

The Spaces of Networked Learning

Symposium Organiser: Siân Bayne

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Introduction

Education has to date taken surprisingly little account of the so-called 'spatial turn' which has been evident across other areas of the humanities and social sciences in recent decades (Withers, 2009; Guldi, nd). New spatial vocabularies help us shift the assumption that space functions as a 'static container' (Fenwick et al, 2011: 129) within which individuals act. Rather, space is increasingly seen as a dynamic entity which is produced by the social and material interactions which take place 'within' it. As Fenwick et al (2011) make clear, for forms of education which have to do with media, technology, distance and the online, 'the ordering of space-time has become a critical influence'. The distancing and networking of education make possible new spatial practices, new patterns of movement and 'new proximities' (129).

In discussions of online education and the nature of the digital, there has been an historic tendency to see the apparent 'fluidity' of 'networked' spaces as inherently liberatory, as providing an educational topology which is somehow freer, more democratic, more 'open' simply by virtue of the otherness of 'cyberspace' (Bayne, 2004; Edwards et al, 2011). Such discourses continue, influenced now by the promises of democratisation and accessibility-to-all of the 'open education' movement (for example Caswell et al, 2008). However, as Edwards et al (2011) point out, 'Mobility through cyberspaces is neither inherently emancipatory nor positive and relies upon its own immobilities and moorings' (226): it is important to maintain a critical and broad perspective on the spatial orientations of online education, not simply to privilege the more obviously networked and fluid spaces of the internet.

Thus our aim in this symposium is to present various perspectives on the constitution of space in networked learning, in order to come at a critical understanding of the various spatial orientations of education conducted within the multiple social topologies of the internet. Papers will weave a pathway through online higher education, distance education, workplace learning and educational governance, working with the consistent themes of mobility and spatial theory. Our session will combine 2 full papers with 3 short pecha kucha sessions in order to dynamically present a range of different perspectives aimed at stimulating and provoking discussion and debate around the notion of educational space beyond the 'network'.

Papers

Paper 1: 'Spatial theory in networked learning'

Richard Edwards, University of Stirling: pecha kucha

This short paper will introduce the broad theoretical context for a discussion of space in education, anchoring the papers presented and focusing in particular on mobilities theory and a notion of education as a spatial ordering.

Paper 2: 'The global institution, the homely, and the overwhelming: (per)forming three MOOC spaces'

Jeremy Knox, University of Edinburgh: pecha kucha

Our first full paper will look specifically at MOOC space, drawing on mobilities theory to analyse two specific MOOC instances in terms of the ways in which they make and perform educational space.

Paper 3: 'Mobile work-learning: spatial re-orderings and digital fluencies'

Terrie Lynn Thompson, University of Stirling: pecha kucha

Using the frameworks of mobility and fluid space, the second pecha kucha in the session will draw on data from a research project that explored the global work and everyday learning practices of self-employed and small business entrepreneurs.

Paper 4: 'Policy networks, database pedagogies, and the new spaces of algorithmic governance in education'

Ben Williamson, University of Stirling: full paper

In our second full paper, the focus shifts to the spaces of educational governance, mapping a shift from centralised to de-centralised 'digital' governance, and from the governance of public educational space to governance of the individual through pedagogy.

Paper 5: 'Disrupting the illusion of sameness: the importance of making place visible in online learning'

Philippa Sheail and Jen Ross: pecha kucha

The final presentation of the symposium will turn back to online distance education in the higher education context, using discussion of local context and embodiment to disrupt 'illusions of sameness' in the spaces of networked distance learning.

Organisation

Chair: Sian Bayne

paper 1: 7 mins (plus 5 mins questions)

paper 2: 15 minute (plus 5)

paper 3: 7 mins (plus 5)

paper 4: 15 mins (plus 5)

paper 5: 7 minute pecha kucha (plus 5)

discussion: 18 mins

total: 90 mins

Presenters

Sian Bayne is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh, and Associate Dean (digital scholarship) in the College of Humanities and Social Science at Edinburgh. <http://sianbayne.net>

Richard Edwards is Professor of Education in the School of Education at the University of Stirling.

Jeremy Knox is a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh; his thesis is entitled 'Critical Posthuman perspectives on open education'. <http://jeremyknox.net/>

Jen Ross is Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh, and Programme Director of the Edinburgh MSc in Digital Education. <http://jenrossity.net/>

Philippa Sheail is a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh, working on a PhD thesis entitled 'The "edgeless university" and the "invisible temporal": the time-spaces of digital higher education'.

Terrie Lynn Thompson is Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Stirling.

Ben Williamson is Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Stirling.

References

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