Re-viewing how we think about architecture and education

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‘commonsense’

- Formal
- passive
- single-directional
- one-to-many
- individual
- serious

- Informal
- active
- multi-directional
- many-to-many
- social
- playful

associative

oppositional
the problem with ‘commonsense’ ….

Binary oppositions which:

• structure learning as an either/or experience

• structure ideas about learning and space via social and spatial analogy

• see design intentions and built results as equivalent
• relate space and learning through stimuli-response behaviours

• read ‘effects’ directly off spaces

• use a deficit model of education

• aim to ‘change’ education by changing space

• fail to engage with architectural or educational theories or methods
Instead….

• what is it that is *distinctive* about post-compulsory teaching, learning and research;

• what is it that *matters* about space for learning?
Many new learning spaces are being designed and built for universities and colleges at the present. Yet there remains an accumulating lack of underlying analysis about what is (or should be) changing in learning and teaching practices or about what role architecture has in this process.

What kinds of space are we talking about – conceptual, physical, virtual, social and/or personal?

What are the relationships between architectural design and learning, teaching and research activities?

What are the different spaces in which learning takes place (both in and beyond the campus) and how can we interrogate their relative effectiveness?

In fact much recent design has tended to rely on the belief that we should be moving towards more informal and social learning and thus require spaces that ‘look’ more informal and social. This book aims to challenge the underlying assumptions in this approach, instead arguing that we need a re-thinking of the relationships between learning and space. The book first engages with recent educational and architectural theories as a critical and creative way of opening up the subject. It then considers alternative ways of mapping relationships between spaces and their occupation, so as to better understand the social and spatial practices of learning at a variety of scales, as a situated experience. Finally, it explores examples of innovative ways of articulating learning at post-compulsory level, and considers the implications for the development, design and occupation of different learning spaces.

Jos Boys trained originally in architecture. Followed by many years experience teaching architectural design and contextual studies in a variety of educational institutions at different levels. She has also worked as an educational technologist and academic developer, exploring ways to enhance learning through both technology-rich and pedagogically sound resources and delivery. In her academic research and creative practice over the last 25 years, she has been centrally concerned with understanding the relationships between social and spatial practices.
Contemporary architectural theories and approaches

deconstruction/post-structuralism
Bernard Tschumi
Parc de La Villette
1982
Learning Spaces

(dynamic model)

social
serious
individual
belonging
collaborative
repertoires
easy

becoming
transitional
liminal
playful
difficult

social and spatial practices
…learning as a process…

• Research to become knowledgeable about the problem under study;
• Define the innovation opportunity or problem;
• Generate options and recognise the need for a new solution;
• Incubate – let the job rest and distil over time in order to process and digest information; and
• Select an option and interpret into a product idea.

Scott-Webber 2004 In Sync
Current educational theories also understood as a dynamic, partial process....
Conversational framework: Laurillard 2002 *Re-thinking University Teaching*
situated/boundary crossings
legitimate peripheral participation
journey from margin to centre
reification through the repertoire

communities of practice

Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998,
troublesome knowledge
sticking points
mimicry
liminal spaces

threshold concepts

Meyer and Land 2006
So how to conceptualise relationships between space and learning?

*Lefebvre 1991 The Production of Space*
Learning Spaces

dynamic model

participant perceptions of, and engagements with, practices and environments

social

collaborative

designed learning environments

individual

belonging

‘everyday’ educational social and spatial practices

after Lefebvre (1991)
mapping the spaces of learning encounters

close observation, talk, social and spatial practices, everyday routines, repertoires to explore layered partial understandings and tensions - not to evaluate as ‘good or bad; but to ‘illuminate’.
(re)making the space of the institution

beyond representation and consensus: complex and contradictory intersections between the social/spatial practices and repertoires of different communities of practice; differences in understanding of what matters
(re) thinking the **relationships** and **locations** of the learning, teaching, research, knowledge creation, transfer and exchange, creative, professional and development, business and community engagement, health and wellbeing, access and equality, resource-effectiveness and sustainability.
(re) constructing learning spaces

• mapping intersections of existing social and spatial practices/individual engagements/design environment
• articulating and debating learning encounters/relationships/contexts
• locating space and its design as not central, but with a particular ‘place’
• learning as more than space, and space as more than learning
• Re-imagining what learning happens where
• finding ways to measure value
Re-shaping Learning?

The future of learning spaces in post-compulsory education.
Analysis and Debate

• Group 1: Where are we now? Defining what we mean by learning
• Group 2: Where are we now? Learning spaces and institutional agendas

• Group 1: What kind of space is learning? The student experience
• Group 2: What kind of space is learning? On and beyond the campus.
• Group 1: Re-shaping Learning Spaces: from physical to virtual and back again

• Group 2: Re-shaping Learning Spaces: towards creative and effective measures

• What next?
  - informing the book collection
  - supporting future developments
• Jos Boys *Towards Creative Learning Spaces. Re-thinking the architecture of post-compulsory education* (Routledge 2010 forthcoming)

• Anne Boddington and Jos Boys (Eds) *Re-shaping Learning: A critical reader. The future of learning spaces in post-compulsory education* (Sense forthcoming 2011)

• Blog/archive: spaces for learning in art and design [http://www.spacesforlearning.blogspot.com](http://www.spacesforlearning.blogspot.com)

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