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Chapter 2

Spaces of Creativity

*Claus Peder Pedersen, Siv Helene
Stangeland and Anna M. Holder*

2.1 Introduction

Claus Peder Pedersen

Leon van Schaik has examined spatial intelligence from an architectural perspective in *Spatial Intelligence. New Futures for Architecture*. Drawing on Howard Gardener's discovery of seven intelligences, van Schaik argues for the underexplored importance of spatial intelligence to architectural design. He examines how spatial intelligence works on the individual as well as communal levels and helps to form particular spatial and architectonic formations. Van Schaik focuses his research on the formation of spatial intelligence and how it determines architectural works. He touches briefly on the importance of workplaces as reflections of designers' mental spaces and thus as an expression of their spatial predispositions and interests.

For the Aarhus School of Architecture contribution to this book on creativity, we have decided to focus further on the role of the workplace. The inspiration for this is not only Leon van Schaik's book. It has been striking after attending several of the Practice Research Symposia organised by ADAPT-r how often creative practice researchers examine the spatial organisation of their offices or workshops to form a better understanding of their practice. This has led us to investigate and discuss how the spatial context of creative practices shapes – and is shaped by – design processes. We have asked ourselves about what role the broader spatial and cultural context play in the architectural design process? How spatial configurations can influence or challenge interactions between designers, collaborators, and clients? How can spaces structure, promote or even inhibit design processes by allowing for different interactions with drawings, models, and software?

The Aarhus contribution probes some of these questions from three different perspectives. Anna M. Holder offers a theoretical contribution to the discussion in *Places of Creative Practice Research*. This text proposes ways to think about the places in which creative practice and creative practice research are undertaken. It discusses how places might enable or affect possibilities for the creative activities and practices. The text brings together theories juxtaposing the role of the creative individual with creative agency engaging a wider network of interacting human and non-human entities. It ends with specific examples of research by ADAPT-r

Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2



Figure 2.3



fellows.

Spatial contexts and relational design processes explored by drawing by Siv Helene Stangeland are based on her creative practice research as an ADAPT-r Ph.D. fellow at the Aarhus School of Architecture. She researches the practice Helen and Hard that she leads with partner Reinhard Kropf. Her text examines the creative spaces of the practice. She maps the spatial layout of Helen and Hard during different periods of the office's 20-year history. The mapping describes the organisation of the workspace as the practice gradually grows, reorganises and relocates over time. Just as importantly, the mapping covers key projects, collaborations and intellectual influences to form a description of the workspace of Helen and Hard as a dynamic space of relations. The text also reflects on Siv's particular contribution to the relational dynamics of Helen and Hard through the investigation of personal drawings. Inspired by the dynamics of the Norwegian landscapes, they are used to discuss her contribution to the design thinking and ethos of Helen and Hard.

Workspace is a short photographic essay by Claus Peder Pedersen. It presents five workspaces of academic faculty members at the Aarhus School of Architecture. The faculty members are all engaged with creative development and artistic or practice-based research. Their spaces are shown in wide-angle photos centring on the predominant workplace. The faculty members are absent from the photos, and the reader is left with the visual and spatial traces of the activities and projects that have been carried out there.

Figure 2.4



Figure 2.5



2.2 Places of Creative Practice Research

Theoretical perspectives on the relational understanding of social action and the spaces that catalyse, support, and are shaped through creative practice

Anna Holder

Introduction

This chapter explores the spatial contexts of creative practice as active agents in processes of design, and, conjointly, how processes and practices of design impact upon their spatial setting. The context for this exploration is a wider reflection on the processes of creative practice as research under the auspices of the *Architecture, Design and Art Practice Training-research* (ADAPT-r) Marie Curie Initial Training Network. This network, and the programme of events undertaken over the years of its operation (2013–2016), not only provide a context through posing questions about how best to develop and support creative practice research. The other catalytic element of the programme toward creating new knowledge of creative practice is in the *bringing together* of a diverse array of international creative practitioners as an active network, and supporting them to open up access to one another's processes and understandings of creative endeavour.

The aim of this text is to contribute theoretical insights in terms of possible understandings of the relationship of creative activity and spatial context, and models of conceptualising creative practice in terms of social-material networks and activities. The purpose of this contribution is to provide a basis for an understanding of *how place and network matter* for the production of knowledge through design and other creative practice.

Creativity within a network

In the interests of providing a sure footing for the journey I wish to lead the reader on, I will begin with a very brief discussion of creativity and its role within the city and society, as I am interested in using and exploring the term from a critical and politically enmeshed perspective. As Edensor, Leslie, Millington, and Rantisi argue clearly in their discussion of the creative city and vernacular

creativity, there is an overwhelming tendency in both regeneration practice, urban policy and theories of the creative city to privilege certain actors, places and ideologies of creativity. Particularly, the individual creative genius is emphasised as foreshadower and maker of the new, and thus a route to new routes and opportunities for capital, and the cultural quarter or downtown area, as a crucible whereby clusters of such actors forge connections and innovations with a focus on economic potential for the city.⁸ In opposition to this model, the concept of vernacular creativity draws attention to creativity as a distributed capability (distributed across diverse spaces and contexts) instantiated in practices which are relational, between humans and the assemblages in which they act: spatial, material, purposeful and ethical as well as productive, and not necessarily productive in material or economic terms:

“creativity is social and sociable, culturally specific and communally produced, and is located in innumerable social contexts.”⁹

In beginning my discussion of the spatial aspects of creative practice research, as an area where highly creative practitioners undertake individual research through their practice, I am aware that an emphasis on the distributed and social aspects of creativity, and an undermining of the belief in the creative hero genius can be seen as a threshold of controversy. Indeed, it must be noted that this controversy between creativity as a capacity of exceptional people, a special capability and on the flipside the democratic urge to emphasise the creative capacity or all, an ordinary capability, is longstanding and well-documented, as Pope notes in his 2005 study 'Creativity: Theory, History and Practice':

“... extra/ordinary. This is the axis upon which many arguments about creativity rotate. Is creativity extraordinary: the prerogative of a few individuals who are in some respects exceptional, whether through innate 'genius' or by chance? Or is creativity ordinary: a commonly available, essentially routine capacity latent in everyone? The specialist literature on this question has been and continues to be divided [...] Earlier studies of 'genius' [...] tend to assert or assume the 'extraordinary' case [...] Thinkers from Rousseau onwards, however – including many of those involved in programmes

8 (Edensor et al. 2010)

9 (Edensor et al. 2010, 9)

of liberal or revolutionary educational development, from Rudolf Steiner to Paolo Freire – have tended to insist upon the ‘ordinary’ case.”¹⁰

Tracing a historical and geographical spread of accounts of creativity divided between these positions, Pope arrives at the current understanding from psychological and educational research, drawing on Michael Howe’s account of Genius, whereby, the mental processes of genius and ‘ordinary’ thinker are shown to be qualitatively alike.¹¹

My own approach to the study of creative practice, focussing on architecture, and following my experiences as a practitioner in architecture and landscape and urbanism practice, and my subsequent research into practice, follows an interest in creativity as emplaced and embodied activity that occurs within relational networks. Architecture is made in places, by complex assemblages of people, things, processes, technologies, materials. Till in his 2009 work ‘Architecture Depends’ calls for a recognition of the *contingency* of architecture, that many more things are connected to and influence architectural production than what goes on in the architects’ studio, than the weight of their hand on the pen (or stylus, or mouse).¹²

Paying attention to the means by which architecture is made, and to creativity within a set of material and social practices, necessarily acknowledges also a distributed creative production. Architecture is made: in local policy plans, in funding bid documents, in planners’ offices, in property boundary lines (going back centuries), in random conversations, in sustainability policy, in the shiny tower blocks of ‘big’ players, and the shiveringly-cold community halls of the public meeting. It is made in the words of the foreman who ‘translates’ the plan pinned on the wall to his group of carpenters. It is made in eighteen facade options churned out for an indecisive oligarch. It is made in an expensively rendered collage telling us what this bare patch of ground will look like next.

This is not to diminish or belittle the individual as creative actor: I wish to recognise the importance of the experienced creative practitioner, building a solid base for innovation and creativity through practice. However, I emphasise that the creative practitioner operates within and is responsive to a wider network.

¹⁰ Rob Pope, *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 53.

¹¹ (Pope 2005)

¹² (Till 2009)

In what follows I will focus firstly on building an understanding of the role of space and location in social action, drawing on both practice theory and architectural theory. Subsequently I will use this theoretical understanding of the role of space in social action to discuss instances of creative agency within creative practice research, with particular attention to the ways in which creative practitioners ‘read’, understand, use and change different spaces and territories within their work.

A focus on practices rather than individuals

Practice theory, as a model of understanding social action, focuses attention on social practices – routine behaviours which incorporate specific knowledge, knowhow, knowledge of values and motivations, together with bodily activity, and material resources (things and their uses).¹³ It offers an alternative to the understanding of human action as guided only by individual intention and private gain, or the contrasting understanding of action guided by collective consensus and social rules.

To describe one unified ‘practice theory’ is of course a simplification, drawing together understandings from social theorists Giddens and Bourdieu among other cultural theorists and philosophers, and the wider ‘practice turn’ in the humanities and social sciences.¹⁴ But I believe it is helpful, within this discussion of creative practice, to position practices as a unit of analysis, particularly within a model of creative practice research which relies on reflective practice and can become firmly entrenched in conceptions of individual agency. Taking Reckwitz’s definition of a practice, from an ideal type bringing together different approaches to practice theory, we can see how a practice brings together existing ways of knowing and acting, and understanding of why and how to act in certain ways:

A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself or of others, etc. – forms so to speak a ‘block’ whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements. Likewise, a practice represents a pattern which can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice

¹³ (Reckwitz 2002, 249)

¹⁴ (Giddens 1986; Bourdieu 2005; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and Savigny 2001)

[... It is] a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood.¹⁵

We might see our actions – in making, designing, fabricating, inhabiting, buying, re-using... – as unique instances. Yet, just as they are connected through our own repetitions, within and across different projects for example, these actions are also connected across time and space to other versions of this particular ‘block’. That is to say: wider projects of certain intentions, a body of know-how passed on through repetitions of the activity or through other means of representation (tacit or explicit knowledge).

As individuals we can ‘carry’ many different coordinated and unconnected practices, through learning and performing them. This is emphatically not to suggest that our activity is strictly pre-determined by a wider social order. As Shove, Pantzar and Watson show, practices are continually changing; dying out, or coming into being as a result of changing meanings and beliefs, and access to material and economic resources.¹⁶ Also, the activities and skills of individuals, as practitioners of a panoply of different practices, vary. The way we enact practices is shaped by our cultural background and tacit understandings of what is needed and accepted to act within certain fields. We may also develop unique capabilities of reading situations, applying bodily and mental knowhow, a “feel for the game” which distinguishes our practice.¹⁷

How creative practices take place

In considering how creative practices are performed in space, my interest was first triggered by witnessing the presentations of practitioner-researchers communicating, or exposing,¹⁸ their practice as research as part of the ADAPT-r network Practice Research Symposia, and at examinations leading to the award of RMIT PhD by Practice. One practitioner after another used an image of their studio, workspace or desk as a kind of symbol, to invoke a variety

of understandings of their creative practice.¹⁹ These included: the scale of the operations of their practice; the emphasis on creative activities of the studio, rather than the industrialised mode of the office; the method of dividing and managing activities within a creative workforce; the materials with which a practice was working; the shift towards working as a practitioner-researcher.

It could be argued that this reference to the places of creative production is simply a visual ‘shorthand’ to represent ways of working, and the recurrence of workplace images is something that practitioners learn from attending the presentations of one another, merely a ‘scene setting’ move. However, the challenge within creative practice research of explicating knowledge from practice, much of which is tacit, suggests that the places of creative practice production might indeed merit attention for the development of creative practice research.

Do space and place determine actions?

The question as to whether, or to what extent, spaces can determine action is of course a critical line of argument and positioning in architectural theory and practice. Attributing deterministic capabilities to the built environment was the basis for Modernist approaches to design and planning, what Heynen refers to as the understanding of ‘space of instrument’, the underlying belief by which new spatial forms are introduced to enact social projects.²⁰ However, this spatial determinism has been largely discredited by the failure of many of such projects to achieve their intended programs or effects. Outside of the design disciplines, spatial context has been conceptualized as having no decisive role in shaping these processes, though they may leave their mark upon space.²¹

Heynen proposes a third way, that of ‘space as stage’, as an integrative model for the previous seemingly diametrically opposed pair. The model of ‘space as stage’ brings together theoretical approaches which recognize both the shaping forces of the social

¹⁵ (Reckwitz 2002, 249–50)

¹⁶ (Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012)

¹⁷ Bourdieu, p.66.

¹⁸ (Schwab 2014) [The term exposition is described by Schwab as a means by which an artistic object’s identity in terms of knowledge is communicated or shown. Practice is exposed as research through this activity of exposition, which may take place in the act of publication in a journal, or presentation at a conference, or in other forms. The exposition of the artistic work need not resemble the work itself, as it can be a process of transformation, and supplementation which allows a different identity (of the practice) to emerge.]

¹⁹ Examples were noted while attending the presentations of Norwegian architect Siv Helene Stangeland, UK architects Deborah Saunt of DSDHA and Tom Holbrook of 5th Studio, Danish designer and academic Martin Tamke and Belgian architect and academic Jo Van Den Burghe at the Practice Research Symposia held at RMIT Europe, Barcelona on 28–30 November 2014, and PhD by Practice examination of James McAdam of London- and Moscow-based practice McAdam Architects, at ETSAB, Barcelona, 28 November 2014.

²⁰ Hilde Heynen, ‘Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage: Notes on the Interaction Between Spatial and Social Constellations’, *International Planning Studies*, 18 (2013), 342–57.

²¹ (Heynen 2013)

on the built environment, and the effects environment can have on influencing social phenomena:

“The difference with the first model — space as receptor — is that the agency of spatial parameters in producing and reproducing social reality is more fully recognized. The difference with the second model — space as instrument — is that the theatrical metaphor is far from deterministic, and that this thought model thus allows for a better understanding of the interplay between forces of domination and forces of resistance.”

This model, draws on the flat ontology of actor network theory, whereby non-human actants are understood to have agency, if not intentionality, and thus influence human action. Latour, a key theorist in the development of actor network theory, pays attention to place as an assemblage of material mediators and intermediaries within a local site. In Latour’s parlance, intermediaries transport “meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs” while mediators “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry.”²² In developing an understanding of the ways activities and practices maintain or disrupt social understandings, institutions and traditions, Latour brings into clear focus the role of all of the material elements of place in enabling or counteracting our intended actions. In particular he points to the asynchronous planning, making and using of spaces, furniture, materials assembled from other times and other places, as one way in which our expectations enable certain practices to continue.

Using the example of the lecture theatre, Latour highlights the expectations of the needs for acoustic separation, for a certain room layout, for materials which enable the intended use of that space to be performed time after time, and which have been thought out, prefigured and assembled by myriad workers whose agency is now carried by material and spatial elements:

“Fathom for one minute all that allows you to interact with your students without being interfered too much by the noise from the street or the crowds outside in the corridor waiting to be let in for another class. If you doubt the transporting power of all those humble mediators in making this a local place, open the doors and the windows and see if you can still teach anything. If you hesitate about this point, try to give

your lecture in the middle of some art show with screaming kids and loud speakers spewing out techno music. The result is inescapable: if you are not thoroughly ‘framed’ by other agencies brought silently on the scene, neither you nor your students can even concentrate for a minute on what is being ‘locally’ achieved. [...] Locals are localized. Places are placed. And to remain so, myriads of people, behind the doors, have to keep up the premises so that you can remain, you along with your students, safely ‘in it’.”²³

Latour emphasises here that there is not a *fixed set* of social ties, nor a structure or set of structures determining our actions within the material world. Also, that face-to-face human interactions, local, and ‘in the moment’ can not be seen to be purely self-determining, free from the influence of other actors, other times, or places. Rather, all interactions are heterogeneous, assembled through human and material agencies, through actions performed long ago, and those in the now, and with implications for those in the future. ‘Society’ is a fragile and complex series of interactions, it is constantly performed: “built, repaired, fixed and, above all, taken care of.”²⁴

Paying attention to places of creative practice

What are the implications for this understanding of place for creative practice? In the example of the lecture theatre, the material aspects of these spaces act as mediators, keeping out the noises of the wider world, directing students’ attention through the layout of the space. While the space and its components and furniture are not determining what can occur there, they are connecting the activities which take place to the intentions, work and care of those involved in designing, constructing, programming, keeping, cleaning etc. If we pay attention to the places of creative practice, we might discern the network of agencies enabling them, the array of moves supporting the establishment and continuity of activity, and the ways in which spaces, people and objects interact in the practices of creativity.

Yaneva’s ethnographic fieldwork in the office of Dutch architecture firm OMA in the 2000s gives insight into the different activities of design and their spatial patterns and movements within an architect’s office.²⁵ Viewed with the anthropologist’s gaze, design processes were revealed not as inspired acts of creative genius or

²² (Latour 2005, 39)

²³ (Latour 2005, 195–96)

²⁴ (Latour 2005, 204)

²⁵ (Yaneva 2009a; Yaneva 2009b)

mechanistic problem-solving, but rather a back-and-forth of trial and error, material and spatial manipulations of models from past projects repurposed to address the problems of new schemes, and the moving of representations, drawings and materials around the office between designers. Designs are seen to be produced through circulating flows of blue foam shapes, conveniently-placed cola bottles, and models migrating across projects in the hands of an architect passing between tables.²⁶

The way of working²⁷, the litter of disposable and transferable foam objects that ‘flow’ within the office is particular to: materials of model-making, which must be relatively cheap; the method of designing with volumes, which are thus more fast and simple to make than, say, detailed façade elements; the technology of the hot-wire foam cutter, which enables fast production and, needing little skill to operate, can be used by many designers rather than one skilled technician. It helps here to have a relatively large office, including lots of table-space on which these objects can sit around, be moved and re-used, rather than needing to be cleared away for other activities. So probably a location with cheap office space is necessary – thus the spatial configurations of creative practice in Rotterdam differ from, for example London.

We might also consider the scope of the practice’s work – this office, like many other large-scale practices, has a global spread of projects, which come and go quickly – early stage competitions, design schemes which are then put ‘on hold’ for months. In their method of working, where hordes of designers are shuttled from one project to another, often migrating across continents simply by walking across the office, the work can no longer be specific to the project’s site in real terms. Instead, as we might infer from this description, the office itself becomes a critical site and set of conditions.

The particularities I have listed above are also true for other production sites of architecture. A different set of conditions in each case, but often the assemblages will have similarities. Material practices and design approaches are passed between offices, schools of architecture, disciplines, through the movement of people, through new technologies, through changing values. In looking at places, we must be aware always to be starting ‘in the middle of

things’, a set of ever-expanding connections.²⁸

Beauregard, writing on the micro-politics of spatial or land-use planning as practice, draws attention to the array of places in which planning takes place in order to better understand whose voices are able to be heard within planning controversies and how planners can engage with diverse publics.²⁹ Paying attention to the activities and discourse enacted within a private planning company’s offices, the offices of city and county planning departments, the spaces used for meetings with lawyers, consultants, a public focus group and public meetings, Beauregard notes that places, as contexts for communication, structure the types of discussions and their subject matter.³⁰

In the following section I will pay attention to some of the array of places in which creative practice research is developed and exposed.

Places of creative practice research: workplaces, places of exposition and sites of intervention

Creative work places

The office or studio of the architect shapes creative processes firstly through the resources it affords. This can be in terms of the size and layout – the Euclidean spatial considerations – but also location and other actors who inhabit or have access to the space. Workplace selection is as much contingent as planned, as economic constraints and the types of suitable space available often meaning that creative workspaces are located in areas which have lower rent as they are undesirable for other businesses or housing. (However, the location of creative workers in these areas is recognised as an established step on the path of gentrification, as amenities and services move in to serve the needs of the creative workers and contribute to change of use and rent increases and rising property values).³¹

In focussing on activities as they *take place* in the places of creative practice, we can learn more about the particular practices and how these translate into creative practice research. Faulconbridge, in a study of architecture practices operating at the global scale, describes the architecture studio as a community of practice, and a

26 (Yaneva 2009a)

27 I draw here on Yaneva’s descriptions from her ethnographic study, also insights into OMA’s workings from the 2011-12 Rotor-curated exhibition ‘OMA/Progress’ at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, and my own experience working within another international, Rotterdam-based design office in the period 2003-4.

28 (Latour 2005, 196)

29 Robert Beauregard, ‘The Neglected Places of Practice’, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 14 (2013), 8–19.

30 (Beauregard 2013, 13)

31 David Ley, ‘Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification’, *Urban Studies*, 40 (2003), 2527–44.

structure for particular forms of social interaction that contribute to the design process. This includes reviews of one-another's work, but also chat and gossip about the activities within the office and those of rival firms. He notes that the collective enterprise or motivational knowledge of the activities taking place within the studio are defined in part through the common training that architects have experienced, as well as the guidance and values of those running the design office.³²

Sites of making public or bringing to light

An example of a social and material activity that circulates within the workspace - from education to practice to research - is the activity of 'pinning up' for project review. This activity is part of a wider practice of development of projects in the design stages. Drawings, work-in-progress, rough sketches and screen shots of 3D computer models etc. are collected together and exhibited within the office - either on a pinboard or assembled on a table top, for feedback or input from the project team or a more senior figure within the organisation. This *gathering together* and *making public* (within a controlled space and public) of one or more individuals' work, provides a clear visual overview of the state of progress. It brings matters to light, out of the *privacy* of the worker's computer screen, and allows connections to be made, both within the project and to other work within the office. Somewhere between the tutorial and the 'crit' of architectural education, the purpose is to improve the project, and is thus very different from a presentation to a project client, or a public exhibition of the architect's work. It necessarily happens here, in the office, as a controlled 'making public', so ideas in progress and potentially contentious design moves can be reviewed in a space which is safe from them becoming fully public and causing political controversies.

Practitioner-researchers from the ADAPT-r network report using this method of bringing to light and garnering feedback in the development of their research; pinning up work they are going to present for a PhD supervision for a preliminary discussion in the office.³³ A critical difference in the work of the PhD by Practice in comparison to the day-to-day project development is an emphasis on developing understandings across projects and time periods, looking at the work of the practice as an oeuvre and how this might

be better understood and explicated.

Sites of creative practice as repositories of knowledge

The process of 'bringing to light' within the development of practice as research is relevant to the role of the office or studio as a physical and living repository for past projects and works but also the knowledge of the office. Experienced practitioners design through recourse to a wealth of references, from others and from their own work, elements of which can be deployed, tested quickly as a design solution and used to filter, refine or change the approach to the problem in hand.³⁴ Within the design office, newer employees will be directed to look at images and drawings from older projects from the practice, to learn from and sometimes replicate construction details, material specifications, or methods of representation that have relevance for the project they are working on. The locating of these references and recognition of their relevance to the new projects is part of the role of the more experienced practitioner. They perform a living 'directory' of the past work to support and drive future work.

However, the experience of those supervising the PhD by Practice over successive cohorts at RMIT has drawn attention to the ways in which knowledge of certain useful or recognised past works can elide or hide understanding of the full oeuvre:

*"a very interesting Australian practice with three partners and one office on one side of the continent and one on the other. And I went to visit the two on the West coast, and they said, "Yes, we've got about a hundred projects that we've done. We've closed this alley and the office next to us closes at 4 o'clock and we'll put trestle tables out there, we'll bring out all the models and we can play 'Happy Families' ". (You know, see which models fit with which). And the models kept coming, and they kept coming, and eventually they did a count - they had 300 projects. They didn't even have a mental picture of the extent of what they'd done."*³⁵

The design office, then, in the process of creative practice research, can become a site of hidden work being revealed.

32 James R Faulconbridge, 'Global Architects: Learning and Innovation through Communities and Constellations of Practice', *Environment and Planning A*, 42 12 (2010), 2842-58.

33 Tom Holbrook, Presentation of PhD by Practice at ADAPT-r Day, University of Westminster, London. 20 January 2015; Deborah Saunt, Presentation of PhD by Practice, RMIT Europe, Barcelona. 27 November 2014.

34 (Lawson 2004)

35 Leon van Schaik. Interview with Leon van Schaik and Katharine Heron at University of Westminster, London 30.03.2015, undertaken by Anna Holder and Eli Hatleskog as part of activities of the ADAPT-r ITN.

A wider network of places

An observation of practitioner-researchers undertaking the PhD by Practice while running larger organisations, is their reference to their need for other places outside the design office to develop and explicate the research. Deborah Saunt, director of architecture office DSDHA talks of working on developing her PhD by Practice on the kitchen table and also on aeroplanes. Tania Kalinina and James McAdam, founding partners of McAdam Architects discuss working away on their research in “boring three star hotel rooms”, savouring the workspace and time away from the office, claiming: “To think and produce your best ideas you need to be in a place of no distraction or entertainment”.³⁶ Tom Holbrook, director of architecture, urban design, infrastructure and landscape practice 5th Studio, rented a separate workspace to hide away and write his PhD research catalogue. He recounts feeling guilty sitting writing in the studio, reflecting at a larger scale, looking back to past and forward to the future of the office, when his staff were clamouring for his attention on projects developing in the here and now.³⁷

Places of exposition

The establishment of creative practice research fellowships at institutes of higher education, such as those of the ADAPT-r ITN, provides an opportunity for creative practitioners to move between their places of work and opportunities for reflection, and translation and exposition of practice as research:

“Creative practice research is typically undertaken in a web of relations held between the studios of venturous practice and studios/laboratories of higher education institutions. There remains significant room in the Higher Education Sector for creating better research environments and relationships between the academy, the disciplines and venturous practice for creative practice research.”³⁸

In addition to providing workspace within institutions of higher education, places of creative practice research within the higher

education environment for the ADAPT-r network include the Practice Research Symposium, a biannual event for research presentation and development which has been well-documented in the evolution of the long-running RMIT PhD by Practice program.³⁹

Also documented in the development of the PhD by Practice through its adoption within Europe is the space of the viva or examination.⁴⁰ This has come to be used not only as a space of oral and visual presentation of the research, but has evolved into a spatial and material ‘setting out’ of the practice *as* research, a bringing forth of the materials of research from the workspace into a wider public realm.

We sit in rows, facing a long, raised, structure, a sort of stretched ‘work table’, on the surface of which an intricate geometric line drawing has been inscribed. At one end, the drawn surface rises up to form a perpendicular screen, and a video projection plays in a loop.

In front of me, four stools support the three examiners and one moderator. They are raised above the rest of us, sitting not quite ‘at the table’ but observing from front row seats.

We are occupying the mezzanine level in the headquarters of the COAC (Collegi d’Arquitectes de Catalunya) on the busy Plaça Nova in the historic centre of Barcelona. Around me, the lines of onlookers are hushed and expectant; they are here, as I am, for the examination of a PhD by Practice undertaken at RMIT Barcelona. From the downstairs space, the bookshop of the architecture institute, there is noise and bustle, which circulates up between the openings in the glazed balustrades of the mezzanine. It intrudes into the semi-privacy of this space, and distracts me momentarily. My gaze shifts: outside, in the city square and street beyond, people stop, talk, walk on. Focussing again, my eye moves back to the drawing and the performance in front of me.⁴¹

Riet Eeckhout’s doctoral research into ‘Process Drawing’ explores the performative nature of drawing, investigating the field of drawing as a bodily phenomenon, selectively traced and

36 Deborah Saunt, Presentation of PhD by Practice, RMIT Europe, Barcelona. 27 November 2014; PhD by Practice examination of James McAdam, at COAC, Barcelona, 28 November 2014.

37 Tom Holbrook, Presentation of PhD by Practice at ADAPT-r Day, University of Westminster, London. 20 January 2015.

38 ADAPT-r ITN, ‘The Research Environment’. Annex 1 - ‘Description of Work’, November 2012. (Amended 28 April 2014), p.14.

39 (Van Schaik and Johnson 2011; Van Schaik 2013; Rattenbury 2015)

40 (Verbeke 2013)

41 Description based on author’s experience, notes and sketches from the PhD by Practice examination of Riet Eeckhout, at COAC, Barcelona, 28 November 2014.

processed through the hand. For the examination of her PhD work, Eeckhout created a semi-public display of the intimate space of the drawing, focussing on the environment between the observer and the observed in the act of drawing – what she refers to as being “between me and what I’m looking at”. Eeckhout’s performance of her relationship with the process of drawing used a poetic and mesmeric description of her actions, bodily movements of stepping forwards and back to explicate a process of “stepping in and out of the drawing”, a surrender to the process of drawing. The place of the examination seemed to be constructed through this personal relationship between creative practitioner and creative work. As Eeckhout described the processes of making the drawing she leaned in towards the example work traced out on the display table, touched it and pointed to it, walked around it, brushing past one of her examiners so they had to move out of her way as she shifted her position again in relation to the artefact.

Arnaud Hendrickx, another graduate of the RMIT PhD by Practice, refers to the process of designing the space of the examination as ‘staging an argument’, describing how the physical space, placing of players and audience are conceived as part of the exposition of knowledge and of a particular line of creative practice research.⁴² Drawings, models and other design elements or representations of projects become players to be placed and deployed by the practitioner-researcher as part of the actions of exposition.

Sites of Intervention

In developing the PhD by Practice, practitioner-researchers continue in their practice throughout the period of the PhD. Thus they research through reflecting back on their past works, but also in developing new work. For architects, landscape architects, interior designers and site-specific artists, the site, that is to say a place under consideration for development, change or intervention, can be critical to both shaping creative practice and understandings of one’s own practice.

Sam Kebbell (an architect practicing in New Zealand, undertaking the PhD in Melbourne and an ADAPT-r fellowship in London) discussed a particular way of understanding site in terms of gauging culturally appropriate interventions to place, which became apparent for him through collaboration with another creative practitioner, Ross Stevens:

He had a really lovely way of thinking about architecture. He’s an industrial designer but he’s designed and built his own house. And we were looking through details [for an office interior for Saatchi and Saatchi in New Zealand] and having a conversation about how we were handling a certain thing, a desk. And he made this remark about how he thought that we were starting to get the culture of the place right. That phrase, ‘the culture of the place’, completely resonated with me. I understood what he meant even though culture and place are both incredibly vague terms. But for me, it was somehow a very precise thing to say about what we were doing and I’ve definitely carried that through, so in probably every project I now think about the culture of the place.⁴³

Kebbell’s understanding of ‘the culture of the place’, as he went on to clarify it relates to the experiences and expectations of those designing and using the space, the cultural background of practices specific to places, and to the way this can be expressed through visual and material means, suggesting ways of acting in that space:

It has to do with the mood of a place which is set up by both how it looks and how it works. [In the Saatchi office project] there’s a series of mobile office pods that move around on wheels. It’s very low key, it’s kind of crudely constructed: all the details are very unrefined, and it’s playful. And those values of straightforwardness and playfulness aligned very much with the values that Saatchi had as a group [...]

The discussion Ross and I were having was about [some] desks along the edge [of the office]. We were talking about how it might be nice, because it gets quite warm, to sit at these desks with your feet in buckets of cold water, and that that seemed to be within the spirit of things (in the end maybe slightly outside of it).

It’s not about building performance, it doesn’t fit with building science or program or typology, but it’s utterly to do with the culture of a place. [Thinking about] having your feet in a bucket came out of the idea that, that’s how we wash the

⁴² Arnaud Hendrickx, Presentation as part of Research Methods Training, ADAPT-r activities, RMIT Europe, Barcelona. 31 November 2014.

⁴³ Sam Kebbell, speaking in a mediated group interview between Sam Kebbell and Siv Helene Stangeland, undertaken by Eli Hatleskog and Anna Holder as part of the activities of the ADAPT-r ITN, University of Westminster, London. 30 April 2015.

sand off our feet, when you're at the beach, and the perimeter of the Queens Chain⁴⁴, an urban caravan park, all these ideas were floating around. So it's not a big leap to have your feet in a bucket, but for a completely different reason.

The description of Kebbell's experience of paying attention to the practices and culture of place to inform a design process, are part of a wider reflection about the regional specificity of his work, borne out of his involvement in the ADAPT-r network. Kebbell credits the experience of his fellowship in London, and conversations with other fellows, with enabling him to recognise what he terms a 'New Zealand-ness' in his work, in having to explain his designs and practice approach in ways that address the "cultural distance" between his work and those of the other practitioners he encounters.

Martí Franch Batllori, a landscape architect practicing in Catalunya, teaching in Paris, and an ADAPT-r fellow at Glasgow School of Art also notes the value of moving between places and also bringing others to the sites of his work. Batllori described taking his PhD supervisor across the Catalan countryside on trips to visit his project, and the quality of the conversations that came out of these encounters between practitioner-researchers in the site. Batllori has initiated a project within his PhD by Practice in his hometown of Girona, which develops his practice and thesis of 'design through management' in a semi-rural environment, and his knowledge of both the landscape and the key actors to make the project possible involve a lived and longstanding experience of the site. His developing mode of practice arises out of economic conditions of scarcity and understandings of the micropolitics of change in the region:

"I'm working for the public sector, I'm working in places where I usually don't have much money. I work in very raw conditions, a very raw public, so ... what level of high culture do you have to deliver?"

[...] The project's seminal idea was about reclaiming the city's edge to the countryside through strategic Design by Management actions. So the way to start was [that] I took some references from elsewhere and I went and I talked to the municipality of my hometown, Girona. I said, "Well, I mean

44 The colloquial expression 'Queen's Chain' refers to the ownership of land next to beaches, lakes and rivers in New Zealand, allowing public walking access along the shoreline.

to do that, and this would be part of a system of growing value to the edge of town, would you like to play with this? That we collaborate together? I need to borrow some of your garden department staff to implement a pilot project". And quite fast they said, "yes".

*[...] I knew some people I had previously worked for, who directed me to the Environment Department. Because initially it is about organising the same resources in a different way, but without economical investment, they accepted. Furthermore I found total complicity with the future Head of Green Management, who became really interested. I think this creates the right atmosphere for this to happen."*⁴⁵

Batllori's use of the conditions and context of creative practice as research to intervene in the practices of environment and economy demonstrate a transformative potential of creative practice. This potential is also articulated by Melanie Dodd, spatial practitioner, educator and another graduate from the RMIT PhD by Practice, when she draws attention to flexible, locally specific practices of cultural and creative activities. Dodd highlights the work of creative practitioners at the small scale, where their activities in supporting themselves and others combine to "manage the chaos" of urbanity in a period of change and scarcity:

*"...to first create and then sustain local networks and facilities. This is especially the case with smaller artist and designer studio organizations and larger community arts organizations, which are critical in the way they provide ongoing and practical advocacy for artists and creative users"*⁴⁶

Dodd terms this 'creative agency', enabling creative action and engagement in cultural production, and points to ways in which this can range from the practical enabling of action, including use of space and location ("rooms, studios, galleries, the city", "market, locale, historical and cultural territory"), and different methods of engagement over time, such as residencies, exhibitions and events.⁴⁷ Dodd encompasses with this understanding of creative agency

45 Martí Franch Batllori, speaking in an interview undertaken by Eli Hatleskog and Anna Holder as part of the activities of the ADAPT-r ITN, Ghent. 20 April 2015.

46 Melanie Dodd, 'Creative Cities: Managing Chaos Not Cleaning up Mess', in *Cultures of Resilience: Ideas*, ed. by Ezio Manzini and Jeremy Till (London: Hato Press, 2015), pp. 39–43 (p. 41).

47 Dodd.

indirect and enabling capacities, which will catalyse or ‘drive’ creative activity, and also enable access to the values of such action by wider society.

Positioning places of creative practice research

Within the overall theme of this chapter – focusing on the workspace as a site of creative practice and research – the aim of this contribution is to theorise and demonstrate the interconnectivity of networks of places, materials, and interactions that make up creative practice.

The role of the workspace, office or studio is highlighted as a place of localised practices, which circulate from education to the work environment, and also between organisations. These practices can be repurposed to develop research through and alongside practice. The space of the office can also be seen to ‘hide’ what it contains, for example the archival works which might develop understandings of creative practice, and the processes of the day-to-day work environment, which may benefit from further interrogation in the process of research.

Attention to practices as *emplaced activity and knowledge* is a useful tool in the process of exposition of creative practice research. The emplaced practices of design and creativity can be invoked through talk, gesture, exhibition and representation through other media when designing how to communicate creative works, in order to better trace the series of connectors from explicit knowledge back to practice.

Finally, the involvement in wider networks of creative practice research shows the value of cross-cultural exchange in developing understanding of the specificity of local practices and the siting of creativity within specific cultures of place. The role of the creative practitioner in reading, knowing, proposing and intervening in cultural practices, supporting creativity as a response to economic scarcity, uncertainty and change can be supported by attention to places of creative practice.

2.3 Spatial contexts and relational design processes explored by drawing

Siv Helene Stangeland

In 2012, Helen & Hard published the book “Relational Design” which starts with the question: How can we make architecture with an ecological awareness? In the book, we present a range of projects to demonstrate different aspects of a relational design approach. In our understanding, relational design is associated with responsive design processes that are able to incorporate changes and feedback as a project develops. It also refers to the intention of developing guidelines and strategies for how to deal with an open-ended relational design process.

The relational design approach has several origins. It is inspired by Doreen Massey’s notion of space as the dimension of multiplicity and that it presents us with the question of the social. It also builds on Freya Mathew’s understanding of a communicative world where matter and nature have their own dynamic and intrinsic unfolding potential, which we can listen to and seek partnership with. We also find a reference to form-generating processes in nature, where reciprocal exchange with the context shape resilient patterns of organisation and structures. This mutual encounter and unfolding of humans, matter, and the environment outlines a vision of a relational design process.

When I entered into the creative practice research program of ADAPT-r I set out to explore the relational design practice of Helen and Hard further. I researched the ecology and spatial organisation of the office and my personal contribution to the design practice. Drawing has become a vital tool for my research, and in this text I will reflect on two of these drawings produced within the process of research. They are part of a long sequence of drawings, which explore different aspects of Helen & Hard’s spaces of creativity.

The first drawing (“Epoch 5”) is an extensive mapping of the architectural practice. It focuses on the habitat of Helen & Hard. I perceive this as a situated system that evolves by increasing the complexity of contextual relations and activities. The second

drawing (“The Tidal Zone”) is a personal exploration, which points to a distinct geographical context and spatial history. It discloses my childhood ‘playground’ in the tidal zones on the west coast of Norway through a free hand drawing. I will discuss how it contributes to my mental space and acts as a present creative source.

In this text, I try to elucidate how these two drawings foreground useful insights on creativity both through the content they ‘bring to the surface’ for me, and the creative process of making them. I conclude with a meta-reflection on how these two different perspectives relate and foreground new insights to the dynamic between spatial context and relational design approach and how the very act of drawing works as a creative medium to reflect and research.

Mapping the practice

The architecture practice of which I am a founding partner, ‘Helen & Hard’, has been in existence for more than 20 years. In my research I have been looking for a way to establish an overview of the development of the practice over time. In doing this, I intended to reflect and explore Helen & Hard’s relational design approach and show the relational dynamics of the office and its production. I was also searching for a mode of creative practice research wherein the mapping of these questions in itself would become a creative process and ideally an embedded expression of a relational design process.

I decided to make hand drawings of the different physical workspaces we had established and inhabited over the years. I made notes about incidents, activities and interests which helped me identify eight different epochs. I used the presentation software ‘Prezi’ to organise the drawings, images and notes. This software allows the user to make presentations that ‘zoom in and out’ of the presented material. In this way, it became possible to view the whole presentation as an overview or ‘map’, yet also to appreciate the smallest details. I placed the drawings of the different epochs as background and gathered layers of information, photos, and illustrations into epochal assemblages. This process allowed me to present the history of the office in different ways at research symposia. I could take various paths through the epochs according to themes or aspects of the development, which I needed to highlight. It allowed me to work in an iterative process where I gradually assembled loose assemblages of information. The parts and the whole were equally present and helped me create a more linear ‘storyline’. The process and the software supported a dynamic, explorative dimension that

was helpful during the research process and in presentations.

Reflecting on this process, I understand that this way of working resonates very much with how Helen & Hard as a practice is developing architectural projects. The inclusive and broad gathering of information precedes the organisation into possible and often parallel solutions without giving a final answer.

“Epoch 5 - 2000-2005”

In this text, I have chosen to focus on one of the eight epochs I eventually subdivided the history of Helen & Hard into. The drawing at the centre of “Epoch 5” is showing the factory plot my partner and I bought in Stavanger, Norway in 1996. Lines of text and photos of projects from that period surround the drawing. The workspace is in the centre seen from above without roof. Small glasshouses are placed within the big hall as individual working cells to keep us warm. Recycled containers are stacked on top of each other outside the factory for housing interns and other collaborators, and the courtyard is used for eating common lunch and testing out different material prototypes. There is a small barrack named “Living” and an extension of the factory with the label “Renting”, hinting at an economical household on the plot.

Handwritten notes run like beams around the drawing, with small discrete symbols at the end marking different themes; ‘public behaviour’, networks, journeys, methods, major projects, books we were reading, values, interest fields and breakthroughs.

Photos and graphics are added and make their own rhythm and composition on top of and in relation to the drawing. Some are larger and some are more central, others smaller and peripheral. They are showing projects, conceptual drawings, work in progress and specific important events like the first team meeting where we started defining our values and design philosophy. The tension between the thin lines of the drawing and the photos make the whole picture oscillate between having a random character and becoming a whole and gives it an evolving, dynamic character.

An overall view

I carefully chose the composition and viewpoint of the drawing so that one can see everything from above. It includes and brings together many different aspects of the practice. At the same time it constructs a new entity from this complex set of relations. It is a viewpoint of someone taking an “overall role”. Someone who is not deeply involved in one single project or aspect, but feeds in concepts, design ideas, strategic decisions on different levels along with leadership, economic management, HR issues, etc. – the complex

role of a practice partner.

Creating contexts

The drawing in “Epoch 5” is composed without any context or surroundings. The plot looks like an isolated island, which could be anywhere. This representation is not accurate, as the office at that time was very much involved in urban development. The office was even engaged in projects in the neighbourhood of the office. Epoch 5 was, during its short timespan, marked by new challenges in a rapidly growing commercial context. Helen & Hard was seeking strategies to cope with a city completely dominated by a booming oil industry and entrepreneurial culture. We started thinking about how we could tap into this ongoing morphogenesis of the city. We were inspired by Manuel Delanda’s book ‘A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History’, and tried to address visible and invisible forces and conditions as a vehicle for developing projects.⁴⁸ This emerging conception of a new context was – and still is – challenging that of our old teacher Christian Norberg-Schulz’ notion of a “Genius Loci”.⁴⁹ We tried to join the forces at hand with new tactics and working methods. They were defining the ‘resource household’ (understood as the available material, human, economical, contextual resources), the process and a spatial and topological guideline. As such they were both strategic tools and creative frameworks, which served both the client and our development.

In this perspective, the seemingly decoupled drawing at the centre of “Epoch 5” express the dual situation of being deeply involved yet feeling very different in a professional context. We perceived ourselves as an island in the periphery where we were consolidating our position and values and at the same time we were endeavouring and confronting the contextual challenges through the making of projects in the booming city of Stavanger.

Revealing new perspectives of a relational design practice

The mapping of the eight epochs revealed how different growth stages are reflected in Helen & Hard’s conception and production of spaces. Over time the focus of the office has developed from immersive, direct and personal interactions with spaces and materials, through the introduction of frameworks which allow for collective development processes, to an interest in form generation

⁴⁸ De Landa, M., 1997. “A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History” New York, Zone books

⁴⁹ Schulz, C. N., 1980. “Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture” Rizzoli, New York. 1980.



Figure 2.6
Stavanger

through growth patterns.

Moreover, while mapping and reflecting on the current epoch I started understanding the purpose of the practice as a distinct ‘forming field’. I see it as a rich ‘habitat’ that projects and ourselves grow from. As an own level of creative intelligence it constellates, brings together and includes all the aspects of being an architectural practice – from leading, managing and organising, to designing and producing spaces. Through the continual projects, it is engaging with the city in different domains. It builds on specific repertoires of embodied references and accumulated knowledge. The mapping of epochs also captures a changing and ambiguous relation to the context of the city.

As a field for ongoing reflection and collective learning it continuously rearranges and adapts itself according to external forces and thus renews its purpose. This systemic coherence of the practice, itself – knowing and organisational adaptability – is a relational capacity and a relational design itself. How we organise the office and how we make architecture has an interesting mutual dynamic.

The Tidal Zone

When moving to a cabin by the open sea in 2008, I was fascinated by the continuous growth and decomposing processes in the tidal zones. There I found a relation between the old host landscape of pools and the kelp. Seaweed, and algae were changing textures and colours during a day. Inspired by this metamorphosis, I started doing free hand drawings. This led me to explore drawing as an autonomous act without any direct link to the projects we were doing at Helen & Hard. It nurtured a part of my creativity, which did not fit the everyday rush of production and managing the office. In time, helped by reflecting on the drawings through my research, I found ways of linking this drawing practice to the practices of the office. Gradually the free hand drawings have developed to help me capture and reflect intangible aspects of the practice. I use them to explore the growth pattern of a project. I use them to speculate on how to build up and organise a project, how relations form between parts and the whole, or how to design flexible spatial organisations that allow feedback and iterations. I started including text in the drawing as a way of capturing my reflective processes and bring forth my mental space while drawing. This process of discovery was intensified by the sequential making of 15 similar drawings in a much larger format than I had used before.

“The Tidal Zone” is one of these 15 drawings. Lines and text

lines are flowing over the paper in wavering patterns. The text lines are more smoothly running in one direction, while the other lines are intertwining in the other direction. The lines have a rich, expressive repertoire; from dense, soft and detailed to bold, rough and forceful. The density and distance between the lines create depth and shallowness, a hierarchy in perception and a subtle composition. The lines never cross randomly, they follow each other, react to each other, adapt to each other. They create a sense of an oscillating and vibrating whole. When doing these drawings, I became aware of three different properties and roles of lines, which I call the wavering, the weaving and the writing lines.

The wavering line is acting without knowing – breaking out, eruptive, surprising, forceful, with temperament, a wild character, uncontrolled in an instant. It has speed, pulse, and spontaneity, unexpected outcome, novelty and freshness, naturalness and roughness.

It is relying on being accepted whatever comes out, trusting the white paper as a holding space, trusting the weaving and writing to make sense of it. It is a becoming line, a wavering line – a reaching out – a pre-sensing line – a vibrating line of raw energy. It is an experiment – a casting out to see what it is afterwards. It is a starting line – the first one to break the white surface of the paper – it is setting the tone – giving a direction – or coming in later when the weaving is getting dull, too repetitive, too known, too much a pattern. It is breaking the rules of the game, introducing the never seen before, a free space. This quality of the line is starting the conversation and makes the drawing a medium and not a tool. It invites to risk taking.

The weaving line is receptive, including a process of continuous movement of transformations, finding clues to connect, to make patterns by small variations, never the same and never too different – always echoing the past movement and adding something new, always responding to something, like a rhythm.

It cannot be repeated in the same way because it was done in dialogue with that one moment that will never occur again. It is transforming, integrating, combining, coupling, and weaving lines into the larger net of lines that all appears to be completely integrated – an evident part of the whole.

These lines have a performing, improvised quality, uncontrolled and controlled at the same time. They are not representations; they are that quality of nature embodied as an intrinsic, present resource; a way of acting, perceiving, responding, a way of organising the parts and the whole, a way of feeling and even knowing the whole.

They are expressing the process itself – its real time – performing, not representing.

The writing line has a smaller scale, thickness and concentration. It is based on widely shared codifications and familiar patterns. It has a smoother, wave-like movement, a melody with a known rhythm but mostly with unreachable meaning, a fragmented sense making. The writing line is just seemingly communicating; the content is only relevant in the act. It is making captions of what is going on – reflecting while doing, explicating, translating. Its role in the drawing is facilitating many possibilities to connect with, hook on to, develop from or approach.

Revealing a spatial history

The act of making the series of 15 drawings became a transformative trigger, which initiated a series of insights. I understood in a broader sense the origin of my creativity. I discovered that the nature I played in, as a child is an embodied creative source with its world of forms and spaces. Moreover, I found that I have an intrinsic embodied knowing about how these forms are shaped and generated through natural processes like the dynamic force fields of winds, the waves, the sun, the changing temperatures and cycles. By becoming aware of this origin as an essential spatial history, I also see this as a source for my underlying urge to make architecture as a means to connect with nature. My interest in natural form and space-making procedures, and my ambition to create spatial environments, which have similar properties to nature has this same origin.

In the drawings, the weaving lines playfully explore the idea of nature inspired relations. They combine, include and are never indifferent to the terrain formed by the previous lines. It is in this interaction the weaving happens, and matter becomes the weave in the end. The weaving lines connect small with big, depth with shallow, intimate with vast openness through engaging, being transformed, infected, and affected. They are forming a specific language that becomes consistent and unique because the lines are thoroughly responsive to what is there. The complex combinations of information captured in the drawing are also bound to the particular drawing process, and, if I were to repeat it, the drawing would never be the same again. I find an ‘authenticity’ in this process. There is no background for something else to happen because everything has been rendered surface, the gaps and in-betweens are as important as the lines themselves. The making is the expression.

Concluding thoughts on spatial contexts and relational design processes

In the text I have argued that a similar notion of relational design can be found through the mapping of the systemic level of the whole practice as well as in the smallest, personal creative act of drawing. I find different aspects of dynamic exchange between spatial contexts and relational design processes on both levels. Moreover, I find similarities in the way that content appears and through the processes of making.

The mapping of epochs of the practice points towards the evident growing interactions between the practice and its immediate spatial contexts – in terms of the workspace, but also to the booming oil city where the practice is situated. The spatial production of the practice in the shape of the projects is mediating this forming interaction. The impact generated by the projects continuously changes the factory plot. Changes happen, for instance, when prototypes of a playground are constructed of used oil equipment in the backyard or cheap living for increasing numbers of employees are provided by recycling containers from the oil industry.

The drawing ‘The Tidal Zone’ points to a particular geographical context and my personal spatial history defined by playing in this harsh coastal nature. It contributes to my mental space and becomes a present creative source and capacity.

The mappings of the epochs explored the multiple relations between different aspects of the practice Helen & Hard. The central, organising element in the mappings was the drawings of consecutive work spaces. Contextual and biographical content is added on top to foreground the dynamic and constellation aspects. It emphasises how the distinct spatial organisation of the workspace is woven together with

The drawing ‘The Tidal Zone’ also reveals a hidden context or spatial reference, which is embedded in the property of the lines themselves. Here the difference between content, context and the making are dissolved. The lines are by their very nature the way the drawer develops the drawing, and this embedded spatial context is continually recreated throughout the drawing. The weaving lines are always responsive to what is there, and yet new potentials are continuously explored through the wavering line by acting without knowing. This combination of operating agenda-less with an agenda is reflected in Ranulph Glanville’s definition of the act of designing. He explains designing as a subtle conversation between different personas in ourselves. Glanville refers to the actor and the listener, identifies the dynamic between the two personas as

the source of creating novelty.⁵⁰ The actor is here acting without knowing, and the listener is the one making sense of it. In the act of doodling, which he uses as an example, these two aspects often oscillate so fast that it is hardly possible to decipher or recognise.

It seems that this dynamic between listening and acting is pointing at a mutually informing principle which is unfolding at the core of creativity. I find it embedded in the poetic language of “The Tidal Zone” drawings. However, it can also be recognised in the layered mappings of the epochs, where it is leaving open possibilities for adaptation and change. The title of this text might suggest a discursive distance between a spatial context and a relational design process. But I hope to have argued that the dynamic between them is more of a fluid interweaving or a circular transformation. As in the drawing “The Tidal Zone”, constellation lines become actual lines of matter, surfaced by an organic structuring and a poetic language of contingency and mixtures.

Extract of text appearing in the drawing:

“My mental space as continuous landscapes,

where nothing has an end, there is always something changing, something new, never repetition, just variations, roughness, wildness has always unexpected details, ruptures and continuity at the same time.

In the tidal zones where I play – there is no exclusion.... and this creates deep belonging and trust in the possibility of integrating, accepting whatever emerges.

– not afraid of destroying, one layer over the next, overlapping, change, always new patterns arising, everything is used, there is no leftover, neither space nor matter, just endless transformations and metamorphosis....”

Figure 2.8
“The Tidal Zone” (Siv Helene Stangeland).

“The Tidal Zone”

The drawing covers a thick paper measuring 110cm X 60cm. It is done with a Pentel 0,5 and carried out in one run over 3 hours.

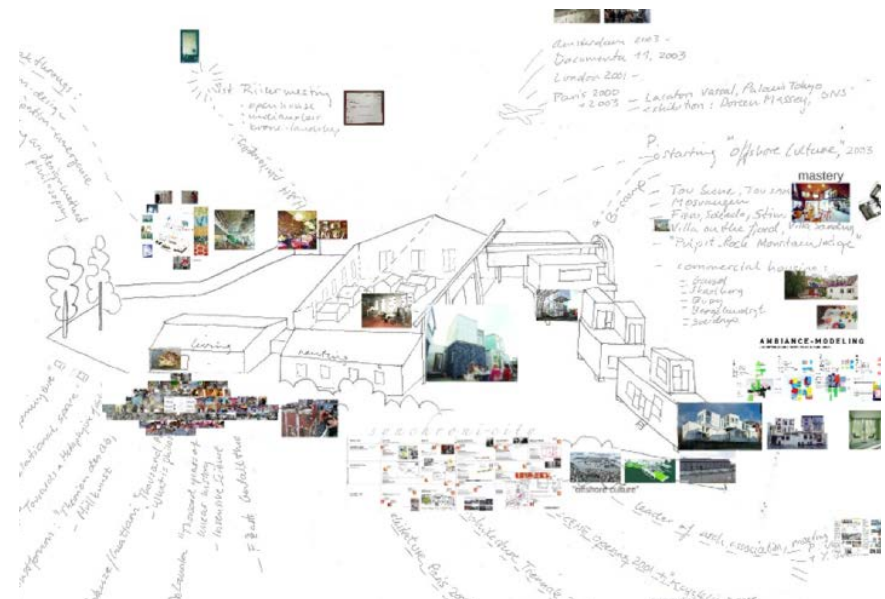


Figure 2.7 “Epoch5”: Text appearing in the drawing: Break throughs: process design, participation-emergence, recycling as design method. Readings: R. Schustermanns Performing live, Doreen Masseys For space, Jean Fishers Toward a metaphysics of shit, Kunstforums Theorien des Abfalls, Deleuze/Guattaris Thousand plateaus and What is philosophy, Manual de Delandas Thousand years of nonlinear history and Intence sciences, F.Pearls Gestalt theory. H&H values/philosophy: crone-landscapes, indian camp, open house, travels: Amsterdam, Documenta 11, Paris 2000 and 2003, Palais de Tokyo; exhibition GNS, Projects; starting offshore culture, B-camp, Tou Scene, Mosvängen student homes, Finns Bakery, Villa on the fjord, Pulpit Rock mountain lodge, Commercial housing: Gausel, Skadberg, Buøy, Sverdrupsgt, Bergelandgt. Public behaviour: Siv leader of Architects Association Stavanger, Tou Scene opening+ exhibition Recycle live, Oslo Architecture Triennale 2003, H&H solo exhibition Galerie d'Architecture de Paris.(Siv Helene Stangeland)



50 Glanville, R. (Ed.) (2007a). “Cybernetics and design” (special issue). *Kybernetes*, 36 (9-10)

2.4 Conclusions: Reflecting upon and within Spaces of Creativity

Anna M. Holder and Claus Peder Pedersen

The impetus for our focus on space and place as a site, catalyst, support structure and reflection of creative practice research processes came from the repeated references and allusions of creative practitioners to their workplaces as they worked to give voice to detailed understandings of their practice. The three elements of this chapter bring together three different lenses on mutually influencing aspects of spatial context and creative practices.

Anna Holder's contribution brings together theories from the social sciences, humanities and creative practice research to demonstrate the interconnectivity of networks of places, materials, and interactions that make up creative practice. She proposes an understanding of spaces of creativity that goes far beyond current ideas of optimising creativity through more or less imaginative office décor or space planning. Drawing on Latour's actor network theory, she argues for an understanding of spaces of creativity as the complex interactions and exchanges between human and non-human actors with different agencies. The unpredictable complexity of these interactions might challenge the idea of designing specific spaces that promote creativity. But more importantly, learning from STS and actor network theory might invite and encourage the exploration of workspaces, contexts and constellations far beyond the traditional architectural office. The reflections of and upon ADAPT-r Fellows seem to support the relevance of this view. The Fellows' accounts of their spaces of creativity do not focus on the design and spatial layout of the workspace. It is rather discoveries of how the most unlikely locations augment the design process or how random encounters and surprising constellations promote particular design solutions that help define the practice. One common trait seems to be the ability to embrace, engage and nudge at constellations and collaborations to arrive at creative solutions. This 'paying attention' to the places, activities and practices of creative practice offers the potential to understand better how it is constituted and can be exposed as research.

Siv Helen Stangeland's reflection on the different epochs and

sites of her practice Helen & Hard gives a more comprehensive account of the creative space of an individual practice. Stangeland does not refer to Latour, but her notion of relational design builds on a somewhat parallel interest in the complex interactions of different actors and agencies. Her contribution emphasises the importance of geographical context and the physical affordances of site and workspace in shaping the processes and activities of the practice at different time periods. Progressing to different workspaces reflects the development and changing needs of the practice over time. Her drawings of different epochs insist on the importance of the spatial configuration of the office at a given time, but the drawing weaves this space into a dense net of travels, projects, intellectual inspirations that both expand and dissolve the physical space of the office. In this way, the contexts and physical affordances are not deterministic – space to think and work otherwise can be sought and found within 'mental spaces'. The space of creative practice is not only influenced by the designated workspace of the practice office, but also the landscapes and scenery which provide inspiration and space for reflection. The landscapes are also an inspiration for Stangeland's personal exploration of her mental space. The drawings are however not about self-expression or realisation but an instead an attempt to draw forth a better understanding of her particular contribution and role in the design ecology of Helen & Hard.

Claus Peder Pedersen's photographic essay 'Workspace' gives a window into the creative practice research workplace, laying bare the accretions of past works and current projects with which creative practitioners surround themselves. It offers no explanations of the nature of the projects or the design processes that have taken place. The viewer is left with the traces of human and non-human interactions. These glimpses offer scope for the viewer's imagination: are these accretions a visual mnemonic for ideas and connections relating to the work being researched? Is creativity found only in chaos? Or can the ordered, tidy workspace offer more room for reflection?