

Category: Completed research study

Title: Space and place in higher education: agency, design and re-design

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This paper presents selected results from a recently completed two year post doctoral project with the ambition to contribute with knowledge on the interplay between space, interaction and learning in higher education. How can we understand campus space becoming a place for learning? Thus, the aim for this article is to discuss space in higher education in relation to interaction, with a special focus on agency and re-design. How are students and teachers interacting using the resources afforded by the room? And how do the participants use space as a resource designing and re-designing their way in a meaning making process?

Stemming from a design oriented theoretical perspective "Designs for learning" (Selander & Kress, 2010) the paper argues that space in a higher education campus setting can be understood as both an important aspect in designs *for* learning as well as in designs *in* learning. With the notion designs *in* learning, one could understand space as a resource in the meaning-making process; as a learner designs his/her way, he/she chooses apt resources to transform his/her understanding into new representations (Selander & Kress, 2010). One could discuss space and place as conveyors of meaning and interaction as dependent on the affordances of a room. The design in a room clearly communicates what is possible and allowed to do. Space shapes interaction, but interaction also shapes space; thus, it is essential to consider space in relation to negotiation and transformation (cf. Leijon, 2010, 2012abc, 2013). As a consequence, this paper focus on how space is designed and re-designed by teachers and students in an on going transformation process.

The study combines video observation, as its main method, with interviews. Observations and interviews were conducted in two higher education settings: teacher education and specialist

nurse education. Two groups were followed in seminars, presentations, and lectures. These occasions could be lasting from one and half hour to a whole day and resulted in 31 hour filmed material. Five teachers and seven students were interviewed. Mixing observations with interviews through a joint viewing of the filmed observations offered a way to deepen the understanding of the interaction in the rooms. In an effort to reduce the researcher monopoly of interpretation, the interview was designed as a joint discussion of the filmed material. During the interviews, excerpts from the video observations were watched and discussed, focusing on the interaction in the rooms.

The paper will present results from the study and focus on instances of participant interaction in the different higher education campus spaces in order to discuss teacher and student agency. When it comes to designs *for* learning, the teachers are in charge for the didactic design; some of them are considering space as a resource, others don't. But when it comes to designs *in* learning the result clearly indicates that space, as designed *for* learning, is something both teachers and students read, transform and re-design in action, designing their paths *in* learning in higher education.

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