

# Organisational creativity and the creative territory: The nature of influence and strategic challenges for organisations

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**Abstract.** This research considers the nature of the influence of the creative territory, examined from the perspective of three levels (the underground, middleground and upperground), on the endogenous factors of organisational creativity (individual commitment, organisational context and the organisation's ability to renew itself). The qualitative analysis of 18 SMEs involved in a competition for ideas highlights the fact that each level of the creative territory tends to have a different (either positive or negative) influence on the endogenous factors of organisational creativity. In order to understand these differences, this research identifies, among other things, four specific properties of the creative territory: the production of discourse, the creation of opportunities to transform the idea into a project, the roll-out of the project, and the protection of the idea and the project. The discussion takes a look at organisations' openness to their environment and the role of the individual and intellectual property in this openness. This work ultimately validates the value of integrating the creative territory into models of organisational creativity.

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"When the winds of change blow, some  
people build walls and others build  
windmills" (Chinese proverb)

Since Amabile's canonical work (1988), literature on organisational creativity has essentially focussed on the influence of individuals and internal context, which are more or less conducive to the expression of individual creativity (Shalley and Zhou, 2008). Because organisation creativity is a situated concept (Weick 2012; Ford, 1996), research subsequently integrated the influence of the environment through, in particular, competitive or isomorphic pressures models (Agnihotri et al., 2014; Gilson et al., 2014; Seibert et al., 2014). More recently, from the latter perspective, authors have demonstrated the influence of creative territory (Florida, 2002, 2005) upon the actors, which constitute it (Joo, McLean & Yang, 2013; Cohendet, Grandadam & Simon, 2011). The creative territory is thus defined as a space where various pieces of knowledge (scientific, industrial and symbolic) are created, where ideas emerge from and for the actors in question, i.e. organisations, communities and individuals, who benefit from the development of territorial activities (Gilly, Kechidi & Talbot, 2014; Tremblay & Tremblay, 2010; Cohendet et al., 2011). The organisations present in this creative territory can therefore benefit from this knowledge in order to develop their organisational creativity (Carrier & Szostak, 2014; Joo et al., 2013; Cohendet, Grandadam & Simon, 2011; Ford, 1996). The creative territory thus encourages the renewal of these organisations (Joo,

1. In the literature on organisational creativity, the terms referring to the organisation's internal 'environment' and 'context' are often used interchangeably. To avoid any confusion, this article uses the term 'context' to refer to an organisation's internal environment, and the word 'environment' to refer to the space which is external to the organisation.

McLean & Yang, 2013; Durand, 2006; Drazin, Glynn & Kazanjian, 1999; Léonard & Swap, 1999). Nevertheless, these models for analysing organisational creativity (Agnihotri et al., 2014; Dominguez, 2013; Weik, 2012) do not specify how this influence takes place. It therefore appears crucial to identify and qualify the nature of this influence.

The article is structured in four parts. The first part builds the conceptual framework for the research by differentiating the factors of influence, which are endogenous to organisational creativity from those, which are exogenous and relate to the creative territory. The second part looks at the methodology and the case study: 18 SMEs located in the Saint Étienne region, which has been recognised as a UNESCO 'Creative City of Design'. The third part develops the results, clarifying the meaning of the link between the influence of the creative territory upon the creativity of the organisations studied, then highlights the nature of this link by identifying four properties, sub-divided into specific dimensions. Finally, the last part looks at ways in which organisations can open up to their environment, before concluding with research perspectives and managerial implications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of organisational creativity (Anderson, Potocnik & Zhou, 2014; Parmentier, 2014; Joo et al., 2013) has adopted several approaches in the past. Lubart (2003) recalls the three major approaches: componential (Amabile, 1988), interactionist (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993) and evolutionist (Ford, 1996).

In this article, organisational creativity is defined as the development of 'a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system' (Woodman et al., 1993: 293). More specifically, it refers to a process of creating and harnessing valuable ideas rather than promoting them, which is the subject of innovation (Carrier & Gélinas, 2011). While creativity and innovation are two related concepts (Sarooghi, Libaers & Burkemper, 2015, Anderson et al., 2014; Amabile, 1988), they differ in terms of the status of the idea: in organisational creativity the idea is the result to be achieved, while in innovation it is the starting point. The individual is thus at the heart of organisational creativity (Weik, 2012; Joas, 1999) while in innovation, although the individual is important, they are no more so than other organisational factors (in particular, structure and resources) (Sarooghi et al., 2015; Carrier & Gélinas, 2011; Durand, 2006). However, individuals in organisational creativity do not operate in isolation like an artist in a studio; they work with others, are socialised, relate to and influence their contexts (Carrier & Gélinas, 2011; Woodman et al., 1993). Organisational creativity is, therefore, a concept situated in a 'socio-cultural context' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 35), a 'complex social system' (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993, p. 293) or a 'domain' (Ford, 1996, p. 1115). Organisational creativity can thus be examined by taking into account factors of influence, which are referred to as 'endogenous' because they characterise the organisation as well as those which are 'exogenous' because they are specific to the environment.

## ORGANISATIONAL CREATIVITY DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY THREE ENDOGENOUS FACTORS

Analysis of the literature on organisational creativity highlights three main endogenous factors. The first is individual commitment (Dominguez, 2013; Drazin et al., 1999) to the creative process of developing new ideas. This is based on motivation (Amabile, 1988; Shalley et al., 2004), personality traits which are

favourable to creativity (Amabile, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Joo, McLean & Yang, 2013) such as, particularly, independence, curiosity, emotional sensitivity, strength of conviction, the ability to unify, self-confidence, an appetite for complexity and risk taking, the ability to engage in divergent thinking, experience, and specific knowledge. The extent of the individual in question's personal network is also regarded as a factor, because this is the source of new knowledge (e.g. Seibert et al., 2014; Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Perry-Smith, 2006). In addition to the individual, there is also the organisational context, the quality of which is reflected by the organisational climate and is characterised by the degree of trust among the actors, the time devoted to the development of ideas, the promotion of risk taking and employees' autonomy (Ekvall, 1995; Cerne et al., 2014). This involves taking account of the organisation's commitment to the creative process (Amabile, 1988), for example, when the idea is evaluated (Harvey & Kou, 2013). The type of management at work in relation to the individual involved in the process is also significant (Dubois, 2013; Andriopoulos, 2003), particularly in terms of motivation (Parmentier & Mangematin, 2009) and the allocation of resources to support their commitment (Sonenshein, 2014).

The third endogenous factor relates to the organisation's ability to renew itself (Parmentier, 2014; Napier & Nilsson, 2006; Durand, 2006). This is reflected by harnessing and exploiting new ideas which have appeared during the process (Yong et al., 2014; Dominguez, 2013) and through the organisation's ability to learn (Bucic & Gudergan, 2004). Crises, phenomena which are inherent to organisational creativity, directly influence the interpretation (or 'sense-making') which individuals have of a situation; if a point is repeated, it modifies the working situation which had originally been negotiated between the actors. Drazin et al. (1999) illustrate this situation during crises in budget management or project planning; the manager has to imagine solutions (technological solutions, for example) in order to continue the project. This may involve often heated discussions, with the other actors involved in order to renegotiate the work situation (Drazin et al., 1999), but may also involve delegation of decision-making (Bucic & Gudergan, 2004).

Based on these studies, we can see that these three endogenous factors directly influence organisational creativity, which will be greater the more the individuals are committed to the creative process, when the context is favourable to the emergence of ideas, and when the organisation is capable of renewing itself.

## ORGANISATIONAL CREATIVITY UNDER THE INDIRECT INFLUENCE OF THE CREATIVE TERRITORY

Ford (1996), Agnihotri et al. (2014), Gilson et al. (2014), Seibert et al. (2014) and Anderson et al. (2014) underline the importance of the environment for the study of organisational creativity. The environment consists of the competitive market according to Porter (1980), institutions (professional, cultural or legal) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Ford, 1996; Washington & Ventresca, 2004), and the creative territory (Florida, 2002, 2005; Joo et al., 2013). Environmental influences are, moreover, indirect: they arise from the link between endogenous factors and organisational creativity (Ford, 1996). They strengthen (or weaken) the individual's commitment to the creative process; they make the context more (or less) favourable to the expression of ideas; they facilitate (or hinder) the harnessing of new ideas.

However, only a few rare, conceptual pieces of research look at the link between creative territory and organisational creativity (Cohendet et al., 2010 and 2011; Tremblay & Tremblay, 2010; Cohendet & Zapata, 2009; Simon, 2009). These studies consider that the creative territory comprises three levels of

interaction, consisting of individuals and/or organisations, but do not qualify the nature of the link between them.

The first level concerns the visible part of the creative territory: the upperground. The upperground consists of institutional organisations and innovative companies which are well known and recognised in the sectors of technology, art, culture and education (Simon, 2009), from which the creative territory draws its creative force (Gilly et al., 2014). Policy direction may go hand-in-hand with resources being released, which thus strengthens organisations' commitment to the creative process.

The second level of the creative territory is the underground: this encompasses exclusively individuals who are involved informally and confidentially in creative activities such as painting, design, fashion or entertainment (Florida, 2002, 2005). The creativity, which is particular to the underground, participates directly in the concept of the 'genius loci', or the 'spirit of place' (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.37); this explains that individuals who are also engaged in creative processes are influenced by the resulting environment.

The last level is the middleground. This encompasses the groups, communities and associations to which the individuals mentioned above belong and which have a clear intention of participating in the development of the territory in creative terms, particularly through projects, events and competitions (Cohendet et al., 2011). Competitions, for example, introduce them to innovative practices (O'Gorman & Kautonen, 2004), which promote economic growth through the development of creative solutions (Liotard & Revest, 2015; Hutter et al., 2011; Morgan & Wang, 2010). These groups lead the organisation to mix with other actors and, subsequently, to question how they operate and to learn from others. The middleground connects the other two levels of the creative territory: it ensures that the creativity of organisations is enriched by structured creativity but also by emerging and non-organised creativity (Simon, 2009; Parmentier, 2014).

This process of permanent exchange between the three levels leads the territory to become increasingly creative and to offer opportunities to organisations which harness valuable ideas to a greater extent (Florida, 2002, 2005; Tremblay & Tremblay, 2010). But what process are involved? What is the nature of the influence between the creative territory and organisational creativity?

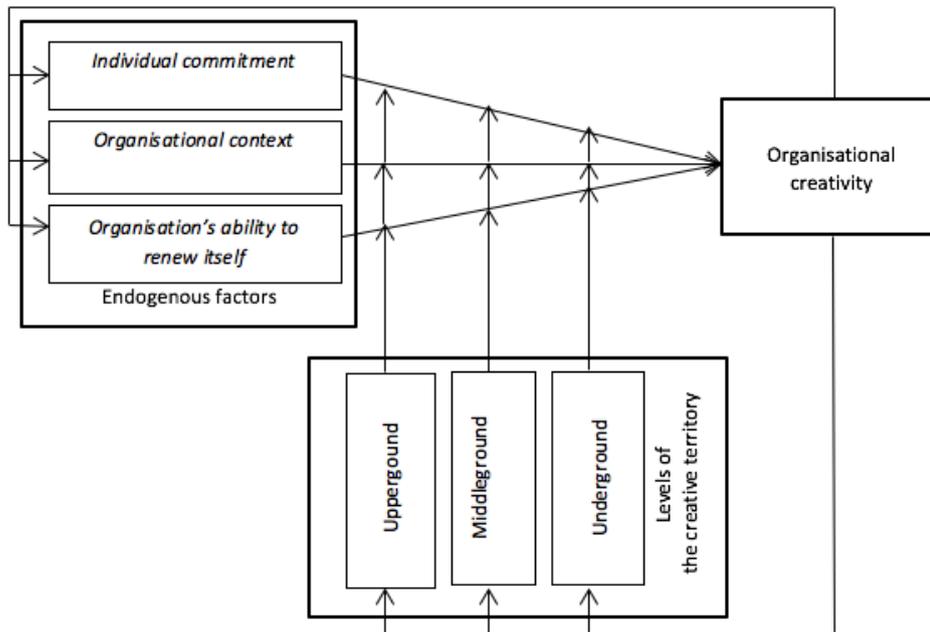
#### ILLUSTRATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE CREATIVE TERRITORY UPON ORGANISATIONAL CREATIVITY

An analysis of the literature leads us to understanding the creative territory as consisting of three levels (upperground, middleground and underground) and influencing the creativity of organisations through endogenous factors (individual commitment, organisational context, organisational ability to renew itself). The organisational creativity of all actors, whether inside or outside the creative territory, stimulates these three levels. In order to develop this research further, in this article we question the nature of this influence. Our intention is to propose a theoretical conceptualisation within which the creative territory is integrated into the study of organisational creativity. Figure 1 represents the framework, which will subsequently guide the exploratory research to answer this question.

Given the definition of creative territory, not all organisations are directly under its influence. Only those which have the desire to trigger or participate in the creation of knowledge in the territory and for its actors are affected (Parmentier, 2014; Cohendet et al., 2011). The decision to belong to a community, an association or a hub, or to participate in a project such as a competition around creativity, is an illustration of an organisation entering into the influence of the creative territory. Consequently, organisations come and go from this influence depending on their strategy and are present there for different

lengths of time. This process reinforces the need to take into account the specific situation of each organisation (Ford, 1996), and also the fact that they belong to the creative territory at the time of the study. This is the case of the organisations studied in the following part.

**Figure 1.** Influence of the creative territory upon the organisational creativity of organisations



## RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHOD

### RESEARCH CONTEXT

The data studied in this article were taken from a research project with the Conseil Général de la Loire. Researchers were able to participate in one of the initiatives developed as part of its 'Innovation and Competitiveness' programme. The objective of the programme was to promote the concept of an 'Innovative Territory' in a context where Loire companies were (and are still) largely sub-contractors for major contractors. Table 1 below presents the Loire territory and sets out the outline and content of the creative territory, which is the context of the study in question.

It is in this specific environment that the Conseil Général chose to create competitions around cross cutting subjects such as design. The competition studied here was entitled the 'Concours Design Concept' (Table 2). Design is defined as a conceptual human activity combining culture and technique. Its objectives may be industrialisation and commercialisation, but need not systematically be so (Dechamp, 2000; Szostak, 2006; Ravasi & Lojcono, 2005; Berends et al., 2011; Le Masson et al., 2011; Dechamp & Szostak, 2013).

**Table 1.** Features of the Loire department and description of the Loire creative territory

The Loire is a department with a surface area of 4,773km<sup>2</sup>, situated in the Rhône-Alpes. Its economic context is strongly marked by its industrial history. In the 1960s, wealth came from traditional industries (armaments, coal, and metalwork), which have partly disappeared today. In the 2000s, public sector institutions therefore made the choice to invest in the development of design, focussing on the art school in the town of Saint Étienne and its long tradition of innovation. The Cité du Design and the International Design Biennial, as well as Saint Étienne's status as a UNESCO 'Creative City of Design' are practical manifestations of this.

The Loire creative territory comprises the following: the upperground consists, among other things, of local public authorities (the town hall, the Conseil Général, the Conseil Régional), the Cité Internationale du Design, higher education and research establishments, local competitiveness clusters and hubs (ViaMéca, Pôle des Technologies Médicales) and a few major companies (Thuasne, HEF, Casino).

The underground includes creative individuals of all kinds: artists, inventors, arts students, etc. Some make their creative status official through exhibitions, participation in third places and FabLabs, and training resulting in qualifications. Nevertheless, the majority continue to be a discrete population.

In particular, the middleground includes Collectif Designers+, Atelier du Coin (an exhibition/sales area bringing together independent designers and artists), third places, and 'off' exhibition sites from the International Design Biennial. These communities have developed to bring together creative individuals who are isolated in the underground and who have no special relationship to the upperground; by coming together they become more visible.

**Table 2.** Presentation of the *Concours Design Concept*

Following a call to tender by the Conseil Général in June 2007, an initial selection of five projects (of the nine submitted) was made by a jury of experts and institutional stakeholders. The projects were presented by clusters in the territory (Loire Numérique, Mécaloire, Pôle Optique Rhône-Alpes, Club ERF - Entreprendre en Roannais Forez, and Sporalec). The projects selected met several criteria: (1) a strong collective dimension with the creation of a consortium; (2) the potential development of a clean product; (3) implementation of collective project management through a specifications document supported by the clusters and the Conseil Général.

The four projects<sup>3</sup> which were selected and studied here each bring together: two to six SMEs belonging to the same cluster to guarantee institutional and industrial proximity, the leader or manager of the cluster, and between three and five designers belonging to the Collectif Designers+<sup>1</sup> (a non-profit making organisation under Law 1901 consisting of Loire design agencies). In all, 18 companies were involved in the competition<sup>2</sup>.

In the context of the competition, the designers were paid €5,000 per project by the Conseil Général. After five months of collective work, the ideas were presented to the final jury which chose the winners in July 2008. The three winning projects were then supported through to the prototype stage or industrialisation phase until 2010.

1. The Collectif Designer+ is an organisation created in 2007: <http://www.collectif-designersplus.fr/>.

2. The four projects in the competition and the 18 companies studied are presented in the Annex (A and B).

3. The fifth project was finally discarded during the contest because the collective dimension could not be observed.

## DATA COLLECTION

The position selected in this study is abductive: a literature review enabled us to confirm the existence of direct links between organisational creativity and the creative territory but, due to the lack of research into the nature of this influence, we explore the data in an inductive way.

Various data are studied. Interviews with SMEs are the main empirical material used. We did, however, triangulate the information with other types of data: information on the companies themselves (internal documents, websites, media, site visits), all written documents relating to the competition for each of the projects (response to the call to tender, project monitoring, the jury's decision setting out its reasoning), researchers notes during meetings with the Conseil Général as well as with leaders of the clusters and, finally, observations during the final phase of the competition.

Individuals from the company who were involved in the competition (the manager and sometimes another employee) were interviewed, i.e. 26 actors representing 18 companies and 34 hours of interviews. Three major themes were selected during the interviews: 1) presentation of the respondent, their organisation and their role within it. These answers enabled us to consider the individual's commitment to the creative process and to characterise the quality of the context. 2) Managers' perception of design and creativity, the description of development activities for new products in their organisations. Consideration of the context of organisational creativity as well as the ability to renew were addressed. 3) The background to the competition (meetings with members of the project, management methods for the partnership over time) and their feedback (lessons drawn and planned follow-up to the project); the information collated encouraged understanding of the three endogenous factors and, in particular, the ability to renew. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, approved by the respondents and used to draft one report relating to the competition<sup>4</sup>.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Research is exploratory and is essentially based on the qualitative data. This approach was used not because of the nature of our data, but because our research approach is to construct rather than test (Baumard & Ibert, 2014). In our research, this involved positioning ourselves as interpreters of the research territory (Stake, 1995), which required proximity to the actors in order to better understand them. This was possible because the organisers of the competition had requested our input to analyse their work. The approach consisted of analysing the content of the phenomenon explored here (Grenier & Jossierand, 2014), i.e. characterising the nature of the influence of the creative territory on organisational creativity. This work led us to propose a new conceptualisation of this influence (Charreire-Petit & Durieux, 2014). Our research is focussed on the way in which actors give meaning to their experience, decisions and actions. From this perspective, we chose to concentrate largely on interviews with the 18 SMEs. The other data collated enabled a better understanding of the general context of the competition and shed light on the respondents' statements. Two reports<sup>5</sup> explaining our level of understanding and our interpretations were prepared and discussed with the Conseil Général when we began the work (Spring 2008) and then following the interviews (Winter 2008-2009). These stages in the research process enabled us to measure external validity. In practical terms, interviews with the 18 SMEs were coded using NVivo 10 software. The three endogenous factors and the three levels of the creative territory as an exogenous factor enabled us to structure our observations (Charreire-Petit & Durieux, 2014), as reflected in the proposal of six themes in

4. During the round table, we explicitly indicated our status as researchers. This initial face-to-face meeting helped create a link with the actors during the interviews which were to take place later.

5. These are two 30-page and 90-page documents covering the themes of the guide, the main statements made and an analysis of each project.

NVivo 10. With a view to guaranteeing the reliability of the coding, two of the interviews were double-coded; the Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated based on the NVivo 10 request (without weighting the two sources): 68% inter-coder agreement. This enabled us to fine-tune the meaning given to groups of words in order to classify them in categories and thus create coding rules (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Presentation and illustration of themes 1 to 6 coded in Nvivo 10

Name of the theme	Coding rules (meaning of the group of words)	Extract from the statements
Theme 1: Individual commitment	Description of their professional identity and background, their motivation, reasons for and objectives of their involvement, their role in the creative process and their external network.	<i>I contributed this idea, which I hold dearly. I am ready to promote it and share it with others.'</i> SME 9
Theme 2: Role of the organisational context	The role of the organisational climate, atmosphere, good (or otherwise) relations between the actors, description of the organisation's commitment to a creative process and to the competition.	<i>Some people are faster than others. Some people want to go at 200 mph and others prefer to take their time going 50 mph and everything has to arrive at the same place at the same time. When everyone is fully integrated into the project, it succeeds.'</i> SME 2
Theme 3: Organisation's ability to renew itself	The ability to change ideas, to draw lessons from successful experiences and failures, to handle crises and to recognise learning gained from a creative process and the competition.	<i>I really appreciated the experience even if we didn't always see eye to eye with the companies and even through it was sometimes very tense. It was still very interesting to see how different people react and see what we could do next time to make it better.'</i> SME 10
Theme 4: Upperground of the creative territory	Identity of the actors in the upperground, description of their practical actions to generate new ideas which are useful to all actors within the creative territory.	<i>We can take something from our universities and give them back something in return, and they can work on actual concrete cases.'</i> SME 2
Theme 5: Middleground of the creative territory	Identity of the actors in the middleground, description of their practical actions to generate new ideas which are useful to all actors in the creative territory.	<i>This [the objective of the competition] is very close to what we want to pass on to companies in the Loire through Collectif Designer+. Some of these sub-contractors will have to become producers with their expertise.'</i> SME 6
Theme 6: Underground of the creative territory	Identity put forward by the actors (artists, isolated creative people, etc.) of the underground, description of their confidential actions which are little, if at all, visible on the creative territory.	<i>Now I say 'light artist' because it is a statement and I am very proud of it. Before I would never have dared say I was an artist.'</i> SME 4

Once each interview has been coded, we cross-referenced themes 1 to 3 on the one hand and 4 to 6 on the other, to obtain a matrix of results in NVivo (Table 4). The statements where the respondents matched up endogenous factors with the level of the creative territory were thus isolated for analysis.

**Table 4.** Number of cross-overs between endogenous factors and the creative territory

	Theme 4: The <i>upperground</i> of the creative territory	Theme 5: The <i>middleground</i> of the creative territory	Theme 6: The <i>underground</i> of the creative territory
Theme 1: Individual commitment	10	27	9
Theme 2: Quality of the organisational context	10	19	4
Theme 3: Organisation's ability to renew itself	9	23	2

The matrix proposes 113 statements in total, which indicates for the actors the existence of the influence of a creative territory upon organisational creativity. These statements emerge because they are coded simultaneously (entirely or partly) into themes which are specific to the endogenous factors or the creative territory; they are considered as emblematic of significant ideas for the organisations in question. However, this influence does not appear to work in the same way for each endogenous factor according to whether we look at the upperground, the middleground or, more discretely in our case study, the underground. This is why the statements of the nine cross-overs in the matrix were systematically analysed. Initially, this stage in the analysis enabled us to appreciate the type of influence (positive, negative or neutral) of each level of the creative territory on the endogenous factors of organisational creativity of the organisations in the study. We then proceeded with a thematic analysis of the matrix by adopting an open coding approach as described by Angot and Milano (2014). This method enabled categories to emerge which indicate how influence takes place in the case study and enabled specific properties to be proposed for this influence as well as details of how they are expressed in practical terms to be developed through specific dimensions. The choice was made to name these properties and dimensions while remaining rooted in the territory in question.

## RESULTS

Our work consists of identifying the nature of influence of the creative territory upon the organisational creativity of companies. To this end, Table 5 lists all the ideas reflected in the statements. We then seek to understand the meaning of this influence on the case study and propose four properties of the influence as well as dimensions reflecting the expression that they adopt.

### THE CREATIVE TERRITORY STRENGTHENS MORE THAN IT WEAKENS THE IMPACT OF ENDOGENOUS FACTORS UPON ORGANISATIONAL CREATIVITY

In the study of the impact of the creative territory upon organisational creativity, it appears appropriate to distinguish three levels, because, although as a whole the upperground, middleground and underground strengthen the impact of endogenous factors, they may sometimes weaken it. To be more precise, the creative territory understood in terms of the upperground supports the involvement of the individual in the creative process, particularly by legitimating

the individual's status through qualifications or by facilitating the creation of official relations with other actors who are institutionally promoted.

*'Employees see that the company is making all these links with the Pôle, with the Cité du Design (...) We want to lean against the Cité du Design, with the art school, to probably take on a young person.'* (SME 2)

The upperground also sets the context for relationships between actors, particularly in legal terms, which is supposed to limit opportunistic behaviour and encourage the development of the idea. It also provides financial resources: actors are thus more directly able to renew themselves in terms of lessons drawn from their experiences.

*'The agreement was signed with the Conseil Général and they have kept their promises. (...) Whenever we have needed them, they were there, so I am satisfied with that.'* (SME 18).

**Table 5.** List of ideas characterising influence based on the analysis of the statements in the cross-over matrix

	Theme 4: The upperground of the creative territory	Theme 5: The middleground of the creative territory	Theme 6: The underground of the creative territory
Theme 1: Individual commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of the creative individual through qualifications issued within the territory.</li> <li>- Direction of the individual's commitment through the creation of links with other institutional actors.</li> <li>- Availability of resources enabling individuals to integrate into a network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of opportunities for recognised creative actors to meet.</li> <li>- Contribution of resources to the creative project led by the individual.</li> <li>- Facilitation of the transfer of knowledge and cross-fertilisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creativity is revealed as a fundamental element in the individual.</li> <li>- Facilitation of interpersonal exchanges around creativity without any defined objective.</li> <li>- Refusal to request intellectual protection or intellectual property (in the case of patents).</li> </ul>
Theme 2: Quality of the organisational context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of financial support and a legal framework for creative projects to minimise risk taking.</li> <li>- Source of extrinsic motivation.</li> <li>- Stimulation of a form of recognition towards an institution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for the organisation to adjust itself to other actors and collaborate on a practical project.</li> <li>- Development of opportunities to exploit a 'stock' idea in the organisation and to generate others (development of creative slack).</li> <li>- Promotion of a positive halo around collaborative creative projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Source of disruptions in collaborative work through lack of ability to adapt to constraints.</li> </ul>
Theme 3: Organisation's ability to renew itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Availability of financial resources.</li> <li>- Recognition of lack of time to support organisations.</li> <li>- Stimulation of joint-funding from organisations.</li> <li>- Support for project launches, seeking new resources or integration into new clubs or associations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging the organisation to exceed its paradigm (project proposals with a variety of actors, direct relationships)</li> <li>- Support for preventing and managing inter-organisational crises (particularly due to intellectual property).</li> <li>- Promotion of intermediate and final results with actors in the territory.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reveals lack of synchronicity between creative individuals not involved in projects relating to the organisation.</li> </ul>

However, this development role may be hindered due to lack of time; the influence of the upperground is likely to be negative due to lack of time and,

hence, involvement in the organisation's approach. It will then weaken the impact of the organisation's ability to renew.

*'The project [with this type of project], is that it takes a huge amount of time. And nothing can be done about it. I am convinced that, on the one hand, there are groups such as the Conseil Général who are making requests but that, on the other hand, there are not necessarily many who respond, because too much time is needed.'* (SME 18).

The middleground may appear to have a positive influence overall on the three endogenous factors. The creative territory enables the individual to be involved in collaborations with partners who are themselves involved in creativity. This is an 'opportunity' for them, an 'occasion' to be seized in order to get to know one another better.

*'I wanted to work in partnership with my competitors.'* (SME 8)

This level of the creative territory also supports the transfer of knowledge across all these actors. In other words, it stimulates cross fertilisation through sharing original ideas.

*'In the Collectif, I met many designers of objects and spaces; for me, this was entirely new.'* (SME 7)

Its influence on the context level appears to be important, because the middleground, through the competition project, enabled the organisation to exploit ideas which had been put on the back burner, setting an operational framework to push actors towards action, to do 'business'.

*'In terms of this operation, I presented [the cluster leader] with the idea of an outdoor interactive play area, because it's a field I want to explore.'* (SME 9).

Finally, the middleground facilitates the resolution of crises, particularly by helping actors to go beyond their paradigm to accept that of another, or to propose concrete solutions to difficulties (for example in the case of the management of intellectual property). Not providing support during these crises may weaken the organisation's ability to renew.

*'It would bother me if people stole my ideas, but if I allow them to use the technology on which I have been working, the more we talk the better it will be.'* (SME 4)

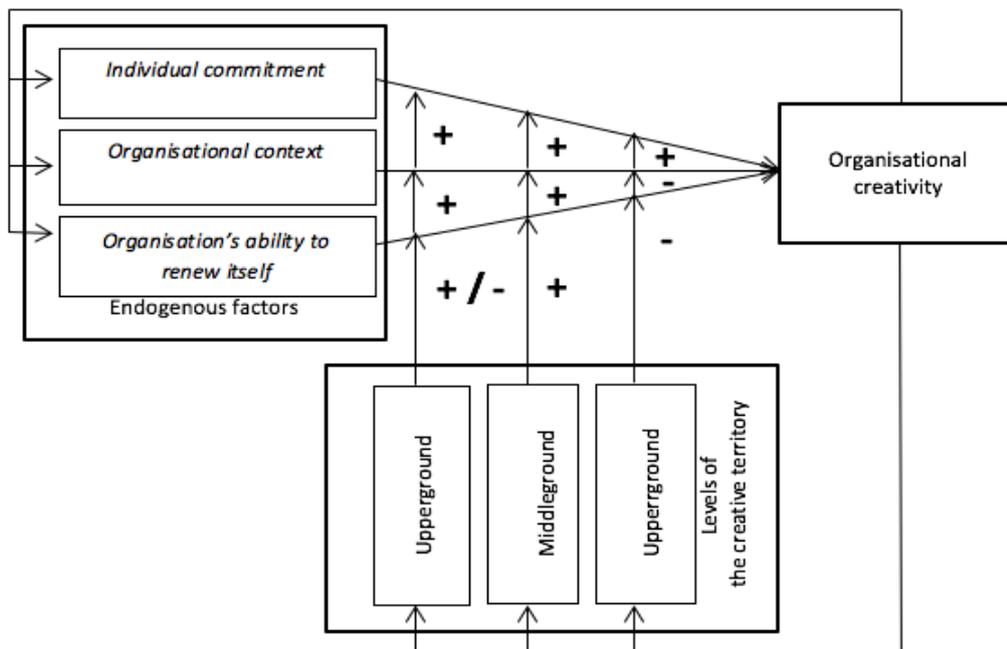
The last level of the creative territory, the underground, appears to have an overall negative influence upon endogenous factors. Indeed, it tends to support the commitment of individuals by promoting their own creativity and by stimulating individual specificities as well as their individual paradigms. This influence will disturb the organisational, collective climate and may therefore make it difficult to renew the organisation.

*'I'm not a salesperson, I am a creator. It's the only thing I'm interested in.'* (SME 15).

This initial analysis of the statements suggests differences between the three levels of the creative territory (Figure 2), even if, as a whole, the territory

studied in the study has a tendency towards strengthening the direct influence of endogenous factors upon organisational creativity.

**Figure 2.** Proposition of the type of impact of the creative territory on the organisational creativity of the SMEs studied



THE INFLUENCE OF CREATIVE TERRITORY TAKES PLACE THROUGH THE INTERMEDIARY OF FOUR DISTINCT PROPERTIES

Differences in influence indicate that the creative territory is an object defined by different properties depending on its levels. The levels will have variable qualities and will thus be expressed differently. In this sense, we adopt a cross-cutting approach to the matrix to draw out four properties characterising this influence. Table 6 visually represents the result presented here.

**Table 6.** Nature of the links between the creative territory and the organisational creativity of SMEs studied

	Theme 4. The upperground of the creative territory	Theme 5. The middleground of the creative territory	Theme 6. The underground of the creative territory
Theme 1. Individual involvement	Black	Grey	Purple
Theme 2. Quality of the organisational context	White	Purple	Blue
Theme 3. Organisation's ability to renew itself	White	Blue	Black

Black : P1 - Production of discourse. Grey : P2 - Creation of opportunities to transform the idea into a project. Blue : P3 - Roll-out of the project Violet : P4 - Protection of the idea and the project. White squares indicate a property of the influence which is not significant to the case study.

**Property 1 (P1) - 'Production of discourse':** the creative territory produces discourse to promote the competition or other development opportunities which it initiates. It also promotes the actors and, in particular, the

organisations involved in a creative process by communicating and disseminating the (intermediate and final) results with all organisations (whether under its influence or otherwise). It showcases projects which also enables them to be legitimised.

*'The Mechanical Engineering IUT in St Étienne asked me to present my profession and to propose an awareness raising module in design to their first year students. There had already been discussions about projects with the BTS at La Martinière and Honoré Durfé.'* (SME 3)

**Property 2 (P2) - 'Creation of opportunities to transform the idea into a project'**: the creative territory is a facilitator for bringing actors together. It creates occasions and gives opportunities to actors. It stimulates their creativity by directing them in their business development (e.g. resources made available to them). It is a source of extrinsic motivation (winning the competition and obtaining funding in particular).

*'I know Jacques well, so I wanted us to work together, it was an opportunity to do so.'* (SME 14)

*'Through the Club des Entreprises, we had the opportunity to respond to the Conseil Général's call to tender.'* (SME 18).

**Property 3 (P3) – 'Roll-out of the project'**: the creative territory steers relationships between the actors, supporting them to imagine the context which is most conducive to organisational creativity. It plays an important role in the case of crises in order to avoid destroying the creativity of each of the actors. It works consistently with paradigms of project actors which may be different or even opposing.

*'It was initially agreed [by the cluster leader], not to be limited to technologies mastered by the enterprise cluster in order to undertake a real reflection on the theme and not the resources.'* (SME 12)

**Property 4 (P4) – 'Protecting the idea and the project'**: the creative territory provides both the legal and moral context for the project so that actors feel safe to express their ideas and transform them into action.

*'There may perhaps be a concern about intellectual property, because this has just been copied. We are thinking it over with the Pôle Optique, and there was no real way to protect it.'* (SME 3).

Based on these four properties, the nature of the influence of the creative territory upon organisational creativity proves to be more precise. It appears that this influence varies according to the endogenous factor in question. Strengthening or weakening the impact of individual commitment doesn't necessarily result from the same property.

#### THE FOUR IDENTIFIED PROPERTIES CAN BE BROKEN DOWN INTO DISTINCT DIMENSIONS

Analysis of the statements, which are characteristic of the four properties, highlights the different dimensions or forms of expression of influence of the creative territory upon organisational creativity. This is the last result from the case study. The creative territory has an influence through the Production of discourse (P1), which is consistent with the type of actors present, such as the Conseil Général, the town hall, universities and schools or competitive hubs. This

discourse is expressed according to the scope of the audience (local, national, international): a state qualification validated by an establishment does not have the same impact as a local project in a region: this rationale also goes for obtaining a label such as the UNESCO 'creative city' label. It is also expressed through the subject of the discourse (is it connected to the announcement of the launch of the competition, the intermediate results or end results of the project?) and according to the speaker (what is the legitimacy of the actor speaking within the creative territory?).

*'For this project, I found it interesting to be able to lean on the Conseil Général, because I wanted them to be my first client. It was obvious that Saint Étienne should be our test bench (...); we could have gone to other communes.'* (SME 9).

The question of the allocation of resources, which is characteristic of the Creation of opportunities to transform an idea into a project (P2), emerges clearly from the interviews. The impact appears to be greater on endogenous factors when this allocation covers different forms of resources (and not only financial resources). The scale of the resources mobilised and the intensity of the commitment of the creative territory in each of these are two significant dimensions in terms of studying the influence of the creative territory upon organisational creativity. Moreover, we note that attachment to the creative territory of certain actors in the project contributes towards their motivation to transform the idea into a project. Thus, the creative territory acts as a stimulator of two classic forms of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic).

*'The Collectif taught me a huge amount, because we had to work with designers who had more experience.'* (SME3)

The roll-out of the project (P3) indicates the role occupied by the creative territory in the different stages of the project. This role may simply relate to the transfer of ideas or the composition of the project; but creative territory may also be much more implicated by accompanying all phases of the project, potentially even leading it as head of the project (building a project team, piloting, crisis management, etc.). Practical support varies. Whether or not the creative territory takes on the role of project head, through its support for operational activities, it influences the impact of endogenous factors (e.g. by providing direction towards new resources if necessary and encouraging organisations to integrate new clubs or associations).

*'The ESC has had little time to devote to each project. It's a shame because it could have contributed a lot more than it did.'* (SME5)

Protection of the idea and the project (P4) reveals distinct dimensions, among other things. If the creative person considers that this is not his or her main role, the organisations take a strong interest, particularly in the event of product development with a view to its commercialisation. The level of the actor is therefore important. In addition, we note that depending on the degree of advancement of the project, the question of protection is dealt with differently: during the pre-project stage and at the beginning, the actors essentially trust the legal framework imposed by the middleground; at times of crisis, the articles of the agreement connecting the actors are examined in detail to identify what the distribution of the potential value created could be. Sometimes a new agreement is established to supplement or replace the legal framework previously defined by the competition.

*'All companies have signed this agreement with the designers. The president of the LN signed it with the president of the Collectif. Things have to be dealt with immediately, if we want to continue working together. They think it is their project, and I don't agree, although I acknowledge that they've done a lot of work'. (SME5)*

**Table 7.** The properties and dimensions of the influence of the creative territory on organisational creativity

	Properties	Dimensions identified
P <sub>1</sub>	Production of discourse	Scope of the audience (local, national, international) Subject of the discourse (announcing action, intermediate or final results) Degree of legitimacy of the speaker (financial public institution, participating organisation)
P <sub>2</sub>	Creation of opportunities to transform the idea into a project	Breadth of resources mobilised (financial, time, material, human) Intensity of the involvement of each resource (from low to high) Degree of involvement in motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic)
P <sub>3</sub>	Roll-out of the project	Role occupied by the creative territory in the project (from a simple member to project leader) Intensity of support for the project's operational activities (low to high)
P <sub>4</sub>	Protection of the idea and the project	Level of the actor in question (from the individual to the group to the organisation) Extent to which the project has progressed (from pre-project to post-project)

The dimensions of the four properties (table 7) relating to the influence of the creative territory on organisational creativity enable an evaluation of how much the integration of this exogenous factor in the analysis models enriches discussions, by studying both the discourse and, particularly, the action of the creative territory.

## DISCUSSION

This paper seeks to identify and characterise the nature of influence of the creative territory upon organisational creativity. It develops models of organisational creativity and enables a better understanding of the role which the creative territory plays in relation to an organisation. Its strengths may be summarised in terms of the following major points. While the middleground strengthens the influence of endogenous factors, this phenomenon appears more measured for the upperground. The underground appears to have a more negative effect. The influence of the quality of the context may be disrupted by the underground, essentially because of the singularity of individuals. The influence of the individual's commitment is strengthened by the entire creative territory. The organisation's ability to renew is influenced heterogeneously. In addition, the creative territory influences organisational creativity according to four axes. It produces discourse with various outlines (depending on the content, scope of the audience, etc.). It creates opportunities for organisations to transform their ideas into concrete projects, particularly by allocating resources. It enables the roll-out of the project by playing a more or less involved role and, finally, it protects the idea and the project by taking into account the actor in question and the state of progress of the project.

Highlighting the four properties and their dimensions enables a better understanding of how the creativity of the organisations studied has been influenced by the creative territory of the Saint Étienne region. In this last section, we have chosen to look more precisely at two points which emerge from these results: (i) opening up the organisation to the environment which extends beyond the scope of the creative territory and (ii) the role of the individual and intellectual property rights in this openness.

#### TOWARDS A SUBTLER MODEL OF AN ORGANISATION OPENING UP TO ITS ENVIRONMENT

According to Teece et al. (1997) and Teece (2007), the influence of the environment is significant and involves a particular organisational capacity in order to 'sense and shape opportunities and threats, to seize opportunities, and to maintain competitiveness through enhancing, combining, protecting, and, when necessary, reconfiguring the business enterprise's intangible and tangible assets' (Teece, 2007, p. 1319). These are dynamic capacities which enable the integration, construction or reconfiguration of knowledge and resources in order to create value. The environment thus becomes an endogenous variable for the analysis of these organisational capacities (Teece, 2007). However, if we consider organisational creativity as a creative capacity (Napier and Nilsson, 2006; Parmentier, 2014), our research highlights that, if it is known that this environment is multifaceted (between other competing spaces, the organisational field and the creative territory), it is important to study in detail the influence of the particularly heterogeneous creative territory. There has, therefore, to be a clear identification of the organisation's environment in order to understand its impact on organisational capacities. For example, the creative territory differs from the innovative territory. This difference may be summarised by the degree of intensity of the link between the upperground and the market (low for the creative territory because of the diversity of links and actors, high for the innovative territory in order to develop specialised links). While the innovative territory is characterised by its interface with the upperground and the market (Cohendet et al., 2011) in order to make innovations available to economic actors, the creative territory promotes interfaces between the three levels (underground - middleground - upperground) to encourage the conceptualisation and circulation of ideas, given that all actors do not have market access as their primary goal. It thus becomes relevant to identify the nature of the influence of the upperground upon the organisation, because this is the actor who straddles the two types of territory.

Moreover, we note that the influence of the creative territory is conditioned by participation in a project, a competition or another mechanism, which leads us to slightly modify the permanent nature of the influence of the territory. While organisational capacities are likely to evolve due to this environment (Teece, 2007), they may also be deliberately preserved for a period of time, which enables the organisation to take the time to e.g. explore in-depth newly acquired knowledge and resources as well as to preserve them internally in order to fully take control of the value created. Consequently, it is notable that not only does the influence of the environment on the organisation's capacities depend on the quality of the actors in that environment, but it may be strategically mobilised through a sequence of opening up and closing off the environment.

Moreover, and in reference to the so-called 'open' model of innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), this contribution agrees with the nuances put forward by Loilier and Tellier (2011). Indeed, they consider that the opposition (closed model versus open model) advanced by Chesbrough (2003) has to be modified. This research states that organisations must open their borders in order to integrate external knowledge and stimulate technological innovation. They must also make the knowledge developed internally profitable and promote their reservoir of ideas

- or creative slack (Cohendet and Simon, 2007) - with external actors, disseminating their knowledge to third parties. The decision to be under the influence of the creative territory corresponds to these two objectives for the companies in question. However, absorption capacity is an essential feature of this model. Moreover, it should be noted that internal R&D is a good knowledge base for achieving the two objectives cited above (Loilier & Tellier, 2011), which backs up our results: openness to the environment may be constructed deliberately and sequentially, depending on the desire to promote and/or protect ideas developed internally.

#### MAKING THE MOST OF THE ENVIRONMENT: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Recent work on the micro-foundations of organisational capacities (Félin et al., 2012; Teece, 2007) stresses the importance of individuals and their interactions (Foss, 2011), their motivation (Jansen et al., 2009), their cognitive capacities (Laamanen et al., 2009) and their ability to be ambidextrous (Augier et al., 2009). 'Boundary spanners' are individuals capable of identifying new opportunities and transferring knowledge from one world to another (Levina et al., 2005, Hsiao et al., 2012). In our work, we underline the importance of individual commitment which is, nevertheless, reflected in different ways. Some individuals lead projects as the result of seizing an opportunity, others mobilise their external network (companies or institutional actors), while yet others share their knowledge and resources. This research thus enriches the existing typologies relating to boundary spanners (e.g. Ancona and Caldwell, 1992), by focussing on the identification of the nature of influence to which individual commitment is subject. Even if, in our case, the three levels of the creative territory reinforce this commitment, they do not do so in the same way (see Table 7). Depending on the scope of the audience of the discourse led by the creative territory, the intensity of the resources available or the protection of the idea depending on the degree of advancement of the project, for example, the individual's commitment may vary.

The variety of this commitment reflects the status occupied by the individual. Our study indicates, notably, that for an independent person such as an artist in the underground, the question of patents is not essential, while this is less so for the same person when they are involved in a project led by the middleground. The investigation thus looks at issues around intellectual property rights (Fréchet & Martin, 2011) in the context of the openness of the company to its environment, in this case, the creative territory defined by three distinct levels. How can creative value be appropriated through original, new and useful ideas? This result backs up the work carried out on intellectual property rights in the context of open-innovation. While the patent is a closed system, it can strengthen open logics (Pénin & Wack, 2008; Ayerbe & Chanal, 2011), which certainly makes the context more favourable to the expression of ideas and makes the organisation adopt a position which is more likely to be renewed confidently, making the most of the value created. Intellectual property rights act as a safety net in the sometimes acrobatic games undertaken by organisations in relation to the creative territory in particular and, more globally, with the environment. Thus, Property P4 highlighted in the case study proves to be essential for organisations to make the most of the environment. It should be noted, however, that the use of this property differs according to the level of the creative territory: the upperground sets the legal framework within which the project takes shape and the middleground addresses intellectual property rights in practice. Moreover, although it has been agreed that the open innovation model 'relates more to the strategic status given to intellectual property rights than to mechanisms and clauses used to manage these rights which fall within a traditional transactional logic' (Loilier and Tellier, 2011, p.3), it should be noted that our study shows that

intellectual property may be invoked by the creative territory (via the upperground and the middleground) with the sole aim of encouraging collective creation. Thus, the management of intellectual property is not only seen from the perspective of a financial strategy, but also as a means of encouraging collective innovation.

## CONCLUSION □

Organisational creativity is influenced by the creative territory which produces discourse, creates opportunities, enables the roll-out of a project and protects it. The individual is the central actor in this approach and communication, motivation and trust are essential elements in the mechanisms led by the middleground. The organisation remains, however, the place where the project takes shape and is led, as well as where disputes are resolved. In this research, we put forward managerial implications by means of conclusion. Initially, while the organisational creativity of all organisations contributes towards nourishing the creative territory, only those organisations involved in this area can benefit from its influence. This is, therefore, an encouragement to actors in the middleground to continue to create projects, competitions, festivals, biennials and other meeting places such as cafés, FabLabs, third places, etc., to enable, initially, people from the underground to reveal their ideas so that, secondly, member organisations of such projects can harness them. Moreover, to encourage a maximum number of organisations, the creative territory must continue to communicate and promote its real influence on organisational creativity. However, in order to turn this discourse into action, it is important that it considers its practical support to organisations' projects to transform the idea into a project while helping organisations to appropriate the value of their ideas through intellectual property rights. This work therefore develops the issues raised by Cohendet et al. (2011) on the role of the creative territory in relation to socio-economic actors. The presence alone of creative actors in the territory as initially described by Florida (2002, 2005), does not necessarily influence organisations: it is essential to create spaces for exchange and links which encourage these actors to meet. The case shows how important it is to create a shared space within which creative projects can develop. As for organisations, they can draw from this research the fact that individual involvement is highly influenced by the creative territory. They all have an interest, therefore, in clearly identifying this space, how involvement in a project takes place and the objective of the project, as well as the qualities of the individuals involved. Moreover, while their presence in the creative territory may last variable lengths of time, they may consider this as a strength, because it enables them to continually restrict their openness to others; they thus preserve some of the employees and protect their competitive advantage.

To conclude, this research merits being followed up, not least through a quantitative study to validate the meaning of the connections of influence put forward by the case study. To limit the bias of the observation of SMEs alone it would, moreover, be relevant to explore cases representing major companies; this would potentially complete the properties and dimensions highlighted in this paper. Moreover, it would be wise to study a mechanism other than that of competitions, such as a classic call to tender, in order to enrich the initial results of this exploratory qualitative work. That said, the work, which has been carried out, shows the importance of integrating the creative territory (Joo et al., 2013) into models of organisational creativity. This supports trends relating to the development of open innovation, which are considered as a key factor of success (Jullien & Pénin, 2014). In the case of organisational creativity, opening up to the creative territory as a source of ideas remains, nonetheless, at organisations'

discretion, enabling them to retain control of their competitive advantage in the market.

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**APPENDIX A. PRESENTATION OF THE FOUR PROJECTS STUDIED****Table A1.** Presentation of the four projects studied

	Project A Luminous fabric	Project B RFID patch	Project C Play area	Project D Evolving house
Number and nature of the economic entities concerned	Five entitles i.e. Two SMIs, two design agencies, one cluster	Five entitles i.e. One SMI, three design agencies, one cluster	Six entitles i.e. Three SMIs, two design agencies, one cluster	Six entitles i.e. One SMI, four design agencies, one cluster
Number of interviews	6	6	6	6
Associated cluster	Pôle optique Rhône-Alpes	Numélink	MécaLoire	ERF
Key project idea	A luminous fabric which can be used as a signalling element	A multi-service digital card which is not in the form of a standard card.	An inter-generational play area.	An evolving habitat to enable people to stay at home despite illness or old age
Prize-winner (yes/no)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

**Table B2.** Presentation of the 18 SMEs studied (2007-2010)

	Project A - Luminous fabric				Project B - RFID patch			
	SME1	SME2	SME3	SME4	SME5	SME6	SME7	SME8
Date of creation	2003	1988	2004	1980	1992	2000	2007	2004
Context of the creation	Creation	Company takeover	Creation	Creation	Company takeover	Creation	Creation	Creation
Activities	Engineering activity, technical studies.	Creation of electrical lighting equipment.	Art-based artistic creation.	Creative, artistic and performance activities	IT programming (software and websites)	Specialist design activities	Graphic design, multimedia design	Visual communication, graphic design and web design
Employees during the project	7	28-30	1	1	10	1	1	1
Headquarters	St Chamond and Paris	St Genest Lerpt	Saint Étienne	Lyon	Saint Étienne	Saint Étienne	Saint Étienne	Saint Étienne
Geographic scope of the activity	Regional, national	Regional, national and a little international	Regional	Regional, national	Regional	Regional, national	Regional, national and European	Regional, national
Experience in design	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Types of clients	B2B, large companies	Institutions (school, cluster), shops (franchise)	Institutions (cluster), SME	Institution exhibitions, individuals	B2B, large and small companies	B2B, large and small companies	Institutions, SMEs and subsidiaries of major companies	Institutions, SMEs and SMI

**Table A2 (continued).** Presentation of the 18 SMEs studied (2007-2010)

	Project C. Play area						Project D. Evolving house			
	SME9	SME10	SME11	SME12	SME13	SME14	SME15	SME16	SME17	SME18
Date of creation	1991	2001	1999	1991	1993	1989	1984	2005	1997	1926
Context of the creation	Creation	Creation	Merger-acquisition	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Take-over
Activities	Overall conception and assembly of control equipment for industrial processes on an industrial site	Live performance arts Scenography Product design	Cutting and embossing	Specialist design activities	Wood impregnation	Other activities to support companies	Specialist design activities	Interior designer: interior decoration and design of houses	Specialist design activities Creator	Woodwork
Employees during the project	4	3	32	1 (+ partner network)	20	2-3	1-2	1	1 + partners in the network	11
Headquarters	St Cyprien	Saint Étienne	Saint Étienne	Tartaras	Savigneux	Saint Étienne	Saint Étienne	Firminy	St Galmier	Roanne
Geographic scope of the activity	Regional, national and Europe	Regional	Regional, national and global	Regional	Regional	Regional, national	Regional, national	Regional	Regional, national	Regional
Experience in design	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Types of clients	Research laboratories, institutions, SMEs and major companies	Institutions, product publishers	Hospitals, schools, distributors, major companies	SMEs/SMIs		Creators, traders	Institutions, SMEs, major companies (GSA), distributors	Individuals	B2B (Seb, Thomson, Thales, Aquilus) SME	Individuals, institutional building renovation

## APPENDIX B. Detailed presentation of projects<sup>6</sup>

**Project 1 - Luminous fabric.** The 'Pôle Optique Rhône Alpes' (or ORA) brings together companies in the optical sector; it has supported a project whose idea was to create new products using a luminous fabric, such as luxury hotel doors or cruise ship cabins. The cluster (in agreement with the Collectif designers+) took a more managerial role in the composition of the project than in later projects.

The two design agencies in the Collectif initially drew upon knowledge within the cluster to better understand the technology of luminous fabric. Thus, these actors identified their level of technical incompetence and worked to bridge these gaps. The result was thoroughly beneficial to these actors, who now continue to use their creative skills to continue this project. In this sense, organisational creativity has been improved for company managers - although they have sometimes struggled to accept the role of design agencies in the collective; organisational renewal has been implemented and it has even been voted on for the future.

Faced with lack of understanding during the project, the cluster leader played the role of negotiator. The cluster leader convinced SMEs by explaining to them the background of the entrepreneurs and the strong foundations of their partnership with these creative actors. This manoeuvre succeeded because of the frequency of relations between all the project actors: this enabled tensions to be rapidly dispelled, to create a common language within the three groups present. Getting to know one another but also meeting regularly with actors in the creative territory appears to be crucial for the success of the partnership and the transfer of knowledge.

**Project B - RFID patch.** 'Loire Numérique' (which has since become 'Numélink') is a cluster bringing together companies specialising in digital, software and hardware. The project is basically centred on one company, SME5, which develops interactive Internet databases, two product design agencies and a graphic design agency. The project consists of creating a loyalty card which is shared between local services and shops. The designers propose transforming the physical card into a patch, which can be stuck to and removed from objects in daily life (mobile phone, wallet, bag, diary, etc.).

The project has been a success. SME 5 was very involved in the project and was able to draw upon the creativity of the designers in the territory. It considers that the design adds significant value to their competitive advantage. This has also strengthened the renewal which began a few years earlier following submission of a company report, which was finally taken over by the director involved here: the SME undertook this change in line with actions undertaken by actors in the upperground of the creative territory.

For the Collectif Designers+ (middleground), this project enabled the creation of 'special relationships' between creative actors (members of the collective in particular) and companies in the territory. This point of view is also expressed by the organisers, who consider the competition mechanism in this project as a success. It has enabled an enrichment of the designers in their professional practice with companies who have seized the opportunity of the creative territory, which has become visible thanks to the joint action of territorial actors from the upperground and the middleground.

**Project C - Play area.** This project is led by the 'MécaLoire' cluster which brings together companies and institutions specialising in mechanics and related technological innovation. SME9 is a major actor in this project. Three other SMEs, design agencies from the Collectif Designers+ joined the project. The objective was to design an open air play area where all generations could relax or play. Parallel bars, benches, signposts, etc. were key elements of the whole; the particularity was in the use of a shared structural form enabling, like a game of

6. The statements in this section refer to the SMEs presented in Annex 1 and to the cluster leaders.

Lego©, all the elements of the whole to be created, developing a unique identity for the play area. This project is considered to have been a failure. The lack of connection between the mechanical companies, the MécaLoire cluster and the Collectif Designers+ appears to partially explain the final situation. The agencies failed to coordinate the creative dimension, despite the proposed framework. The mechanical companies considered, among other things, that they were 'creative actors' and took up a competitive stance in relation to the designers rather than a partnership approach. As such, they found it difficult to recognise the legitimacy of the Collectif Designers+, despite the clear signals from the Conseil Général (budget allocated to agencies, official recognition of the Collectif, etc.). One of the keys to understanding the situation resides in the differences in appreciation: the cluster did not appear to be fully convinced of what the agencies bring, which was reinforced by the lack of coordination between the three agencies.

Another explanation is the lack of clarity in the roles of each of the participants, particularly in terms of the intellectual property of the creative results.

This difficulty was a barrier to the full fruition of the original ideal at the start of the project. This case highlights the fact that, even when all actors are aware of the others, the concrete formalities of the partnership need to be defined without ambiguity. The middleground plays an important role in facilitating mutual understanding of the objectives and must bring actors together, which the leader of the cluster in this project failed to do. Without this, the actors cannot engage in the creative process; the organisational renewal of the SME even appeared to be set back, due to the institutional and industrial proximity which had been weakened.

**Project D - Evolving house.** This fourth initiative is based on the ERF (Entreprendre Roanne Forez) cluster, which brings together craft-related structures to share their ideas and experiences to develop their activity in the Roannais Forez area. This project aimed to create the 'house of the future', a house which could be adapted to the needs of the inhabitants (handicap, illness, young children, elderly people). SME18 and four design SMEs worked together on this creative project. This project was considered to be a success although the objective was not fully achieved, which was understandable, given its scale.

In addition, this SME was familiar with the Collectif, and rapidly understood the positive impacts which the creative territory could have upon its organisational creativity; and the agencies had the confidence to share their creative expertise. Two elements can explain the success of this case: the strong involvement of the middleground, personified through the active participation of the president of the Collectif in the project, and the strong involvement of the various actors: the SME and the design agencies worked together to jointly construct the problem and the solution. This put them at ease and thus supported their involvement in the creative process.

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