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2.4 Conclusions: Reflecting upon and within Spaces of Creativity

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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 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?