techniques, and the use of recycled, ecological or vintage fabrics (Gardetti & Torres, 2013). Those designers position themselves against mainstream fashion's strong references to change, irrationality and frivolity; fostering on the opposite craft and authenticity. This is where they want to attach their designer identity, and not on the fluctuations and short-lived trends. In such cases, craft-intense and timeless material objects take on political overtones.

Designers then develop themselves and impact the organization by enacting new paths of action. They also incorporate their lived experience of enacting new paths of action into the creative story that shapes their identity (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003). At each new occasion, they re-construct their designing identities by making sense of these new events, in relation to their past knowledge and experiences; and renew their sense of self.

Resisting creative work then happens with a mix of compliance -acting within a given system of power, offering creative solutions, assuming de facto managerial roles- and outright confrontation. In that sense it acquires some characteristics of resisting work (Courpasson, Dany & Clegg, 2012). The initial creative, artistic, poetic aspect then becomes political, as it renders refractory practices possible.

Creative practices that were not initially intended to be committed become political by questioning and reorganizing the existing. Creative actors strategically engage with and adapt to available discourses, but in the meantime they strike a discordant note in the rational surrounding context. At this point, such creative workers become political beings, since their labour has taken on characteristics of political action.

Such practices reveal the ability of imagination to transcend the barriers of existing images of (capitalist) future, conjured up through dominant discourse (De Cock et al., 2013; Michel, 2011). For example, fashion shows have proved to potentially perform as important critical societal tools (see for example the Serpica Naro catwalk during Milan Fashion Week, as discussed by Gherardi and Murgia, 2013). Provocateurs and conceptual artists have been noticeable in the sector for a while -to name but a few: A.Mc Queen, H.Chalayan, V.Westwood, R.Kawakubo (see Clarke & Holt on Vivienne Westwood, 2017).

The aesthetics portion is replaced by a query on norms, conventions, taken-for-granted principles such as symmetry, cut and body shapes: *"Alexander Mc Queen' shows are commentaries of our profession, of our time, while avoiding the irony or second degree humour trap. With a hard-hitting emotional charge, always. Creative integrity and fulgurance of aesthetic actually owe him such high regard and respect from the community."* (documentary series *Fashion!* O.Nicklaus. INA)

Our results show how the active involvement of designers is not only important for long-term viability. It also embroils designers in an engaged, critical, collectively negotiated and sustained creation of an ethos that carries with it a sense of difference. In that sense designing clothes has resistance resonance.

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Thus far, we have argued that some practices allow creative professionals to create, looking over two particular practices: playing the game of the market and cultivating one's uniqueness in this game. Creativity is unfolded around processes of making, masking and rearranging; as well as various performative workings with an impact -such as endless re-inventions of own uniqueness.

Obviously creative subjects' responses and positions may vary. At a certain point in time, a creative worker may seek a more conformist subjectivity, in which she or he continually pursues a secure identity -in the face of constant pressures to achieve in the industry. Alternatively, or at a different moment in time, the same -or other- creative workers may attempt to articulate committed or resisting identities that challenge the dominant economic discourses, and in doing so expand the conditions of creative possibility for organizational subjectivities.

In addition, we observed a bunch of practices that allow creative actors to 'escape'. In those moments, creative actors not only purposefully isolate themselves and withdraw from the rest of the organization, but they also develop a full creative life on the side.

### *Seeking autonomy*

Listening to creative actors, one realizes that they keep themselves at a distance from the organization on which they depend. Interestingly, they often seek autonomy from this organization.

- Isolation (vis-à-vis the organisation)

First, there happens to be moments when creative actors momentarily withdraw from the organisation. **They isolate geographically.** Regularly, when it comes to the actual creative work they do it in another place than the organization -usually at home: *"I'd rather be in a safe place, when I draw. If I am here, at office, it is preferably to work...like make rectifications and corrections, email, catalogue the collection, look at fabrics...but real creative work, pure work, of drawing mainly...this can only happen at home"* (stylist), or again *"it is very difficult, almost impossible, to create, when people are around, asking questions all the time. There must be some kind of break, being some place else"* (assistant designer). In the first quote we can't help but notice the use of the word "safe". As if the organization was, in opposite ways, "unsafe".

We also notice **a temporal separation.** Creative workers will work on their creative mission in the morning and do the rest in the afternoon, or isolate a few days in the week entirely devoted to creation: *"I try to book all appointments on half a day, so then I can get moments that are quiet. I need to get those long time slots. If I don't split my time as such, I am told 'let's meet at 3pm', and then it turns out meeting is at 5...but in that case I would never work, and never ever produce anything"* (artistic director). Those moments are understood as a sort of truce, allowing some space of mind to create.

When the deadline approaches (a fair or a fashion show for instance), more and more time and space are devoted to finish the collection on time: *"The priority is, next week is December, so it's zero appointment, no appointment at all, I d-o-n-t w-a-n-t any appointment. I have to focus on the collection, due end of January"* (creative director). Creative activities require sharp temporal coordination.

Indeed, highlighting such issues of coordination -in time- flags the fact that the selection of a creative input also depends on when it is available - and not just on its qualities. In the end, the temporal coordination interacts with the conventional effect of time's passage on the value of a project. This is all very stressful, and temporal separation helps to move on.

**The symbolic isolation is strong too.** Creative professionals would rather concentrate on their creative missions and leave the rest to others: *"Designer is a very abstract job... in real terms, to me...when being creative, one should not have any management obligations..."*. Yet once hired, creative professionals often realize that they belong to, and depend on, organizational rhythms and culture: *"Sometimes I get asked questions on my strategy. As if I was PR! But I am not PR...at all...and that's it"* (model-maker). Reporting obligations and other requirements certainly go with the job.

As a result, some feel the need to withdraw at some point. The combination of previous elements is too much: *"Competition is tough (...) I try, as much as possible, to stay very far from this reality"* (artistic director). But keeping a position of outsider is also difficult, and many creative agents are often called back to the much more organizationally -convenient insider position. Consequently, they consider isolating here and there. Such moments provide more leeway to create outside rationalization logics, while concurrently expressing oneself inside.

- [An outside life \(out of the organisation\)](#)

Moreover, creative persons interviewed often present a full and busy life outside the organization. They talk a lot about what happens outside of its walls.

The idea of exploration is omnipresent. Eyes are everywhere and **the inspiration constant**. Creative actors demonstrate a great capacity to open up and be receptive to the outside: *"Look at the outside is necessary to be even more specific but also to understand everything that is underlying out there"* (dressmaker). This openness to the present, also known among our interviewees as "being in the



present" or "being in the moment", leads to a very refined perception of the environment.

Responsiveness and creative integration of a larger range of elements, diverse in nature and time of occurrence, seems important to making the creative proposition unique, engaged with this so-precious zeitgeist: *"It is all the time a sort of...yeah, a sort of schizophrenia...we are never in the real time. Fashion is like that, always being ahead of time. It is a relation that develops with time. The fragility of time is what matters. So that's what fashion is about...time, time that is passing...the movement of time"* (JP Gaultier interviewed in Prigent's documentary *Le Jour d'avant*-2010).

This holistic conceptualization of creation does not treat the world as a passive recipient of human action or ideas, but as an active participant of the creation that speaks, resonates, and can change everything: *"My brain is active all the time...with creation you can hardly totally cut. I take everything: meeting new people, long walks, as bonus, inspiration...I see a man in the street and I like his pose, hop, I take a picture..."* (artistic director).

Designers are then understood as 'way-finders' (Chia & Holt, 2009), researching widely and engaging externally from the organization to broaden their awareness of the outside world and inform their next steps. Unable to know before they go, they instead know as they go, finding their way by means of exploratory movement, 'out there'.

Through those practices, they take unexpected directions, precisely without a defined output in mind for their efforts: *" I can see a drawing on a wallpaper...or anything actually...and in flash I keep it in mind (...) or iron forgings on balconies, I love those. So I draw something out of various observations, then I give it to the embroiderer and then it is his turn to draw something, and then we propose it internally. But I never really know where I'm going, or with what it will start"* (assistant stylist).

This, in turn, might make the stakeholders in the organization uncomfortable facing uncertain practices that do not fit quite well with fixed step-by-step plans (Chia & Holt, 2009). But designers cope with this kind of tensions by updating key stakeholders regularly, and providing them with deliverables for their activities - even more so when *they know commercial codes*- cf first part of findings.

This unique way of knowing and peculiar research activities might therefore become valuable to the eyes of previously sceptical stakeholders: *"There is something that somehow fascinates them, I must say. Namely that if you take an idea out of your mind or out of something you got from the outside, and if -but only if- they love it, then they all become kind of amazed...and in a matter of seconds! I have to say...those moments it's a bit like Christmas"* (stylist).

In addition, and unsurprisingly, **creative professionals seem very attached to freedom**. They like being able to organize their own time, just like they want. They strongly link creation to freedom and personal expression. Several interviewees genuinely explained how they would not hesitate a second to not come to work if it did not seem like a day they would be able to give and create: *"There needs to be this freedom margin, allowing yourself this. Otherwise...pfff...how boring...And it is also a way to keep getting some pleasure out of what we do, what we make. We must give ourselves some freedom to make things"* (artistic director).

Importantly, the majority of persons we interviewed had a **personal creative production they worked on, in parallel**. Those projects are done with no filter, for the only sake of creation: *"At one point I said to myself 'I have to do something where I can release everything...so I can go to work relaxed'...I need to create, otherwise I am frustrated (...). Last year I felt frustrated, something was missing. And I said to myself 'this is it: I need to have my own projects alongside'"* (assistant stylist). Personal projects are nurtured here and there, but mostly at weekends and in the evening.

Interestingly, we notice a growing number of freelance workers, who can organize their time following desires. Sometimes they invent a way to make their living through self-organized, partially freelance relations. In those cases, the freelance status is not only a way for creative workers to manage their own time and priorities and escape the organization's rigidity, but also for companies to pay less employer's charges.

Some freelance workers also function following an 'alternative economy', dependent on alternative cultural spaces (Von Osten, 2007). In these spaces they earn their small but quite adequate incomes. They present themselves as enclosed studio monads that deliberately resist collaboration with the 'branding' and 'marketing' systems. They collaborate only when in immediate need of money, doing a 'job' to pay the rent or fund a holiday travel.

In those cases, the motifs of freelance life usually come up used as a social value to distinguish oneself from business as usual. Freelancing or working independently, rather than in a position of permanent employment, corresponds to the desire for an enjoyable way of life that is not structured by others (Von Osten, 2011).

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This last part was dedicated to the various practices creative professionals develop to seek autonomy and get access to a rich and vivid life outside of a given organisation. Yet seeking autonomy has its own limits. Pure autonomy, we agree, is a myth. To what extent are creative actors autonomous within society, once they need to sell their creative propositions to be able to live? For 'autonomy', we obviously read 'relative autonomy'.

Raunig (2011) revitalises the debate by emphasizing the importance of "potential" autonomy, "*not the mystified autonomy that returns in the discourses of creative industries, but the potential that is actually ours*" (p.143). Aiming at more and more autonomy, holding to one's own criteria and to the historical logics of its own forms remains different from the merely calculated production of cultural commodities. Differentiate between both is key.

### *The combining of practices*

As we have seen, tasks constantly require an active collaboration between representatives of the two contexts that are commerce and creation. To ensure the coexistence on the long-term and to benefit from their complementarity, the risk of a deviation or an absorption of a context by the other has to be counterbalanced. We demonstrated how creative actors develop a bunch of practices to deal with this. Yet, an isolated practice might easily exacerbate the conflict. This is what brings us to the dynamic that combines those practices, understood through the ensemble they constitute.

In spite of our exposé of the practices in a separate way, obviously those are linked by a dynamic and processual relation, within the same whole. This requires to deconstruct the linear aspect of our account, to demonstrate how these three sets of practices circulate and evolve on the moment according to what is required of the situation.

*Play the game of the market* happens following the need to cope with economic necessity. Nevertheless, play the game of the market more than needed shows some limits, such as lack of novelty -while entering the market- or renewal -after a few years. *Cultivate one's uniqueness* while abiding to the market's rules is a way to preserve one's own perimeter, to ensure one's own creative signature, and to reinforce it on the long run, on the same market. Whatever game they

play with the market, creative professionals insist on their uniqueness at one point in time. They realize the value they have for the organisation, comprised of this difference they cultivate. Even within a collaborative relationship, creative actors maintain their established identity. Such collaborations are actually likely to happen only under conditions where they have the possibility to maintain their own identity. The position statement a creative questioning sometimes implies reinforces this identity phenomenon.

Cultivate one's uniqueness is also a way to legitimate one's escape from the organisation (*Seeking autonomy*). Seek autonomy helps in defusing the strain. This way, the combining between integration (*Play the game of the market*) and differentiation (*Cultivate one's uniqueness*) echoes Purdy & Gray (2009), whose work shows how stepping over two conflictual logics requires a balancing mechanism. *Seeking autonomy* occurs after the game with the market and the assertion of own singularity, complementing the dynamic relation and useful to balance forces by deactivating the unavoidable tension.

We insist on the combining of such practices. Each of those, in a separate way, does not weigh the same once combined with others. It is the interplay between those practices that matters. This conceptualization is important because it gives attention to the value of disagreement, and provides a representation where multiple, potentially conflicting values and beliefs can be managed openly rather than covertly.

Now going one step further, we notice how the integration of the practices identified leads to a 'grey zone', an ambiguous space purposefully maintained by creative actors.

#### *Integrating the practices: a creative that maintains fuzziness*

*"My real concern is fuzziness. I am not into beauty. I always found beauty very suspect. So...fuzziness. How to maintain a certain degree of fuzziness? Through mystery, through installation...today we definitely live in a society that supports that"* J-C De Castelbajac, french designer<sup>29</sup>

We insisted on the ongoing back-and-forth between rationales that is managed through the combining of the identified practices, acting as levers for creativity. As such, the tension between

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<sup>29</sup> on the Radio Program Boomerang (French Radio-France Inter-31st Oct.16)

creative logics and rationalization logics dissolves into sustainable arrangements.

Yet configurations within which those appropriating practices are inscribed vary in space and time (Moulin, 1992). Also, attachment to freedom and individual nature characterizing the creative actor do not much support identification and matriculation processes. Consequently, maintaining fuzziness while navigating between the different contexts -by means of various practices- is a way for the creative actor to move on without being locked.

So at the heart of those appropriating practices, we suggest the notion of *the fuzziness of the creative*. We define the fuzziness of the creative as a condition of constant vagueness and ambiguity within which lies the creative actor to be able to create, being all at the same time affiliated to the organisation and breaking with it.

Each ensemble of practices contributes in a distinctive way to the coexistence of the contexts. It is via the concert of the three that coexistence refines towards a constructive tension, the fuzziness of the creative. Being vague is about not being too explicit, and not being too explicit means leaving some gaps. This is what allows people in, leaving things incomplete to arouse the faculties of others, encourage things and other various elements in.

Interviewed actors seemed to gather in their own person the different positions identified by Jones et al. (2016) concerning creative people: being the *maverick*, the *mainstream*, the *misfit* and the *amphibian*, as multiples faces that occur following the moment or the context all along the creative process. At the same time faithful when playing the game, but unfaithful when mocking it and cultivating his or her uniqueness, the creative actor would be at times believer, at other times pagan, sometimes totally escaping.

## The fuzziness of the creative

### Play the game of the market

Appropriate the commercial dimension

Strategically diversify  
one's creative proposition

### The Fuzziness of the Creative

An outside-life  
(out of the organisation)

Isolation (vis-à-vis  
the organisation)

Maintain one's  
own patrimony

Preserve one's  
own status

Nurture  
commitment

### Seek autonomy

### Cultivate one's uniqueness

This fuzziness might be understood as the cornerstone of creativity in creative organisations, a disorder that leads to order, resulting from the combining between the game with the market, the asserted singularity and the autonomy. Ambiguity, heterogeneity and movement are thus the raw materials of creativity, which unfolds through mechanisms of recombination, transposition and mixing, maintaining a now vital disorder.

The notion of disorder also implies the deviation from the norm, apprehending a creative that deviates from the expected behaviour in organisation -being for instance absent at work

schedules. Oscillating between rejecting and belonging, defiance and necessity, maintaining the confusion is a way to maintain authenticity and independence. The fuzziness of the creative occurs to enable the reunion between commerce and creation.

## 4.2 De Certeau & the making use of creative work

Examining those practices occasioned deviation from the presumed tendencies of management to dominate, crowd out or endanger creative resources. Our study reflects upon those practical forces creative actors develop in reaction, sticking to fuzziness to articulate some personal space.

While a few scholars have already written on the topic - see previous paragraphs on theoretical framing-, we think that the literature in sociology might bring something new to the issues raised above. As our focus was the more micro-level of interactions, we turn now to Michel de Certeau's work shedding light on the particular object we are talking about.

Something was missing in our attempts to understand creativity. De Certeau is a convincing match, as it reveals important things in this agenda: the tactical dimension. It is his reading of what is happening on the field that reveals something else, the making use and transformative part of creative work.

Indeed, Michel de Certeau himself is entertaining the idea of existing practices used to individualise the all-pervasive forces of commerce, politics and culture. From that perspective, we can again draw a parallel with creativity approached through the critical lense. What Certeau calls the "all-pervasive forces" brings us back to the critical researches stating that creative industries' apparatus influence the critical thinking of creative individuals. Certeau's work on individual practices offers a way out for the individual. Indeed, he stresses those subtle tricks and ingeniously defended private meanings the subject uses to individualise mass culture, altering things and using them in his/her own way, from utilitarian objects to street plans to rituals, laws and language, in order to make them their own.

Following Certeau's analysis, everyday activities (such as reading, talking, dwelling, walking and cooking) become creative acts of resistance. Modes of subjectivation constituted by specific relations of power gain priority over macro structures. Michel de Certeau's concepts help us in

shedding light on a phenomenon we might not have been able to see referring solely to the literature on creativity: the tactical side of creative work.

#### 4.2.1 Certeau's work & tactics

Michel de Certeau is referring to four new concepts: strategy, tactics, place and space. A strategy, most often corporate, is created and communicated in a given place (the organization). Within that place, practices and tactics are implemented to create space on the back of the corporate place. While the strategic operates through a place made proper, within such a place tactics create space.

Thus, Certeau has created a conceptual apparatus that renders practices visible. Interested by the silent transformation in the everyday practices of the official or strategic story, his writing helps to unsilence the making use of such everyday practices. At the outset of *The Practices of Everyday Life*, Certeau (1984: 11) defines the scope of his considerations as follows:

*“The question at hand concerns modes of operation or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles. It concerns an operational logic whose models may go as far back as the age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves in order to survive, and which has in any case been concealed by the form of rationality currently dominant in Western culture”.*

Certeau’s method is dialectical: he describes the power of the powerless, the activity of the passive, the production of the non-producers (Buchanan, 2000). But his focus is on practices and not on subjects (individuals), nor structures (laws of production):

*“Neither an enunciating subject, nor a subject of enunciation, occupies the first position in Certeau’s scheme: that honour is reserved for enunciation, or, to put it another way, the modality of practices, which, in reality, is the true subject of his inquiry” (Buchanan, 2000: 98)*

We will thus pursue the assertion that economic empuzzlement is a favorable ground for practices related to creativity, but will redefine the idea in terms of the distinction Certeau draws between tactics and strategy.

More specifically, whereas contemporary organizations lionize ‘strategy’ and relegate ‘tactics’ to the lower echelon of implementation, Certeau inverts the order: the power of corporations and



the associated logic of production are continually inverted. He is questioning the unidirectionality of their control.

The prescriptions of the place are never total (Hjorth, 2004). They are always possibilities for poaching. Although strategy is associated with a dominant principle, tactics are waiting to 'jump up'. Certeau explains the tactical appropriation of space in the following manner: "*It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its position, and plan raids*" (1984: 37).

The strategic operates through totalizing/domination and the tactical through multiplicity/poaching (Hjorth, 2004). The tactical act poaches in the cracks of the surveillance of the powers. In our case, tactical acts surrounding creativity poach in the cracks of the surveillance of the (economic) powers.

Hjorth (2004) uses the word "crisis" while describing this marginal-tactical act of creating space for play and invention; triggering a crisis in the place of strategy, in the rule of the dominant order: "*Occupying the gaps or interstices of the strategic grid, tactics produce a difference or unpredictable event which can corrupt or pervert the strategy's system.*" (Colebrook, 1997: 125, cited in Hjorth, 2004).

Practices, like the unexpected using of circumstance, is therefore 'tactical'. Tactics are feared and denigrated because they inhabit open space, and can redefine action. Strategy operates in prescribed places that preclude the function of those tactics. Tactics is then describing a different mode of power: "*Strategy depends on simple '2 × 2' schemes and is enacted in accordance with convention. Tactics are indeterminate and unpredictable.*" (Letiche & Statler, 2005: 9).

Mostly in management studies, the responsibility for strategy has been given to senior management and thus glorified, while tactics have been relegated to employee 'misbehavior'. In a different manner, Certeau underlines how strategy pertains to the logic of power, when tactics follow a logic of circumvention (1984).

Tactics create surprise in a given place. Certeau writes:

*"I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relations which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment.' A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as a basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clienteles,' 'targets,' or 'objects' of research). Political economic and scientific*

*rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (1984: 19)*

*I call 'tactic', on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'...The Greeks called these 'ways of operating' metis." (1984: 19)*

Letiche and Statler (2005) explore this concept of 'metis' or 'cunning intelligence' in the context of organizational theory, producing greater understanding of the innovative power of metis. The word 'metis' is firstly a common noun that signifies a particular form of intelligence made of tricks, tips, stratagems and even concealment or lies. The concept of metis has been introduced most compellingly into contemporary thought by D tienne and Vernant (1974). The human hero of the metis is Ulysse. Ulysse "polymetis", the man of all tricks and feints, the resourceful who knows how to get out of trouble, and not always in a very frank or faithful way but under any circumstances, as hard as they may be.

But to stick with de Certeau's terminology, we notice that the practices we identified around creative work seem to be moving in the space of contemporary balance between strategy's 'principles' and tactics' 'circumstances'; between an ideal of permanent control and an ideal of transient responsiveness.

#### 4.2.2 Certeau's resort to spatiality

The other aspect we would like to draw out of Certeau's work is his resort to spatiality.

Certeau considers that while tactics are owned by practitioners in various 'spaces', strategy is owned by their superiors in a determinate 'place'. The spaces form (through tactics) within the place (and its strategy). So every rational ethics defends some place, an established ordering of power, norms and relationships. And the tactical, in opposition to the powerful, appears to wander about in "the hyper-reality of performativity" (Letiche & Statler, 2005). Hence the

importance of juxtaposing a given 'place' and its adjoining 'space', the latter defined as the openness of becoming and "the rhizomic realm of pure generativity" (Letiche & Statler, 2005).

Hjorth (2004) calls those spaces the "other spaces" for play and invention. Working on the notion of entrepreneurship -a form of organizational creation-, he understands entrepreneurship as a free and playful movement. In entrepreneurial processes, certain spaces for play or invention subsist. In his paper, Hjorth gives the example of an organizational transformation of a former public authority into a competitive limited company. This transformation includes re-imagining and re-shaping the employee as better 'fitting' the conditions of this new competitiveness. As management practices are central in the process, Hjorth notices how entrepreneurial activities are played out at the margins of these projects, in other spaces.

Although the new management system constitutes the grid of intelligibility through which the employees become strategized, they keep playing with boundaries: « *These are the crafters of other spaces where, like in transit-halls, they can cross many tracks on their way to invent new practices of organizing.* » (Hjorth, 2004 : 427). Poaching at boundaries to create space is a discursive act. The employee ends up in a different discourse, invites other contexts in to frame action, playfully destabilize the reigning normalities in prescribed places.

Applied to our research, Certeau's work leads us to understand how spaces and places matter in creative work. Different identities, narratives, struggles and possibilities are created in the interaction between the own personal *space* of the creative actor and the organisation *place*. A creative space is created through the creative subject's tactical practices, relationships and discourses.

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In what follows, we unfold some other examples to better grasp Certeau's main ideas.

Certeau's specificity is that he focuses on consumption. He considers consumption as following the logic of the tactical, 'grasping the opportunity' in momentary possibilities (Letiche & Statler, 2005). Although material power follows the dominant order of the strategy, people do not let their daily existence become strategized. Certeau brings out the playful, witty, cunning creativity deployed in everyday cultures of consumption.

He is interested in the forced silence that dominant thinking and practice produce and impose

with images of people as consumers, who effectuate predictable decisions or plans. In opposite ways, Certeau urges us to attend to the multitude of creative productions -of ways of making use, abundant in everyday practices (Hjorth, 2005). This is also how we may read the various practices identified in our results on creative actors. Instead of sticking to the dominant practice, attend to the underlying tactical work and multiple ways of creating.

Certeau's often-used example is the popular reversal of "la perruque". La perruque refers to the moment when employees do different things with their time than their employers have assigned them to do. As a principle of disguise, employers' purposes are thwarted and the organizational technology is (momentarily) not used to make money, but to do what the employee think is worthwhile. Technologies that normally discipline the work situation, photocopiers, computers, telephones and internet connections all get used for private goals and become sources of personal creativity.

Similarly, creativity may be understood and defined through this tactical dimension. Creative actors tactically re-employ what the established order provides and expect from them. And such creative action is naturally processual, as the tactical is always moving on.

Developing Certeau's work, Letiche & Statler (2005) use the other example of powerful corporations. Although a bunch of powerful corporations may own the newspapers and billboards, regulate what gets onto the media, and all that this may implies in terms of influence, they cannot control the message until the end -what the spectators see and experience. The slight difference here relies onto the matter of the reception -of the message.

The suppliers of culture -goods and symbols, meanings and ideologies, structures and requirements- do not control the reception of it. Consumers re-write material and cultural markers. Letiche and Statler also give the example of the internet, initially a plaything of security services that became a destabilizing means of communication. Once again, bottom line is: consumers re-employ what the established order provides.

Tactics then play the very role of creating disruptions and break with normalizing and regulating forces. Thus, they remind us of a broader scope when we turn our analytic attention to organized work and the situation of employees: *"Such a broader scope invites passion and desire, play, the feminine, and bodies and thereby breaks with a continuity in our focus on the interest-driven male subject of economic reason, which dominates mainstream management and organization theory."* (Hjorth, 2005 : 396).

Following Hjorth, we believe only prefabricated dreams are made available through managerial practices prioritizing predictability and control. Those dreams are what the success-assuring managerial concepts for innovative organizations offer to their employees on the verge of burnout (Hjorth, 2005). In this research, and through Certeau's lines of inquiry, we evoke tactics as a form of action that surrounds creativity and plays an important role in contemporary organizations.

The overall purpose of this Ph.D project is thus to produce a greater understanding of the tactical power of creative practices, as well as to provoke further research concerning the ethical significance of those kind of practices, which enable people in creative organizations to "*disguise or transform themselves in order to survive*" (De Certeau, 1984).

#### 4.2.3 Unsilence the making use: the necessity for ethnography

Intrigued by the silent transformation of the official or strategic story through everyday practices, Certeau helps to unsilence the 'making use' of such practices. In his footsteps, what is interesting here is trying to unsilence the 'making use' in creative practices.

Importantly, the notion of tactical dynamic implied by any creative activity on the market was shaped throughout the different phases of the research. This means during the descriptive and analytic work around the creative process, as well as in the comparisons that those descriptions conducted side by side -so to speak 'chained' to one another- could not fail to arouse.

But we did not invent this idea of tactic, it 'sticks', and, in a way, always 'sticked' to the objects under study. In a sense, it just needed to be left to rise throughout the analytic and interpretive work. This work was trying to build a continuity as perfect as possible with the activities observed or heard when the data was constructed.

It is not that the word "tactic" was really used by the actors interviewed and observed. As such, it never appeared in the interviews. Yet it seems that a number of things that were said and observed all pointed jointly towards this idea, and that it was thereby the appropriate descriptor.

In so doing, it really is in the slow emerging process of the data that the word tactic has become appropriate for the writing, until now becoming almost difficult to avoid.

If, to conclude, the tactical dynamic around the act of creating is essential to the description of the creative industry -understood as a business; it is because it seems to have its source and its rhetoric outside of it, and so to speak that it precedes it. The ideas therein described are a matter of experience. Privileging lived experience over theory, emotional over rational, subjective over objective. The ambition, while acknowledging for those tactical dynamics, is to stick to the complexities of creative life as much as possible, rather than to offer a bland or cleaned-up view of it.

However, the limitations of language are encountered once we start discussing outside the taken for granted. The challenge in eliciting narratives is putting into words a knowing-how that the literature regards as ineffable or personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958) and therefore as eminently tacit, but not unsayable. For this reason, we understand narrating as a process of retrospective sense making, but we also believe that the main limitations were due to the difficulty of expressing sensible knowledge in words.

During the interviews, in order to explain a difference to the interviewer -for instance between a well-accomplished job and one only acceptable- the interviewees resorted to objects and showed examples able to 'give the idea'. At one point, this experience -in interview- of objects, materials - mostly fabrics- and samples used to sustain stories struck me. Something about the language used, rich with metaphors and sensations, started to direct my attention towards materials.

As I collected stories of designing, I realized that what was being told was a polyphonic story of in-becoming designing. How the material encounters ideas and how objects acquire form. And how once they have been formed they cancel the history of their formation, of previous failed attempts, experiments, and trial-and-error procedures.

Certeau's concepts definitely represented a big step on the path to grasping creativity. Yet as I just said, too many times the fabric was mentioned by designers, and kept coming back in interview. In those moments, the analysis with Certeau's grid appeared incomplete, as in reality a lot seemed to come from materiality -and materiality is not present in Certeau's work. His work

certainly reveals something, sensitizes to the importance of tactics. But then (the analysis) leaves the material a bit silent.

An ethnography was then a chance to go deeper into that direction I left aside with the interviews. In terms of research process, it is then *via* and *with* Certeau that I have arrived at the possibility of material apprehensions of the everyday performing of designing. Though analytically rich, the exploratory moment -with interviews- still echoes the problem Becker (1998: 70-71) identified as commonly faced by archaeologists and palaeontologists: "*they find some bones, but not a whole skeleton, they find some cooking equipment, but not the whole kitchen; they find some garbage, but not the stuff of which garbage is the remains*" (cited in Bazin & Korica, 2016: 16). An ethnography appeared as the appropriate response to circumvent that difficulty, and keep on exploring the various enactments of creativity.

### 4.3 From ethnography: a more material and affective response

The following analysis is built from the moment-to-moment lives of 'my' research subjects. From the moment we understand that creativity can only be practised, and that beyond this exercise there is no formulation, the story becomes its practice as an art of saying.

A story is a "knowing-to-say", precisely adjusted to its object, and for that reason an authority in terms of theory (De Certeau, 1980). Writing a story is a common strategy for making sense of complicated events in the world (Huopalaainen, 2016). Scientific legitimacy happens once we understand that narration is a necessary function; and that a story is inseparable from the practice, as its condition and production. To say what those creative practices say, there is no other discourse than those same practices. As Certeau simply puts it: "*Practices say exactly what they do. They constitute an act which they intend to mean...When someone asked him about the meaning of a sonata, it is said, Beethoven merely played it over*" (De Certeau, 1980: 39). Similarly, if asked what the practices identified 'mean', we will read the story again.

Indeed, the story does not express a practice, it does not *talk* about a movement. It makes it. We understand it by reading the story. Narrative is the temporary expressing mode of history. Barthes called this phenomenon "the effect of reality". Nothing can render the events or moments per se other than a continuous process of description and narratives which, by regular and endogenous corrections, allows for scientificness (Barthes, 1968). Although my writing

accounts evidently intend to raise curiosity and affect the reader, I have tried as much as possible to let my research subjects be correctly discovered and their voices properly heard.

Also, I understand the following story might be taking many directions simultaneously, and as such hard to follow. This way of describing naturally came up and turns out to be of importance for the deeper understanding of creative realities, and the 'diving' in creativity-in-action. Such a story is the processual performing of creativity. As a form that sticks to its object, the story accounts for the mess and multiplicity encountered on the field -on those two topics and fashion, see also Huopalainen, 2016.

Anyway, to avoid vagueness in accounting for this mess that can be studio life, I opted for very precise and vivid examples, anecdotes and transcripts. Hopefully the following story will give the reader the opportunity to more thoroughly dive in the research journey, and again raise experiences of the studied world.

I call the company *Ellen Estali*<sup>30</sup>.

#### 4.3.1 The company Ellen Estali

This company I integrated is an eponymous brand, in the name of its founder Ellen. The company has been active for 20 years. Established in Paris, it is specialized into the sector of high-end design - *Prêt-à-porter haut de gamme*, with a turnover of 197 900 € in 2016. In the studio, it is only Ellen, the founder and CEO of the brand, and Ela, an assistant designer who graduated from LISAA (*Institut Supérieur des Arts Appliqués*) in 2014. Ela carries a big part of the responsibility of the design processes and the everyday doings in the studio.

The company works with an accountant, Claudine (employee of EuroGestion, an accounting firm) and a model-maker (freelance), Riekkö. Ellen also works with Samuel at FinanceMode -an accompanying structure on the financial side-, getting public grants and tax credit for instance, essential for the survival of the company. For 2 years, Ellen hired a press agent but as she said "*it did not work that much...Except seeing my clothes in magazines, it did not bring business*". So she stopped

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<sup>30</sup> I changed the names of the persons I mention.



working with a press agent at the beginning of last year, which also allowed her some more financial flexibility.

Ellen once launched a kids collection of selected pieces, and also various selections for men. She was even selected to present her kids designs at a fashion show in Japan. However, dressier women's collections that include tops, skirts, jackets, shirts, pants, coats and dresses are currently in focus and considered safer to produce in turbulent economic times. We notice here the incursion of economic preoccupations. In the end, Ellen and Ela coordinate all of the production and the sales themselves, and this also goes for the PR, visibility and event planning.

Daily interlocutors are also the subcontractors: the manufacturers. Ellen deals with three manufacturers, one in Paris, one in the suburb of Paris, and one in Niort (in French region *Poitou-Charentes*). Each manufacturer is specialized in one or two kinds of fabric. This is the reason why she works with three. Composed of less than 10 dressmakers and tailors, two of them are S.A.R.L structures (limited liability companies) and one is a cooperative. She could have chosen to work with cheaper manufacturers, abroad -in China for instance-. But what she likes with having the manufacturers not too far is that she can afford many trips for the garments-in-the-making, which means more feedback -which means more control on the creation.

- o Ellen Estali's story

Born in 1970, Ellen E. graduated from the *Arts Décoratifs* in fine arts and fashion design in 1993. She works as an assistant designer in a ready-to-wear company for three years. Entrepreneur and voluntary, she then starts her own high-end brand: Ellen Estali. She could have dedicated herself to textile-making, but the final form and the purpose of the object called to her. And so she made clothing. In 2006, ten years after her first collection, the city of Paris awarded her *Le Grand Prix de la Création*.

Soft colours with tone-on-tone designs, anthracite, black, navy blue, pearl grey, unbleached fabric characterise her collections. Ellen is very picky regarding the choice of fabric. Her search for natural material such as silk, cotton, linen or wool is essential, it is "*a key issue for the house*" -in

Ellen's words. The rhetoric of opposing ever-changing, 'superficial' forms of fashion through the choice of sustainable fabrics is obvious in her case.

To find new fabric, every six months Ellen goes to fabric fairs, comes back with samples and then asks for the price by email. Indeed, at fairs prices of fabric are not displayed. In that sense, a fabric fair is both an enactment and a celebration of the creative side of the field -the commercial side is kept for after the fair, once designers ask for the price in the following weeks.

Very concerned with the production of fabric, Ellen only looks for fabric 100% natural, only the sewing threads are in polyester. Picking the right fabric might even represent an act of 'anti-fashion' (Huopalaainen, 2016), by not following the fabrics or colours of the season for instance. Similarly, Ellen uses a lot of technical or theatre costumes fabrics in her designs -not the most 'fashionable' on the fashion scene. Imported mainly from Italy, weaving and jersey attest her sensibility. Minimalist and Japanese-style, collections are loose and fluid.

They associate relaxation and elegance, simplicity in the colours and softness in the blend of materials. Ellen definitely possesses deep knowledge about textile creation and the feel and behaviour of material cloth. She has also mastered different techniques of weaving, printing and finishing. In the end, compared to made-to-measure, *Ellen Estali* clothes are accessible and affordable, but still special in their materialization of design talent and creative personal vision.

#### o A place

The atelier, bright and tranquil, is tucked into a cobblestoned impasse, in the heart of an historically industrial area of Paris. The alley comprises a few private homes, but mostly artists' and various creators' workshops and design offices. Graphic designers, set designers, one sculptor, one jewellery designer and Ellen cohabit in the alley. It is a lively place, cars cannot really access due to the cobblestone, so it is easy to step out and spend some (work) time outside.



31

### *The Space of the Studio*

The studio is divided in two rooms. The studio entrance door opens on a very spacious and luminous room, dedicated to designing strictly speaking -sewing, designing of patterns-, and to private sales:

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<sup>31</sup> Photographs are included to account for the visual experience. Obviously they reveal a very different side of fashion, contrasting with the more glamorous and spectacular images one might encounter at every street corner.









At the end of this second room is a small washroom with the very crucial washing machine.

### *Arrival in the Studio*

I arrived at the end of October, one of the quietest period. After the fair, Ellen and Ela are waiting for the confirmation of orders, and have not yet started the next collection. Ellen was

taken by accountability and administration, Ela was working on the finishing touches and Riekkö (The model maker, freelance) adjusting the last models. Few space was left for me in the studio, so I took care of the errands, of bringing back patronages from manufacturers, of fabrics, of labels, of delivering some orders to Parisian stores...The first week was intense, the most difficult being to accumulate in record time the new vocabulary of fashion design.

Having lunch everyday with Ela helped me a lot to figure things out, as she sometimes took time to explain the organisation and planning of the studio. First weeks I spent a lot of time taking



care of the administrative part: emails, labelling, accounts for stock, transcription of orders. I learnt quickly as Ellen's trust created proximity quite fast. Weeks passing by, I slowly took part in the design circle, Ela showing me how to sew a few things here and there. By the end of the first month, I was responsible for sewing the buttons on the pieces of the new collection. By then and until the end, I assisted Ellen

and Ela following priorities: cutting pieces, adjusting patterns, finishing touches of hems, disassembling of inner linings.

### *At Manufacturers*

I believe the discovery of those odd places that are manufactures was the most striking experience of my observation. One of the manufactures was at the end of the same street as the studio. I would often go there to bring a piece of fabric, a picture of an old skirt, a prototype to ask whether they would be able to produce it. Lost in an old building at the end of a gloomy corridor, those sewing workshops, composed of a dozen of persons, are at the same time essential for designers, but must have the humility to stay in the shadow.

Suspended patterns, mountains of clothes and fabrics, and as background music the noise of the machines. The atmosphere enchanted me. The warm hospitality was always very professional. "*We must go on and not postpone the delays*" was something I kept hearing when over there. Originally from Croatia and Serbia, the dressmakers aged around 60 speak only few words of French or English. It is the boss, Cecil, who acts as translator on top of establishing relations with clients and assisting her father in the cut of fabric pieces.







Spending some time there I could discuss and learn a lot on the evolution of manufactures nowadays. As in several domains, technology has a great impact. Designers can adjust the size grading and measurements of their models with a software, saving time not only for themselves but also for manufacturers who for the moment have to count every single piece they cut to lose as less fabric as possible.

Relations with manufacturers are not so easy, as production is unpredictable. The process is a real challenge in terms of reaching mutual understanding. Ellen and Ela ask for a specific pattern they have in mind, but evidently this pattern will be interpreted by the many human heads and hands involved. So it is not that the original idea or proposition they have in mind is misunderstood, it is more that imperfection and reinterpretation are very likely to occur, along the way. A finished prototype never comes out as anticipated.

#### ○ Functioning

Ellen and Ela achieve two collections per year, each one of them composed of about 60 pieces that are then produced according to purchase (in fairs). The success of a collection is what allows the next to be done. They have to get it right. On average 1500 pieces are produced each season, and exported for the most part abroad, in stores in Europe (Paris, Bordeaux, Madrid, Athènes, Milan, Rome, Porto, Zürich, Nottingham), in Asia (Tokyo, Osaka, Kobé, Séoul), in the United-

States (New-York, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Boston), in Lebanon (Beirut) and Israël (Tel Aviv, Jafa, Kiryat Motzkin).

### *Forms of Communication*

To develop her business, Ellen had a webmaster design her website a few years ago. She could definitely make some improvements to it now but this does not seem to be part of her priorities. She keeps her website very basic. In addition to the following image, I can also mention the lack of any evocative or seductive communication language on the side. There is not any attempt, effort or whatsoever to create worth around the clothing proposition.



So then one might wonder, but how does she actually *sell* her clothes? And she does. Each year, Ellen goes to fairs that take place twice a year: Tranoï (Paris), and Designers & Agents (New-York). As she does not have a store in her name, the collections are sold in concept-stores or in small clothing stores, where retailers are looking for innovative designers (in those fairs). Main competitors in that case are designers developing clothes for the same commercial target, attentive to the choice of fabrics and production issues as well. In practice, fairs are hugely

expensive (around 10 000€ for 10 square metres at *Tranoi* in Paris, 7000€ for the same at *Designers & Agents* in NYC) and time-consuming for designers. In reality, a fashion house can usually only afford to produce one set-up of a collection, and not go to multiple trade show destinations simultaneously.

Fairs bring together exponents and designers from all over the world, who came to present their last collections. Those fashion fairs construct symbolic fashion and consequently worth and credibility for many houses. *Tranoi* takes place in Paris beginning of March and beginning of October for four days. *Designers & Agents* takes place in New-York mid-February and mid-September and lasts for three days. I once asked Ellen if there was any correlation between the two fairs, in terms of commercial results. She told me that the New-York fair was for her a good indicator of the Paris one. So if NYC happens to be a success, Paris will certainly be a success also -although it is obviously not the same buyers who go to both.

So even if Ellen tries to circumvent some aspects of mainstream fashion and its questionable agendas -for instance she stopped doing fashion shows, she somehow has to respect this exact same agenda with fairs. With her label she has to follow the movement, do what everybody else does in the business of fashion -go to fairs. In this regard, she is likewise affected by the constant pressure to create collection after collection. All along this, various pressures to perform appear, the major pressure being to be able to financially survive to keep the ship afloat.

In addition, Ellen also organises four private sales in her studio, two or three weeks before the sale season (beginning of January and mid-June), one in April and one in October. Loyal clients do not miss the opportunity. Ellen makes discounts on the previous collections, and sells the more recent collections to the wholesale price. For instance, a dress found in store for €200 minimum would be found in those private sales at €80 (wholesale price). The price of the garment is multiplied by 2.5 (sales margin) in stores. Such private sales represented an opportunity to observe during two days the Parisian clients wearing *Ellen Estali* clothes. Urban, ecologists, well-off people, artists or originating from the creative sector, a lot are regulars and a few leave empty-handed.

## *Hierarchy*

Hierarchy is made simple, Ellen directs and organise days or weeks following priorities. Her status as boss is not obvious and I could observe a lot of trust between her and her employees/collaborators. The use of first name, and address as 'tu' (rather than 'vous') is required with everyone. Ellen gives her opinion and advice without being above or superior.

Being in the role of the intern, the work environment was very pleasant. Ellen easily gives responsibilities and she is convinced that the people surrounding her are in a position to fulfil them. This generosity allows a particular atmosphere dedicated to free speech and expression by collaborators. Initiatives and opinions given by each other are well regarded and most of the time good to take for Ellen.

- No need for flash and shows, an economy of means

Ellen started all by herself 20 years ago. For 10 years now she has been trusting the new generation -young graduates- by employing them in short-term contracts. Most of them have completed an internship with her before being hired. During those internships, she initiates them to the functioning, the brand image, the various activities that compose the everyday life of a studio: developing the collection, designing and adjustments of patterns, finishing works for prototypes, choice of labels, depot of patterns at manufacturers, garment tagging, administration, various errands, all the activities of the house are discussed.

The studio is ruled by very precise activities. In October, time of my arrival, Ellen re-selects the textiles that inspired her at first glance for the winter collection -of the following year. Meanwhile, the spring/summer collection (bought in fairs in September by international buyers) is being produced. For the winter collection, Ellen orders small quantities of fabrics that she likes, with which she will develop prototypes. Once the prototypes (around 50) are realized (or rather once there is no time left), she makes use of the services of an external photographer to establish the " *carnet des collections*" (the collection book).



MODÈLE NORMA.  
A-H 2015



In fairs Ellen shows the prototypes. Regular customers (sales representatives for clothing stores around the world) are always very curious to discover the new collection and order almost each season, provided they like the creative proposition.

Fairs are also an opportunity to show her collections to sales representatives who do not know her brand. If it was not for them, she could definitely organize showrooms in her studio and invite her regular customers. Ellen has been building a real network for 20 years, with a loyal clientele. Obviously the risk exists that those regulars grow tired of her work, or do not get hooked by the brand new collection, but it remains the most reliable commercial target.

Once the orders are confirmed, Ellen recontacts the textile producers to order the appropriate quantity following the number of pieces to produce (she cannot afford a surplus or a lack of textile). Textiles are directly sent to manufacturers. While the outfits are being produced, Ellen develops the next collection and organizes the schedule for fairs. From now and then she would also organize private sales in the studio.

Meanwhile, on the production side, a lot of back and forth happens between the studio and the manufacture to validate the lead series model ("*tête de série*"), first piece produced for a given model -once validated, the whole series of that model is produced.

At that moment, the 'trial-and-error' process is not entirely in the hands of Ellen as it involves unexpected human missteps and misjudgements that cannot be controlled. Back and forth exchanges can be many before validation. Finally, once all series of all models are produced, they end up in the studio where they are washed, dried, labelled and packed by Ellen and Ela themselves, to then be sent in the different stores- those same stores that placed an order at fairs.

Reading the whole process, one might think that things are kept very simple, with no ambition for flash and show, Ellen needing little to design. Part of this is true, as there is a real economy of means, seeing things from above. But this does not jeopardize the proper functioning of the designing process. The studio life and creation does not suffer from any lack of dedication or inspiration, finding its richness in other things such as experimentation and play.

- The journey in pictures

In what follows we unfold the journey through pictures to better catch what goes on in studio, in-between the new collection being designed and the previous one being produced.



. THE NEW COLLECTION .



\* FABRIC \*  
*(Assessment includes affordability)*



\* Patterns in Brown Paper \*





\* Stock of Patterns \*







\* Cut of patterns in fabric \*





\* Adjustments \*



\* Finishing Touches \*



\* New collection of prototypes completed \*



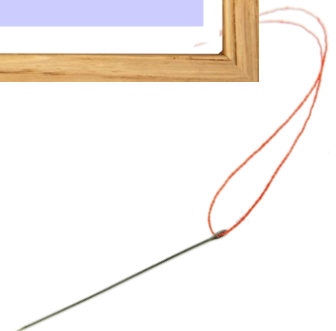


. MEANWHILE..  
PRODUCTION OF (PREVIOUS) COLLECTION.

Prototypes + Technical indications sent to manufacturers (after the fairs, following orders by buyers).



\* Back & forth between manufactures and studio \*  
(Eg: validation of the tête de série)





We receive the new production, bit by bit. We wash them, dry them, check them (loose threads, label in the wrong direction), repair the mistakes (eg: bad shape, hitches), soften them with steam.



\* Washing / Drying / Steaming \*





\* REPAIRS \*



\* Stock in cartons by models / Label & Package \*





\* Ready to send to the buyers \*  
(following orders from fairs)



Clothing that have been made are now ready to turn into fashion and integrate the fashion system (Kawamura, 2005).

- Economic Constraints

Spending those months on the field helped me understanding the day-to-day constraints weighing on Ellen and Ela. They work at the intersections of creative and economic rationales. They are at once making creative decisions, interpreting and constructing taste; and simultaneously making economic decisions around appropriate market transactions. There lies the key part of their work, the paradox of selling creativity: they construct economic value where, initially, none exists.

The following part sketches out the constraining landscape for an independent fashion house such as *Ellen Estali*. Alongside the creative process, business side is calling. As the founder, CEO, artistic director or designer-entrepreneur behind *Ellen Estali*, Ellen must continuously perform, represent and personalize her label. And it takes a lot of discipline: send the e-mails, remember the deadlines, negotiate with factories, answer sales inquiries, send collection photos to the fairs, update facebook, meet buyers, and so on. The aim for Ellen is to get through the contemporary capitalist system. The label *Ellen Estali* would not survive very long if her propositions ever failed to sell through.

### *The fashion market*

Globally speaking, when we look at this market as a labour market, we notice four main characteristics. First, it is a 'winner takes all' market. The best performers are able to capture a very large share of the rewards, and the remaining competitors are left with very little. Secondly, the unknown and uncertainty are always associated with creative goods. These two characteristics can be shown in the following extract from diary.

Vignette from ethnography -extract from diary-

*I am discussing with Ellen about young designers that start their own brands of accessories, pins...Ellen wonders how they are profitable. She explains to me that when she started, what was important to her was to be able to continue doing only her designs, and not needing to take a part-time job on the side. Then, progressively, she could pay herself. But the minimum...'I pay my salary and then there is nothing left'. She looks at Ela on the side. Ellen must know that Ela would like to get a permanent contract and get a salary increase. But uncertainty rules. Ellen does not make much profit. Each time, she makes enough to keep on doing it but it never became largely profitable. At times in the past it was easier than others. And at other moments more difficult than others. She can never anticipate nor explain it. Two years ago she had to break off from her 10-years-assistant because the line of the season was not very successful. Meanwhile, Ela awaits and accumulates practical working experience with Ellen, compensating for a very low monthly wage as this practical experience will prove much valuable when she launches own brand one day.*

Third, the amount of debt: fashion designing is an expensive job, starting with the cost of fabric. Designers usually start their business in the red -that was the case with Ellen. Living from hand to mouth, lacking income, struggling to survive...those features characterize the beginnings, very far from the air of fascination, style and allure associated to the profession (Kawamura, 2005).

Finally, the labour market is characterised by its peculiar labour. A lot of employment is non-standard or freelance; some don't work for a salary, trying to mitigate the uncertainty of work. In most cases, designers deal with precariousness individually: no collective bargaining rights, no benefits like health insurance or retiring packet:

-Extract from diary-

*On the radio, a program talks about the workers with an independent or freelance status. Ellen intervenes aloud on the topic of their protection, in case of an accident "there is none. if you're hurt, you are taken in charge by the health mutual, but meanwhile your business does not move, and there isn't a single compensation". I ask her why she cannot pause, freeze the business for 6 months, as the working capital is about 6 months. She says she cannot because of the charges, "what about the salary ? and the rent ? See, I have to work". "What did you do when you were pregnant?" I ask, "I worked from distance, with my assistant. I stopped for about 3 weeks, and came back as fast as I left...with the baby, in the studio".*

### *Major issues encountered*

Within this fashion market, designers have to face several issues. What implicitly comes up is the growing lag between creative companies' aspirations and practical realities that represent the context within which the designers are working, to develop and implement their creative ideas within their respective organizations. What follows is a tentative outline of the tensions designers experience in realizing their aspirations. The issues encountered center around aspects such as constant uncertainty or cost burden.

First thing is the financial problematic, especially the cash flow. Designing a collection and commercializing it to buyers is very expensive. The price for a prototype is 5 to 6 times the cost price -in production. So it can go from 20 000 up to 50 000 euros a collection- the one that is going to be presented at fairs.

Following the orders that designers take at fairs, production is launched. As an investor specialized in fashion sector explains, bankruptcy is not only a question of commercial success but also a question of cash flows: *"Manage and anticipate all the cash peaks that might lead them to bankruptcy, which is what happened to many designers. Because, more specifically, once you go through a growth phase, you have to be able to fund it. You go from 100 000 euros to 300 000 euros of orders, it does not seem enormous, like that. But instead of spending 50 000 euros in production it means spending 150 000 euros. If you don't have that money, it's over"*.

As a consequence, designers might sometimes restrain orders to financially ensure them. Working capital has to cover the house's ongoing expenses. Lacking financial resources, independent and small fashion houses most of the time don't have enough time to reach a critical size with a sustainable profit growth, and the majority of them disappear before reaching maturity.

Classical and institutional financial facilities do not usually provide for business younger than 10 years, of less than 500,000€ turnover, and not possessing a full team (artistic-commercial-financial direction). And the arrival of a new investor is not always very easy: *"There is going to be a negotiation around the pack, audits will be initiated...Combine both, the arrival of the new investor and keeping on the activity, it is not so easy. In fact, it can be very heavy and difficult to bring in new funds"* (says investor in fashion design).

-Extract from diary-

*I understood today how important timing is. The payments arrive once packages are sent. Then Ellen is financially stuck...the bank allows a small overdraft (of 10 000 euros), but takes an interest on it. So if things work out fine, it is for 6 months. Ellen has a working capital to keep on for 6 months- necessary time to prepare the production and send it. But she cannot hold any longer after that. After 6 months, she must get the payments (from clients) to initiate a new cycle. And again, create.*

Size plays an undeniable role in that problematic as the choice of the fabric might be determined by the number of metres -of fabric- needed. A lot of fabric suppliers set a minimum amount for the quantity of fabric ordered. If of small size, the house might get small orders for specific pieces and need a small amount of fabric accordingly. Sometimes sellers add a 10% markup when small quantities of fabric are ordered. This is where small -usually independent- houses are disqualified compared to bigger houses and groups with bigger funds.

Second problematic is the commercial one, knowing how to position a line of clothes, the adequate price. A designer should be able to justify the proposition to clients, especially when a client is willing to pay 200 euros a dress that he/she might find at Zara ten times less expensive. Commercial sensibility also entails knowing when to set up pre-collections for bigger clients. At that moment, before the collections, buyers have more budget. After the collections, they already spent most part of their budget. Big buyers might even have an influence on the line, perhaps asking for specific designs.

-Extract from diary-

*End of the day: I am working on the threads and ironing of the special models for one of the big buyers that ordered several dresses without sleeves. Ela explained to me that during fairs, big buyers sometimes ask for specific designs: this blue dress in beige, this short skirt in long, this shirt without sleeves, etc. Of course Ellen and Ela often find senseless what demanding buyers ask for, but follow their will as they cannot possibly refuse their financial support. In a similar way, some pieces might be dropped after the fairs if they do not catch enough attention -meaning orders- from buyers...Thinking about it, it's almost weird, how a full collection of prototypes presented at fairs looks finished, polished, impressive, adjusted...it looks perfect. Yet, underlying, things are still underway, under construction. In process. In progress. Is it ever finished, in a way? When is it finished, in fairs or once sold?*

Tacit knowing is also part of the success. Designers learn for instance how having a significant percentage of the turnover that is made internationally is synonym of a creative brand for the public. Accordingly, decisions have to be made in terms of communication: a designer has to know how to be known. There are key moments in the fashion year that cannot be missed: fashion week, fairs, showroom time, etc. Work with a press office is usually a good way to see the potential of news coverage. Also, analysing the sales and learn from experience on them is part of the commercial sensibility. In the end, the "know-how-to-sell" (le "*savoir-vendre*") and "know-how-to-show" (le "*savoir-montrer*") add up to the know-how (le "*savoir-faire*") of the designing activity.

Third problematic is the production and the relations with the manufacturers. Knowing how to negotiate (the prices, the timing, the different finishes) is a day-to-day concern. Accounting, billing and other administrative systems typically are daily processes. Ellen would systematically spend a more or less big part of the morning -fluctuating according to the time of the year- on the phone or on emails dealing either with the manufacturers (reminding them the deadlines) or the clients (reminding them to pay).

To make ordination even more demanding, some manufacturers close for holidays and/or never deliver on time. Schedules must be organized accordingly, and the job requires top-level coordination. At the end of the season, with the deadline approaching, the phone keeps ringing all day long in the studio. The manufacturers would call for any reason, sometimes unfounded, at other times really urgent: some information on the width, a lack of fabric or lining, a request to come and validate a piece, a question about quantities.

All of this takes a great deal of time and a great deal of patience -as being flexible is an imperative throughout a process made of constant changes. Designers learn to deal with these crises, as they regularly need to overcome unexpected events in terms of production. As a consequence, prototypes that are presented at fairs are drafts, still in-the-making. They might be modified in the future, not only by buyers (as seen in previous section) but also while going through production (next step after orders).

Moreover, a designer has to face human resources issues. From the moment he/she hires someone, topics such as employment contracts, training, payroll are also part of the day-to-day routine. And finally, the legal side has to be addressed. A trademark registration implies to know

which 'class' (that is, the domain) a designer wants to choose for his/her future creative propositions. Clothing is one, but designers should also think about leather goods, accessories, shoes and perfume, especially if their ambition is to develop internationally. As contracting on creative decision rights is problematic (Caves, 2003), in those moments the business hat prevails.

In short, being a fashion designer is a profession that entails a lot of juxtaposition: between the commercial, creative, administrative and organizational activities, as a significant number of different hats. And in those same activities, one must juggle with a juxtaposition of different layers: within the creative side, dealing with three collections at a time for instance.

Overall, the job is a lot about knowing how to manage a portfolio of projects evolving at different rates and levels. Organizing manufacturing doings, sending e-mails, working from home, calculating production costs, coordinating private sells, working late, being late, performing commercial at fairs, adapting to clients, setting up photo shoots, taking care of the website, packing final orders, planning business trips...and the list goes on and on.

Learning from experience is obviously a way for designers to learn how to deal with those obligations, but several public trainings are also available for young designers willing to start their own brand. Ellen started hers at 27. At that time, a commercial training was mandatory for young designers, supplied by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris. That is where she learnt for instance the offsetting of profits and losses across her designs, how to find public grants and subsidies or how to manage the stock. Nowadays, a lot of designers work in collectives to assist each other with mutual aid agreements.

\*

Those information about the economic framework justify the appropriateness of the house Ellen Estali as a case that may inform the research question (Dumez, 2015; Yin, 2008, 2012). While trying to understand how creative actors deal with economic constraints, being on the field in this fashion house was an adequate way to understand on a day-to-day basis the designing trajectory, economically viable and creatively interesting. Contrary to the dominance of studies on large-scale industries, this case is emblematic of the independent designers and is interesting in that it speaks for all those designers that have to create a line of clothes while being profitable at the same time.

Obviously the economic constraints may vary from one designer to another, and the way of designing as well. Contemporary designers are known to work in significantly different ways, both conceptually and practically (Breward, 2003). The responsibilities, work routines and practical doings of designers arguably depend on the market position and the scale of the business, together with changing socio-cultural references and norms when thinking broadly. But the major points that are emerging in the results illustrate ways of proceeding that might be relevant or say something on many, and make this case a particularly interesting case study of designing within economic constraints.

- o No Strategy attached: the "happy medium"

The result of 4 months of designing is around 60 prototypes that set the tone for each season. The model-maker Riekkö then comes on stage, handling patterns and other gradations (adjustments of sizes). Far from mass manufacture, less than 2000 pieces are produced by season, all of which are made in France. *Ellen Estali*, the brand, is currently available at more than 50 points of sale across the world. With no need for runway presentations of directly-operated boutiques, and no desire to refine her brand image or design a marketing strategy, Ellen E. maintains, as much as possible, distance from a commercial role. Her brand name, in fact, is her own moniker written in lowercase letters.

The whole idea of having a strategy seems to be rejected by Ellen, in the sense that there is absolutely no explicit commercial strategy. Strategy happens in the in-becoming commercial necessities and events. As cliché as it may sound, Ellen does not like taking care of the financial aspect of the job, and does not really even care about it as long as she can make a living out of it. On the opposite, Ela does not approve; she told me several times that Ellen could double the turnover by making a few communication images or improving her website. She does not understand Ellen's unwillingness to actively brand herself.

Yet what Ellen tries to reach, with *Ellen Estali*, is a sort of "happy medium", with 2000 pieces by season, no more. Such a threshold she does not want to cross. She does not *need* (I insist on the word) to reach the potential clients she could get, let alone commit to marketing actions and

plans. In the eyes of Ellen, being successful means to move from one day to the other, from one collection to the other, rather than growth, fame or fortune.

For instance, she could try to communicate more on her private sales, attract some more people. But she is not interested in doing it. It annoys her. As a consequence, it's essentially her friends, or friends of friends that come to her private sales. The database of clients to whom she sends her invitations (by mail) to private sales are only friends -and friends of friends. She never took the time to add her real clients (from different stores where she is sold), that would be much interested by those private sales. Those anti-market behaviours and associations, added to Ellen's unwillingness to stand out definitely sounds surprising.

Work intensification is another typical consequence of rationalization processes that is resisted at Ellen Estali. Produce more would mean grow bigger and she does not want that. Invest in marketing or communication would mean less time for designing and she does not want that. This is also what allows her to maintain as much control as possible on her designs. Ela once suggested making some pictures of the clothes for a very little amount of money, with a friend of hers who is in a photography school, Ellen said no.

By so doing, it seems that Ellen considers designing throughout a conscious posture against established consumerist agendas, and with an active disinterest in profit, growth or additional earnings -as long as she gets the necessary earnings to keep on designing. For Ellen, branding, communicating or even think positioning is unneeded. In addition, there is not always enough time to devote to those doings. In everyday business life, production and sales are the key, and always gain the upper hand over less critical practices.

In that sense, it appears as if Ellen would be an 'anti-hero', or at least very unconventional, not trying to reach absolute performance. She often opposes this statement with the constructed accounts of other fashion labels, created "only to sell" -in her own words. In the following extract from diary, Ellen strongly disapproves:

*Ellen talks to me: "For designers nowadays it's very difficult. Designing cannot happen without marketing and communication". Ellen seems very pessimistic, saying that designing does not really happen anymore. "Look at xxx (a famous brand), we hear about them a lot, but don't you think that they also have difficulties, seeing that*



*their manufacturer is the same as ours? Trust me, that explains why their designs are far from being amazing, they're obsessed with profit".*

Indeed, Ellen shares one of their manufacturers -the cheapest- with a well-known and very trendy Parisian brand.

At the end of the day, Ellen dissociates herself and her designs from the company. This is very clear, as her brand name is *Ellen Estali*, whereas the company's name is *Est*. She willingly gave two different names. So when she speaks of the business, she talks about the company *Est*, and sometimes it almost feels as if it were not hers. Some business-related activities actually happen in parallel, as may the emails between the financial person and the accounting person show: Ellen is in copy but does not intervene in the exchange and communication between them. *Est* happens in autonomy.

#### 4.3.2 How they design -within constraints

In the previous sections, I set the stage on the fashion house' key facts and functioning, and described the different steps towards the emergence of a garment. The following sections will describe how designing really happens on a day-to-day basis, along those steps and constraints.

The way Ellen and Ela deal with at the same time designing and economic activities is that they work on designing in a very emerging way. It is not thought of upstream, via reasoning -and economic rationality. Designing takes shape in a progressive way, through interactions -collective compositions-, through experimentations -trials, mistakes, handling-; all of it on the background of the passion for the fabric, from which everything follows.

In that sense -that of the emerging practice-, designing becomes a living practice much more than a functionalist practice whereby economic rationality reigns. And this is precisely how Ellen and Ela deal with rationalization logics. As previously seen, we talk about rationalization by referring to "the predominant focus on business interests or productivity-oriented production processes, usually at the expense of creativity" (Tschang, 2007: 989). Ellen and Ela find their way towards designing by creating in a very emerging way, thus deviating from such predominant focus.

In the studio, designing is far from the ideal of planning as a calculable, forcefully direct, and explicit attempt to control and organize elements in order to realize represented economic ends. A grasp of their creative work requires a perspective on sensuality and affectivity. It is their deeper self that create by feeling, reacting and interpreting their surroundings. By being attentive to materials, to experimentations and to each other's opinions, they succeed in putting aside, for one moment, the economic priorities. I call this moment their "playground".

In what follows I elaborate further on the designing practice in such a playground, as a fine-grained and multi-dimensional embodied-material practice. I will first develop what I understand by "living practice", a constant listening to surroundings where timelessness and resourcefulness prevail; to then move to the three main ingredients of such practice: fabrics, experimentations and interactions.

### *Emerging designing, a living practice*

There is never a good -or a bad- answer while creating. The process of designing is an emerging one, an un-designed one. Creative work could always be done differently, and as a designer, Ellen learnt about this variability. She knows how to use it differently according to the experience, and the risk of failure is always on her side. So there is no good answer to what she is creating. In the studio, design is read as making things whilst open to risks of incompleteness and imperfection.

And she develops a sort of detachment, as a consequence. For sure, economic concern does not rule in the studio. Designing happens, and it appears as if it was a daily wonder, a daily task. Ellen, like Ela, is not afraid of ruining a piece of fabric, not afraid of wasting days of work. Ideas come out of this 'no-guarantee'. Difficulties and struggles are part of the complexities of fashion organizing in situ. Ellen and Ela find themselves designing spontaneously amid mess and confusion, evolving between excitement and failures, successes and mistakes.



Their sensibility encapsulates an attitude, not of passivity, but of enduring things as naturally as possible, immersing themselves in the open-ended intricacies of the unexpected of studio life, without hankering after completion and essences. Spending one day in the studio is like witnessing the messiness settling down all over the place, gradually, until the end of the day where the studio is a total mess.

Pieces of fabrics, scissors, threads, shirts, skirts, rolls, brown paper, needles, half-sewed garments...an assembly of things surround Ellen and Ela, and they interact with those all day long. Having everything close by is a way to get quick access to all of them. And it is the same story everyday: studio is clean in the morning, messiness settles down as the day passes by, and at every end of the day they would take 30 minutes to tidy the place up before leaving, and find a bright new studio in the morning.

What preoccupies them is how to respond in situ to the changing relationships they encounter, in a manner that ensures the smooth and productive functioning of their everyday world. Fabric come in the studio, and from this fabric emerges the creative piece. It comes out of Ellen and Ela's trials, handling the fabric on the stockman and on themselves. They constantly talk about the pieces: "*is it too short ?*", "*could we find another way of sewing it ?*", "*what about adding a pocket here or there?*".



Adaptability prevails on anticipation. Following the process perspective, garments are not stable objects, but rather continuously emerging objects that constantly evolve through uses, abuses, embezzlements, plays, modifications and re-creations. Ellen and Ela are paving their way through the variations, inconsistencies, fragments and cracks beneath the superficial gloss and appreciating how the surface appearances of coherence and unity belie a deeper messier and at time economically incoherent reality.

In the following episode, the garment emerges from trials and errors, exemplifying the process of progressive forming. So one of the key pieces of the collection was a large coat made in heavy wool. Ellen and Ela spent an incredible amount of time on it, going back and forth, trying different colours, different shapes, to finally agree on a certain design. In the end, I helped them sew the hem, and it took me half a day as the wool was very heavy.

But then, out of nowhere, one morning -about 15 days later- Ellen looks at it once again and changes her mind on the hem. So I had to undo the hem, and sew a new one, a different one. Ellen like Ela won't hesitate to disrupt the order of something, to break a marching formation - join the top and bottom, fuse them together. Work is very meticulous and I noticed several times how much treatment and attention is given to the clothes-in-the-making.

Ellen's eyes are everywhere, and that's what made me understand the tentative and experimental nature of designing. It is through tentative actions that the becoming of the form happens, determining the success (or otherwise) of the designing process. This following extract (from

diary) exemplifies this idea, talking about a shirt for which they picked up this very special transparent fabric: *Although Ellen is pleased with the result, she still does not like the structure of the collar. "I think what does not work, sadly, is the transparent effect". They hesitate before removing it, as the collar is an unavoidable element of any shirt. But they follow their inclination and remove it.*

The idea of the creative process as a linear one which moves through distinct stages -ideation, experimentation, and realization- is not satisfactory, and it may also be misleading. It is not about an idea, and then its realization; rather, both become connected as a form emerges. This is what I call a "living practice". On this, I wrote down (from diary): *Designing takes shape, between fittings, sewing machine noises, interactions and most of all many looks in the mirror to give expression to the garment. Ellen and Ela try the clothes, they walk with them, they discuss on them, with them, they look at the mirror twisting on every side to get a full view of the worn garment, moving with them.* As such, the garment acquires form within working practices.



Necessarily, through the collective and continuous creation process, Ellen and Ela are looking for something that 'fits', an aesthetic that satisfy them. It is easier to think that project as something under construction, moving from the potentialities of raw material to a meaningful shape and to a result or outcome. In this sense, the object keeps determining the horizon of possible goals and actions. But it is truly a horizon: as soon as an intermediate goal is reached, the object escapes and must be reconstructed by means of new intermediate goals and actions.

Importantly, there is no decided numbers of pieces that should constitute the whole collection. For instance, for the winter collection sold in fairs in mid-february, Ellen and Ela start the collection in November, and go on until there is no time anymore. Sometimes they end up with 50 clothes, sometimes 70. The unknowability of outcomes is set amidst the always emergent and often absorbed experience of working with nascent, incipient occurrence. Atmosphere, materials and designs can go this way or that, demanding attuned adjustment to differences and the possibilities in accident, as things are brought in the studio.

This always emerging experience is a way to feel the presence of the material rather than the presence of the economic frame. It is also a way to avoid the blank page. In all things, the idea of designing from scratch favours anguish, laziness, pride or despair. Having to start from scratch is avoided; and the way to do this is to continue, to resume. The past period is of great importance in the present period. This extract reveals how continuity matters (from diary): *I am asking Ellen if she finds a common theme for her collection. -"No", she says. It seems clear. -"but the buyers, at fairs, don't they ask of you to explain ?" I ask, almost embarrassed. -"yeah, they do..it happens...but I answer that there is no theme, it is the continuity of my work".*

Ellen then explained how she understands her collections as a whole, compiled from one year to the other. Time is neutralized. Seasonality effects are not considered as a mean to produce novelty, but rather as to further a vision - what Ellen has to say as a designer, her message season after season. And for the closing of the line, there is just one possible way: the interruption with a closing date -we will come back to that.

Designing is thus continuously unfolding in the moment, while examining the multiplicity of possibilities, as they appear more or less relevant at that moment. Thinking happens through gesture, hands and eyes playing a key role, creating the break with the continuity of reason. Such an everyday practical coping is a way to achieve some form of daily intelligibility, and not through having ideas and mental images -that could be conditioned by economic-oriented answers, integrated by their intellects.

Economic and creative rationales play together in the relationship between the mind and the hands. By no means the everyday creative practices are to be understood as determined by purposes and rules, so that sensual perceptions appear only as minor and as secondary cognitive



processing. It is the exact opposite that happens. Sensual perceptions rule. Ela once told me "the know-how is essential here. Not the fashion. Fashion is a pejorative word for us".

The following extract (from diary) traces that moment: *I spend the morning with Ela, as Ellen arrives at 11.30. We chat for two hours, Ela ironing and I checking for extra-threads on clothes. Ela talks about her peers, from school. She says that they are obsessed with visual identity, which is a mistake -to her. Ela likes manual work. Of course, she says, every day she wakes up and spends some time on Instagram or Pinterest during morning coffee. But although she knows a lot of her peers could do that all day, "What I like is to make. Shaping a world of ideas and inspiration does not do the job" (Ela).* Within the realm of personal experience, Ela is building her own profile and designer identity, among the complexities of social meanings.

The three months I was there Ela was indeed constantly training for new sewing techniques. She would do that on her own, during spare time, evening and weekends. Ellen also was curious about technical training, constantly. I remember that moment when they checked on YouTube how to sew a certain type of buttonholes, trying one technique after the other. The whole is constantly becoming coherent through trials on the fabric, and not through economic evaluation. The action is purposiveness -a collection has to be delivered-, but not purposefulness - no deliberate intentionality-; they do not know where they are going.

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Let's go back to Certeau's work for one second. Certeau makes the difference between an "acte de pensée" (thinking act) and an "acte de raison" (rational act). To think is not to reason. Thinking allows connections to form, without going through rationality -that would evaluate potential risk or success. In that sense, it seems that with designing we are facing a thinking act rather than a rational act. Thinking (acte de pensée) is the experience of being amid the things of life in their enigmatic and untouchable nearness, a placing and sustaining in the flow of events and things.

In that context, the mind and the hands are not separate, neither does the one follow the other, nor does the one constitute an application of the other. The genesis of the piece happens in parallel with the thinking, and it very much seems that the capacity to represent it unfolds within the fabric and the hands rather than in the intellect and its rationality filter. Bottom line is the

intelligence of the hand. Designing is organic and happens thanks to acquired automaticity, of hands together with eyes.

By getting into the swing of things, all fits into place automatically with a certain amount of unconsciousness. Ideas circulate between Ela and Ellen only through fabrics -and the shape(s) they give to those fabrics-, without necessarily pass through consciousness. Exchanging through the senses requires the mediation of a vocabulary and a language if it is to be expressed in abstract and decontextualized form. Showing, making seen, and comparing, this is how Ellen and Ela 'talk'. By so doing, they ground the sense and the possibility of an inter-subjective understanding on materiality criteria -rather than economic criteria.

I argue that the fabric gives reality to the exchange between designers by allowing it to be enacted and experienced simultaneously by them. Designing happens like a transformative insinuation, step-by-step, act by act -on the fabric. It returns again and again as an active force, with the competency of bridging one's empirical sensitivity and imagination "*beyond the bounds of logical, linear habits of thought*" (Chia, 2014: 685).

Such a sensible knowledge underpins the aesthetic judgment that expresses a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Constraints are known, but never considered a priori. The eye and the hands traffic in feelings rather than in thoughts. In that context, perception happens through the senses, and the judgment, production and reproduction happen through them as well, as illustrated in the following (from diary): *I arrive at 9am. Ellen and Ela have already been here for a moment, when I come in they are interacting and exchanging about a black dress. Ela wears the dress and Ellen rotates around it, touches, retouches, discusses, suggests. Both of them then spend most part of morning sewing and adjusting it. I can feel in the air how much passion and devotion is given to those trials. Maybe it is in the way they touch the clothes, or how they get excited once they find the right 'twist'*. This series of moves are mindfully organized without being the product of a strategic intent.

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Timelessness in intervention seems crucial. As if designing would express itself in timelessness pockets, on the back of time -and its strict calendar for collections. In the background, obligations stand still. Ellen and Ela have four months, from September to January with the winter collection, and from April to August for the summer collection, to complete a line and be



ready to sell it to fairs. But those temporal constraints are not apparent when they create. Of course Ellen and Ela have the deadlines in mind: a few dates are marked in red, and crucial. But between those dates, timelessness prevails. This is reminding Bergson (1911) who argued that one experiences 'real time' as duration, apprehended by intuition. *Chronos*, the mechanistic clock-ticking measurement, is to him an analytical construct.

Ellen and Ela are always underway without any real sense of starting or end points. They are creating meanings as they go. In experiencing being underway, they are also changing themselves, learning, accepting irreversibly that in their expressive activity things are brought into life in ways that are not entirely within their grasp, nor which faithfully echoes their purposes. As such, the out-of-time temporality of designing coexists with the linear and constraining temporality of logistics and of pragmatic concerns.

And it is precisely through those timelessness pockets, where there is no rule regarding the right amount of time to spend on a piece, that they manage some latitude to create. They break from the economic constraints through another vision of space and time. Designing a garment is an end in itself, self-referential, and oriented to its own realization at this precise moment in time. The question they ask themselves is: "Will I be able to do this?".

In these pockets, the temporalities of creativity are expressed as a fusion of time. The future is rearranged by arranging the garment in the now, which at the same time involves perpetuating or making present a particular past -an elusive but very present 'Ellen Estali aesthetic'. I heard them several times refer to "*that shirt of this summer collection two years ago*", or "*that coat from last winter collection*", "*that fabric we wanted to put on the skirts that summer when it was really rainy*" etc.

Materiality enables an archival record by which Ellen can trace her own aesthetic. Past and future are contextualised within present contingencies. As a result, an aesthetic consistency is recognizable throughout collections, from one season to the other, but continuously re-negotiated and re-combined.

Namely, the past of Ellen Estali's previous collections does not have to continue in the exact shapes and colours and every aspect of each garment. Instead, what comes out is evidence of the continuation of the past occurring in each situated instance of practical aesthetic judgment: fix

the dress like this, not that; direct the pocket like this, not that; do we include flowers or not...without the reproduction of a single specific past.

Those hands not only allow inspiration, being the bridge between the fabric and the designer, but also carry the creative signature all along the different lines. The creative signature lies within those hands, and the material: a way of manipulating, a way of sewing, a way of adjusting.

So the story of becoming of any garment happens via a perpetuation conjointly with a redefinition of taste or aesthetic judgments. In this continuity of creation, the desire (to design) locates the body in its temporal dimension. The body (hands and gestures) remembers the lived and permanently updates. In the end, designing is about being simultaneously in the instantaneousness of the calendar urgency and in the continuation of the creative signature, together with the clothing that lasts.

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Designing with the hands is also a way to create "in volume" -as in Ellen's words- rather than on a piece of paper. The creative focus on designing is materialized, that is it assumes a tangible - sometimes temporary, at other times permanent- shape. A space is built around the clothing-in-the-making to satisfy the wish for the aesthetically satisfying. Designing happens to be the result of this work on volume: *I ask Ela why they don't draw in the studio. She says she'd rather create in volume than through drawing.. "I don't know how to explain...but when I have a design in mind I cannot really draw it, it is easier to build it directly in volume with my hands"* (from diary).

From this dwelling world-view -as in Heidegger's words<sup>32</sup>-, the practical ability to successfully design does not presuppose detached planning, distancing, linguistic justification or cognitive representation. Ellen does not and need not have a bird's-eye' view of the room to successfully cope with her imbroglio. When she zooms in on a piece, she's entirely devoted to it while working on it. Space is stratified: sometimes she zooms in, sometimes she pauses and assesses the whole line filling up the space of the studio. But most of the time, detached seeing and contemplation give way to a locally sensitive, immersed, guileful and opportunistic form of designing.

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32 cf "Dwell" Heidegger/Building, Dwelling, Thinking.

Such a way of designing calls upon a heightened sensibility, alertness and resourcefulness, on a day-to-day basis. Everyday coping actions underpin organizational accomplishments. I insist on the day-to-day basis as it stroke me several times how things were not organized in terms of business interests or productivity-oriented processes. On the sewing supplies for instance, it happened many times that I had to rush outside to buy new needles as we were running short of them.

There was not that much anticipation or organisation in the studio. For instance, I went to buy new lights (for the sewing machine) when the one we had broke; I went to buy threads of blue, beige, white...at different moments, when the desire for a certain colour popped up. Similarly, manufacturers called us a lot of times asking for more labels, as Ellen did not provide enough - but was sure she had. How many times did we run to the manufacturers as something was missing (patronages, technical sheets,...). So much happened on a day-to-day basis.

Ellen and Ela are being active within such systemic environment, mapping rather than conforming to maps. To build their own map, they rely on their surroundings. Certeau talks of this active engagement as bricolage. Bricoleurs are people for whom life is not something that can be forced into their own system demands, or those of any other system, but which instead is an experience of coming across the demands made by multiple, inter-penetrating systems and sub-systems. Ellen and Ela learn things by doing and improvise all along the way. As bricoleurs, they proceed with hands, experience, materials, personal networks or whatever happens to be available around them to solve a (for sure momentary) problem.

Several times, I was struck by their resourcefulness. I remember that moment when we received a series of dresses with a similar defect on each of them: *I check the dresses that just arrived from the manufacture. As usual, I find some manufacturing defects, like extra threads, but also, and more annoying, a white mark situated near the neck on the whole series. The fabric is black and it is impossible to not see it. Fair enough. Ellen grabs a black marker pen and starts colouring the mark on each dress. Unnoticed. The result is impeccable.* (from diary).

The efficacy of such everyday coping actions is all the greater the more discreet and unnoticed it is. What is certain is that structures and systems alone do not explain designing. While acknowledging the existence of such indirect forms of everyday coping, we may also refer to

*Metis*, the Goddess of prudence, cunning and craftiness, as another reading of this spontaneous indirect action.

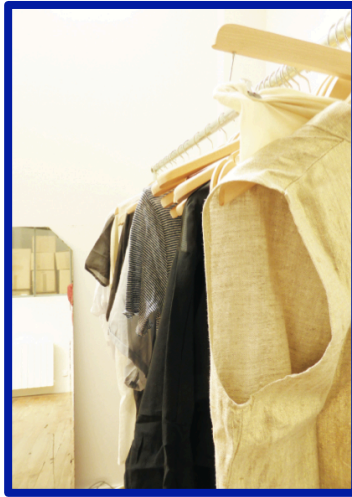
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In what follows, we will develop how such a living practice is driven by three main 'ingredients': first the fabric and its immanent laws, second the experimentations surrounding this fabric (and other various elements), and finally the flow of interactions between individuals. Those three ingredients give us access to the very innards of creative work, while also revealing the collective aspect of such creative matter, unfolding in between human and non-human forces. As we will see, those forces hold the key to understand how designers are able to create within rationalization logics, carrying them in a peculiar playground where economic preoccupations do not have the priority anymore.

#### *Fabric-centered*

In that setting, the fabric is of great importance, especially with know-hows as antidotes to standardization and economization. What defines designing in the studio is not simply the skilled use of tools; but Ellen and Ela's heedful regard for the often disorienting and surprising experience of being underway amongst the fabrics, without requiring that those same fabrics conform entirely to their own designs. They are aware of the intrinsic richness of materials and of the relations and feelings they have with these materials.

The clothes of Ellen E. are perennial and free of trends. Novelty is to be found in the continuity of a recognizable style: the handfeel of fabrics highlighting natural fibers such as silk, cotton and wool. Motifs and ornaments are absent beyond the grain of the fabric itself, which makes its presence felt.



I insist on fabrics as I discovered they are at the heart of everything in the studio. When the fabrics come in, brought by the post-office from Italy, Ellen and Ela stop everything they do and rush to open the roller. A moment then happens, that can last around 20 minutes, of commenting the fabric, going outside the studio to check it under day-light, cutting a piece to test its response to the cut: *"I am surprised by the touch", "it is more rough than I thought", "the colour is brilliant"...*

They do not simply move toward or away from a certain kind of fabric out of entirely instrumental concern, but are aware of the fabric being something that ought to be treated in a certain way. The wool is transformed from being simply a material asset or a thing-in-relation to human design, part of a standing reserve for their own immediate ends; into a thing with possibilities that demand consideration, curiosity, sensitivity.

It appeared very much as a visceral relationship with the material that could not be expressed with language but was represented through different situations. It was frequent to see them go outside to get sunlight to really appreciate the true colour of the fabric. In the brevity of this intense light, a different garment appears. Iridescent fabrics, brilliant sequins, pearly leathers, coppered organzas. The light is deflected, the colours burnished, and in the end their eyes enraptured by the beauty of an instant. Tactility and touch are a vital part of the creative process.

On that topic also, I once asked Ela how they find the will to start a new collection, knowing that at the point in time when they have to start the next one (eg summer 17), they also have to send the previous collection to buyers (summer 16), and launch the just-finished collection (winter 16/17) with the manufacturers...which means 3 collections at a time. She replied instantly: *"We receive the new fabrics...(..) and it is through those that we want to start again as soon as possible"*. Fabrics bring the renewal, they have the power to create images that involuntarily or voluntarily act upon her thinking. These images are virtualities in the sense that they are real but not actual, they add to an investment in the wanted future (Hjorth, 2013).

There is a real attachment to fabric. I noticed several times the passionate nature of material experimentation, as this episode reflects: *Ellen and Ela take the time to make some research around the fabric. Today they work on the patchwork sweater, and put it in the washing machine to observe the washing effect on the fabric* (from diary). Or this other moment: *We receive a sample of fabric from Italy, around 5 metres for a prototype. Ellen and Ela look so happy, "it's like a christmas present, discovering the fabric"*(Ela). They

*imagine the piece they are going to design with it. I can feel their enthusiasm* (from diary). In those moments, the work I observed is definitely more linked to playfulness, tentativeness and emotionality or affect than to rationalization -business interests and productivity-oriented processes.

It is almost an alchemy, they stand there, they try things out in their playground, with fabric. The suppleness and lightness of jersey, a two-way stretch knit, offers a relaxation of attitude. The cut-and-sewn technique allows for rolled edge, rolls of material. The pleats and drapes play with light and shadow. It is through a constant openness to material that they concentrate on something other than economic priorities. Designing through the senses has its own momentum: sensuality for the sake of sensuality, perception for the sake of perception.

This almost magical equilibrium is not easy to describe through standardized rules, it springs from their passion for their work and their search for interesting results through the manipulation of fabric. The location of passion is central to designing. It is their desire to create that drives them into one direction.

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Obviously an enormous amount of hard work is required, together with constant efforts to make material objects appear elegant, and establish their differences from the competition. But spending three months there I remember watching the hanging rail fill up, slowly, progressively, without being able to explain and separate the linear steps that led to this filled-up rail, with more than 50 clothes at the end of the collection. In that lies the magic.

The alluring and magical comes out of the packaged collection -ready for the fair, while a few moments ago the same clothing were on a corner of the studio, unfinished, in a big, messy place. Such a world of difference between the two. The standard of how polished the clothing now look sharply contrasts with the mess within which every garment emerges in-action.





Another example of the passion with material and the viscosity of relation is described here: *The afternoon passes calmly, Ellen and Ela move forward on the collection. I hear, for the nth time, that they talk about the fabric. Ela calls for Ellen "come! come! Look how this cotton is really amazing to sew". Ellen tries and approves with excitement. And now starts a new discussion on fabric to shape, as modelling clay* (from diary). With that story one understands the relationship with the fabric that can only be described through sensory perceptions: sniffing, touching, and looking are the appropriate verbs to convey this physical and bodily relationship.



Importantly, sensoriality and the visceral relationship with materials are identified as the real sources of inspiration. Not only does the fabric arouse corporeal and sensorial reactions but it is so indissolubly embedded in the formative process that it is at once a stimulus and the matter to be shaped.



Ellen, like Ela, associates the material (e.g.: silk) with a given accomplished form (*"a shirt like this, with a neck like that"*), discursively representing how sensible knowledge and matter are entangled within the designing process. The fabric has a physical presence that transport them somewhere, call them back to order. In the center of the studio lies a moodboard, Ellen pins several things on it like pictures of clothes or pictures of people, and a lot of fabric pieces put right next to each other.

This attachment to artefacts, literally "arts de faire"<sup>33</sup> is of great signification. It seems that there is no idea without fabric. Material is in itself the condition for the idea. In the studio, the idea is dedicated to a domain, the garment. In that sense, it is a potential, a possibility already committed to one expression mode and inseparable from it. It will never be "I have this general idea", the fabric is instantaneously involved: "and what if we do this, with that". It is never an idea 'in itself'. It is an idea into something. Things do not only show their obstinate settlement of their own places and their contours to the designers' prospecting look and manipulating hands. They project halos over themselves and cast shadows on other things.

In those moments, Ellen and Ela do not spend that much time in their own intellectual device—that never forgets the economic right answers and business interests. It is rather the colours, the textures, the resonance and the scents of the material that condense into things and induce their postures. As much as they, as agents, have integrated the economic framework, the material, neither opaque nor inert, weighs on them: it surprises, oppresses, delights and directs them. The evocative-sensorial characteristics of fabric actively addresses them, suggesting both opportunities for action and constraints upon it.

Consequently, by no means the outside world consists of sensuous objects whose value lies in how they serve Ellen's productive and economic purpose. The flow of events and things are both

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<sup>33</sup> Artefact: *ars*, *artis* ("art") & past participle of *facere* ("faire")

with them and yet constantly turning away, withdrawing, moving on. It is through the force they release that Ellen and Ela withdraw a strength and direction to create. They act as if in commitment with materials and their surroundings. Designing is forever in ferment.

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So fabric is this thing having its own terms of reliability, its own summon, to which Ellen and Ela make fitting responses. Designing in their case seems to draw on a corporeal and pre-reflexive dimension expressly associated with pleasure. In this excerpt in particular, pleasure is understood as the desire to realize only pieces that are liked, and which are therefore not produced in series: *At one point, Ellen takes out her old samples of experiment on the fabric to show them to Ela. I come closer. Ellen shows us the squares of fabric: one composed of pasted threads, another one with striae, another one with folds...all sorts of experiments with sticky tape and thermal paper. It's really interesting. She did most of them when she started, "it was really entertaining for me, and helped me achieve a breakthrough in the market" Ellen says.* (from diary). In this extract, Ellen emphasizes seeking opportunities for artistic expression, creativity, truthfulness and legitimacy. By so doing, she proclaims working outside the mainstream and its questionable guidance.

Ellen has always been researching this material resource with a traditional approach to production, and her early experiments in the creation of new materials earned her distinction in 1997 by l'ANDAM (National Association for the Development of Fashion Arts). Among the noted processes involved in her approach: the hot-application layering of plastic bands and the felting of wool threads. It is this ANDAM fashion award that helped her launch her own brand with a 100,000€ grant.

Once one-off experimental pieces, these projects have since given way to equally experimental limited editions. The fabrics, selected with care, are washed and dyed. Once stressed and tamed, the material sometimes reveals its surprises. As previously seen, Ellen stays true to the feeling of clothes and cares about grain, fibers, finishing details, cuttings and nitty-gritty. From here volumes are shaped and forms are modelled on both mannequins and live bodies.

Notably, every designer is different in his or her way of presenting ideas and producing dresses. Some draw, others stitch, while Ellen and Ela mime and construct dresses in space, working

directly on live models. They work without drawings or sketches, and keep questioning the structure, proportions and matters.

This leads to an appearance of chaos around the model, a particular playground in the process of which fabrics, structures and accessories are assembled, tried, displaced, modified, thrown away and taken back constantly. This conveys the idea that a garment is not merely the fabric itself: it is a particular material expression according to a certain vision, in a given space and time.

This extract illustrates how any object might actually be interesting to their eyes: *They have been working on the pink coat since early morning, the belt has now disappeared and the coloured flounce is around the neck. I can see that they hesitate, the coat is not quite like they imagined it. And then, at one point, they start looking at my own coat, hanging there, next to the front door. They examine it, use it to see how much separation would suit the new coat between the buttons. They deconstruct the coat, grasping an idea here and there* (from diary). Here again we notice the peculiar time and space pockets, and how any element might enter the stage and end up being involved in the creative process.

The surrounding entities (fabric, tools, washing machine...), inasmuch as they are found in the environment they perceive and inhabits and inasmuch as they are available for their use and enjoyment, direct their perception, action, and sensibility. This seems especially interesting in creative industries and fashion, where so much of the prestige and reputation of the designing activity is related to the inspiration world and abstract themes or ideas.

Importantly, Ellen and Ela encounter things such as wool, silk, the equipment demands of furniture without reducing these encounters to an entirely instrumental logic of pragmatic confinement. Their identity is one of constant disclosure within this relational condition which they animate, but over which they have no distinct perspective or control; fabrics definitely have a say.

Ellen and Ela are aware of how this equipment relationship demands of things that they are disclosed in certain ways, that the silk is disclosed in forms conforming to the physiological framing of human anatomy or the symbolic framing of an economic good. They keep that in mind but, in the space of a short moment, that of the playground, they move away from it by listening to the material.

So awareness of things is governed not simply by their being tools Ellen and Ela are able to use, but also things present in themselves, outside of their pragmatic use of them. They know the latency, or potential of things being otherwise outside of the confines of human expression. In that sense, they are aware of the limits of the demands that they, as designers, can make upon the fabric. They accept the authority of the fabric, and their role on its side.

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Sometimes the fabric resists: *Ellen is not quite satisfied with the colour of the fabric they received. She decides to dye it, in a darker colour. But first she designs the dresses. Indeed, it is easier to dye the clothes than the whole roll of fabric (...)* Anyway, after having designed the dresses, she puts them in the washing machine -where the dye is done. After a few hours, she gets the dresses out of the washing machine. Dresses are now black. Well, I see them black but Ellen is not satisfied, she says the colour draws near greenish. The fabric did not fully appreciate the dye. Ellen will try again, differently (from diary).

Fabrics somehow 'behave' in one way or the other, following various handling, possibilities and openings, checks and balances. They have the capacity to freeze or kill a newly designed piece. In that sense, fabrics are performative resources. All along the designing of a new collection, they might perform and feel different. Ellen or Ella's choice of a particular fabric, combined with specific techniques -of cutting, sewing, moulding-, drives the process of designing. It determines how a garment will 'behave' on a stockman and after on a body. To feel is to contract, and the sensation contracts and preserves intuitive vibrations.

The designing process may in that sense be understood as a very relational phenomenon. Fabrics exist in relation with actors (designers), as a manifestation of how they use it at one point in time and who they are as users and makers at that moment. And once the new fabric arrives, conjointly with the 'old' garments from then on embracing another identity as purchased pieces, so will Ellen and Ela immediately move on with their search for what's to be continued.

To conclude, as designers they evolve with the flow of designing that is the inherent nature of their work. The relation and affect they develop towards material unfolds as a way to spread the economic preoccupation. Frayed edges, asymmetries of the cuts, dryness of the fabrics, memory of the materials...such a multiplicity brings them back to their emotional bond with designing. At the end of the day, the way they touch their makings speaks for itself, and demonstrate how each

time an affective relationship develops with those makings, alongside the creative unfolding of a new collection.

### *Experimenting*

Following on from the notion of living practice among fabrics, the notion of experimentation seems also very useful to better understand the inside life of the studio. Among the back and forth moves of Ellen and Ela, around the material coming alive in volume, I discovered a lot of experimentation and investigation. By that I mean that designing always implied possibilities to play and to move, constantly shifting between the spaces of the possible opened by body and gestures. Experimentation in this case is understood as the formalization of a dress, a shirt or a jacket through the systematization of accumulated corporeal experience with different fabrics, and other various elements materialized in samples.

Ellen and Elsa not only talk about the different designs worth considering, but also try, explore, examine: with a piece of this fabric, with a material from this past collection, with a new couture they heard about, gathers and ruffling held only by a thread. There is definitely a time of uncertainty to make use of. The fragments of lace give way to new white fragments. In such a context, Ellen and Ela belong to a 'gathering' of things in which each thing (the tools, the fabric, the designers, and so on) are inextricably woven, and yet distinct.

Here again, belonging to this gathering of things is a way to try out another way of doing things than the economic one. The environment is not merely perceived but also fully enacted. As designers, Ellen and Ela build, arrange, re-arrange, react to their environment. Perception there is selective, and built around preferences. Importantly, in such a context re-arrangements are allowed, provocative in a way of a contemporary creative economy obsessed with that fetish of novelty only for the sake of novelty.



Escaping the injunction, it is through experimentation that Ellen and Ela make sense of the task at hand. The idea of experimentation as play is crucial. It is not a matter of sudden and brilliant inspiration, but rather of following a series of suggestions that arise in the course of the formative activity itself, and prompt the mixing of colours. It is about letting oneself be led by taste in a ludic dimension where emotions, sensible knowledge and aesthetic judgment totally lead the process, putting aside the economic understanding for a moment.

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Ellen and Ela would fit outfits in a form of bricolage directly onto each others bodies. The design is being explored. And they could spend one day on a trial to finally change their mind two days later. Breakdowns like this show how much creation of garments is never a simple succession of ideas, orders and technical application; but a constant process of interactions and relational collaboration, unfolding around central artefacts that are the clothes-in-the-making.

Associations arise and relationships get tied up in unexpected directions, when nothing foreshadowed the sequence. Experimentation is made into a situation, an event, and passion can then do its work. Moments of breakdowns are essential as they allow reflexive understanding as well as energy to change plans.

In the end, materials stabilize meanings by encoding them into durable form that can be shared and preserved. They leave a trail of what meanings are encoded by whom. This would be the

golden rule of designing: "to see whether an idea works, one has to realize it" (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014, p. 141, talking about crafts). Experimenting may be seen as a creative combination and re-combination of modes of making in the light of an anticipated and emergent form.

In the designing activity, the needle for example does not exist as an object with given properties. It is as much part of Ellen's world as the arm with which she wields it. The needle belongs to the environment and can be unthinkingly used by her as a designer. She does not need to 'think a needle' in order to sew a sleeve. Her capacity to act depends on her familiarity with the act of sewing, designing.

Merleau-Ponty makes the distinction between corporality (body as in body's action) and corporeity (body as in spirit's action). Definitely what we are talking about here is corporality. Body has its own momentum. The line that slowly appears for the clothing follows the dimensions of the designers corporeal existence.

So Ellen and Ela use their hands, they try on each other, they imagine the piece in real life ("*and worn like this ? or like that ?*"). They find balance in the unsteadiness of the gait of one's body in movement. The garment is definitively a three-dimensional object. It can be taken in by viewing it from the front, the back or the side. The label indicates the right way round.

But sometimes there is no right way round. They have to move all the way round. Experimenting with materials then becomes an activity closely bound up with learning and forming.

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The idea itself of experimentation is intrinsically tied to the *discovery* of materials, techniques and tools, and all this through gestures.

With this extract we notice the indissolubility of experimentation and learning: *A certain number of pieces from the winter collection are made following a patchwork style. Ellen and Ela recycle pieces of fabrics they like (from previous collections but also from current fabric fairs) and they try. Ela holds the patronage of the patchwork shirt in front of her, they arrange the pieces in different orders and modalities, they make trials, discuss, try again, go back to their first solution, touch the fabric, try the shirt on. By working on it, they realize that certain fabrics are easier to sew together than others, the shirt then takes another direction* (from diary). Ellen



and Ela design because they can see, touch and feel; meaning they are able to seize a certain relationship of shapes, of pattern, a given outline of space.

A ludic dimension is at the core of such situations: playing with materiality, experimenting it on a body. Inventing technical solutions as well: I remember how much time they spent to figure out the perfect fit of patronages on fabric rolls, to avoid as much as possible throwing away left-overs of fabric, and order rolls a certain size. Rolls are sold by metres so they would try to fit the patronages up to a round number.

But sometimes they would have to give up on the perfect economy of means. Ellen and Ela gladly confess their failures, as in such imperfection lays possibility. Imperfection is most of the time not viewed in negative terms. Messiness is openly confronted, vagueness and ambiguity constantly celebrated as positive and fecund conditions for communicating the richness of reality in the studio. Many times 'accidents' have happened and proved to become constructive events after a while.

So it seems as if designing opens and expands in cultivation without distinct or pre-existing boundaries. It is the world of materials, forms and ends opening up within the experience of experiment itself, through a continuous moving and making of forms. From a single pattern it appears that tons of possibilities exist, and that experimenting is part of the process. Most of the time, a different route than intended in the short-term is taken.

Avoid folding the fabric back on itself, leave rough edges exposed, reveal the tearing. Unweave by hand, thread by thread, to expose the solid selvage of the fabric. There is no guarantee that a certain inspiration will prove appropriate when realized. It is like taking a gamble and being willing to make repeated attempts until idea and material reciprocally take form.

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In that again, fabrics play an undeniable role. Designing develops in action, through the *material* realization of the object. The designing of a garment, meaning the treatment of the material from which it emerges, is an open process. It progresses on a track the designer in question never took before. In those moments Ellen seems free from constraints. She engages herself in the experimentation. Finding herself implicated in materials, her inventiveness is not so much working upon as within them. It seems that her mind is full of clothes she did not yet make, but may -you never know which direction things will take.



So control over materials is never fully realized. Ellen experiences at the same time her imagination on the material, and the experience of the material on her imagination. It seems that the material's effects are not in her command. Possibility is given to her, at any moment, to orient her designing in one direction or the other. The productive imagination is imperatively constrained to produce an image that will be operative in a practical field. She may deviate; she may, with hindsight, realize "*It does not work, it does not come to what I imagined, it does not have the style it should, it is trivial, coarse, disjointed, it does not form a whole of integrated tensions*".

Then the imagining dynamic and the knowledge dynamic are not the only producers of a design. A personal authority also intervenes, making the final move, taking the decision, the artistic conscience of the designer, a voice that says "*it should be like that, like this it stands out, it is well, it feels like the way it should be, and not any other way*". Within the process of designing, the knowledge necessary for its production is discovered when the garment emerges from the process.

While getting absorbed in the material, Ellen and Ela seem able to quickly determine if the direction in which the spontaneous flow of their personal imagination accounts for the immanent laws of the material. Connecting 'knowing' with 'doing' (Gherardi, 2000), those kinds of practices reveal the fabrication that happens.

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Interestingly, the energy deployed around dresses is as much about creating outfits as it is about building a collection and presenting oneself. Designing is attempting to produce the image that renders what Ellen and Ela have in mind, and in body...and the outcome of designing is seeing those formed. In that respect, bodies are understood as open to being affected and affecting others, rather than closed and fixed. Designing dictates its corporeal condition. In those moments of corporality (Merleau-Ponty, 1948), designing is neither a knowledge, nor a learning or a representation, but a truly lived and proven experience.

While designing, their bodies are not external to them, but a constitutive dimension of their very essence. Similarly the context is not external to them, but a constitutive dimension of the very essence of their designing. Obviously, in such a context the performative aspect characterizes every 'doing', even when it consists in thinking or acting. Designing moves forwards and

backwards but has its momentum in the judgment of 'a job done the right way'. The judgment of what constitutes a proper realization is internal to the designing process.

This attention creates once again a temporality of its own, which is not oriented toward the fair, but rather toward the open-ended emergence of a dress, a pair of pants, a shirt...that does not exist until a feeling of satisfaction is reached. This is a question of personal and group satisfaction. The success of the designing process is again inextricably bound up with the emotional aspects of the work.

Ela's assertion that retouching is a 'gut thing', an emotion, and that it must be felt, highlights the visceral relationship with the matter; the work of giving form to an object and its successful outcome. The crucial point here is not whether perceptions of the garment-in-the-making are beautiful or ugly, harmonious or dissonant with the market expectations, but rather that these perceptions (and adjoining decisions) cannot be reduced to economic information processing.

In this playground, Ellen and Ela do not subordinate themselves to purposive-economic action, but gather momentum of their own and realize themselves rather independently. Such a process is closely linked to what comes out of the fabric and the surroundings. So much affection is put into designing a new collection. Finding the right creative solution is always a real delight for them, as the following example shows.

So Ela had a project that was important to her, a pants that she imagined with a bias cut: *I can see that Ela is happy, "this pair of pants is going to be beautiful, you'll see!". She seems really satisfied, it's almost contagious. She forgot a stitch on the pocket so she has to start all over again but she cannot wait "Wow, I am pissed I have to detach it and sew it again, I can't wait for it to be over, it's going to be great". She explains to me how she spent her past evening talking about the pants to her friends at the bar. The excitement is very present, as she gets close to finishing her piece* (from diary).

Finally, Ellen's and Ela restless experimentation is characterized by a glad openness to doubt, uncertainty, possibility, and, in the end, the impossibility of completeness. So does their persistence with the direct experience of making, as a form of craft. Ellen told me several times that the only reason that made her fix things is the deadline. Nothing is definitive, except her research. There is always something to do, to improve. And Ellen and Ela would keep on designing until that deadline, not trying to produce as much as possible, or to complete some pre-

determined number of pieces; but genuinely following their desires and instinctive sense of possibility along the fabric.

### *A collective composition*

In that context, what came out is also how designing unfolds as a very collective process. Momentary interactions are an essential part of the in-becoming design. Such interactions enable Ellen and Ela to 'mock up' or 'prototype' a new movement in a matter of seconds, and thereby provide instant evidence to inform an emerging conversation.

Indeed, the collective creativity results as much from the day-to-day interactions between both of them (micro-creativity) as from the outcome of the initial plan in mind of Ellen (macro-creativity-as in that case Ellen understood as the head of the house). Ellen does not design any study project in advance, ahead of time. The tactical consists in allowing, and even encouraging, a two-way flow of information, between macroscopic conceptions and in-detail studies. It is this small group combined and manipulated working ideas and solution that arrives at an aggregate product or an emerging creative composition.

Besides, to design requires being able to create and to criticize at the same time. Those two conflicting positions have to be separated: first freely create, design without criticism, and then criticize and revise. It seems that by pushing back criticism one can create and by pushing back creation one can criticize. Doubt replaces certainty and vice versa. In that sense, a designer facing someone able to assume one of those positions can go further. Ellen is able to make her designs evolve by playing this ping-pong game with Ela. The flux and movement being conveyed is not physical motion, but a disclosure of communication and exchange.

In that perspective, the 'collective' is also to be understood as a place of experimentation. It is an open-ended curiosity, and much more is going on in the studio than the sole line. Discussions act as triggers to designing. What is exciting about it is not what is produced, but the collaborative, open-ended manner in which any design production takes place. The following extract traces this moment when Ellen and Ela are dialoguing together about some shirt-in-the-making (from diary):

*-What about a crimped side...that would be lighter....*

*-But let's imagine, in grey...*

*Ellen goes to the next room, and comes back*

*-What about some satin ?*

*-muslin, instead ?*

*Ellen leaves again, looking through the fabrics*

*-And this silk ? For a change...*

*They try on the stockman*

*-well, seeing it on, it's not that bad....*

*-oh, and Naomi's fabric ? we still have a lot of it!*

*-no. too tight.*

I could go on and on transcribing so many of those dialogues in a faithful manner. But I also acknowledge the inanity of it. Even if I'd remembered or written every single part of their conversations, I would not be able to account for this special atmosphere that gives the statements their bite, the exclamations of surprise, the passionate emphasis that constitute the nerve of the discussion. Relational connections definitely change and influence them as they move and sense in the world.

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So let's imagine a world of possibility, constantly revolving around the designer and her assistant. What actually occurs is always absorbed by what potentially could occur but which remains unarticulated:

*'Granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern.... So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. Formlessness is also credited with powers, some dangerous, some good' (Mary Douglas, 1966: 27)*

In that sense, it does not matter to validate, formalize or consolidate a common grammar, and in that so avoid the creative routines. Ellen is obviously at the centre of the designing process, but she heavily relies on Ela to exchange ideas. In the flow of disordered experiences, we understand Ellen, Ela, and their bodies, as defined relationally. Not as subjects of a body they control, but as

transitions between movement and rest, as capacities or powers to be affected and affect.

Watching them work together gives an impression of deep tacit understanding, as Ela seems to often materialize ideas before Ellen is even able to express them. No doubt here that gesture is a possibility of communication, a signifying intention. We might even say that the gestural intention stays opaque to the person until the other person picks up on it. Ela is part of the on-going flow of creation around each garment. All along the designing process, she actively contributes to the constant emergence of Ellen's aesthetic and creation.

This desire for connecting with the other is even here before subjectivity and subjects -that those two persons represent. It is a desire to become, to be more, to create together, that precedes the explicit (Deleuze, 1972). In that respect, desire as a force is quite strong. Through gestures and hands they are able to unite this nondescript thing varying with the different perspectives. For example, division of labour is not always very clear. At times Ellen would start a piece and Ela would pass by, suggest something and finish it.





Interactions and debates are rooted in one essential artefact: the disseminated parts of the clothes-in-the-making. Every step is made with equal blindness to the future, constantly nourishing the forming of the new (or not that new) clothing. This raises the possibility that understanding creative group work is less about understanding the overall creative climate or coarse stage models, but more about understanding the interaction patterns that enable creative members to build on one another's ideas and, ultimately, integrate them into a synthetic solution that has a sense of coherence. Designing then depends on the relational reality of the context in which it is located.

Beyond the mechanical gesture, hands remain a fundamental element. At times, silence is king, passing the scene onto the sacred triangle: a gesture, a position, a posture that suggest and provide all the necessary information. This pre-reflexive knowing is a comprehension that takes place in situations of involvement in a practice (Gherardi, 2000), in this case in the practice of designing. Closely associated with the phenomenological tradition, this form of comprehension is also related to the concept of tacit knowledge: we know much more than we know we know (Polanyi, 1962). In that sense, Ellen and Ela achieve, but without striving to do so.

Constant flows of creativity in interaction unfold to temporally reach an agreement, via coordination through manipulation. A joint aesthetic judgment is negotiated and temporarily settled. Designing as such reveals itself in each instance of interactive judgment, in which what it was, what it is, and what it may be are conjointly negotiated and instantaneously settled.

Different to the dominant literature, designing is then understood as collective and inherently affective. For the force in this process is given by how receptivity is connected with spontaneity, that is, by how the power to be affected is connected to the power to affect (Hjorth, 2013). A designer, in that respect, is constantly in a state of empathy towards the other, feeling the emotions, the sentiments, the experiences the other person goes through. This attitude asks for a true understanding of the other, be it intellectual (through words) or manual (through adopted or shown gestures).

Sometimes there are frictions. Following Leonard-Barton I call them "creative abrasions". Leonard-Barton defines creative abrasions as sparks; igniting a conflict among individuals who work together but have different signature-skills, ideas and ways of seeing a particular task/problem (Leonard-Barton, 1995; Contu, 2014).

On the field I could often make an explicit distinction between the two creative signatures: *I look at the collection. There is a long skirt in an unbleached wool gauze that I find lovely. Ela says "Yeah, I love it too, actually I suggested to Ellen to translate it in a very soft pants, high waistline. -And ? (me) -And she said no..."(Ela). Ellen has the final word here. It is her creation. And even if she discusses it with Ela, for sure Ellen gets to decide* (from diary).

I found that sometimes Ela suffered from it. In some cases, she is the only brain and hands behind a new pattern or shape, but it is always the chief designer that gets credit for the collections, and the overall design expression. Subsequently, the *Ellen Estali* signature silences the many persons (including Ela) involved in designing and constructing the garment.

I remember one of those bad days when Ela said to me that there were moments when coming to the studio every day was difficult for her. She would rather have her own brand. "I need to design", she said once, as if she was not really designing but just following Ellen's designing desires. Obviously, Ela is herself a fashion designer prior to being an assistant designer. While being negotiated, aesthetic judgments can either converge or diverge. When becoming attuned to one another, they allow for a collective action to occur on shared aesthetic grounds.

Both designers' grounds are not specified in a unitary fashion, they necessarily contain suppleness and difference (Bazin & Korica, 2016). It is by paying attention to their situated accomplishments in the studio that one understands the attunement. In Ellen and Ela's case, attunement happens



most of the time, as their designing signatures are not very far from each other.

Those exchanges are essential: no garment will be displayed without Ellen's complete satisfaction, but satisfaction emerges in relation to Ela. It is never a solitary affair. As Becker (1998:50) nicely puts it, "*objects (...) are congealed social agreements, or rather, congealed moments in the history of people acting together*" (cited in Bazin & Korica, 2016).

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What is also opaque and difficult to express through direct language is the embedding of knowledge and action within shared social rules (designing rules, between independent designers). Evidently Ellen and Ela's actions are to a certain degree influenced by the conventions, rituals, norms and regimes of their particular cultural 'world' (Becker, 1982). This consideration is made explicit through the inherited knowledge with which they make sense of the task at hand.

Unlike the artist, whose work is pure performativity (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014), the designer works within practices of design that contemporize a network of other actors, a market and a reproducibility of works which take account of economic criteria and not only aesthetic ones. Negotiated within this texture of relations are the criteria used to evaluate practices and their objects.

Consequently, judgments are situated in a broader politics of contemporary design work. Ellen and Ela cannot break from this normative constraint coming from the market. They endeavour to be aware of 'what is going on', by being open to all influences that are in the air of fashion business at the present time.

Certain fashion networks matter hugely. Others don't. It is by talking to the other designers (or jewellers, or illustrators) in the street, or by spending some time during lunch on blogs and webzines (e.g.: [businessoffashion.com](http://businessoffashion.com)), that they develop a sort of business intelligence in their domain.

When taking a closer look, we realize how many imperatives, authorities, norms, expectations and discourses a designer has to take into account, relate to and sometimes overcome in order to perform within a given ensemble. Ellen and Ela constantly perform their role of independent designers, through their daily actions.



They constantly keep an eye on what is happening on the independent design scene. Ellen looks at blogs, and receives newsletters from independent designers collectives. Acceptance by this system places them within the fashion system of stratification (Kawamura, 2005), labelled as independent. Ellen and Ela are in contact and connections with other creative professionals from their circle of independent designing; like the studio *Beau Travail*, not far from their studio, a collective of artists and designers whose aim is to make various researches and exhibit them.

In Art Worlds, Howard Becker argued that the ranking of creative professionals (along with their work) has become an intrinsic part of the problem-solving process that underlies all forms of creative work (1982). Once Ellen and Ela, as agents, have integrated the important information, they can start playing, they can start tricking. They have the key information in mind. Many times through their reflexions Ellen and Ela voluntarily positioned themselves as independent designers, signifying their intention to keep belonging to the informal group of independent designers.

Actors in the independent system have shared values to achieve their specific goals. Each participant has individual goals that are met by participating in the system. In doing so, he or she plays a specific part in the overall system and gets benefit from that participation. Ellen and Ela have the right "connoisseur's knowledge" (Turner, 1988) possessed by professional communities of such a group. In doing so, they play a specific part in the overall system and get benefit from that participation.

Participating in a practice also means to learn the logic of that practice. This is what Bourdieu calls the "*sens pratique*", pre-reflexive and non-linear; transmitted through the senses by virtue of familiarity with similar situations, with a progressive refinement of sensibilities toward those situations.

In that sense Ellen and Ela's gestures are culturally tinted. As true "techniques du corps" (Mauss, 1935), their work belongs to a practical reason that is both collective (stands for independents) and individual (through a personal signature), transmitted over the years. As such, processes of designing are cultural phenomena, as in combining meaningful practices that construct certain ways for individuals to conceive of and conduct themselves in a given context (Kawamura, 2005).

Importantly, Ellen purposely doesn't follow the criteria used by mainstream designers. In her words those mainstream designers "don't create anymore. It's just about money". To her, many design labels are just concerned with producing unauthentic, mass fashion. She wonders whether this can be qualified as creation. *I am talking with Ellen and Ela about other designers, particularly those that we often see, all those brands of 'prêt-à-porter femme' that abound in Paris. Ela says that there is absolutely no research in those brands. They all copy each other, work on the same ideas, fabrics are all the same, propositions similar from one collection to the other, from one brand to the other. On the opposite, with Ellen there is a real research, around fabric for instance. Ela explains that Ellen is constantly looking for new fabrics, experimenting on those fabrics -washing, dying- to give birth to a new collection* (from diary).

Ellen keeps associating her brand to high-end independent couture, professionalism and the 'true' art of creation. As a matter of fact, saying that the others are not creative might be a way for Ellen and Ela to preserve their own perimeter and privilege (of being creative). As Becker suggested (1998), saying 'this is not like *that*' is a way to control the 'that' in question. Admission into the independent system grants both social capital and symbolic capital that separate the independent designers from the non-independent ones, outside their system -designers of mass-produced apparel for instance.

Besides, Ellen and Ela need to earn symbolic capital for their consumers who wish to share that capital in order to differentiate (from others they do not wish to identify to). So the fashion system provides designers with a given amount of symbolic capital (attached to the independent scenery). In turn, it allows them to convert that symbolic capital into economic value for particular customers.

Meanwhile, the fuss around fashion seems to be problematic for Ellen and Ela. In line with Volonté (2012: 409), who reveals that "*fashion is not always an ideal to pursue among designers*", Ellen and Ela defy mainstream fashion through their creative propositions. Many times I could hear them specify that what they are doing is not "fashion" -so to speak. On the opposite, and far from the fuss and short-term cycles they associate with the fashion planet, they intend to create long-lasting material clothes characterised by honesty, care, and importantly, affection.

Here again the attachment to clothing goes with the craft-intense and authenticity aspects of the proposition. Simultaneously, another paradox arises: the impossibility of ever gaining a bigger public while staying true to this status. This goes with the constant tension between on the one

hand playing the economic game, following business interests with mass and less craft-oriented fashion; and on the other hand embracing craft and striving to create something advanced and not dispossessed of any creative light.

As a consequence of this position, the never-ending difficulties are very much real. Being part of a network of independent designers who struggle equally helps and provides support. This network does actually comprise other territories than France, and Ellen and Ela fall within a myriad of other designer-driven labels abroad as well (see for example the independent scene in Scandinavia with Huopainen, 2016).

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Added to this collective aesthetic judgment, the studio also condensates a lot of what is happening in the outside world. I am talking here about very broad influences. What is happening inside the studio is a constantly moving, open-ended world into which Ellen and Ela navigate. We could picture the studio as a big receptacle. Designing means acting (unthinkingly) in the wider swim of wider system influences.

Their creative territory is not circumscribed to the studio, but rather in resonance with their surrounding vibrations. Ellen and Ela listen to the news, talk about this last exhibit one of them saw, this last movie, the place Ellen's daughter went to, the bar or museum Ela visited. Knowing each other is also a way to better understand each other over creation. But what goes through the studio ranges more globally from what happened in the metro that morning to the ecological crisis in Brazil.

All day long, the radio is on. Designing breaks down in the midst of those influences, on occasion. In those moments there is no distinction whatsoever between subject, object, and the world. All are totally present and caught up by the subject matter. Mental and sensory perceptions become bits and pieces of the construction of clothing, and of the social worlds in which practices assume meanings and facticity (Gherardi, 2000).

The Italian designer Ettore Sottsass is famous for the following sentence that resonates with the existing situation, and says a lot on what animates a designer: "*A designer is a sponge, we know that, but a very special cosmic sponge*". There is this absolute necessity to swallow and absorb all the various

propositions of the multiple actors gravitating in a more or less close context. More than mere collaborative work, it especially means integrate the variables produced by others to then make an object appear.

The creative potential that I could feel in the studio definitely erupts from this indifferent pure presence of things from the outside world. Those things are often outside of any conscious pragmatic or intellectual relationship with Ellen and Ela. Designing here both shapes and is shaped, both affects and is affected by the (human and non-human) context in which it occurs. Context jumps in, obviously subjectively and differently understood at various times and in various spaces (within one studio), but always ends up in one way or another as being part of the creative process.

As such, the context is potentialised or "electrified" (Hjorth, 2013) by bodily movements and personal imagination. An aesthetic emerges from this 'here and now', tapping into a shared sensibility, and generating complicity. It takes shape in the apparent mess of what emerges in Ellen and Ela as individuals, in the world of the studio, and more globally in current events. In that sense, the studio is a place for chance, imaginery and reality to prevail all at the same time. Bottom line is to give those forces as much space as possible.

With this point I want to underline the importance of context as a balancing force for that of agency, potentiating or counteracting the productions as well as the intermediating materials through which designing happens. Designing, knowledge, truth and influences are no longer possessions of mind and hands. There are also mediated by the interactions between people and their arrangements, no longer their property but rather a feature of the outside world together with their material setups.

Context is here to be understood as a constellation. It comprises the direct and less direct environments surrounding the designers: materials, scissors, washing-machine, pliers, available colours, radio on, smooth or rough textures, breaking news...many external forces have an influence on the designs.

So even if Ellen and Ela, as agents, have integrated the business aspect of designing; it is by listening to those surroundings, playing with them and interacting with each other that designing

happens, suspended for a moment from the feeling of some economic obligation. Sensual and perceptive designing processes possess a momentum of their own, leaving behind their embeddedness in purposive-economic acts.

While being on the field, Ellen and Ela progressively integrated me in that interaction and designing circle. Inevitably my presence had, from the beginning, an influence on designing, be it through my questions or observation. But also, after a few weeks and once they taught me a few things, I was able to help them, and then I integrated their small group of influence.

They started listening to my point of view: *It is really pleasant to be at the cut, I am now "on the other side", their side. I am thrilled. Bye-bye circling around them, doing labels, computer stuff, I am now at the very heart of their daily activities. I can participate to the discussions, I appropriate the process: paper patronage, cut of fabrics, sewing...until the final checking of prototypes* (from diary). But this only happened after a while, I had to be initiated to be able to integrate that 'designing circle'.

To conclude, interactions constitute the cornerstone of creative action, happening in a system of relations. The relational substance of individual action unfolds through the perspective that every human and non-human takes on the behaviour of the other, and on the consequences drawn to orient own behaviour and decisions in joint action.

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To conclude, the ambition with this part was to demonstrate how Ellen and Ela find their way towards designing within constraints, by entering a playground where the very presence of the economic is not felt for a moment.

Ellen and Ela rely on a dialog with their surroundings to move on. Materials' heaviness, experimentation, interactions and corporality dictate in this playground, and not anymore the economic expectations and profitable right answers. In that sense, creation is more of a reaction than an action. A reaction to fabrics and their affective attraction; an inspiration that comes out of the trials through bodies and senses; a conversation between the designers... such a combination of elements is powerful and exert a force on them. This force is what constantly shapes the perimeter they design in, bringing them back into that playground even when the economic jumps in - for example when realizing the over-expensive price of a fabric while

working on a new piece.

This playground may at times be questioned and challenged, following the economic incursions. It is constantly moving and shifting, refined and redefined all along the creative way. For example, if the designers compromise too much, leaning towards economic preoccupations, they might end up not interested in their own proposition anymore. This would mean having pushed the boundaries of their creative expectations -with those of the playground- too far.

Still, with our story we wanted to reveal and insist on the weight of the fabric, the experimentations, and the interactions; constituting such a force that they can transport the designers some place else than the economic possibilities, in the depicted playground. Most of the time the playground is on major mode while the economic priorities on the minor one.

In what follows, we take one step back of the playground and have a look at the broader journey, following the plot that progressively unfolds around the garment.

### 4.3.3 The broader journey

The knowledge that needs to be articulated here is the aesthetic knowledge, the "sensory knowledge and felt meaning of objects and experiences" (Hansen, Ropo, & Sauer, 2007: 545), considered indispensable to better understand the multi-faceted bodily and sensorial qualities of human experience (Strati, 2007). The creative process originates from personal creativity, an individualistic and a social process (Runco, 2007) that, like aesthetic knowing, "is driven by a desire for subjective, personal truth usually for its own sake" (Taylor & Hansen, 2005: 121).

Whereas intellectual knowing (i.e. the process of utilizing intellectual knowledge) can express the cause of things and comprises answers to both the what and why of things (Chia, 2003), aesthetic knowing (i.e. the process of utilizing aesthetic knowledge) happens in and through the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1948; Strati, 2005) when we try to feel the meaning of sensory impressions (Warren, 2008) that we can touch, see, smell, taste and hear (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007).

The aesthetic includes two dimensions. Aesthetic perceptions are not mere sensory activities, but also contain a good deal of affectivity. Following Deleuze (1996), we understand aesthetic

phenomena as always comprising a pair of percepts and affects. Sensual-aesthetic perceiving encompasses the subject's specific affectedness by an object or situation, sensitivities or agitation; and enthusiastic, concerned or calm ways of feeling (Reckwitz, 2014).

Such tacit qualities of aesthetic knowing make the creative process naturally complex and chaotic (Boje et al., 2004), but also playful and engaging (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006) as well as experimental in the sense that new ideas often emerge in action between the mind and the senses (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014). Whilst intellectual knowing is widely accepted as an important cognitive sub-process of creativity, to date aesthetic knowing has received less research attention (Stierand et al., 2016).

The perspective here pertains to the intricate nature of the 'aesthetic experience' in organizational life and to the challenge for academic (or any) inquiry to get hold of and appropriately represent findings about these embodied and emotional elements that are different from and complementary to intellectual knowing (Strati, 2009).

In what follows, we try to acknowledge for that moment when the garment-in-the-making, fuelled and filled in aesthetic knowing, becomes a garment-ready-to-sell, associated to more commercial rationales.

*The Plot of Designing, a crystallization. From emerg-ing to formatt-ing.*

Building on the key scenes previously presented and on that notion of aesthetic knowing, we can draw a number of analytical conclusions.

It seems that the designing process as previously described happens within *Ellen Estali* (the Fashion House) through experimenting, playing (with) the fabric and interacting. But then at some point in time, there is a switch towards *Est* (the company). Ellen puts an end to the designing process.

Labels are put on clothes, clothes are ironed and prepared for upcoming fairs. Work-intense practices now focus on the presentation of the collection. In that moment, creative studio-objects

become high-end fashion commodities. Ellen gets ready to move on to the outside world and take on the professional cape.

As previously seen, the surrounding context of designers is not a container for action, but a situation in which the interests of the actors and the opportunities furnished by the environment meet and are reciprocally defined. The moment of designing, in interaction with a given context, was renamed the playground. Of central importance in this playground are interactions with others, situated communication, the construction of situations, the relationship with the physical environment and the objects in it, but above all the idea that these elements are 'held together' at one point in time. They constitute an ensemble and express a particular logic of designing contextual to the situation.

Fairs cannot be re-scheduled or even delayed. The new collection of prototypes, which, up to that point, continuously moved in between various geographical locations and spaces of production, is now coordinated and presented to a prominent and leading crowd of buyers in specific exhibition spaces. They will after that get produced in numbers according to orders at those fairs, to end up being shipped all over the world.

I remember Ela saying that she could feel the concretization of the work -no wonder why-, after all these blurred experimentations. In a sudden, real-life improvisation and low budget manners are steadily absorbed by a collection that looks and appears professional, or at least *so-called* professional or *what-is-expected-of*-professionals.

From the beginning of the designing process (fabric enter the studio), to the end of it (clothes leave the studio), I could observe an increase in power. At the beginning, Ellen takes time, tries and experiments, as in a playing ground. Designing is sensed viscerally, intensity is registered as Ellen moves and dives into new forms and possibilities for the fabric, maintaining a sort of suspense along the way. But the closer the deadline is, the faster it goes, and less and less time is devoted to experimenting.

Toward the end (of the collection), Ellen starts mentioning the buyers -she never did beforehand- and their potential reaction to the new collection. She herself recognises that the designing process has now come to an end. It is done, there is nothing they can change. What's interesting is the apparition of those ghosts-actors -such as buyers- that progressively materialize.



Designing happens following an accelerating rate. With the upcoming fairs, evanescent buyers find expression and weigh in creation in an indirect manner, before becoming primordial at the end of the process.

More and more space is given to the shining and affective aura around the clothes (ready-for-buyers), reducing or at least rendering less visible the improvisation, messy and made-of-bricolage(s) reality of spontaneous actions.

Things become serious: *Ellen spends a long time in front of the board where she keeps track of the collection. It gets filled out. Names appear in front of sketches: Pablo, Paloma, Paule, Paulette (It's the "P" collection). Ela goes past it "so, names have been found! That's a good thing, usually she (talking about Ellen) puts it at last minute and it gets difficult to sort patronages out"* (from diary).

More than ever, Ellen keeps asking how much time is left, what day we are. Most mattering, after days of searching for perfection, aesthetic satisfaction seems to impose itself as more a result of temporal necessity of particular fixation, than a universal sense of normative 'rightness' that exists outside of time. At that moment, time, or perhaps the lack of it, plays a prominent role in this unfolding of collection designing.

Ellen and Ela come earlier in the morning, leave later in the evening. They explain it to me by invoking passion and their devotion for their work. Towards the end, boundaries blur between work and home. They never totally break up, it's never totally complete. I wonder if that's what we might call 'self-disciplining' (Raunig, Ray & Wuggening, 2011), as seen with the concept of 'governcreativity' (Mokre, 2011) we mentioned earlier: a hard-working serving neoliberal profitable ambitions.

Where is the limit? Do sleepless nights mean passion or mean break even? Listening to them, I realize that there is something that sounds pretty much like the neoliberal vision of the creative worker<sup>34</sup>. At the same time, work too much might end up in a dead end, burn the energy, engender counter-productivity. They also know that. Accordingly, this working-all-the-time professional ethos varies considerably with the timing (of the collection), between the *not-so-much* and the *too-much*, or rather from the *not-so-much* to the *too-much*.

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<sup>34</sup> But who am I to distinguish between extreme work and normality? Writing this sounds funky as currently working on those words I am not counting my hours to finish this thesis.

Trying to qualify such an increase in power, I called the phenomenon "the crystallization process". Following this plot that progressively unfolds, Ellen does not know where she is going. Solidification of design develops according to the events of daily life in the studio. The crystallization process starts with the emerging state of designing (the living practice described in previous paragraphs), marked by a collective and experimental way of doing things, with fabric right in the middle of it...to end up in a much more rationalized way, marked by measuring techniques (to calculate how much fabric will be necessary for production), by the fixing of prices, by the grading (adapting for different sizes) and by the constitution of silhouettes (presentation of clothes to the buyers).

Time has come to put much care into presenting the garments. And naturally this goes through its 'outside', by adding worth and significance through the many other affective interacting elements, such as hair and make-up -for pictures- or accessories -to present next to garments on the clothing rack at the fair. All those efforts follow the same purpose: render the difficulties invisible. Blending garments from a brand new collection with suitable accessories, edgy jewellery and hair and make up styles altogether definitely enhance the collection and move audiences (Huopalainen, 2016).

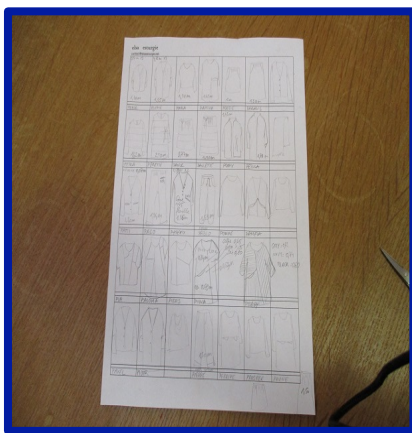
Importantly, business interests make their presence felt. *It is now time to fix prices. Ela says "fixing prices, it stresses me out! I mean, it concretizes the work, you know. So it becomes real, and necessarily it's stressful". Fairs are coming, and I can feel that the atmosphere in the studio is changing. Clothes now shift to enter the business side. I say it to Ela, who approves* (from diary). As the past, present and future become fixed around the garment, they do so in relation to a certain temporal breakdown.

For each collection, the fixing of prices is also quite an event. Pricing is a particularly troublesome endeavour for creative producers, because in most creative industries there is no clear correlation between price and quality (Mears, 2011). There are no standard price-setting indices that designers use to figure out the worth of their prototypes. So it comes 'as it comes'.



Gherardi & Perrotta (2014) talk about "formativeness", which denotes the kind of knowledge that is generated in the process of realizing the object of the practice, discovered while the form of the object is being shaped. Formativeness makes it possible to name the process by which ways of doing are discovered while activities are being performed. In order to justify this entanglement of knowing ("this is it!") and doing (manipulating the fabric), we might refer to the epistemology of becoming (Clegg et al., 2005).

The epistemology of becoming stresses impermanence, and the tentative and ongoing process of knowledge production. As an epistemology of transformation, it points out how knowledge changes through its use (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014). In the Wittgenstein (1953) tradition, knowledge is understood in transition, an expression intended to capture the difficulties one faces "in trying to make sense of activities that are still incomplete, still unfolding in relation to their actual surroundings" (Shotter, 2012: 247 -cited in Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014). All along the creative process, elements are not just connected, they *become* connected. The moving-forward towards the "Est." structure happens very progressively, through a powerful upswing. Things accelerate towards the end.



*pencil written*



*marker written*

In the playground we noticed the sense of progressing towards the final result: attempting, correcting, re-doing. There is the inspiration and the elaboration of an intuition, there is improvisation and exercise, there is domination over the material that opposes resistance and enjoys obedience, there is technique and the language of style. As a matter of fact, this process of designing could very well never end. Non-creative constraints (such as the deadline for the fair, the necessity of some cash inflow) will help the designing process to unfold and produce or settle itself in a particular time and a particular object.

Subjection happens and is the condition for there to be possible a world of experience that would be a genuine world, a cosmos and not a chaos, a world of recognizable objects and not inconsistent phantasms. In the end, the collection will be the symbol of something, performing Ellen's presence as a legitimate high-end designer.

As the fair is about to start, the creative temporality must come to a particular end, that is a particular present, a freezing point. In other words, the collection is a freezing of the temporary effect on processes of designing. Garments that found their way into existence are going to be presented. Others that encountered obstacles have to be left aside, for reasons as diverse and trivial as not being possible to assemble, not fitting with the rest of the line, not producing a result appreciated by Ellen, who has the final word.

In that sense, material constraints (including time and budget) do not always preside over the in-the-moment aesthetic judgement of the designer, who wants to be satisfied by a final result: *Ellen takes stock of the situation, what is left to be done for the new collection: "So, the blue flannel pants...the grey dress...". She continues her list: a skirt like this, perhaps another dress like that. I can see that she likes doing this, reflecting on the collection, taking some time to think the whole. Ela suggests: "what about a shorter coat, like this?" (she mimes the length), and Ellen to reply "Mmmm...I know you'd have liked it. but no". Power is all over the place at that moment. Ellen always has the final word, it's her house (from diary).*

What is more is the repetition of that plot. For each collection, Ellen has to take that tortuous path and repeat this contingent designing practice: a garment, and another one, and another one, all of them emerging from a texture of connections established in tentative form, by experimenting and interacting. Designing understood as a living practice always leads to a process of realization.

This is how the emergent course of action tends towards crystallization. Realization happens, again, and again, for each new collection. It is commonly said for art curators that "the value of a curator can only be estimated with his/her next exhibition". Similarly here we might say that the value of a designer is constantly estimated with his/her next collection -meaning a designer is never at rest.

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Besides, a key aspect of the crystallisation is that it is never linear. There is a lot of back and forth between the 'fashion house side' and the 'company side', between Ellen Estali (as for the name of the house) and Est. (as for the name of the company). The formation of a design is here understood and conceptualised through the two designers moves, from playful receptivity (also called passion) to economic concern.

Economic constraints are included in the designing process, or impose themselves upon it. As previously seen, Ellen and Ela, as agents, have those constraints in mind: *Ellen starts cutting a skirt in a grey jersey. Then she realizes that she loses a lot of fabric while cutting the pattern. The different pieces of the pattern are adjusted to the fabric while cutting it, but sometimes it's hard to fill the space between the pieces, which generates a lot of scrap fabric. Ellen hesitates. "Do we stick to this fabric?". She goes next room check the price. "15 euros for 1 linear metre". It's expensive. She hesitates, she could switch the grey jersey with a black cotton, far less expensive... "Ok. Let's keep on with the jersey, now that we started". Still, I realize how the choice of fabrics depends on prices. I ask Ellen if she already thought of using cashmere. "Impossible, it's too expensive. - But aren't people ready to pay good money for high-quality cashmere (me)? -No, because now mass market brands sell some for less than 100 euros (Ellen). -But how do they manage with their costs? (me) -They manufacture in China (Ellen).*

In the end, designing is about bringing into play a certain amount of various elements. The clothing object is gifted and destined to an intention that is at the same time an intention out of reason (house of economic constraints, internalized by designers), out of mind (a desire following a discussion, an idea following a picture), out of body (a movement, an impulse).

Disappearance of the body's autonomy might happen sometimes (when controlled by reason), body becoming in those moments the extension of the internalized constraints, pure *tekhnè* of capital. When the body is programmed as such, there is no corporality anymore. Body is then for a moment put aside, and might perhaps come back; in the glimpse of a different touch, a surprise coming from materials, an unexpected experimentation, an episode of complicity with the other designer.

So the journey towards the final collection is characterized by those back and forth movements. Although inherently based on the quest for an aesthetic satisfaction while designing, we see that many other factors interfere, just like the price of the fabric. Ellen and Ela play a game, within the

rules of the game.

As such, power dynamics are evident, lying in the contradiction between continuity and displacement between the two sides (economic and creative). What we underline here is how, at one point, there is always a solidification and sedimentation engendered in the power struggles (Elkjaer & Huysman, 2008).

The analytical view proposed here (the playground of the designer and the crystallization process that characterizes the creative process) appears appropriate exactly because it does not lose the moment of sedimentation and determination where contexts and (therefore) designs emerge as significant. Those design trajectories enable us to identify power dynamics in their practical constitution. What we observe is a continuous construction or reconstruction of design, and this is precisely what constitutes the creative while profitable organization -and the work it requires.

When the process leans towards *Ellen Estali* (the house), things are never really fixed, openness is strong and possibilities always there. Whereas when the process leans towards *Est* (the company), things take shape in a more fixed and presentable (to buyers) way.

Nurturing the playground: re-charging the hands, the mind, the eyes...is what allows creativity to develop. It's about maintaining the living process alive, keeping in mind that it will solidify at some point.

In other words the studio is a dynamic system in which designing is a wild oscillation between one thing and another. The very image of 'system' itself slips out of the grasp of all those quick assumptions that associate it with things like order, unity, tradition, coherence and singularity.

This is a system that is not either/or but both/and (Stewart, 1996): both global and local, both tactile and imaginary, both set and fleeting, both high status and low budget, both polished and dirty, both one thing and another. It is a system in which moments of aesthetics and economics are fundamentally interlocked, a place where centripetal and centrifugal forces form a unity of opposed forces, all along the crystallization of things.



### *The broader journey*

Examine the broader journey also means include the relationships we observed with sellers (on one side of the creative process), and buyers (on the other side of it).

In the playground, creative *possibilities* are always abundant. We may refer to the *infinite variety* property, suggested by Caves (2000), to invoke the universe of possibilities from which the creative agent chooses. Nevertheless, the events taking place at boundaries -with buyers and sellers- remind the creative agent that creative *realizations*, in comparison, cannot be abundant.

Let's now take another step back of the fabric-to-garment process, and have a look at the whole material-to-fabric-to-garment-to-wear journey.

*Material --> Fabric --> Garment --> Wear*



We might here refer again to Harrison White's conception of the industry (1981, 2002), represented as a flow of goods produced by fashion houses, which serve as interface between "upstream" suppliers, and "downstream" consumers.

Ellen and Ela, the designers, enter at the stage of the fabric. The transformative act that was depicted in the previous paragraphs starts at the arrival of the fabric in the studio. They can start playing once the fabric has arrived. This moment is a moment of maximum potentiality saturated with openness. They experiment, they interact. Things are never fully finished, but remain in a process of construction and transformation. As previously seen, at some point it starts to close because there is a deadline. They have to go to fairs and sell the line. Garments become *wearable*, they have to seduce. We go then from the 'garment' stage to the 'wear' stage.



Interestingly, Ellen seems to confine herself as much as possible to the fabric-to-garment transformation. She is not interested in presenting her offer, nor in interacting with the clients (buyers) or the final clients (users). In a way, we could say that the creation process is not extended to the sales process (the relationship to the buyer). Ellen could be joyful to present her offer but she would rather avoid it if she could, and stay in the playground.

I remember that moment when an appointment was scheduled with a buyer from Canada (in the studio). Ellen was so late she barely saw the buyer and Ela had to take care of it all by her own (from diary): *I come in the studio with Ellen, around 11. The buyer is here and has been here for one hour. She's already done with her selection. Ellen does not ask about the buyer's order or opinion on the new line. She will have a look at her order, but only after, once the buyer left -on the order form. She does not ask any question to the buyer -who came all the way from Canada!, totally avoiding any small talk. I am very surprised, she does not make any effort. It is obvious that she looks forward to the end of the visit.*

Doing fashion includes pretending to make huge efforts appear 'effortless', while convincing critical gatekeepers of the design team's intelligence and taste (Huopainen, 2016). This is definitely not the case here. Functionality is part of the thing and Ellen knows it. In the end, the garment is worn. So how come there is no interest in the final use(r) of the garment?

Obviously Ellen is not resisting the stream of income coming out of this *garment-to-wear* stage. How come she gladly produces a design from a fabric, but not a wear from a garment? The creation process is in no way extended to the sales process. Playing her role as an interface (White, 1981, 2002), she nevertheless gets the least involved as possible with the downstream clients.

On the opposite, on the other side she is happy to talk to the upstream suppliers, those who sell the fabric -at the *material-to-fabric* stage. She is certainly happier to talk to those who sell fabrics (mostly Italian sellers) than those who buy garments; meaning that she performs as a buyer but not as a seller. There is an asymmetry in market-based roles.

I suggest that this is because in the buying role, everything remains open. This occasion, when she disposes of the fabric, is an episode of maximum openness. Designers at that moment are like bees around honey. The emulation taking place in the playground is like a fuel; they get the kick out of it, out of the rawness of the material, the possibilities to experiment, and so on.

Whereas the other side is a closing of things: they have to harness, make use of this, give it a certain direction, give it clarity. They have to weave with constraints, more and more.

In the end, the whole point of Ellen is to stay in/expand the living practice previously discussed. So that this messy central designing moment gets bigger and longer. Soon will be the time of the packaging. Her design has to reach boutiques, which means the closing of her playful ground. In other words, she doesn't want to be at the end, she wants to be at the opening. That would be why she confines herself to the *fabric-to-garment* stage, as much as possible.

Material/**OPENING**/Fabric-->Garment/**CLOSING**/Wear

Accordingly, a passion for opening is observed as well as a fear of closing. The seller role is not attached anymore to potentiality. This is the ultimate scene, and exam. It is scary for her, her design is being *examined*. There is no joy in presenting her offer; but rather a sort of fear to conclude, to terminate. She is very nervous and wishes she could avoid that moment of finalizing.

At fairs Ellen is waiting for people's reactions, looking out for any appreciation on the collection.

She cannot escape confronting what buyers think and feel about her creative proposition. She tries to catch any assessment or judgment and keeps wondering. Although now professional designer, it is not so easy for her to really form a clear opinion about how her designs are received -commercial success not being the only indicator. Exposing a brand new collection is both exciting and anxiety-causing (Huopalainen, 2016). If her affective makings do not resonate, she might be in trouble for the future.

Perhaps a way to cope across those issues is the distance -no display of any commitment nor interest, as observed with clients. This distance might be understood as a way to maintain un-hurt, for instance in a case of negative feedback or of buyers' annoying special requests. As previously seen, some powerful buyers might ask her to have the piece she initially designed in blue...in beige, and then the *garment-to-wear* stage becomes a threat to her integrity and designer identity.

Finally, anticipate on her next playground might also provide an escape, in those moments. I noticed several times how once at fairs, Ellen seemed to already have her mind on the next

collection. Selling is a required passage, acted upon as a mere formality. So much is at stake, and pressure is all over the place. But Ellen is already gone, immersed into her inspiring thoughts and designs-to-come. Hands are not in the next playground yet, but mind is.

Perhaps doing this is also a way to remember that designing, for her, is something much larger than trying to make money or make a living. And even if at fairs this is what it looks like, to her it is unfair, or at least incomplete. And so she escapes again, throwing herself into the next creative step.

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To make a long story short; as a designer Ellen performs in the buyer role (means openness) but not in the seller role (means closing). Such conception of designing is congruent with the critical, processual and relational perspective discussed thus far. Ellen confines herself to the *fabric-to-garment* transformation step as the *garment-to-wear* step means the closing of her playful ground, and the fear of being examined.

Lastly, a final clarification on the actors involved. Caves' work reminds us that, in some cases, joint ventures take place instead of direct transactions. Revenue-sharing joint ventures with up-front payments make repeated appearances in creative industries in general, as well as real option contracts with successive transfers of decision rights (Caves, 2000). Arguably, we believe the environment we described, taking place around a designer and designing team who themselves take care of the buying and the selling; also works in a case of a joint venture or any other third party (that might occur in fashion but also in another creative industry).

Indeed, in the idea we have of the broader journey, the 'outside' interlocutors that are addressed through the buyer role and the seller role may vary -from those we identified with our case study. In fact, in the case of a deal in creative goods involving joint ventures, the core idea remains the same. The asymmetrical relations creative actors develop - nurtured buyer role, rejected seller role-, happen not with direct interlocutor, but with intermediaries (might be art dealer for visual artist, record label for musician, publisher for author, etc).

So even if other people take care of the buying, and other people take care of the selling; creative actors are still engaged, or at least consulted on those matters at some point. Necessarily

abrasions happen. Within the joint venture, creative actors would still 'be true' to own inclination (e.g.: rejecting the seller role represented by intermediary), even if this role is not directly endorsed.

### *To conclude*

Our objective throughout this whole diving into the everyday reality of a designer was not just to describe what we have attentively observed and experienced. We also wanted to show, through those descriptions, how creative actors -such as this designer- deal with economic constraints by relying upon materiality, embodiment and affect.

Different materials such as wool, silk, cotton, linen, surfaces, artefacts and other physical things, more or less reachable tools in the environment, are the necessary resources that provide for creativity. But these various resources are not limited to material things. Corporality and affects are significant resources too, in this game with economy. And all those resources are fluctuating, relationally and jointly produced.

Throughout our findings, certain underlying and taken-for-granted assumptions about the notion of creativity within creative industries were scrutinized and problematized further, with an emphasis on the marginal and peripheral, the *in situ* and *ad hoc* aspects, now central in the analysis. The comprehensive, exhaustive and close-up descriptions were not just here to make the reading easier, but rather to bring out the answer to the research question. In doing so (write in a dense and rich way), we believe that insight was provided into how creative actors get around surrounding constraints.

Interestingly, it is through those various micro-level actions made of materiality, experimentation and collective action; that creative actors establish their own creative zone (i.e.: the playground) within economic constraints. It is through this going-with-things, within the flow, that they stay attuned and connected to their playground, moving beyond dichotomies.

Following Bergson, we could say that the virtual is being actualized (1907), in the playground. We move away from the idea of designing as a given *possible* being *realized*, by unfolding a playground

whereby the *virtual* is being *actualized*. While focusing on the possible is just an execution process, actualize the virtual is about differentiating from what has already been done. Not any material form nor social practice already anchor the virtual in the world, when it does with the possible.

In Bergson's view, the virtual is real but just lacks actualization. We believe such actualization happens in the playground, amidst embodied-material and affective ways of relating to surrounding agents. Creative work in the studio is the actualization process of virtual ideas. Non-human and human agents are the triggers to the virtual. In that process, the sensation of intensity comes with the potential difference that appears in the making, at its virtual fringe exactly.

Charles S. Peirce supports this understanding of the virtual, as something that is 'as if' it were real. The everyday use of the term indicates what is 'virtually' so, but not so in fact<sup>35</sup>. Creative production precisely lies in this 'as if', a meeting point between agents, in a given space and time.

Through the forces that come out of all agents' actions and re-actions, a designing opportunity can become actual, or not. It may vary, and no one is able to say what it takes to get there. Bergson says that actualisation is the creative act by which value potentials (virtualities) become actual. In light of his work, we say that the creative act is the actualisation of virtualities in a given material-embodied and affective context.

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To conclude, we highlighted the weight of materials, experimentations and interactions that, to a certain extent, outweigh any direct economic preoccupations -once one's own playground is entered. In parallel form, it is by diving into the everyday way of being creative that we might understand the why and how of things here. Explicitly, it is those previous and in-depth descriptions that helped us approach and answer the research question " how do designers deal with the economic constraints? ". Our aim throughout the results was to go beyond binaries (creative rationales on one side, economic ones on the other) and in that respect, pull off the veil surrounding creativity's actions.

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<sup>35</sup> Peirce, C.S. "Virtual." Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, ed. James Mark Baldwin. New York: Macmillan, 1902

In what follows, building further on those ideas, we will discuss creativity through what we call creativity-in-action, a performative concept of creativity -inspired by Beyes and Steyaert's performative concept of spacing.

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5.

# GENERAL DISCUSSION & CONTRIBUTIONS

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## 5 GENERAL DISCUSSION & CONTRIBUTIONS

### 5.1 General discussion

In what follows, results are summarized before entering the discussion.

As a reminder, we wanted to understand how different rationales such as the creative and economic ones co-existed for lengthy periods of time. We wondered how actors within creative companies could carry out their creative work within rationalization logics (Tschang, 2006). Like a dancer for whom dancing appears easy -and it is not-, a designer shows the smooth surface of his/her work to the public.

Far from the artificially constructed, 'effortless', polished and glamorous images of the end-product of fashion, we shed light on the daily workings of designers. By so doing, we try to illustrate how a complex making of creativity is an ongoing and essentially non-linear process of navigating various grounds, through tactical behaviours, conflicting meanings, and messy actions.

In the first part of the results, we paid close attention to the practices creative agents, such as designers in fashion industry, develop to cope with daily challenges. By directing our attention inside organizations, we found that the creative actors we interviewed played both the game of the market, and, at other times, cultivated their uniqueness or sought autonomy. By being creative within an economic canvas, creative actors need to understand the rules of the market. Inevitably, they get used to the vocabulary and economic reflexes.

What we observe is that they perform a role regarding those rules. They play a game, which brings them to, at some point, claim their uniqueness in that game. Creative professionals do not want to be perceived as any other employee. They insist on their specificity, by means of a (creative) signature, a (creative) status, and sometimes a peculiar commitment. Creative process becomes creative questioning, defying certain ideas. Finally, it is by seeking autonomy that creative actors defuse the tension. They get away from the organisation, in a literal as well as metaphorical sense, by creating at home or at specific moments in the day for instance, or by having personal-side projects.

The identified practices constitute different components of informal relationships that were established inside the creative organization. The tactical side of those practices was identified (through De Certeau's reading) and we demonstrated how navigating between them allowed for some leeway in creativity. Like a well-oiled machine, those tactics act as mechanisms that maintain the ongoing existence of a creative fuzziness towards the organization, necessary to create.

Through fuzziness, a peculiar order is maintained, purposefully not stable, a zone of indetermination and ambivalence, meaning a zone of possibility. By maintaining a creative fuzziness around their professional actions and desires, creative actors interviewed could access a form of independence while also supporting the accomplishment of mutual goals (with the creative company).

In the second part of the results, we paid closer attention to one specific designer and her micro-level actions with the proximate team. The presented field episodes all tie to the actions surrounding creativity on the move, and thus illustrate different situations and emerging actions of processual creativity. Designer's behaviours and decisions happen in joint action with other individuals, together with materials and surroundings. The designers we observed find their way towards designing within constraints by entering a playground where the very presence of the economic is not felt.

Materials, experimentations and interactions rule this playground, not the economic laws and profits. In that sense, creation is more of a reaction than an action. Fabrics and their affective attraction, the inspiration that comes out of the trials, and the dialog between the designers, the combination of those forces is powerful and constantly brings designers back into the playground. In this space and time, no distinctions are made among subjects, objects, thoughts or contexts.

Evidently, economic knowledge resides in the heads of the designers, appropriated, transmitted and stored by means of cognitive processes. But not only. Hands, gestures and eyes also play a key role. Accordingly, the collection takes shape in the flow of experience: working, hearing, listening, touching, communicating and experimenting are co-present in practice, and entirely part of creative actors' existence.

In this sense, the playground is an enjoyable and gratifying space for designers. In opposite ways, we noticed how, while obviously endorsing her role as CEO, the chief designer we observed confines herself to the (upstream) fabric-to-garment transformation step as much as possible, as on the other hand the (downstream) garment-to-wear step (bringing it to the public) means the solidification of things, the closing of her playful ground, and the fear of being examined (on creative proposition).

Finally, in our results we unfolded a given playground around two designers, as ethnographic work focused on those two persons. But obviously, any creative actor involved during the process might at some point enter that playground. It is not a 'designers-only' zone. The realm of the playground includes and has always included the frequently overlapping activities of designers as well as skilled craftsmen, *petites mains*, stylists, dressmakers, and other creative workers in the industry under study. All those voices feel at some point connected to their creative personal zone through materials, experimentations and interdependent relations with surroundings.

To conclude, creative workers -and we made it clear now that whoever they are, and whatever their position-, face plenty of resource constraints, and cannot always get what they want. Organizing and understanding that such a playground gets formed around them -made of various materials, possibilities to experiment and exchange, etc- is a first step towards providing more leeway for creative action. With this research, we understand how dependent creativity is on the performative presence of other moving, affected, active and inter-related bodies and things that produce meaningful actions in relation to others.

### 5.1.1 Introducing the discussion: a performative concept of creativity

Our results led us to depict creativity within constraints in a more densely textured form, and in this sense, to adjust its definition with every new occasion that emerged to describe it. Important themes were discussed throughout: fabrics, experimentation and collective composition, that often go unnoticed.

In the following discussion, we analyse what creative actors actually do when they create. We intend to analyse how creativity is reproduced in action intertwining human and non-human agents. Inspired by Beyes and Steyaert (2012) who advocate for material, affective and embodied

apprehensions of organization, we dig in their conceptual gymnastic around the concept of "spacing" to inform our focus of interest, creative work.

Beyes and Steyaert suggest the concept of "spacing", orienting the understanding of organizational space towards its material, embodied, affective and minor configurations. The embodied, generative everyday becoming of organization is stated as relevant, and their processual and performative approach to space considers complex dimensions and multiple forces of material, affective, and embodied apprehensions as already intertwined.

Being attentive to their work directs the organizational scholar towards encounters generated in the here-and-now, "*assembled from the manifold (im)materialities*" (2012: 53). As we wish to move towards more flexible understandings of creativity embracing ambiguity, flux and multiple dimensions, Beyes and Steyaert's approach will be used as a canvas for our discussion. Their concept of spacing appears helpful when it comes to making sense of creativity's messy 'real-life' organizing practices, under economic constraints. The kind of organizational analysis they imagine then becomes a performative organizational geography attuned to the material, embodied, affective, and multiple sides and sites of organizing.

They map out a number of features that inform the practice of non-representational theorizing (Thrift, 2007) and the resultant continuous performance of space:

- \_ Everyday practice and materiality,
- \_ Embodiment and the body,
- \_ Affect and sensation,
- \_ Multiplicity and a minor politics.

The ambition throughout is to divert social sciences from the accent on representation and interpretation, by turning away from the contemplative, intellectual-preaching models of thoughts and action, going for models based on practice.

Aligning with their call, we propose to orient the understanding of creativity towards its tactical, material-embodied and affective configurations, rendering the minor visible. This entails a rethinking of creativity as processual and performative, open-ended and multiple, practiced and of the everyday. Our results reveal a situated creativity, that both shapes and is shaped, both affect and is affected by the (human and non-human) context in which it occurs.

This way, we explain how concepts from the socio-materiality and affect theories provide an

alternate framing to understand creativity within rationalization logics. Following Beyes and Steyaert, such a reframing of creativity implies *"exchanging a vocabulary of stasis, representation, reification and closure with one of intensities, capacities and forces; rhythms, cycles, encounters, events, movements and flows; instincts, affects, atmospheres and auras; relations, knots and assemblages"* (2012: 47). By moving the thinking of creativity towards the thresholds of the tactical, the embodied-material, and the affective, we thus arrive at a performative concept of creativity we call "Creativity-in-action".

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In what follows, we choose to use the features that Beyes and Steyaert underline, one by one, as a frame for the discussion. We highlight the need to consider these many interrelated themes and activities as important and neglected topics of creativity research. Following the various features Beyes and Steyaert reveal to inform their concept of spacing, all along with key insights from our results, we will provide a new understanding of creativity, investigated within rationalization logics.

### 5.1.2 Everyday practice and materiality

Beyes and Steyaert's notion of practice understands practices as not tied to human subjects but stabilized, material-relational assortments. Matter potentially exists within the capacities and properties of any element. Beyes and Steyaert advocate for the relevance of materiality, and more specifically material elements that render practices inherently unstable, as in constant need to be enacted.

As a consequence, the everyday enactments of practices come first in the analysis. In line with this, our results reveal the tactical side of those everyday enactments, the bricolage thread supporting it, and the material weight of surrounding elements in the creative process. The practices we reveal highlight the resourcefulness, abilities and energies of creative people, who develop workable solutions in spite of competing rationales.

- The tactical

Creative actors might be guided by different rationales and maintain separate identities from commercial and marketing agents, but they engage in collaborations that result in mutually desirable outcomes, and thus sustain the co-existing rationales. A common purpose does not mean a common identity, and separate identities can be maintained. Yet arguably in this context, image and reality, matter and mind or creativity and commerce are never mutually exclusive, but always part of creative life and, as such already intensely entangled and intertwined.

Instead of seeking to prove how such creative life is economized, we revealed how within the economic canvas, things happen. We tried to find out how creative actors in a specific place are attempting to develop tactics to navigate the common discourse. We underlined very different kinds of coping mechanisms. The first one is playing the game of the market, through various practices including the appropriation of the commercial dimension or the strategic diversification of one's creative proposition. The second set of tactics refers to cultivating one's uniqueness, more specifically one's own status, patrimony and commitment. The third set of tactics describes how creative actors seek autonomy, withdrawing from the organisation and feeding a life outside of its walls.

What we are discussing here is how being creative within an organisation does not only imply creative practices. In other words, *to be creative, being creative is not enough*, one must navigate between practices that will arrange sufficient space to hazard a new approach. *Such a creative space needs arrangements*, sometimes questioning the boundaries of the company -when creative activity is happening outdoor for instance, and at the same time raising awareness on their necessity towards the emergence of creative solutions.

To avoid standardisation not only of own work but also of own person (Nixon, 2009), we underlined how a creative professional will for example follow a common thread that is his own, or insist on a peculiar commitment, as many pathways to escape the position of modular-agent acquainted with disciplined creativity (Jones, Anand & Alvarez, 2005; Raunig & Ray, 2007).

The nature of difficulty may vary, as well as the nature of practices developed in reaction. But what catches our attention is rather that practices systematically emerge in reaction. They allow

for playing between the boundaries of what is visible and what is not, the objective being to overstep injunctions and paradoxes existing in organisations.

This way, creative professionals build themselves as dissidents *within* the organisation, and not *of* the organisation. Following Jones et al. (2016) who investigate the agency part in this debate, we could talk about creative agents as "elusive creatives". Simultaneously reconsidering (the "maverick" in Jones et al., 2016) and adopting (the "mainstream"), on-the-side (the "misfit") and hybrid (the "amphibian"), the creative agent purposefully maintains an elusive position towards lucrative organization, whereby various facets take turns, following the 360 degrees of own work.

The fuzziness they maintain is precisely what allows them to adopt various forms of agency. In creative industries marked by unpredictability and uncertainty (Caves, 2000), creative actors compose by developing multiple projects and strategic collaborations, while intervening on marketing matters for instance. Those commercial efforts are then counterbalanced by more personal projects, far from economic or commercial preoccupations, and precisely without any ambition to be profitable.

The specific association of such practices to navigate between various positions is not prescribed but rather instituted by the creative actor on the spot. Over the course of a day, *the relation between such practices happens within and throughout daily tasks*, via an active listening and careful sensitivity to the specific requirements of a given situation. The boundaries between positions are in flux and permanently in the blur, not only alongside creative process, but also on the scale of one creative agent's whole career (Montanari et al., 2016).

In the end, the issue with this research is to make creative professionals' such crafty sense of cunning seen. The daily life of a creative actor is made of critical periods whereby the roles are redefined and redistributed, where positions invert, where what was opposed combine (playing the game of the market), overlap (asserting one's singularity) and sometimes turn away (looking for autonomy).

As a consequence, *such tactics enable us to ascertain some power dynamics*. Those tactics are not straightforward. They offer opportunities for creative actors to access a substantive sharing of power, asserting their creativity through symbolic means, to promote ideological positions, and to manipulate their image within specific communities. Such power dynamics imply implicit



potentials for resistance and emphasize everyday tactics in opposition to processes of economization.

The creative practice requires collaborations and tactics at the boundary of creative and economic skills where abrasions are evidently to be expected. But what is significant is *how the tactical becomes a condition of the emergence of what we comprehend and speak about*. What becomes intelligible, such as the piece of garment, and the specific identities of the subjects participating in its production, are the results of a sedimented yet continuous tactical struggle. We describe it as the never-ending process of articulating and maintaining fuzziness around creative work, by means of those tactics.

- Bricolage

We now connect with the notion of bricolage. It is almost impossible to keep off that bricolage grass, when invoking tactical actions and improvisational doings surrounding creative action. Indeed, the link is automatically made with the bricolage theoretical framework, once we step on topics such as heterogeneous resources, flexibility, non-routinized processes or any ad hoc value creation practices. De Certeau himself often refers to bricolage when unfolding his definition of the tactical (1984).

As developed within our results, changing plans is common amongst designers. As bricoleurs, they 'make do' with materials, throughout experimentations, and always in a very relational way. Detailed creative practice reveals interesting interplays and paradoxes, making coordination and in situ improvisation necessary amid this uncertainty.

Existing knowledge, appropriate business and creative skills, commitment and hard work are drawn upon to go about solving problems. Duymedjian and RÜling (2010, 148) emphasize that the bricoleur's repertoire is "*closely tied to the bricoleur's knowledge and worldview*", constituted over time. It is their experience and accumulated years of work that allow those creative actors to practice bricolage (Pinha e Cunha, 2005). And it is through those bricolage practices that they, among other practices, deal with rationalization logics.

Every single day carries its share of demands, and you never know what is behind this phone you hear ringing in the studio. Devotion is key. In this sense, bricolage is also an attitude: trying to be as flexible as possible with the constant changes involved -with suppliers, with manufacturers, with buyers. So as much as bricolage requires flexibility, openness and non-routinized processes, creativity as observed equally requires non-straightforward skills.

As such, the broad expression of bricolage might help us in capturing various in situ actions, lived practices, improvisational doings and disorder in creative life. Disorder as in that creative fuzziness we underlined, an illustration of continual 'becoming' in creative actors' action. Indeed, we revealed how much ambiguity, heterogeneity and movement are the raw materials of creativity, which unfolds through bricolage mechanisms of recombination, transposition and mixing, allowing a somehow vital disorder. Maintaining fuzziness while navigating between the different contexts is how creative actors move on without being locked in.

Duymedjian and Ruling (2010) discuss bricolage research in terms of variety, levels of analysis, motives, metaphors and stances. Attempting at overviewing various treatments of the notion of bricolage, we realize that the 'making do' (Baker & Nelson, 2005: 333) under study distinctly connects with what was observed on the field. Bricolage is everywhere in organisations, underpinning all knowledge work (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011).

This undoubtedly goes for creativity, too, in resonance with the everyday workings of designers in a studio, among various experiments and curiosities. In surprising ways, Perkmann and Spicer (2014) introduce bricolage as a very structured activity of organizational formation. From bricolage practices, unexpected resources emerge, often recombined towards new purposes (Baker, 2007).

Going one step further, we take an interest in bricolage and its material-embodied enactments, specifically how those enactments interact with creative endeavours. Bricolage represents a continuous process of change that seems to have plenty in common with hybrid and messy creativity. As a matter of fact, the field of fashion studies has already turned to bricolage to analyse design processes, by stressing the combining of existing physical resources 'at hand' to create shocking, pleasing or interesting fashion expression (Huopainen, 2016).

In line with Perkmann and Spicer (2014) and Huopalaainen (2016), we comprehend bricolage processes as always shaped by a variety of affected embodied agents with differing values and shifting feelings and spaces, as well as a myriad of powerful non-human agents and materiality.

It seems to us that bricolage might be understood as that form of organizing where embodiment and socio-materiality intertwine, towards the production of a creative proposition. The bricoleur is someone "*who undertakes a wide variety of tasks and who is forever making do, not necessarily using either the correct tools or the proper materials*" (Barnard, 1979, 2002). This reminds us of the designers we observed in situ, constantly reaching for any available item in the studio to suggest a creative action. Such a contemporary, critical and dynamic approach to bricolage is relevant for illuminating the emergent, embodied and relational everyday qualities of this performative concept we are trying to sketch for creativity.

We understood the bricolage activities surrounding creative practices. The designers we observed were being active within their systemic environment, 'mapping rather than conforming to maps' (De Certeau, 1984). They would fit outfits in a form of bricolage directly onto each other's bodies. The design was being explored. They could spend one day on a trial to finally change their mind two days later.

But bricolage was not property of creative practices. We also found bricolage in other practices of a designer's routine, such as pricing. What looked expensive was priced accordingly, but again, this was not predetermined, planned or meticulously calculated. The pricing practice happened in situ and ad hoc (same in Huopalaainen's work on fashion, 2016). Added to that, the space and location also affected the pricing of the garments -pricing might happen last minute, on the plane to New-York's fashion fair.

To sum up, the techniques, expressions and everyday activities of bricolage are helpful in explaining and analysing creativity as a performative concept. The not-knowing is part of the process, as our results show, and vital to it. Knowing would mean abide to economic rules, and being successful on easy commercial terms. Changes, adjustments and tactics are essentially part of how things in creativity are (en)acted.

In the end, while bricolage helps us put some theory onto forms of in situ organizing such as last-minute actions (*'Damn, we don't have marine blue thread, Margot, could you go get some now?'*), it is not

entirely doing justice to the reality, also coloured by the ongoing weight and negotiating of creative value with surroundings materials. We now turn to socio-materiality theorizing for some enlightenment on that other yet inter-related side of things.

- Socio-materiality

*"When you have kind of a soft material, you'll start draping on it...sometimes bias cut for instance...but when you have a tough, thick material, you're gonna cut sharply (...) it's kind of a construction, you build something with the material"*<sup>36</sup> Yohji Yamamoto, Fashion Designer

Significance in those moments relies in the material, creative process is here understood as a situated doing among materials, inventing its way of doing as proceeding toward realization of the object.

In a socio-material framework, *"the social and the material are constitutively entangled in everyday life"*, (Orlikowski, 2007: 1437). This approach posits that materiality is constitutive of everyday life (Latour, 2005). Such a position of constitutive entanglement does not privilege either humans or technology (in one-way interactions), nor does it link them through a form of mutual reciprocation (in two-way interactions). Instead, the social and the material are considered to be inextricably related. There is no social that is not also material, and no material that is not also social.

Back in 1962, Heidegger and the phenomenological school used the term *Dasein* to denote this 'being-in-the-world' whereby subject and object are indistinguishable. They are both part of a situation and exist in a social and historical setting. The development of these alternative conceptualizations (e.g.: Actor Network Theory) can be broadly conceived as post-humanist, as they seek to decentre from the human subject and reconfigure notions of agency in studies of everyday life. Latour (2005) has long argued that agency is not an essence that inheres in humans, but a capacity realized through the associations of actors (whether human or nonhuman), and thus relational, emergent, and shifting.

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<sup>36</sup> From the documentary *Anti-Fashion*, Olivier Nicklaus, 2012

Materiality in organization studies has been accounted for in various contexts: space/spacing and place/placing as designed, practiced, embodied, (re)claimed, enacted, imagined (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Ropo et al., 2013; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Paring, Pez  & Huault, 2017). One important aspect of these research works is to look through tools and situations to consider “*how people, as they interact with a technology in their ongoing practices, enact structures which shape their emergent and situated use of technology*” (Orlikowski, 2000). Once we acknowledge this dynamic interplay between materiality and underlying embodied knowledge, and the role of interactional processes in this relation (Islam et al., 2016), we understand creative action in a brand new way.

Throughout our results, we have empirically illustrated how *creativity happens ad hoc in certain conditions and entanglements between the social and the material* in an ever-changing creative reality (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008).

Indeed, the designers catch how different materials, cloth and surfaces breathe, move, react and perform with(in) hands and bodies. Building on our empirical insights, we reveal how actions such as experimentation allow for bridging between embodied cognition and materiality. Such a 'living practice' -as we called it- is what underlies the interactional process.

Designers stay open to movement, shifts and alteration, genuinely following their desires and instinctive sense of possibility along the fabric. As such, creative professionals might be understood either as mega sensitive engineers, or creative experts in materials.

It is not only a story about the weight and density of one fabric at a moment in space, and time, but also about the way this fabric combines with other fabrics, and surfaces, all along the forming of a coherent creative proposition as an integrated whole. Creative process is here understood as a practical accomplishment within interconnected practices. All those elements (material and semiotic) make up a practice when assembled, held together at some point, and interrelated. The creative process emerges and becomes stabilized.

We define this as the crystallization process, where things get solid, in a way. This also highlights the importance of material accumulation, and the resonance and potential experimentation that comes out of their linkage. Once again, the noise materials make together, taken out of their feel, taken out of their image, expresses something to the creative actors surrounding, and this is of key importance, releasing a creative process yet under constraint.

Without creative actors, there would be not creativity to start with, yet creative actors alone cannot produce creativity. Becker (1982) and followers have underlined the thousands of people other than creative that are involved in creative work, but this is still revolving around human action. And although human action has arguably often been privileged in the study of creative work practices, we believe that *further detailed attention should be paid to the weight of materials, as in bringing back creative actors to their creative focus*, and more broadly to actions and agency of non-human agents, in conceptualizations of creativity. As such, creativity always requires never-ending considerations and adjustments to local circumstances.

Investigating materiality more specifically within creative industries, Islam, Endrissat and Noppeney (2016) reveal how materiality plays a central role in accessing the '*difficult-to-articulate familiar experiences*' that some would see as the essence of creative industries. Materiality's relation to embodied knowledge, and the way in which artefacts steer actions, is identified as enabling the transference between modalities.

Islam et al. (2016) give the example of mood-boards, used in a number of creative industries, as a way of facilitating transitions or translations between mediums, evoking sense and understandings visually, of that which is difficult to grasp in words. *Materiality stabilizes meanings* by encoding them into durable form that can be shared and preserved (Jones et al., 2016). It leaves a trail of what meanings are encoded and by whom.

The anthropocentrism of existing treatments of creative work is also questioned by Duff & Sumartojo (2017). Accounting for the nonhuman, 'more-than-human', bodies, actors and forces that participate in creative work, they propose the concept of 'creative assemblage'. A creative assemblage is understood as a more or less temporary mixture of heterogeneous material, affective and semiotic forces, within which particular capacities for creativity emerge, alongside the creative practices these capacities express.

Drawing from Deleuze & Guattari's discussion of the assemblage (1991), they depict creativity and creative practice as less the innate attributes of individual bodies, and more a function of encounters and alliances between human and nonhuman bodies. Aligning with their work, we believe that full recognition of creative propositions ought to include the whole cast of human and nonhuman agents involved.

In the end, and in line with those previous studies, what we may add to the creative actors, their assistants, the manufacturers, the wholesalers, the photographers and so on...are the buttons,

scissors, washing machines, textiles, plastic etc, all those non-human objects that play a key part in the process. In that sense, we demonstrate how creative practice happens to be a social practice as in Styhre's sense, '*always a sociomaterial practice wherein cognitive, embodied, and material resources are co-aligned and combined*' (2013: 22).

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This sociomaterial turn in the social sciences has been complemented with a specific "*turn to embodiment*" (Dale, 2001) in the field of organization studies, contributing to an ever-growing body of literature on various detailed micro-level practices, through which embodied activities of organizing have been explored.

### 5.1.3 Embodiment and the body

In Beyes & Steyaert's work (2012), the emphasis on the wide spreading of things is complemented with the interaction of such things with the human body. Organizational scholars have explored the embodied and sensorial nature of organizational life in different ways, and with different foci (Gherardi et al., 2013). Such recent work on the body in organizations argues against the ubiquitous tendency to write the body out of organizational life's accounts.

This human body is seen as *an outcome of and the setting for* a play of connections and forces, influenced by its proper fluids and desires as well as social conventions and habits (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). The body is a vehicle for the self to know the world (Mears, 2011). Meaning is generated from sensory perceptions, and involves the subjective, tacit knowledge rooted in feeling and emotion that guide behaviours, thoughts, and actions in organizations (Gherardi et al., 2013).

So embodiment refers to such an experience of possessing a body that moves and feels (Noland, 2009: 105). It captures lived, subjective experiences of inhabiting a body that is capable of engaging in various activities of organizing in motion. And this is what creativity is about: a body engaging in various activities of creating in motion, a sensorial way of knowing which permeates creative everyday practices.

Experiencing new ways of action in one's body changes one's access to the world and specifically to the creative world. And just for the anecdote, the painter Picasso expressed similar thoughts in a provocative way: "*Each of my painting is a flask, filled with my own blood. This is what it's made of*".

We showed in the results how creativity as bodily performances occurs *despite* the economic setting. In that, gesture is key, as not having any value of use, any value of exchange. *Gesture is the opposite of commodity*. It is no truth of mind, determined by reason. Beyond the body movement, gesture is thus fundamental and primary, particle accelerator while creative action unfolds.

As we developed our reflection throughout our findings on fashion designing, the importance of tactility and of sensuous relationships emerged through designer's everyday work doings. Designers are reliant on touch, among other things, to cope with rationalization pressures. Sensing and feeling yarns, fleeces, threads and physical materials is how they succeed in creating something.

As such, gesture establishes itself as the constitutive form of creative process, it is about '*corporalité*' (body as action of the body), and not '*corporeité*' (body as action of the mind), to keep with the French vocabulary. Merleau-Ponty (1964) talks about *corporalité*, insisting on the 'being-body', and shedding light on the idea of a bodily thinking. The word *corporalité*, unlike *corporeité*, emphasizes the specific nature of the bodily constitution of human. The body is in itself whole and it informs human subjectivity and behaviours.

In those creative moments, the *corporeité* (of the mind) does not operate anymore as mediating element between *corporalité* (of the body) and creative subject. It is solely body 'as action of the body' that manifests itself, a body that knows, experiences and works through the senses (Gherardi et al., 2013).

As much as *corporalité* is intuitive and innate, *corporeité* is a human construction, via the uses, beliefs and knowledge, therefore subjective. So as much as *corporalité* is out of economic reach, *corporeité* is part of it. The *corporalité* of a subject is always very individual and unique. Creative process understood through *corporalité* depends on characteristics, functioning, capacities and limits of one's own body. From there arises creative work.



In those *corporalité* moments (amidst other moments), creative production is not about knowledge or representation, but rather made of tried and tested living. It is one's eyes that see the shapes under the light - to use the word of the French architect Le Corbusier- and not the mind.

This way, *creative process is constituted by a series of gestures originating in body*. There is the first gesture, and from this first one follows amplification, diversion, differentiated lines...Until a final form is produced. Consequently, the movement is embodied in human body through gestures. It is this movement that gathers the very personal creative momentum and discloses it. A movement is like a transition, from an answer to another, from a desire to another. Every creative actor has his or her library of gestures. The space of touch takes shape around the creative-product-to-come, safe haven in the rationalization grid.

Therefore, the gesture is understood as the structuring and structural piece of creative action. To be able to create means to decrypt the material *at hand* through gestures. The body, through gestures, reveals a creativity in motion, in-the-making. In that sense, *gestures allow the anchorage within creative desire rather than rationalization logics*. Sensitive perspectives impinge on the intelligible.

A creative person creates because she is able to see, she is able to seize a given account of shape, contour and space. Beyond mechanical gesture, the hand remains fundamental. Silence often occurs within a creative playground, leaving some space for such a 'sacred triangle': a gesture, a position, a posture that suggest.

Following Blackman et al., the concept of subjectivity is replaced with a focus upon bodies, where bodies are not "*singular, bounded, closed and fixed but rather open to being affected and affecting others*" (2008: 11). Relational connections change and alter bodies as they move and sense the world. Through hands creative persons unify this impossible-to-define thing, following the variability of viewpoints. Arguably here gesture becomes a possibility to communicate, a signifying intention.

To go one step further, the gestural intention might even remain opaque to oneself until the other person takes it over. The comprehension of the other happens through such a research, that positions a creative object, and facilitates common understanding. Here we focus and look at the coupling of the human body and its gestures with technology, materials, other spirits and surroundings to get creative things done.

If we simplify a bit to grasp the idea, the body becomes a mediator of meaning. It reveals a dimension of feelings, staying attuned to the object that arises under the hands. Decoding happens through gestures. Hence, the body curls up in its environment and surroundings, concentrating on answering the environment's stimulations, deviating from providing economic right answers. In opposite ways, an autonomous body that ignores its environment is under exposure, risking disappearance, sometimes. Ignoring its environment, the body becomes closed to own experience, directed by reason -understood as an extension of economic constraints and pure capital's *tekhne*. The body in those moments is present but in a very programmed way.

On a broader level, we surely learn from these performances and practices, and they provide information for our understanding of creativity. Sticking to appearances, the body, in our culture, is strongly valued. But taking a closer look, we realize how much bodies are often silent. There are silent in creative work too. In our civilisation, more and more determined by technique, the body gets less and less space, meaning it is intervening less and less.

It seems to us important to give back to the body what belongs to it. A body-in-action rather than evanescent, silent, without any smell or weight, sleek and transparent, subject to ephemeral. Far from the body-instrument, for work or for enjoyment, a body with no mystery.

Elias (1976) held our civilization responsible for rendering the body completely silent. It is however from the body's first impulse that things arise. Creative production has a lot to do with the body, and conversely. The body sets the creative process into movement. And the reverse is also true: the creative process sets the body in motion, moving it forward.

This way, a creative proposition says something about the body. Not in being its mirror within the body, but rather as in getting embedded, settling in the body. The body provides substance and form for creative propositions. Therefore, creativity understood in action is in a way a bodily fulfilment. Body-in-action leaves some traces, 'bodyprints' on which the rest lands.

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So far, the discussion has been focusing on the embodied-material aspects of creativity. In accordance with different theoretical discussions, we clarified the complex empirical reality we witnessed. In particular, we shed light on human and non-human movements across creative spaces, and how manipulations of human bodies, robe and material surfaces are operated by

using bodies, uncostly things and various resources available at hand, in that space and time we call 'the playground'.

In this playground, the manifold activities of creativity, practiced 'in-action', are always contingent on various actors, relations, agencies and interactions, as well as the unavoidable presence of uncertainty, ambiguity and accident.

Such extended view of materials and bodies required moving beyond dualistic ways of thinking, as it enabled to problematize dualisms (such as the body/mind one) and to integrate insights from both views (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000; Strati, 2007). To take this step provides a new way of thinking, from now on tinged with simultaneity, entanglements and movements, as recent scholars have forcefully advocate for (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008).

Yet, the intense, embodied, expressive, elusive and tactically vested notion of creativity cannot be problematized further from a purely discursive and embodied-materialistic point of view. This is when affect enters the stage.

*"I'm not interested in how people move, but what moves them", Pina Bausch, dancer*

So far we have revealed how much effects and co-effects are decisive along creative process. But they are not the only decisive elements. Materials and bodies are never simply stabilized effects of the subject-positions that precede them. Affect also has to play a part in the direction creative work takes, to complete the picture.

In and through their bodies, creative actors feel joy, pain, anger, exhaustion, excitement, love, passion and so forth. And from those emotions derives the creative proposition. Emotions alter, lift, carry, strain, involve, inspire...and by so doing provide direction.

#### 5.1.4 Affect and sensation

*"Pure originality does not consist in breaking the rules, but in claiming own personal emotions, inseparable from collective emotion"*<sup>37</sup> Viktor and Rolf, fashion designers

We cannot examine the lived experience of creativity without bringing attention to affect. Sticking to Beyes & Steyaert's work (2012), we now turn to affect, revealing how much previous notions of practice and the body are interwoven with their affective construction.

Affects shape the creative actions previously described. As an extension of our first part on the discursive and embodied-material response of creative actors, we now turn towards affects to account for what they feel and subjectively experience in and through their bodies.

The perspective from where we are talking now does not aim at redeveloping affect against discourse, but rather at questioning their separation. As Laclau (2005: 111) puts it, *"affect is not something that exists on its own, independently of language; it constitutes itself only through the differential catexes of a signifying chain [...]". Hegemonic or discursive formations would be unintelligible without the affective component"*.

It appears to us that in order to understand the complexities of creativity, and gain deeper understandings of the lived experiences central to creativity in action, among materials and bodies, we need to address aspects of affect. In what follows, we are discussing the centrality of affect together with our results. This way, and different to the dominant literature on creativity, we approach creativity as inherently affective.

What we observed in our results is how designers dwell in the studio on the affective mode. They feel (something) before they express (something). The affects bring us back from composite meanings and habitual use of thoughts and help us start from intensities of experience, which is from where the subject is created (Smith, 2007; Colebrook, 2005). We believe *creative action unfolds through/in this affective mode of living one's own world*.

There is no single definition of affect theory; on the contrary, affect theory builds bridges

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<sup>37</sup> From the documentary *Anti-Fashion*, Olivier Nicklaus, 2012

between humanities, neurosciences, emotion studies and organization studies. The shift towards affect is again grounded in a phenomenological epistemology of the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) that theorizes the self as always situated, embodied and interconnected in the world. Affect and its visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing can serve to drive us toward movement, thought, and ever-changing forms of relations (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010).

Following an affective turn in the fields of sociological studies (Clough, 2007; Sedwick, 2003), the study of affects and its *'pulsing refrains'* (Fotaki et al., 2017) is currently gaining ever-growing scholarly interest in the realm of organization studies (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; Beyes & De Cock, 2017; Fotaki et al., 2017; Gabriel, 2014; Wood & Brown, 2011).

Affect permeates organizations profoundly, and allows us to see, anew, the 'texture' of the world, as it is lived and experienced (Fotaki et al., 2017). It denotes the inter-connectedness of social forces and lived embodied experiences through inter-relations between bodies (Adamson & Johansson, 2016).

Affect instigates us not so much to look at representations and significations as to engage with the intensities and the forces of organizational life (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012), in our case creative life within organization. It offers novel ways of moving beyond the inherent pessimism of poststructuralist theory and its perceived emphasis on the domination of the subject by power (Fotaki et al., 2017). A creative relationship is co-constituted between the lived, experiential body and the society (Dale, 2001).

*"Creative fabulation has nothing to do with a memory, however exaggerated, or with fantasy. In fact, the artist goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived.*

*The artist is a seer, a becomer"* Deleuze & Guattari (1994: 171)

Here, anti-substantialist and pre-individual matters of sensory awareness enter the scene of creative thinking. Self-reflecting processes guide creative professionals to enact the creative. Indeed, in Deleuze's view, a creative proposition generates affect. Such an affect takes creative actors back from their composite, opinionated and habitual meanings. It makes them start from the non-human or the meaningless, in order to experience the event of sense, the potential of becoming-other (Hjorth, 2013).

Affect suggests the promise of a state of becoming that can potentially destabilize and unsettle

into new states of being (Massumi, 1996). This greater awareness to the lived experiences of creativity invites a new reading on the notion.

Massumi (2002) argues that affect is a story about the brain and the brainless. It is a story about listening to one's own gut, no matter how good, bad, rational or irrational something sounds on paper (Karpi et al., 2016). Listening to the gut, for Massumi (2002: 29), is to understand the force of "*a half-second lapse between the beginning of a bodily event and its completion in an outwardly directed, active expression*". From there, we wish to do justice to affectivity in a way that also emphasizes embodied-materiality.

Designers observed on the field were animated and moved by the fundamentals of clothing and the role of textiles as indispensable tools in their creation. Keevers & Sykes explain how "*some of the resources useful for examining affectivity and socio-materiality include a focus on doing an emphasis on the embodiment of practice by practitioners, and the sensing, knowing, perceptive body*" (2016: 4, cited in Huopalaainen, 2016).

All these resources catch our interest. Shifting feelings and experiences are related to socio-material flows, but also subjectively experienced through the body, and interdependent on other bodies. Affects are the binding agent that link together lived experiences within social and personal spaces, among socio-material practices.

Arguably, atmosphere is also of interest in this scheme. Michels & Steyaert (2017) relate atmosphere to as spatial ontology of 'being-together-in-a-sphere'. From there, we could picture how a creative studio's peculiar atmosphere emerges through a series of encounters, between various bodies and their specific affective capacities. The playground we depicted renders perceptible the potentialities of a creative space, and give scope to creative agents' feelings as they experience a spatial recomposition (Michels & Steyaert, 2017).

We also realize how creativity is so crucially connected to time, more to action entangled with time. At some moments, in the creative studio, speed, hurry, stress and lack of time are the only things that dominate and saturate the atmosphere. At other moments, time is suspended. By observing so, we understand how creativity is defined through its close yet sometimes paradoxical relation to time. As such, we shed light on creativity as a continually made and unmade process across time and space. The body is also part of it, retaining the trace of time. The body remembers the affective living and re-actualizes permanently.

The field of affect studies offers critical approaches to subjectivity. All those sensuous emotions

and feelings not only invite action in creativity, but also create *affective relationships and subjective value that equally carry along creativity*. Such approaches have the potential to problematize and disrupt dichotomies, especially the one that catches our attention, between creativity and economy.

Rooted in real-life experience, affects are referring to those vital ways of feeling in the world, through emotions, through embodiment (Stewart, 2007). In that sense they matter hugely in the coming together of creativity and economy. As an instructing, transpersonal power, *affect is what allows creative actors to not lose ground on their creative activity*. Affect makes them act, exceeding or preceding (economic) rationality. Creative activity implies creative affectivity.

It is important to note that this conceptualisation shifts attention from simply focusing on the action-side of creativity, to stress the centrality of passion. Thinking the affective materiality that performs creativity means pondering the passion for the activity and resultant emotional movements. In our findings we underlined various affective processes that are tightly connected to the possibility of creativity: excitement, enthusiasm, concern, disappointment, surprise, recognition and so forth.

Rich in empirical data, this research shows how the stitching, sewing or piecing together of materials as well as resources or ideas provides a key to 'grasp the ungraspable' of creative action, on the background of emotional states felt all along. We believe *creative work relies essentially in this uncertain process of passionate 'becoming'*.

In modern organizations, and as a result of the industrial revolution's processes, the 'creative man' seems to be crowded out of the workplace by the 'economic man' (Hjorth, 2003). The economic man is conditioned by the organization to carry out pre-determined activities to maintain control and predictability, hence constructing playfulness and passion as non-organizational (Hjorth, 2003).

What we demonstrate here is how desire and passion for creative action is precisely what organizes creative professionals in opposition to dominant managerial strategies (Hjorth, 2003).

Designers interviewed and observed spoke passionately about the potential of their design projects, and discussed their belief in their findings and recommendations. Also, their actions were driven by a desire to position the organization in the long-term rather than short-term economic interest, and this drove them to enact new paths of action beyond simply doing economic actors (Hjorth, 2003).

Many illustrations of this phenomenon can be found in our findings. While following the work of a designer, we noticed how she constantly enacts new paths of action (and is self-reflective on those enactments), distinct from customary working practices in the industry. In her mind, in her hands, in her propositions, a clear distinction was made between the conventional industry and her work as an independent designer. We underlined practices such as belonging to peculiar networks for instance.

The passion shows itself and stands out in the mi(d)st of tensions, grievances and problems experienced in the organisation of work (Contu, 2014). If points of strains and tensions are evident, the continuity of the passion is consistent and takes over. And this is due to the passion for the creative practice and the (more or less) imaginary community of competent practitioners (other independent designers in our results) for whom and by whom the practice is enjoyed.

Contu (2014) calls such a phenomenon the 'manufacture of commitment', nurtured through shared communities of practice. It is the passion for the practice, the investment and trust in the identity of strong independent professionals doing their dream job that enable the stake for this practice to stand out meaningfully and powerfully for all those involved.

This despite, or perhaps even more due to, the increasing strain and sense of frustration and unfairness (Contu, 2014). Plausibly, these aspects authenticate the passion, making it real. This identification can be actual, as for the main designer we observed throughout our work, or can be in the future, as in the case of her assistant.

More on the trainee side, she (the assistant) is learning her identity as a competent independent designer, on the side of the lead designer. In the end, this scenario supports the manufacturing of commitment that makes possible the continuity of autonomous designing practice, in the face of growing discontinuity, when tensions and dislocations start shaking creative actors' certainties.

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When wondering how tensions are navigated, a clue is given by affect, furnishing the reflection on creative work as being a passionate endeavor. Inter-subjective transmission of intensity is key. We argue that considerations of how affect emerges, travels and is transmitted between bodies are essential for understanding a range of issues relating to creativity, including the daily combining of creativity with economics.

Therefore, we acknowledge the presence and significance of affects in creative experiencing,



staging an affective creativity on all levels. Those pre-individual matters of sensory awareness and atmosphere make up for a whole set of economic pressures, escaping their discursive capture and naming, simultaneously escaping their logic and refusing to conform to their expectations. Subjects become interlinked in given circuits of experience, affect connects them to those around in ways that are 'extra-linguistic' (Fotaki et al., 2017).

### 5.1.5 Render the multiple and the minor visible

The montage of parallel assemblages enacts multiplicity and affirms what Beyes & Steyaert call '*a minor politics of alternative imaginations and practices*' (2012: 56). Aligning with Beyes and Steyaert's call, we wish to abandon the assumed authority and putative certainties of 'theory' (of creativity) in favour of a more generous, attentive and responsive 'witnessing' (of creative actions).

Apprehending rather than representing reality has a particular resonance when the object of research is elusive and tricky - it seems the more creativity is under study, the more fleeting and puzzling it becomes.

Based on a certain reading of De Certeau's problematic of coming to terms with spatial multiplicity (in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984), our work reveals the various spaces co-existing in a dominant (economic) place, through the development of different tactics. Pragmatic collaborations happen on the background of a very fuzzy behaviour, constituted of personal spaces managed within the dominant place, allowing creative actors to accomplish work and meet professional responsibilities.

Therefore, De Certeau's analysis sharpens our awareness of '*provisional spatio-temporal constellations that are in process, alive and unstable*' (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 53). Our results underline the processual performativity of designing, and by doing so, acknowledge the co-existence of a multiplicity of time-spaces surrounding creative action.

Through our findings, we also understand how creative space is organized through multiple trajectories and affective registers. In the end, the minor is rendered visible in allowing multiplicity and mess in (creativity), as revealed by the outline of tactical, bricolage and socio-material practices, coloured with *embodiment* and affectivity.

This is what creativity is all about. The theories we invoked helped us suggest a new approach to the way in which we apprehend creativity, away from the use of static concepts that reify and freeze the complexity and intricacy of embodied experience. We firstly underlined the tactical part of creative work, necessary to deal with economic constraints.

While investigating further, we also shed some light on the embodied-material and affective aspects of creativity in the making. We believe such aspects deserve our further scholarly exploration, and to render those ideas visible, we suggest the concept of 'Creativity-in-action'.

Creativity-in-action reveals an uncertain organizational process allowing and demanding multiple humans and non-humans to become part of the work in progress. *Creativity-in-action carries the idea that creativity happens through many actions, and re-actions to a certain non-human and human context, triggering embodied and affective responses.* Looking at this the other way around leads to understand how affective and sensory isolation would mean the end of creativity.

Being creative-in-action means confronting the action. Make. Do. React through actions. Creativity-in-action is about this spontaneous reaction to the present. In the playground, what happens between material, its weight, mass and volume, and the body, is unique. To create is to find the right position, the right posture that is mental, concrete and corporal all at the same time.

*Where does this 'in-action' come from ?*

The 'in-action' here is a mimicking of the 'in-action' of Latour's *Science-in-action* (1987). Following scientists and engineers through society, Latour emphasizes that science can only be understood through its practice. The author examines science and technology 'in action', or 'in the making', shedding light on the daily activities of laboratories. Throughout his book, Latour shows how a lively and realistic picture of science in action alters our conception of the sciences. We believe that, like scientists, creative actors' work remains little understood. Mimicking Latour's denomination and aligning with his approach, this thesis contains a full-featured approach to the empirical study of creativity, aiming at altering the common conception of creativity.

For the purpose of this research, creativity within creative industries was broadly approached as an intense creative and economic practice. Trying to get a grip on the practices developed to articulate economic constraints, we brought to light various processes whereby creative insiders

go about organizing, making, manipulating and 'working around' things and surfaces in order to 'act' creative.

In the end, we deliberately emphasized how creativity always intertwines socio-materiality and embodied action, and this is something that was addressed empirically.

We believe creative industries' actors are creative-in-action while interacting their creativity with fabric, texture, shape, form and surface, listening to their feelings during those interactions, training their hands and their eyes to sculpt while keeping in mind matters of taste and aesthetic judgment as important throughout their work.

*What is so performative about creativity-in-action?*

Organizational actors are understood as network effects (Callon, 1980), they acquire the attributes of the entities they include (Law, 1999). And this operation comes about through the idea of performativity. If entities (human or non-human) achieve their form as a consequence of the relations in which they are located, and if relations do not hold fast by themselves, then they have to be performed in, by, and through those relations.

Creativity-in-action is thus understood as a performing, organized action, in movement. Especially since the 1990s, critical research has elaborated on Judith Butler's (1988, 2004) construct and theory of performativity as the repetition of stylized acts that are simultaneously intentional and performative. Performativity, for Butler, should not be understood as a singular or deliberated act of some sort, but rather as the reiterative and quoting practice through which discourse produces the effects it is describing. In the end, repeated and reiterative practices and discourses are *the reason how* a concept is produced.

Butler's work helps comprehend what we mean by the 'in-action' in creativity-in-action. As previously seen, the position of the creative actor is evidently no stable construct. Rather, the position is constantly shifting, moving, in a flux, within the everyday interactions among people, materiality, a specific socio-cultural context and affective ways through all that. Following Butler and feminist researchers who try to avoid fixing gender in contemporary organizations, we try here to avoid the 'fixing' of the very fleeting notion of creativity that we identify, by mobilising that notion of performativity.

In the end, by contextualizing creative action in its material-embodied and affective form, previously taken-for-granted categories are scrutinised, and values become outcomes of messy negotiations and contested meanings with(in) surroundings. In the following part, we will try to explain how such a new conception of creativity might contribute to various fields of studies.

### *To conclude*

Unfolding this performative concept of creativity is what enabled us to answer our research question.

Creative actors deal with rationalization logics in two main ways. First, by developing various tactics that maintain a creative fuzziness around them in the organization. Second, by sticking to that creativity-in-action, meaning being aware of the materials and the non-human surroundings, with and within their bodies and gestures, all along with affective endeavours and responses.

All that goes towards the forming of an integrated whole that is a creative proposition, which remains rooted in the creative intention despite the weight of the economic forces. Hopefully, this discussion has provided a support that makes possible the continuity of creative practice, in the face of widening cracks threatening its very existence.

## **5.2 Contributions to organization studies**

*'Understanding where ideas come from and how they evolve, elucidating the process and mechanisms of creativity, is a scholarly challenge of the highest order'* Sgourev, 2016: 115

This thesis explores several aspects of creativity, addressing some of the constitutive elements that have dominantly been overlooked. Specifically, we propose a study of creativity that entails a profound immersion in the tactical, socio-material, embodied and affective relations, none of which have traditionally been the focus of existing creativity studies in the realms of organization studies or fashion studies (Huopainen, 2016).

Previous research on tensions between the economic and the creative has often failed to embrace creativity as an embodied-material phenomenon in motion, 'in action', and in what follows we reflect upon why we believe this is important, and how it can contribute to the organizational creativity debate occurring within organization studies.

### 5.2.1 The 'in-between': arrangements and affects in creative industries

Throughout arrangements and affects, a careful mediation between creativity and economic profit happens within creative industries. We wish to demonstrate that such doings are powerful. A developed understanding of creative work needs to consider and acknowledge the presence, influence and power of these intertwined practices.

With this research, we hope to advance studies on creativity and the realities of creative work, in lucrative organizations and in contexts of everyday life's organized conditions within creative industries. Revealing the tactical, embodied-material, and affective side of creativity, this approach broadens the scope of what creativity research explains.

Not only is openness and heterogeneity more central nowadays in discussions on how to organize for creativity, but also the in-between, the *entre*. Following Hjorth, Strati & Weik (2015) who called for an emphasis '*not so much upon what is in people, but rather what is in-between people*', we provide answers to the questions '*how is creative life organized?*', '*is there a dynamics of everyday organizing of creativity that we are missing?*'<sup>38</sup>.

Suspecting this might be so, they point out the importance of considering the 'knowing-in-practice' (Gherardi & Strati, 2012) that characterize the dynamics surrounding creativity, grounded on and embodied in the materiality of the tacit, relational and aesthetic nature of everyday organizational life (Strati, 1999). They encourage research that examines the aesthetic dimensions of organizational creativity, its beauty and its ugliness, its sensorial worlds.

In their view, this *entre* represents potential for new knowledge, and they insist on the urge to '*stay with practices, include the body, forces, and the sensorial*'. Such studies are indeed emerging, where we are invited to learn how artful making and artful practices are an integral part of and enhance the organization conditions for creativity (Austin & Devin, 2003; Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Strati, 2008).

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<sup>38</sup> Call for Papers-OS Special Issue on Organizational Creativity, Play and Entrepreneurship-2015

Our findings indicate where movement can happen, and where space for play is incipient (Hjorth, 2005). First, what we say is that being creative does not only require creative practices. We address the tactical in-between that plays a key part in arranging for creative process.

- Necessary arrangements

*'Beyond these theoretical issues, there is also a great need for careful empirical research examining how metis intelligence can arise in, and/or have effects on, organizational systems, perhaps especially those systems that are predicated on command-and-control models of strategy and leadership'. Letiche & Statler 2005: 15*

To conceptualize creativity as a tactical art (or metis intelligence) of creating spaces for play can provide a contribution to studies of creativity in the context of lucrative organizations. With this research, we shine a light on the constant flow of actions surrounding creative action, such as various tactics and arrangements that sustain fuzziness and movement within rationalization logics.

This research creates deep and situated knowledge on the uncertain, ambiguous and ever-changing process of creating-in-action. It does so by exploring in detail how creative actors and their teams creatively suggest something amidst varied and tactical practices. Creating-in-action appears always on the move and suddenly very far from any idealized genius phenomenon.

Our focus was placed on the conditions for the emergence of creativity in creative organizations – conditions described as space for play or invention (De Certeau, 1984). We demonstrated how the relation between creativity and surrounding rationalization logics is central for this focus. Using De Certeau's concepts enabled a new approach regarding this relation. Creativity is now understood through various tactics of creating space, other spaces, in managerially determined places.

Therefore, one of the contributions of this research is the mobilisation of Michel De Certeau's work, and the new light it sheds on creativity. His conception encourages us to shift our focus onto the moments when, and the ways in which, all forms of practices, action and intervention, both individual and collective, help in the construction of creativity.

Indeed, our study sought to understand how creative agents who face persistent complexity enact both the conflict and the interdependence of coexisting rationales in their everyday work. We theorized various sets of mechanisms: playing the game of the market, cultivating one's uniqueness and seek autonomy.

We integrated them into a conceptual model of creative fuzziness, that reflects their processual relationship, and explains how creative agents can dynamically balance coexisting rationales, to make them conflicting-yet-complementary (Smets et al., 2015).

Consequently, our contribution lies into the acknowledgement of tactics surrounding creative work in creative industries. Those arrangements offer an insight into what may, at first glance, appear as a spontaneous process. They are necessary for creativity to occur at boundaries, where signature-skills are needed to accomplish the task at hand. In addition, they reveal a political process played at boundaries, a process that is reproduced and reproduces a working order in creative industries.

More specifically, we contribute to the organizational creativity debate through the fine, thick and detailed description of those processes of spaces and places, and of the practices at their origin. What we say is that being creative does not only require creative practices. Leaning on De Certeau's work allows seeing creativity anew, through a novel angle of analysis. We explained how the tactical is intertwined with the practice under study and, more broadly, the constitution and reproduction of such practice.

This significantly extends how we conceptualize creativity in organizations and allows us to address some of the shortcomings of existing theories. We identified a gap in most studies of creativity, as in the neglect of the affective dimension, to us central to creativity. It is this affective dimension that is elaborated further in this research, and provide for another contribution.

- Necessary affects

Our findings and our discussion have revealed an embodied and affective creativity. We demonstrated how creative actions are mediated by the relationship between the senses, and the nature of engagement with the sensory experience. Therefore, this research has implications regarding how the creative work that lies at the heart of creative practice is characterised and

assessed. It is conducted, mediated, and/or facilitated by nonhuman agents, functioning as active and affective collaborators in the work of creativity.

Indeed, we argued that affective processes and subjectively felt socio-material intensities, such as enthusiasm, concern, exhaustion, excitement etc are crucial to the everyday doing of creativity, on all levels. By being creative, a creative agent intends to create long-term (or not) affection, that materializes and resonates in creative objects. The buyer, in turn with his/her own affective answer, tries to respond to these affective choices. Perspectives on affect and embodiment affirm the intertwining of moving bodies and the mind. Creativity is no purely physical or purely mental skill, but a coordination of bodily action, doings, knowledge, thoughts and feelings, all of which allow creative actors to pave their own way within economic contexts.

The above elements that were brought into discussion helped us reveal how creativity happens in-the-making, in the opening/break/suspense that a given playground creates. We were interested, in particular, in how intensity is provided by the creative-economic force of tension, and how this 'electrification' at the outset provides a passionate time where the power to be affected and the power to affect are important forces. Feelings are the instrument of creative agents' attention, not the focus but the mean and vehicle through which they get access to creation.

While vision and creativity are easily associated, creativity and affect are less so. Organizational ethnographies more specifically have paid close attention to practices of talk and rhetoric within day-to-day situations or how people make sense of talk, but less detail has been paid to embodied actions and affective dimensions of organizational life (Huopainen, 2016). Consequently, the toolkit of the creativity perspective is being enriched by such an affective contribution, derived from ethnographic work as well.

This way, the notion of stake articulated with that of enjoyment and imagination has been reactivated, showing how the affective dimension plays an important role in covering over discontinuities and maintaining the continuity of the creative practice. The creation of affection not only drives, but also shapes and defines the behaviours of human and non-human agents, involved in organizing for creativity.

Our hope is that the approach developed here can inform those wishing to study creative work and organisation from this perspective, and offer new points for further elaboration of affective creativity at work.



## 5.2.2 Getting back to current debates with insights

*"While economists have been game to think about public policy toward creative activities, they have largely ignored questions about why those activities are organized the way they are. Artists of all types engage in creative processes and tasks that come to completion only with the collaboration of humdrum partners (...) I attempt an integrated attack on the organization of creative activities. There is much to be done, and the goal could be pursued in several ways."* Caves, 2000: 1

The implications of this research broadens the understanding and thinking tools for those interested in exploring the politics of creative work and organising specifically in the creative industry. Our intention is to challenge certain underlying and taken-for-granted assumptions about the notions of creativity and creative industries.

- An answer to the 'missing link'

The elements we unfolded, on arrangements and affects, suggest a possible answer to the literature that investigates the relations between creativity and economy in creative industries. Attempts to examine empirically the detailed nature of these supposedly essential tensions, the specifics of how the competing logics interact, are not common in the research literature (but see Barrett, 2004; Cohendet & Simon, 2007; Eikhof & Hautschild, 2007).

Thompson et al. (2007) point to a gap in understanding of the inner workings of creative firms, a *'missing link between conception and consumption'*, which does *'leave a gap where concrete analysis of work should be'* (p. 625). Efforts to develop research to explain interactions and ways of working within creative contexts, as consequences of these conflicting tensions, are similarly scarce (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017).

We started this research with a theoretical part, which underlined the call of many scholars for a deeper analysis into the drivers of creative action in creative production -which in turn would help to understand better the relationship between creativity and business in creative industries. Although highly relevant for creative production, the drivers of creative action in these and other similar situations remain unclear.

Until very recently, the management literature was strangely silent about creative practices at an intra-organisational level. Even in the creative industries field, there are surprisingly few empirical studies that examine how creativity is managed and organised at work (Warhurst, 2010). With this research, we provide an answer, and in this way, we also address the neglect of the material that has been recognized in research on creative processes that dominate the studies of creative industries (Hennion, 2004; Jones, Boxenbaum & Anthony, 2013; Islam et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2016).

In response to such challenges, the tactical, material-embodied and affective practices we reveal act as intrinsic drivers, like a function support, and without those it can be doubted that the disadvantages and uncertainties of the industries would be accepted at all. Altogether, this study shows in its actual realisation the struggle of a practice that is caught between creativity and commerce, management and craft, passion and business; and the antagonisms therein generated (Elkjaer & Huysman, 2008; McKinlay & Smith, 2009; Thrift, 2005). Arrangements and affects underlined provide answers to such antagonisms.

We hope to contribute to a better comprehension of the reactions of creative actors facing these potential tensions. The question of the modalities of articulation formulated in the literature is unsettled and on hold: *'Analysing the practices that help to bridge the gap between artistic work and the economic need for self- management adds to our understanding of a phenomenon most relevant for the creative industries in general'*. (Eikhof & Hauntschild, 2007: 235).

Our contribution here is to advance studies on that topic. Our research arguably provides new ideas on how creative actors handle the central paradox of creative production (Lampel, Lant & Shamsie, 2000; Linstead, 2010; Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017). We underline the arrangements and affects that also occur in those creative industries, as *'simply balancing the two drivers is insufficient'* (Eikhof & Hauntschild 2007: 233).

What is more, this research enriches the existing literature on the concept of role as a resource (Alvarez et al., 2005; Baker & Faulkner, 1991), by caring about the various mechanisms that creative agents deploy to ensure the combining and consolidation of roles to get access to necessary resources. Circumvention becomes possible and key to use the commercial tools as

they, creative agents, want it, and not exactly like the way it was thought out by the designers of such tools.

The set of tactics identified does not claim to completeness, but, to a relatively modest extent, tries to get closer to the daily reality of a creative agent within creative industries. By paying attention to the role played by agency, we demonstrate how those actions are triggered by endogenous factors, such as for instance individual quest towards inclusion or autonomy.

In a recent, provocative essay on social inquiry, Law and Urry (2004) argue that current modes of social research do not resonate well with important aspects of twenty-first century global realities. They suggest a number of areas where this lack of resonance is particularly pronounced. For example, they argue that contemporary social science is ill-equipped to address issues of ephemerality, multiplicity, dispersion, and mobility.

Some of those shortcomings might arise from scholars' conceptual difficulties in dealing with the inextricably material nature of our sociality (Orlikowski, 2007). The position of constitutive entanglement we advocate for privileges neither humans nor technologies, neither knowing nor doing; nor does it link them in a form of mutual interdependence (as in a two-way interactions).

Hopefully, focusing on these tactical, socio-material and affective aspects of everyday practices surrounding and constituting creativity will open important avenues for examining and understanding the ongoing production of creative and organizational life. This, in turn, helps us join this '*minor politics*' Beyes and Steyaert advocate for in research (2012).

Aligning with Beyes and Steyaert's call, we wish to abandon the assumed authority and putative certainties of 'theory' (of creativity) in favour of a more generous, attentive and responsive 'witnessing' (of creative actions). This way, the minor is rendered visible, allowing multiplicity and mess in (creativity), as revealed by the outline of tactical, embodied-material, and affective practices.

Finally, we wish to finalize this section with a focus on everyday life. Understanding complexity between economy and creativity could more and more involve taking those everyday life paths. Creative agents themselves, very conscious of the conflicting demands that characterize their work, have a practical comprehension on how to navigate between domains.

As the notion of 'creative fuzziness' we developed shows, observed mechanisms do not simplify

nor solve the initial various dilemmas. Rather, they maintain such dilemmas and those various contexts in constant constructive tension. When disorder forms part of a persisting order on the long term, it is not experimented as blocking.

Over time, answers to such dilemmas, that form a now well-known part of daily creative work, might become usual, ordinary, banal, nested within practical comprehensions of agents, on how to accomplish their work in such a specific context. In practice, dealing with tensions becomes a continuous and voluntary achievement.

This way, and in contrast with existing literature, we do not believe that leaders or managers are the ones that can apprehend those multiple realms, but much more those 'ordinary' actors, on the field, doing their ordinary work, living this complexity on a daily basis.

- Address the shortcomings of current theories

The idea that creativity is often chaotic, hesitant, incomplete, made of bricolage practices and erratic decisions, is something that scientific investigation has great difficulty to reckon. There is a standard or dominant perspective, which presents organizational creativity as series of bounded stages (Fisher & Amabile, 2009; George & Zhou, 2001; Woodman et al., 1993). Taking a different path, this research suggests that processes occur in a way that cannot be confined within specific components of a linear characterization.

Obviously, acts of organizational creativity are executed following a given plan in the organization. However, expertise is acquired and skills developed through relevant experiences, and serve as prior rehearsals to acts of improvisation. This suggests a departure from the view of practices as temporally evolving (and at times linear) sets of activities, or bundles of activities, in which action b follows action a, which then proceeds to a set of other actions to form a coherent whole we can identify as a practice.

On the contrary, all the aspects we underlined are crucial to the everyday doing of creativity. Following Huopalainen (2016), we reject the idea of creativity described as a linear opportunistic activity of resource utilization, treating both resources and their environment as fixed, granted and stable.

Such straightforward and disembodied treatments of creativity ignore the multiplicity of daily actions and realities, the ambiguity and uncertainty attached to them, and the essence of a creative process constantly occurring over performative actions, in flux, between human and non-human agents, between ideas and actions, between mind and body...all those things constantly in interaction.

This heterogeneous and inclusive entanglements between embodiment, materiality, affects and emotions, this is where we see a potential and relevant theoretical contribution for studies interested in creativity within creative industries. All those meaningful things are the key to understand creativity within economic constraints. Our research on multiple practices will hopefully allow, while focusing on the empirical aspect of it, to go further than the 'taken for granted' theories on creativity, denounced by critical researches.

We have indeed previously reported the '*doctrine of creativity*' (Osborne, 2003) of the '*creative everything era*' (Linstead, 2010), where creativity is loaded with non-creative forces captured by professional fields. Not only will this approach be a way of exploring how the material and affective matter, but also of promoting a critical analysis of this positive 'politico-moral' imperative.

It seems to us that choosing to ignore the presence of those aspects in creativity means getting a fragmented, partial and surely incomplete representation of what creative practices are. Providing a rich, situated and thick empirical study is a way for us to unlock such clichés.

Indeed, the relation between an established order and creativity is central to all forms of organizational creativity, but it is theorized almost exclusively from the perspective of management or strategic management (du Gay, 1997; Hjorth, 2005; Stopford & Baden-Fuller, 1994), which commonly results in paradoxical systems for controlled creativity. Such a problem is related to an inherited priority given to managerial perspectives when dealing with organizational problems and a subsequent lack of concepts that would allow an alternative (Hjorth, 2005).

Consequently, existing creativity research has not reflexively and sufficiently managed to explain how creativity emerges in its own context. How creative agents truly enrol in powerful action. How they co-create actions themselves in and through their bodies, in specific situations across time and space. How they weigh-up or cope with rationalization logics in a constant play of order-disorder (what we call 'the creative fuzziness') and organization.

As an alternative, this research has shown the increasing importance of the tacit, diffuse and tactical dimension of creativity, embedded in human and non-human practices. Hopefully, our refined processual perspective offers a deep understanding of power dynamics in creativity intertwined with issues of affect and the politics of multiple tactics in creative industries. We contribute to a critique of mainstream knowledge on creativity, while offering an alternative line of inquiry.

- On a broader scope

Our aim was to consider the practices that characterize the dynamics around creativity, thus, our results are grounded in the materiality of the tactic and relational nature of everyday organizational life.

Consequently, we believe this work might contribute to the 'spatial turn' in organization studies (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013; Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Dale and Burrell, 2008; Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Van Marrewijk and Yanow, 2010; Taylor and Spicer 2007). Hopefully, we will be able to explore in more detail what *spaces* and *places* mean in our research context, bearing in mind Certeau's work.

This stream of research certainly provides a forum to discuss what spatiality of creativity might entail, how tactical activities build and maintain personal spaces. We believe our work gives insights into the impact such personal spaces might have on re-conceptualizing creativity.

Moreover, we advance studies on material and practice focus in organization studies, where we are invited to learn how getting closer to the 'real' work in organizations sheds new light on organizational phenomena. Underlying our main arguments, hopefully one reads the importance of bringing the active body back in organizational studies, and of acknowledging the significance of socio-materiality. In that sense, our work pays heed to the 'material turn' of organizations (Orlikowski, 2002; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008).

Indeed, the specific concern has been to identify what socio-material elements constitute a creative practice. As such, we add a valuable materiality or an object-sensitivity to complement the process approach. In addition, consideration has been made on how those elements assume a common form in being connected. The attention therefore has moved from what is connected,

to how it is connected (through affect), to the process by which the form appears and the object of the practice becomes momentarily stabilized - through what we call the crystallisation process.

Creative production is a joint result of what a given team has been able to negotiate and express within a certain time and space. More than truly novel, more than truly finished, it is a result of their history together, at a moment in time and space. Creative productions get transformed from anonymous to deliberate objects, all along (re) actions to non-human and human agents.

What is of particular interest here is the interplay between the creation of affective aura in relation to the 'messy', last-minute do-it-yourself reality of bricolage. Throughout, we also demonstrated how creative actors work as bricoleurs, assembling heterogeneous resources (Duymedjian & Ruling, 2010), in companies continually facing constraints. There is never a clear end in sight. Meanwhile, things are assembled, depending on their availability.

And as much as bricolage requires flexibility, openness and non-routinized processes, creativity as understood in action requires equally non-straightforward skills. In short, bricolage appeared essential for us to better understand the everyday, socially organized activities, work practices as well as creativity's continual becoming in action.

For that reason, we hope to advance studies on bricolage, more specifically the significance of embodiment, affect, and emotions in bricolage. *'The existing literature on bricolage in organizations has mainly focused on practice'*, write Duymedjian and Ruling (2010: 148). If bricolage and practice are commonly viewed as closely interrelated, the significance of embodiment, affect and emotions has been surprisingly overlooked in this literature.

As Huopainen (2016) nicely puts it, although questions of matter and materiality appear vital to Lévi-Strauss, they are treated as static, solid, naturalistic and given. She emphasizes how the classic approach to bricolage neglects how embodiment is mobilized, through the active and acted upon body.

Indeed, mainstream bricolage literature has largely focused on the individual bricoleur as entrepreneurial hero (Rehn & Lennerfors, 2014), not very much subject to feelings or emotions - be it anxiety, friction or struggle (Huopainen, 2016). Yet bricolage seems like a perfect fit to account for creative actors grasping various objects, moving their bodies and things around in meaningful ways, touching various surfaces, presenting themselves physically. Consequently, it seems to us that more than a random and improvisational use of tools 'at hand', bricolage

practices seem to be as much embodied and affective a mess as the rest.

Interestingly, bricolage and creative practices infuse each other with this 'giving it a go' ethos, without any well-articulated or explicit purposes in mind. As a consequence, we align this research with a 'messier', more uncertain, dynamic and embodied-material project for bricolage studies (Huopainen, 2016); on the opposite to dominant bricolage literature that approaches the notion with a functional lense -introducing order through improvisation.

This messier part should not be understood as a deviant organization practice. On the contrary, it is precisely such messiness that is key to understand dynamic organizing (Cunha, 2007).

In any case, the contribution lies in adding up on the routines, complexities and daily actions that bricoleurs need to do in order to practice bricolage. Bricolage as observed is carried out in situ across rich socio-cultural and embodied-material contexts and lived spaces. In Hopalainen's word, we adopt *'a more disruptive approach to bricolage in the making, one that emerges through affective relations, performances, and practices and involves a variety of agencies'* (2016: 130).

#### *To conclude*

To conclude on these first two sections, hopefully we have given an answer to those wishing to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of a lucrative and creative organisation facing discontinuity. Why and how an individual is constituted as creative or inventive is the outcome of a discursive practice that frames creativity within creative industries.

Another discursive space can be framed, one in which creativity is an eminently practical, relational, and embodied-material process, if creativity is made to descend from its pedestal of exceptionality, and if one considers practical creativity and the practices of creativity – as we did in our empirical research –. Creativity as such is contained in the objects, techniques, and materials that particular individuals 'affectively manipulate' to produce ideas or objects that materialize creativity; rather than contained in the psyches of those individuals.

This study can also be useful to those who manage and work in creative industries. To think of a practice as complex and over-determined, with the resulting power dynamics therein generated, can be a useful way to approach and reflect on one's work (managerial and otherwise). For example, it might go through appreciating the different key meanings of the practice, identifying



how they clash or instead support each other. Such attentive and purposeful alertness to the complex and over-determined nature of one's practice could be developed as part of becoming a reflective practitioner. In turn, producing a heightened awareness around those practices can lead to original and better-situated solutions.

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In the previous sections we underlined the various arrangements and affects that take place in creative industries, surrounding and constituting creative work within rationalization logics. In what follows, we focus on the concept of creativity. We explain how a performative concept of creativity such as the one we propose, creativity-in-action, might more precisely contribute to the organizational creativity debate currently occurring within organization studies.

While the intuition that a processual theory of creativity can generate rich views of creativity as a situated process of knowing, its realization has been hampered by the difficulty of developing a vocabulary able to illustrate and interpret the practice phenomena that are addressed.

Accordingly, our aim in this research is to contribute to the refinement of processual/creative vocabulary by proposing the concept of creativity-in-action. This way, we will be able to talk about creativity in action, and to analyse processes by focusing the attention onto those processes of creation that are discovered while doing and through the act of doing.

### 5.2.3 Creativity-in-Action: a new understanding of creativity

In the context of this research, we developed a peculiar understanding of creativity. We recognized the active body of the creative actor, as well as the significance of other bodies and non-human agents present in relational and affective creativity activities. We tried to add a richer and more critical understanding of the versatile, emerging, and non-linear work of creativity by closely exploring creative actors' everyday doings, dynamic interactions and work experiences. This concept represents another contribution to the field of organizational creativity.

- Creativity-in-action as an embodied-material and affective understanding of creativity

As developed throughout discussion, we tapped into Beyes & Steyaert (2012) ideas in order to develop a performative concept of creativity we call creativity-in-action, and discuss its conceptual implications. Creativity-in-action reveals an uncertain organizational process allowing and demanding multiple humans and non-humans to become part of the work in progress. It carries with it the idea that *creativity happens through many actions and re-actions to a certain non-human and human context, triggering embodied and affective responses.*

We have defined and empirically investigated creativity as a process, situated within working practices, which establishes connections-in-action between the material and immaterial elements that constitute a practice, so that they are bound together within a form. It is therefore a process of creat-*ing* and a situated 'doing' which invents its way of doing as it proceeds towards realization of the creative object. This was illustrated in the specific behaviours of the creative actors and the socio-material organization involved.

Henceforth, creativity is only achieved by proceeding through experimentations and interactions. As such, it requires a relationship with materiality, because forming means forming a material and the work is nothing other than formed material (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014). With the concept of creativity in-action, one fully grasps the co-emergence of production and invention, of materiality and emotion, of the creation produced and the process of its production.

We hope to enrich and deepen the theoretical and practical understanding of creativity within creative industries, by paying attention to socio-materiality, embodiment, and the affective processes involved. This way, this research has the potential to contribute not only empirical but also conceptual knowledge on how such creativity is organized, by building upon techniques of material manipulations, passion and emotions. Creativity is arguably a socio-material and embodied practice that builds upon the feeling of being moved and being affected, this is what we call creativity-in-action.

We elaborate further on creativity as a fine-grained and multi-dimensional embodied-material practice, by describing a playground where embodied-material relationships are certainly intensified. What we try to offer with this concept is a transformative redefinition of creativity existing theoretical kit. The abstraction of creativity mostly present in the literature tends to

ignore these emerging micro-level aspects of creativity, including practical doings, mundane meanings and the relational, physical moments of bodies and things.

Practical understanding, ways of proceeding and setups of material environment represent forms of creative knowledge. Yet, most dominant approaches to creativity interpret creative action as an answer to an intellectual problem. What we suggest is that the conceptual and the affective are indissoluble. Creative agents' register is emotional. The passionate, sensitive and physical relation that creative agents have with materials breaks out when they create. Creativity's radiance comes from such relations. We showed as much as possible how creative actors perform and present themselves physically as they carry out creative actions within their studios and working contexts.

Hard work is also part of it, as well as emotions such as disappointment, doubt or anxiety. The idea is not to focus on the darker aspects of the notion; but rather to highlight the doubts, efforts and real-life actions of creativity. In what we call the playground, a creative actor never does exactly articulate or perhaps even know what he is trying to accomplish as a creative-business man, or what he wants to focus on.

Indeed, he sets off in motion -all the time and in various directions- to act, organize, 'bricolate' (Huopalainen, 2016: 301) and do plenty of things. Creative actors experience moments of triumph and success, but also anxiety, failures, mistakes and unexpected. We tried to account for the more affective and emotional aspect of the portrait.

This research embraces emerging action amidst socio-materiality, lived experiential bodies and the body and senses of creative actors who are always acting emotionally, relationally and 'irrationally' too. Instead of portraying the upsetting, messy, affective, emotional and arguably at times difficult reality of creative actors, creativity research predominantly offers a sort of heroic view in terms of an agent not struggling too much to survive.

With our research, we reveal the shortcomings of a creative actor presented as a disembodied and unaffected agent, that supposedly does not feel much. In opposite ways, by precisely highlighting those aspects, we thus hope to better capture the complexities of organizational and everyday life of creation within creative industries.

Therefore, and taking the opposite direction of orthodox representations of creativity, we emphasize the multiple registers of sensation and intensity, emerging throughout events, as well as materials, yet often lost on the way of human resources and human capital.

In Duff and Sumartojo's view (2017), this anthropocentrism view is as true of scholars and policy-makers, for whom the creative economy is vital to innovation and improved economic performance, as it is for critics wary of the rise of a new 'precariat' (Mokre, 2011), based on the exploitation of 'creative subjects' in cultural and creative production. In both cases, Duff and Sumartojo explain, creativity is reified as a uniquely human attribute, as something individuals working alone or in small groups manifest, as a result of a particular aesthetic, cognitive and social skills.

Despite widespread interest in the cultures and ecologies of creative practice (Flew, 2012; Howkins, 2010), these cultures and contexts are almost always pressed into the service of the human subjects of creativity (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017). Consequently, in those settings the material is typically conceptualised as part of complex aggregations of (human) norms, attitudes, practices, dispositions and relationships (Styhre, 2006). We demonstrated there is much more to it.

- Creativity-in-action and the constant web of agents involved

It is worth noting that what we understand with material objects and practices is not a simplistic meaning of mere artefacts or instruments of expression -*intermediaries* and not true *mediators* in Bruno Latour's technical vocabulary (2005: 37–39)-. What we emphasize, in line with Duff & Sumartojo (2017), is rather their action in converting and reconstructing the character and limits of creative expression. Apprehending such objects as passive is going further down that road of human creativity, and letting the rest getting 'black-boxed' (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017), therefore nourishing the anthropocentrism' filter of research on creative work.

We place the emphasis on each of the non-human material and affective forces active in any instance of creative action; going off on a different tangent than the hyper-muscular, heroic, and, in any case, very *human* creative actor. The story of creativity does not begin with the deliberate acts of the creative actor. Rather, the creative actor is part of a larger and more complicated and multifaceted process, where surroundings (human producers, non-human materials and tools at hand) circulate. We hope to offer new insights into creativity and the ever-changing relations between humans and non-humans, by revealing the multifaceted aspect of the creative process.

We do not deny that creative professionals are an important part of the process, however we rather focus on their intimate embeddedness in creative practices, among many other agents and affects. To that end, we suggest the concept of creativity-in-action, in an attempt to include affect, embodiment, and materiality in creativity's wider scope and definition, those aspects being currently under-theorized dimensions in existing creativity theory and practice (Islam et al., 2016).

Interestingly, those micro-level actions provide the answer to the macro-level inherent tensions of creative industries. Those neglected aspects are the exact ones through which creative actors deal with tensions and manage their own creative zone, as seen in the previous part on the role of arrangements and affects in the creative industries. This will to perform creative, more than economic, where the reality lacking in finances is for a moment far away, demonstrate how infused creativity is in current actions, departing and evolving from those actions-in-the-present.

As much as distinctive attributes and skills of selected individuals might be codified, organised, managed and exploited within rationalization logics, in the course of generating enduring profits from creative production (Potts, 2011); it is much less easy when it comes to materialities, bodies and affects. The instrumentalisation of such skills and their transferability in market transactions proves to be much more difficult than identified individual skills and competencies (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017).

#### *To conclude*

To conclude, we highlighted the centrality of non-human agents in creativity understood as in-action. We discussed how creativity is manifested in the various processes, spaces and dynamic activities that altogether comprise the ambiguous and uncertain creativity-in-action. Specifically, we acknowledged the potential of an affectively and bodily sensitive approach, also in terms of understanding creativity -a form of organizing in action-, in novel, more dynamic and relational way.

This entails a rupture with the usual ways of researching organizational creativity, and allows to move forward by opening to a performative concept of creativity. This outlines and illustrates 'more-than-representational' practices (Lorimer, 2005: 84) of apprehending creative becoming. We highlight the emerging and contextual qualities of creativity that have traditionally been overlooked within the field of organization studies in favour of more linear, rational and abstract

accounts. More precisely, we challenge conventional representations of creativity as abstract, disembodied and purposive actions.

We identified what constitutes creativity across different times and spaces, and demonstrated how creativity is co-constituted relationally and in motion across time and space. More importantly, we shifted focus from what is connected in creativity (human and non-humans, affects,...) to the complex processes of how human and non-humans 'become' connected through creativity-in-action. This way, we have added a dimension to the deeper understanding of the processual, emerging activity of creativity, as well as the 'becoming' of practices more broadly (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2013).

### *In the future*

In the end, the concept of creativity-in-action would deserve to be developed scholarly, once the notion of creativity is approached by referring to the entanglement between humans and non-humans. We might then want to investigate further the more complex and multidimensional formation ruling in any playground; and meditating roles that objects and bodies across playgrounds play, within and towards practices of creativity. Surely there is a wide repertoire of embodied-material experiences present in affective creative actions that is waiting for investigation.

## 5.3 Contributions to Fashion Studies

*'We need to make serious efforts in order to better understand fashion at the heart of culture and capitalism, affect and aesthetics, order and chaos, temporality and continuity, as well as creativity and routine'* Huopalaainen, 2016: 75

It goes without saying that the promotion around the *sensational* creative economy has boosted the study of fashion. Yet the field of organization studies has been far less interested in fashion's everyday life on the ground -work, detailed practices, complex and messy value-creation processes-, in comparison to its fetish for production or management fads and fashions (Alvesson, 2013). As a matter of fact, popular readings about fashion tend to focus on its

references to consumer dreams, seduction, spectatorship and glamour (Moeran, 2015; Stacey, 1994).

Specifically, this research contributes empirically with insight about fashion's real life, in a context where *'very few studies are carried out in the context of fashion and other feminized, frivolous' industries'* (Huopalainen, 2016: 308). Answering Huopalainen's call for other empirical settings than traditional serious 'macho' businesses, we show how inquiring into the organization of a 'feminized' field does not generate solely trivial or superficial understandings of work routines and phenomena. This way, we take the opposite stance to the current *'scholarly awkwardness'* around fashion (Huopalainen, 2016: 335).

### 5.3.1 A more grounded model of fashion designing

*'There is a dearth of in-depth empirical research on fashion's mundane and detailed work practices including meticulous efforts, anxieties, insecurities and struggles present behind fashion's closed doors'* (Huopalainen, 2016: 44)

- 'From the inside': informal processes & activities

Following fashion-interested scholars we already met in this document, such as Giusti, Godart, Kawamura or Huopalainen, we have strived for deeper understanding of fashion's everyday organizing activities, 'from the inside' and beyond the trifling surface. We know little about the particularities of fashion's dynamic actions, organizing and affective economy (Huopalainen, 2015). Fashion practice, most notably the interplay between fashion and organization, has remained largely understudied and under-theorized - but see for example Huopalainen (2016) who brings in bricolage in fashion studies.

What we propose here is an alternative model of fashion designing, a more grounded model. We ask how is fashion done on the ground, although commonly thought of as a phenomenon associated with shallow ambitions, show off, scanty ideals, visual issues and concerns. So how

does it happen, as a matter of practice? We demonstrate that a collection is a combined and shared result of what a given team has been able to negotiate, and express, at a given time and given space. Never truly novel, never truly finished. Creative process in a fashion studio happens in an uncertain manner, and the shape of an item arises from all the micro-level actions and reactions that we underlined.

More specifically, we revealed that the *success* of a designer, its scope and time on a given market so to speak, does not depend only on the creative production. It also depends on how well the cunning spirit inside the designer as bricoleur and player manages to continuously negotiate, balance and perform the peculiar tension that exists at the heart of the profession, between creative and economic rationales. Our aim with this study has been to portray a socially constructed reality in rich detail, outside of clichés of an industry that is '*neither highbrow art nor lowbrow capitalist rubbish*' (Huopainen, 2016: 315).

Behind the surface of fashion, so much hard work goes into only one piece of garment. We tried to map out the activities and the spectrum of practices that go into keeping a fashion business floating. Deep and detailed exploration of fashion 'in the margins' was unfolded, revealing in-situ accomplishing, endeavours and inclinations toward value creation in a fashion context.

We tried to focus on those far less visible creativity's detailed practices, taking the opposite approach to the hype around the dazzling creative economy, as depicted in initial theoretical part (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Raunig, Ray & Wuggening, 2011). To appreciate complex creative life and understand how designers organize for fashion requires a broader approach to fashion as a joint and tactical phenomenon, apprehended in interactional terms.

In the end, this study fills the void in empirical studies investigating the role of designers in the development of creative processes in fashion organizations, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how creative processes really happen within such organizations. The approach developed has made it possible to detail the daily workings of designers and appreciate the informal processes and power dynamics through which a collection takes shape.



- Bling-what ? Hard work

While intimately observing daily actions of designers, we discovered the gap between on the one hand fashion's constructed and maintained shiny surface (Huopalainen, 2016b; Mears, 2011), and on the other hand its difficult and sometimes exhausting reality, on the ground.

We hope to add substance to a fashion world that is commonly acknowledged as superficial, when there is such a great deal of hard work and effort behind. Obviously, every fashion designer works differently, but this study suggests that in any case it takes a lot of discipline, energy and striving to propose some fashionable clothes.

How not to make the link here with the critical entrepreneurship researchers (Hjorth, 2013, 2016; Hjorth & Holt, 2016; Hjorth & Steyaert, 2010)? We subscribe to their research, which describe *entrepreneuring* as conflict and fatigue, no salaries; and sporadic, precarious project-oriented contract labour. All of this appears to go for fashion entrepreneurs as well, caught up in hard work, self-employment, uncertainty constantly in corner of mind, long working hours, and an expectation of full allegiance.

This research brings something to light: the conscientious and fastidious work performed in fashion to produce value on the market. We know so few about what fashion designers do when they do not respond to their public obligations adjoining to the '*enchanted fabrication of images of seduction*' (Lipovetsky, 1994, 182). Hopefully, we reveal the rooting of the creative process in something stronger and more complex than common representations, by bypassing the stereotypes and reflecting the wealth and variety of daily practices.

- Designing-without-design

*'Interestingly, fashion's sensuous qualities and especially fashion's appeal to touch has remained relatively under-explored both theoretically and empirically'* Huopalainen, 2016: 81

Following our initial questioning, we tried to show how creative actors -such as designers- deal with economic constraints, and by so doing we revealed the importance of tactics but also materiality, embodiment and affect in the equation.

Different materials such as wool, silk, cotton, linen, surfaces, artefacts and other physical things are the necessary resources that provide for creativity in fashion. These various resources are not limited to material things. Corporality and affects are significant resources too. And this ensemble of resources is fluctuating, relationally and jointly produced. As such, fashion designing is understood as a spatial and relational process of social and socio-material interactions.

Fashion designers are shaped by those that surround them, and vice versa. Creativity-in-action unfolds in fashion all along affective processes and subjectively felt socio-material intensities. Getting involved in the creative process for a designer means engage in durable affection that materializes and echoes in garments, and in *'the consumer's affective self-performance that intends to respond to these affective things available'* (Huopainen, 2016: 209).

From excitement to exhaustion, an affective ballet takes place amidst a very messy and uncertain reality we highlighted in discussion - through bricolage practices for instance. In fashion designing, affect is created along the creative process, and it is precisely such affect and feelings that drive and provide contour and architecture for the designs-to-come, the directions human and non-human agents involved take in designing.

Subsequently, it is by focusing on the tactical, the socio-material and the affective aspect of fashion designing that this research contrasts with traditionally abstract and metaphorical conceptualizations of designing in fashion sector. We believe that aiming at a deeper and more critical understanding of fashion requires exposing the manifold actions and doings of designers, entangled with non-humans, that occur on the field. This way, the dominance of anthropocentrism will be challenged in research on organization (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017; Huopainen, 2016). Indeed, creativity in design still appears to be too often attributed to one human agent with own cognitive skills.

Demonstrating the importance of the material and so on, and avoiding generic words, this research went close to the practice, and in that sense, is part of the 'internal' literature that aims at more realistic depictions. We have tried to show how the influence and acting capacities of non-human agents call for more research on their involvement in fashion designing research, aligning

ourselves with Huopainen (2016: 75): *'Perhaps other dimensions, such as that of age, affect, materiality and embodiment (...) deserve to be more thoroughly explored and discussed'*.

Lastly, and as a continuation and crystallisation of those reflections, we could add the concept of 'designing-without-design' to the field of fashion studies. More sector-specific than the concept of creativity-in-action, the term 'designing-without-design'<sup>39</sup>, and its addition to the vocabulary of process-based studies, contributes a concept able to qualify designing as a situated activity, and therefore to make visible that process of designing while the object of design is realized.

Designing-without-design carries with it the idea of designing as more of an unfolding experience, amidst various agents, than a consciously planned operation. Coloured with non-purposeful action, this concept of designing-without-design implies that a lot in designing has to do with a spontaneous and emerging order. Garments sort of recklessly emerge from the everyday coping actions of a multitude of agents, human and non-human, none of whom or which intended to contribute to any preconceived design.

Eventually, tracing how embodiment, materiality and affect are mobilized into the *how* of things getting designed (through this designing-without-design process) offers an important and valuable contribution to the field of fashion studies. Gathered, amassed, fixed, performed, joined together, receptive to the outside, this is how things are integrated into a whole through a designing that happens without any preconceived design in mind. Designing-without-design is about going with the flow, amidst human and non-human agents.

### 5.3.2 Think and theorize differently about Fashion

The ambition here is obviously to challenge certain underlying and taken-for-granted assumptions about the notions of fashion and designing.

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<sup>39</sup> Mimicking the 'strategy-without-design' of Chia & Holt (2009), and the silent efficacy of indirect action.

- Say good-bye to the star-designer as a heroic construct

The approach we advocate, rooted in practice, reveals the whole range of contributors to creation -human and non-human- and thus goes around the contradiction of the heroic or hyper-muscular figure of the star designer in fashion houses.

We focus on different subjectivities involved into the designing process, rather than on the social construction of creative practitioners - a phenomenon we described in the empirical setting section. Consequently, we contribute by providing insights into the creative ones on the foreground but also into the 'lost voices', be they human or non-human, that are most of the time not given the epitaph 'creative' but equally contribute to the creative process, in the shadow.

Therefore, the creative project that is encompassed in tactical and embodied-material acts is something that goes far beyond the fantasy of the oh-so-popular fashion designer. Throughout this research, we tried to deconstruct this illusion and consequently moved the focus onto those different agents and determinants suppressed or overlooked by such an over-represented symbol. Following our understanding of designing as an 'un-designed' process, the relational, emerging, messy and swirl of agents become events along the creative road and take the lead instead of a given designer's mere personality or exceptional talent.

Underlining such real-life aspects, we wish to capture what Huopalaainen quite nicely calls '*the fusion of magical and mechanical aspects of the fashion organization*', aiming at '*developing fashion as an empirical organizational phenomenon*' (2016: 8). Hopefully, this move will reposition fashion studies closer to the less mythical, mystical and glorified, off its pedestal and back to the '*rough ground*' (Dunne, 1993).

- Think differently about fashion

To the emerging field of fashion studies, this research offers a deep and detailed exploration of fashion happening 'in the margins', one uncovering various mechanisms that do not prevail in

most existing research. We tried to describe the realities of creative work of designers working in an affective economy, a *'very particular kind of moving, restless and exhausting economy marked by continuous movements, insecurity, fabrications of desire, struggles, tensions and paradoxes'* (Huopainen, 2016: 303).

By highlighting for instance the different existing tactics surrounding creative practice, we understand how shortcuts and diversions are an integral part of the creative practice within fashion industry. Far from prescripts that can be read on large-scale production, we try to uncover in situ knowledge about peripheral fashion contexts.

Another illustration of this is the phenomenon we called 'happy medium'. In the case we depicted, what designers try to reach is a sort of 'happy medium', with a given number of pieces by season, and no more. Such happy medium is what allows them to keep the business floating.

They do not want to reach the potential clients they could get in addition to current clients, let alone commit to marketing actions and plans. In such a context, being successful means to move from one day to the other, from one collection to the other, rather than growth, fame or fortune.

In this case, work intensification is another typical consequence that is resisted. Produce more would mean growing bigger and they precisely do not want that. Investing in marketing or communication would mean less time for designing and they do not want that. In a sense, it appears as if those designers would be called 'anti-hero', or at least very unconventional agents of the industry, by not trying to reach absolute performance.

It is noteworthy that this goes opposite to the classical business model thinking taught and circulated in fashion sector -and fashion schools. In such classical scenario, a new designer becomes the 'darling', with 2 or 3 seasons to get established attention. Then the business part becomes more important, stores and e-shops are developed eventually. It is thereupon about getting the set-up right, bringing investors in, establishing oneself. Interestingly, our case shows that designers can build business and come to a standstill. In this case, we have another set of choices and consequences. A fashion organization might create, deliver, and capture value differently.

Therefore, this case can be discussed as a mechanism, and further research could be done in other settings, we could start comparing. This story is of interest for the luxury industry for

instance, as in this industry ordinary marketing is also refused (Beaume, 2017). Through this, we hope to do justice to the complexities of fashion actions, and highlight that a different theorizing of fashion could be favoured.

In short, unlike most existing fashion studies, we have deliberately focused on micro-level actions and tactical practices, and the embodied-material part of fashion activities to provide for a new way of accounting for such activities. This is a first step towards engaging with fashion critically, and broaden the scope regarding fashion's issues and challenges.

Allowing messiness and chaos in is also part of that real-life illustration we try to provide. By examining a multi-layered and captivating realm, we've dug in the margins of what is dominantly positioned as hype or fashionable. This way, we shed some light where needed, as *'further light needs to be shed on fashion's less spectacular, mundane, mechanical and everyday aspects, not limiting our understandings of a culturally and socially significant phenomenon to staged spectacles in certain 'fashionable' locations'* (Huopainen, 2016: 314).

In the end, when so much of contemporary capitalism relies on the production of affective value, glamour and captivation (Huopainen, 2016). To stay connected to one's own material-embodied creativity seems like a way to foster economic and creative success in such dynamics, *'where elements of pretend play out in value production and where significant effort and suffering are often rendered invisible for the sake of a moment's consumer amusement, attachment or (long-)lived experience'* (p 304).

- [Discussing with fashion ethnographers](#)

In the same vein as the works of Blumer (1969), Davis (1992), Kawamura (2004, 2005), Giusti (2006, 2011), Mears (2011) or most recently Huopainen (2016), we hope this research reads as a serious effort in joining fashion ethno-methodology research. We have tried to experience fashion ourselves, thus giving some anecdotes and living texture to its outside image.

*'We cannot dismiss designers and their designs, their fabrics and silhouettes, and the production process of types of clothing must be taken into account in order to understand fashion and clothing fully'* (Kawamura, 2005:59)

By presenting thick material throughout this thesis, we tried to do justice to an ethnographic approach for the sector, by proposing stories and images that illustrate the daily intensities and complexities of the designing context, and say something interesting about designers and their proximate teams.

As previously highlighted in the methodological section of this research, part of the ethnographer's job is to get as close as possible to the lived realities of a set of people (Mears, 2012). The ethnographic method allows fashion researchers a personal, indeed physical connection -through day-to-day activities- to the world of their subjects, including their skills, categories of differentiation, capacities for judgment and valuation, their disciplining routines and moral rules, and their fears and desires (Mears, 2011).

Specifically, we have related our empirical observations to ideas about fashion, organization and creativity-in-action by moving back and forth between theories and empirical material in an open and flexible manner. Like those fashion scholars and ethnographers, we tried to demystify what may seem like miracles into mundane human interactions (Mears, 2012). Although highly visible and celebrated, fashion is still invisible as a form of work.

However, most of existing fashion ethnographies do not elaborate on the most internal aspects (e.g.: clothing process) of the system they depict (Kawamura, 2005). Rather, they focus on the culturally and socially significant aspects of the fashion system. Intermediaries, institutions, professional communities are mostly under study, while clothing process is put aside. On the contrary, with this research we insist on the clothing process occurring 'behind the door'.

*'In today's fashion, the focus is less on the actual clothing or its manufacturing process, but rather, on the designer who can produce and reproduce a glamorous, attractive image to the consumers'* (Kawamura, 2005: 64)

When designers are under study, it is through their shining aspect. The star quality is what's significant, overshadowing the skills that the designers possess -be it in mind or body, and the part that nonhuman actors play. In an industry that gradually shifted its attention towards image-making (Kawamura, 2005), with this research we focus on the contrary on the creative side of dressmaking. The innate feeling for colour harmonies, the balance and arrangements of parts, the matching of different or similar materials and a feeling for rhythm (following Brenninkmeyer, 1963), all those things that altogether provide for the creative clothing process.

Therefore, this research dives into clothes as a material production rather than fashion as a symbolic production. We concern ourselves with the manufacturing, pattern-making or draping processes that are taken to create an item of clothing, thus answering an identified call from Kawamura: *'I urge researchers to examine the technical production process'* (2005:18).

Evidently, the fashion system and its economic downsides are of interest to us. Yet the object we are focusing on is not the fashion system itself but rather the clothing production, and more specifically the link between both: how designers produce clothes within a given fashion system (and its economic constraints). By so doing, we are bridging the gap between the micro (daily designing in studio) and macro (under market constraints) levels, thus answering another fashion ethnographer's call:

*'Having an eye for the future of fashion is simultaneously an act of seeing and of understanding a field at the macro level—a whole system of aesthetic possibilities and status hierarchies in fashion—and at the micro level, in the interactional and corporeal sense of resonance'* (Mears, 2014: 308).

In short, the ambition with this research was to approach the making of clothing, in the fashion system depicted by many ethnographers. We hoped to discuss with and contribute to researches that mix and mingle ethnographic work together with fashion studies.

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Approaching now the end of this thesis, and in light of our conclusions and discussions, time has therefore come to move on to the (potential) generalization of our findings.

#### 5.4 Compare and contrast with other creative industries.

*Musicians are exemplary agents who, through their creative practice, demonstrate how one might act differently, and in so doing, rebut, at least to some extent, the exigencies of the capitalist system. The question is, though, how can this happen? In what sense might creativity emerge from the very social relations which perpetuate domination?*  
Toynbee, 2000: 35



The above quote demonstrates that the issues at stake here also arise in all creative industries than fashion. This was the starting point of our research. The questions we had about creative actors encompassed creative industries in general.

We decided on purpose to not jump freely from one creative activity to another. We believed that unpacking one industry in depths would prove more interesting, more consistent and more coherent. We scrutinized the fashion industry, and cited a number of reasons for that -see empirical part.

#### 5.4.1 Fashion and its generic challenges

Inquiring about the reach and significance of such results beyond fashion industry also means wondering about the external validity of this research. In what follows we wonder the extent to which our phenomenon conclusions are specific.

- As a reminder

Some features characterize the creative industries altogether, constituting a specific context where 1/uncertainty is pervasive, 2/drivers of value are debated, and 3/ the cultural content of goods and services is very high (Godart, 2016).

To begin with, we do not wish to draw any all-inclusive conclusions based on a specific, limited and interpretive ethnographic study. *'The fact of our imperfect understanding should not be allowed to feed our anxiety and so increase the need to control'* Bateson reminds us (1972: 269). And indeed, we do not argue that our insights are generalizable in a direct manner to other contexts. How could the creative process be described *inside* a model or a single theory aiming at generalization, when an essential part of such a process is its differentiation from what's existing?

That said, it does not mean that we cannot say anything that goes beyond this specific context, or try to highlight some potential similarities. Hopefully the explanatory power of the apparatus we tried to shape demonstrates that creative industries, while not organized alike, might be ordered

according to similar coherent processes.

Using ethnographic work through a single case, we can only speculate about the generalizability of our findings to other contexts. However, ethnographic case studies are believed to be insight-rich by preserving the unpredictable, informal and contextual nature of innovation, 'in-the-making' (Hoholm & Araujo, 2011; Wolfe, 1994).

A comprehensive description of the organization under study and research methods have been thoroughly described in this research, to provide grounds for comparability of the findings, and as such to inform other researchers that are interested in investigating the everyday life of creative work within creative industries.

- Fashion and its generic ambiguity

The translation of creativity into economic value has always been an important part of markets, but it is becoming more and more apparent to scholars as the creative industries and 'soft-knowledge' intensive industries become central sectors of the economy. They are not marginal or frivolous but are, in fact, huge engines of urban and, indeed, global economies (Mears, 2011). This research ultimately is about the tactical, embodied-material and affective elements that underlie creativity-in-action, not just in fashion markets, potentially in all creative markets.

Following Mears, we leave behind the idea that fashion markets have special and unique properties and consider the opposite frame: all markets contain an element of fashion. As a labor market, designing is prototypical of precarious work in the new economy, with its rising importance of soft skills. Designing is a great case, since it gives us access to a market where there are many acknowledged ambiguities. Indeed, all markets have varying degrees of demand uncertainty and unpredictability in outcomes. *'Nobody knows'* in fashion any better than in other creative markets.

So, starting from there: all markets are predicated on some uncertainty. Fashion producers, then, acknowledge this vagueness in their everyday activities, and their careers are defined by their ability to deal with it. But the ambiguity they face is generic. It is shared across all creative market settings (Mears, 2011), with creative professionals who accumulate necessary material-embodied knowledge, skills and expertise, to cope with such uncertainty.

We believe the aspects we underlined such as the embodied-material and affective aspects might represent an important part of the broader post-industrial, spatial and dynamic experience-based conditions of creative organization. Speed, performance, status and surface are thus part of the deal: '*fashion promises a life of being extraordinary*', says Mears (2011: 261). But there is more to it. And we tried to illustrate the importance of materiality and affect in the equation. Could fashion, then, serve as a theoretical lens to understand the developments of the contemporary creative economy in more nuanced and 'moving' ways?

For long, the creative industries have been appointed as the -ideologically underpinned- cool and fancy industries (Huopainen, 2016). We inquire about the overlooked or glossed over aspects uncovered once we start scratching and problematizing this polished surface. Fashion speaks here for other creative industries that blur the division between exhausting labour and 'leisure' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002), because of their appealing and dramatic appearance and uncertain promise of popularity and fortune (Mokre, 2011; Von Osten, 2011), whereas twists and rebounds, lack of finances, frenetic pace and significant personal investment are, it appears, a consuming normality for those working in such cyclic industries (Huopainen, 2016).

Hopefully our work will offer *useful* and *novel* (i.e. creative ? see Amabile's definition- 1988) and critical insights for future studies not only on fashion designing but also on creativity within creative industries in general.

If we now go back to the emblematic articles that helped us problematize in the initial stages of this work, we might try to loop back with our findings and see how such findings might build upon the others while also contributing to the debate.

- [Looping back](#)

In the previous section (5.2), we got back to various studies and articles we cited as starting point in the framing of the research, to demonstrate how our findings might contribute to organization studies. It is worth noticing that those various studies and articles we cited all concern and are related to various (creative) industries. Eikhof & Haunschild for instance investigate theatres;

Alvarez, Mazza & colleagues focus on film industry, Hjorth & colleagues on design companies etc.

But the underlying common logic is always put on the table at some point. And the scholars we cite make that jump, investigating a specific industry on the empirical side while drawing results on the general -creative industries'- side. This is another reason why we believe an underlying logic might also prevail regarding the practices of creative actors we identified, on a day-to-day basis, in fashion industry.

Going back to our findings, we underlined how creativity in such industry is produced in situ and ad hoc. We tried to reveal the plethora of practices and means with which the subjectivities of creativity go about organizing plenty of things, in an uncertain socio-material process, giving their best shots to articulate affection and worth.

We already knew that creative organizations were not paragons of rationality, and understood them as dynamic and interactive nexuses of adjustments. For instance, we referred to Jones & colleagues (2016), who explore the various roles creative actors endorse within creative industries: mainstreams, mavericks, misfits and amphibians, as many different positions that reproduce, modify or create new conventions and as such help creative agents deal with rationalization logics in their creative practice.

In a similar vein, Alvarez & colleagues (2005) underline practices such as role-consolidation or role-versatility. Eikhof & Haunschild (2009) describe how creative agents invest in cultural capital and live a 'bohemian life' to counterbalance economic pressure, and bourgeois norms and values they associate to it. However, on the road to embodiment, they note how the 'performance' of creativity -as they call it- also happens through dress and demeanour, body language and body art, and as such compound the complex understanding of what it means to be a creative 'worker'.

We will not go into too much detail as those works were already largely unfolded in the first part of this research -in framing section, 1.2. The insights they provide definitely help in identifying the power of agency, and the ongoing context for more practical activities aimed at producing creative outcomes. In line with them, and in light of them, we suggested a tactical view (De Certeau, 1984) on such practices and added another set of arrangements.

However, for the most part, and even if they lead the way in scratching that 'cool' surface of creative work, in those articles we find no mention of any embodied-material or more affective dimensions playing a key part in creative process(es). So, again, we believe that this is where our contribution lies, potentially then for creative industries in general, and not solely the fashion planet.

Hopefully such previous works we highlighted on creative industries will be enriched and expanded with own findings. In that sense, we pay heed to Richard Caves' well-known book on creative industries, Creative Industries: Contracts between Art and Commerce (2000), advocating for this peculiar object that is a creative industry.

#### 5.4.2 Creative Industries' core

Translating economic ideas into everyday language, Caves provides an economic explanation for why creative industries are organized as they are. Choosing to frame his analysis regarding creative goods in a social context, he does not follow traditional lines of analysis from orthodox economics. Aided by contract theory, he underlines the patterns of deal making in the creative industries. His insights tell a rich story about how parties - both creative and commercial actors - structure agreements, to address complex incentive problems.

- The underlying organizational logic

Evidently each creative industry presents its own specificities, and Caves unfolds some of them in his book -performing arts ventures being mostly non-profit firms for instance. However, reflecting on some features of those creative industries, and no matter how different their superficial organization and aesthetic properties, Caves also explains how such industries share the same underlying organizational logic.

To him, the curious nature of contracts in those industries leads to organizational and contracting challenges that must be resolved. Creative industries are fundamentally different from 'humdrum' industries -as he calls them- on a set of fundamental properties, such as -to name but a few- the

*nobody knows* characteristic, the *art for art's sake* one, the *motley crew* or also the *A list/B list* -a designated hierarchy within creative productions.

By so doing, Caves interestingly defines the boundaries between creative and other industries. These characteristics make creative industries -such as book publishing, Broadway theatres, movies, music recording etc.- make creative industries fundamentally different from humdrum industries. At the heart of such characteristics, Caves identifies the tension between art and commerce, the starting point of our research. Following Caves, we unfolded how problems may arise when creative types are called upon to balance creativity with humdrum commerce -see first section of the thesis.

Interestingly, Caves works by describing various case studies of different (creative) industries that best illustrate a given organizational and contracting challenge. He relies on those cases studies to draw the characteristics of the whole they constitute. Arrangements are revealed, such as how Broadway theatres use two coping strategies to address cost issues: reducing the number of plays while running hits longer to recoup costs, or engaging in blockbuster plays.

Unfolding various elements relating to this paradox at the beginning of this research, we also tried to provide the beginning of an answer by unveiling other arrangements and affects occurring in creative industries. In the same way, we explored the case study of fashion that surely illustrates shared organizational and contracting challenges with other creative industries. By revealing how things are tactically and affectively handled we hoped to offer some interesting research possibilities to the creative industries.

- Compare and contrast

In line with Caves' work, we argue that our work might have a potential for generalization in other creative industries. We revealed the adjustments and tactical side of arrangements that are developed to organize creativity and commerce, such as how creative actors would differentiate between commercial products (would be 'B list' products) and creative products (in that case 'A list' products).

The challenge happens when B may serve as a viable and less costly substitute for A, and we underlined such case throughout our research. Both new and accumulated products compete for

consumers' attention, and the mix of stocks and flows in creative products is important for understanding industry change.

Also, Caves distinguishes creative artists from their theoretical counterparts on assembly lines in other industries, and this arguably backs up our findings on how creative actors at some point cultivate their uniqueness in the equation. In Caves' view, assembly line workers are characterized as not being much concerned about product originality, style, or special features.

Those workers thus become separated from the quality and creativity of their output. Deprived of significant participation in product design, assembly line craftspeople focus their passion instead upon wages, work schedules, and working conditions. Caves suggests that conversely, creative professionals are far more likely to care about originality and quality of their final products.

Another convergence: According to Caves, the risk of failure is heightened by 'asymmetrical ignorance' between team members that develop creative goods. This echoes the practices we identified around creative actors playing the game of the market by learning commercial codes and rhetoric, thus reducing such asymmetrical ignorance.

Knowing and learning such codes is also described by creative agents as a way to unlock or reduce the tensions and anguished contact with the gatekeepers, who select among the creative works and talents on offer (Caves, 2000). As knowledge represents a form of power (Contu, 2014), knowing about the existing and prevailing codes upon which gatekeepers operate is one step on the way of dealing with them.

Finally, Caves explains that organizational arrangements strive to keep the creative and humdrum inputs out of each other's hair (2000: 364). In that we differ. What we observed is more of a hodgepodge. We believe that 'living with' opposing rationales better describes what we observed rather than installing safeguards. The inputs are constantly entangled, and a creative fuzziness is nurtured by creative agents so that the processual relations of such inputs keep being on the move, off the ground, and less dichotomous or bipolar. Sometimes striving to be left alone, at other times putting some real efforts to be part of the commercial 'it', creative agents keep their sphere of intervention and influence unclear, possibly as they do not have the answers themselves.

*'We lack a deeper knowledge about the trade-offs and terms of these deals'*, Caves explains (2003: 82). Hopefully, our research could support other compare-and-contrast patterns of this type. We tried to translate the arrangements that characterize the distinctive and serviceable contract forms he identifies as prevailing in the industry. Such binder will hopefully do some good to unveil the 'real-life' and 'behind-the-curtain' aspects of creative products going to market.

- Feelings and affects

What we also add to his view of creative work within economic settings is the affective dimension, thus trying to pick up where the book tapers off. While Caves underlines the very structural features that challenge economic calculation, to explain why deals are structured as they are, we say something novel and valuable about the truly messy and affective organization of creativity, and the versatile and meticulous work performed in creative industries to produce value.

Encompassing small-scale pickers as well as large-scale promoters, simple creative goods as well as complex creative goods (to pick up on Caves' terminology), we revealed the embodied-material and affective elements that are part of the creative deals all along.

While Caves focuses on the characteristics of creative goods on the market, we rather focus on creative workers, and the realities of their job, stressing the affective part of it. However, we noticed that at one point in his book, Caves clearly identifies the passionate aspect of the job. In his own words, *'creative workers care about their products (...) in creative activities, the creator cares vitally about the originality displayed, the technical prowess demonstrated, the resolution and harmony achieved in the creative act'* (Caves, 2000: 4).

The imperative *art for art's sake's* characteristic that Caves identifies implies that artists will choose low-paid creative work over better-paid humdrum labour. Imagination and passion are understood as carrying their own warrant. For instance, we read that *'when the worker cares deeply about the traits of the product, the problem of organizing its production is fundamentally changed'* (2000: 5).

However, while his work touches upon such issues, ideas are not really developed further. This way we pick up where he ended by exploring affective perspectives.



At last, as Caves underlines, '*time is of the essence*' in creative industries (2000: 8). Temporal coordination is key to success. *Time flies*, that's one of the characteristics Caves raises for creative industries, and by that he means that the economic profitability of creative activities rely on close temporal coordination of production, and the prompt realization of revenues.

We agree with that, while adding that there is a precise moment when time is suspended, and this moment we renamed the playground. In the playground, a given person performing own creative activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment, in the process of the activity. Complete absorption in what one does, means that preoccupation of time is not here, you see, '*the muse takes it all*', Mainemelis argues, evoking such experience of timelessness within organizations (2001).

Complete attention is captured by the weight of material, interactions, experimentations, and all the non-human forces we highlighted. Those embodied and affective way of relating to the process of creating 'drag' the creative actor out of time for one moment. It might be for a few minutes, but it has some power as in putting aside the rest for that precise moment.

- Take the film industry

Let us illustrate this discussion with the film industry, for instance. Rightful claimant of the label 'creative industry', such an industry also channels artful and commercial insights. Roussel & Bielby (2015) acknowledge for the gap between both insights. They look, through various articles and testimonies, at how movies and shows are concretely made.

Similar to our findings, they reveal the entanglement of both art and commerce, depicting a commercial dimension of entertainment that is never devoid of creativity, and, conversely, an artistic endeavour in film or television that always has a commercial dimension (Godart, 2016, reviewing their work).

At first sight, we cannot help but think in terms of discrepancies, and notice how the film industry, on the contrary to fashion industry, is characterized by a predominant informal organizing (Godart, 2016). In the film industry, organizations appear here and there, are created

and lost very rapidly - the time of production and launching. The industry is characterized by short-term organizations, with short-term contract teams or single-project organizations (Roussel & Bielby, 2015). This is pure organizing. Sometimes, changes are even made to the organization(s) while in progress. In a way, it varies from fashion industry and its formal organizations (fashion houses).

Yet again, fashion houses usually organize fashion shows. Such fashion shows relate to art, rituals, theatre and film in nuanced ways, and are part of the creative proposition. They also constitute temporary organizations (Bazin & Korika, 2017) that bring together agents from different backgrounds and domains (sound and lightning, construction, press agents etc) for a given amount of time.

The experience is also very visual: people look on the stage (and on each other as well). There are more similarities than we think between industries. This is why we can consider them as creative industries above all, and start reflecting on the underlying scheme that might be unfolded when taken altogether.

More specifically, in their book Brokerage and Production in the American and French Entertainment Industries (2015), Roussel & Bielby underline the key role of brokers, such as agents in the film industry (relying on studies of French and American ecosystems, obviously). Agents are stakeholders forming part of a wider social structure that includes producers, directors, actors, and so forth. Roussel & Bielby's work highlights the level of involvement agents have in the creative process -determined by their level of embeddedness in a given core-periphery structure. This is why it is of interest to us, they reveal the 'silent voices' of the film industry -or 'invisible hands' as they call them.

The well-oiled mechanism of the industry in this case seems to be the intervention of agents, with brokerage as a type of action that binds. Agents often try to create value by generating ties among otherwise unconnected actors. Similar to our work, the relational complexity of the object is under study, with such talent intermediaries that definitely take part in the emergence of creative output.

At a more micro-level, this industry could be approached from the perspective of this work. Sure enough, the role those brokers play is undeniable. Yet, certainly their actions are possible thanks

to arrangements and tactics that are developed to cope with various rationales. As intermediaries, they surely deal with ruts and friction.

Another layer that might be added is the embodied-material and affective side of creative actors' activities, that agents deal with, on a day-to-day basis. What amount of irrationality is absorbed by such intermediaries? To what extent do they have to deal with passionate behaviours?

Altogether, we wish to complement the existing literature by adding such a micro-level. We believe this micro-level is where we might really get access to creativity-in-action, that brokers (also underlined by Sgourev, 2015, with the case of the *Ballets Russes*) then arguably facilitate. By so doing, we hope to answer the call for research encompassing both micro and macro factors. We aim to bridge micro and macro levels in creativity research, as 'dangerous liaisons' as those dynamic interdependences might be (Sgourev, 2016).

#### 5.4.3 Raising new inquiries

We might learn a good deal about processual creativity and contemporary forms of organizing in creative industries, in a deep, situational and intertwined sense; by following embodied-material organizing activities that are tied to creativity-in-action,

- Shaking existing accounts

Surely the tactics deployed, and the affective way of relating to surroundings, may vary from one creative realm to the next, but what we believe is that all of these elements appear in each realm. We argue that the complex ecology we underlined, the embodied-material way of creating, surrounded by tactics to deal with the economic, might prevail in each creative activity.

Consequently, this research' insights shake existing accounts of creative practice by acknowledging nonhuman collaborators in the work of creative labour. By so doing, we refuse to reify the human agent in her practice, and hope to open unique '*matters of concern*' (Latour: 2005: 87), advocating for embodied methods of sensing the chaotic rhythms of daily (creative) life, where '*nothing is immobile*' (Lefebvre, 2004: 20).

Hopefully this research on such overflowing movements that produce creativity will be an inspiring direction for creativity scholars, whose understanding of creativity begins with the lived and the body, that is a creativity developed within an organic, living and thinking being. We see promising lines of inquiry once including greater interest in the nonhuman and more-than-human (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017) constituents of creative practice.

Ultimately, one could tie our findings to the recent interest among organisational scholars in the implications of post-humanism and the 'affective turn', science and technology studies and new materialisms for research innovation in organisational studies (Canniford and Bajde, 2016; Prince, 2014; Thanem, 2011). Such studies are currently gaining ever-growing scholarly interest, also in the realm of organization studies, and we hope to be read as part of this more general effort for organisational research.

- A larger picture

Anchoring our findings in current debates in creativity theories allowed us to detect the specific intricacies of singular mechanisms and encourage comparisons across fields and domains. Throughout this part, we demonstrated how fashion designing investigation can teach us much about how the realms of creativity and economy shape one another in creative industries, but also on a broader scale.

The dilemmas experienced by creative professionals in creative industries are also to be found in a growing number of other industries where knowledge and creativity are key to sustaining success. Creative Industries do have apparent counterparts elsewhere in the economy. For instance, Caves (2000) underlines how the contracting problems of sport leagues considerably overlap with those of complex creative activities.

Also, the *A list/B list* ranking process goes on in many settings where vertically differentiated inputs contend for high-ranked positions and super-star status. The higher-education sector provides an example. Positions in the rankings are a continuous preoccupation of faculty members and university administrators. Such an industry might be understood as creative industry -as in creating knowledge, and from there arise the various tensions between funding research that gets that higher position in rankings versus other alternative research.

We know for sure that arrangements are many in the higher-education sector. And we might

wonder to what extent creative scholars might focus on and stick to the "material" while producing knowledge, to avoid the ranking objectives that govern their research inclination, and that often are also related to economic priorities. In this case, stick to the material would mean stick to the (challenging) thoughts they meet and have, and the way they feel about such encounters.

More generally, a growing variety of organizations straddle multiple social domains whose constituents impose different and often incompatibles rules and expectations. Because firms in creative industries have long had to deal with this challenge, their experience potentially contains significant lessons for other industries. The lessons are not embodied in a set of directly transferable prescriptions but are to be found in the way that firms in creative industries navigate between different imperatives.

We hope that our approach inspires more empirical research to advance and extend our theorizing on practices and creativity, opening avenues for research, not only in a comparative perspective across creative industries, but also in a more general, theoretical manner around creativity.

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A photograph of a clothing rack in a store. The rack is filled with various garments, including sweaters and jackets, in neutral tones like beige, cream, and dark brown. The lighting is warm and focused, creating a cozy atmosphere. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the store's interior and some ceiling lights.

# GENERAL CONCLUSION & LIMITS





# GENERAL CONCLUSION & LIMITS

- GENERAL CONCLUSION

*"Every effort to understand destroys the object studied in favour of another object of a different nature; this second object requires from us a new effort which destroys it in favour of a third, and so forth until we reach the one lasting presence, the point at which the distinction between meaning and the absence of meaning disappears: the same point from which we began"* Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955: 441)<sup>40</sup>

To conclude, and as Lévi-Strauss quite frankly puts it, the knowledge that is produced is never conclusive. A full account of what is happening on the field is hard to conceive, given that we lack not only the space and possibility of mind, but also the accurate vocabulary to entirely capture lived, complex, embodied, dynamic and affective relations and interactions.

On the contrary, we sought to represent as faithfully and honestly as possible the complexity of the situations, in order to leave the story open enough to stimulate active interpretation on the part of the reader (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009).

In what follows we summarize the research. All along, we will reveal how rethinking creativity as an affective and embodied-material notion offers a much-needed path for further developing and getting behind the door of this subject under study.

*At stake- the why of things*

*"Creative work pursues goals just beyond its reach, with the performing arts striving for higher levels of quality and proficiency, and the fabricating arts seeking novel problems and new strategies for solving them"* (Caves, 2000: 363)

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40 Originally, in french: "Tout effort pour comprendre détruit l'objet auquel nous nous étions attachés, au profit d'un effort qui l'abolit et ce au profit d'un troisième et ainsi de suite jusqu'à ce que nous accédions à l'unique présence durable, qui est celle où s'évanouit la distinction entre les sens et l'absence de sens: la même d'où nous étions partis." in Édition revue, dans Œuvres, Paris, Gallimard, « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », 2008, « IX. Le Retour » – Chapitre XL, p. 441.

Starting from there, we wondered how creative work could unfold, pursuing goals beyond its reach within rationalization logics<sup>41</sup>. Approaching creativity as contextually defined, we examined it through the awkward tension between creative rationales and economic rationales, as if possible to approach them in isolation. As we extensively described, goals of the creative process strain against the economic resources available for the task, bringing the creative agent into anguished contact with the gatekeepers and managers who select among the creative works on offer.

While creative work within creative industries surely is a question that contains economic elements, the answer is no entirely economic response. As Caves (2000: 364) nicely puts it, "*the muse whispers erratically, and rarely on demand*". Creative people describe their creative process as arising out of inner necessity. This unpredictable and uncommittable character of creative inspiration colours relations between creative professionals and managers or organizers of creative products. Such a problem principally affects the creative agent's commercial dealings at arm's length, but it also shapes commercial organizations in which creative professionals collaborate in one way or another with economic resources.

### *Initial questioning*

We wanted to understand how creative actors within lucrative organizations accomplish their day-to-day work and guide their behaviour, when facing the intertwinement of creativity with rationalization logics. What is happening on that uncertain, ambiguous, and ongoing creating and negotiating path of creative value, within rationalization logics? How do actors involved into the creative process deal with economic constraints? Those questions were inherently central to our work. Not surprisingly, they turned out to be dynamic, multilayered and complex. It is by going some way towards addressing them that a new concept of creativity emerged along the way, one that is performative and processual.

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<sup>41</sup> Rationalization logics such as defined by Tschang (2007: 989) as "*the predominant focus on business interests or productivity-oriented production processes, usually at the expense of creativity*".

### *On the field-the how of things*

Thinking the world processually was the first step towards providing new answers. From there, it is in very banal workaday life that we looked for responses. The empirical focus was on the here and now, with some telling evidence arriving from exploratory shores, pile of interviews, and ethnographic work. Trying to "*envelop ourselves into events*" (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 56), we spent some time in a designing studio, where we closely observed a designer and her team create, manipulate, mark, organize and conquer or being conquered by the space of the changing playground surrounding them.

Throughout our work we sought meaningful interplay and oscillation between different theories and rich empirical material, and tried to evoke more than describe, staying attuned to affect, sensation and atmosphere. This way, we depicted creativity in a more densely textured form, and a great deal of qualitative evidence was brought up to support the following conclusions.

### *Findings*

Paying close attention to the challenges creative actors experience, we revealed various arrangements they develop to cope with such challenges. By directing our attention inside organizations, we found that creative actors at times play the game of the market, at other times cultivate their uniqueness or also seek autonomy. The identified practices adjoining constitute different components of informal relationships that are established inside the organization, going from differentiating creative piecework from commercial piecework, intervening creatively up to marketing activities, or also sticking to one's own creative driving line.

The tactical aspect of such practices was identified -through Certeau's reading- and we demonstrated how the navigating between them allowed for some leeway in creativity. Those tactics are interesting because they offer a cue to creative work that is done at the boundaries of different practices, where clashes and tensions are evident, particularly in the elaboration of, as

such, boundary objects. Like a well-oiled machine, those tactics act as mechanisms that maintain the ongoing existence of a 'creative fuzziness' between creative agents and the organization.

Movement, shift and openness to alteration are then defining what creativity is all about when understood as managed through with tactics. In that, disturbance is welcome, and creative process arises within incoherence and inconsistencies. Paradoxes and tensions are part of the deal. In fact, tactics multiply and feed out of such tensions. We also discussed how such arrangements make use of the strategic, in surprising ways. Creative actors tactically become creative, within the official. Sometimes the tactical fakes the official. It is a form of creativity that is not anticipated. The tactical insinuates, and creativity as such is a form of insinuation as well.

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Besides, we also demonstrated throughout the findings how creative behaviour and decisions happen in joint action with individuals together with the materials and surroundings. Touch and tactility intersect with objects and the everyday actions and activities of 'doing' creative action. Creative actors we observed find their way towards designing within constraints by entering a 'playground' where the very presence of the economic is not felt for a moment. Materials, experimentation and interactions dictate in this playground, and not anymore the economic expectations and profitable right answers.

In that sense, creation is more of an affective *reaction* than an affective *action*. Materials and their affective attraction, the inspiration that comes out of the trials, and the dialog between creative actors...this combination of forces is powerful and constantly brings creative actors back into their playground. They genuinely follow their desires and instinctive sense of possibility along those forces. In such a playground, various events happen, not yet coded by interests of economic efficiency -such as the unexpected results coming out of an experiment.

Evidently economic knowledge resides in the heads of the designers, appropriated, transmitted and stored by means of mentalistic processes. But not only. Hands, gestures and eyes also play a key role, and a role that is not up for grabs in the marketplace. Accordingly, the creative proposition takes shape in the flow of experience: work, listen, touch, communicate, experiment are co-present in practice, and entirely part of creative actors' existence. In this playground's space and time, no distinctions are made among subject, object, thought or context.

In fact, it is this small group combined and manipulated working ideas and solution that arrives at an aggregate product or an emerging creative composition. Such meaningful and valuable inter-related actions are carried out along the creative process, paving the way for what we call 'creativity-in-action'.

We argued that such creativity-*in-action* implies taking on board a conceptual awareness of the material, embodied and affective forces. By unfolding a performative concept of creativity and its different dimensions, we have been able to exemplify how various and valuable meanings, outcomes and objects are made up 'on the spot' to create, thus fooling economic priorities.

In constant metamorphosis, creativity is then accomplished through personal and affective drive alongside with materials, experimentation and inter-relations. In the end, the visible part of creative work is so little. In fact, the creative production that might be attributed to actual and active work is very little as well.

Following Herbert Simon we could say the visible part of work (creative in this case) is nothing compared to the huge invisible part underlying the whole. 90% of the work is explained by past work, infrastructures, materials, objects, previous experiments, tactical arrangements etc. Effective work is just the emerged part of the iceberg. Such an under-revealed and elusive 'on the side' of creative process makes for the most part of it.

*Enter that metaphorical space for one moment*

Trying to overcome the language of reason, pure knowledge or seriousness, we could present our results through the metaphor of a weaving loom. Creativity-in-action would unfold within the various threads of a weaving loom, that progressively spine and twine them. Each of the threads would represent one of the aspects we underlined: the red one would be the influence of the materials, the blue one would be the influence of the body, and so on...

In weaving, the vertical yarns are collectively known as the warp. The weft and the warp constitute the design. The various influences on the path of creativity are represented by the different threads, and turn into a weft. To stay with the metaphor, a certain theme can be a

certain figure in the fabric. In the end, a given fabric comes out of the weaving machine, like a given creative production comes out of the creative process.

As with a simple frame loom, things get woven and creative production appears progressively. When starting out it is hard to know what tools will be needed, what colours will take over the other; and above all, what the creative proposition will look like. Possibilities are many, numerous directions on how to warp the looms might be taken.



Let's say for instance a fabric base is woven from cotton and polyester fibers. Similarly, we could imagine a creative production woven from a mix of given materials, corporal forces and affective encounters. Constraints are evidently part of the deal, like a weaving loom having its wood structure, more or less heavy. We might also let Certeau in the metaphor: the strategical, in his words, is constraining, and can be integrated in the weaving, as the weft. *Strategical* and *tactical* are then intertwined in the weaving loom.

Correspondingly, the creative process is about a mix of materials, dreams, stories, images, rumours, all of those woven together to produce a pattern. Creative actors would then be weaving stories into a grand narrative. They also have to weave with constraints. In similar ways, creativity-in-action, as we call it, is produced *in situ*. We drew its portrait as always in motion and in flux, spanning human and non-human bodies capable of affecting and being affected, corporal forms and physical artefacts on the move.

#### *Add another brick*

This is where we close the loop with the title of this research: "*Creativity-in-action, Arrangements and affects in the creative industries*". In an economic context, arrangements surround and affects constitute what we call creativity-in-action, an embodied-material way of acting creative. This way, first we answer our research question: creative actors deal with the industry's rationalization logics with various arrangements and other affects that provide some leeway to create. Second, and following up from the previous findings, we propose a brand new way of approaching the concept of creativity with the performative concept of creativity called 'creativity-in-action'.

In doing so, our research develops an understanding of creativity as an emerging socio-material and affective process in which workers and non-human agents are active constituents. We underlined some of the processes whereby creative insiders go about organizing, making, handling and carrying off with things and surfaces in order to 'act' creative. Hopefully the case we narrated and the analysis we drew from it provided a more richer and nuanced story of creativity, thus widening the perspective on what organization studies can contribute to understanding creative industries.

In the discussion, we intended to reflect upon the findings in a dialogue with relevant previous research, showing how that dialogue might also shed more light on the manifold lived realities of creativity. We did not reach to those concepts and theories to enhance potential performance attached to creativity, but rather to highlight mundane, emerging and 'incomplete' attempts of creativity-in-action, doing and dealing with complexity in a creative and economic setting.

Depict things as such was also a way to step out of the dichotomy. We were interested in when and where the creative process starts, or stops; and how it unfolds or spreads out, rather than seeing things in a dichotomous way -economic versus creative.

In the first part of the research, Certeau's work helped us in so pursuing. In the peculiar system he describes, things fall into an 'into each other', sort of both-ends, system. As such a system, there is no dialectical opposition that longer prevails: tactics and strategies need each other, feed of each other. Both are necessary for creative organisations to work. In this instance, creative process is made of simultaneous making use and transformative actions. Naturally processual, the tactical is always moving on. It feeds on a productive ambiguity we renamed 'the creative fuzziness'. Ambivalence to the organization is key.

Second part of the research also allowed us to push the boundaries of dichotomies. The on-going process we depicted pulls away from any archetypal thought. Diving into ethnographic work was a mean to get access to more micro elements, the invisible 'work in action', more specifically the embodied and material dimensions, and the underlying affective coloration. We show the significance of those elements in adjusting along the economic path, in line with organizational studies that favour non-human agents, material things, objects, and tools essentially present and active in organization; rather than utilitarian or rational ways of doing,



We offer a performative and open-ended concept of 'creativity-in-action' that sees creativity as an excessive composition of multiple forces, resolutely materialist, including the body and embodiment, and struck by "*the spatial swirl of affective intensities*" (Thrift, 2006: 143). In doing so, this thesis challenges conventional representations of creativity as disembodied actions. The position of the creative actor is constantly shifting, moving, in a flux; within the everyday interactions among people, materiality, a specific socio-cultural context and affective ways through all that.

This concept recognizes a wider range of actors in creativity than allowed for by the traditional focus on top creators. Stressing the need to acknowledge for such a silent or unwritten history of creativity, we are problematizing creative actions and daily work. This means integrate the whole spectrum of human and non-human actors closely or remotely involved within the creative process, and thus bring to light what we might call various 'effects of invisibility'.

Previous research on creativity in organization studies has traditionally not included embodiment, affects and the tactical in its wider scope and definition. As Latour (2005) would have it, these questions relegate the entire universe of nonhuman actors – the missing masses of social life – to mute indifference. Breaking the indifference, this research challenges orthodox understandings of creativity in the field of organization studies, and develops our understanding of creativity as a multidimensional and unfinished organizational phenomenon.

In the end, we hope our efforts to open up discussions of creative practice (to include more of the nonhuman mediators) yields a more accurate account of the diverse labour (and labourers) involved in creative work; while also transforming how creative work is understood, sustained and promoted within creative industries.

### *Subjectivity*

Evidently we are aware of the subjective aspects of the research. For instance, we could have identified distinctions between haute couture and ready-to-wear in our interviews, we could have interviewed other stakeholders and agents, we could have been to many more events with Ellen and Ela -the two main agents of the ethnography. But still. We were notably involved in

numerous informal conversations with other agents, wrote plenty of field notes regarding doings and actions. And most importantly, we enjoyed doing this fieldwork, tried as much as possible to keep the experience alive; and also accepted that at some point it had to come to an end, to be able to produce something, on our own.

Having said that, it seems now essential to clarify and question a few things. We reflexively acknowledge that this account is an interpretive one, shaped by own positionality (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009), meaning our critical lens mingled with own subjective experience. Ethnography and semi-structured interviews have been at the core of our methodological approach. Stories of practice have been preferred to theories of practices. Meanwhile, all interpretations continue to be our own, embedded within the research setting (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003).

There are many ways of seeing the data collected and this was influenced by our personal experiences as part of the research context. Narratives were co-created within narrative discourse with others (Cunliffe, 2001). As researchers, we were in a sense co-authors of the narratives, sharing with our interviewees (endorsing the role of 'co-researchers') a single discursive space, where reciprocal understanding occurred as a way to connect and create meaning in a moment of storytelling.

Such story fragments are not easily captured. To re-present them is to retell them in another context that definitely needs to grow aware of its own partial understandings, under the weight of its own influence. There is no way to retell the story except by re-forming it. As Stewart (2007) explains, knowledge and our experience of reality is always situated, emergent, partial and fragmented. With our own epistemologically grounded vocabularies, we represent social reality in subjective ways.

Even what is recorded in field notes is filtered through perceptions, experiences and commitments (Emerson et al., 1995). Embedded and embodied in the field (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), we were and still are 'inside the practices' (Gherardi, 2016) that we study. Moreover, as researchers we follow certain 'laws' and 'codes', at least we belong to a social group. Every social group produces a particular culture, and tends to confine itself into it. Consequently, every practice is taken in a polymorphic network which conveys a connoted approach, underlying issues that initially appear mainly technical.

- LEAVE THINGS OPEN

In what follows we try to underline main limits and final reflections adjoining to our research process and posture. Although plenty of problems arise if we choose to approach creativity as something of a moving phenomenon, a multi-dimensional mess, a must-remain conundrum, we suggest doing so aware of the limitations we now unfold.

### *Complexity*

This research is a context and time bound piece of research, shaped by our subjective oriented thinking and doing, inherently partial worldview. All along, the idea of complexity has been important in the research process, and a reflexive approach has been useful in grasping the contradictions, gaps and currents encountered on the field. To use Mol and Law's admittedly simple definition of complexity: things do not always add up, events occur outside the process of linear time, and phenomena can share a space but not be mappable on to the same single set of dimensions (Mol & Law, 2002).

As much as we tried, through rich, vivid and dense descriptions to make sense of the field at hand, obviously we could not avoid reduce such complexity, uncertainty and equivocality in our writing. This is a common strategy for making sense of intricate events in the world, but in doing so we also inherently substitute and reduce understanding (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001). We strived not to reduce such understanding by taking the mess and complexity seriously.

An emphasis on the explanatory potential in acknowledging complexity is shared among scholars across the social sciences. For example John Urry, in editing a *Theory, Culture & Society* special issue on 'Complexity', refers to a "*complexity turn*", describing a shift in the social and cultural science "*from reductionist analysis to those that involve the study of complex adaptive ('vital') matter that shows ordering but which remain 'on the edge of chaos'*" (Urry, 2005: 1). We hope that through our writings, we provided somewhat richer and thicker descriptions of the empirical material and our context.

While trying to overcome those difficulties, we approached the field through a process view,

aiming at embracing movement rather than arresting it. As reality is perpetually fluxing and changing; naming, logic, and formal representations will always be too fixing and static. While acknowledging for such an incompetence of utterance, we tried to continuously reflect and make decisions regarding the methodology of this study throughout the process. Consequently, the research process that has led us here was very explorative, navigating the landscape of thoughts, practicalities, sense-making, decisions, activities and experiences (both ours and 'our' subjects's), encountered on the way.

With this explorative reflexive framework, the different steps of the research process have overlapped and evolved. We spent hundred of hours of participant observations, formal interviews, photographs as well as countless informal discussions with a number of creative agents over various time and space. Throughout our work, research process felt very much like craft, that definitely "*cannot be reduced to steps, manuals, and models*" (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007: 1272). As such a craft, it goes beyond (a) given methodological choice(s), but rather involves dealing with the peculiar and personal, something deep-seated in the researcher.

### *Reflexivity*

*"The construction of a scientific object requires first and foremost a break with common sense, that is, with the representations shared by all, whether they be the mere commonplaces of ordinary existence or official representations, often inscribed in institutions and thus present both in the objectivity of social organizations and in the minds of their participants. The preconstructed is everywhere. The sociologist is literally beleaguered by it, as everybody else is. The sociologist is thus saddled with the task of knowing the object –the social world- of which he is the product, in a way such that the problems that he raises about it and the concepts he uses have every chance of being the product of this object itself."* Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L., 1992: 235, original emphasis.

While this research endeavours to demonstrate rigor at all times, it embraces the presence of subjectivity, experience and emotion in the social-interaction process, by using full participant observation methods (Adam et al., 2015). To reduce bias, we tried to be cognizant of our position throughout the investigation.

All along, our concern was to describe what we saw and not what we knew. To that end, we have also drawn practical guidance and inspiration from Alvesson and Skjöldberg's reflexive methodology (2009), which emphasizes the ambivalent relationship between a researcher's text and the realities studied; and the consequent need for a continuous reflexivity in engaging with confusing and contradictory empirical material.

Two phenomena might have altered our perception of what was happening on the field, hence colouring our empirical interpretations. First, even if we tried to not impose any theoretical framework to our field notes, we cannot say that we were not influenced by our prior readings and knowledge. While (we believe) all concepts are empirically integrated, all fields are theoretically integrated fields. Second, every description seems oriented according to individual values and sentiments, although those are often implicit and sometimes difficult to recognize. We often wondered if our interpretations were influenced by our current readings, and we sometimes alluded to such questionings in our daily notes on the field, so as to be able to, later, remember what could have oriented our vision towards a particular direction.

On the journey, advice from colleagues happened to be an efficient safeguard. More than our readings, colleagues' comments and feedbacks helped us figure out the preconceived and preconstructed we were juggling with, all along our presentations on the research's progress or various other communications in conferences. We aimed at this reflexivity throughout the research process; a process we lived as a constant dialogue between the guiding ontological and epistemological notions, existing theories, the multiplicity in the empirical material and our personal acuteness as a researcher.

### *Leave things open*

To Olivier Saillard<sup>42</sup>, who says: "*Nowadays fashion has abandoned the personal, inner, affective and poetic questions, for lack of time*", we might answer that such aspects are still there, underlying but surely stakeholders of the creative process. Importantly, we reveal how creative practices call attention

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<sup>42</sup> Historian, Performer, Head of Paris' *Musée de la Mode*.

to those aspects that can never be fully or finally represented, reconciled or incorporated as explicit knowledge. As such, some areas are destined to remain conundrums.

In that respect, it is worth noting that creativity or rather the method of creativity cannot be fully captured and consumed by the models of scientific management that seek to reduce all chaos and becoming to algorithms or words. Our aim was definitely not to make the creative work and adjoining organization logical, understandable and predictable. At the end of the day, what matters here is much more to explain how arrangements and ambiguity are affected and/or affect all the rest, rather than make them crystal clear.

Hopefully we have opened some areas to think about the deployment of subversive creative actions within creative industries. Finally, we would like to conclude our document by instilling some fresh ideas regarding contemporary matters. Obviously there is a dark side to creative industries. Obviously creative actors struggle and often have mountains to break through. In so many ways today rationalization rules in creative industries. However, what we reveal here is how creative actors definitely rule in/through their own playground: a playground they value, aspire to, and maintain through various tactics within and regarding the organization.

In the end, the creative economy we so glowingly speak about in economic terms hides a reality made of independent elements. Any creative action implies a definitely non-manoeuvrable but very personal part -made of corporality, affect and materiality. Such creative action or creativity-in-action, while being intensely entangled and intertwined with surroundings, constantly escapes its economic processing and packaging.

In line with Certeau who recommended not to treat people as fools, we believe that one should not under-estimate creative actors' capacity to arrange for their own times and spaces, nor their ability to bring out the full richness of something that has its roots very far from the economic grounding and capitalist thinking.

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## APPENDIX

### 1/SECONDARY DATA: non-exhaustive list of secondary data

#### OBSERVATIONS

- >One week - Paris Fashion Week (Sept 14)
- >One day - Who's Next, Parisian Fashion Fair for International buyers (Sept 15)
- >One day - ECSCP, École de la Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne (April 15)
- >Three days - Paris Fashion Week (January 17)
- >One day - Première Vision, Parisian Fashion Fair for Fabrics (February 17)
- (...)

#### DOCUMENTARIES

- The September Issue*, R.J.Cuterl, 2009
- The True Cost*, Andrew Morgan, 2015
- Fashion !* Olivier Nicklaus, 2012
- Martin Margiela : The Artist is absent*, Alison Chernick. Festival du film de Tribeca 2015
- Isaac Misrahi. Unzipped*, Douglas Keeve, 1995
- Louboutin*, Farida Khelfa, 2013
- Pinault-Arnault, les frères ennemis du luxe*, Claire Fournier et Antoine Coursat, 2014
- Balmain*, Collection The Day Before, Loic Prigent, 2011
- Sonia Rykiel*, Collection The Day Before, Loic Prigent, 2011
- Dior and I*, Frederic Tscheng, 2014
- (...)

#### FILMS

- Saint Laurent*, Bertrand Bonello -2014
- Yves Saint Laurent*, Jalil Lespert -2014

*Coco avant Chanel*, Anne Fontaine -2008

(...)

## TV PROGRAMS

2014/2015/2016 "La mode, la mode, la mode", Alexandra Golovanoff, Paris Première

2014/2015 "À la vie, à la mode", Elisabeth Bost, TV5 Monde

(...)

## WEB

Ifmparis.blog.lemonde.fr

Businessoffashion.com

Style.com (website magazine VOGUE)

GaranceDore.fr (fashion blog of Garance Doré)

Ashadedviewonfashion.com (fashion blog of Diane Pernet)

Websites of main parisian fashion schools (trainings, conferences, partnerships) : ECSCP, Duperré, Esmod, Studio Berçot, Atelier Chardon-Savard

(...)

## PRESS

La Revue des deux mondes-N°Spécial "Le sens de la mode"2011

Press articles on fashion week 2014/2015/2016/2017

Continuous press review on fashion industry (2014-2015-2016-2017)

(...)

## RADIO

Interview of Christophe Lemaire, artistic director of Hermès, Radio program "Dans les Oreilles", Radio Nova -April 2015

Interview of JC de Castelbajac, artistic director of own house Castelbajac, Radio program "Boomerang", France Inter Radio -November 2017

(...)

## EXHIBITIONS

*Fashioning Fashion. Deux siècles de mode européenne. 1700-1915*  
Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris, Avril 2013

*Un siècle de photographie de mode chez Condé Nast*  
Palais Galliera, Musée de la mode de la ville de Paris, Mai 2014

*La Mode en France-Les années 50*  
Palais Galliera, Musée de la mode de la ville de Paris, Novembre 2014

*Dries Van Noten-Inspirations*  
Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris, Novembre 2014

(...)

## CONFERENCES

*Les nouveaux territoires du luxe.*

Invités : - Axel Adida, COO Digital du groupe L'Oréal  
- France Grand, ex Directrice de la création de L'institut Français de la Mode  
- Laurent Gardinier, Délégué général de Relais & Chateaux France, co-proprétaire de Gardinier et fils (Taillevent, Les Crayères, Château Phélan - Ségur, etc.)  
- Louis Orlianges, Editeur du magazine GQ et de Conde Nast Digital  
- Franck Sorbier, Grand Couturier et Maître d'art

Conférence organisée par le master Management du Luxe de l'Université Paris Dauphine,  
22/10/14

*La créativité, source de soft power pour la France ? Le cas de Paris et de la mode-*  
Frédéric GODART-Docteur en sociologie de l'Université Columbia à New York/Professeur de psychosociologie des organisations à l'INSEAD  
Conférence de l'ANAJ-IHEDN, 22/09/15

*L'usage de l'art chez Hermès*

Masterclass de Pierre-Alexis Dumas, directeur artistique d'Hermès, au sujet de l'usage de l'art chez Hermès.

Organisée par l'Ecole de la Communication de Sciences Po, 01/10/15

Rencontre avec Olivier Saillard, directeur du Palais Galliera, Musée de la mode de Paris  
CND, 08/10/15

*Forum de la Mode- Gaité Lyrique-organisé par le Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication et le Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances, avec le soutien du DEFI et l'appui de la Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode et de la Fédération Française du Prêt à Porter Féminin. 06/12/16*

(...)



## OTHER

Les Savoir-faire dans la mode et le luxe: quels enjeux pour la filière française? Étude Mazars, 2014

Anti-Fashion, a manifesto for the next decade- 10 reasons why the fashion system is obsolete.  
Lidewij Edelkoort, trend forecaster

Organizational Charts of various fashion houses

Various job sheets for creative profiles

Performance au Centre National de la Danse, "Models Never Talk".  
Conçue par Olivier Saillard, directeur du Palais Galliera, Musée de la mode de la Ville de Paris,  
dans le cadre du festival d'automne à Paris-08/10/15

(...)

## 2/REPRESENTATIVE DATA -support for interpretation

Theme	Example of Representative Data
Learning commercial codes	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">PLAY THE GAME OF THE MARKET Appropriate the commercial dimension</div> <p>« Si tu veux préserver ta créativité dans ton truc pour un client, il faut vraiment savoir vendre ton truc dès le début » (styliste)</p> <p>« Par exemple il n'y a pas d'étiquette avec la marque, j'ai plutôt décidé d'accoler la marque directement sur le foulard, pour qu'elle reste. Parce que les gens coupent les étiquettes » (directeur général/directeur artistique)</p> <p>« Cette pièce, c'est le truc image, il va te faire rentrer la cliente dans la boutique, mais même si à la fin elle n'achète que du noir et du blanc » (styliste)</p>
A creative process that continues up to marketing	<p>« L'image n'était pas vraiment de mon goût, j'ai été très exigeante pour qu'ils modifient » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Le vêtement doit être visuel. En général c'est des trucs visuels qui fonctionnent dans la comm' » (styliste)</p> <p>« Ces 10 dernières années avec internet, on apprend même maintenant à faire des vêtements qui sont rectangles, puisque l'écran est rectangle, quelque chose qui soit joli, bien pour l'écran » (DG/DA)</p>
Creating one's own organisation	<p>« C'est le moment où j'ai actionné le réseau de l'amitié, quand j'ai commencé » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« J'ai une copine qui est pleine de bon sens, à qui j'ai dit "tiens tu ne veux pas venir me filer un coup de main?" et aujourd'hui c'est elle la DG de la boîte » (DA)</p> <p>« Nous avons appris à transformer nos faiblesses financières en force créative » (DA)</p>
The multiplicity of projects	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">PLAY THE GAME OF THE MARKET Strategically diversify one's creative proposition</div> <p>« Je conseillais des marques chinoises, donc je faisais du conseil, en Chine, pour en fait faire rentrer du financement dans la société » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Je travaille sur des dossiers type uniformes événementiels, tenues de scènes, créations pour la publicité, joint venture, collections capsules. Je crée aussi des objets de décoration, je dessine des figurines qui ont plus à voir avec l'illustration et la matière, des dessins à encadrer... » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Je remarque qu'avec les autres projets que j'ai, puisque je travaille</p>

	aussi pour l'architecture et tout ça, une chose nourrit l'autre, en fait le plus que l'on fait, le plus que l'on produit... » (DA)
Differentiating between creative piecework and commercial piecework	<p>« Tu construis une collection en forme de pyramide. En bas de la pyramide, tu as tous les essentiels, ça c'est la base, que tu vas vendre tout le temps. Et en haut, en général tu as quand même les pièces images. Et c'est là où tu arrives à avoir quand même de la créativité » (styliste)</p> <p>« Les produits dérivés, sur le prêt à porter, se vendent. Un pantalon combinaison de la collection Haute couture, par exemple, nous il nous suffit de ne reprendre que le haut, en dentelle de cette combinaison et d'en faire un produit dérivé, en t-shirt noir. On est vraiment un laboratoire extrêmement puissant » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Parfois on fait des choses qui n'ont pas de sens commercialement, mais on le fait quand même parce que c'est pour l'image » (assistant styliste)</p>
Collaborating	<p>« Ces partenariats, je trouve que c'est une ouverture vers l'extérieur et même c'est quelque chose que j'accentuerais plus, à choisir » (DA)</p> <p>« C'est un partage des risques, aussi, financiers. Voire c'est plutôt eux qui prennent le risque finalement » (DG/DA)</p>
Reflection and meaning behind each creation	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>CULTIVATE ONE'S UNIQUENESS Maintain one's own patrimony</p> </div> <p>« Ça ne me suffisait pas de me lancer dans la mode. J'avais besoin de donner du sens à ma création, donc j'ai écrit pendant des mois, avant de me lancer » (DA)</p> <p>« J'ai un rapport assez intellectuel au vêtement, qui raconte finalement une histoire » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Je trouvais ça intéressant de réfléchir à tout ça, plutôt que de ne faire que des exercices de style dans des choses qui existent déjà depuis très longtemps. Je trouvais ça intéressant de se questionner, qu'est ce qu'on raconte, pourquoi...je trouvais que c'était important de le faire en fait, c'est tout » (styliste)</p>
The underlying creative driving line	<p>« Dans tes créations il faut aussi qu'il y ait une ligne directrice et que ça reste toi. tu ne fais pas un truc pour plaire aux autres, sinon tu restes dans le cercle vraiment commercial » (DA)</p> <p>« Du coup ça donne une espèce de ligne conductrice entre ce que j'ai fais chez (marque 1), ce que j'ai fait chez (marque 2) et maintenant ce que je fais là. Enfin, moi, j'essaye de faire ça, j'essaye qu'il y ait quand même un truc...j'essaye de me reconnaître dans ce que je fais » (styliste)</p> <p>« L'une des choses que je trouve les plus intéressantes, c'est essayer de canaliser, focaliser sur une chose. De l'éditer, l'épurer et travailler avec ça. Décliner avec les saisons. Il y a une structure, et on la voit » (DA)</p>

Putting forward creativity	<div data-bbox="592 188 1465 264" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <p>CULTIVATE ONE'S UNIQUENESS Preserve one's own status</p> </div> <p>« La création ça n'est pas comme un boulot. Moi je n'ai jamais fait ça comme un boulot. Franchement c'est pas vraiment ça, genre faire son petit week-end à la campagne, son truc...et puis revenir au taff le lundi...et puis être content quand on finit à 19h : le boulot » (assistant styliste)</p> <p>« Quand je dessine, c'est vital, ça alimente tout le reste » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Le démarrage d'une collection, la page est blanche, c'est toujours excitant » (DA)</p> <p><u>Contradicting with:</u> « Le DA [<i>directeur artistique</i>] reçoit un plan de collection des commerciaux, avant la période d'inspiration, ce plan dépend des chiffres de l'année dernière » (assistant styliste)</p> <p>« Le travail de création, je dirais que ça représente 25%, 1/4, je dirais...j'aimerais plus mais là je ne peux pas » (DA)</p> <p>« Et la phase recherche, création et tout elle dure combien de temps ? -c'est variable, on va dire une semaine en gros...» (assistant styliste)</p>
The mystique maintained around creativity	<p>« C'est compliqué comme exercice de mettre tout [<i>la création</i>] à l'oral, d'arriver à se faire comprendre à l'oral, il y a des choses que tu ne peux pas expliquer » (styliste)</p> <p>« Quel message ? Je pense que c'est très subtil, je trouverais ça dommage, de réduire, là, en une phrase...il y a beaucoup d'aspects différents, beaucoup d'entrées... » (styliste)</p> <p>« C'est très difficile à décrire parce que c'est ce que je suis, qui je suis, et comment je perçois les choses... » (DG/DA)</p>
The creative construction against	<div data-bbox="592 1417 1465 1494" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <p>CULTIVATE ONE'S UNIQUENESS Nurture commitment</p> </div> <p>« Inventer mes codes, c'est une façon de me distinguer mais aussi d'exister...en réaction. C'est à dire que si je vivais toute ma vie dans le rêve, peut-être que j'aurais moins besoin de créer, d'exprimer. Si je vivais aux Bahamas...tandis que là, je fais quelque chose qui diffère » (DA)</p> <p>« C'est une résistance par rapport aux grands groupes, qui ont des moyens énormes. Pour une collection, une petite maison n'a pas du tout le même budget, par contre on est sur le même calendrier donc il faut qu'on assure » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Si quelqu'un vient me voir en me disant 'on le refait ce truc là ça cartonne en ce moment', mais que moi je sens que non, l'année prochaine je n'en aurai plus envie, et bien je ne le fais pas, voilà.</p>

	<p>Quand c'est dicté par le service commercial, ça s'étiole et c'est insipide et sans odeur, et ça n'attire personne » (DA)</p>	
The position statement of the creative questioning	<p>« Pour cette proposition, j'avais envie de ne pas suivre le système, de penser différemment le rythme des collections » (styliste)</p> <p>« A partir du moment où l'on s'exprime dans un domaine, c'est une prise de position. Par rapport à ses pairs déjà. Et après, plus largement, par rapport à des enjeux » (styliste)</p> <p>« Le fil rouge, pour se préserver, c'est un vrai rapport à la résistance, savoir dire oui voilà c'est ça que j'ai envie de faire » (DA)</p>	
Being elsewhere geographically	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td> <p>SEEK AUTONOMY Isolation (vis-à-vis the organisation)</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>« Quand je commence quelque chose, si je suis coupé après j'ai du mal à m'y remettre. l'idée c'est que je viens ici parce qu'il n'y a personne donc je suis tranquille » (DA)</p> <p>« Je préfère être tranquille quand je dessine. Si je suis là c'est vraiment pour travailler, corriger, faire des mails, faire le plan de collection, regarder les tissus...mais le travail créatif, pur, de dessin...c'est chez moi » (DA)</p> <p>« C'est difficile de créer, quand il y a des gens autour, qui posent des questions tout le temps. Il faut juste une rupture, être ailleurs » (DG/DA)</p>	<p>SEEK AUTONOMY Isolation (vis-à-vis the organisation)</p>
<p>SEEK AUTONOMY Isolation (vis-à-vis the organisation)</p>		
Being elsewhere temporally	<p>« Le matin je dessine, ce qui me passe par la tête, je fais beaucoup de patouille, du collage, de la peinture...et l'après-midi je check mes mails, les réseaux sociaux...et là je prospecte » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Le mot d'ordre c'est, la semaine prochaine, on passe en décembre, donc c'est zéro rendez-vous, je ne veux plus de rendez-vous. Je me concentre sur la collection c'est pour le 28 janvier » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Finalement il faut que je vienne bosser le week-end pour être tranquille. D'ailleurs, c'est ce que je préfère. Venir bosser le samedi après-midi, même le dimanche matin... » (DA)</p>	
Being elsewhere symbolically	<p>« Ce n'est pas mon boulot, le commercial » (assistant stylisme)</p> <p>« Nous on va se concentrer sur le dessin. La recherche, toutes les parties développement du modèle, ça fait partie du côté industriel, ce n'est pas le développement intellectuel » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« On fait un croquis, on met un petit morceau de matières, un petit morceau de couleur. Mais ça la plupart des gens ne peuvent pas imaginer ce que ça va être à la fin. Les commerciaux encore moins. C'est très abstrait, donc pendant 6 mois, ils regardent ce qu'ils vont avoir, les dessins, mais c'est très difficile de lire un dessin. Donc il y a une espèce de tension qui fait qu'ils ont du mal à imaginer en fait » (styliste)</p>	

Perpetual Inspiration	<p>SEEK AUTONOMY An outside life (out of the organisation)</p> <p>« Mon cerveau est un peu actif tout le temps. dans la création, tu ne peux jamais vraiment couper totalement » (DA)</p> <p>« Je peux voir un dessin sur un papier peint ou n'importe quoi, hop, je prends une photo. Ou des fers forgés sur les balcons, j'adore aussi ça. Je fais la photo je le donne à mon brodeur, il me fait des dessins » (DA)</p> <p>« Regarder l'extérieur est nécessaire pour être encore plus spécifique mais aussi pour comprendre tout ce qui est sous-jacent. Voir comment l'air du temps ça existe, pourquoi tout à coup la mode, le cinéma, la musique...décident de s'engouffrer dans un courant » (DG/DA)</p>
Deep attachment to freedom	<p>« J'ai besoin d'une certaine liberté, d'organiser...je suis bosseuse mais d'organiser comme je veux » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« Je relie ça [<i>la création</i>] très fortement à la liberté, à pouvoir s'exprimer, qu'il soit prévu de s'exprimer » (DA)</p> <p>« Quand je ne suis pas bien, je reste dehors. Ils me prennent pour une <i>tarée</i>, mais je continue. Parce qu'en fait il y a des moments dans la vie où c'est très compliqué de pouvoir donner » (DA)</p>
Personal -creative- work in parallel	<p>« Personnellement, je suis sur des projets aussi qui m'enrichissent personnellement. Et qui me font avancer. Qui me permettent de ne plus être centrée sur finalement la réussite d'une marque » (DG/DA)</p> <p>« J'avais envie d'avoir mon travail avec mon vocabulaire à moi. Sans filtre, sans filtre d'une maison » (styliste)</p> <p>« Pour le boulot, comme je suis freinée, je ne peux pas m'impliquer à 100%. (...) Mais après quand je fais mes trucs à côté, là je suis dans mon truc, et je crée, je me dis <i>ah oui ça en fait...avec ça....</i> C'est différent » (assistant styliste)</p>

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## Résumé

Le constat de départ de cette recherche, souligné par la littérature, est celui du débat permanent au sein des organisations créatives, entre priorités artistiques et créatives d'un côté et intérêts économiques de l'autre côté.

Nous interrogeons la manière dont les acteurs créatifs gèrent les contraintes économiques qui les entourent dans ce contexte marqué par la rationalisation. Au travers d'une étude qualitative et approfondie de l'industrie de la mode -entretiens et travail ethnographique-, nous observons les pratiques quotidiennes des acteurs créatifs du secteur.

Premièrement, et au travers du travail de Michel de Certeau, nous révélons ici les différentes tactiques et autres arrangements que ceux-ci développent vis-à-vis des contraintes, une forme d'action qui joue un rôle important dans les organisations créatives. Cette forme d'action, que l'on nomme 'trouble du créatif', entretient une ambiguïté autour du travail créatif en organisation, nécessaire pour créer.

Ensuite, nous révélons les forces socio-matérielles et affectives qui constituent les pratiques créatives de façon intrinsèque, et soulignons le poids de telles forces dans la négociation permanente avec les motifs économiques. Subséquemment, nous proposons le concept de 'créativité-en-action', une manière à la fois incarnée, matérielle et affective d'agir créatif, au sein des industries créatives.

## Mots Clés

Créativité; Industries Créatives; Industrie de la Mode; Pratiques Créatives; Tactiques; Michel de Certeau; Materialité; Incorporation; Affect; Ethnographie

## Abstract

This Ph.D. departs from the research literature that underlines the on-going debate arising in creative companies, between art/creative priorities on the one hand and economic/business interests on the other hand.

We wonder how actors involved into the creative process deal with economic and rationalization constraints. Through an in-depth, qualitative study in fashion industry - interviews and ethnographic work-, we investigate empirically the daily practices of creative actors.

First, and notably through Michel de Certeau's work, we reveal the various tactics and arrangements that they develop towards such constraints, as a form of action that plays an important role in creative organizations. This form of action we call 'creative fuzziness' maintains a necessary ambiguity around creative work.

Second, we underline the socio-material and affective forces that inherently constitute creative practices, and how much such forces weigh in the economic negotiation. We then suggest the concept of 'creativity-in-action', an embodied-material and affective way of acting creative, within creative industries.

## Keywords

Creativity; Creative Industries; Fashion Industry; Creative Practices; Tactics; Michel de Certeau; Materiality; Embodiment; Affect; Ethnography