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Studying the moments of encounter and (im)mobilities in artists' creative processes

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ABSTRACT

This article advances management and organization (MOS) research on the everyday creative process through an explorative study of artists. In this paper, we investigate moments of encounter—the coming together of different bodies and forces that create change in processes. We explore how encounters are enacted by various forms of mobility, such as geographical, corporeal, virtual, and imaginative mobility. Based on a two-week study including interviews, diaries, and mobility tracking, we analyze various encounters formed along (im)mobilities that drive the creative process by fostering stability, serendipitous engagements, and moments of stillness. This study extends the process theorization of creativity in MOS by highlighting encounters as drivers of the creative process. The encounters emerge through various forms of mobility. Mobility should thus be viewed as a crucial focus in both theoretical and empirical studies of creativity in MOS, as it deepens our understanding of creativity as a dynamic and contingent process.

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moment of encounter;
mobility; artists

Introduction

Creativity plays a vital role in shaping society by driving artistic expression, academic breakthroughs, and organizational development. This paper joins recent scholarly efforts in management and organization studies (MOS) to rethink creativity as a vibrant process that emerges through encounters among people, material objects, and the environment (Garud, Gehman, and Giuliani 2018; Gherardi and Perrotta 2013; Hjorth et al. 2018; Kuismin et al. 2024; Stephenson et al. 2020). Following the strong process ontology (Fortwengel, Schüßler, and Sydow 2017), this paper challenges the prevalent, instrumentalized views of creativity as a linear process (Amabile 1983; Botella et al. 2013; Schaefer and Hallonsten 2023). We conduct an exploratory study using moments of encounter and mobilities as units of analysis. Translated from human geography, 'moments of encounter' represent the connections between individuals and their environments (Wilson 2017; see also Woodward, Jones III, and Marston 2010). By conceptualizing encounters as events that 'make a difference' (Wilson 2017, 646), we depict how the creative processes of artists are constantly 'becoming' over time in situated interactions (Fortwengel, Schüßler, and Sydow 2017). We combine this concept with a micro-level analysis of mobility to explore how encounters emerge over time (e.g. Jensen 2009; Küpers 2015; Merriman 2015). Our study thus foregrounds the contingent aspects of the creative process, which are often overlooked in mainstream or managerial approaches to creativity (Karakilic and Painter 2022).

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Examining the creative processes of artists, we follow the rich and growing MOS literature that has examined artmaking processes to draw insights on organizing for creativity, exploration, and play (e.g. Hjorth et al. 2018; Schüßler, Svejenova, and Cohendet 2021). We focus on artists for two reasons. First, the artmaking process aligns with process ontology: the artistic creative process is exploratory and bricolage-like, involving inventing through interactions with material objects in various environments (Gherardi and Perrotta 2013). Artistic work is also defined not solely by its outputs but by an 'ongoing aesthetic development' that emphasizes exploration and expression (Mace and Ward 2002). Thus, artistic processes provide a reference frame for studying creativity as a situated, material action (Holm and Beyes 2022; Schüßler, Svejenova, and Cohendet 2021). Second, artists are often seen as 'precursors' in self-organized work (Loacker 2013, 140), and their creative processes involve high mobility, including virtual connections and work across studios, coworking spaces, homes, and cafés (Liegl 2014; Loacker and Śliwa 2016). Process thinking allows us to view mobility and the creative process as interconnected, rather than viewing creativity as merely the outcome of mobile lifestyle. Focusing on encounters and mobilities thus reveals how and why artists connect to materials and sites (Küpers 2015). Our study also has implications for organizational contexts promoting employee flexibility and mobility to support creative processes (Bal and Izak 2021).

We utilize data from four Finland-based new media artists to investigate (i) what encounters drive the artists' creative processes, and (ii) how these encounters are shaped by geographical, virtual, imaginative, and corporeal mobilities. To answer these questions, we employ an exploratory mixed-methods approach that combines creativity diaries, interviews, and GPS data on the artists' geographical mobility, resulting in 36 descriptions of encounter. We first illustrate these moments and explore how they drive the creative process. Then, we conduct a micro-level analysis of the artists' mobilities—geographical, virtual, imaginative, and corporeal (Elliot and Urry 2010; Urry 2007)—to study how these mobilities contribute to the formation of encounters in the artists' creative processes.

Our findings make two central contributions to MOS by conceptualizing the dynamic 'becoming' of the creative process and using encounters and mobilities to characterize creativity as distributed and processual. First, our study joins the scholarly efforts to challenge the outcome-oriented and linear views of the creative process by highlighting creativity driven by encounters (see also Schaefer and Hallonsten 2023). We identify formative, serendipitous, and tranquil encounters that depict the diverse contexts in which creativity arises among creative actors, their materials, and their environments. In doing so, our research also sheds light on embodied aspects of creativity (Duff and Sumar-tojo 2017; Kuismin et al. 2024; Leclair 2022).

Second, we show how different mobilities—physical, virtual, imaginative, and corporeal—precede the encounters. The findings reveal that creative processes constantly 'become' through mobility, bringing to the fore the connection between mobility and the temporal fluctuation of processes (Karakilic and Painter 2022). Our findings illustrate how different types and speeds of mobility give rise to the encounters. Through mobility, we can depict fluid creative processes characterized by continuous change, driven by the assembling and reassembling of various forces over time (Merri-man 2023; see also Hernes 2014; Langley et al. 2013). Together, these insights advance process thinking in creativity research, emphasizing that the creative process unfolds through ongoing, embodied interactions rather than static, predetermined stages. This approach encourages scholars in MOS to look beyond linear, outcome-oriented models of creativity and recognize the contextual, distributed nature of creativity.

Theoretical framework and literature review

The creative process

The definition of creativity as production of novel and useful ideas has long been prevalent in the leading theories on organizational creativity (e.g. Amabile 1983; Botella et al. 2013). MOS research

has generally attributed creativity to individual skills and behavior, and organizational creative processes are then used to harvest such skills to produce novel outcomes (see also Botella, Zenasni, and Lubart 2018; Runco 2010). Here, external factors are often considered separate from creativity; for example, management practices, team arrangements, and office spaces are seen as variables that can be adjusted to enhance creative production (e.g. Caniëls and Rietzschel 2015; Hennessey and Amabile 2010; Slavich and Svejenova 2016). Therefore, the studies often denote a linear understanding of the creative process, in which novelty is achieved as long as suitable organizational settings are in place. Critics argue how such instrumentalized studies perpetuate ‘performed images of creativity,’ limiting their research efforts to notions of outcome-oriented and market-focused ideals of creativity (Leclair 2022, 821).

On the contrary, this paper adopts process thinking to examine how creative processes fluctuate and change over time (e.g. Håkonsen Coldevin et al. 2019; Hjorth et al. 2018; Kuismin et al. 2024; Stephenson et al. 2020). This approach rejects the idea of the creative process as a linear phenomenon that can be controlled through organizational structures or managerial practices. Instead, process scholars highlight how the dynamic assembly of people, material objects, affects, and the environment brings about ambiguous and often unpredictable creative processes (Beyes and Holt 2020; Karakilic and Painter 2022; Stephenson et al. 2020). Here, creativity is enacted in situated events (Garud, Gehman, and Giuliani 2018; Gherardi and Perrotta 2013; Hargadon and Bechky 2006), embodied in sensory experiences between people and their environment (Leclair 2022), and distributed between human actors and material entities (Duff and Sumartojo 2017; Glăveanu 2014). This means creativity cannot be attributed solely to individuals’ or teams’ innate talents, nor can creative outputs be predicted by installing pre-established, ‘creativity-supporting’ organizational structures (Kuismin et al. 2024; Schaefer and Hallonsten 2023).

In this paper, we focus on creative processes by exploring the ‘particular conditions under which creativity emerges, as a fleeting moment in time’ (Fortwengel, Schüßler, and Sydow 2017, 11). Our approach thus adheres to what Fortwengel, Schüßler, and Sydow (2017) describe as a strong process view, highlighting how creative processes are constantly ‘becoming’ in the flow of time. This means considering change and fluidity not as exceptions, but as the norm in processes (Hernes 2014; Langley et al. 2013). To examine such an ongoing, open-ended process, scholars have drawn from Deleuzian thinking (Deleuze 1991) to explore how creativity emerges from the temporal assemblages of different forces (e.g. Karakilic and Painter 2022; Mahringer 2024). In other words, creativity must ‘be sought in encounters’ between the forces that co-constitute creative processes (Duff and Sumartojo 2017, p. 431).

The aim here is not to overlook the creative efforts that can be linked to human behavior, such as creative insight (Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer 2014), or to dismiss the importance of collective creativity produced in collaborative, social interactions (e.g. Hargadon and Bechky 2006). However, we agree with process scholars that novel research approaches are needed to challenge the linear and outcome-oriented approaches to creativity (Karakilic and Painter 2022; Mahringer 2024). In this effort, we present an empirical study focused on encounters and mobilities to provide a more nuanced understanding of the creative process in MOS research.

Encounters in the creative process of artmaking

Derived from human geography, the ‘moments of encounter’ represent the coming together of different bodies and forces that ‘make a difference’ (Wilson 2017, 458). Wilson (ibid, p. 646) notes how encounters hold a dual focus: identifying the difference and how it takes place, thus alerting scholars to ‘the different ways in which subjects and objects are formed, remade and given meaning.’ Indeed, encounters are not fixed, but continuously produced in the dynamic assembling and reassembling of subjects, objects, materials, sites and embodied actions. Traditionally, encounters were used to explain frictions in societal phenomena that result from the ‘thrown-togetherness’ of actors (Massey 2005; see also Beyes and Holt 2020) for such thrown-togetherness reflexively

affects what is made possible in the encounters. Encounter thus lends itself to process thinking, enabling an exploration of ‘what is’ and ‘what could become’ in different assemblages (Kuismin et al. 2024, 528), without assuming a correlation between a given encounter and a given outcome. Therefore, encounters entail a level of ambiguity that makes them ‘of analytical interest’ for scholars concerned with the unpredictable ways processes emerge according to Wilson (2017, 464). The encounters analyzed in this paper are described by the participants, allowing them to ascribe meaning to the events from their perspective and thus adhering to the strong process ontology (Hernes 2014).

Encounters have been used in creativity research to account for the enchanted, surprising meetings of various forces in everyday life (i.e. ‘creative encounters’) (Bhatti et al. 2009; Nordström 2018; Pyry 2016). In this vein, this paper contextualizes encounters in the artmaking process with sensitivity to the nonlinear, exploratory, and bricolage-like ways of doing. The artistic creative process captures the journey in which creativity is ‘embodied’ as felt and lived moments through ‘a body that moves and feels’ (Noland 2009, 105). Therefore, we also take note of the experience of encounter—‘a mood, a sense, or a feeling’ (Wilson 2017, 458)—to better capture the dynamic, embodied, and emergent nature of creativity. Indeed, artmaking involves moments that link various objects and tools in the material world with meaning by activating the artist’s sensory body. For instance, Gherardi and Perrotta (2013) illustrated how creative ideas emerge dynamically when artists invent their ways of doing with their materials. Similarly, Leclair (2022) found that intimate moments between designers and their materials resulted in inspiration and positive affect. Therefore, encounters invite us to consider the less scrutinized emotional and embodied aspects of creative work (see Dobusch et al. 2021; Frith, Miller, and Loprinzi 2020; Schüßler, Svejenova, and Cohendet 2021).

On that note, the artists’ work entails individualized ways of organizing and self-management, which then have implications for how and where the encounters in artistic creative processes come about (e.g. Holm and Beyes 2022; Kuismin et al. 2024). The demand for particular networks, infrastructures, and artistic spaces further highlights the inherent situatedness of the artistic creative process. Artists form part of the ‘mobile middle’ (Loacker and Śliwa 2016), where mobility is crucial for maintaining professional relationships with peers, funders, and institutions (Hautala and Nordström 2019; Loacker 2013). From artists, mobility serves as a resource, allowing them to balance solitude and social interaction, which facilitates diverse encounters that influence creativity (e.g. Liegl 2014). Mobility thus provides a waypoint to how the creative processes ‘emerge, develop, grow, or terminate’ over time (Langley et al. 2013, 1). Next, we examine how mobility is considered in creativity research in MOS, and propose ways to enhance this by connecting mobility literature with process thinking.

Mobility and the creative process

Reviewing the extant research on creative processes and mobility in MOS, we find that mobility is approached in four central ways. First, it is viewed as an ‘underlying dynamic’ enhancing organizational performance through resource mobilization and collective action (Halme, Lindeman, and Linna 2012; Shipilov, Godart, and Clement 2017). Second, scholars have examined career-related mobility affecting organizational creativity and individual careers, where vertical mobility crosses various boundaries and facilitates knowledge transfer (Franzoni, Scellato, and Stephan 2018; Gubler, Arnold, and Coombs 2014). Third, critical studies highlight the precarity in the creative industry, where mobility becomes a survival strategy amidst unstable work conditions and migration between metropolises and marginal cities (Alacovska, Fieseler, and Wong 2021; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010; McRobbie 2018).

The fourth, emerging perspective sees organizing as involving ‘moving in and through actions in the organization’ (Küpers 2015, 807). Urry (2007, 8) described this as a horizontal perspective, emphasizing the ongoing nature of organizing (Stephenson et al. 2020). For instance, Pattinson et al. (2020)

used dance as an analogy to capture rhythms and flows in entrepreneurship. Huopalainen (2015) and Satama, Blomberg, and Warren (2021) illustrated how collaborative actions and organizing occur through bodily movement. Similarly, Richard, Holder, and Cairney (2021) explored how idea journeys become embodied through mobility between stimulating sites. This perspective underscores how moving bodies contribute to the creative process by maintaining embodied connections between individuals and their environments.

Points for MOS development

The previous notions reveal that general views on mobility in MOS often adhere to instrumentalized accounts of creativity, where mobility is seen as just another variable in organizational processes. To advance process perspectives on creativity, scholars must consider creative processes and mobility as intertwined, rather than separate (see Cresswell 2006; Küpers 2015). Although researchers examining creative individuals' mobile careers have made efforts in this regard, they have mostly focused on long-term and vertical mobility. Therefore, there is a lack of studies that consider mobility as a dynamic force in creative processes (see Stephenson et al. 2020). We must thus adopt the horizontal perspective on mobility (Urry 2007) and consider mobility as more than mere movement between locations. Indeed, as Cresswell (2006) notes, mobility must be understood as a way of moving as well as representation of movement. In other words, mobility is not only a 'brute fact' but also experienced and embodied (ibid, p. 3). Critically, such conceptualization of mobility aligns with the strong process perspective (Fortwengel, Schübler, and Sydow 2017). To this end, we illuminate mobility as a dynamic medium through which the creative process unfolds, allowing people, materials, and environments to assemble in various encounters.

Against this background, this study focuses on the often-overlooked micro-level mobilities of individuals that shape, and are shaped by, the organization of work and personal life (see Loacker and Śliwa 2016; Wingström 2024). For example, a study on artists' geographical mobility during COVID-19 showed how their creative processes were affected as they had to reorganize when, where, and how they worked (Comunian and England 2020). The pandemic accentuated how virtual mobility has relaxed the requirements regarding a fixed place for work (e.g. Brydges and Hracz 2019; Knight et al. 2022). For example, virtual connections enable the development and creation of artistic outcomes and collaboration beyond physical distances (e.g. Schiemer, Schübler, and Theel 2022; Slavich and Svejenova 2016). Geographical and virtual mobilities provide an important perspective on how mobilities enable (or hinder) encounters (see Wingström 2024). In other words, we must better understand how creative processes are (re)produced through mobile actions (Huopalainen 2015; Leclair 2022; Pattinson et al. 2020; Satama, Blomberg, and Warren 2021).

Notably, the embodied and experiential aspects of mobility are often overlooked, despite being central to the creative process. Merriman (2015, 89) noted, 'Embodied movements—from walking and driving to writing and painting—are frequently valued for their creative and expressive qualities.' Indeed, the 'interpretative dimensions' are in constant interplay with material reality in creative processes (Gherardi and Perrotta 2013, 252). Thus, imaginative and corporeal mobility intertwine in a creative process when projecting 'meaning, emotion and possibility into perceptions' (i.e. when ideas become realized) (Thompson 2018). As such, imagination also becomes mobile: it crosses material boundaries by enabling the ideation of something new, bringing the existing into the present from elsewhere, or replacing present things with others (Cangià and Zittoun 2020; Ricoeur 1994; Zittoun and Cerchia 2013).

Finally, we note that focusing on mobility allows us to consider how processes dynamically emerge and unfold through movement. Merriman (2023), for example, argues that understanding the world as a series of constantly fluctuating processes encourages us to consider the varying speeds, rhythms, and slowness of such movements. Similarly, Cresswell (2006) contends that we must pay attention to mobilities in relation to stillness (i.e. immobility)—specifically, how these patterns generate processes. Past research has explored mobility and immobility somewhat

dichotomously, attributing mobility to nomadic fluidity that fosters creativity and associating immobility with stagnation that reinforces fixedness (cf. Costas 2013; Jensen 2009). However, we argue that the interplay between these forces is central to fluid creative processes (see Hautala 2015; Wingström 2024) and should be more seriously considered in process studies. Taken together, we consider the different (im)mobilities present in artists' creative processes: geographical, virtual, imagined, and corporeal (Urry 2007; see also Costas 2013; Cresswell 2006; Huopalaainen 2015; Loacker and Śliwa 2016).

Methodology

Participants

This paper introduces an explorative study with four Finland-based new-media artists whose creative process we followed over a two-week data collection period between late November 2020 and early February 2021. We collected data from multiple sources: (1) diaries, in which the artists were asked to describe one moment that made a difference in their creative process (i.e. moment of encounter) per day; (2) interviews conducted at the end of the study period; and (3) GPS data on geographical mobility over the study period. The two-week data collection period was different for each participant (i.e. carried out at times that best suited the participant). Altogether, our data include 36 descriptions of encounters combined with daily GPS data as well as four interviews. We intentionally kept the sample small to focus on the richness of data (Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam 2013). Although this limits generalizability, the data provides a detailed exploration of individual creative processes and mobility. We secured ethical clearance, and all participants signed an informed consent form before participating.

With a purposive sampling technique (Robinson 2014, 32), we contacted the four artists due to their relevance as 'mobile' artists, their ongoing creative work, and their willingness to participate. Going forward, we give the artists the pseudonyms Anna, Ben, Dani, and Carl (Table 1). Whereas Anna, Ben, and Dani collaborate with art collectives or research groups, Carl works mostly independently. They span various new media-arts domains, and three of the artists are also involved in art research. Anna and Ben are mid-career, and Carl and Dani each have over twenty years of experience. All worked in Finland during the study but have affiliations with groups both locally and internationally. To maintain anonymity, detailed artist descriptions were omitted.

During the study period, Finland enforced COVID-19 regulations, curtailing collective activities. We acknowledge that the pandemic altered the participants' routines and social interactions. In

Table 1. Summary of the participants' characteristics.

	Anna	Ben	Carl	Dani
Age group	30–44	30–44	45–60	45–60
Field of art	Art research, Interactive art, digital art	Performing arts, new technologies	Art research, new technologies	Art research, music
Affiliation	Art collective	Art collective	Independent	Research group
Work status	Grant researcher	Freelancer	Freelancer	Employee
Career stage*	Middle	Middle	Late	Late
Main place(s) for work during the study period	Home	Home, office	Home, office	Office
Main place(s) for work before the COVID-19 pandemic	Home	Home, office, 3rd locations**	Home, office	Office
Phase of the ongoing creative process during the study period	Planning and working on a new art project	Coworking on a project and developing AI for an art piece	Programming for own research and other projects	Developing musical AI algorithms

* Middle = more than 10 years of work experience.

Late = more than 20 years of work experience.

** Working on art projects in multiple locations.

the interviews, the participants recognized the decrease in social contacts during the pandemic, and Dani discussed how his international work plans were disrupted. However, during the data collection periods, the artists' work-related routines and mobility remained relatively stable, and they were able to visit their offices regularly and have meetings with colleagues (Table 1). We stress that our aim was not to examine the changes in the artists' work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the participants were also more aware of mobility's effect on their work due to these unique circumstances; therefore, we deemed the research setting suitable for the study.

Creativity diaries and interviews

In the creativity diaries, the artists reflected on their creative processes through self-described moments. For each entry, we asked the artists to describe a pivotal moment from their day and its influence on the creative process. They were instructed to describe any moment they felt was significant (i.e. 'made a difference' in the creative processes). Therefore, there were no predetermined attributes assigned to the moments, and as researchers, we refrain from imposing judgment on the moments. Sometimes, the artists did not describe moments during the day and therefore left the entry blank. The diary-data collection focused on workdays and excluded weekends and holidays.

In the diaries, the artists were also instructed to describe the events that occurred, places where they worked, tools they worked with, people they were with, feelings during the moments, and what happened after the moments. Altogether, the data entails 36 descriptions of the moments of encounter (Table 1). At the end of the study period, we conducted an online interview with each participant, during which the interviewer asked questions about the data collection phase, the encounters, and the different forms of mobility. We recorded the interviews in Teams and transcribed them; the recordings vary in length from 30 to 50 min. We translated excerpts from the Finnish interviews into English.

GPS data

We used geospatial location data from GPS points to track the artists' geographical mobility, and the participants carried a GPS tracking device (SenseDoc 2.0) during the study period every time they were outdoors. We excluded days with incomplete tracking (i.e. less than 60 min of tracking or tracking that ended before the participant had arrived at their home location) from the analysis. We visualized the GPS data as spatiotemporal mobility maps that covered 24-hour spans with ArcGis Pro 2.7 software (Figure 1; cf. Chen et al. 2011; Lee and Kwan 2011). The anonymized maps inform the initial analysis and were combined with qualitative data from the diaries and interviews. The GPS-based maps therefore depict the artists' geographical mobility between locations over two weeks. Thus, they are used to frame process through movement (Merriman 2012, 2023). As such, they alert us to the everyday contexts of the participants' creative processes and are used to depict when and where the encounters came about.

Analysis

Our approach to the analysis was explorative and therefore data driven. We used NVivo 11 software to help us organize and code the qualitative data. Considering the small number of participants, the aim of the content analysis was not to derive quantity-based categories from the data but rather to identify interconnections between types of encounters and mobilities.

The first research question (What encounters drive the artists' creative processes?) was answered with data from diaries and interviews with a data-driven qualitative content analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015). First, we went through all qualitative data and conducted descriptive coding to the qualitative data. Each diary entry was assigned a code (i.e. a tag) based on the descriptive characteristics present in each moment (place, time, activity, materials,

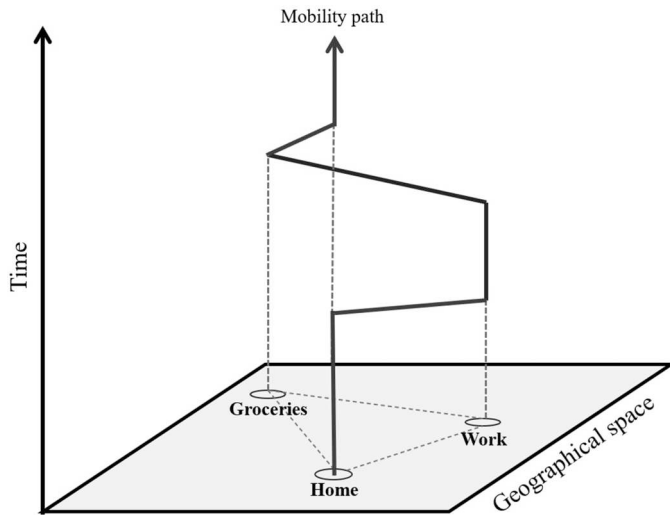


Figure 1. Example of a GPS-based mobility path.

social connections, emotions, and mentions of mobility). Similar descriptive coding was done with the interview passages in which the participants talked about their creative process and mobilities during the study period.

After the descriptive coding, we moved forward to inductive coding to create categories of the encounters. Here, each diary entry was defined as an analytical unit in which relevant passages from the interviews in which the participants talked about the self-described moments were the analytical units from the interviews. Then, we began the coding process with open coding, meaning each self-described moment was condensed and coded (i.e. described with a short label). The codes were then cross-examined and clustered based on similarities and differences between them, resulting in subcategories that describe the moments as situated encounters. Then, the subcategories were again clustered, resulting in three main categories: creativity emergent in formative encounters, serendipitous encounters, and tranquil encounters. [Figure 2](#) presents the analytical procedure with example codes.

Source data	Condensed node	Code	Sub-category	Category
Diary entry	Facing problems while fixing sensory outputs during a recording session with program	Responding to challenges arising from the material	Iterative process between artist and material	Formative encounters
Interview	Feeling creative while playing the instrument and waiting for its responses to give a counter response	Creative experience emerges from trial-and-error with material	Iterative process between artist and material	
Diary entry	Walking outdoors with the group lead to ideas regarding upcoming project	Forming ideas while being in the nature	Outdoors facilitating ideation	Serendipitous encounters
Interview	Solution to problems arose when openness of space in nature park resonated with seeing possibilities	Idea about solutions resonated with outdoors	Outdoors facilitating ideation	
Diary entry	Thoughts get more organized while lying in bed in the morning	Gaining understanding while relaxing	Thinking process connected to relaxing	Tranquil encounters
Interview	Trying to get sleep or waking up sleepless as only times when there is time to think	Having time to think when going to sleep or waking up	Thinking process connected to relaxing	

Figure 2. Summary of the inductive analysis process of the diaries and interviews, with examples.

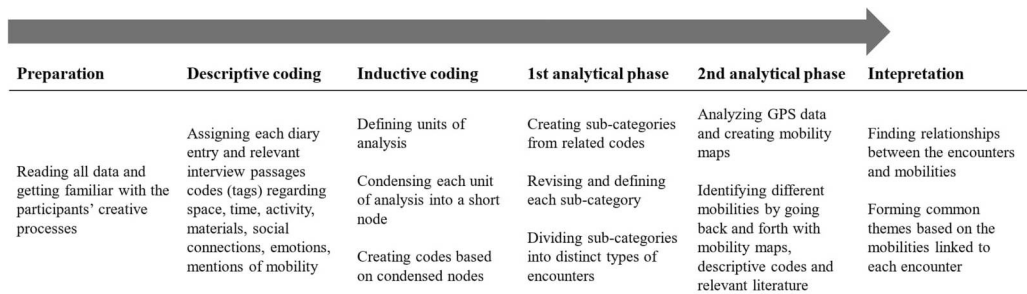


Figure 3. Summary of the overall analytical procedure.

To answer the second research question (How are the encounters shaped by geographical, virtual, imaginative, and corporeal mobilities?) we first created the GPS-data-based mobility maps to depict the artists' movement over time during the data collection days. The mobility maps enhanced the analysis, enriching our understanding of the participants' geographical mobility patterns and situated activities from a processual point of view, allowing us to identify dynamics between the encounters and the GPS data. Next, we revisited the qualitative data to identify additional forms of mobility. We applied the descriptive codes we developed in the initial analysis phase and utilized Nvivo to investigate the connections between different types of encounters and mobilities. In this phase, we used the different types of mobilities as introduced by Urry (2007) and Cresswell (2006) as a schema to examine the geographical (change of location), virtual (the use of virtual platforms to connect with peers of resources), imaginative (descriptions of moving thoughts, ideas, and mental images), and corporeal (descriptions of the moving body) dimensions of the participants' mobility. Figure 3 summarizes the overall analytical process.

Findings

Encounters: connections in action that drive the creative process

Here, we answer the first research question based on the artists' descriptions of 36 such moments. We illustrate the participants' creative processes by describing them through the encounters. In the diaries, we found moments characterized by iterative interactions between the artist and the material, moments when serendipitous interactions resulted in novel insights, and moments highlighted by tranquility that support room for thoughts. We depict these moments along these lines as 'formative,' 'serendipitous,' and 'tranquil' encounters. We first explore the activities and contextual features present in each encounter, discussing how this interplay brings about the creative process. Then, we combine these findings with an analysis of mobilities to better understand how the encounters emerge over time.

Formative encounters: moments when creativity is realized

First, we describe encounters in which creativity is realized through hands-on tedious work in an iterative manner. Here, problem finding, problem-solving, learning, and repetitive actions are key activities. We depict these as *formative* encounters, illustrating how rather mundane actions drive the creative process. In the interviews, the artists described work leading to such moments rather banal, because work is often repeated for a long time before tangible effects are perceived. The formative encounters were mostly present in Dani's and Anna's diaries. During the study period, Dani was working on a new computer-assisted composition that required recording music and coding the program at the studio. Anna was working on an experimental design, in which she wanted to use a novel technology combining machine learning and human perception. Despite the differences in

their work, we find that both of their processes entail a formative becoming of creativity that emerges in everyday encounters.

Dani's diary invites us to take a look at the moments that emerge during hands-on work, for instance during tasks such as writing the composition or fine-tuning and developing his computer program in recording sessions through trial and error. Such work is, as Dani reflected in the interview, 'a huge part of creativity, how it appears.' In other words, 'creativity doesn't come to you, but actually, it's something that you make happen.' Therefore, Dani's creative moments involve 'tangible aspects' that come about in close proximity between the artist and the material (i.e. when Dani can 'pull things and push things, modify, apply a pressure.')

One day, Dani wrote about feelings of frustration when the program he was using was still not running smoothly and about how 'recording and fixing the sensory outputs at the same time slowed down the process.' Therefore, Dani was forced to find ways around the problem. After fixing the issues, he described this moment as 'extremely creative' because he was finally able to play music without disruptions. Similarly, Anna's diary depicts a process in which a deep immersion in literature and source material results in better formation of ideas and ways of working. Like Dani, Anna was making incremental progress in her work and routinely engaged with tasks such as reading, writing, sketching, and drawing. In her diary, Anna recognized new connections between existing pieces of knowledge as pivotal results of such formative moments. Therefore, we consider that the formative encounters are moments when the creative idea journey 'takes hold' in the material reality.

Dani and Anna recorded intriguing moments when the experiences of creativity are crystallized in 'just one moment (...) kind of a sudden thing,' as Anna described in the interview. For example, in the following excerpt, Anna talks about such a moment of problem-solving as a discharge of energy:

[Those positive moments] are connected to the technical development work. (...) You have a dilemma, like how could I solve this, and then I find a connection. (...) Maybe emotionally, there comes an emotional experience in relation to knowledge, and it feels like creativity. (...) [It is] some sort of discharge of energy that I experience as creativity.

A similar moment happened with Dani, who explained that a 'sort of flow appeared' while he was playing his instrument. Although it felt like he had 'only played for five minutes,' over half an hour had passed:

I would say that in the performing part of the composition, [the moment] appeared. (...) I could really develop a more mutual relationship with the instrument. (...) I could understand how the instrument changes musical textures, takes me to another sound world (...)

Therefore, although formative encounters can be tedious and mundane, the ensuing experiences of creativity as energy and flow highlight that iteration is at the core of the creative process. Critically, the formative moments alert us to the manner in which the creative process is constituted in encounters with everyday material reality.

Serendipitous encounters: moments supporting creative exploration

Second, we illustrate the encounters that support inspiration, novel perspectives on existing ideas, or making sense of ambivalent matters, thus sustaining the explorative aspects of creativity. These moments are characterized by unexpectedness and serendipity. In many ways, the serendipitous encounters can be seen as encountering novelty, meaning they exemplify how abstract ideas are made meaningful when the artist encounters inspiring matters. In our data, the serendipitous encounters were mostly present in Ben's and Carl's diaries. Ben had recently begun work with a new collective, with whom he was establishing a new artistic project whereas Carl was mostly preparing for art research. With their diaries, we illustrate encounters that prompt inspiration and novel ideas, thus supporting the explorative idea journey.

Exploration was central in Carl's creative process: in the interview, he explained that 'inspiration is needed to make illations and to understand what I'm trying to understand.' His diary entailed

moments when he was inspired by a lecture presented at a seminar, had a new idea regarding his work when attending an online conference, or gained insight after visiting a friend's art exhibition. In many ways, these encounters highlight how Carl's ideas are made meaningful when he connected with the surrounding world. Such moments represent the felt experiences that, despite being fleeting and serendipitous, create meaningful change in Carl's creative process.

Therefore, we note that serendipitous encounters can help one make sense of matters when they navigate the more ambiguous and uncertain parts of creative work. This was evident in the creative process of Ben, whose diary involves descriptions of the ambivalences and frictions that arose when he begun work with a new collective. One day, Ben headed out for a walk to an old train station during a remote phone call with the collective. During the call, a conflict arose, which Ben described as a 'piling of problems and challenges that felt overwhelming.' When talking about the moment in the interview, he elaborated on the connection between the train station and his feelings:

[The area] is a bit of an unusual environment. (...) [It] has old train carriages. [It is] an industrial area. It has either highlighted my experience of the work day or that moment ... or then I just associate [the feelings] with that place. (...) It feels almost like a simplified metaphor (...) because I did not know where to go there. I was merely walking in circles.

Here, the train station and old train carriages produce a meaningful experience that supports Ben's sense-making regarding his work, for getting stuck with the collective resonates with 'getting lost at the station.' Later in the interview, Ben noted how such difficulties 'bring out the core in our work,' allowing him to better articulate the challenges they were facing. A similar relation can be identified in a moment Ben recorded after another meeting with the collective, when the challenges finally began to ease:

[The moment occurred] high up on the rocks. It's probably the highest point of the park [...]. There, you can see nature and the built environment, of course. There is space [...]. There, it emerged—not a solution but something to grasp, to head toward in the next phase of our project.

This time, they met at a park, and the meeting resulted in a better formation of various ideas coming from the group members. When talking about the moment again in the interview, Ben recalled how the vast landscape of the natural environment resonated with his new insights. Again, we note that encountering such a landscape co-constitutes Ben's creative experience, supporting his idea journey.

Tranquil encounters: finding pauses during the process

The diaries also entail a few moments that are characterized by the tranquility mentioned in Anna's, Ben's, and Carl's diaries. In contrast to the other types of encounter, these moments occurred when 'thoughts could roam freely,' as Anna wrote in her diary. Indeed, these moments were often related to solitude and relaxation, including activities such as lying in bed, showering, and toothbrushing. Therefore, the encounters are characterized by the absence of social interactions and instead highlight solitude. For example, Carl described a moment that occurred late at night; he mentioned 'quietness' and 'the bed' as important elements in this moment when he came up with a solution for a programming problem. In the interview, Carl discussed such moments as follows:

I used to have of this free thinking time (...) spaces of emptiness. That doesn't happen so often now. Many times now, the only time I have to think about stuff is when I'm ready for bed or trying to get to sleep or when I wake up sleepless. So I try not to fight against it but just let the thoughts come.

Indeed, the tranquil moments support the idea journey of the artists' creative processes to 'create room for thoughts,' as Anna noted in the interview. Here, the creative experience is connected to pausing and stillness, meaning the moments occurred in calm atmospheres, such as bedrooms. Here, we note that such tranquility is connected to the feeling of abundance of time, meaning the participants are not pressured by other tasks or demands from others. Thus, the tranquil encounters reveal that the creative process also requires moments when disrupting interactions or tasks are

absent. Moreover, as suggested in Carl's above quote, such moments might be difficult to find amid everyday activities.

(Im)mobilities bringing about encounters

After describing the encounters, we move forward to the second research question. Our findings reveal that different types of (im)mobilities play a crucial role in supporting routines, encouraging spontaneous exploration, and allowing for the breaking of established routines. Figure 4 illustrates these relationships and guides us toward thinking of the creative process as becoming, highlighting the spatial and temporal dynamics involved as artists navigate their environments.

By examining various forms of mobility, we shed light on how encounters are formed through distinct yet interconnected mobility types. We discovered that the combinations of geographical-virtual and imaginative-corporal mobilities bring about mobility patterns that give rise to the encounters. We found examples of repetitive mobilities, i.e. patterns that recurred throughout the study period, that supported formative encounters. On the other hand, we also identified sporadic mobility patterns, marked by irregularities, that contributed to unexpected, serendipitous encounters. Lastly, we found that tranquil interactions were often preceded by periods of 'stillness,' which we define as a form of immobility. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Repetitive mobilities supporting formative encounters

First, we find that the formative encounters are enacted through everyday mobilities. Such patterns support iterative work that requires repeated interactions with certain materials and spaces. For instance, Dani's need to practice at the studio resulted in recurrent geographical mobility patterns. Therefore, identified with GPS data, his geographical mobility occurred mostly between his home and the studio. The importance of being present together with the material is central in the formative encounters; as Dani notes, his work requires 'a physical place' where he and his colleagues can put their 'hands on the instrument together.' Indeed, effects of the COVID-19 restrictions further accentuate how disruptions in geographical mobility can prevent the formative encounters, as happened with Dani. In the interview, he talked about an international collaborative effort he was trying to build during the pandemic when he was unable to travel outside Finland. After he tried 'a couple of meetings on Zoom,' the collaboration 'didn't really work out.'

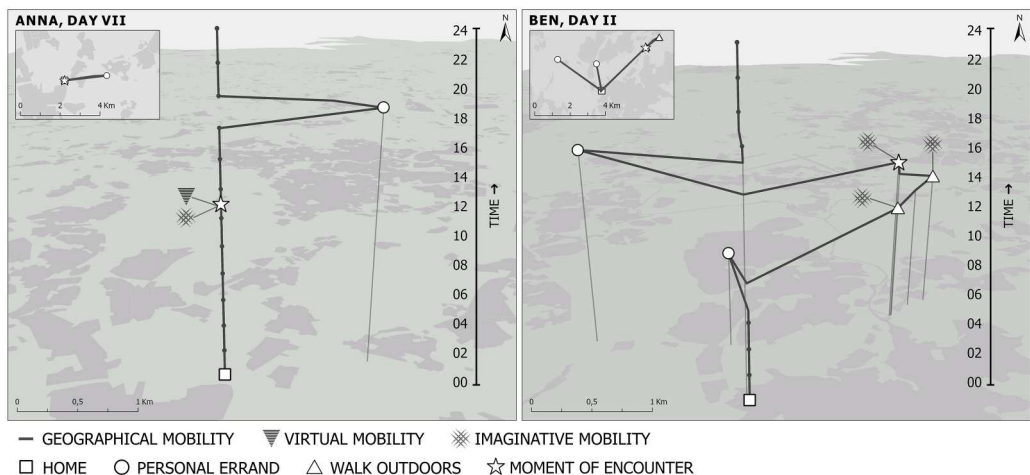


Figure 4. Maps of Anna's and Ben's mobilities throughout the day, highlighting moments of encounter.

Table 2. Summary of the findings.

	Formative encounters	Serendipitous encounters	Tranquil encounters
Activities	Tedious work, inventing by doing	Exploration, ideation, inspiration	Relaxation, creating room for thoughts
Contextual characteristics	Iterative relationship with the material and environment supporting focus and connection with the material	Environment and material as a source of inspiration, surprise	Quiet and calm environments, absence of distractions, abundance of time
Role of mobilities	Repetitive geographical and/or virtual mobility patterns that enable proximity to material Interplay between imaginative and corporeal mobility in the formative relationship between artist and material	Sporadic mobility patterns enabling inspiring outcomes and distance to workspaces or materials Attentiveness to the surrounding world through corporeal movement of body and imaginative movement of thoughts	Immobility sustaining stillness and tranquility

In contrast, for Anna, virtual mobility is a central form of mobility that facilitates routines as she worked remotely during the study period. For her, virtual mobility provides proximity to material that she needed during the study period (e.g. access to online repositories and articles) and to social connections if needed. This allows her to work in spaces that support formative encounters, such as reading source materials at the kitchen table. Such an arrangement helps her facilitate moments of tedious work; for instance, working early in the morning while drinking coffee has been the ‘best time’ for her creative work altogether. Therefore, in our findings, geographical and virtual mobilities support the formation of formative encounters. The mobilities allow for the formation of a dynamic relationship between actors, reflecting how the creative process is sustained and embodied through mobility. Indeed, in the interviews, Anna and Dani accentuated places where they can focus on creative work. Dani is drawn to the music studio, which supports hands-on work and enables him to experience music in an adequate manner:

Music has to happen in, be experienced in time and space. And that’s actually also how it’s being created as well. (...) So, that characterizes the features of the space that I could really be in (...) this leads me towards more in a studio, where I can set up the stuff, where I could be focusing on the practice of playing.

On that note, the formative encounters also alert us to the manner in which the artists meet space and the material through the interplay of imaginative and corporeal mobility. The imaginative and corporeal mobilities were illustrated in Dani’s inventing-by-doing manner of working: here, the corporeal hands-on relationship with his instrument shapes the imagined composition that is constantly becoming when he plays. The mutual relationship culminated in the feeling of flow, during which Dani was taken into ‘another sound world.’ Therefore, we see such manifestation of creative experience emerges through mobility, through which the artist’s idea journey connects to the material through imaginative mobility and movement of the body. Indeed, our findings accentuate that the formative moments in the creative process are not merely happy accidents but actively formed through movement. Therefore, this co-constituted relationship can reciprocally prompt the artist to move. When telling about the moments when her creativity ‘crystallizes,’ Anna further elaborated on the connection between bodily mobility and creativity. Here, she noted that the energy from the crystallizations of creativity feels ‘like a cascade’ that makes her ‘walk or get somehow excited.’ These quotes highlight the processual dynamics of creativity, in which, on the one hand, encounters require mobilities to come about and then prompt new mobilities.

Sporadic mobilities supporting serendipitous encounters

As opposed to formative encounters that are connected to specific spaces and materials, we find that the serendipitous encounters are more supported by the absence of strict spatiotemporal patterns. For example, Carl suggested there is no pattern in when the moments recorded happened but instead asserted, ‘There’s a pattern to when [they] don’t happen.’ Indeed, Carl’s diary reveals that the moments he recorded all occurred in different locations. Interestingly, all the moments occurred

while he was not working on his main project but was instead engaged in other tasks or leisure activities. The following quote from Carl's interview illustrates that his serendipitous moments were not connected to specific contexts, highlighting the difference between formative and serendipitous encounters:

There is one thing that happens often, which is important. (...) If I see a call for a paper or a conference and this is something that is interesting to me (...), how do I react to that? It's not something that I can even start thinking about when I'm on the computer. Really, the work, in the creative sense, works when I'm not on the computer or at the office. (...)

Ben also noted in the interview that exploration 'requires distance to [materials] in order to emerge, so they come in shower, train, or other situations.' Therefore, in serendipitous encounters, mobilities sustain distance from the usual spaces the artists operate in and thus enable moments of inspiration. For example, the sporadic patterns in Ben's GPS data show his creative process is characterized by serendipitous encounters. In the interview, Ben explained that during the study period, his collective was able to meet wherever they chose each day, and even during remote meetings, the members often went for walks outside. Such a change of location resonated with Ben's emotional experiences regarding the collective's work progress. Such flexibility in terms of spatial and temporal arranging of work supported the serendipitous encounters in Ben's creative process. Here, geographical and virtual mobilities offer him means to break out of everyday work patterns.

Therefore, our findings bring to the fore the interplay between imaginative and corporeal mobility, which is reflected in bodily, felt attentiveness and sensory awareness of the surrounding world. This highlights that moments of inspiration and enchantment are co-constituted between the artist and their surroundings. For example, when describing a meeting with his colleagues during an outdoors walk, Ben wrote in his diary that walking together 'facilitated a flowing conversation' and 'stopping by at the bird watching tower' opened up discussions about the upcoming project. Therefore, serendipitous encounters accentuate mobility's role by alerting us to the manner in which fleeting ideas are made sense of by relating them to real-life materialities through corporeal mobility. Therefore, even the more abstract moments in the creative process, such as the emergence of thoughts and ideas, must also be considered situated activity.

Immobility in tranquil encounters

Finally, the diaries include intriguing moments when 'immobility' becomes a way of disconnecting from interactions. Such immobility then supports tranquil encounters, in which thoughts can roam free. For example, in one moment recorded in his diary, Carl 'created space' for creative thoughts while lying in bed in the evening. Similarly, Anna stated that her home sometimes felt 'chaotic' due to her partner and pet sharing the space with her. Therefore, sometimes she needs 'emptiness and space' to 'hear her own thoughts.' Besides social connections, space and material can become unwanted disturbances:

The computer or the mobile phone (...) everything that provides you with so much information and possibilities, they have a negative effect on creativity.

The above quote from Carl alerts us to the ways the embedded experiences with space and materials can produce undesired effects in the creative process. Here, immobility becomes a way for the artists to distance themselves from distracting matters. In such moments, mobilities other than imaginative mobility are generally absent; however, we note that immobility is a felt experience rather than a brute fact of being completely still. Nevertheless, immobility as a concept highlights the importance of disconnection during the creative process, particularly such moments of stillness might be difficult to achieve in today's hectic environments. Moreover, bodily stillness resonates with an embodied experience of having 'enough' time or space for thoughts. In other words, immobility results in an experience of a tranquil atmosphere, which then supports the creative process.

Discussion

In this explorative study, we examined artists' creative processes, which are typically characterized by ongoing exploration and 'inventing by doing' (Gherardi and Perrotta 2013; Mace and Ward 2002). Drawing from a strong process ontology, we used encounters and mobilities to capture these aspects of the participants' creative processes. In this context, we present two key contributions: we challenge outcome-oriented and linear approaches to creative processes in MOS and demonstrate the use of encounters and mobilities to conceptualize creativity as processual 'becoming.'

Depicting the becoming of creative process with encounters

As our first contribution, we challenge the outcome-oriented and linear views of creativity prevalent in MOS (e.g. Caniëls and Rietzschel 2015; Hennessey and Amabile 2010; Slavich and Svejnova 2016) and instead approach the creative process as one that is constantly 'becoming' (Fortwengel, Schüller, and Sydow 2017). Building on the latter approach, our explorative study demonstrates that creativity cannot be attributed to specific cognitive stages or practices, nor is it simply the outcome of such processes. Instead, we illustrate creativity as an 'emergent property' within encounters, meaning creativity arises during the temporal assemblage of creative actors, resources, and environments. This results in fluid creative processes, where continuous change occurs through the assembling and reassembling of various forces over time (Hernes 2014; Langley et al. 2013).

For example, formative encounters reveal how creativity can emerge in everyday, repetitive actions, through which the creative process interacts with the material. Although this work can feel rather banal, it preceded the experiences in which creativity 'crystallizes' when a solution or a new association between matters is found. Similarly, serendipitous encounters demonstrate instances when imaginaries are realized through surprising engagement between the artists and the world, producing novel ideas and insights. Tranquil encounters, in turn, denote the need to pause and reflect in order to make room for thought. These insights, which depict the becoming of the creative process with varied encounters, extend processual creativity research in MOS.

Thus, by illustrating the different qualities of the encounters, we can better account for the 'bodies and forces that enable and sustain the human subject's becoming creative' (Duff and Sumar-tojo 2017, p. 430). Encounters resemble the assemblages that make the becoming of creativity (im)possible (see Massey 2005), and thus embody what Kuismin et al. (2024, 528) call the 'actualization of potentiality'. Indeed, as Leclair (2022) notes, such embodied engagements cannot always be traced to conscious actions but are sometimes surprising and erratic. However, we agree with Karakilic and Painter (2022, 104) that creativity results from all the 'multiplicities that already exist within the past, waiting to register themselves.' In other words, following Deleuzian thinking, they assert how the embodied experiences of past encounters inform present ones (Deleuze 1991). Therefore, we illuminate creativity as an emergent property of encounters that 'pulls its force' from past successes and failures in experimentation. Such temporal unfolding does not conform to linear progression but instead, the encounters interweave with one another, producing new potential for creativity. For example, the formative actions that precede crystallization reflect the way in which creativity becomes through immanent, non-linear temporal processes.

In sum, encounters allow us to account for the role of human and non-human, material and immaterial forces involved in creativity without assuming 'a correlation between a given configuration and a given organizational outcome' (Kuismin et al. 2024, 524). Thus, we argue that encounters offer a way out of prevalent, instrumentalized narratives of the creative process, which assume that creativity can be strictly predicted by predetermined variables or stages that denote linear progression. Instead, recognizing that actualizations of creative potential cannot emerge without 'some form of interaction with other bodies' (Karakilic and Painter 2022, 102), we focus on the spatio-temporal contexts in which these actualizations arise.

Exploring mobility's role in the creative process

In discussing our second contribution, we address the role of mobilities in forming encounters to illustrate the distributed and contingent dimensions of the creative process. Past research in MOS has largely examined how mobilizing resources or people across organizational or regional boundaries impacts organizational performance (e.g. Franzoni, Scellato, and Stephan 2018; Gubler, Arnold, and Coombs 2014). These studies often depict mobilities as frictionless phenomena occurring between spaces 'already in existence' (Stephenson et al. 2020, 810) or focus on the effects of mobility on creative workers and careers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010; McRobbie 2018). However, we draw on mobility literature to emphasize how relationships between people, material and immaterial objects, and spaces are formed through mobility, resulting in encounters in which creative potential emerges.

For instance, everyday geographical mobility is essential for artists to engage with peers, materials, and the environment across various sites. Geographical mobility is intertwined with virtual mobility, which enables proximity to materials and peers across different locations and times. Thus, these mobilities are central to the spatial and temporal emergence of the creative process, enabling 'the reciprocal and affective shaping' of humans and their environments (Leclair 2022, 823). While past research has highlighted how space enables or restricts actions such as micro-mobility (e.g. Huopalainen 2015), there is a need for more studies on how mobility reproduces, transforms, and disrupts situated encounters. In this effort, we revealed how encounters become (im)possible by linking them with different forms of mobilities. For example, virtual mobility allows connection to peers and digital materials over long distances but does not facilitate an in-depth engagement with tools requiring hands-on interaction (cf. Schiemer, Schüßler, and Theel 2022). Thus, we argue that scholars concerned with the relationship between (organizational) space and creativity should pay equal attention to the mobilities that continuously shape the spaces in which the creative process is actualized and comes into being (see Stephenson et al. 2020).

On that note, by coupling encounters with mobilities, we underscore the interconnectedness of situated relations and mobility that play into the continuous becoming of the creative process. Our findings reveal how the 'sensual, psycho-physical, and social capacities, presences, and forms of processing knowledge' needed for creativity are realized through 'bodily mediated mobilising' (Küpers 2015, 807). We used imaginative and corporeal mobilities to illustrate embodied engagement, such as when an artist repeats actions to play an instrument or uses walking to facilitate a collaborative conversation. We thus argue that mobility informs us about imaginaries materialized through mobile interactions (Gherardi and Perrotta 2013; Thompson 2018), showing how past embodied experiences translate into creative potential in present encounters (cf. Karakilic and Painter 2022). Thus, we argue that mobilities can be used in future studies to empirically explore how these socio-material relations assemble and disperse over time, thus pointing us toward process thinking (Cresswell 2006; Jeanes et al. 2015; Küpers 2015). This also allows scholars to add a greater emphasis on the role of non-human agents and space that are often neglected in creativity studies (Duff and Sumar-tojo 2017; Glăveanu 2014; Kuismin et al. 2024; Leclair 2022).

Moreover, while the becoming of the creative process is often associated with uncertainty and chaos due to its constant state of flux (Fortwengel, Schüßler, and Sydow 2017), mobility literature challenges the notion that such constant fluctuation implies a chaotic process (see Merriman 2012). By identifying how mobile processes consist of different rhythms and speeds, we can begin to unpack the erratic becoming of creativity. For example, we observed repetitive patterns of geographical mobility that create iteration and, thereby, stability, which enables formative encounters. A studio can become a site for formative encounters not only because it is a studio or due to the relationship between the artist and their instrument but also because the artist regularly moves to the studio to practice. In contrast, walks in a park facilitate serendipitous encounters, not only due to the inspiring qualities of the environment but also because the artist becomes attuned to these qualities through sporadic mobility, leading to fluidity and unpredictability in the process.

Finally, we note that immobility is ‘thoroughly incorporated into the practices of moving’ (Cresswell 2012, 648). As Merriman (2012, 2023) would have it, tranquil moments do not imply that processes ‘pause’; rather, the movement slows down. In our findings, immobility relates to disconnection from factors that disrupt ideation and creative thinking and instead promotes ‘creating room for thoughts.’ Therefore, the different rhythms and speeds of mobilities are not only characteristics of processes but also essential co-constituents in the emergence of creativity. Indeed, process scholars could leverage mobility to explore how creative processes oscillate between fluidity and fixity. In this way, we contribute to process thinking by highlighting encounters that emerge through (im)mobility.

Limitations of and avenues for future research

This paper introduces a unique blend of mixed methods from process research and human geography, offering an empirical way to analyze the creative process through encounters and mobility. Data collected over the two-week study period revealed a creative process emerging in multiple contexts and points in time. Here, the encounters described by participants provide insight into the creative process as it unfolds in everyday life. These encounters involve a level of ambiguity, allowing for the uncertainties inherent in the creative process. However, this ambiguity can also be seen as a limitation, given that the encounters are based on participant-generated diaries. Thus, in future studies, it is imperative to complement these findings with a broader array of interviews (e.g. Loacker and Śliwa 2016) or ethnographic investigations (e.g. Huopalainen 2015; Leclair 2022). Such study settings are essential to uncover the tensions in the current outcome- and market-oriented landscape, where creativity is often viewed as an organizable, frictionless phenomenon (Karakilic and Painter 2022).

The encounters were complemented by mobility maps, which served as a dynamic way to conceptualize the creative process (Merriman 2012) and enabled a better understanding of the creative process through (im)mobilities. While mobility maps provide powerful visualizations, the use of GPS data has its limitations. In this study, an external GPS device was used to collect data rather than, for instance, a mobile phone application. Consequently, the dataset relied on participants’ engagement with the device, which led to gaps in the data (see also Chen et al. 2011). Additionally, gathering data from multiple sources often requires limiting the number of participants or data collection days, as was the case in our study. Thus, future research should carefully weigh the benefits and challenges associated with GPS data collection.

Given these limitations, this exploratory study remains illustrative and does not permit generalizations. Nevertheless, we argue that novel and innovative methods are needed to unpack the relationship between organizational creative processes and mobility. As Merriman (2012, 21) noted, focus on mobility calls attention to permanence and fixity in processes, or to the lack thereof. Indeed, mobility extends beyond physical movement; it fosters a reflexive relationship between individuals and their environments (Jensen 2009). Cities and organizations shape rather than just attract creativity, suggesting a need for scholars to explore mobility in its social, embodied, and intangible dimensions (Jeanes et al. 2015). Creativity scholars could delve deeper into the power dynamics of different mobilities (Elliot and Urry 2010), the meanings of movement in organizing (Küpers 2015), and the role of mobility in shaping individual and collective identity within creative fields (Loacker and Śliwa 2016).

Conclusion

In this exploratory study, we examined the creative processes of four Finland-based artists, focusing on encounters and their connection to various types of mobilities. Specifically, we used research diaries, interviews, and mobility maps to follow the artists’ creative processes over the two-week study period. We identified formative, serendipitous, and tranquil encounters, each involving distinct socio-material features that drive the creative process. We found how these encounters are preceded

by different mobilities, such as repetitive and sporadic mobility patterns, as well as moments of immobility. The encounters and mobilities thus provide valuable insights into creative process research in Management and Organization Studies (MOS).

First, we expand the understanding of creativity as an emergent property shaped by interactions between individuals and their socio-material contexts. Our findings thus challenge instrumental views of creativity as a mere outcome or organizational resource. By recognizing the mobilities that lead to different encounters, we highlight the various forces that contribute to creative experience, without assuming a direct causal link between context and outcome. Second, we present the creative process as situated and contextual, and argue that creativity cannot be fully understood without considering the assemblages that enable the actualization of creative potential. The way artists navigate various mobilities should be a key concern for scholars aiming to understand spatio-temporal processes such as the creative process. Here, the focus on different mobilities allows us to examine which (im)mobilities are beneficial in different contexts. For example, hybrid and virtual work can offer flexibility but may limit copresence and embodied experiences.

For management and organizational contexts, fostering self-organization and mobility may enhance creativity. However, it's important to avoid assuming that greater mobility always promotes creativity or that constraints necessarily limit it. Creativity, as an emergent property of encounters, is not always predictable but inherently involves ambiguity. Thus, embracing the dynamic perspective of creativity as *becoming* would help scholars gain deeper insights into how the creative process develops. Here, mobility helps us understand the fluctuating speeds and rhythms of the creative process over time. Therefore, organizations concerned with fostering employees' creativity should be attentive to employees' mobilities—from geographical and virtual mobilities to imaginative and corporeal dimensions of mobility.

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Data availability statement and data deposition

The data of the study will not be opened for public access to ensure the protection of the personal data of the participants.

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