



OVERVIEW

THIS CLUSTER FOCUSED ON THE ROLE OF SPATIAL IMAGINATION AS A CREATIVE DRIVER IN ARCHITECTURE AND SPATIAL DESIGN PROCESSES. IT BROUGHT TOGETHER AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF 16 PEOPLE FROM ARCHITECTURE, SPATIAL DESIGN, THE VISUAL ARTS, SPATIAL THEORY, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND ENGINEERING FOR THREE WORKSHOPS TO PRODUCE FOUR OUTCOMES. IN PARTICULAR, THE GROUP INVESTIGATED THE SCOPE OF THE SPATIAL IMAGINATION IN THE PROCESSES OF WRITING, MODELLING AND DRAWING TO CONSIDER A NUMBER OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY NEW THEORIES AND METHODS OF SPATIAL IMAGINATION IN DESIGN PROCESSES?
- IN WHAT WAYS IS THE SPATIAL IMAGINATION A DESIGN TOOL?
- WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SPATIAL IMAGINATION AS A MECHANISM OF CRITICAL INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DESIGNED ENVIRONMENT?
- HOW DOES THE SPATIAL IMAGINATION CONSTRUCT THE USER'S EXPERIENCE OF DESIGN IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

Activities

The cluster's workshop activities produced four outcomes: a *Website*, www.spatialimagination.org.uk/, an *Exhibition*, Spatial Imagination, Domo Baal Gallery, London (9-20 January, 2006) and a *Catalogue*, Peg Rawes and Jane Rendell (eds), Spatial Imagination, (London, 2005), presenting original research processes of investigating and producing the spatial imagination. The *Symposium: Spaces of Exchange*, Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment, London, (18 January 2006), provided the first point of exchange between the cluster and potential users of the research the design professionals and academics to publishers, funders and commissioners (RIBA, CABE, The Architectural Foundation, The Arts Council, NESTA and the AHRC). These outcomes demonstrated the value of:

- Research outcomes that exist as both physical artefacts and written forms.
- Process-based or 'proto-typed' research and its central role in the production of design-based knowledge.
- Enabling multiple modes of understanding - material, applied, theoretical and historical - to be examined simultaneously.
- Generating new forms of communication between the designer, the profession and the user, especially the value of different research techniques.

Insights

The work of the research cluster allowed us to identify the following as areas for potential new research. The need to investigate:

- the perceived division between academic and professional realms of architectural research and practice.
- the kinds of language required to communicate and discuss the role of the spatial imagination in the public sphere.
- what constitutes 'legitimate' research across the different communities in the built environment.
- how to accurately value and cost 'design time' for both academic and professional communities in the built environment.
- the role of the 'object' in practice-led research as a starting point for, well as an end point to, research projects.