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Sub-theme 29: Craft and Emerging Forms of Organizing ‘Making’ in  
Cultural and Creative Organizations

**BEYOND CREATIVE PRODUCTION: SHAPING CREATIVE  
TOGETHERNESS ACROSS DIFFERENCES IN A EUROPEAN  
SCREENWRITING PROGRAMME**

*This is a work in progress. Please do not circulate outside this sub-theme.*

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**ABSTRACT**

This empirical article seeks to explore the relational dynamics and social phenomena underpinning collective creativity, focusing on the lived experiences of co-creators. Drawing on an ethnographic case study of the Eureka Series programme, we examine how participants build and sustain social bonds while creating together. This programme, organized by the Series Mania Institute in Lille, France, brings together emerging European TV series writers, placing them in a ‘writers room’ environment to collaborate and develop original TV series projects.

Our analysis reveals how co-creators cultivate a *creative togetherness* (i.e., a way of being and feeling together while creating) and shed light on three underlying dynamics: (1) the assembling of human and material entities, (2) the movement between different modes of ‘crea-co-presence’, and (3) the careful mobilization of affects and affectivity. By integrating relational and new materialist perspectives such as Judith Butler’s social ontology of shared vulnerability, we highlight the significance of embodied and affective subtleties in collective creation. We challenge traditional views of creativity as a static process focused on production, instead emphasizing the generative potential of being and creating together. Our findings contribute to management and organization theory by shifting the focus from collaborative production to the organization of creative togetherness, underscoring the importance of non-productivist forms of collective creativity in contemporary work environments.

**Keywords:** creative collaboration, co-presence, ethnography, vulnerability

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Management and organizational studies on ‘collective creativity’ (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006) or ‘creative collaboration’ (Elsbach & Flynn, 2013) has often focused on the production or output of creative processes. While scholarly works have shed light on the interplay between individual and group creativity (Amabile, 2006; Harvey, 2014), the role of trust in creating together (Bidault & Castello, 2009) or the selection of novel ideas (Berg, 2016), we still know very little about the relational dynamics and social collective phenomena that come into play in such processes. In particular, even though recent studies have started to explore these aspects (e.g., Skaggs, 2019; Schiemer, 2024; Schiemer, Schüßler, & Theel, 2022), our understanding of the lived experiences of co-creators’ relationality and sociality remains somewhat limited.

As cultural and creative industries are met with a vast wave of digitalization and automatization (Amabile, 2020), there is an urgent need for a deeper insight into *how* creation-oriented relationships and creative communities develop over time. Therefore, in this paper, we seek to address the following empirical puzzle: *How do co-creators build and sustain social bonds? In which way do they relate with each other and feel together while creating collectively?*

This paper delves into this puzzle by drawing on an ethnographic case study of a 10-week long programme for emerging TV series screenwriters called ‘Eureka Series’. Initiated by the Series Mania Institute (SMI), this training programme brings together aspiring television writers in Lille, a city in the north of France. In doing so, it aims to build a professional class of international TV series creators with a distinctly European ‘cosmopolitan capital’ (Kuipers, 2011) to compete in an industry largely dominated by U.S.-based streaming platforms and shows. In exchange for a tuition fee, participants – who have some prior professional experience – receive high-quality courses on the craft of TV series from experienced professionals (e.g., screenwriters, producers) and develop their collaborative writing skills. Two weeks into the programme, they are grouped into four small writing teams, which are equipped with a ‘writers’ room’—a term that refers to both a physical workspace and an established way of working within the TV screenwriting industry. Throughout the programme, each group needs to develop an original TV series, that is a coherent story with fictional characters, conflicts and narratives that can move an audience (and be sold to a broadcast or streaming platform). The programme culminates in a final presentation of their series project in front of a jury of industry professionals and partners of the SMI. Although projects are neither graded nor immediately produced, this offers a spotlight to these emerging screenwriters while upholding the semi-professional dimension of the programme.

We find value in exploring how the participants of *Eureka Series* develop social ties and form creative communities over time. In particular, this setting offers an appropriate context

for delving into the relational practices of co-creators and to further understand their ways of being, interacting and creating together. For instance, since they aim to develop stories and characters that move us as an audience, they heavily draw on their own lives, experiences, and affects which they share with co-writers while putting a lot of themselves (e.g., their emotions or personal stories) into their joint creative work. In continuation of relational ontologies and ‘new materialist’ perspectives (Ashcraft, 2007; Barad, 2007; Duff & Sumartojo, 2017; Endrissat & Islam, 2021), we argue that paying closer attention to the role of human and nonhuman bodies, digital technologies, and other materialities, all entangled in a ‘messy’ way (Stierand, Boje, Glăveanu, Dörfler, Haley, & Feuls, 2019) could help to further understand how creators relate with each other and enable a sense of the collective while creating. Co-presence (Aroles & Küpers, 2021; Bancou, 2024), postures, bodily movements, as well as affective and ‘embodied subtleties’ (Satama et al., 2021) are an integral part of collective creativity, which, if more fully integrated, should inform how we view the relationality and sociality of co-creators. To explore how bodies gather to form creative communities, we also draw on Judith Butler’s (2009; 2015; 2022) ontological works, which enable to recognize a ‘shared vulnerability’ among co-creators as well as the ethical and political potential of ‘assembling’ and creating across differences. This leads us to inductively show how participants develop what we call a ‘creative togetherness’, which refers to the emergent intentional *sense of being and feeling together* when creating collectively. Our paper sheds light on three interrelated dynamics —namely (1) the assembling of human co-creators and material entities, (2) the movement between different modes of co-presence and, (3) the careful mobilization of affects and becoming affectively attuned— that contribute to organizing ‘creative togetherness’ as well as the interplay between these different dynamics.

In so doing, we aim to challenge longstanding views of the organization of creativity that ontologically foreground creativity *as production* and the creative process as ‘something

static' (Stierand et al., 2019). More specifically, through this ethnographic study, we aim to shift the focus from the organization of collaborative creative production to the organization of a generative kind of creative togetherness. We believe that rethinking the generative potential of *being* together is important in times of growing differences and polarization in modern-day forms of working and organizing. Our case study also holds implications for management and organization theory, which has heavily favored a focus on production, productive action, and accomplishment, thereby neglecting creations arising from the generative potentiality of assembling. In this sense, we aim to provide a step in this direction while encouraging other scholars to further explore non-productivist and creative forms of togetherness.

In what follows, we first discuss the literature on collaborative creation or creativity by relying on studies in organization studies focusing on creative production in groups or teams. We show how organizational research has largely focused on creatives working together on specific creative projects or products and highlight how emerging scholarship in that area has considered the spatial, material, embodied, affective, and atmospheric nature of such collaborative creation processes. We give specific attention to the role of affect theory and emphasize its place in new materialisms (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2019; Bennett, 2010), which offers ways of acknowledging the *agentic nature* of the affective, understood as 'the fluctuating intensities of encounter' (Ashcraft, 2020). We argue that organizational research – perhaps because of its agenda of theorizing organized action – has mostly highlighted the potential of the affective in steering action and production. Instead, in this paper, we aim to focus on the forming and sustaining of bonds within creative settings by pointing to the role of affects in generating a sense of togetherness that holds a creative, ethical and political potential. In the empirical section, we rely on Gherardi's (2019) recommendations for affective ethnography to shed light on how situated affects and an embodied sense of co-presence participate in the constitution of what we call a 'creative togetherness' among human bodies and other material

entities. In the findings section, we further expose the interplay between these dynamics of (1) assembling bodies, (2) moving between modes of ‘crea-co-presence’ and (3) mobilizing affects and affectivity. We conclude by offering further recommendations to understand the affectivity of settings of organized creativity beyond the production and products that emerge within and from such settings.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***1. Creative collaboration, creativity, space & materiality***

The field of organizational studies has a longstanding tradition of examining how people organize to create together. Focusing on ‘collective creativity’ (e.g., Hargadon & Bechky, 2006) or ‘creative collaboration’ (e.g., Elsbach & Flynn, 2013; Schiemer et al., 2022), the focus of this research has largely taken a cognitivist perspective to analyze creative processes and social relationships between co-creators. While certain studies in this tradition have focused on the interplay between individual and organizational creativity (Amabile, 1988; 2006; Woodman, Sawyer, Griffin, 1993), others have highlighted the importance of trust and mutual understanding in order to create together (Bidault & Castello, 2009). In their piece, Hargadon & Bechky (2006) also demonstrated the social and fleeting nature of collective creativity, designating it as a process that emerges from - and is embedded in - social interaction rather than something that can be reduced to the sum of individual creative minds.

Even though a conclusive theory of creativity in organizations and organizing is still missing, we find that organizational research on creativity tends to see collective creativity as an outcome or achievement. We also need to point out the singularity of collective creation, which, in our case, refers to the generation and development of a *work of fiction* - here, a TV series original concept and script - by a collective. Creative professionals, much like other

artistic professions, also make sense of their work within discourses on art and artistic creation (Conor, 2014). Therefore, insights from the organizational research on creativity may not entirely lend themselves to gaining knowledge about the specificities of collective creation and its organization, or creation within cultural or creative industries.

Nevertheless, organizational research has started to consider that collective creation does not happen in a vacuum and instead, is embedded in material, physical reality and in bodily life. As beings of flesh and blood, cocreators are sentient workers who use and orient their bodies in certain ways, and for certain purposes (Harding et al., 2022). The ‘embodied subtleties’ – expressed through bodies, sensations, and movements – in their social interactions are an integral part of creative work (Satama et al., 2021; Stierand et al., 2019). In this sense, we can view writers rooms (or any type of creativity-oriented collaborative space) as affectively charged spatial environments in which embodied co-creators draw on their sentiments and share them with each other to create together. Doing so, we thus join recent post-cognitivist and new materialist perspectives on craft and collaborative creativity (e.g., Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Duff & Sumartojo, 2017; Endrissat & Islam, 2021; Satama et al., 2021) that have highlighted the role of bodily and affective realities in the organization of collective creation.

However, most of this research still takes creative production – i.e. the making of creative products or the successful completion of creative projects – as its focal point, investigating the entanglements involved in the creation of an artistic outcome. Such research has, for example, put forward an understanding of artistic inspiration in terms of assemblages that emerge in space and through technology (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017), and has shown how creative ideas materialize with the help of gestures and objects (Martine & Cooren, 2016; Martine, Cooren, & Bartels, 2019). Studies departing from such relational ontologies have also shown how space contributes to the repetition and adaptation of creative ideas, which can then lend durability to informal communities of creative workers (Cnossen & Bencherki, 2022), or



how impactful ideas for films need to materialize through documents that have agency as they move through the stages of a film production process (Malou Strandvad, 2011).

Although these studies have done much to decentre the human as the main actor in creative production, they still share an implicit emphasis on the ‘productivist’ side of creativity. In the end, films are made, artworks designed, and hackathons are accomplished. What such research on organised creativity has left aside to a certain extent, is the vulnerable and highly emotional nature of much creative work. Drawing on a social ontology of ‘shared vulnerability’ developed by Judith Butler (2009; 2015; 2022), we assume that bodily existence implies a vulnerability that is inherently shared; our capacity to affect and to be affected, as living bodies, is central to understanding how we engage with each other and create together. This brings us to a closer engagement with affect theory.

## ***II. The role of affect in creative production: towards a new materialist and vulnerability-based understanding***

Affect theory, as argued by Ashcraft (2017), holds potential for what she refers to as a *humanized* criticism, i.e. a critical stance that creates possibilities for vulnerability without the loss of agency. The ‘ordinary’ in Stewarts’ *ordinary affects* (2007) should be read as an ordinary that resists its equation to the micro, and rather should be read in terms of a *contact point*, something which becomes possible when the ordinary is understood in terms of new materialism (Ashcraft, 2017). This notion of public, ordinary affects, something that escapes language (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012) and can ‘burst through the constant motion of experience’ (Linstead, 2018, p. 325), is what allows people to be together in a mutually affective way. Judith Butler directly engages with this phenomenon by developing a social ontology around a phenomenological understanding of ‘shared vulnerability’ (2009; 2015; 2015). They consider

that embodied existence implies to be “*vulnerable by definition*” (2009: 33) in that the subject’s (inter)corporeal vulnerability (i.e., their bodily capacity of ‘affecting and being affected’ by others, in Butler’s words) anchors their experience of the social world. It is both a general condition of existence and an aspect that shapes our lived experiences of selves and others. Furthermore, affects are also *felt* in specific moments in which bodies and things are thrown together (Stewart, 2007). Much like atmospheres, they are de-psychologised (Jorgensen & Beyes, 2023; Knight, Lok, Jarzabowski, & Wenzel, 2024).

Considering the entanglement of the social and material implies an ontological turn that cannot be separated from the political. Barad (2007) therefore speaks of the ethico-onto-epistemological premise of new materialism. Thinking through the ontological equal footing – or ‘flatland turn’ (Ashcraft, 2017, p. 46) results in a radical rethinking of the nature of the human subject (Braidotti, 2019), that goes far beyond the acknowledgement of the agency of materiality, or the non-human. Thus, beyond the affective and atmospheric qualities of space (Jorgensen & Holt, 2019), which can be said to apply to the writers rooms as well, we explicitly build on the understanding of affect as something ‘hanging in the air’ (Stewart, 2007). In so doing, we rely on the work of other scholars who have pointed to affect theory’s potential for rethinking commonly held assumptions in the study of organizational communication (Ashcraft, 2020) and organization and management (Fotaki et al, 2017; Gherardi, 2023).

Research in that vein has highlighted how co-presence between creative workers sharing a space constitutes an affective experience (Endrissat & Leclerq-Vandelanoitte, 2021). Whereas such spaces offer affective qualities that help people be and feel creative alone (Endrissat & Leclerq-Vandelanoitte, 2021; Cnossen & Stephenson, 2022), joint creative work is also shown to be fueled by *affective circuits* between co-present human bodies, digital technologies and other socio-material, atmospheric elements. For instance, such research shows that common formats for joint creative work such as hackathons, leverage people’s desire for community,

thereby driving value extraction (Endrissat & Islam, 2021). While affective circuits can be seen as a way to engage in novel forms of value extraction, research on the affective quality of collective organizing has pointed to the ways in which affects can help shape atmospheres of collaborative organizing (Resch & Rozas, 2024). The affective is often portrayed as something positive: affective spaces or resonance can offer a sense of security (Vesala, 2023), help drive political transformation from the ground up (Vidolov, Geiger, & Stendhal, 2023), or create an atmosphere of caring for a place and its things (Cnossen, 2022). The tendency to cast affects, or the affective, in this light, is understandable, since organizational scholarship is primarily concerned with questions of the uniting of actors and action, and the propelling of action. Focusing on affect, then, is a way to draw attention to the extra-linguistic ways in which moments, spaces, encounters, or situations become consequential for organizational emergence and endurance (Brummans & Vézy, 2022; Vidolov et al., 2023).

Yet, we believe that an emphasis on affects can offer more than paint a rosy-colored picture of the emotionally charged ways of creating together, or (on the contrary) point out the ways in which the management of affect is another way to extract labor from creative workers (Endrissat & Islam, 2021). Instead, we believe that integrating the political foundations of affect theory – particularly its connection to new materialism – with Butler’s (2009; 2015; 2022) social ontology of shared vulnerability may offer new ways to understand *being together* in contemporary forms of work and organizing. Our findings show that such a *being together* can take shape in entirely mainstream and apolitical contexts of creative collaboration (such as a prestigious programme for European screenwriters). Such mainstream organizational contexts for creative collaboration offer a chance for enabling a shared sense of *being and feeling together* that emerges in the writers’ rooms. Thus, we have come to think of this shared sense of being together not in terms of mutual understanding or joint creation, but rather as something that is more-than-productive while also holding a creative, ethical and political potential.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### *I. Data collection: An ethnographic case study of the Eureka Series programme*

The first author conducted an ethnography (Kostera & Harding, 2021; Van Maanen, 2011) of the 10-week long *Eureka Series* programme. He was able to follow a recent edition of the programme, from the first days – when participants started to get to know each other at the *Series Mania Festival* – to the final presentation of their original TV series ‘concepts’. Given the “intensive” nature of the programme (as displayed on the website<sup>1</sup>) and the fact that it takes place in Lille (a relatively isolated town compared to the European capitals in which they live), the participants are led to spend a considerable amount of time together, leading to an informal creative residency within and outside the Series Manies Institute’s facilities. Thus, to immerse himself in the field, the first author took part in almost all of the programme’s teaching modules but also many social, ‘off’ activities (e.g., lunches, drinks, small parties). He regularly struck up casual conversations with all of the participants, mentors, and guest lecturers, taking jottings throughout the day (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). His ambiguous role (somewhere between that of a regular participant in the programme and that of an external observer) meant that he was in constant communication with the Series Mania Institute’s pedagogical team running the programme, informing them of the study’s advancement, sharing his initial observations and simply conversing with them.

Before starting the fieldwork, the first author received explicit warning that access to the writers’ rooms – which we quickly understood to be vital to the craft of collective screenwriting –, were very private spaces and off the table for observation, unless the

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<sup>1</sup> The official website of the Eureka Series programme: <https://seriesmania.com/institute/en/eureka-series-3/about-eureka-series-2/>

programme's participants, divided in four teams, explicitly invited the first author in. Two weeks into the programme, two screenwriter teams out of four invited the first author to their writers' rooms so that he can attend their group work sessions. These sessions took place almost every workday from the second week of the programme until its end. The first author offered his assistance with note taking, writers' assistants being a common role in the TV industry. He was able to alternate between the two groups throughout their collective creation processes, which he documented in detailed diary entries. He attended more than 20 half-day work sessions, including 5 that took place online using videoconferencing software or Cloud-based platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet. The first author was thus able to observe some activities occurring in digital spaces such as online work sessions – during the programme's 'remote period' – but also the participants' social life in the WhatsApp group chat.

Throughout the fieldwork, the second author provided guidance to the first author on various aspects of data collection (e.g., ethnographic note taking, negotiating access to the field) during regular online meetings and e-mail communications throughout the fieldwork. In sum, it amounts to over 300 hours of observation over a 44-day period as well as 125 pages of ethnographic field notes. The first author also conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with all but one of the participants, some of the programme's mentors, lecturers, and all the pedagogical team's members including the Institute's director. In terms of secondary data, these include more than 45 documents (e.g., e-mail exchanges, planning tables, presentation decks), 115 photos (taken by the first author), and over 400 screenshots of various online interactions, such as online meetings or group chat messages.

## ***II. Case description: A 10-week long programme for aspiring screenwriters***

The 10-week long residency and training programme Eureka Series was launched in 2021 by the Series Mania Institute (SMI), an organization that brands itself as the “first school entirely dedicated to television series” (official website). Each round of Eureka Series (one taking place each autumn; one each spring) welcomes about 12 participants per round from all over Europe and of different ages; the studied promotion’s average age was 34. The programme mostly takes place in Lille, a city located in the north of France, on the border with Belgium. Its location at a cross point in Europe coincides with the programme’s European profile and ambition to develop an international pool of TV series professionals.

The Eureka Series programme aims to offer conditions that the development of enduring relationships among participants by teaching them “*collaborative writing skills*” and placing them in a “*European writers room environment*” (official website). Shortly after joining the programme, participants are assigned into four small writing teams of three people each. Each team is provided with a so-called ‘writers room’, a physical workspace to which participants have access to for the duration of the programme, and in which they are supposed to develop and fine-tune an original TV series script or ‘concept’. The writers room is both a tangible space (in this case: located in the SMI building) and a highly institutionalized and symbolically charged way of working that originates in the US film industry, in particular in Hollywood-based films and TV series production (Conor, 2014). Today, writers rooms more broadly stand for a collaborative way of writing in which a team of professional writers, hired for the purpose of one production, are expected to develop a series’ concept and episodes. The writers rooms are often considered very private spaces for creative practice. Screenwriters put a lot of themselves into the stories and characters they develop. This requires them to feel they can freely express their thoughts, fantasies, fears and doubts. Furthermore, compared with other types of workspaces, writers rooms can have an almost therapeutic function in that screenwriters are more likely to share their personal experiences in order to fuel the

development of the story and the characters. As such, the programme is geared towards the cultivation of productive ‘professional friendships’ that can extend beyond the duration of the intense 10-week course itself. Finally, although the programme takes place mostly on-site, in the SMI building in Lille, there is a two-week ‘remote period’ during which ‘Eurekans’ are given the chance to return to their homes. During these two weeks, they engage in online work sessions in their team and are also expected to participate in online lectures.

Despite the commercial and industry-focused nature of the programme, what stood out most to us was the way through which participants – through their social interactions and creative practices – build and sustain ties while developing a sense of the collective, which proved to be both a condition for and creative output beyond the development of an original European TV series project. Therefore, in this paper, we sought to analyze more specifically how the forming and sustaining of bonds and communal feelings took place.

### ***III. Data analysis (ongoing): Relying on different methods***

To analyze the collected data, we iterated between different coding techniques (Locke et al., 2022). First, in line with our interest for collective creation processes, we drew on Ann Langley’s (1999) strategies for analyzing process data, which include ‘temporal bracketing’, writing narrative descriptions, comparing cases, and elaborating tables and visual mappings to guide our shared sensemaking. Yet, we were unable to yield satisfying results using this technique; instead, we concluded that it would not enable us to grasp the “*complex, messy, embodied and non-linear*” nature of creative processes. Second, we started to do thematic coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) in order to identify themes related to our research question directly in the data. Doing so, we were able to discover how certain passages referred to the role of material and tangible artifacts like sticky notes, the role of bodily materialities such as embodied gestures, or how affects came into play in moments of collective

creation. Thematic coding enabled us to organize and make sense of our material in a first step, while leaving some of our interrogations unanswered.

Therefore, in a third step, we sought to develop a set of theoretically-inspired, ‘sensitizing question’ (Locke et al., 2022) to elucidate our understanding of social bonds and communal feelings in the context of the Eureka Series programme. Sensitizing question have been used in several empirical papers in the field of management and organizational studies (Howard-Grenville, Metzger, & Meyer, 2013; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). It involves drawing loosely on “*concepts from the literature*”, and turn them into questions, in order to *sensitize* ourselves to “*themes in the data and to focus our analysis*” (Locke et al., 2022: 971). Rather than constraining them, this complementary analytical reading opens researchers to new possibilities in their data, as exemplified in some recent studies we refer to (Endrissat & Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2021; Vidolov et al. 2023). Thus, drawing on the aforementioned theoretical framing, i.e., a new materialist perspective of affects (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2019) and Butler’s social ontology of shared vulnerability (2009; 2015), we developed sensitizing questions around concepts such as ‘material-discursive practices’, ‘shared vulnerability’, or ‘more-than-humans’. After having developed a dozen questions around the initial research puzzle, we picked a selection of sensitizing questions based on their potential to resonate with the empirical material, to inspire us as well as our openness to the data. For instance, we sought to make sense of the material by asking ourselves the following sensitizing questions: “How do co-creators express their own vulnerability and acknowledge that of others?” or “what are the different ways in which they experience the presence of others while creating collectively?”

As we loosely let ourselves be inspired by the literature, constructs such as *assembling*, *co-presence*, and *affective attunement* emerged over time by moving back and forth between our analysis of the material and conceptual insights from the literature. Therefore, mobilizing a new materialist perspective of affects (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2019) and Butler’s social



ontology of shared vulnerability (2009; 2015) in the context of Eureka Series translated into the empirical research question: *How does considering the role of materiality, shared vulnerability, and affects offer insight into the relational practices and communal experiences of participants in a European screenwriting programme?*

#### **4. FINDINGS**

Based on our interpretation of the Eureka Series fieldwork, we have developed an in-depth understanding of the above aspects, enabling us to identify a phenomenon we call *creative togetherness* as well as its underlying dynamics. In the following, we detail such dynamics by initially focusing on the way *creative assemblies* of inter-acting human co-creators and material entities are formed. We then explain how being and creating together involves a shift or movement of co-creators between different modes of ‘crea-co-presence’, which, from a new materialist-phenomenological lens, goes beyond mere spatial colocation. The third part of the findings unpacks the central role of affects – their careful mobilization and specific management by co-creators – in driving this movement while nurturing creative relationships and community. Building on these findings, this paper offers a conceptual model that sheds light on and decomplexifies the phenomenon of creative togetherness, which we define as *a sense of being and creating together*. Through describing how it materializes and emerges in the case of Eureka Series, we contribute to the management and organizational literature by further theorizing the role of materiality, co-presence and affects in organizing and sustaining *creative togetherness*, a phenomenon which take place within and beyond cultural and creative organizations. The descriptive sections of the findings are written in the first person to emphasize the first author’s account of the fieldwork, while the analytical parts use the ‘we’ pronoun as they are based on joint analysis work.

## 4. 1. THE ASSEMBLING OF HUMAN CO-CREATORS AND MATERIAL ENTITIES

### *1. Embodied and material embeddedness of co-creators' practices*

The Series Mania Institute is located in the historic centre of Lille, just a few minutes' walk from the famous Grand Place. Most of the activities associated with the *Eureka Series* programme, from learning modules with experienced professionals to screenwriting group work, take place in this two-story building, which is a former mansion. Two weeks after the programme's kick-off, the participants start to work with their teams in their writers' rooms. Each team was able to pick one of the building's four available rooms that they would use for the remainder of the programme. Although the term commonly refers to a method of collaborative writing for TV series, writers' rooms have always struck me as tangible, secluded spaces above all else, probably because their very physicality was difficult for me to access. In the following, I describe three moments I witnessed inside these 'rooms' after one of the groups, renamed here as 'Ambushed', agreed to let me sit in on their creative work sessions.

**Moment n° 1:** At the end of the lunch break, I go upstairs to join the 'Ambushed' group. I walk into *their* room, trying to be as discreet as possible. Alice and Sandra are at different sides of the central island, which consists of two large roll-top tables joined together. I go to sit next to Sarah, on the corner of the side that's not occupied, but Alice stops me: "It's Carmen's (the third group member) seat. She's usually there." Their current arrangement seems to be somewhat habitual for them now; I understand that it has become something not to be disturbed. I move to another of the central island's corners – one that is free – and set up my laptop and notebook in a way that, I hope, won't disturb them in their creative work.

**Moment n° 2:** The following day, I attend another of their working sessions, sitting in the same place. Alice, Carmen, and Sandra are now placed at each corner of the central island, typing on their laptops without speaking to each other. They are working on the *characters'*

*descriptions* (i.e., bits of text that outline the traits of the main characters in the TV series) using the same online word processor, a shared Google Doc, although using their own devices. Alice and Carmen both write on their laptops while Sarah types on a keyboard connected to her tablet. Occasionally, one of them asks a question or mentions something that has been modified in the Google Doc, e.g., when Alice tells Carmen: “*Thank you for making this change, I also thought this sentence was too long*” before going back to writing. The crisp sound of them typing on their respective keyboards becomes not only an expression but an integral part of their common creative work. The three screenwriters seem to listen to each other type as one of them types even faster or longer than the other, thus turning the typing into a creative drive. Sandra looks at several photos on her smartphone, swiping between them and sometimes zooming in on certain ones by using her fingers. These are photos of the large pieces of paper and sticky notes, laid out on the room’s walls, just a few inches away from her. Drawing on these handwritten contents, which she looks at on her smartphone, Sandra keeps on editing the shared Google Doc. She also uses an online automatic translator that occupies about one third of her tablet’s screen. I remember that she’s had difficulties expressing herself in English and often uses online translating tools to find what she means to say or write before sharing it with others.

**Moment n° 3:** A week later, as they continue working on the traits of the main characters in their TV series concept, the three members of the ‘Ambushed’ team use the accessories put at their disposal by the pedagogical team (e.g., sticky notes, felt pens, rigid paper cards). They have also asked Jade, one of the programme’s coordinators, to print A4-sized images of famous actors and actresses, who, they think, could interpret their fictional characters, before hanging them on the walls of the writers room. In this session, Alice, Carmen, and Sandra brainstorm together on what would be the first and the last *images* (i.e., what the audience would see) of each character. While discussing Franck, one of the characters in the show, they look towards a printed image of Vincent Cassel, a renowned French actor. Sandra

starts imitating what Franck would do in his ‘first image’ by gesturing him discreetly picking up a piece of a birthday cake that was not meant for him. Sandra’s whole body seems to be involved when she tries to show Alice and Carmen how she sees the scene. Then, they focus on another character, Timothée, for whom they have hung a printed image of the famous actor, Timothée Chalamet. Carmen, looking in its direction, thinks out loud about the character’s ‘wants’ and ‘needs’ (i.e., foundational concepts in character development that are meant to identify a character’s explicit desires or goals as well as their deeper, often subconscious motivations driving their actions in the story). Sarah says in a reflexive voice: “*what does he need?*” and we all look towards the printed picture of Timothée Chalamet while thinking about his ‘needs’. As I feel caught up in their collective brainstorming, I surprise myself being as intrigued by this question as the members of the creative trio.

We see these three moments as illustrating the embodied and material embeddedness of co-creators' practices. Here, the screenwriters’ bodily sensations, discrete gestures, voice tones, and facial expressions all contribute to shape their joint creation work. Other spatially situated, material entities, such as the room’s walls, a chair or printed images become blended in the creative process of human creators. Their affective attachment to *things* leads to the emergence of an indiscriminate and creative assembly composed of human and nonhuman bodies, materially embedded artifacts and digital technologies (e.g., search engines, automatic translators), which become intertwined in co-creators’ practices and discourses.



*Image 1 – Photo montage based on one of the writers’ room in the Eureka Series  
screenwriting programme*

***II. Recognizing a shared, embodied vulnerability that contributes to the emergence and durability of these assemblies***

Over the course of the 10-week programme, the twelve participants came to know each other in an intimate way, whether it is in their respective project groups or with people outside of their creative teams. By discussing with the pedagogical team, guest lecturers and an industry expert, we learned that the development of ‘professional friendships’ was central to the work of screenwriters. In particular, they need to establish a significant level of trust when creating together, as this allows them to share their struggles and feelings, which they purposefully use to build fictional stories and characters. For the industry expert, “*screenwriters are people who,*

*if they're too reserved about their story, their trauma, their psyche, things don't move forward"* (industry expert interview n°1). Drawing on the case of Eureka Series and the ontological works of Judith Butler (2009; 2015; 2022), we sought to further understand how *creative assemblies* involve co-creators sharing their affects and vulnerability (i.e., the capacity of being harmed, either physically or psychologically) with each other. Thus, in what follows, we rely on excerpts from fieldnotes and interviews in order to shed light on this aspect of collective creation.

*"I am sitting in one of the creative work sessions of 'South West' (another screenwriters' team the first author was able to access). The three members of the group, Eleanor, Evangeline, and Charlie are discussing the backstory of their series' main character, Juliette, especially her family ties. Charlie talks about knowing a Chinese girl who was adopted in his hometown and witnessing how she's experienced her difference with other inhabitants. I can feel that he's affected when telling this, and that Eleanor and Evangeline are listening to him carefully. [...] They continue to tackle issues of adoption, racism, and the difficulty of finding oneself when growing up in a difficult family environment or an underserved social milieu. I can sense a shared attention from the people in the room, including myself, which is linked to the topics of their talk. Each of them uses a softer, more concerned voice, and seems to take great care in their choice of words so as not to offend the other co-writers' sensibilities. Eventually, they decide to give Juliette an adopted background and discuss how this might influence her perception of other characters in the show."* (Fieldnotes, South West)

In this sequence, screenwriters openly share their views and emotions with each other. This highlights their ability to communicate in a way that allows for everyone to share their intimate feelings. Drawing on this, we observe that making creative choices collectively involves expressing ideas, opinions, and intentions, but also affects and vulnerability. For co-

creators, being able to welcome and to recognize the vulnerability of others means that they can also express their own and become more inclined to do so. Such process of being *there* and listening to one another leads the screenwriters' group to collectively advance in the development of their main character, Juliette, partly by identifying her traits based on sharing their own experiences. The co-creators' 'shared attention' builds up into a sense of togetherness among them, which nourishes their collective work. In the following interview excerpt, Alice, one of the members of the 'Ambushed' team explains how she views the role of vulnerability in a writer's room environment:

*“I think it's more my own point of view, my motto, that basically, the more vulnerable you are with people, the more people will be able to feel vulnerable with you, and that you can really create a real bond, rather than something a bit “shallow” (in English in the original transcription). [...] I believe that our writers room (ibid.) is very benevolent, but I think we could have open to each other even more. Then again, maybe I have high expectations, that's all. I've shared a lot about myself. They've seen me cry so many times. [...] Because I think that, in the writers room, maybe it's more related to work. So, people, when they go to the office, they come in, do their things and leave. But it's true that, since we are writing stories, we are trying to get people to connect, to feel emotions.” (Interview, Alice, Ambushed) <sup>2</sup>*

As Alice's account underlines, co-creators become affectively attached to one another and establish a safe, 'benevolent' space between them. The way they share affects (e.g., their fears, doubts or existential struggles) and recognize a mutual vulnerability not only comforts them; it also serves to fuel their collective creation. In the case of Eureka Series, screenwriters develop strong, intimate ties among themselves and may come to appreciate each other as persons outside of work. Yet, their affects-based communality and intimacy seem to be essential to their craft, as they intend – by developing stories and characters – to 'connect' with

an audience they see as other *affective beings* like themselves. Drawing on these insights, we understand bodies, gestures, and bodily expressions, such as crying, laughing, or bending over to listen to someone, as central in the emergence of bonds and the sharing of vulnerability within creative assemblies. However, when co-creators refrain from expressing themselves, this can also generate tensions and blockages that hamper the work of collective creation, as the next interview extract illustrates:

*“First, we asked help from Larry (the group’s dedicated mentor) to deal with Charlie’s behavior because it was really hard to discuss ideas or do anything when [...] I mean, Evangeline felt it, you know, it’s just like, [...] Charlie was, like, kind of just sitting there and just, like, not responding. [...] Yeah, he was like basically shutting down. And I can understand that it was all about the stress of working with people. And, you know, that was basically just really obvious from that. But. So [...] Charlie was not that comfortable expressing his ideas. And we were like trying to ask him, like: “what do you think?” And that was a struggle. [...] It just took some time, more time for him to overcome this. (Interview, Eleanor, South West)*

The passage above shows that co-creators do not automatically share affects and open to each other; it takes ‘some time’ for this process to take place. Affective responses and behaviors such as ‘shutting down’ can prevent members of a creative assembly from *connecting* with one another. Based on this last account, such lack of *affective resonance* (Rosa, 2018; Vidolov et al., 2023) between this group’s members doesn’t seem to be easily solvable; rather, it is a complex and difficult problem that requires the outside help of an experienced screenwriter, who probably had to deal with similar situations.

To conclude, this first part of our findings has enabled us to shed light on uncovered aspects of collective creation, drawing on the case of screenwriters in the Eureka Series programme. Especially, we showed how, while creating together, embodied human and more-



than-human (Braidotti, 2019) bodies gather into creative ‘assemblies’ (Butler, 2015). The co-creators' embodied situatedness and agentivity do not only pertain to production logics or goals, but also involves a certain way of being and feeling together, e.g., by sharing the same material and affective reality. Therefore, the materialization at stake in the ‘making’ of a collective creation refers to both the process and outcome of a *transindividual* (Gherardi, 2023), creative assembly. We refer to Butler’s (2015) notion of ‘assembly’ rather than assemblage (Duff & Sumartojo, 2017) to highlight the co-creators' capacity to recognize their shared vulnerability to act in an agentic and political sense, which, in our case, enables them to develop a work of fiction. Furthermore, to ensure the durability of their creative assembly, co-creators must rely on their embodied and affective sense of being *with* another in a way that facilitates the sharing of feelings and creative ideas. In this sense, the recognition of a shared, existential vulnerability, as developed in Butler’s social ontology (2009; 2015; 2022), helps to understand how these creative assemblies emerge and sustain over time. To further analyze the ways in which human co-creators, material entities, and technological artefacts assemble, the next section of our findings focuses on their *modes* of co-presence, how they are enacted and organized in the frame of collective creation work.

## **4. 2. MOVEMENT BETWEEN DIFFERENT MODES OF CO-PRESENCE**

### ***1. Different modes of co-presence while creating collectively***

One might legitimately question whether the co-presence among co-creators differs from the dynamics of other types of co-workers, such as teams of consultants or engineers, in large corporations. For obvious reasons, many different professions, including so-called creative workers, do the same social activities of listening, talking, presenting their ideas, but also sharing moments of focus, laughter and tension. While we do not seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing differences, our analysis of the Eureka Series fieldwork has led us to identify different ways or *modes* of co-presence that were both enacted

and experienced by emergent screenwriters. Drawing on our analysis, we theorize the notion of ‘crea-co-presence’ to outline our differentiated understanding of co-presence, which emphasizes the embodied, relational, and temporal over its spatial dimension in considering the phenomenon of being and creating together. We especially outline three *modes* of ‘crea-co-presence’, namely (a) ‘generative crea-co-presence’, (b) ‘proximal crea-co-presence’, and (c) ‘tacit crea-co-presence.’ As explained in the preceding section, such *modes* do not concern only human co-creators. Instead, they are part of creative communities along with more-than-human materialities such as tangible objects and digital tools, that are equally involved in the making of a joint creation. In the following, we detail each one of these *modes of co-creating* and their specificities before describing the fluid movement between them.

**(a) ‘generative crea-co-presence’**

Based on our observation and interpretation of screenwriting teams in the Eureka programme, we see ‘generative crea-co-presence’ as a first *mode of co-presence* that lies at the heart of their joint creation process. This mode consists primarily of *moments* in which co-creators engage with each other and enter a collective emulation that facilitates a creation-oriented interaction. In such moments, the shared attention, availability and *thereness* of team members contributes to their alignment in the creative task they wish to accomplish. The following scene from a writers room session exemplifies this:

*“Eleanor gets up and [...] asks whether she can erase what’s on the whiteboard [...] then she starts listing things on the board as she thinks about them and shares with Evangeline and Charlie [...] Evangeline starts repeating what they’ve been saying as to make sure they are aligned with this new direction for the character.”* (Fieldnotes, South West)

As shown in this excerpt, when they are experiencing ‘generative crea-co-presence’, the co-creators’ bodies are fully involved inasmuch as the spatial elements, such as the room itself or

the building, and material artifacts (e.g., here, the whiteboard) that seem to permeate their sociality. The different co-present materialities, which all feed into each other, contribute to the emergence of particularly creative moods that are goal-oriented but also very much linked to emotions, as illustrated in the next extract:

*“Carmen starts imitating the characters in the episode’s scene they are working on. She changes her tone of voice to interpret the two protagonists, changing her facial expressions and making hand gestures as to make herself more comprehensible. Alice joins in Carmen’s act by also modifying her voice tone. Sandra joyfully proposes yet another idea for the scene. Alice starts laughing and says: “I laugh because I find the situation funny.” The three of them then move on to discussing another scene in the pilot episode”* (Fieldnotes, Ambushed)

Here, the screenwriters’ voices, bodies, gestures, and feelings are all mobilized at the same time, and seem to fuel their creative energy. Drawing on our observations, we thus see this first mode of co-presence less as a spatial situation than as a temporal phenomenon whereby co-creators simultaneously experience heightened responsivity and attention (to the creative task, but also to each other). In these moments, they typically engage in various embodied interactions, such as vocal exchanges, bodily movements, and gazes, which enable and drive their collective creation process. Yet, for screenwriting teams to have more of these moments, this requires every member to intentionally embody a certain *thereness* with the other creatives. The following interview highlights one of the group’s difficulties with a member’s drifting attention, which affects their common creative effort:

*“And then we talked about the three of us. We have talked about like, how we feel in the room, but we he haven’t directly addressed, like, Charlie’s issues (sic.) [...] I think it was the second week when [...] he said that he sometimes is having trouble following like what we’re doing and what we’re saying.”* (Interview, Eleanor, South West)

Furthermore, given their primarily temporal nature, moments of ‘generative crea-co-presence’ are not reserved to in-person interactions. Instead, co-creators can also experience them while working remotely, such as during online sessions, which are enabled by modern communication tools (e.g., videoconferencing software like Zoom or Teams). In the course of the ‘remote period’ of the Eureka Series programme, the first author was able to attend a few of these sessions with the screenwriting teams he followed. Drawing on our analysis, we also see the next excerpt as illustrating how ‘generative crea-co-presence’ can be lived online:

*“Sandra asks a question to the group, picking up on their prior discussions by focusing on Andrea (one of the characters in their series) [...] She straightens her back up before asking Alice and Carmen what they think of an initial, structuring conflict the character has with another in the pilot episode [...] Carmen picks up on Sandra’s flow by sharing her opinion on how could this inform the character’s development [...] Alice then shares another idea for a funny scene, which would introduce Andrea in the series [...] Sandra smiles but doesn’t say anything. Her eyes are moving, and she is touching her mouth with her right hand in a pondering manner. Alice continues to expose idea by enthusiastically describing the scene, using her hand as to embody the situation.”* (Fieldnotes, Ambushed)

This sequence thus shows us that, even if digitally mediated, the co-creators’ bodies, voices, gestures directly contribute to moments of ‘generative crea-co-presence’, which foster their collective creative work.



*Image 3 – Two members of Ambushed group are chatting about one of their series’ characters, in ‘generative crea-co-presence’*

**(b) ‘proximal crea-co-presence’**

While co-creators spend a lot of time talking, chatting, joking or arguing, there are also many moments of proximal silence and stillness that are an integral part of their creative process. During our ethnographic study of Eureka Series, the first author attended several of these moments within the two writers rooms he was able to access. Based on our analytical work, we frame them as relative to the second mode of co-presence, which we call ‘proximal crea-co-presence’. When in such mode, co-creators experience a spatial proximity but more, importantly, a kinesthetic sense of each other’s presence while they are creating in a synchronic way. Interactions between co-creators become more discrete and less vocal than the preceding mode, which can give the impression of lessened activity. Yet, their bodies’ sensory resonance

can also be highly generative in terms of stimulating a group's collective creation. Far from being human-centric, this mode of co-presence involves many more-than-human materialities (e.g., physical artifacts, digital tools), as the following extract illustrates:

*“To complete this week’s assignment, the three of them (the members of the Ambushed team) need to write their series’ synopsis (i.e., a longer piece of writing summarizing the plot). The three members start typing on their respective laptops. They’re sitting next to each other, working on separate documents. Yet, I sense they are doing this together since they are writing about the same thing. When Miguel (a guest lecturer in the programme) knocks and enters to collect his bag, none of the girls react [...] They all seem too focused to pay attention [...] Alice types rather decisively, seeming more sure of herself. Carmen also has her eyes fixed on her laptop’s screen and has been typing steadily [...] At one point, Alice stops. She sighs, then turns her head towards the back wall, on which the characters’ names and storylines are written [...] I get the impression that they are listening to each other typing”* (Fieldnotes, Ambushed)

Drawing on this scene, we see that, when in ‘proximal crea-co-presence’, co-creators engage in many different bodily interactions with each other and the material objects that surrounds them. While the room is apparently silent, as to allow for individual focused writing, there are plenty of discrete gestures, tangible exchanges and performative acts which, taken altogether, seem to accentuate the members’ collective creativity. In this sense, the proximal sociality of human and more-than-human beings leads to the production of particular moods (taken as sociomaterial and affective), or atmospheric environments of joint creation. For instance, in the last extract, the sound of the screenwriters’ keystrokes – both emitted and heard by them – becomes central in establishing a moment of creation-oriented co-presence. In a different situation, the screenwriters also engage in this mode when using other artifacts:

*“Then, the three of them start writing topic ideas on sticky notes using markers. They are spread out in the room: Alice is sitting down and looking at the wall of characters. Carmen*

*is sitting near her laptop and writing on sticky notes one-by-one. Sandra is in a blue armchair near the back wall. All three of them are writing in silence and I can only hear the sound of their markers on the colored notes [...] Carmen stops for one moment and takes a sip from her coffee take-away cup. In between the sounds of coffee sips and markers, I sense their concentration in the room, as well as certain of tension to move fast.” (Fieldnotes, Ambushed)*



*Image 3 – Members of the South West group in ‘proximal crea-co-presence’*

### **(c) ‘tacit crea-co-presence’**

As in other types of creative professions, a large part of TV series writing consists in autonomous, alone work, which can be done at home, in cafés, co-working spaces, or where the creator sees fit. Although Eurekans all conducted individual work during the programme (e.g., to advance a part of the script or to develop an idea for a character’s development), our reading of the empirical material leads us to question the isolated character of these moments. We do so by elaborating the third and last mode of co-presence, which we call ‘tacit crea-co-presence’, in an attempt to capture the implicit, intercorporeal connection that co-creators

experience when working on a common creation. We first draw on the interview of one of the participants in the programme to highlight the existence and necessity of such moments:

*“In fact, it usually takes far too long to really write together, especially when we do not have the same ways of thinking (sic.) [...] But, so, generally, each of us ends up writing a versions by themselves, and then, we discuss what we prefer in each version and start mixing things up, more or less.”* (Interview, Sandra)

Relying on this verbatim, we understand that, when they are working on their collaborative project, participants in Eureka Series alternated between moments of solitary work and sharing moments (such as the ones presented above). Yet, guided by our analytical framework, we find that these moments are populated with the tacit presence of others, giving way to an experience of being *alone-together*. For instance, when writing the first version of an episode’s plot, a screenwriter could be re-living, through their embodied memory, past meetings (in-person or online, through video calls) with their co-screenwriters. Like the previously evoked modes, we understand such ‘tacit crea-co-presence’ as being experienced first and foremost in time, as moments whereby a communal and creative ‘space’, independent of geographical boundaries, emerges. When creating *alone-together*, human co-creators blend in along with atmospheric elements (e.g., the room temperature, the dimming sunlight, noises coming from the street), material objects (e.g., the desk, the lamp, the laptop), and digital artifacts (e.g., the word processing software, e-mail communications or text messages about the creative project).

On the other hand, drawing on the Eureka Series fieldwork, we realized that relying solely on ‘tacit crea-co-presence’ could hamper a creator’s focus and self-confidence and, in turn, affect the group’s creativity. For instance, during a learning modules, one of the participants admitted their struggle with purely solitary work:



*“For me, writing alone is much harder than being in a room with people. When I’m alone it’s like I’m in a dialogue with three or four versions of myself.”* (Fieldnotes, Nathanael in a module session)

As it emphasizes creative collaboration and fosters what we call moments of ‘generative’ and ‘proximal’ crea-co-presence, the Eureka Series programme somehow offers a refuge for emerging screenwriters, some of whom are seeking to (re)experience communal feelings of being and creating together, as another participant explains in an interview:

*“That’s exactly why I came here (in the programme). I worked alone for over a year and then I had a long period of having no work at all. And I started doubting myself a lot. And I really needed [...] like a boost of confidence again. And then I just wanted to work as a group because [...] I missed the dialogue and missed (hesitation), missed working with people.”*  
(Interview, Michael)

## ***II. The fluid movement in-between modes of crea-co-presence***

In the preceding section, we outlined different modes of ‘crea-co-presence’ as encapsulating moments lived by actors in the course of their collective creation. Even though we presented each mode – (a) ‘generative crea-co-presence’, (b) ‘proximal crea-co-presence’, and (c) ‘tacit crea-co-presence’ –, sequentially by highlighting their characteristics, it is important to stress that they are not to be viewed as static, fixed modalities. Instead, our analysis of the empirical data leads us to emphasize how human co-creators – who are part of broader, materially-diverse creative communities – circulate, or rather, flow in-between them. The following paragraphs thus serve to further describe this fluid movement and what guides it. This, we believe, could help to shed light on the phenomenon of *creative togetherness* we seek to explore, and lead us to a better understanding of how it emerges and sustains. After having elicited this fluid

movement from our reading of the observational data, we analyze the phenomenological dimensions that underlie it.

1- During the ethnography of Eureka Series, the first author was able to experience first-hand the progress and tribulations of two screenwriting teams in the programme. Spending hours in the writers room allowed for studying the way in which emergent co-screenwriters communicate and work together. In the following, we use the aforementioned modes of crea-co-presence in order to pinpoint the fluid movement between them, taking a work session in the South West group as an example.

‘Generative crea-co-presence’: *“The three members of the (South West) team are focusing on developing the traits of Nora, one of the main characters in their show [...] Eleanor and Evangeline are sitting in the blue chairs in the corners while Charlie standing up is on my left and writing something on the paper board [...] Emilie also stands up and starts imitating what their character, Nora, would look like, how she behaves around Estelle (another main character). She actively uses her body movements as to make sure that Charlie and Eleanor understand how she’s imagining Nora...”* (Fieldnotes, South West)

‘Proximal crea-co-presence’: *“After having shared their ideas around Nora, they take some time for some ‘blue-sky thinking’ (term used by of them) on the series’ main storylines. Evangeline goes to put a sticky note on the large horizontal sheet of blue paper they use for storylines. Then, Charlie joins her and, without saying a word, starts moving the sticky notes around on the sheet. Eleanor looks very focused. She’s sitting down, with her laptop on her lap, with her eyes riveted on the screen...”* (Fieldnotes, South West)

‘Tacit crea-co-presence’: *“Around 17:00, Evangeline puts down her pen on the table and says: “I need to get some air.” She leaves the room quite suddenly. A few seconds after, Eleanor announces that she also needs to do a break and follows her outside. Charlie, who*

*remains in the room, is still writing down ideas on the sticky notes. He tells me that he prefers to keep working while his ideas are “still fresh” [...] Charlie thus continues alone as alternates between looking at the blue sheets of paper, jotting words on sticky notes, and carefully placing them on the sheets.”* (Fieldnotes, South West)

2- The preceding excerpts indicate that, within a matter of minutes, the emerging screenwriters in the room shift between different modes of ‘crea-co-presence.’ Drawing on our analysis, we find that several phenomenological dimensions drive this movement. First, co-creators’ embodied intentionality and constant negotiation between the self and the collective directly influences their choice, which can turn into an englobing mood if shared by others. Second, our results point to the central role of affects and *affectivity* (i.e., their capacity to affect and be affected) in co-creators’ orientation towards and experience of different and constitutively changing modes of crea-co-presence. We detail these two dimensions in the following paragraphs (to be completed).

In the third and last section of our findings, we further examine how does the careful mobilization of affects and a properly creative affectivity take place in the Eureka Series fieldwork. Currently, we intend to go through the different sub-parts:

1° Co-creators’ affects are a central part of their relational practices insofar as the sharing of affects and the recognition of mutual vulnerability enables them to feel and create together

2° Instrumentalization (and specific management) of affects: When working together, co-creators cultivate a certain know-how of becoming affectively attuned to other co-creators

3° The ethnographer’s capacity to ‘move’ and be ‘moved’ also allows them to better attune themselves to CT

## **5. DISCUSSION: EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS**

### ***5. 1. Towards a conceptual model to frame creative togetherness based on how these three aspects are related***

Based on these first rounds of analysis, this study's potential contributions to the RQ could be:

- Creative togetherness (CT) is not a state, spatial setting, or even mood that you can *enter*, but rather a sense of being and creating together that involves a range of affective, material, social dimensions.
- CT is not the result of a linear process of problem-solving or social cognition. Instead, it involves the constitution of (creative) assemblies of human co-creators and material entities... that share and mobilize affects (as well as their affectivity)... and move across different modes or modalities of co-presence...
- Study that highlights the messy, embodied, affective process that goes into the 'making' of a collective creation.
- The emergence and durability of a creative togetherness is very unpredictable. For instance, there are interruptions, blockages that are part of the process. However, through relying on their affective relationships as well as on their embodied sense of others (through different modes of co-presence), co-creators can become better able to *manage* their creative togetherness.

This leads us to develop a conceptual model to frame creative togetherness drawing on the three main sections of our findings.

### **5. 2. Expected contributions**

***5. 2. 1. Literature on creativity: Shedding light on the links between the co-presence of bodies, the reciprocity of affects, and intimacy in collective creative processes***

Through this study, we aim contribute to scholarly works on creativity (Elsbach & Flynn, 2013; Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Schiemer et al., 2022) by moving away from a cognitivist, problem-solving approach to instead explore the material, embodied and affective dimensions at play in creative processes.

First, our early analysis shows that creating as a collective is intertwined with bodily existence, the materialities of space and tangible artifacts, and digital tools among others. Co-creators are not involved in purely cognitive tasks of *brainstorming* and problem-solving, but fully embedded in an embodied relationality and tangible affectivity that participate in them knowing each other and creating together. In developing the paper, we could produce a model or diagram that exposes these relations of dependence and their organization in creative work processes.

Second, in light of our early interpretation of the empirical material, this paper might help to further the debates in organization studies on the role of mutual vulnerability and its recognition in fostering a creative form of togetherness. The singular case of emergent, and sometimes doubtful, screenwriters in rather secluded writers' rooms might lead to interesting insight on how the sharing and organizing of vulnerability influences dynamics of social interaction in creative organizations and beyond.

***5. 2. 2. Literature on the changing nature of work/new forms of work: Study informs us about the nature of collective work and its creative dimension in new forms of work, particularly hybrid work***

We suggest that exploring screenwriters' way of working through such lens can not only contribute to research on collective creation in cultural or creative organizations (Cnossen, 2022; McKinlay & Smith, 2009; Schiemer et al., 2022), but also help to make sense of teamwork in more fluid and emerging forms of work. In particular, in light of the increasing digitalization (Aroles et al., 2021; Endrissat & Islam, 2021) and spatial hybridization (De Molli et al., 2020) of 'knowledge work' practices, our study answers the need to "pay closer attention to how our bodies generate meanings, messages and hidden qualities" to explain social interactions and processes in novel forms of organizing (Satama et al., 2021: 185).

In particular, we believe that our study of physical and online writers' rooms could offer insight on the nature of creative work by ephemeral project teams – made of people who may not know each other very well –, in more technologically-mediated ways of working (Endrissat & Islam, 2021; Schiemer et al., 2022). Although the majority of the programme's modules and activities took place on-site, an important part of the participants' social life - which comprised rich expressions of affect -, happened online. Thus, our materially- and affective- oriented study of screenwriter teams could help to better understand the meanings and emergence of joint creation within multi-modal work settings, as well as what 'gets lost' between physical and digital environments.

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