



#creativeworkplace. A Virtual Ethnographic Case Study of Creative Climates in an Innovative London Design Agency

Melanie Smith

Volume 11, Number 1-2, 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1115423ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1115423ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

International Centre for Innovation in Education/Lost Prizes International

ISSN

2291-7179 (print)

2563-6871 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Smith, M. (2023). #creativeworkplace. A Virtual Ethnographic Case Study of Creative Climates in an Innovative London Design Agency. *International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity*, 11(1-2), 137–148.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1115423ar>

© Melanie Smith, 2024



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

#creativeworkplace. A Virtual Ethnographic Case Study of Creative Climates in an Innovative London Design Agency

Melanie Smith

Royal College of Art, London, England

I would often lay on the grass as a child pondering the clouds. Was that a frog floating by, or perhaps a teddy bear slowly losing a leg and an ear, dissipating as some aviation shadow flew through it, leaving a trail that became a sharp slice in the sky like a Lucio Fontana painting.

I spent much of my childhood dreaming, exploring and playing: ensuring Barbie made full use of all her outfits in her compactible closet because she was going to disrupt the patriarchy without Ken; that my British *Fuzzy Felts* created strange whimsical realities no one would ever go to; and drawing on the windows of the car with my sticky jam sandwich finger before my dad laughed then swiftly said “Oi!” at the thought of the exquisitely clean car. Before I knew it I was also wearing my finest denim dungarees and delicately holding the biggest of household paint brushes, helping my parents ‘paint’ the skirting boards of the newly renovated extension. Little did I know my artful, excitable brain would soon be validated with terms like ‘metaphorical thinking’, ‘analogous ways’ and ‘cognitive tools’ (Egan, 2012).

I naturally followed my inclinations and instinctual expression to study Fine Art, creating giant conceptual realist paintings and leaving people questioning ‘*is that a fridge door or a painting?*’ Showing a clear delineation between conceptual thought and reality has never really been my forte. I would rather cross-contaminate, create new dimensions that provoke, question, problem solve and stimulate thought to see there are other ways to being alive than perhaps those that one has been conditioned to.

At the start of my career I quickly found myself painting commissions in my parent’s garage; working in Interior Design and commissioning graffiti artists to decorate all walls, ceilings and floors in their entirety; myself painting murals on relative’s bedroom walls before progressing into education and setting students’ ‘authentic design challenges’ to tackle real world problems like treating infant asthma and teaching students to code using physical card-based approaches.

What did all these experiences have in common? The climate I found myself in always felt conducive to my creativity and enabled my mind to wander freely enough beyond the conditioned self. The climate I witnessed surrounding others, however, often hindered their experiences - especially in the classroom contexts where students were being tasked with being creative.

“Like love or happiness, creativity is anywhere and nowhere”

(Kaufman & Glăveanu, 1999, p.27)

In 2020, I undertook a virtual ethnographic case study to understand how creative professionals respond to their physical work spaces as a central phenomenon to the creative climate being studied. Working directly in context with four participants who hold roles as creative professionals within an innovative London design agency provided me with substantive insights into how their physical workplace settings as research sites may help to induce or hinder the creative

process. The organisation workplace setting was studied retrospectively and the Designer's remote working locations were studied live and pragmatically due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The creative climate, as the central phenomenon being studied is generally defined as “an attribute of the organisation, composed of behaviours, attitudes and feelings, which are characteristic of life in the organisation” (Ekvall, 1996, p.122). It is important to differentiate between climate and environment and the attributes that exist within these systems, notably social, emotional and physical.

The subjective realities housed within the organisation I researched can be influenced by the physical space as the ‘object’ in question (E. Wilson, 2013). I drew upon my subjectivities as both an experienced artist, designer and educator, falling into a collective of creative persons sharing a commonly understood language (Taber, 2013, p. 43) or shared paradigm (Kuhn, 1997 as cited in Taber, 2013, p. 42). Using these lenses to leverage my “subjective humanness” (Counsell, 2009, p.257) was key as this is the “very thing that allows you to reach across the distance and make meaning out of your object” (p. 257).

Architectural and interior spaces are typically designed with a purpose in mind. What is interesting to me to consider, is who we become when we enter and spend time in a space and how the ‘climate’ within, can add to or detract from our creativity (and productivity). This climate of course can originate from both the physical building itself and the more embryonic, abstract internal social and emotional elements that also contribute to a climate.

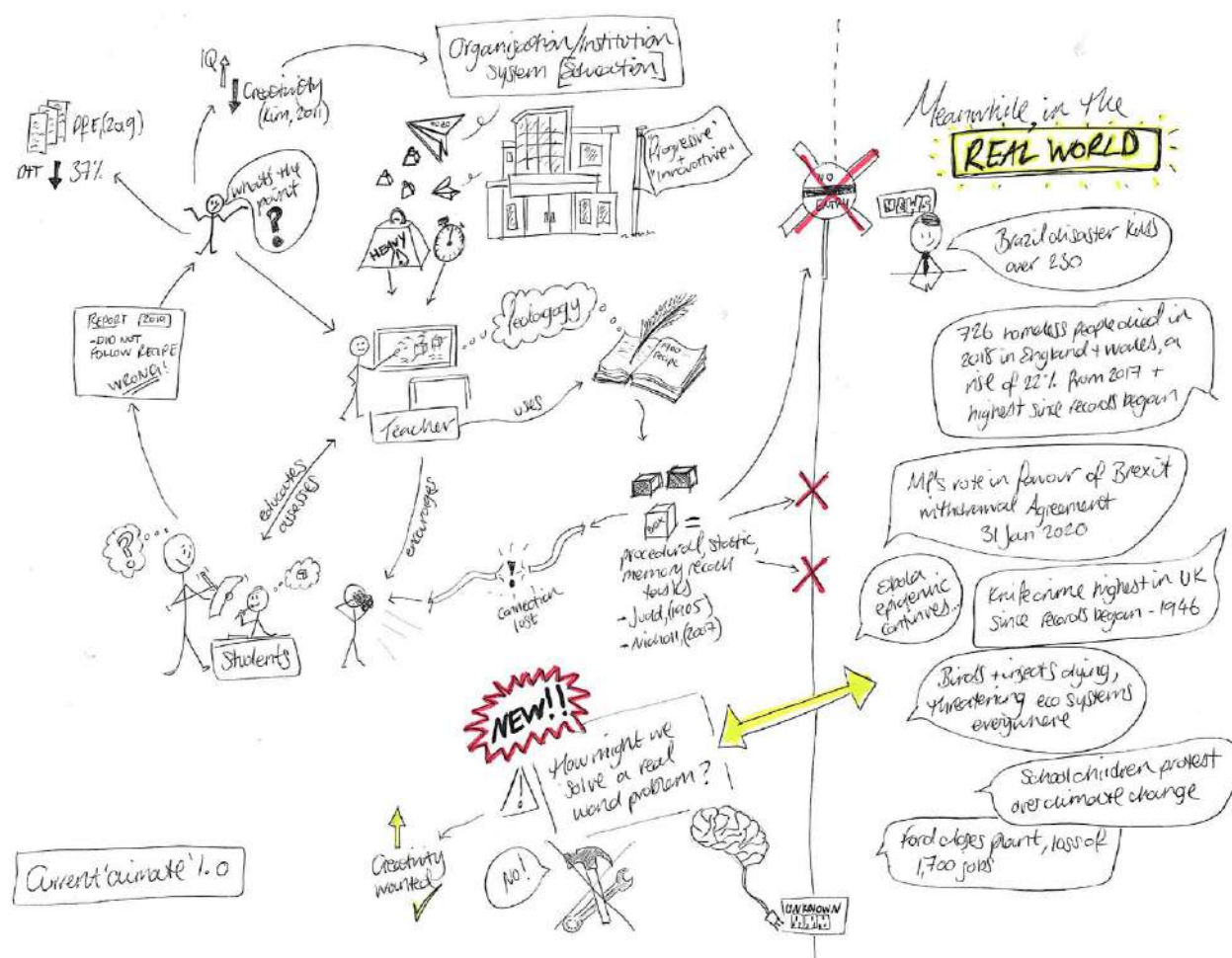


Figure 1: My ‘Rich Picture 1.0’ based on my current perceptions of a typical creative climate in an educational setting, in relation to the wider world (Monk & Howard, 1998, p. 22)

Research questions

The following sections explain the preliminary investigations I undertook that led me to propose these research questions. Note, a London Design Agency in this instance is a creative organisation that provides retail design and physical architectural experiences for brands to inspire human connection and entice customers. This is done through focusing on the visual branding of the client as well as the physical and sensory experience the consumer receives within the retail space.

- (1) What does a 'creative climate' look like and work like in an innovative London design agency?
- (2) What does a 'creative climate' look like and work like in respective designers' remote working spaces during a pandemic?
- (3) Do these physical spaces provide a climate for creativity to take place?
- (4) How do these findings inform how a creative climate can be created in an educational setting?

Key themes: Literature

Creative Climate:

“an attribute of the organization, a conglomerate of attitudes, feelings, and behaviours which characterize the organizational life” (Ekvall, 1996, p.105).

It was important to review a range of literature given the contemporary workspaces in question and industry contexts portraying the stereotypical “creative workplace”. From reviewing the literature, the most pertinent take away showed that there was, and remains, a fundamental misunderstanding of the creative climate, derived from an aesthetically pleasing stance that is further promoted by such ubiquitous image sharing platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, Houzz and Unsplash, to name a few. This visual representation keeps us locked in popular culture (Cropley, 1995), as opposed to allowing creative spaces to be embryonic and saturated in authenticity. As French philosopher Camus (2018) states: “bourgeois society talks about freedom without practicing it” (p.45).

Furthermore, this may also begin to support the growing literature on design fixation. Not the focus for this research but it is useful to factor in more broadly given the fundamental misunderstandings of creativity, the creative climates and environments where this thrives and therefore our perceptions as a society on the creatively made world.

When I started this research, I tried to remain objective; from my own experience and the hunches I had about these glorified creative spaces. I was curious enough but naturally had some assumptions based on what I kept seeing time and time again on the image sharing platforms mentioned above, and what De Paoli & Ropo (2017) discuss in their paper *Creative Workspaces – a fad or making real impact?* “The aesthetic appearance of the spaces seems to follow a rather standardized and deterministic understanding of creativity stimulation” (p.2); meaning in order for a space to be deemed creative, it was often embellished with novelty items, subsequently creating a stereotype. The notable slides across various Google office sites (Lynley, 2012) and the beanbags and alien-like phone booth pods that began appearing in the early 2010s. These stereotypical features of the physical workplace setting quickly dominated on a surface level, but it was unclear to me the credible benefits these items had on an individual's creativity levels.

Historically, we may think of such creative workspaces like the ‘atelier’ or Artist's studio, oozing artistic milieu and creativity. Today we need not look far to see the endless trends of co-working spaces, evergreen plants and longer menus of coffee combinations paired with the appropriate topping of dairy free milk. But how can we make it un-cliché and rigorous enough to be taken seriously to empower people to make the most of their creative potential in such settings or indeed propose a way to a new creative ecosystem that can be applied both in educational and industrial settings?

Cropley and Cropley (2019) argue the benevolence bias, suggesting that a lay person's perspective on creativity or professional not as a research practitioner, may derive from popular culture. Thoring (2019) insinuates such visual representations “merely present a collection of

photographic case examples of peculiar creative spaces” (p. 301) without indications of the effects of such on a creative process they seem to glorify. I argue it is paramount for the practitioner as researcher approach in parallel to research conducted by academics simply with an interest in creativity.

Table 1 below outlines key themes deduced from the literature with a summary definition for each. Some notable observations I took were: IQ is going up, Creativity is going down (Kim, 2011); the creative workspace can induce or hinder creativity (Beghetto & Kauffman, 2014); much of current research is grounded in visual stereotypes without experience or research conducted in context (as seen with De Paoli & Ropo, 2017). I would supplement these observations with my own experiences, in as much as educational practice is grounded in out-of-date content and pedagogy (Nicholl, 2007); creativity is conceptualised in many different ways (Kauffman & Beghetto, 2009); and a student’s experience of creativity in school (in particular UK Secondary school) is not preparing students for the fast paced, unknown world of work, especially when creativity is in demand and there is a perceived creativity crisis (Kim, 2011).

Table 1: Key themes deduced from the literature.

Key Theme	Summary
<i>Creativity: theory, society & crisis</i>	Definitions, uses, societal positioning and a proposed creativity crisis
<i>Existing models of the ‘Creative Climate’</i>	Typically comprising of a multi-dimensional model with set criteria that are used as measures to gauge creativity within an environment
<i>Creative learning environment</i>	Educational setting, typically classroom or studio based (Secondary & HE), sociological theory
<i>Creativity in organisational contexts</i>	Innovative companies with a creative output, e.g., a product or service
<i>Assumptions of a creative climate</i>	Visual stereotypes & representations, creativity as an undefined notion or concept, loosely used and applied

In sum, much of the literature I have drawn upon is either: 1) research that has not been undertaken in context; 2) methodologies and research designs evolved from a positivist standpoint, selecting the participants (who tend to self-identify as creative) and seek to prove a hypothesis; or 3) researchers that have focussed on systematic reviews of literature that cover ‘creative climates’ as a notion to be considered in a more abstract way, and without fully understanding the physical space and how this may contribute to a creative climate in practice.

I believe this is too broad an area to not approach with an interpretivist, relativist ontology, appreciating multiple realities that can be shaped by context (James, 2015). Whilst I have prior experience of creative climates in various guises and consequently the effects of such, epistemologically I did not seek to influence any data that was collected, but merely conduct research with an awareness and desire to ethically explore the questions that have evolved from a systematic review of the literature. Consequently, I can then offer tentative suggestions for impact and advancements going forward for both educational settings and further creative organisations.

Existing models of creativity

In order to consider a physical workplace setting to see if it can influence one’s creativity, I reviewed existing models of creativity to help structure my investigation in a more systematic way. Note the ‘Rich Picture’ in Fig 1. which derives from the Soft Systems Methodology.

Soft systems methodology (SSM) is an approach for tackling problematical, messy situations of all kinds. It is an action-oriented process of inquiry into problematic situations in which

users learn their way from finding out about the situation, to taking action to improve it. (Checkland and Scholes, 1990, p. 191)

Whilst cognitively I can think in the abstract realm, systems thinking methodologies are also familiar to me. This systematic approach to creativity allowed me to collate concepts in a more structured manner to assist when it came to measuring how creative a physical workplace setting could be and, of course, as a more robust and credible approach.

Existing models that have been reviewed below haven't been used directly but do help to explain how we might be able to use models and frameworks to assess when, how, where or indeed the level of creativity that has occurred at a given point in time. The 4C Model of Creativity by Kaufman & Beghetto (2009); which, as one example, is useful to help us consider personal levels of creativity and therefore how we might nurture and enhance these when considering positive aspects of creative workplace contexts. The four types of creativity in this framework are: '**mini-c**', a novel and personally meaningful pursuit; '**little-c**', the production of something novel and useful; '**Pro-c**' a remarkable creative accomplishment; and '**Big-C**', a clear cut, imminent creative contribution in the field. Most students would produce *mini-c* or *little-c* outputs, with leaders in creative domains such as Jonny Ive, Walt Disney, Vivienne Westwood and the like producing the latter *Pro-c* and *Big-C* levels of creativity.

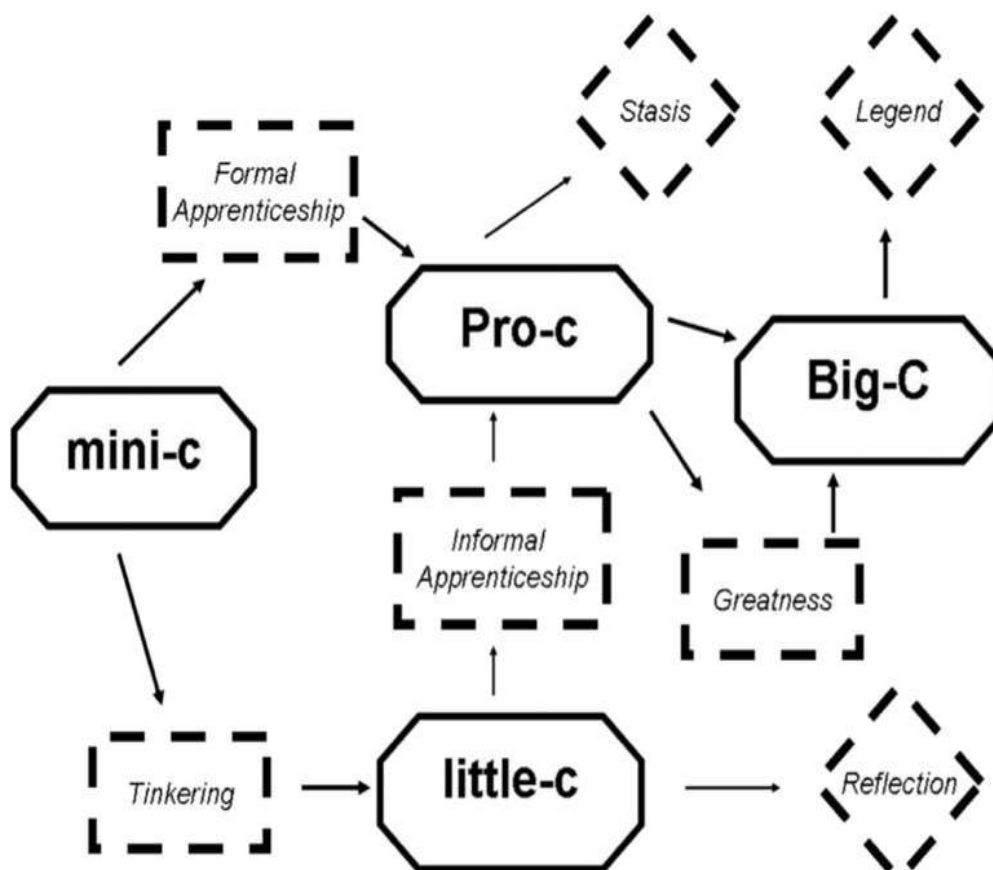


Figure 2: The 4C model of Creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009)

From my overall perusal of other existing models, they tended to focus on the social constructivist & psychological approaches to conceptualising creativity. In other words, what a 'creative climate' might be and how this can be measured. What I also discovered was that typically the climate will be one of many dimensions measured as part of a larger creativity framework and therefore not addressed specifically in isolation - making the 'climate' slightly more challenging to define.

Table 2 collates taxonomies from existing creativity climate models to consider when thinking about the physical workspaces. I.e. are these present, to what extent and what effect are they having on employees?

Table 2: Taxonomies of existing climate Models collated from the literature

Author, Date	Model	Attributes/Dimensions/Taxonomy
Amabile, et al. (1996)	8-dimensional model	(1) work group support, (2) challenging work, (3) organisational encouragement; (4) supervisory encouragement, (5) organisational impediments, (6) freedom, (7) workload pressure, and (8) sufficient resources.
Burningham & West, (1995)	4-dimensional model	(1) participative safety, (2) support for innovation, (3) challenging objectives, (4) task orientation.
Ekvall, G. (1990) & later, Isaksen & Ekvall (2007):	9 & 10-dimensional models – Creative Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) & Situational Outlook Questionnaire (SOQ)	(1) challenge, (2) freedom, (3) idea support, (4) trust/openness, (5) Dynamism/liveliness, (6) playfulness/humour, (7) Debates, (8) Conflicts, (9) Risk taking, and (10) Idea time.
Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, (2005)	14-dimensional model	(1) positive peer group, (2) positive supervisory relationships, (3) resources, (4) challenge, (5) mission clarity, (6) autonomy, (7) positive interpretation, (8) intellectual stimulation, (9) top management support, (10) reward orientation, (11) flexibility and risk taking, (12) product emphasis, (13) participation, and (14) organisational integration.

Research design

Informed by the literature, existing models of creativity and the subjective nature of a *creative climate*, I custom built the research design using a subjectivist and interpretivist ontological and epistemological stance using qualitative, ethnographic, grounded, case study and soft systems methodologies. The methods I applied were qualitative observation, semi-structured interviews using visual-ethno methods (photo elicitation and floor plans) and assigning one participant to be the key informant to test the research design and to assist in validating the findings when the study's findings were analysed and proposed.

The study was piloted for 2 weeks. Week 1 was a retrospective studio study - participants marking up floor plans and conducting an interview offering insights of the physical studio setting (looks like/works like). Week 2 was a live remote workplace study - participants annotating a floor plan, interval-based sampling diary entries, providing photographs and participating in an interview, again to offer insights of the physical remote workplace setting.

To ease the process, I decided to provide task sheets with guidance and some initial questions for consideration whilst recording the interval-based sampling of diary entries and annotated floor plans/photographing the sites in question. Once agreed with the key informant, the study went ahead with the four participants over the course of the month.

Findings and discussion

The interview transcripts were analysed along with the annotated floor plans and photographs using codes & subcodes I generated for what the physical space looks like, works like and if it allowed a creative process to take place/what might factor into a creative process for this participant. I then noted anything in addition that felt useful to highlight. This led to the culmination of themes and sub-themes that I collated in the below diagram for visual representation for the reader.

The findings in this section are a conceptualisation and not a prescribed set of recommendations.

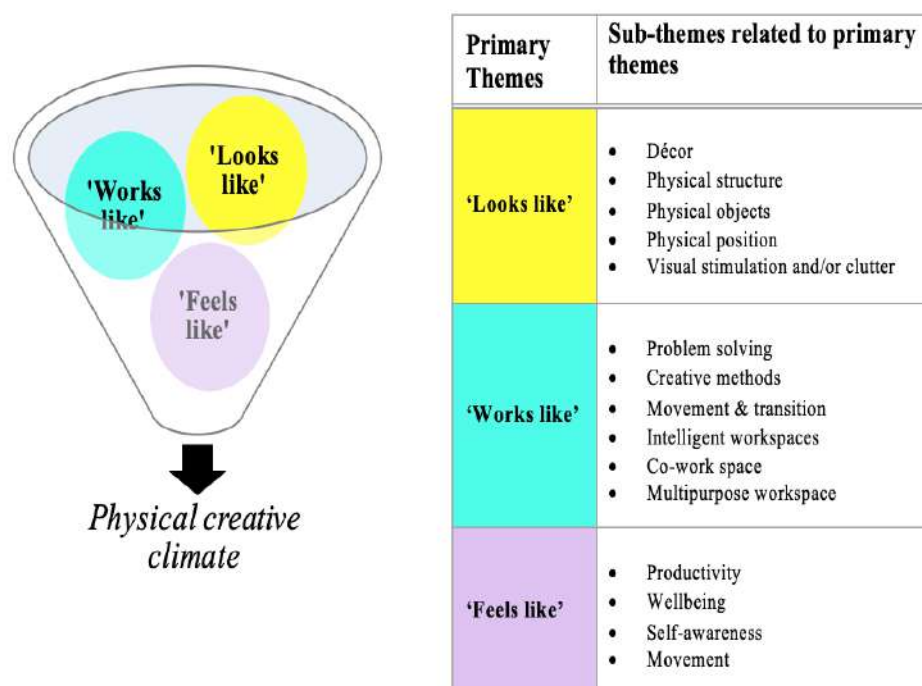


Figure 3: My data analysis level III, showing overarching themes of participant data

As expected, the data was rich in insight but also vast and suitably subjective and, at times, abstract. The methodological approach that was 'custom-built' (Miles et al., 2014) enabled a grounded stance to see what would naturally surface from the research rather than attaching any preconceived notions (especially from my own experiences as a creative). This approach offered a pragmatic and systematic analysis for painting a 'holistic cultural portrait' (Creswell & Poth, p.95). The study lends itself to further research and multiple avenues to consider the themes that have arisen in more detail.

Whilst the focus was on physical workplace settings, it was clear from the insights and working with 'humans as emotional beings', the physical setting findings are difficult to deduce in isolation without including psychological aspects - 'Feels like' was an overarching theme I added once the data had been collated, to encapsulate these insights.

The research questions shared at the beginning of this paper and the specific tasks that were undertaken by the participants to respond to these, are as follows:

Research question 1

What does a 'creative climate' look like and work like in an innovative London design agency?

Task 1 - Retrospective studio study

The first task was asking participants to retrospectively mark up a floor plan of the studio and provide a narrative for how they used the workspace, what types of activities did they undertake and any features of the workspace that they felt helped stimulate or induce their creativity. This was required due to the Covid-19 pandemic and entering lock-down just as the research was due to begin. Once completed and interviews with me undertaken, the findings were analysed producing key sub-themes that included: task dependent; personal working styles; physical size & layout; personalisation; hierarchy (staff); and light.

When asked what participants missed from the studio space considering it retrospectively: **four out of four** participants noted "**collaboration**" and being able to quickly discuss, sketch or

brainstorm together; **two out of four** participants noted “**light and interaction between spaces**” and the option of using different spaces for different tasks; and **one** participant missed the **material library** (physical resources including textiles, papers, floor samples etc), which would help to have at hand when working remotely. Interestingly at this point, not one participant mentioned the disco ball, drinks cabinet or any other ‘stereotypical’ object that I deem examples of representations of creative workspaces on visual platforms or ‘internet imagery’ reference from the literature (De Paoli & Ropo, 2017) and as commented in the literature discussed earlier.

Research question 2

What does a ‘creative climate’ look like and work like in respective designers’ remote working spaces during a pandemic?

Task 2 – Live remote workplace setting study

For the second task I asked participants to take photographs of their remote workplace settings and complete interval-based diary entries for how they were using their remote sites live, for two weeks. Interviews were then held following this with photo-elicitation to demonstrate their experience. Given the pandemic and personal circumstances, some participants ended up in multiple sites (London & Australia, London & Spain) meaning seven sites in total were studied across the four participants. They also were able to provide insights for internal and external areas, whereas the studio setting on the third floor didn’t allow external areas to be considered. All sites for Task 2 were shared with other people with only one participant as a sole occupant.

Key subthemes for this task showed themselves to be: movement & transition; visual stimulation and/or clutter; creative methods; creative collaboration; and physical position and productivity. These themes varied from Task 1, due to working in a pandemic and working within personal spaces where participants reside with spouses, friends, pets or in complete isolation. Another key difference was the use of outdoor space where the studio setting does not permit this. The transition to home working was clearly an effect on personal working styles and various attempts to find satisfactory set ups. Interestingly, most participants hacked/creatively redesigned their working spaces to enable them to adapt to creative working from home, which was often trial and error, fluctuating naturally over time depending on the task. An example of this was one participant turning their bookcase on its side, adding a makeshift worktop and using it as a desk/kitchen counter, which is discussed further below.

Headline findings

Research question 3

Do these physical spaces provide a climate for creativity to take place?

Self-Awareness and Well-Being

Once the tasks and interviews were complete and all data had been analysed, it was clear thematically which areas were proving pertinent for the stimulation of creativity for the participants as Designers. Four out of four participants demonstrated self-awareness & wellbeing were important for them, for example:

“Ideas seem to come also when I’m **transitioning between spaces** or just **after I’ve been exercising** and I’m not really thinking.” (Participant 1)

“...like dots start to connect and then you’ll be walking, going to walk the dog or something an it’s like ‘Ah! That’s it!’... I think the pressure of the situation I was under, I needed to get so many thoughts out because... I was caving in...” (Participant 1)

Across all participants was a strong emphasis on health & wellbeing in conjunction to physical position and productivity. Creative methods used were novel and distinctive for this creative individual. Notably the use of post-it notes, cardboard boxes when working outside in bright sunshine and how ideas tend to assimilate when they are transitioning from one space to another and not when working within a specific space, undertaking a specific task.

Physical location

Three out of four participant responses suggested the physical location was important to them. For example:

“If you can **hear bird sound** in the background and nice things and you're being delivered some not nice... uncomfortable news, I think it's gonna be nicer than just hearing an echo of someone's bedroom.” (Participant 2)

Strong patterns emerged with regards to where participants positioned themselves physically, for specific tasks. Preference for standing to work but moving around a lot more for some. One participant in particular presented themselves as sensitive and perceptive emotionally to their physical surroundings, acoustics are key and can dramatically affect approaches to tasks - they played a big role for this participant.

The physicality noted above was also in conjunction to the actual **physical position** of the participants, for two in particular, especially when mentioning the layout of the studio workplace setting.

“When I’m standing, I notice that I hit my deadlines, my internal deadline and do stuff in a lot more of an efficient way really” (Participant 3)

“I moved the room around as I found the desk too small to think because the wall was too close to my face!” (Participant 1)

Participants showed a clear focus on the benefits of a ‘curated and personalised’ home workspace but with no clear influence of the physical setting on their creativity or productivity. They insinuated a desire or personalisation within the studio setting but appreciate this may be difficult to implement in practice. They also frequently commented on the hierarchical structure of the organisation and assigned physical areas which at times felt constructive and other times oppressive to their creativity.

Physical objects

The clear desire for personalisation of a workspace, from all participants led to a headline finding of physical objects emphasised on more than one occasion.

“It's almost like I need my workspace to be more vibrant and more stimulating, you know, even if it's messy.” (Participant 3)

“Really nice white light... so the facade that is at the bottom of this drawing it faces North so really nice white light during the morning” (Participant 4)

Participants spoke fluidly of the effects of a physically bright and light space for an energising and vibrant atmosphere. They also indicated they enjoy workspaces with dynamic environments and cultures, which can be attributed to social or cultural connections or through their own ‘mess’ caused by their personal working style. One participant referenced coffee as a heavy influence for creative work as well as the specific use of colour, (white, blue, green and yellow) and they appear to be weather dependent and not task dependent with regards to the physical location within which they chose to work.

Creative collaboration and creative methods

Finally, and perhaps the most notable headline finding was creative collaboration and creative methods - hard to separate given the nature of the work being undertaken for the organisation as opposed to personal benefit. All participants suggested this was hugely impacted by the circumstantial aspects and even trying to pivot, be creative and approach collaboration and communication in other ways, had its limitations.

“...you're just so much more aware of the dynamic within a project, which obviously cannot be done on zoom or on anything” (Participant 2)

“...like an Ikea bookshelf on its side. It's 90 degrees... I put on its side and then I've added a work top and then I put the two together to make this quite long kitchen island for super cheap” (Participant 3)

All participants commented on working collaboratively and how that differs working away from the usual site or in isolation at home/separated from colleagues. It was fascinating to see how these creative people adapted to their (unknown at the time) temporary surroundings. Many participants ‘hacked’ their remote working locations to assist productivity and to ensure the creative process could still be accessed in all dimensions - thinking, feeling and physically through ‘making’ objects required for their endeavours.

So, do these physical spaces provide a climate for creativity to take place? Absolutely. The participant’s responses have made clear the individual is central to a space and cannot, as discussed by Geertz, be removed from the “webs of significance he himself has spun” (1973, p.5). Without such attributes, how can one decide if the physical workspace has impacted their creativity or indeed provided a positive climate for them to be creative. The physical workspace must match the personal requirements and creative tendencies of the individual. This would sympathise with the existing creative climate multi-dimensional models discussed in the literature (Table 1) and offers a reason as to why the physical creative climate has not been formulated as a climatic model independently, as far as time has permitted me to explore.

The creative classroom

“The most creative spaces are those that hurl us together.
It is the human friction that makes the sparks”
(Lehrer, 2012)

Having conducted such a creative research study (also pivoting due to the pandemic), I reached a point where I could offer a preliminary transferability method for an educational context.

My motives and ontological assumptions for this research were born from my own experience in both educational and creative industry professional roles where the hunch of how I have felt and continue to feel in physical spaces is only increasing as I progress through my career. Upon entering the creative classroom, this feeling became stronger still. In part, due to the number of students with so much potential individually, possibly being affected by the physical climates of their classrooms and hence my decision to seek to understand the “current state of the field” (Taber, 2013, p. 57) and pursue this line of enquiry from a contextual and relevant position.

In the larger field of research, I position myself at the crux directly between industry, architecture of creative spaces and educational theory which has allowed me to maintain a subjective etic stance as an outsider not residing within one of these specifically. I am considering how to implement and put forward the disposal of the findings for the contexts in question, to provide a more conducive climate for creativity that students and educational professionals alike can benefit from.

Research question 4

How do these findings inform how a creative climate can be creative in an educational setting?

Circling back to Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, 1990) including the ‘Rich Picture’ from Fig. 1, the revised rich picture below conceptualises my findings visually for ease of understanding for the reader. The main three themes you will see included, and in my view, are paramount for a thriving creative climate in an education setting:

- (1) **Looks like:** Industry
- (2) **Works like:** Intelligent workspace
- (3) **Feels like:** Fun & Purposeful

I’ve reflected long and hard on a clear takeaway message that echoes the ambitious body of work, of which I will say: whether its sticking post-it notes to windows; standing in front of a blank wall sitting on a shower room roof whilst having a difficult conversation; setting your bedroom up like a zoom booth; or having your light bulb moment whilst walking the dog; creativity, much “like love or happiness... is anywhere and nowhere” (Kaufman & Glăveanu, 1999, p. 27). We are facing some big,

-
- Ekvall, G. (1996). Organizational climate for creativity and innovation. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(1), 105-123.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- Kaufman, J., & Beghetto, R. (2009). Beyond Big and Little: The Four C Model of Creativity. Review of General Psychology - REV GEN PSYCHOL, 13. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0013688>
- Kim, K. H. (2011). The Creativity Crisis: The Decrease in the Creativity Thinking Scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. *Creativity Research Journal*, 23(4), 285-295. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2011.627805>
- Lehrer, J. (2012, January 2023). Groupthink. The New Yorker. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/30/groupthink>
- Lynley, M., (2012, May 14). "RANKED: The Best Slides and Worst Slides in Google's Offices". Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/googles-office-slides-2012-5?r=US&IR=T>
- McLellan, R., & Nicholl, B. (2013). Creativity in Crisis in Design & Technology: Are classroom climates conducive to creativity in English secondary schools? *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 9, 165-185. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2012.11.004>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Third edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Monk, A., & Howards, S. (1998). Methods & tools: The rich picture: a tool for reasoning about work context. *Interactions*, 5(2), 21-30. <http://doi.org/10.1145/274430.274434>
- Taber, K. (2013). *Classroom-based research and evidence-based practice: An introduction* (Second edition). SAGE.
- Wilson, E. (Ed.). (2013). *School-based research: A guide for education students* (2nd ed). SAGE.
-

About the Author

Melanie Smith (PGCE-MEd) is a creative leader, bleeding edge instigator & builder, and manages the inception and operationalisation of the Design Age Institute at the RCA. She joined the RCA from the Engineering Design Centre at the University of Cambridge and holds a BA (Hons) Fine Art from UCCA, PGCE Design & Technology and MEd Researching Practice, both from the University of Cambridge. She has also recently completed an MBA short course with London School of Economics & Political Science.

Melanie has worked as an Operations & Project Manager and Designer for private sector Interior Design and Architecture practices and as a conceptual artist upon graduating from art school in 2008. She has undertaken numerous commissions for high profile clients, with her predominant creative interest in inclusive design, gender stereotypes and creative rebellion.

e-Mail: melanie.smith@rca.ac.uk