

MAKING CREATIVITY, NOT INNOVATION. LESSONS FROM THE FIELD OF FASHION¹

Raimund Hasse and Judith Nyfeler

ABSTRACT

Conceptualizing creativity as an ascription made by external audiences, this paper sheds light on the organized making of creativity, a process we label creativization. Creativization is based on specific forms of knowledge and communication. By means of empirical illustrations from the field of fashion, we first view the utilization of knowledge in the form of materializations (in technologies), repertoires (of routines), and pooling (in projects). Second, we shed light on the significance of communication and demonstrate that communication in the form of themes, narratives, and storytelling not only serves external purposes of staging, but also fulfills internal functions of developing novelties. Third, we consider the (often loose) couplings between knowledge utilization and communication in the making of creativity. Finally, because manifest and highly institutionalized creativity expectations absorb resources and attention, we view creativization as an innovation barrier or even a substitute for innovations rather than its base.

Keywords: Creativity; innovation; knowledge; communication; fashion; creativization

INTRODUCTION

Creativity is “in.” Although it has long been seen as an asset for coping with unforeseen problems and has served an instrumental role ever since, we now live in an age in which creativity seems to have a value of its own. Products, processes, individuals, and organizations are particularly valued if we think they are creative. Furthermore, recent decades have experienced the institutionalization of a new economic sector – the creative industries, and the significance and growth of this sector is considered an indicator for cutting-edge economies (Caves, 2002; Flew, 2013; Jones, Lorenzen, & Sapsed, 2015; Moeran & Alačovska, 2012). In that sense, creativity has succeeded what has long been said about innovations and innovativeness: We are all told to shape up in this respect.

The appreciation of creativity has also attracted the interest of students of organizations (Chen, 2012; Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999; Hasse, Mützel, & Nyfeler, 2019). Their contributions transformed the former primarily psychological topic into a sociological topic in which creativity was viewed as having resulted from collective forms of organizing. This new perspective has moved the focus from the created or the creator to the process of creation. Other, related lines of organization research have addressed a variety of underestimated or even neglected topics in the realm of creativity. Collective processes have gained attention (Carlsen, Clegg, & Gjersvik, 2013; Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Harvey & Kou, 2013; Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000; Mora, 2006), as have intra-organizational relationships; exchanges of the “creatives” (Aage & Belussi, 2008; Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Choi & Thompson, 2005; Dokko & Rosenkopf, 2010; Godart, Shipilov, & Claes, 2014); and questions regarding the utilization of repetition, standardization, and rationality (Barrett, 1998; Gilson, Mathieu, Shalley, & Ruddy, 2005; Obstfeld, 2012; Tschang, 2007).

Building on this research, this paper deals with the making of creativity, a process we label *creativization*. Our research question tackles organizational means of this making of creativity, particularly with respect to the utilization of knowledge and communication. Moreover, we ask how *creativization* affects innovation, thereby questioning widespread beliefs about the relationship between innovation and creativity.

But what is creativity? Can it be distinguished from innovation, or is creativity merely a synonym for innovation or a microelement of innovation – its little sister perhaps? In line with recent literature, we view creativity as an ascription. Based on this conceptualization, creativity must be ascribed to products, processes, or the persons who are involved in it (Hasse & Nyfeler, 2019; Koch, Wenzel, Senf, & Maibier, 2018). It has been argued that such ascription is evoked and justified by the “intentional configuration of cultural and material elements that is unexpected for a given audience” (Godart, Seong, & Phillips, 2020, p. 2). Based on this understanding, creations are not a synonym for innovations; nor are they little sisters. Rather, creativity can be distinguished from innovation. Innovations need to be evaluated as improvements, whereas creativity merely needs to be new and differ from that which has already existed. But the difference must come as a surprise (F. Godart et al., 2020). In other words, both are novel and valuable – but

innovations are considered useful, whereas creativity needs to be surprising (Hasse et al., 2019). Based on this difference between innovation and creativity, one may reflect upon the neglected innovation effects that arise with a turn toward creativity – an issue to which we return at the end of this contribution.

In order to illustrate the making of creativity as an organizational process and to reflect on the effects of creativization on innovation, it is reasonable to focus empirically on fields or cases in which companies spend most of their energy in being evaluated for their creativity. This insight renders the creative industries a promising candidate for study. What are currently considered creative industries cover branches ranging from relatively old sectors such as architecture or fine arts to relatively young branches such as game design or digital fashion design for virtual realities – avatars and social media, for example. Creativity is essential in any of these branches, but in some of them, such as architecture and video gaming, technological progress and innovation speed are crucial. In contrast, in such other branches as gastronomy and hairstyling, success depends mainly on being evaluated as creative. These branches may serve as the purest models for studying the making of creativity. Fashion also falls into this category. In fashion, actors and significant others are well aware of the significance of creativity. They take it for granted that the ascription of creativity is the main evaluation criterion and condition for success (Crane, 2012; Godart, 2014; Lee & Östberg, 2013).

We thus take fashion as our empirical case to illustrate our model of the making of creativity. Based on a thorough empirical investigation,² we demonstrate that creativization is based not only on particular organizational forms of knowledge utilization (as has already been emphasized in the literature on organized creativity), but also on communication, which has been considered in this literature to a much lesser extent. Developing new collections (pre-production) and staging (post-production) are dominant and related phases in the process of making creativity. Issues of production, by contrast, seem less relevant. In fact, the fashion production process, including its technologies and collaboration networks, is seen as an enabling disposition rather than a problematic constraint.

In line with former contributions to organized creativity, in the next section we outline (1) the ways in which routines, technologies, and projects as forms of knowledge utilization are crucial for the making of creativity. Next, and in extension of this perspective, we consider (2) the roles of communication in general and language specifically. These topics are certainly well established in the study of organizations (Cooren, Taylor, & Van Eve, 2006; Schoeneborn, Kuhn, & Kärreman, 2019), but in studies of the making of creativity as an organizational process the use of communication and language has rarely been reflected. We then consider (3) the coupling of knowledge utilization on the one hand and communication and language on the other. This coupling is important, because communication also serves internal purposes and cannot be reduced to a rhetoric that addresses only external audiences. Finally, we raise (4) questions of (unintended) consequences of creativity for innovations. As long as creativity is understood to be either the small sister of innovation or its synonym, the effects of creativity on innovation cannot be addressed properly. If, by contrast, and as suggested in this contribution, we analytically distinguish creativity from innovation, new questions

emerge – questions regarding the relationship between creativity and innovation. These questions are based on the observation that the production process and its technologies are considered less important for the making of creativity than pre-production (the development of sketches and prototypes) and post-production (various forms of staging). Against the background of this observation, we conclude by asking more generally what effects an increase and strengthening of creativity may have for the willingness and capacity to innovate.

THE UTILIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

In order to cope with the pressure of continuous renewal and institutional expectations of creativity, fashion companies employ specific organizational forms of knowledge utilization that are implemented into local structures and situations. This utilization of knowledge is embedded in beliefs about managing the process of creativity in the creation of new fashions (Slavich & Svejenova, 2016). The process is based on organizational forms of knowledge utilization that allow for “business as usual” while its constant renewal continues. Main components are routines, technologies, and collaborations in projects, all of which are utilized in every phase from first sketch to final garment yet may not be equally important. Routines occur along all types of assignments and are thus applicable for the development and staging phases. Technological dispositions are prevalent primarily in the development of new fashions; they are rarely used for staging purposes. Projects are formed on the basis of available resources and interests of the firm and build the frame for intra- and inter-organizational (also network) collaborations. Thus, they can be formed for staging purposes and can also become the content when, for instance, collaborations with artists are staged or when a famous model is hired. However, differentiating here between development and staging is an analytical perspective, and empirically not succinct.

Knowledge Repertoire: Routines

Students of organizations have shown special interest in routines when investigating creativity (Sonenshein, 2016). Enacting a routine can lead to “continuous change” (Feldman, 2000), and the combination of routines into new forms of organizing is conducive to fertile organizational change (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). Having to deal with a multi-stakeholder environment and an object that embodies change and ephemerality, the management of ideation, development, design, and (re-)production of novelty in fashion companies is based on routines that reduce uncertainty and ambiguity. By means of “economies of repetition” (Davies & Brady, 2000) or “economies of recombination” (Grabher, 2004, p. 110), fashion firms manage continuous renewal by regularly re-combining existing ideas, models, and formats, while re-utilizing experience and knowledge gained from former projects.

Routines can be organizational in the form of predefined plans, timelines, or the production or fittings of prototypes; professionalism in the form of well-trained and scripted activities such as making patterns, repairing linings, or sketching new

styles; or they can address the field level, in the form of synchronized seasons or the regularity of fashion weeks. Thus, routines can occur in all phases and at all levels of organizing (Becker, 2008). Because they respond to time pressures and institutional expectations, they are viewed a vital means for creativity endeavors.

In the case of fashion, the regular enacting of routines enables organizations to plan steps and deadlines and to replace old collections quickly. The fashion field relies on routines in its choice of colors; styles that will remain in the collection (e.g., basics and classics) or be renewed and substituted; and the input of financial, time, or material resources for the development of new styles. In like manner, practices are repeated, and styles or more concrete patterns are reused. Such routines have profound implications for the creation process. Often, the designer varies only sartorial details – buttons, hemlines, stitches, or style details – buckles, straps, or bows that represent the collection's theme. They are stylistically employed as means of renewal, albeit often partial renewal. As fashion styles and models change minimally, the organizations communicate differences from former collections by altering the names of the styles compiled under the collection theme. Although the collection styles are changing to some extent, fashion design is a form of derivation, improvement, optimization, reduction, or variation of former styles rather than radical change. Organizational learning results from the combination of stable and flexible organizational forms – the combination and performance of a routinized activity, which in turn fosters novelty and unexpectedness. Neither the models nor the co-operations are seen as one-off but rather assemble “to the execution of many similar types of bids or projects within cost, schedule and the required specifications” (Davies & Brady, 2000, p. 952). Repeated and patterned activities allow for greater flexibility and variety, while keeping costs low. Routinized activity further enables easy modifications – subsequent products connected to forerunners – and thereby facilitate variation along with steady reproduction.

Materialized Knowledge: Technology

In addition to routines, the making of creativity is based on technology assets such as machines, instruments and knowledge. According to Thompson (2008 [1967]), these technologies build the core of production processes that needs to be protected from environmental turbulences. Technologies, in a broader sense, encompass “a set of pieces of knowledge both directly “practical” (related to concrete problems and devices) and “theoretical” (but practically applicable although not necessarily already applied), know-how, methods, procedures, experience of successes and failure and also, of course, physical devices and equipment” (Dosi, 1982, p. 151 f.). According to this understanding, technological means of production are prevalent in almost all forms of organizations, including fashion companies.

Based on empirical observations, we assume that organizations form around their technological core – which defined the fundamental techniques of fashion manufacturing and oriented its stylistic realization. Moreover, these observations indicate the importance of technologies for early phases of design development. In this vein, companies stick to such proven technologies as technological infrastructures

(e.g., production facilities), machines (e.g., looms, knitting machines, screen-printing), and social contacts with producers (e.g., supplier and producer networks).

Having such a strong focus on a single technology entails an aversion to using complementary technologies, and companies are well aware of their technological backbone. They speak of technical skills when highlighting classical sartorial crafting and of knitting culture when accentuating the automatic manufacture of seamless goods in production facilities. Always conscious of the company's technological backbone, designers design in a manner resembling an "actuarial" practice that sustains well-proven methods, models, and materials. This awareness indicates, rather, that technology is considered enabling, and, to a much lesser extent, that it is viewed as a problematic constraint that needs be overcome by substantial improvements. Consequently, companies do not reflect upon technological contingencies.

Technology applies not only to machines, instruments, and other hardware devices, but also encompasses specialized knowledge and practical skills of employees and subcontractors. Crafting – silk manufacturing, weaving techniques or screen-printing, for example – is essential to fashion companies, which tend to relate to their crafters. Instead of selecting subcontractors according to their technological capacities, however, fashion companies have to negotiate and find compromises, given that subcontracting and outsourcing are based on long-lasting relationships.

Continuity and longevity of production networks reduce transaction costs and increase trust, but they also have profound impacts on novel creations. Cooperating partners influence technological feasibility and realization and often influence negotiations among various departments. These negotiations result in a fit between design ideas and technology-based logics of production. Small firms are especially flexible in their production, yet they do not have the resources to invest in new technologies or learn new techniques. Consequently, social network relations and cooperation capacities solidify as the result of reproduction, as they become more and more reluctant to test radically new techniques, producers, or styles.

Our empirical examples illustrate how novel creations rest upon technological constraints, how they in turn concern the design process, and therefore become barriers and stimuli for the design process. Based on technological skills and assets, fashion firms can create a market niche in which they can outperform potential competitors, and it rarely happens that firms search for a new market niche by varying their technological base. Instead, technology is taken as an imprinted disposition and considered a taken-for-granted prerequisite that orients future directions and activities and aligns organizational processes with external expectations.

Knowledge Acquisition: Collaborations in Projects

The making of creativity is typically based on projects. Projects are a temporary organizational form that allow for the temporary pooling of knowledge (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Via project participation, freelancers are incorporated into an organization for task-specific cooperation, thereby fostering the formation of a larger network of relevant specialists (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). Thus, project

cooperation is relevant through all stages of fashion making, from pattern making in the early stages of development, over the elaboration of prototypes with the *couturière*, to the fitting of models before the runway show and the post-production of a photo shoot. Further freelance professionals are graphic designers, make-up artists, hair stylists, and photographers hired for fashion shows and photo shootings – all of whom collaborate for the production of advertising material.

In this way, ideas and inspirations are shared and filtered, and knowledge diffuses through network transactions: “[...] the network acts as an information filter by narrowing the range of market data to that which is of immediate concern only to the producers, agents, retailers and consumers” (Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989, p. 409). Inter-organizational, timed contact gives rise to collectives, in which similar interpretations of the situation are developed and shared, yet understanding and goal setting often remain divergent. After the dissolution of the project, such “motley crews” (Moeran, 2009) transport expertise and experience beyond organizational boundaries, thereby opening up new ways of information and knowledge circulation.

The process of developing and producing novel – and hopefully surprising – fashion items is thoroughly planned: meetings follow meetings; deadlines follow deadlines, and creativity is actually a matter of good planning, timed workflows, and temporary cooperation with specialists in the production process. Task sequences of cooperation and individual work are scheduled ahead of the process and deadlines are coordinated. It is not uncommon, however, that cooperation contacts persist beyond a single collection and are often revived for subsequent assignments. This can be seen when models are made “the face” of a certain brand, or when graphic designers or photographers are repeatedly employed for collaborations in order to leave their fingerprint on the task.

Summing up, knowledge utilization is based on routine repertoires, it materializes in technologies, and it is acquired in projects. In contrast to bricolage, novelty techniques or other forms of creative endeavors, this recombination of various forms of knowledge is not solely a means to cope with unforeseen problems and find novel solutions. It also has a value in its own because it can be utilized for impression management and reaffirms beliefs and myths of creativity.

THE USE OF COMMUNICATION

The use of language and other forms of communication have recently attracted the attention of creativity researchers (Koch et al., 2018). Particularly in the fashion field, the use of language appears to be a central matter for the making of creativity (Nyfeler, 2019). Communication carries various elements that serve as illustrators of the preceding and relatively unspectacular organizing forms of knowledge utilization. Organizations in the creative industries thus highlight the creativity of products, processes, and those involved.

As creativity must be ascribed, communication to external audiences plays a specific role in the development and staging of creativity. At the same time, communication is crucial for internal processes in projects and with collaborators, constitutive

of the identity of fashion companies, and instructive for decision-making and practices. In our empirical material, we could see both sides of such “creativization by communication”. On the one hand, there is what we label outward communication – communication to external audiences that is based on strategically constructed stories in order to promote a creative façade. Such stories are presented in fashion shows, which are in themselves creative acts. Outward communication typically “re-enchants” the technological base and seeks to acquire the label “creative” by means of staging – by showing new aspects up front. On the other hand, there is internal communication, which is essential when ideas are integrated into a concept that guides all subsequent practices and decisions, including those regarding the final production. This constitutive use of language builds beliefs into the development and prototyping processes and helps to organize and structure internal processes: working titles and sketches, cloth samples and color palettes, and style names that are adapted to the overarching theme. Internal communication is not necessarily used for marketing and is not designed strategically in order to meet the expectation of external audiences. Rather it is a meaning provider for subsequent action that anchors creativity beliefs into the fundament of the organization.

Staging can be subdivided into three main groups: themes, narratives, and storytelling. Storytelling is designed exclusively for outward communication, whereas the selection of topics applied to narratives also serves a critical role prior to internal processes. As with narratives, themes also guide the development process. One may therefore view both narratives and themes as hybrids.

Setting a Theme

The underlying base of a new collection is the collection concept present at the beginning of the development phase. The concept is a more or less elaborated version of the idea to be developed – a kind of project description – consisting of text and images referring to the overall theme, including references to current societal matters. Looking at this concept in greater detail, we find collection topics, working titles, drafted sketches and style illustrations, and color and cloth samples. This type of material usually applies to internal communication, and is part of the development phase, but is sometimes also used in outward communication. Since internal communication is an ongoing process, themes remain unfinished and vague and serve as a frame of reference; being refreshed and curated for outward communication, themes then become the embodiment of the novel idea that is being advertised.

Fashion companies alter themes from collection to collection. Examples range from the history of the firm (e.g., family-owned business with a long history and myths about the founders), the tradition of implemented crafts (e.g., the silk road, local traditional raw materials) to associative inspirations and visions (e.g., the change of seasons due to climate change, the idea of a modular wardrobe). The theme serves as a point of reference for later storytelling, orients technological realization, and guides textile and sartorial decisions that are materially inscribed in the designs. The theme is typically introduced by the designer, then transported into all phases and tasks and physically and materially crafted into the designs of the novel collection.

Similarly, working titles guide action and affect the realization of the collection concept. The overarching collection theme is a combination of the symbolical (e.g., the newly invented style or color name) and its material reference (e.g., in form of a logo or collection-specific pattern), both of which refer to the chosen theme. As part of the ideation and creation development, themes, sketches, and drafts forgo the prototyping process. Later, however, these symbolical references are materially inscribed – esthetically and/or sartorially realized – and thereby narrate the story of the collection.

Constructing Narratives

A second means of staging creativity constitutes narrative elements that anchor the collection topic illustratively or even physically onto the fashion garments. These elements therefore materialize the foregoing collection topic, become its physical embodiment, and materially display direct connections between abstract themes and physical garments. This construction of narratives can be viewed as an internal legitimizing strategy to make the novel aspects visible, so they can also be used for outward communication. In this respect, narrative elements are prospective anchors in form of style or color names that exist not only symbolically as an idea, but are often fixed materially in the form of logos, labels, patterns, color choices, or sartorial details, like buttons, seams, cuffs, or collars.

During development and prototyping, narrative elements combine abstract ideas with material benchmarks; they serve as a point of thematic reference, and thus various decisions are aligned with them. Such symbolic and material anchors provide references for what is called the “look” – the unique style designed for both the new collection and the original theme. Beyond that, narrative elements flag renewal, as is the case of distinct style names. And not only style names are altered, but also the names of the colors. Color names reflect the original theme of the idea, and the palette is put together in accordance with the collection concept, which serves as a narrative means for transporting the story. This renaming can lead to a newly developed and changing taxonomy for each collection. From a language perspective, this taxonomy anchors language references into the making of the novel collection long before the story is communicated to any audience – and often without these details being used for public display. In this vein, communication anchors provide two key features for the making of creativity, and thus are particularly relevant for internal communication: They construct the collection as an autonomous unity, and they specifically include the general theme into the development and prototyping of the novel collection, thereby building the institutional fundament on the base of which myths and beliefs about creativity are reinforced.

Finalizing by Storytelling

Storytelling encompasses many types of rhetorical preparations and curated visualizations, with the objective of displaying novelties like photo shoots, fashion shows, and stories to the public. Themes and narratives are constitutive, and fashion makers believe in them, whereas stories mainly address external audiences in order to gain legitimacy and authenticity ascriptions (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001;

Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Suddaby, Haugh, Doherty, & Huybrechts, 2017). This outward communication is often inspired by sensemaking that has emerged during earlier development and prototyping stages of fashion making. Themes and narratives – the means of internal communication – provide a fruitful baseline for establishing authentic storytelling. Most storytelling efforts draw upon further specialists, with their own conceptions, ideas, and intentions. Storytelling is not merely another act of cooperation; it is an act of creativity (Kühl, 2015). Stories, created by specialists as a polished face-lift of social reality, are unlikely to be believed by practitioners.

The elaboration of stories and the organization of shows are often outsourced to professional fashion show organizers, who invite fashion companies to participate. For their photo shoots and other visualizations, companies may hire the same photographers, graphic designers, and fashion models repeatedly, in order to build and maintain a recognition value. Yet they may change freelancers in order to stimulate renewal and “never do the same thing twice.”

Storytelling conveys this renewal, thereby communicating the collection's future perception and its valuation. Fashion shows are moments of visualized communication that display the novelty of the collection, often by means of extensive and resource-intensive staging. In this vein, fashion shows are orchestrated by concepts that contain choreographic information and mediate at least parts of the background story. Stories require anticipation of a suitable plot along the development stages and result in its staging.

Other forms of presentation such as photo shoots for marketing campaigns go beyond the styled design of a company's clothing tag, and physically assume the story of the collection. For this reason, the choices of models, locations, and scenery are time-consuming processes often conducted by or at least together with the designer. Such visual endeavors range from pictures in the collection booklets to the creation of accessories and showpieces for show purposes only, or the choice of location, window design, and shop display. For the purpose of illustration, the photo in Fig. 11.1 indicates the idea of the story on the firm's silk fabric production and how it was visualized for outward communication.

In contrast to themes and narratives, stories are crafted *ex post* and only sporadically refer to the early anticipation of narrative elements. All post-produced and sugar-coated marketing documents, such as websites, collection booklets, newsletters, and video posts provide a great opportunity to study storytelling, yet it is crucial to consider that the final versions of marketing material display only one remaining option. A plethora of discarded choices precedes its final version. The images in Fig. 11.2 illustrate how stories are curated and how they provide visual support for the underlying theme of instruments.

The Relationship Between Internal and Outward Communication

The use of language guides decision-making along all stages of the making of fashion. In the form of internal and outward communication, it embellishes the routinized practices and technological base of fashion design, although it can be at the center of the projects themselves. The more concrete the idea becomes, the more it



Fig. 11.1. Campaign Picture: “route de la soie” (Courtesy of Linda Suter for Company A).

is laden with symbolic value. Internal communication is therefore pivotal in early development phases, whereas outward communication becomes relevant at the end of the process of staging novel collections. Outward communication is designed to present the novelty to external audiences, whereas internal communication, by contrast, is required in order to get things done, but, as has been described here, is often utilized for external purposes. The actors are aware that success in the fashion industry depends on the ascription of creativity by external audiences. Thus, they consider the need to communicate to these external audiences by the time they are in the initial phases of developing novel collections, and they keep this requirement in mind during the entire development and prototyping process.

In sum, communication serves two functions: It is designed in order to signal creativity to external audiences rhetorically and visually, and it reproduces myths and beliefs of creativity. Regarding themes, narratives, and storytelling, in particular, fashion companies manage to infuse the “profane” technology-based



Fig. 11.2. Campaign Picture: “Instruments” (by Courtesy of Daniel Spehr for Company B).

operations with creative value to make creativity visible and believable. In that sense they creativize. Communication is a vital means of this creativization, because it is essential both as a guide for action and as a means not only to convince or even manipulate external audiences, but also to make themselves believe that what they bring about is creative.

It should be noted that considering internal communication that characterizes early-stage development processes is a step beyond some of the more conventional notions of communication. These notions have tended to depict communication primarily as a rhetoric used strategically, in order to inform or even manipulate external audiences in the final stage of presenting novel collections. Our inclusion of constitutive internal communication into the analysis is the starting point of an antithesis of the idea of merely identifying creative potentials and turning them into commercial revenues, a perspective that is often based on the assumption that creativity techniques (e.g., design thinking) support the commercialization of creative potentials. This perspective suggests that creativity already exists and needs only to be discovered and exploited. Our focus on the making of creativity provides

the opposite perspective: Due to highly institutionalized creativity expectations of the so-called creative industries, organizations in this sector do not commercialize creative potentials by various means of staging but strive to gain or maintain a creative reputation, in that they creativize commercial products from scratch. By doing so, they imbue their often profane and unspectacular ways of organizing the making of garments with symbolic value, which not only serves marketing purposes, but also reinforces the belief of involved actors. In this way, creativity claims can be communicated authentically to external audiences – or, even better, creativity is taken for granted and does not need to be made explicit.

THE COUPLING OF KNOWLEDGE UTILIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

The fashion example developed here illustrates that knowledge utilization and communication, which are crucial for both the development and staging of creativity, are coupled. Yet, the coupling is loose, and degrees in freedom remain. Given this loose coupling, fashion companies can maintain their technology and that of their subcontractors, while simultaneously modifying and revising communication for staging purposes. Fashion companies can therefore dynamically vary their creations in order to meet external expectations without irritating their technological core. In so doing, fashion firms manage institutional and technological fit. They achieve novelty and creativity without changing the technological backbone of production and balance technological stability and repetition with staging change and renewal. Creativity façades are established and maintained not only for external audiences, however; they also affect the identity of fashion companies. Internal beliefs in creativity affect job titles (e.g., Creative Director or Art Director), the choice of an atelier rather than an office (or both an atelier and an office), and the idea of formulating and sometimes even drafting new concepts for any new assignment.

The more the internal processes of developing and producing novel collections differ from the envisioned creative image, the more important communication becomes – and not only for impressing, persuading, or surprising external audiences, but also in order to make the involved actors believe that they are creative. In other words, the more profane the organizing, the more mystified the institutionalized idea of creation; and the bigger the gap between technological realities and communicational requirements, the more relevant becomes the ceremonial creativization of a rigorously organized and, in a sense, profane reality. Organizations thus make considerable investments in the construction of creative façades by various means of communication, but such communication is not merely a by-product of organizing creativity in the fashion industry. Rather it is an integral means of organizing and signaling creativity and is therefore the decisive fundament of anything that is evaluated as creative. Thus, myths of creation and creativity are constitutive of the fashion industry. It is the base upon which the unspectacular is rendered spectacular.

Because of the technological core of production that both enables and constrains novel collections, one could expect there to be a permanent quest for

production-related innovations that may provide new opportunities and that can be signaled to external audiences. The making of creativity in fashion reveals quite a different picture, however: The creativity handicap of invariant technologies needs to – and can – be compensated by communication. Less attention is therefore directed at the actual production process, and instead of investing in technological innovations, fashion companies spend their resources on assignments and contents of communication. This making of creativity therefore uncovers a phenomenon that evidently informs about the importance and prominence of organizational talk that has been described as a characteristic feature of current organizations in general (Brunsson, 2002). In our case, this implies that rather than being at the center of fashion making, the actual production and its technologies are secondary and give way to upstream and downstream processes. Instead of fostering technological innovation, then, the quest for creativity seems to constrain it. Or, in other words, creativization absorbs resources and attention that, in turn, are side effects of innovation. It follows that fashion companies rarely invest in such radical innovations as new products (e.g., recycled textiles) or processes (e.g., 3D printing) – and if they do, new products or processes become their core technology, by means of which a particular niche (e.g., 3D-printed clothing) is defended, and for the purpose of which its core technology is buffered from radical environmental influence.

DISCUSSING EFFECTS OF CREATIVIZATION ON INNOVATION

Creativization regards the highly organized making of something, that aims to gain creativity ascriptions. This understanding of creativity neither considers creativity as a new label for what was formerly called “innovation”; nor is it seen as a microelement that builds the base for innovation processes. Equating creativity with innovation would be like serving old wine in a new bottle. It would not only miss the point that not all creativity results in innovations, but also, and mainly, it would underestimate communicative particularities of creativity. Conceptualizing creativity as a microelement would reduce it to a small group or even a psychological phenomenon and miss the point of its social formation. In line with recent literature, we therefore viewed creativity as something different – namely as a specific ascription to products and processes by significant others and peers in a field. Creativity ascriptions acknowledge that something differs in interesting ways from what existed previously. It needs to come as surprise, yet it needs not to be an improvement. Creativization, then, is the process by which actors aim to make such ascriptions more likely by means of knowledge utilization and communication.

Regarding effects, there certainly are several socio-economic and cultural impacts of a turn toward creativity. After having elaborated on the making of creativity, we are now particularly interested in impacts on innovations. Thus far, such impacts have been neglected or remained unknown in research on creativity, partly because the relationship between creativity and innovation has remained vague. Based on an understanding of creativity as a specific ascription, we can

distinguish it from innovations, and we can reflect upon creativity effects on innovations that have rarely been considered.

In reflecting upon the impacts of creativization on innovation capacities, we identify two restrictions for innovations, both of which should be considered unintended consequences of the quest for creativity. First, organizations need to develop novel collections that align with the technological base, thereby allowing for variations in details only, because fashion companies eschew radical breakage in order to reduce failure. They bring about novelties primarily as the result of a creative recombination rather than a reformative creation “from scratch,” of which only a fraction has any long-term effect. Fashion companies therefore re-use well-proven models and established measures that have been tried and tested over time, thereby managing to renew the familiar and endowing the outcome with acceptance, understanding, and legitimacy (Nyfeler, 2019). Second, another obstacle to innovations is the temporality and frequency of renewal, which again, hinders the diffusion of novelties because it reduces the willingness to make huge investments in new products, materials, or production processes. This resistance to innovate also applies to subcontractors and suppliers that are often risk-averse small- or medium-sized companies (Hasse & Nyfeler, 2019). Thus, fashion companies take the technological base of production as an invariant constraint rather than searching for options. The fact that fashion companies rarely question technological sources of creativity teaches us that in the case of fashion, technology is less a contingency than it is a preserving imprinted disposition.

These two obstacles may explain the fact that in our investigation no evidence could be found for substantial improvements of the production process being a core issue in fashion. Instead, developing and staging seems to absorb most resources and attention, and participants hardly problematize the production process. From this observation, we hypothesize that the way the process of making creative products is organized (from its development to prototyping and finally its staging) limits the potential for innovation.

The hypothesis of creativity as an obstacle to innovation is based on two empirical observations from the field of fashion: the significance of developing and staging, which is an absorber of attention and resources; and the striking absence of innovation concerns regarding material production. Regarding generalizations, one may certainly ask whether this finding could be verified with respect to other fashion companies – global giants such as the new verticals or the haute couture fashion houses. One could also ask whether other branches of the creative industries, particularly those in which time constraints are less rigid and technological innovations are more important quality criteria, are based on a similar logic. In this respect, video-game design or architecture may serve as examples of branches in the creative industries in which technological progress is pivotal and thus more valued. And finally, it is an open empirical question how products and services in other economic sectors are creativized and how the interplay of organizing creativity appears in such other sectors as car manufacturing and financial services.

Fashion certainly is a highly specific field, and the companies we utilized for illustrative purposes certainly is unique cases within this field. We are, thus, well

aware of the risk of overgeneralization. But against the background of, current diagnoses that emphasize a master trend toward creativity that potentially affects any economic sector or even any social domain (Caves, 2002; Florida, 2006; Reckwitz, 2014), fashion can well serve as a model. It points to a trend toward an all-encompassing creativization that corresponds with a neglect of core activities and related innovations, because the notion of creativization implies that it be primarily concerned with pre-production conceptualizations and various forms of post-production staging. In contrast, such core activities as the production of garments or other products and services – or even scientific research, the curing of patients, and the implementing of political decisions – could be considered less important, given that creativity ascriptions are achieved primarily through various means of conceptualization and staging.

In line with these considerations, a general trend toward creativity has the potential to limit innovation capacities severely. We therefore conclude that rather than viewing creativity as the little sister of innovation or even a synonym for innovation, it can be a powerful stepson that has begun to replace it. Understanding such bonds and relations not only explains its profound consequences, but also spotlights the need for further disentanglement – an inquiry that has yet to be addressed properly.

NOTES

1. We are grateful for feedback from participants of the Sub-theme 9 of the 36rd European Group of Organizations Studies (EGOS) Colloquium (University of Edinburgh, 2019) and of the International Conference “Organizing Creativity in the Innovation Journey” (Freie Universität Berlin, 2019). We also thank the editors and reviewers of this volume for their helpful comments, Rebekka Thöle for valuable background information of technological challenges and constraints of the production process in the fashion industry – and Nina Colwill for editing this paper.

2. On the basis of multi-sited ethnographic field work, the case of fashion was studied in two small Swiss fashion companies: a specialized knitwear producer and a highly diversified couture house. The body of empirical data ranges from interviews, participant observation and illustrative documents (e.g., newsletters, corporate magazines and clothing tags). The analysis was conducted using an abductive interpretation, which entails moving between empirical material, theoretical concepts and possible explanations in order to theorise the social phenomenon. For further details, see Nyfeler (2019).

REFERENCES

- Aage, T., & Belussi, F. (2008). From fashion to design: Creative networks in industrial districts. *Industry & Innovation*, 15(5), 475–491.
- Barrett, F. J. (1998). Creativity and improvisation in jazz and organizations: Implications for organizational learning. *Organization Science*, 9(5), 605–622.
- Becker, M. C. (2008). *Handbook of organizational routines*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Brunsson, N. (2002). *The organization of hypocrisy: Talk, decisions and actions in organizations* (2nd ed.). Oslo: Abstrakt, Liber.
- Carlsen, A., Clegg, S., & Gjersvik, R. (2013). *Idea work* (2nd ed.). Cappelen Damm.
- Cattani, G., & Ferriani, S. (2008). A core/periphery perspective on individual creative performance: Social networks and cinematic achievements in the Hollywood film industry. *Organization Science*, 19(6), 824–844.

- Caves, R. E. (2002). *Creative industries: Contracts between art and commerce* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chen, K. K. (2012). Organizing creativity: Enabling creative output, process, and organizing practices. *Sociology Compass*, 6(8), 624–643.
- Choi, H.-S., & Thompson, L. (2005). Old wine in a new bottle: Impact of membership change on group creativity. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 98(2), 121–132.
- Cooren, F., Taylor, J. R., & Van Eve, E. J. (2006). *Communication as organizing: Empirical and theoretical explorations in the dynamic of text and conversation*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Crane, D. (2012). Globalization, organizational size, and innovation in the French luxury fashion industry: Production of culture theory revisited. In A. Moreau & B. Alačovska (Eds.), *Creative industries: Critical readings*. Vol. 3: Organization (pp. 80–102). London: Berg.
- Davies, A., & Brady, T. (2000). Organisational capabilities and learning in complex product systems: Towards repeatable solutions. *Research Policy*, 29(7–8), 931–953.
- Dokko, G., & Rosenkopf, L. (2010). Social capital for hire? Mobility of technical professionals and firm influence in wireless standards committees. *Organization Science*, 21(3), 677–695.
- Dosi, G. (1982). Technological paradigms and technological trajectories. *Research Policy*, 11, 147–162.
- Drazin, R., Glynn, M. A., & Kazanjian, R. K. (1999). About creativity in organizations: A sensemaking perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2), 286–308.
- Feldman, M. S. (2000). Organizational routines as a source of continuous change. *Organization Science*, 11(6), 611–629.
- Feldman, M. S., & Pentland, B. T. (2003). Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 48(March), 94–118.
- Flew, T. (2013). *Global creative industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Florida, R. (2006). *The rise of the creative class* (11th ed.). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gilson, L. L., Mathieu, J. E., Shalley, C. E., & Ruddy, T. E. (2005). Creativity and standardization: Complementary or conflicting drivers of team effectiveness? *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(3), 521–531.
- Godart, F. (2014). The power structure of the fashion industry: Fashion capitals, globalization and creativity. *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, 1(1), 39–55.
- Godart, F., Shipilov, A. V., & Claes, K. (2014). Making the most of the revolving door: The impact of outward personnel mobility networks on organizational creativity. *Organization Science*, 25(September), 377–400.
- Godart, F., Seong, S., & Phillips, D. (2020). The sociology of creativity: Elements, structures, and audiences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46(14), 1–22.
- Grabher, G. (2004). Learning in Projects, Remembering in Networks? Communitality, Sociality, and Connectivity in Project Ecologies. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 11(2), 103–123.
- Hargadon, A. B., & Bechky, B. A. (2006). When collections of creatives become creative collectives: A field study of problem solving at work. *Organization Science*, 17(4), 484–500.
- Harvey, S., & Kou, C.-Y. (2013). Collective engagement in creative tasks: The role of evaluation in the creative process in groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 58(3), 346–386.
- Hasse, R., Mützel, S., & Nyfeler, J. (2019). Hauptsache neu? Die Organisation von Innovation und Kreativität. M. Apelt et al. (Eds.), *Handbuch Organisationssoziologie*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Hasse, R., & Nyfeler, J. (2019). Alles nur Mode? Organisation und Sprache in den Creative Industries. *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie*, 48(5–6), 401–417.
- Jones, C., Lorenzen, M., & Sapsed, J. (2015). *The Oxford handbook of creative industries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Koch, J., Wenzel, M., Senf, N. N., & Maibier, C. (2018). Organizational creativity as an attributional process: The case of haute cuisine. *Organization Studies*, 39(2–3), 251–270.
- Kühl, A. (2015). *Modenschauen. Die Behauptung des Neuen in der Mode*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Lampel, J., Lant, T., & Shamsie, J. (2000). Balancing act: Learning from organizing practices in cultural industries. *Organization Science*, 11(3), 263–269.
- Lee, Y.-J., & Östberg, J. (2013). A case study of the Swedish fashion industry from the systems perspective of creativity. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 4(2), 128–143.

- Lounsbury, M., & Glynn, M. A. (2001). Cultural entrepreneurship: Stories, legitimacy, and the acquisition of resources. *Strategic Management Journal*, 22(6–7), 545–564.
- Lundin, R. A., & Söderholm, A. (1995). A theory of temporary organizing. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11(4), 437–455.
- Moeran, B. (2009). The organization of creativity in Japanese advertising production. *Human Relations*, 62(7), 963–985.
- Moeran, B., & Alačovska, A. (2012). *Creative industries: Critical readings. Volume 2: Economy*. London: Berg.
- Mora, E. (2006). Collective production of creativity in the Italian fashion system. *Poetics*, 34(6), 334–353.
- Nyfelner, J. (2019). *Die Fabrikation von Kreativität: Organisation und Kommunikation in der Modeindustrie*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Obstfeld, D. (2012). Creative Projects: A less routine approach toward getting new things done. *Organization Science*, 23(6), 1571–1592.
- Porac, J. F., Thomas, H., & Baden-Fuller, C. (1989). Cognitive communities: The case of Scottish knitwear manufacturers. *Journal of Management Studies*, 26(4, July), 397–416.
- Reckwitz, A. (2014). *Die Erfindung der Kreativität* (4th ed.). Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Schoeneborn, D., Kuhn, T. R., & Kärreman, D. (2019). The communicative constitution of organization, organizing, and organizationality. *Organization Studies*, 40(4), 475–496.
- Slavich, B., & Svejenova, S. (2016). Managing creativity: A critical examination, synthesis, and new frontiers. *European Management Review*, 13(4), 237–250.
- Sonenshein, S. (2016). Routines and creativity: From dualism to duality. *Organization Science*, 27(3), 739–758.
- Suddaby, R., & Greenwood, R. (2005). Rhetorical strategies of legitimacy. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50(1), 35–67.
- Suddaby, R., Haugh, H., Doherty, B., & Huybrechts, B. (2017). *Managing the authenticity–legitimacy paradox: The rhetorical construction of fair trade, 1999–2013*. Working Paper.
- Thompson, J. D. (2008). *Organizations in action* (6th ed.). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Tschang, T. F. (2007). Balancing the tensions between rationalization and creativity in the video games industry. *Organization Science*, 18(6), 989–1005.
- Uzzi, B., & Spiro, J. (2005). Collaboration and creativity: The small world phenomenon. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(2), 447–504.