
Report from the Recipients of the 2013–2014 Perry Chapman Prize

Developing Research Methods for Analyzing Learning Spaces That Can Inform Institutional Missions of Learning and Engagement

by Jos Boys, Clare Melhuish, and Angelina Wilson

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Society for College and University Planning

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The mission of the Hideo Sasaki Foundation is to support inquiry, research, and continuing education in planning and design, with an emphasis on the value of collaboration between disciplines. The Foundation currently sponsors the annual Boston Architectural College Distinguished Visiting Critic (DVC). The DVC conducts an advanced studio for those seeking to study with highly accomplished design practitioners. The Hideo Sasaki Foundation is funded by a trust established by Sasaki Associates, Inc. and family, friends, and colleagues of Hideo Sasaki.

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The Hideo Sasaki Foundation, under the auspices of the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), seeks to honor the intellectual contributions of M. Perry Chapman.

As the 2008 recipient of SCUP's K. C. Parsons Founders' Award for Distinguished Achievement in Higher Education Planning, Chapman was committed to developing and sharing knowledge to advance integrated planning and interdisciplinary collaboration in higher education.

Chapman's influence on campus planning and design spanned more than four decades. He affected colleagues, institutions, firms, and community organizations through his insight, mentoring, writing, and speaking. He raised the standard of planning theory through research and analysis of the relationship between the campus as a place and its impact on learning and community.

In honor of Perry Chapman's passion for developing and sharing knowledge and his commitment to integrated planning and interdisciplinary collaboration a prize of \$10,000 will be awarded annually from 2012 through 2016. This prize funds research in the planning and design of institutions of higher education. The prize is intended to further the research, development, and dissemination of emerging knowledge to improve campus environments in support of their institution's mission.

SCUP is grateful to The Hideo Sasaki Foundation for its support of The Perry Chapman Prize. For more information, visit www.scup.org/perrychapman.

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This research project examines the holistic learning space perceptions and experiences of new students entering a university environment. It does so because we wanted to add to the existing literature, which has tended to focus on specific innovative learning spaces and on making and evaluating pedagogic and design “improvements” compared to existing provision. Instead, we wanted to know the extent to which the design of these different spaces impacts not just on specific learning situations but also on more general attitudes toward learning and feelings of engagement. Centrally, we wanted to explore whether qualitative research methods could be applied in a resource-effective way to capture learning as a complex and multilayered process. This was for three reasons. First, we felt that starting from open-ended questions in order to elicit meaning-laden and diverse responses had the potential to raise issues from the students’ perspective that might otherwise be missed. Second, we were hoping to find ways of elucidating the effects of space *within* the inseparable entanglements among people, physical environments, technologies, and educational practices. We were particularly interested to see if and where space matters and how it intersects with both what individuals bring to their experiences and the learning processes with which they engage. We also wanted to produce findings with implications not just for particular space designs but also for strategic educational development and integrative planning processes. Finally, we were interested in seeing whether this kind of qualitative research can usefully illuminate university and college decision making regarding campus design and management so as to enhance its role in supporting learning and engagement.

To begin to address these issues, we undertook a small pilot study at Northumbria University (NU) in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the northeast of England (text box 1), exploring how all the learning spaces on campus—and beyond—are perceived and experienced by a sample of freshman students.

We were particularly interested in working with new students to see how the university environment might affect their “settling in” to learning in tertiary education. The intention has been to capture as much as possible the complex and nuanced qualities of learning through a small-scale study while still aiming to inform choices about what kinds of learning spaces are appropriate and effective in different educational situations.

To do this we employed a multiple methods approach combining focus groups, interviews, and observations. We have also begun to evaluate the effectiveness of such an approach and method in informing institutional missions of learning and engagement through interviews and discussions with faculty and campus planners at the project university. In addition, this research report has benefitted from wider feedback from Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) members in June 2014.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

As the recipients of the 2012–2013 Perry Chapman Prize show in their report, *Research on Learning Design: Present State, Future Directions*, the study of learning spaces in tertiary education is an emerging field in which the key issues are to “establish a body of knowledge that will guide the design, remodel, and use of new and existing learning spaces” and “evaluate these learning spaces by developing research to determine whether and how they fulfill their purposes” (Painter et al. 2013, p. 4). Their research focused on reviewing studies that aimed to establish a correlation between specific innovative learning spaces and the experiences and outcomes they generate. The report concludes that the early promise of environmental psychology in analyzing and improving learning spaces has not yet been fulfilled. The authors also suggest that much of the research on learning spaces remains poorly framed, without an appropriate theoretical underpinning or proper evaluation methods (see also Barnett and Temple 2006; Bligh and Pearshouse 2011; Temple 2008).

Text Box 1 The Project Location—Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

This research took place at Northumbria University, an institution situated in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the northeast of England. The campus is on the edge of the city center and is split into two halves connected by a bridge across a main road and railway.

The participating students and faculty are all based in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences (FADSS), a relatively recent combination of two previously separate schools located at opposite ends of the campus (numbers 27, 29, and 25 on the plan). These recent rearrangements have meant that first, staff and students are now moving regularly between both sets of buildings, and second, students study in a variety of learning spaces ranging from traditional lecture theatres and seminar rooms to art and design studios to more informal “in-between” spaces within the FADSS buildings. They, of course, also have access to a range of other learning spaces such as the library, the Students’ Union, courtyards, and cafés.

Northumbria University is a post-92 institution (that is, it was previously a polytechnic) and is thus in a particular subset of universities in the United Kingdom. It has just undergone a major restructuring into faculties that may have affected our results (for example, some of the students in our sample were about to be moved to another building). Its departments have historically had considerable autonomy so that the types and amount of learning spaces across different subjects remain varied, an issue that is already central to Campus Services’ own agenda as it looks to set university-wide standards and typologies. What is more, the new Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences has found itself simultaneously with some of the newest and best buildings on campus as well as some of the worst and with these on opposite sides of the campus.



This research report aims to produce complementary work by addressing the larger context of the university campus and students' perceptions and experiences of their learning at the tertiary level more generally. Rather than starting from environmental psychology or behaviorist models, it explores the value of applying contemporary approaches from the social sciences to learning space design, an approach increasingly being developed (see, for example, Barritt and Knox 2013; Melhuish 2011; Pizzuti-Ashby 2013). This, however, is not just a matter of applying a different research method; it also concerns the underlying problem of how we conceptualize relationships between material space and its occupation both generally and specifically in relationship to learning. In fact, over the last few years, theorists across many disciplines that deal with material space—such as geography, anthropology, and science and technology studies—have been critically examining precisely this issue of rethinking how to conceptualize the interrelationships between space, people, artifacts, and activities (Ingold 2011; Latour 2007; Thrift 2008).

While there are differences in approach, the underlying shifts are similar. Interrelationships between space and the activities that go on in it are increasingly being thought of as entanglements or meshworks, where each affects the other in an ongoing and inseparable process. Such a conceptual framework aims to articulate activities in space as embodied experiences in which we engage with the world dynamically and continuously as our individual perceptions and beliefs intersect with everyday social and spatial practices (that is, the unthought-about routines and assumptions about “how things work”). In this process, physical space acts—along with, for example, spoken and body language and our habits and routines—as one element in reproducing, perpetuating, adapting, and challenging particular ways of doing things. The physical environment—its size, shape, décor, furnishings, and equipment—is thus one of the means through which particular “normal” ways of behaving and particular “rules of

the game” in various institutional settings are (literally) made concrete.

This means that our lived experiences are both how we think about things and how we embody our thoughts in action. We change space through our affective encounters, just as space changes us, through a process of continual, embodied *negotiations*. In this model, space is both decentered in its impacts on human activity (rather than having direct effects, it is part of many interconnected processes for making sense of the world) and relocated as a dynamic relation (rather than a “thing”) in which its various and differential effects can be analyzed in specific situations.

Many theorists have investigated how such a relation is part of the perpetuation of society (or subgroups within society) in particular forms rather than others. What Bourdieu (1987) calls a “habitus” (the shared and unthought-about beliefs and actions learnt through background and upbringing), Latour (2007) calls “modes of existence,” and Wenger (1998) calls a “repertoire” are all ways of describing the everyday socializing practices that lead us to the assumed obviousness of particular ways of thinking and behaving. Rather than using more general concepts like “society” or “culture,” these theorists are aiming to find terms that can capture the interrelationships between people, objects, and spaces as a dynamic, relational, and complex patterning between and across individual choices and societal norms.

Participants' perceptions and experiences of their learning spaces are thus always *more than* just their behavior in a specific learning situation. Previous work by Boys (2010) building on these kinds of conceptual frameworks has suggested that we can analyze the effects of learning spaces in tertiary education by examining in parallel three interwoven relationships that make up university learning. These are

- » Educational practices (whether traditional or innovative)

- » Physical environment
- » Participant experiences and perceptions across and between both practices and environment

Such an approach does not aim for overall coherence or simplification. The three strands may sometimes align, but can also be in tension or even contradictory. They may align better for some participants than for others, depending on what different learners (and faculty) bring to their situation. In addition, such an approach generates data that can be inconsistent and even contradictory across diverse participants' perceptions and experiences. This means that there is never one correct solution for the design of a learning space that can be drawn from analyzing the data. Engagement with particular spaces depends on what students and faculty bring to them, how particular educational processes are played out, and what the space enables or hinders across diverse perceptions and experiences.

RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN

To better explore these meshworks (Ingold 2011), we made this research study open ended in two ways. First, we used a grounded theory approach (text box 2). This is because we wanted to see how new first-year students talked about what particularly matters to them about space when it comes to learning, rather than imposing assumptions. Second, we used a range of methods for gathering data from a small sample of students studying on various courses in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences at NU (text box 3). Central to the conceptual framework outlined above is the fact that the physical environment was not given special preference (even though this is a study of the impact of learning spaces); rather, we centered on participants' perceptions and experiences of the interweavings between their physical environments and educational practices. The aim of the study was to explore the *patterns* that are revealed—what might be envisaged as “densities” or “bundles” of alignments

in which there is considerable overlap across different students' descriptions of their learning, but where diversity and difference continue to be recognized. This is what Geertz (1973) famously called a “thick description”—that is, a rich and layered account that does not result in a solution or conclusion but that can illuminate (Parlett and Hamilton 1972) our decision making.

Research methods from ethnography were therefore selected that could enable us to gather rich data—primarily through observations and focus groups of participants complemented by photographic documentation from both students and researchers (figure 1). This approach, while aiming for a degree of objectivity and neutrality, accepts the speculative, intuitive character of data interpretation by individual researchers and the subjective dimension of this process.

Text Box 2 An Outline of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an approach with two central aims: to develop strategic themes and theories through the analysis of data and to do this in a systematic way so as to enable rigor in dealing with qualitative data. Rather than beginning with a hypothesis, the first step is the collection of data through a variety of methods. Key points in the materials collected are marked with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text. These are key words or phrases that summarize recurring points and issues in the data.

These codes are grouped into similar concepts in order to make them more workable, and a first-stage report is drafted for discussion and review. Then the concepts are grouped into categories. Based on these general themes, explanations can be proposed for the research topic. These in turn can be reassessed by a wider audience or reviewed against relevant existing literature. Grounded theory thus does not aim for a general truth or “solution” but hopes to better conceptualize what is going on in any given situation.

While this case study work created a platform for the voices of the students, faculty, and campus planners involved, and the sharing and review of both method and results by the intended recipients is a central part of the whole process, the analysis here has, of course, just one particular focus. There is always the potential for reinterpretation of the data in the future; to this end, the initial datasets and the coding process are outlined in the appendices to this report, and primary research data will be made available on request.

The majority of the time allocated to the project was spent on collecting the case study data, leaving a relatively limited period for the analysis of observation notes, transcribed recorded interviews, and photographs. The analytical process was therefore based on a simple, partly intuitive, interpretive approach to the data through the grounded theory method of sorting into categories and themes as they emerged from recorded material. We gathered the following data:

- » One researcher's detailed description of the physical spaces used by the first-year student participants (lecture halls, seminar rooms, studios, and the journeys between them) outlining spatial layouts, furnishings, colors and materials, and technologies through photos, sketches, and notes.
- » One researcher's observations of different educational settings and their occupation, use, and interactions through written and visual recordings of selected classes in progress.
- » Student and faculty perceptions and experiences of social and spatial learning relationships through focus group and interview sessions.
- » Individual student volunteers' photo diaries of their learning activities, spaces, and interpretations through a five-day period.
- » Ongoing critical review of the data within the research team, with relevant course teams and campus planners at the university, and more widely through SCUP networks.

Text Box 3 **The Student Sample**

Through an open call to all module leaders across the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, three modules being taught to first years in the first semester of academic year 2013–14 were identified. Following a presentation of the research project to students in the identified modules, 18 students self-selected to participate in the study. These students were divided into three focus groups; seven staff members were also interviewed in their course team groupings.

All the courses studied ran across 12 weeks and were formally assessed at the end of that period. One module was on American history, which was structured as a conventional weekly lecture series with supporting seminars and made up of a cohort of 100 students who were then divided into four seminar groups of about 25 students each with four seminars per group spread across the semester. Another was an introductory module in criminology with 200 students in the cohort, also based on a weekly lecture series supported by 10 seminar groups of about 20 students each. This was patterned as a lecture per week and a seminar per fortnight. The third module was in interactive media design and had 30 students. This had a different format more typical of the art and design disciplines. Students had a weekly lecture or demonstration or gave presentations in a side room off the larger open-access computer studio, with activities varying throughout the semester. This was supported by studio-based practice in the adjacent space, which was used both for self-directed learning and tutorial sessions, again with a variety of activities throughout the semester.

Figure 1 Example of a Student’s Photo-Diary of His/Her Learning Spaces through Time

WHAT DID YOU LIKE/DISLIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE?	Like: The two projectors on each side of the room. Dislike: Crowded nature. Also very hard to hear lecturer from other side.	WHAT DID YOU LIKE/DISLIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE?	Like: My own space...can just relax and read. Dislike: Too many distractions here, such as my ipad and music and xbox which I listen to. Can distract me from work.
ANY OTHER COMMENTS	Not a very nice feel in the room. Find it very hard to concentrate.	ANY OTHER COMMENTS	Can stop and start at will, don't feel like im wasting anyone else's time.
WHAT DID YOU PHOTOGRAPH AND WHY?	 As many chairs squeezed into the room as possible.	WHAT DID YOU PHOTOGRAPH AND WHY?	
WHAT DID YOU LIKE/DISLIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE?	Like: Computers and tables for both internet work and writing source work. Dislike: Atmosphere. Doesn't feel like a university room that should be used.	WHAT DID YOU LIKE/DISLIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE?	Like: That everyone can see me and I can see them. Dislike: Maybe be better if tables were in a circle rather than rectangle.
ANY OTHER COMMENTS	I like the set up of the room and more rooms should be this size because there are lots of room for everyone.	ANY OTHER COMMENTS	Favourite room that I work in by far.
WHAT DID YOU PHOTOGRAPH AND WHY?		WHAT DID YOU PHOTOGRAPH AND WHY?	
WHAT DID YOU LIKE/DISLIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE?	Like: Away from usual busy uni life. Dislike: Lots of random people walk by all the time. Not very private.	WHAT DID YOU LIKE/DISLIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE?	Dislike: Everyone going past constantly and high levels of noise sometimes. Like: The social environment where I can work and chat with friends at the same time.
ANY OTHER COMMENTS	Lit and Phil Newcastle Library (outside uni) perfect place for silent written work between all of the books	ANY OTHER COMMENTS	Not really suitable but makes long periods of work better than working by myself.
WHAT DID YOU PHOTOGRAPH AND WHY?		WHAT DID YOU PHOTOGRAPH AND WHY?	

The central element of the research came to be the focus groups with students that were undertaken first. This was in part because we did not have the resources to observe students studying in non-taught spaces, which became our research focus. However, the observations of taught classes and the campus, analysis of photo diary materials, and interviews with faculty and campus planners all tended to reinforce what the students said to us.

INITIAL CODING

When we initiated this study we expected to find out about new students' perceptions and experiences across all their learning spaces, taught and self-directed, on campus and beyond, inside and outside. But while we did gather a lot of data in which our participants discussed the effects of their formal class sessions (across lecture, seminar, and studio spaces), the bigger concerns seemed to be more general ones about what "being a student" meant and the anxieties and challenges this posed. Equally important, while this was affected by their experiences in formal taught sessions, it was most strongly felt in relation to developing skills in self-directed learning and thus was most intensely meshed with the provision of *non-taught* learning spaces whether on campus, at home, or elsewhere. This was both because formal faculty contact made up a relatively small amount of their workload (for our participants between 12 and 20 hours a week) and because they were juggling other aspects of their lives such as part-time employment or caring responsibilities. Thus, managing learning throughout their free time was perceived as a major aspect of being a student.

Working out how to "become" a student, however, was not experienced similarly by all the participants in our study. Although our sample was much too small to draw any transferable conclusions, it seemed, for instance, that participants who were entering tertiary education at a later stage of their lives were much more confident about what

studying involved for them and how to undertake it (although this did not prevent them from being dissatisfied with the learning spaces available). There were important variations in preferences for studying at home or on campus. And there were differences in wanting learning spaces to feel more "homely" or more "professional" (although there was also a strong overall sense of not wanting it to be like "school"). Thus, perceptions and experiences were strongly affected by what each person brought to the process. This, in turn, revealed perceived gaps between expectations and realities. Our participants discussed with each other and with us the relationship between their previous experiences of learning and the university environment and facilities; their ideas about a typical greenfield university campus compared to the city-based campus on which they were now studying; the impact of visiting both this and other universities on open days; differences between what they had been shown at those open days and the teaching and learning spaces they mainly used; the availability and visibility of their tutors; and their initial experiences of being a student in relation to what they had expected. Overall, there seemed to be a relatively abstract understanding of studying in tertiary education disconnected from what might be called the operational details. For example, as two student participants put it:

But the uni, there's a lot more independence than I was expecting in terms of, like, if you're thinking about an assignment, no one says, "There's an assignment due soon," you're just expected to have gone off and read the module guide and be aware that there's an assignment and be aware how to write it and be aware of what you need to write in it, and yeah, it's a lot more . . . There's very little guidance here, but it's to be expected because there are so many students compared to school. But it is still quite a shock.

There's a lot more reading than previous . . . The lecturers don't let on how much reading and extra knowledge is needed for lectures and seminars. They say obviously

that you have, your course is based on hours and you do have to do some external hours but they don't tell you the extent of how much that you need actually.

Thus, what new students bring to their studies; how explicitly and accurately the university makes visible its educational practices; and how well individuals respond in developing the appropriate knowledge and skills to be a learner in tertiary education all impact the effectiveness of their learning and engagement.

In these processes, the physical environment does have important effects. This is most immediately entangled across and between, first, functional and environmental conditions (how hot, cold, easy to hear, etc.) and, second, expectations—compared to the realities—of what a “lecture,” “seminar,” or “studio” should be like (that is, the various perceptions and experiences of intersections between particular educational practices and the spaces in which they take place). So, for example, there seemed to be general agreement about what made a good lecture theatre based on clear assumptions about what lectures “are,” but there were differences of opinion about preferred seminar arrangements, with some supporting islands (café-type layouts) and others horseshoe or boardroom settings. Participants’ perceptions and experiences here intermeshed functional elements and pedagogic ones, with students having a variety of views not just about what might be termed active versus passive learning but also about how this *felt* to them. Almost all our participants had anxieties or felt uncomfortable about speaking out in class in front of others or were unsure about “the rules of the game”—how you are meant to behave in various educational settings and contexts. Here different sizes of space and layouts of furniture could increase or decrease these feelings—for example, where rooms were felt to be too cramped to allow comfortable eye contact or body distances from each other (figure 2)—this, of course, always intersecting with the particular learning and teaching practices involved.

Perhaps more crucially, our participants were also very aware of the difficulties of fitting their learning into the rest of their lives. Here the physical campus environment also had an effect. The extent to which both taught and self-directed learning spaces were available and suitable—at home, on campus, and beyond the campus—at the right time and place was explicitly understood to affect learning and engagement, for example, by impacting on attendance or the ability to study effectively. Again, there was considerable variation in attitudes across our small sample. Student focus group participants had a variety of preferences as to where they liked to study (dependent in part on other commitments, their home situation, and the distance of their living accommodation from the university). These ranged from wanting to separate home life from study life (so studying on campus) to enjoying working at home to negotiating across a range of study demands and possible spaces dependent on each situation:

I don't like working at home.

I can't work at home either.

No, mainly because when I go home I associate it with bed and food and sleep, and so that's what I do; I don't work, because if I work there I can stay in bed and can watch a film, but if I'm at the library then that's all I do, and I think it's a lot easier, especially because you haven't got someone telling you to do your work. It's easier, I find it easier to distinguish the two parts of my life and not have them cross over so I know that when I go home I can go to bed and can go to sleep instead of trying to do it all in one space.

I'm in halls [student accommodation] at uni so sometimes in there if it's quiet, but if we've got people in the flat then it's quite hard to work in there because it's quite loud, and my window backs onto a courtyard so I can hear people

there and it's too hot to not have the window open. So in there if it's quiet, but if not I'll go to the library.

I don't own a laptop so I stay in my room [at home] because I've just got a [desktop] computer, but I've got plenty of equipment available to me . . . so, I like working [at home] because it's kind of, I kind of have more than the university has to offer straight away without having to chase people up and borrow equipment and stuff, so I like working at home.

These preferences affected, and were affected by, what types of spaces were available. Some students felt tension in attempting to match what was available on campus, at home, and elsewhere with what they wanted to do, whether that was concentrated reading, writing an essay, working in a group,

or designing something. Different spaces thus supported or constrained their activities—for example, because of the cost of having to buy a coffee in order to use a café as a non-taught learning space, or a dislike of being in the library at very crowded times, or needing to access equipment only available in particular places or at specific times. There was a considerable perception by all our participants of an unmet demand for a variety of self-directed learning spaces along with a view that formal classrooms often appeared to be (frustratingly) empty and unused.

Many student participants talked about how they negotiated space and time—that is, the interrelationships between their other commitments, home location, weekly timetable, access to/preference for different types of study spaces, and the perceived quality of those spaces. Failure to manage these

Figure 2 **Examples Showing Range of Learning Spaces at Northumbria University**



negotiations had a direct impact on levels of attendance as well as on a sense of engagement with the class or course. The way this was described varied from “not being bothered” to come to class to finding it difficult to manage workloads/space/time due to other commitments in their lives:

And because it’s Monday, by the end of the day you’ve already had two lectures sometimes, or four, and I just won’t go, I’ll be that tired or that hungry and I see that module as so pointless, and I’d be like, “Why am I wasting my time when I’ve got other stuff I could be doing at home?” like going to the library or doing a lecture.

I think both times we were in that room as well it’s always at the end of the day. For me on a Tuesday I’ll either have two one-hour breaks so it’s a long day, or a three-hour break. And then you go into that room and then you’re not motivated by that time. I think it is the time of the day as well.

On a Tuesday I have a four-hour gap between, that’s a big gap between the two, and I always go home because I’d rather leave the uni, but then I have to convince myself to come back to go to this lecture in this room, and I just don’t want to go to it.

Here the perceived quality of particular teaching spaces (and their associated educational practices) and lack of sufficient or appropriate self-directed learning spaces were deemed to have an adverse impact on learning and engagement. While NU has a wide variety of informal spaces both in the library (with 24/7 opening) and dotted throughout the campus in cafés, the Students’ Union, and faculty or department-owned learning zones, many of our participants experienced finding appropriate self-directed study spaces as a complex and wearying negotiation in which spaces could be overcrowded or too noisy or require a purchase to use. At the same time that participants were often very satisfied with much of what was offered (especially in the library), the overall space and

time patterning was experienced as problematic and difficult to manage. Some of the students we talked to were very self-sufficient (for example, finding other libraries in the city to work in), but many were less resourceful. They were also surprisingly influenced by the perceived distance from home and between facilities on campus. Interestingly, students from the east side of the campus were noticeably less aware of what facilities there were “across the bridge” (figure 3).

Figure 3 **Bridge Perceived as Dividing the Campus**



A final point about new students’ perceptions needs to be made here. When we asked them about their sense of belonging and engagement, our participants mainly used the expression “connectedness.” For most of those we interviewed, connectedness was of course intertwined with their relationships to their course, tutors, and peers; however, space (and time) also had a role in how this connectedness was experienced. Many missed either some kind of common room similar to what they had experienced at school or asked for a “home base” or the opportunity to meet informally with others in social spaces—both to process their shared learning and to increase social interaction. Although no student participant used the precise term, some comments implied a certain degree of fragmentation:

I don't think there are that many social points in the university, like something as simple as picnic benches or stuff where people can sit around, there are only standard benches where people sit awkwardly next to someone they don't know, but there are no groups of friends like you normally see in university, which is kind of like, it gives a learning atmosphere as well, because at high school and 6th form I used to be part of a big group of people and we'd have a certain spot we'd . . . You don't really see that around here.

Yes, like common rooms and things, we don't really . . . It's all just classrooms.

Yes, classrooms or flats and I always feel really awkward saying, "Oh come to my room after class . . ."

Outside of class time and stuff you don't feel too connected to your course or the university. I like to just go there then break off from it as soon as class ends and go and do my own thing.

Our overall initial findings then were that (as with other studies such as Melhuish 2011) students could easily "read" the cues that the existing settings and relationships provided across functional, educational, and contextual concerns. They

also had plenty to say about how space enabled or reduced learning and engagement. But the overwhelming theme of this study is how new students' holistic experiences of learning in their university environment seemed to center on the process of negotiating their learning across different spaces inflected through time and circumstances. The categories developed from the initial coding are shown in figure 4.

This analysis therefore suggests that new students' attitudes toward their education (what they bring to it, how they begin to "be a student") and their relative success in coordinating across their lives and their learning activities intersect with the university's learning spaces in several ways (shaded in red in figure 4). The physical environment is shown to have an impact where its design and management intersect with gaps between students' expectations and the realities of what being at university or college is "like;" with attempts to match availability and suitability of learning spaces (particularly non-taught spaces) to their own requirements; and with perceptions and experiences of the functional, environmental, and pedagogic quality of different taught and non-taught spaces—as well as through the extent to which the physical spaces of the campus engender a sense of connectedness (see also Rullman and van den Kieboom 2012).

Figure 4 **Diagram Outlining Initial Coding of What Being a University or College Student Entails**

Students' Learning: Negotiating Space, Time, and Circumstances		
Expectations of, and Attitudes to, Learning and University Life	Coordinating Where and When to Study	Perceptions and Experiences of Learning Spaces
What students "bring" with them	Preferred/possible patterns of study/ social life	Environmental comfort and functional conditions
Processes of "becoming" and "being" a student	Interacting with spaces through time, availability, appropriateness, etc.	Perceptions/experiences of specific settings and pedagogic interactions
Negotiating gaps between expectations and realities	Dealing with tensions and gaps in existing provision	Sense of connectedness with peers, tutors, course, and institution

A next step was to see how this reporting correlated with faculty perceptions and experiences. This, of course, centered on taught sessions—in lecture theatres, seminar rooms, and studios. Here our participants echoed their students' interpretations of formal teaching: they felt they were negotiating between reduced contact hours and increasing numbers of students, which was affecting how they developed and ordered relevant educational content and created appropriate learning activities. They also noted that some rooms had functional and environmental problems; that some seemed timetabled for more students than could be fitted comfortably (that is, were too cramped or too full of furniture); that some spaces lacked a professional feel that could convey an appropriate “learning culture” to students; and that the sheer logistics of enabling time for cross-campus movements and furniture-shifting could “eat into” valuable class time. They too felt that where physical and affective discomfort was created, there was an effect on attendance and concentration. They also had a variety of views about the possibilities and effects of different seminar layouts, associated teaching styles, and student engagement. This was explicitly connected to how newcomers learnt the “rules of the game” of being a student:

My sense is that a lot of them come into the first few seminars not really sure what they're supposed to do, and it's our job to kind of emphasize that ideally a seminar will involve us talking less and them talking more, but I do find that that works normally a lot better in second year and third year, most likely because they're a bit older and more confident and more used to how it works . . . So trying to get them talking can be, I find it can be a challenge.

And I think there is this residual belief that we are “teachers” and that these classrooms are more of an opportunity for us to convey knowledge rather than an interactive experience, and that is very, very difficult, and I think it contributes to this, you were talking about a couple of them sat right in the corner out of the way, and you see

them sitting right at the far back of the room, and they want to do that because it's the place where you can hide.

And there's a tension there because I think if you create the boardroom situation with no place to hide, one slight danger is that people don't come because they think, “Alright, I've only read a tiny bit,” which is bad because they should be reading it all, but then they don't come at all. Whereas if there's a middle ground [using a café table layout and small group discussions] then they come and maybe get something from the seminar even if they're not actively as involved as some other students.

Thus, while our beginner students are negotiating the space, time, and circumstances of their learning—intertwined with what they bring to the situation and the educational practices/spaces on offer—faculty are negotiating their own educational practices-in-space as a means to improve both learning and engagement.

A final point: it should also be noted that some of the staff we interviewed felt that beginner students' inability to organize their time was a difficult and current educational problem:

We're kind of caught in this bind that they want it to be different but when it is different they don't know how to respond to the difference and they won't take the guidance we offer them to help them overcome that difference, and so it's self-perpetuating. We do get a lot of students that just go down those ever-decreasing circles, and you can see it happening in the first year, and part of me thinks we should do more and the other part thinks, “Well, they're adults.”

This, together with the student responses, suggests that making the rules of the game more explicit (whether in traditional, innovative, physical, virtual, or hybrid modes) should be a strategic concern for universities and colleges and that the planning and management of campus spaces needs to

be an integrative component in supporting the settling in of newcomers as engaged and effective learners.

INITIAL FINDINGS

As we have said throughout this study, we are not looking for direct correlations between a space design and its use or for any best solution. The conclusions to be drawn from the data must always take into account the intermeshing between a particular student population (and what it brings to a situation from previous learning experiences), institutional and individual educational practices, and the particular range and types of learning spaces (both taught and non-taught) available to students. However, we propose that it is possible to draw wider conclusions applicable across other tertiary educational institutions where underlying circumstances are similar. This is in situations where class sizes have tended to increase at the same time as formal teaching contact hours have been reduced, as well as where both self-directed activities and social interaction are thrown back onto the management of individual students as they attempt to coordinate the interrelationships between space, time, and their particular situation (physically, socially, culturally, economically, and personally). This situation may also be exacerbated by current educational practices based on independently taught and assessed units of study—self-contained modules—that run in parallel to each other (and may be provided across different cohorts and courses simultaneously), leading to potential fragmentation of the student experience. Overall, we are positing that these circumstances are having social and material effects as

- » the shift to more self-directed learning is producing a large demand for on-campus non-taught study spaces;
- » students may have less opportunities for making social connections; and
- » faculty are facing tensions between what they would like to do and what is possible in relation to allocated hours and available spaces.

While the potential implications specifically for the university being studied are outlined in text box 4, the study also raises some more general issues: What types and range of learning spaces—not just taught spaces (whether innovative or traditional) but also self-directed learning commons (or “hubs” or “zones”)—should a university or college campus provide? How are students supported in active learning in these non-taught spaces? How can these spaces enable effective learning? And how can they enhance engagement and connectedness? While this study can only raise these as questions that need further research, it does suggest some directions for campus planning and management more generally as well as outline some themes that impinge across the whole university infrastructure. These concern, first, making learning processes more explicit; second, matching the range of learning spaces to the student population; and third, ensuring space design and management supports learning and engagement (figure 5).

- » more students arrive on campus less sure of what being a student entails;
- » reductions in the amount and framework of teaching and learning leave students less sure about what is expected of them;

Text Box 4 **Outline Recommendations for Faculty of Art, Design and Social Sciences, Northumbria University**

From this pilot study we were able to draw tentative conclusions for Northumbria University campus planning, particularly in relationship to the Faculty of Art, Design and Social Sciences. The student participants suggested that there is a lack of both enough informal learning space (quantity) and appropriate space in terms of quality, location, facilities, and timetabling. They also had ideas about how to improve the situation. This led to the following recommendations:

- » Aim to better provide for existing unmet demand for informal, self-directed study and common room areas by
 - » developing more self-directed and group study learning spaces
 - » expanding and improving the already good informal learning spaces in the library
 - » finding out more about student needs for informal learning spaces
- » Make better use of existing spaces by
 - » making formal classrooms available for self-directed learning when not in use for taught activities
 - » repurposing (where possible) circulation and foyer spaces to better support informal learning
 - » redesigning outside spaces in support of informal learning rather than “to be looked at”
 - » improving interrelationships between timetabling and self-directed space usage
- » Improve basic teaching and learning conditions in older parts of campus by
 - » improving environmental and functional qualities in the least satisfactory rooms
 - » reviewing group sizes allocated to different spaces and reducing where possible
 - » reviewing the amount of furniture and default layouts allocated to different spaces
 - » increasing the flexibility of furniture in classrooms to enable layouts supporting a variety of pedagogies

THE VALUE OF OUR FINDINGS IN INFORMING CAMPUS PLANNING

As outlined above, grounded theory research has critical review built in throughout. In addition to sharing and discussing the data, initial coding, and analysis, the research team undertook a discursive observational walk of the campus to share ideas and interpretations. As well, campus planning colleagues were interviewed and the data-in-progress discussed. Finally, through SCUP’s roundtable and

web conferencing processes, we shared our categorization process more widely.

The two NU campus planners interviewed noted that the student responses correlated directly with comments from the National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSSS), a yearly nationwide university reporting mechanism in the United Kingdom. While the survey does not ask any specific questions about learning spaces, open fields enabled students to note issues similar to those found in our study—the

uneven quality of classroom spaces, furniture, and fittings; specific spaces with environmental issues; the problem of some self-study areas requiring a purchase; and the pressure of numbers on self-directed learning spaces in the library. These interviewees are, of course, aware of the considerable variation in stock across the university, including some buildings or parts of buildings that are recognized as no longer being fit for purpose. As well as aiming to improve facilities across the campus, expand the library, and develop an experimental innovative “taught” space to test with staff and students, NU planners are also intending to set some basic self-directed (“learning hub”) space standards across the whole university campus. Previously, before a recent restructuring, individual schools had considerable autonomy, leading, as one of the planners noted, to a “real diverse range of buildings that don’t feel joined up” both because of legacy issues and because of differences in approaches across departments. Importantly, the students we surveyed came from the newly formed Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences, which brought together departments that had not previously developed self-directed learning spaces as much as some others. Elsewhere in the university there are learning

zones explicitly created to meet the demand highlighted by the students in our study (figure 6). A major intention, then, is to set baseline standards for self-directed learning spaces across the university while still supporting disciplinary variations. In this context, the value of our small study to NU planners was that it

- » validated existing data coming from student satisfaction surveys (but could provide more detail and variety),
- » provided additional evidence highlighting the unmet demand for non-taught learning spaces to inform strategic recommendations to senior management, and
- » offered student-led suggestions for particular improvements to inform campus planning and management.

Figure 5 **Suggested Strategic Issues for Campus Planning**

Expectations of, and Attitudes to, Learning and University Life	Coordinating Where and When to Study	Perceptions and Experiences of Learning Spaces
Make Learning Processes More Explicit	Match Range and Type of Learning Spaces to Student Population	Ensure Space Supports Learning and Engagement
<p>Make courses, tutors, and institutional identity more “visible”</p> <p>Communicate “rules of the game” more effectively</p>	<p>Undertake ongoing research into students’ negotiations of study across multiple learning spaces</p> <p>Develop an integrated strategy for taught and non-taught learning spaces provision across the whole university</p> <p>Create an appropriate number and type of non-taught learning spaces</p>	<p>Have good functional and environmental standards</p> <p>Involve students in development of educational practices and spaces</p> <p>Undertake ongoing evaluations of effectiveness of learning in different spaces</p> <p>Develop role of space design and management as element in enhancing connectedness</p>

Note: Red shading indicates key themes from initial coding.

Figure 6 **Learning Zone, Faculty of Engineering and Environment, Northumbria University**



At the same time, our study showed the need for additional research—most immediately, a more detailed analysis of what types, locations, facilities, and timetabling of additional non-taught spaces are required by students at the university (across what they bring to the process, for example, as part-time, international, or mature students as well as the learning activities and identities of different subject disciplines). We therefore hope that NU will consider undertaking further student and faculty focus groups as a method for better understanding what kinds of standards need to be set for these non-taught spaces.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our overall aim in this study has been to raise questions about what matters to incoming students regarding the physical spaces of the university, what kinds of rich data are achievable in small-scale research, and what is the usefulness of such data in informing campus planning and institutional missions of learning and engagement. We were not expecting to connect the process of becoming a student to negotiations across space, time, and circumstances, but consider that this emerging and central theme offers some useful purchase on

the contemporary university and college campus. We also felt that the study, although small, was resource-effective and its methods could easily be transferred to other institutions and different issues. Ultimately, we draw the following conclusions and recommendations across three areas: first, research approaches and methods; second, interrelationships between learning spaces and their occupation; and third, informing institutional missions of learning and engagement.

A. RESEARCH APPROACHES AND METHODS

- » A1. It is important to undertake research of existing as well as innovative learning spaces and to explore perceptions and experiences across the whole campus and beyond.
- » A2. There is considerable relevance in using student-centered, open-ended, and meaning-laden research methods that can reveal issues that might not otherwise be considered.
- » A3. There is a value to rich research methods beyond quantitative surveys; here we have only scratched the surface of possibilities.
- » A4. These kinds of approaches can offer a systematic way of understanding the varying effects of space completely interconnected across educational practices, learning environments, and participants' diverse perceptions and experiences.

We believe that affect is as important as functional performance in a learning space (and that in fact these are completely intertwined) and that listening to students using open-ended approaches has the potential to elicit a rich understanding of what diverse students bring to their whole learning process as well as to specific learning situations. How they perceive and experience their learning as a dynamic, negotiated, and sometimes difficult sequence of activities in turn needs to be mapped in relation to both existing and innovative educational practices. We have

only touched on the surface of possible methods here, with the focus groups providing the strongest data in our case. However, there are many other examples of rich research methods already used to analyze learning spaces in universities and colleges ranging from observational techniques (for example, using web cams) to mapping (for example, of student journeys through campus [Douglas 1998]) to ways of capturing non-verbal and tacit knowledge (for example, through cultural “probes” [Gaver, Dunne, and Pacenti 1999]) or other forms of visual ethnography (Pink 2006). It is hoped that learning spaces research will continue to develop these rich methods to both examine and evaluate students’ perceptions and experiences.

This study was also concerned with explicitly considering the underlying theories used to understand relationships between space and the activities that go on in it. While there are many fine studies that come from a behaviorist perspective or use the language of affordances or human-computer interaction (HCI), there are also many that do not reflect enough on the conceptual framework underpinning their work. Learning spaces research needs to address this issue more generally, not just engaging with the social sciences approaches offered here but also with developments in neuroscience that have the potential to re-enliven environmental psychology.

B. INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEARNING SPACES AND THEIR OCCUPATION

- » B1. The effects of campus spaces on learning (in its widest sense) can be usefully interrogated through exploring how students negotiate space, time, and circumstances, which takes into account the interweavings of what students bring, the educational practices involved, and learning space design.
- » B2. The material spaces of the whole campus (and associated facilities such as student accommodation) are shown to have an impact on students’ attendance, the effectiveness of their learning, their understanding

of what being a student is, and their sense of connectedness.

- » B3. For many universities and colleges, the amount, quality, and type of non-taught spaces are likely to become increasingly important in supporting institutional missions of learning and engagement.
- » B4. It is posited that material space can be part of making the “rules of the game” of an institution’s educational practices more explicit and visible.

When the University of Sydney in Australia (Ellis 2011) came to develop a new campus strategy, it aimed to fully and seamlessly integrate formal, informal, and virtual learning spaces. The intention was to start from the student experience and put “engaged inquiry” at the center of the institution’s understanding about what learning spaces in universities need to support. This has led to interesting work on how these principles underpin strategy and connect to the details of implementation across, for example, timetabling, the percentage of formal to informal spaces, and the range of space types from specialist to generic.

In many ways, the kinds of questions raised there also underpin this study. We have here posited that space can also have an impact on how students understand the rules of the game (that is, the preferred educational practices of a particular university or college) by helping to make visible its activities and culture; by providing spaces that help students feel connected with their peers, courses, and institution; and by exploring the pedagogic implications and social rules of different spatial arrangements where teachers are not present. All of these issues require further research.

Crucially, we have argued that the contemporary student experience in universities and colleges is tending to become more fragmented as numbers grow, contact hours decrease, and more students work or have caring commitments. The types, quality, location, facilities, and timetabling of

non-taught spaces become increasingly important in these circumstances both to support self-directed and peer group study and to enable informal social interaction for which there may not be time in formal class sessions.

The second, connected, implication of this study is that new students often struggle with the shift to self-directed learning as a major part of their learning (compared to school or the workplace, for example) as they lack a clear understanding of how and where this “undirected” activity should take place. Universities and colleges may therefore need to explore more explicitly how instructional support, student support services, and a range of self-directed, informal, and social spaces can help students feel “at home” and motivated in these non-taught aspects of their studies. Of course, this is already happening in many libraries, learning commons, and other student support services but in our particular study we found that some beginning students were failing to make the connections across and between these services and what was provided through their course and discipline area (or had not had the rules of the game effectively communicated) and also felt a real lack of a common room or home base. Exploring these issues further might include the following research questions:

- » How do the interrelationships of space, belonging, and engagement change as a student progresses from freshman to graduate (and/or from learner to researcher)?
- » To what extent do diverse types of students (full time, part time, mature, disabled, etc.) tend toward different perceptions and experiences of their learning spaces and of what belonging and engagement means to them?
- » What kinds of non-taught learning spaces do contemporary students perceive they need in support of their learning and engagement?

C. INFORMING INSTITUTIONAL MISSIONS OF LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

- » C1. The study supported the importance of integrative planning, with the role of campus design and management fully embedded into institutional learning and teaching strategies and processes.
- » C2. There is an urgent need for clearer taxonomies and a shared terminology of the new kinds of learning spaces being developed in universities and colleges.
- » C3. There remains an issue of “translation” that can enable the bridging of the divide between conceptual frameworks for understanding the complex interrelationships between learning spaces and their occupation, analytical research methods of various types, and the strategic and operational planning required to manage campuses and facilities.

The research approach and methods used here deliberately refuse to separate out educational practices from the spaces in which they take place; it is therefore not surprising that our conclusions support an integrative campus planning process based on strategic missions that work across space, learning and teaching activities, and other factors. It was felt that as part of this process it would be very helpful to have more consistent taxonomies of the increasing range of learning spaces now being developed at the tertiary level. Concepts such as formal and informal learning are used inconsistently (differentiating between “formal” university and college education and “informal” learning taking place outside these institutions as well as between different kinds of learning *within* these institutions) while valuable terms like active and passive learning can blur across taught, non-taught, and mixed-use spaces. This was particularly important in our study as we came to focus on the range of learning spaces that did not involve any formal teaching. A variety of terms such as learning commons, hubs, and zones is now being used to name these types of spaces, but again without an underlying

consistency. And, of course, it needs to be noted that this research did not engage at all with virtual, hybrid, or even technology-rich forms of learning. Databases such as the JISC Informal Learning Spaces Flickr photostream (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/jiscinfonet/sets/72157600086195383/>) and FLEXSpace (Flexible Learning Environments Exchange—<https://sites.google.com/site/flexspacedev/>) are engaging with this issue, but it remains an area worthy of more research.

Finally, although this pilot study informed campus planning to the extent that it helped validate the current work being undertaken at the university, there remains a divide between the conceptual thinking, research methods, and forms of data gathering used here and the frameworks and terminologies for strategic and operational development within campus planning and management more generally. Again, this suggests some possible future research areas. For instance, we need to investigate what kinds of data can help in the

better design and management of an effective variety of self-directed and informal learning spaces on university and college campuses. We should be exploring ways in which academic researchers and campus planning teams can work effectively together to generate research that can inform developing strategies and practices for campus design and management. And we need to find ways of embedding resource-effective learning spaces research into everyday university strategy and practices on an ongoing basis to enable evidence-based decision making that is integrated across strategic, pedagogic, and design developments. In this small study we hope that we have shown just one of the ways that this might happen using methods from social sciences as a means of generating rich, complex, but also valuable data that can inform the future design of university and college learning spaces.

APPENDIX 1A: INITIAL CODING FROM STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Campus Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Traditional versus modern; like modern, contemporary feel » Atmosphere varies—compared to school/previous educational setting » Comparisons to ideas of a “traditional” campus university » Not much green space and for landscaping rather than for using » Preference for greenery/places to sit/informal meeting opportunities without having to make a purchase » Pros and cons of campus setting/relationship to town » Expected the campus to be busier » Tendency to get lost initially
First Impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Positive impact of first visits » Lack of satisfaction with induction process; not appropriate for mature students » Enjoyed informality of staff relationships with students
Settling In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » “Falling” into routines » Developing awareness of pleasures and pressures of learning » Different aims between PT and FT, mature students » Developing belonging
Belonging and Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The library as a “belonging” (scholarly) space » Lack of informal social spaces » Lack of connection with particular classes and spaces » Desire for “home base” for social encounters
Timetabling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Being “bothered” to come to class (effects on attendance) » Timing issues in using informal learning spaces
Perceptions and Experiences of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Adjusting to expectations of self-directed and independent learning » Importance of “visibility” of tutor support » Varying accessibility of content » Friendliness and approachability of staff » Negotiating passive and active learning activities » Anxieties about speaking out in class » Differences between studio/lab-based courses and lecture/seminar ones
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Gaps between expectations and realities » Lack of suitable seating (for self-directed study) » Problem with paying for drink in order to sit down » Strict rules about what you eat where » Overcrowding in library at peak times » Complexities of “rules” for self-directed and group spaces » Appreciation of good facilities, particularly Students’ Union, sports facilities, library » Lack of more social self-directed learning spaces » More facilities for group work wanted » Better communication needed about what spaces, facilities are available » Specific problems with size, environmental conditions, layout, and furniture in particular spaces » Time/organizational issues affect possibilities for classroom flexibility » Varied preferences for seminar formats
Choosing Where to Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Differential preferences for studying at home or on campus » Negotiating availability and suitability of self-directed study space at home, on campus, and beyond » Would like to be able to use empty classrooms for self-directed study » 24/7 opening of the library—valued, welcoming, motivating

APPENDIX 1B: SECOND STAGE CODING: CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

What Students Bring With Them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Traditional versus modern; like modern, contemporary feel » Atmosphere varies—compared to school/previous educational setting » Comparisons to ideas of a “traditional” campus university » Not much green space and for landscaping rather than for using » Preference for greenery/places to sit/informal meeting opportunities without having to make a purchase » Pros and cons of campus setting/relationship to town » Expected the campus to be busier » Tendency to get lost initially
Processes of Becoming a Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Positive impact of first visits » Lack of satisfaction with induction process; not appropriate for mature students » Enjoyed informality of staff relationships with students » Adjusting to expectations of self-directed and independent learning » Importance of “visibility” of tutor support » Varying accessibility of content » Friendliness and approachability of staff » Negotiating passive and active learning activities » Anxieties about speaking out in class
Negotiating Gaps Between Expectations and Realities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Not much green space and for landscaping rather than for using » Preference for greenery/places to sit/informal meeting opportunities without having to make a purchase » Pros and cons of campus setting/relationship to town » Expected the campus to be busier » “Falling” into routines » Developing awareness of pleasures and pressures of learning » Different aims between PT and FT, mature students » Developing belonging
Preferred/Possible Patterns of Study/Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The library as a “belonging” (scholarly) space » Lack of informal social spaces » Lack of connection with particular classes and spaces » Differential preferences for studying at home or on campus » Negotiating availability and suitability of self-directed study space at home, on campus, and beyond
Interacting With Spaces Through Time, Availability, Appropriateness, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Being “bothered” to come to class (effects on attendance) » Timing issues in using informal learning spaces » Lack of suitable seating (for self-directed study) » Problem with paying for drink in order to sit down » Strict rules about what you eat where » Overcrowding in library at peak times » Complexities of “rules” for self-directed and group spaces » Appreciation of good facilities, particularly Students’ Union, sports facilities, library » Lack of more social self-directed learning spaces » More facilities for group work wanted

<p>Dealing with Gaps and Tensions in Existing Provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Adjusting to expectations of self-directed and independent learning » Importance of “visibility” of tutor support » Varying accessibility of content » Friendliness and approachability of staff » Negotiating passive and active learning activities » Anxieties about speaking out in class » Differences between studio/lab-based courses and lecture/seminar ones » Differential preferences for studying at home or on campus » Negotiating availability and suitability of self-directed study space at home, on campus, and beyond » Would like to be able to use empty classrooms for self-directed study » 24/7 opening of the library—valued, welcoming, motivating
<p>Environmental Comfort and Functional Conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Gaps between expectations and realities » Lack of suitable seating (for self-directed study) » Problem with paying for drink in order to sit down » Strict rules about what you eat where » Overcrowding in library at peak times » Complexities of “rules” for self-directed and group spaces » Appreciation of good facilities, particularly Students’ Union, sports facilities, library » Lack of more social self-directed learning spaces » More facilities for group work wanted » Better communication needed about what spaces, facilities are available » Specific problems with size, environmental conditions, layout, and furniture in particular spaces » Time/organizational issues affect possibilities for classroom flexibility » Varied preferences for seminar formats
<p>Sense of Connectedness With Peers, Course, and Institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Differential preferences for studying at home or on campus » Negotiating availability and suitability of self-directed study space at home, on campus, and beyond » Would like to be able to use empty classrooms for self-directed study » 24/7 opening of the library—valued, welcoming, motivating » The library as a “belonging” (scholarly) space » Lack of informal social spaces » Lack of connection with particular classes and spaces » Desire for “home base” for social encounters

APPENDIX 2: INITIAL CODING FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

AUTHORS' NOTE: The student participants have been coded as S1–S18 to anonymize the data. In some cases where a particular voice was not clear to the transcriber, a question mark has been used. The buildings the students name are their main formal study locations and are shown on the map in text box 1: Ellison (8), Lipman (29), Squires Annexe (18), Business School (17), and CCE2 (25).

CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

TRADITIONAL VERSUS MODERN; LIKE MODERN, CONTEMPORARY FEEL

S15: I like the layout, the campus. It's all kept together, where some of the others I looked at, it was, like, spread quite a lot over where it was.

S16: I like the modern building that we're in at the moment.

S15: Yeah, I do.

S16: That's what drew my attention to this university.

S17: It seems quite hi-tech with its computer systems and all that.

S15: It's well-thought-out.

ATMOSPHERE VARIES— COMPARED TO SCHOOL/PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL SETTING

So it's Ellison makes you feel like school; what about Lipman?

S16: School. [Agreement].

S15: The design building [CCE2] is a bit different I think.

S16: That gets me into a bit more freedom.

S15: Yes.

S17: There's a lot of open space.

Does it feel like maybe a bit more of a creative space?

S16: Potentially, yeah. But at the moment it's still a bit school-like because it is literally learning. When you go downstairs to floor 1, it's got this huge space with all these tables and people sat at tables and stuff doing work in an open space, which is what I want to start doing soon. But at the moment it is really linear.

COMPARISONS TO IDEAS OF A "TRADITIONAL" CAMPUS UNIVERSITY

S2: I think that sometimes, like especially when I came here, the environment is quite a lot different, and for some reason I expected there to be a lot more green space, outdoor types of places to go to. The other universities I visited on open days, they had quite a lot of grassy areas and places to go, and that's something I don't really find here. I don't know if that's a point that I could raise, but it's just how I felt.

S5: I felt that as well; it appears to be less traditional here too, well, we were talking earlier on about how the architecture is newer and you expect it to be more like an old-fashioned school going to university, it's a higher level of education where it's a lot more advanced than you'd expect, in the buildings and [the] contemporary [style].

S3: Yes, it's not a campus and the thing you expect with universities is a campus, like at Nottingham for example, that's really, really out of the way and is really green,

so it's in a park, but here this is just public space, you get people walking to work through the uni and stuff, so it's a lot more urbanized, which has its benefits in terms of location, but maybe as a learning environment it's different to what you expect. Obviously the idea around uni is, you go and there are people lying on grass reading things [*laughter*], but it's not quite like that.

NOT MUCH GREEN SPACE; GREEN SPACE FOR LANDSCAPING RATHER THAN FOR USING

S5: Greenery, so you don't feel. . . . It'd be nice. You do feel like you're in a big city with lots of people because there are people outside who can come in.

S4: At the Business [School] where you can tell they've made an attempt to get a little bit of green in, and there's not even that much there, but the fact that I noticed, the fact that there's little circles of green at the Business School, means that there's hardly any, and the only green that there is on this campus you don't feel as if you could ever sit on it because it's constantly being mowed and the gardeners are constantly there watching over you, so you don't go on the grass.

So what kind of improvements do you think the university could make to the campus? And I know there are lots of things, but just shout them out.

S12: The paving outside of the library is all wobbly.

S10: And the tree in the middle of nowhere.

PREFERENCE FOR GREENERY/PLACES TO SIT/ INFORMAL MEETING OPPORTUNITIES WITHOUT BUYING

S6: I've been told that in summer people do sit on the lawns and stuff and I've been told they do that, but you notice how little green there is because I went to the walk-in clinic and passed a field with cows and it was the most exciting moment of my two months being up here, and the fact you actually pick it out shows how little green there is. There's a park, apparently, near me, but I've no idea how to get to it, and you wouldn't believe that there was because it's just all houses and streets. [. . .] but in the [Students'] union, because there is, there's Reds and Habita [on-campus cafés] and stuff but you have to actually buy something to sit there and you're not really allowed to go there unless you're actually purchasing something, and apart from that there's nowhere to actually meet up with people, especially with people who are in houses compared to those in halls because there's nowhere for you to sit and interact without really going back to someone's house or hall or whatever.

PROS AND CONS OF CAMPUS SETTING/ RELATIONSHIP TO TOWN

S6: This is my second choice, my first was Lancaster, and that is one of the most secluded universities, it's worse than Nottingham for transport. You're not allowed cars on campus, it's bus, and the nearest town is half an hour by bus, and then this is the complete opposite, but . . . I don't know, I come from somewhere really secluded so it's really different here, but then it has its benefits at the same time, but it's completely different to home.

EXPECTED THE CAMPUS TO BE BUSIER

S16: I was expecting it to be busier. I was just expecting crowds of students constantly around our area and to and from the west and east campus, but when I'm walking to class and stuff there doesn't seem to be that many people, there doesn't seem to be an atmosphere of student life; it's just people walking.

So you expected the campus to be busier?

S16: Yes. Because I prefer going to private open days where you see how it is when there's uni students instead of visitors, and places like Lincoln seemed busier and also Chester, and they seemed to have more of a uni atmosphere, kind of a stereotypical uni atmosphere. Like, you'd see groups of types of people but here it just seems very individual.

NAVIGATION

TENDENCY TO GET LOST INITIALLY

S1: I was quite surprised that during our induction in the first week there was no one really around campus to sort of point you in the right direction for which building you were [trying to find], so, like, obviously we were all quite lost with where our rooms were and there was no one there to give assistance, which I thought was quite surprising.

S2: The few people that you did find that were out on the front, they did, some of them didn't actually know whereabouts places were and I asked quite a few times and some of them just didn't understand.

S6: I had trouble actually finding the university because there was no concession made for those people who were dumped outside of Newcastle in a house, who did not come from Newcastle. I had no idea at all, so there

was no help there.

So what is your typical journey to get to that space?

S4: It's usually followed on from another lecture so I usually follow a big stream of people, and if that one person gets it wrong, everybody gets it wrong.

S5: I have once been that person that got it wrong.

S4: There's such a big stream of people so you just follow that, but if there was no group of people I'd have to look at all the signs.

S6: I got lost getting there this morning.

S5: I'd get lost because [when] there was a group of us that walks there and we just converse as we're walking [then I don't look where I am going], so now if they weren't there and I wasn't walking with them, I'd probably have no idea how to get there.

S17: It's in an awkward place as well, the room . . . X . . . Not X; what's the other one called? Y, the room Y teaches in. I got lost a couple of times in there. I get in, because that building . . .

S16: You have to go through.

S17: Yes, through, along, and down a couple. . . I missed a whole lesson because I couldn't get to it.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

POSITIVE IMPACT OF FIRST VISITS

S1: I was torn between going to Newcastle and coming here, and I went to the open day on Newcastle, and even though, like, it has a much better reputation in league tables, I felt like I wasn't impressed by it at all. Then

when I came to this open day I thought it sounded really good, I think, like, this university, you can tell they try a lot harder to try and sell themselves to students.

S6: . . . this one was the first one I actually enjoyed because they were more modern, there wasn't the traditional talking and they were actually funny and modern and included you rather than talk at you, which was a really good benefit, I think, of this uni.

S8: I liked the open day, the structure of it. Some of them that you went to see, it was like, you were spread out quite a bit; they sort of kept you in one part then you'd move on to another part here, where at others it seemed like, "Oh, this is what you do in the morning" and then "Oh, you get on this bus and get to the other side of the city" and now go and look at this and come back, and you really seemed to be all over and not really spending time anywhere. But the one here was like, "Oh, we'll properly show you around the floor that you're going to be learning at, then you can go and see the halls, come back, see other things and just do what you like, walk round . . ." but some of them seemed, "You can only do this, you can only do that. . . ."

S12: I'd already visited the university several times before and done extensive public lectures so I already knew the layout of some of the buildings and I did [a course in Newcastle] which is twinned with this university anyway, so there was a good rapport beforehand.

S14: I have friends in Newcastle but they're all at the University of Newcastle whereas I don't feel that one's as close knit as Northumbria. I thought this was more of a community environment, so I'd rather go here than there.

S12: Friendliness, staff not "elite" but people who are "down to earth and will help you with anything."

S7: I think it's what I expected student life to be like.

S12: Yes. The external staff such as obviously admin staff and bar staff, they are very accommodating and they'll help you, and just in general everyone makes you feel welcome. I mean, Newcastle is the friendliest city in the world anyway, but the staff within Northumbria University, from library to Habita bar staff, are the most welcoming and friendly people you could ever meet.

LACK OF SATISFACTION WITH INDUCTION PROCESS; NOT APPROPRIATE FOR MATURE STUDENTS

S3: I thought it was a bit annoying that we got loads and loads of stuff through the post about freshers' week and going out and then we got one page in the booklet about where we had to be the first week, and I kind of overlooked that because I was getting so much post, like TV license and where to go out and nights out and stuff, and I ended up missing the first day for the history induction. I wasn't the only one; there were a few people from different faculties in my accommodation who missed it as well because we had so much post and stuff for going out and that, that they just completely overlooked the one A5 piece of paper telling you where you had to be that week.

S5: I didn't even see it through the post. I ended up finding it by chance when I was looking on the website. Completely by chance.

S3: I just feel slightly over-inducted, like, so many meetings and big events. Like, when they got you all in the sports hall and there was that really weird show with the people putting on their little performances [laughter] of various scenarios and they were just, they'd explain to you the same thing sort of over and over again in various mandatory talks and I think you could definitely consolidate that into something more efficient rather than just going in every day for the similar sort of talk.

S6: All my housemates, none of us do the same thing, and someone went to that mandatory sports hall talk and I got a text telling me not to bother going. I didn't go to the library one either, because I think it is literally a case of some of them are just not that necessary, and you do feel like it's too much, in a way.

S9?: I wouldn't say more welcoming for mature students. On my first week we did feel a bit that we were the minority, and I know we are but [part-time and mature students] weren't really mentioned. And the welcome week, I didn't get to take part in that because I do have a two-year-old that I need to go back to, so I thought they could have maybe done a little bit more maybe for the mature students and people with caring responsibilities.

S8?: I didn't get any information at all about the welcome week so I literally went to the "This university is so amazing" presentation, and that's all I got, didn't get anything else.

ENJOYED INFORMALITY OF STAFF RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

S15: Yes, that was the first week, wasn't it? Yeah, that was alright, that was. . . . We met the tutors and sat and had a talk.

S17: And it was really laidback.

S15: Yes, X and Y took us all out on a treasure hunt thing; that was on the Thursday, and then we all went for a drink with the lecturers and stuff so . . . That was quite nice, I got to know everyone then.

SETTLING IN

"FALLING" INTO ROUTINES

So do you think you've changed at all since the beginning of term?

S4: Yes. I think before, you were just panicking about turning up on time and getting to the room and then once you get used to where the room is and you get comfortable you start picking out little faults with the room and then slowly but surely you have rooms that you prefer and ones you dislike.

S2: But you fell into a routine now.

Has the way you think about this space changed since you started using it? So when you started back in whatever it was you started, over the last few weeks has it changed?

S15?: Yes, because you recognize people more and stuff like that, so it doesn't feel as awkward going into it.

S17: There are more familiar faces. I think when you first get here you're like, "Oh, I'm going into a lecture," but now it's more, "Oh yeah, here we are . . ." and it's the same people.

S16: . . . This was all brand new and I didn't know what to expect. I don't think we've really had the opportunity to explore all the facilities because all we've really been in is that classroom, which you came in, and one classroom in the Lipman Building. We haven't really been able to see. . . . There's a sound room and there's more but we haven't had a chance to explore them.

Do you have a feeling of belonging or do you feel isolated here?

?: Well, I don't feel that we belong but I think that's more the students more than the university.

And did you feel that at the beginning when you came here, when you started, or has that grown or . . . ?

?: I think it's grown more over time. [*Agreement*].

And do you feel connected or disconnected to the university and the course and your modules that you're doing?

S12: Connected, definitely. [*Agreement*]. You all know what I'm like, I feel that maybe it is because I sit on the front row and maybe it is that they're directly looking at me, but I do feel like the lecturers engage with you during lectures and sometimes you do feel you get to take part and you actually contribute to the learning environment for other people as well.

Would you say you feel comfortable or uncomfortable at the university?

?: Comfortable. [*Agreement*].

DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF PLEASURES AND PRESSURES OF LEARNING

So what does it make you think of when you arrive there? You come in and you know you've got a lecture

?: Yes, you're learning. Every day when I walk onto the university campus, I know I'm going to be challenged.

?: I think it is, at the minute, it's still a bit new and fresh, but I think maybe within the next few weeks, because of assignments and stuff, I think people might start being a bit more, "Oh God. . . ."

?: Especially with the 9 o'clock start.

?: Yes.

DIFFERENT AIMS BETWEEN PT AND FT, MATURE STUDENTS

S1: For me, I don't really have much free time because I've got a job and stuff and I don't really spend much of my spare time here so I think it's pretty fit for purpose for me. I'm not really bothered by it. Changes like greenery and that, I could live without it so. . . .

S17?: I chose Northumbria because it was my only choice because I've got a young family and I live close.

S8?: That's the reason I chose Northumbria as well, so that I could stay at home so that I didn't have to move my son around.

S12: I chose it to get away from home!

DEVELOPING BELONGING

S16: To start with I [felt a bit isolated] because I came straight from just being with my mum, and now I'm suddenly on my own, and it was very intimidating. But then it's kind of grown on me and it feels like I actually belong here. And I keep telling my mum I'm going to go home soon when I'm actually in Leeds and she says, "This is your home!" [*Laughter*]. But Newcastle is my home.

So did you feel the same or . . . ?

S17: A little bit isolated in a way. But now I feel like I belong here.

But it took a little while just to get settled in. What about you, L?

S15: I know quite a few people in second year and third so I already knew quite a few people here. They're not on the same course but. . . . So I had that feeling of already knowing people here. And there was a few coming up with me as well, first years, so it wasn't like I was on my own.

Okay. And did you feel connected or disconnected with the university and the course and modules? Did you feel you had a connection with them or did you feel it was something you just couldn't connect with? So that's when you started at university.

S16: I'm not sure.

S15: I don't know really. Before I'd say yeah, because you kept getting letters and things and. . . .

S17: And they send you a card saying, "Good luck. . . ."

S16: I got a Happy Birthday card from them! That was great. *[Laughter]*.

S15: Yes, just things like that, like you were connected before you came, I think.

So they were trying to make you feel part of the university from a very early stage.

S15: Yes.

S16: Outside of class time and stuff you don't feel too connected to your course or the university. I like to just go there then break off from it as soon as class ends and go and do my own thing.

BELONGING AND SPACE

THE LIBRARY AS A "BELONGING" (SCHOLARLY) SPACE

S3: I feel quite connected. I like the library, I'd rather do work in the library than at home. I'd say that was the main connection I've got with the university. I just don't work as well at home because of distractions.

S4: And there's Newcastle City Library just round the corner as well, which is really nice to go and work in, and the staff there are really friendly as well so if you want a change of scenery but still need the library then it's literally a five minute walk away and you've got another massive library.

S2: Very comfortable. I think it's quite a nice place to be. Sometimes even at the library it does get quite loud, it's not always the perfect place to work but you're going to get that anywhere you try to work.

S3: It was certainly nothing to make you feel uncomfortable.

S4: No, everyone's friendly, everyone is in the same position as well so there's no reason for anyone to be hostile, and everyone's doing the same course and everyone likes their subjects so . . . well. . . . *[Laughter]*.

S2: One of my favorite places now to work in is, it's the Lit and Phil Library in the middle of town because it's somewhere no one else goes and there's quite a lot of desks where you can sit and do some quiet work whereas I've found that here there's either friends or social factors involved.

S4: Is that the one we've got membership?

S2: Yes, it's got a really big history section and I've found that quite useful. And there's a bit down the very bottom

of the stairs where it's an absolute silence area as well, people are just writing dissertations and stuff, [and I] just sit there at a desk round the corner [. . .] so it's quite a way from everyone else.

LACK OF INFORMAL SOCIAL SPACES

S4: Also I think history specifically, there's not really an exclusive history library place but with quite a lot of other faculties there are, like, architecture have got their own library and facilities, and law, business, they've got their own libraries that they can go to but they can use ours as well, whereas with history there's nowhere where just history students can go, and it's quite a big subject, like, it's bigger than quite a lot of the others.

DESIRE FOR "HOME BASE"

So what kind of improvements do you think the university could make to the campus? And I know there are lots of things, but just shout them out. . . .

S10: A common room. [Agreement].

S9: Or just make a space in the Students' Union where you can eat your own food.

S10: Make it bigger in here.

S9: And floor 1 in the library, the one that's the social space, I think they need that, even though they've extended it, they need more. Or move one of the other floors into that kind of space. A social space.

Can you explain a bit more about what you mean by "uni atmosphere"?

S17: Just loads of people. . . .

S16: They look like students, wacky hairstyles, groups of

people so you can, it's like, very stereotypical American films like, "Oh there's the nerds over there, and there are the geeks." In some unis you can actually tell those groups of people, where you actually see groups of people, groups of friends, but here you kind of see only one or two people walking around but not groups of people meeting up. I don't think there are that many social points in the university, like something as simple as picnic benches or stuff where people can sit around, there are only standard benches where people sit awkwardly next to someone they don't know, but there are no groups of friends like you normally see in university, which is kind of like, it gives a learning atmosphere as well, because at high school and 6th form I used to be part of a big group of people and we'd have a certain spot we'd. . . . You don't really see that around here. [Agreement].

S17: Yes, like common rooms and things, we don't really. . . . It's all just classrooms.

S16: Yes, classrooms or flats and I always feel really awkward saying, "Oh come to my room after class. . . ."

S15: There's the bit in the design building downstairs but there are only a few chairs, there's not much there.

S16: And that's usually for waiting as well.

You say there aren't a lot of places to kind of mix with people; are you managing to mix with other people on the course?

S17: On the course? Yes. But not with other people though.

S15: A weird focus between course and flat mates.

Okay. What kinds of improvements do you think the university could make to its campus?

S17: Make [other spaces in the university] more modern as the design [school] ones.

S15: Social areas maybe. So you could go as a group, like, just outside the classroom, and plenty of it so it's not going to be taken up, so you've always got that. . . .

S16: Social study areas. Because when you go as a group of friends to a library or something like that, it's quiet and you have to whisper. . . .

S17: Like a common room I suppose.

S16: A room for general studying, and you have a few facilities you can have access to. But when you have group work and stuff, it's good to. . . . At the moment, my group personally, we haven't spoken that much, we haven't worked together that much because we don't have the opportunity to. I just haven't stepped forward and said, "Right, you can all come to my flat and let's see how that works out" because you don't have that much. . . . Like, we can't really work that well during class time, my group, a lot of people. . . . It's always a mix and match of people who don't turn up, we can't really work as a group. And we have all the facilities there and we can talk, it's potentially a perfect environment, it's just getting everyone there. So maybe some general study area, and not strict silence but somewhere you can go, optional, to work.

S15: My library at college had different areas, so they had a computer area but so much of it was a quiet, personal, one-on-one thing, and there'd be another part that was the groups and similar with study booths and things, there were ones for if you just went by yourself and that was quiet, then they had another one where you could talk to people. So you had the choice of which you wanted. And they put small, quite low-down chairs and tables and things but they were in a circle so you could just go and sit as a group and things. (*note: lacks*

knowledge that NU library has this facility)

S16: Just to have a more professional environment, more adult, because we've seen videos of people in design studios and stuff and they're kind of sitting round talking to other people instead of. . . . You can't talk to someone whilst everyone's in a line because then you're ignoring this side and you kind of

S16: Yes, you kind of highlight yourself but you could be sat there and be looking out and say it out loud and you'd be talking to everyone. You could have a little chat box on your screen and you can just. . . . [Laughter].

S16: A personal study booth, that would be good, so you could just plug your iPod into the speakers so you could have background music without disturbing other people, because mixing music and sound is a bit chaotic, too distracting.

[. . .]

S17: In 6th form we had a common room and there'd always be a TV on, it'd be like just little sections of. . . . Table and lockers and stuff over here, another table there, just seats. . . .

S16: It'd be a better working environment . . . for some people.

And would you like desks or would you like more comfortable seats?

S15: Yeah, ones where you can just sit back and lounge back.

S17: A mixture really.

S16: Yes, because we need to use laptops and do drawings and whatever.

S15: Just depends on what you're doing.

S16: If it's for design students it's better to have tables that you can move around and use as a table and add it to your collection of tables for all your group to fit around.

LACK OF CONNECTION WITH PARTICULAR CLASSES AND SPACES

So have you got any other feelings you have when you go into other areas?

S16: When we go into other areas it's just the same, I really do not want to be there. Like, I attend, I always attend but I just don't want to. . . .

[. . .]

S17: I think it's more to do with the content rather than the room. I just don't find it as interesting as others. I mean, that's got a part to play in how I feel about it.

TIMETABLING

BEING "BOTHERED" TO COME TO CLASS (EFFECTS ON ATTENDANCE)

S4: And because it's Monday, by the end of the day you've already had two lectures sometimes, or four, and I just won't go, I'll be that tired or that hungry and I see that module as so pointless, and I'd be like, "Why am I wasting my time when I've got other stuff I could be doing at home?" like going to the library or doing a lecture. It's got to the point where it's that depressing and awful in there that I'd just rather not go.

S2: It's really hard going from say [one module] sort of being bright and being alert and wanting to be there to going to something you just don't want to.

S1: I think both times we were in that room as well it's always at the end of the day. For me on a Tuesday I'll either have two one-hour breaks so it's a long day, or a three-hour break. And then you go into that room and then you're not motivated by that time. I think it is the time of the day as well.

S5: Yes, I think if it was in the morning you wouldn't feel half as bad as this.

S6: On a Tuesday I have a four-hour gap between, that's a big gap between the two, and I always go home because I'd rather leave the uni, but then I have to convince myself to come back to go to this lecture in this room, and I just don't want to go to it.

S3: We make our lives sound so hard. We've got two lectures in a day; just awful! *[Laughter]*.

S5: I think the time of day does factor into it a lot, the fact you have. . . . Like today, I've been in from 10, which although it doesn't sound that long compared to my other days where I may only have one hour, walking in you kind of got into the mind set of just being tired by the end of the day.

So that was just about half the class today. Do you normally have twice that amount in there?

S15: A third more.

S16: Yes, the attendance isn't great. It's usually 23. It's meant to be. . . .

S15: The most we've had is about 14, 15. . . .

S16: Yes, we've never had a full class.

Do you think that's down to the room or . . . ?

S15: No, it's not even the same people; it'll change so. . . .

S16: Yes. But the one in. . . .

S15: Unless it's to do with which teacher it is, but even then, not like a. . . .

S16: The one in the Lipman Building has the worst attendance, Tuesday morning, has the softest voice and. . . . So no one. . . .

S17: There'll normally be maybe eight in the lecture.

S15: It's too early a start. It just seems you're going in for an hour on a Wednesday morning and that's your day. . . . Like. . . . Why get up that early for that one hour?

S15: It seems a bit weird that we're over there [Lipman 301] for only one lesson, and everything else is in the design building. It seems a bit like we're being kicked out of that building for that one lesson.

S16: It's the furthest from most people's accommodation. So inconvenient.

S15: That might be why attendance is quite low.

S16: Yes, because people can't be bothered to walk in. . . .

S17: It takes 15 minutes to get there.

TIMING ISSUES IN USING INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES

S4: I don't like floor one library at midday to around 3, but after dinner it gets really quiet and it's quite nice to work in there, but sometimes you'll get a group of three that'll go down and you can tell that they intend on doing work and then end up talking about where they're going to go, so they end up talking and it gets out of hand and then you can't concentrate when you're right next to them and you regret sitting where you sat.

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING

ADJUSTING TO EXPECTATIONS OF SELF-DIRECTED AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING

S3: But the uni, there's a lot more independence than I was expecting in terms of, like, if you're thinking about an assignment, no one says, "There's an assignment due soon," you're just expected to have gone off and read the module guide and be aware that there's an assignment and be aware of how to write it and be aware of what you need to write in it, and yeah, it's a lot more. . . . There's very little guidance here, but it's to be expected because there are so many students compared to school. But it is still quite a shock.

S12: There's a lot more reading than previous. . . . The lecturers don't let on how much reading [*agreement*] and extra knowledge is needed for lectures and seminars. They say obviously that you have, your course is based on hours and you do have to do some external hours but they don't tell you the extent of how much that you need actually.

S15: [At school] I'm used to doing an hour lesson then changing to something else completely, so this is just two-and-a-half hours of one thing and I just get bored. I'd rather be more "doing" rather than sitting.

S16: Especially for our course, because we're design students but we have done very little design so far.

S15: It's just talk.

S16: There's a lot of lectures. It's all been lectures. [Agreement].

S16: Yes, which has limited us to our bonding sessions, because we've not been able to work as a group and chat with each other, it's only really been nights out that we've really been able to communicate that well with each other, and then we're intoxicated. [Laughter]. So it doesn't reflect very well the morning afterwards.

IMPORTANCE OF "VISIBILITY" OF TUTOR SUPPORT

S6: The thing I noticed most is, if I have a question on an assignment you can't just go and find [your tutor immediately] where you used to go and find a teacher [at school] you have to go at specific hours and if you don't go then you're stuck. You can't just pop in and see them. You have to go at specific hours or e-mail and it makes it a lot harder to be in contact with people.

S1: I think they make themselves more available than what other universities do, like, I know some of my friends don't get half as much help and guidance as we probably take for granted here. I know we still don't get that much, but like some people, they e-mail the lecturers and don't get anything back, whereas every time I've e-mailed someone I've always got loads of help.

Is there anything else at all that you'd like just generally to be done to the campus?

S15: Access to our tutors.

S17: E-mail isn't really a good form of communication, I don't feel.

S16: Especially when you have an issue with software or anything like that, because they can only tell you to wait until they reply and then try it out and figure out if it doesn't work or not. And it kind of slows. . . .

S15: Back in school, in 6th form, you just go to their room and say, "Ah, I've got this problem."

S15: We've got like . . . I don't know if it's like an IT technician or something; he's the guy who shows us the software and he's always around anyway, so you can just go and ask him. We know where he is but X and Y and the other lecturers and stuff, they're just, "Contact by e-mail and we can arrange an appointment" but. . . . If you knew where they were and they were free or whatever, then you could just go and ask.

So how would you like to communicate with them then?

S17: Just in their office.

But you can't do that?

S16: Well, we don't know where. . . .

S15: Yes, they've got an office but we don't know where it is. [note: staff in large shared office accessed by students through phone outside door]

S16: There's too much separation between students and lecturers. [Agreement]. Out of and during lecture time as well. It feels very. . . .

S15: They're around but if they are around they are either teaching or going to a lesson, so it's like you don't want to interrupt.

S16: We're paying £9,000 to listen to a presentation or whatever, but I'd rather pay £9,000 to be able to talk

to my lecturers, get feedback from them and learn from them, rather than learning from what I can see on a board, which I can look at myself and research myself. I'd rather learn from their practical teaching and their own experience in kind of a custom way. Because what they're teaching they can really have time to plan what they're going to teach, [but] they may not ever [answer] the questions which I have, which if I see them during social time I can ask, "Oh by the way, I had a problem with this," or "I'm interested in this. What do you suggest?" or something like that. It'd be easier to communicate and learn from them. You could have a conversation with them, instead of asking a question, and you don't feel like you're. . . .

S17: . . . like you're stopping the lesson.

S16: Yes, because one person does it all the time.

S15 & S17: [*Groans*].

S15: Like you can grab them in breaks, like if there's a 10-minute break they stay in the room so it's alright then, but it's 10 minutes, so if everyone's got a question it's like. . . .

S17: Plus you will have forgot, you might still have a question at the start but by the time you get to that break. . . .

S16: Yes. It'll come to you whilst you're working.

VARYING ACCESSIBILITY OF CONTENT

S3: Some of the lecturers, when they do lectures, their vocabulary is completely random, like, one of the CSI [Culture, Structure and Ideas] lecturers that we had a couple of weeks ago, what he was saying no one could understand at all; it was so complicated and. . . .

S6: It sounded like Shakespeare. . . .

S3: And it's my seminar tutoring and during the seminars, he doesn't talk like that at all, he talks in a really normal way. No one understood what was going on in the lecture at all.

FRIENDLINESS AND APPROACHABILITY OF STAFF

S2: I thought the introduction was excellent, the friendliness of the staff and the approachability of them was excellent, and I couldn't have expected any better from them. They said right from the start that if there was anything that we needed then "Here are our contact hours and here's our e-mail," and every one of them gave us their own e-mail address to get in contact with them in case we ever needed anything, and they stressed that quite a lot and that was a good thing.

NEGOTIATING PASSIVE AND ACTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Which learning activities do you enjoy most? Do you enjoy lectures most or seminars?

?: Seminars. [*Most agree*].

S8: I prefer the lab work because I get to play with things. We did epithelial [tissue] slides and things like that because I'm doing criminology and forensic science.

So why do you like the seminars?

?: Because you can discuss things and get your own opinion out and stuff instead of sitting in silence and listening to someone else speak.

?: I don't like seminars.

S12: I was going to say, have you actually been into our seminar group? Because it is just me speaking.

[Laughter].

Why don't you like seminars?

?: Because I feel like not everyone joins in. The other day we had one and there was about seven people turned up and it was awkward and I was sitting there trying to say stuff and no one else was backing us up.

S18?: Yes, when we have directed reading that we have to do for the seminars, and you turn up and there's you and one other person who's done it, it's annoying.

S7?: I think it's quite annoying in seminars when, if certain people, not like certain people that would contribute all the time, but certain people who would distract other people, it's quite hard to concentrate when somebody else is always shouting out or. . . .

ANXIETIES ABOUT SPEAKING OUT IN CLASS

Do you manage to talk to each other a bit during the class or is it all very . . . ?

S16: No, not really. During every lecture it's silence for us. It's really awkward, because when they ask the class a question, we can all respond to it but no one does. [Agreement]. Sometimes I try saying stuff to break the ice and kind of get. . . . Because I don't really care. I get annoyed with it, it's such a simple question, even just "How does that make you feel?" Everyone can answer that but no one does.

S17: Because we're already in that silence and we just don't want to be the silence breaker.

S16: If there was more talking during the class and stuff people would be more willing to answer. I think in the past when people have, I think it's more in W's class when people answer, they kind of get quite shot

down in front of the whole class. It's a bit embarrassing. [Laughter].

S15: Yeah.

S16: "That's a *stupid* answer!"

[. . .]

It's just breaking the silence then really?

S16: Yes.

S15: There's not really a wrong answer to the questions we get asked. It's just your personal opinion, and everyone has a different one.

S16: We need to learn to communicate with the lecturer.

S16: Yes we feel comfortable with each other, we could chat to each other for ages but then whilst we're in the class it's awkward looking at each other, it's like we've just met and there's not much communication between students and the teacher and students and students. But the lecturer tries to communicate with students but we're not very comfortable because it's quite rare.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STUDIO/LAB-BASED COURSES AND LECTURE/SEMINAR ONES

So what spaces have you studied in for this module? We're talking about classrooms or if you go to the library or home, other places.

S17: Part of, like, a studio for the lesson and then tables outside the class where you just came in. And a lecture hall down here somewhere.

S16: Yeah, and there's one lecture on the ground here.

S15: We have a lesson in Lipman as well. It's just like a room like the one we're in now.

Do you go into the library to study at all?

S16: Not during class.

S15: I don't think our course really has anything where you need to read books because it's design and not something you can read up on, it's just like. . . .

S16: You can, but we don't really focus on that really.

S15: Not yet. . . .

S16: But probably when essays start and stuff. We've just been given our essay questions, which might require, probably will require, study on types of design, types of art.

Is that because you learn better by doing rather than sitting and listening?

All: Yes.

S15: I think that's just the type of student we are though. Like, with design I think it is a lot to do and I don't think any of us would sit there watching something on the board and then going away and reading up about it.

S16: That's why we are designers, because we *do* stuff.

S15: It is hands-on work. But even getting taught software, if we're just shown it on the board it's like, you don't really pick it up, so it's more if you follow what they're doing. . . .

S16: Or try it yourself, teach yourself.

S17: That's one of the reasons why we like Z's lesson, he

shows us then comes and helps you if you need it.

FACILITIES

GAPS BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES

S6: When you came, you got shown the best lecture theatres and the buildings they wanted you to see, like, you weren't shown this side of Lipman or Lipman 204, which is an oversized classroom; you were shown the sports hall, the sports centre, which is really modern, and the big theatres, yeah, they weren't what you actually saw on your open day really.

S2: And Lipman is sometimes a bit of a labyrinth trying to find random rooms, like, this room was quite complicated to try and find, and then 0026 as opposed to 026, on my first few lectures I accidentally came to a different "26" building instead of the one in the basement because it took so long to find.

S5: I end up in the toilets, every time you try and find that American lecture theatre we have today, because it splits off, and I always end up in the toilet.

S4: It is weird, this building; it must be huge, absolutely massive.

S6: It smelled of Play-Doh earlier.

S2: I quite like the facilities here and I thought it was more than I'd expected actually. I didn't come to the Northumbria open day but I did quite a lot of research about it, and when I got here I really liked the Students' Union compared to Glasgow's which is about a fourth of the size of our union, it's just a little bar with a pool table, and the sports facilities are unreal, like, using the gym and stuff, it's just state of the art, and the library as well, I think that's very good.

S5: I love the sports facilities; they're the best.

So going back to what you said about the facilities, they didn't show you all the rooms; how did you feel about that?

S4: I was surprised, like, I went to some of my lectures and I was just kind of expecting them to match all the modern ones you already saw. It kind of, I agree with they are really selling themselves and I do think some of their facilities are amazing, but the room 204 that these went to for that, the last lecture that we have, it's so packed and tight it's ridiculous. And there's a reason I think, that they don't take you there for one of the talks, because if you thought that was the standard of lecture theatre here, you wouldn't go.

S2: To be fair, you can't expect them to show you the dingy bits of the uni because then no one would come.

S4: No, no, I mean obviously it's an advertisement, but it is a surprise really.

LACK OF SUITABLE SEATING (FOR SELF-DIRECTED STUDY)

S4: I expected a lot more seating. The only seating really that there is in the café, where you have to buy something, or in the Students' Union, but that's always packed and you hardly ever get a seat there [or find] places to work. If you don't need a computer you're quite restricted because pretty much every space in the uni is a computer space.

PROBLEM WITH PAYING FOR DRINK IN ORDER TO SIT DOWN

S4: I sometimes use Costa, and if you've spent money there and bought a drink you feel inclined to spend as much time in there as you can because you don't want to waste the money that you spend on your drink, so I

sometimes do a lot of work in there.

S15: Hmm, I don't really use anything at uni.

S17: There's a food place near the Students' Union, I go there sometimes. Habita.

S15: I find those café things expensive.

S17: Oh yeah.

S15: For a drink or something, like a bottle of Fanta or something, it's £1.20. But it's uni and we're students so you'd have thought it'd be cheaper.

So you don't go there to study.

S15: No. We get given breaks and stuff in lessons but I think everyone tends now to stay in the room instead of going to get a drink because it just seems too expensive.

S16: And you only get 5 or 10 minutes' break in a two-and-a-half-hour lecture.

So you tend not to go to the cafés too much then.

S17: Not often, but sometimes.

[. . .]

Do you actually do work there?

S17: No.

Is there anywhere else you go to do studying?

All: No, not really.

And what are the spaces you most use for your studies?

S17: Just the room.

S16: I'm doing more at home, creative wise. I have everything I need at home. [Agreement].

STRICT RULES ABOUT WHAT YOU EAT WHERE

S12: Yes, there's no common room for people who live outside the campus or who don't live within walking distance, because you do have a dramatically long gap between lectures and seminars and as I said, I have a good rapport with Habita staff but I am sick and tired of getting moved from one place to another, "You can't eat that here. You haven't purchased it here," and it's ridiculous, the fact that half of the courses show the works of what capitalism does to the world and yet the university employs a capitalist attitude, especially when it comes to "You're not allowed to eat Greggs in the basement because you haven't bought it from the university," and you're not allowed to drink Costa coffee in Habita because it's not Starbucks, and personally I *refuse* to buy Starbucks, I don't like their ethical trade. The Lipman café is ridiculously expensive and you're not even allowed in there with a can of Coke you haven't purchased from that café, even if you've been to Habita and purchased it from the university, you're not allowed in there and you get told to leave, or bin it.

So generally you've got to have bought something where you are actually sitting?

S12: Which is extortionate prices as well, and if you're on a tight budget, and I can't ask parents for help, obviously I have a dad and that is it who is on benefits and so when I've got no money I literally have to go elsewhere and stand out in the freezing cold to eat.

OVERCROWDING IN LIBRARY AT PEAK TIMES

S17?: I know they've just extended the library but I do think that they do need more space [agreement] for computers and stuff, because if you went to the library now there's no chance you'll get one.

S10: It kind of turns me off wanting to go to the library because I know it's going to be so packed.

COMPLEXITIES OF "RULES" FOR SELF-DIRECTED AND GROUP SPACES

S9: And on the quiet floors, it's not quiet. There are always people talking and using their phones and music and stuff and so there's no one to say it other than the students themselves and you'd be like "Shh!" and you don't want to be that person.

S4: And anybody can use the library as well. It'll say there are 37 spaces free in the library and you go to the first floor and there'll be none, then you go to the second and every single one will be taken and it's been a waste of 20 minutes of you walking up each staircase looking left and right and there's no computers, so you go up again.

S1: Or there are people asleep and snoring and you can't do your work. It's really distracting.

S4: Or people leave all their things on the computer and log out and then come back. It's like a towel.

S6: I like the basement, . . . it's like, downstairs, but I find it really difficult to concentrate when it's really quiet; I don't like it. I like having people chatter around me but I can still work really well. I prefer that.

Is that the area where there's a lot of soft seats and . . . ?

S6: Yeah. I find that better than the first floor.

S1: I think it's good there if you've got some kind of group work that you need to do, because obviously you can be sociable and know you're not really bothering other people.

S15?: I need background noise to be able to work so I'm quite happy sitting in the basement with all that noise, because I need that background noise just so that I can do what I need to do.

APPRECIATION OF GOOD FACILITIES, PARTICULARLY STUDENTS' UNION, SPORTS FACILITIES, LIBRARY

S2: I quite like the facilities here and I thought it was more than I'd expected actually. . . . when I got here I really liked the Students' Union compared to Glasgow's which is about a fourth of the size of our union, it's just a little bar with a pool table, and the sports facilities are unreal, like, using the gym and stuff, it's just state of the art, and the library as well, I think that's very good. . . . I've got loads of eBooks, they've photocopied most of the books into the system and that's really helpful when you're at home and you need. . . .

S5: I love the sports facilities; they're the best.

S5: . . . the library is good because there's the floor where it's entirely computers if you need to just run in and print something off, but then there's the other floors where it's got all the books and there might be, rather than having two computers directly adjacent to one another, you'd have just one computer but then desk space next to you so it's as if it's seated for two but you can just sit there, do your work, and there's a small kind of barrier around you so you kind of are contained in that area so you're more likely to get on with your work but you don't feel completely boxed in. I think it's a good layout. It caters for everybody in the library because

there are so many different floors and different types of seating arrangements.

LACK OF MORE SOCIAL SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING SPACES

S2: I think I'd have an area like the first floor of the library with sort of a big social area of computers and also a space where you could just sit and they have the comfiest chairs there as well, quite big and modern, and I think I'd have that but sort of more, like, a bigger space, away from the library itself, just by itself and somewhere where if you don't want to go to the library then there's always that place to go and that social aspect, but at the same time you can get on with work that you need to do.

MORE FACILITIES FOR GROUP WORK

S7: Big computers on floor 1, there are these big computers with a table for group work, and they are never free, so I think maybe more of them. Because when we get assigned group work and had to work, we had to go back to my room to do the work and we couldn't all see the computer.

S12: Rooms at the back of the. . . .

?: The Learning Zones.

S12: Yes, now every single one we've been into, none of those massive computers actually work. We've done quite a lot of group work where we've had to use a room to discuss and we can't use them.

S7: And the laptops as well, in the library, the laptops that you can take out, they are always either. . . . I think they should leave the power cables on the side, because I was using one the other day, doing work, just about saved it then it crashed and there was no way I could

plug it back in and turn it back on to see if it would work.

BETTER COMMUNICATION ABOUT WHAT SPACES, FACILITIES ARE AVAILABLE

S8: Information about computers, easier to find, because I know the life sciences, if you go up onto the third floor in the Northumbria Building, they've got restricted access so you need your card to get in and they've got computers up there that are for us only.

S12: Oh right, because you're on life sciences.

S8: But you're on life sciences.

S12: No, we're not.

S8: You are.

S9: Ours is social sciences.

S8: Yes, but social science is involved in the life science.

S12: See again, this is something the university needs to pick up, making access or making this information widely known throughout all students, because it's all hearsay, "Oh, I've heard this, you can do this . . ." "Oh, did you know you can go there?" Now, none of it is. . . . I mean, I've extensively read the university packs, the welcome packs, I mean, I'm a swot, but nowhere is it stated that we can use any of these facilities.

S7?: What they could do for the computer issue, when you were saying you can't find a computer, they could probably put all of the computers onto a server, like they do at the cinema when you can pick your seat.

S12: It is, you can see what computers are available. See what I mean? You go onto the library website and you can obviously search for available computers and it'll tell

you what floors. . . .

S7?: You walk into the library where the lifts are, there's a computer up there that says how many in [each location].

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WITH SIZE, ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS, LAYOUT, AND FURNITURE IN PARTICULAR SPACES

S8: It's quite cramped.

?: I think most of the rooms are quite cramped.

S8: And the chairs are broke, the arms on the chairs keep falling off as you walk past.

What other spaces does it make you think of?

?: A classroom.

?: *[Whispered.]* This room makes me think of a bomb shelter.

S1: There are some rooms that are just so hot, couldn't even breathe. *[Agreement]*.

S6: You could pass out in that room.

S1: Or freezing. . . . It's too overcrowded and, oh. . . .

S4: I had to walk out of the first lecture because it was that warm.

S4: I quite like that room. Because I don't really feel anything I'm just assuming that it must be a good room because you shouldn't be really feeling it's cold or it's warm in there or that you don't like the lighting. If it's a good room then you should just be comfortable in it anyway.

S5: [The Lipman theatre 0026] just feels like a proper lecture hall, whereas in the room upstairs you've basically got a desk that squeaks when you turn it around and it's about the size of an A4 piece of paper so you have to maneuver your paper so that you can write, whereas there you've got space, comfortable seats, and you can see without having someone's head in front of you or feeling that you're sat on the person next to you because you've got no room.

So there are pull-down seats?

S6: Yeah.

S1: I like that one. I think it's just nice, you can see the board really easily.

S6: Unless you're sat at the end.

S1: Or you're next to that air conditioning vent. . . .

S5: Even though it is smaller you feel like you've still got the space that you'd have in the Lipman Theatre, the proper desks; I think that's the main thing everyone's bothered about.

S1: The seats ascend, so you're never going to have the problem of someone's head being in the way. I think that's important because there are other rooms that we do learn in where you can't even see the board, and it's a nightmare if you've got someone tall sitting in front of you and you're short.

S5: . . . You just walk in and you sit and you just get on with it. Sometimes you get a bit too comfortable but not as in the fact you're bored, you're just sat there enjoying being in a nice room.

S2: It's clean as well. Just feels so much nicer.

S4: Because there are no distractions to focus on, you are literally just kind of writing the notes down. There's nothing that you're thinking whilst you're writing notes that kind of distracts your train of thought, like, "Now it's colder, I need to put my coat on" or anything like that.

S2: You tend to talk more really. [Agreement].

S5: Yes, it's more sociable because you're more inclined to speak to the people directly in front of you or behind you because they're not directly in your face and there's a bit of space between you, or you might just hear someone say something and you've got more access to turn and talk to them without an elbow in the face.

?: It's not that our class is too big for it, it's just that the layout, the way the tables are put, they're just too close together. There are too many tables for the room, we don't need all the tables in that room.

?: No. All just dotted round.

S7: And all the chairs are just kind of. . . . They're not in rows, they're just all kind of thrown around somehow. You have to move ones to get to the one you want to be at. . . . I think it would be easy for, like, if we all sat round at one table in a group, because we're all in the chairs. Normally you sit in rows and then they ask you to group work and then you kind of are just looking up and down the row at the other people rather than being in a circle.

Okay. And what does it make you think about when you arrive?

?: I just don't like being in that [seminar] room. It's not a room, like, it's not a very inviting room so you're kind of like, "Oh, it's this room again."

?: I think [our lecture theatre is] quite small compared to

what I imagined it would be like. [Agreement].

?: Yes, compared to the Law Building. . . . The law lecture rooms are amazing.

?: But I prefer them smaller because I don't really like speaking out in front of all them people so I definitely wouldn't if it was even bigger.

?: Sometimes you can't hear if you're at the back, especially if the microphones go off. [Agreement].

?: Yes, that's another thing, the sound doesn't travel. Even though it's meant to, with the lecture theatre, I mean, it doesn't actually travel as far as it's actually meant to, and they do run out of batteries quite a lot of times for the microphones. [Agreement].

So over the day, it starts off nice and clean in the morning and then . . . ?

?: I don't actually think it gets cleaned during the day either. My cup, and it was purely experimental, was left on the table until the next day, until we went from Thursday into Friday, in the same spot I sit, a little cup like that, and it was to see whether they actually moved it or not. And it hadn't been moved.

And the other one was Ellison, this building.

S17: Just a massive lecture hall. The number is 0001.

And what do you think about that room?

S17: I don't like it. I prefer the ones in the Law Building.

S15: Oh that was good, they're really nice.

S17: I think his presentation was good and that's probably why.

S15: No, because the chairs are comfy and have armrests and stuff and the room is quite a nice shape and it's curved as well instead of it just being a straight line. It's split up so it's not just a block of chairs.

S15: You can see everyone as well, can't you?

S17: Yes, it's curved.

S16: So if someone asks a question you can see who is asking it, and the lighting is nice.

Okay, so if we start with the design room, can you describe what you remember about these various spaces?

S17: [The study room] is quite boring, just a square with two windows.

S15: Really small as well.

S16: Light switch doesn't work. Well it does now but it didn't, you couldn't see the board really.

S17: But there isn't anything interesting or appealing to that room.

And it's a plain, square room.

S15: Yes, plain walls.

S16: Two windows. It looks like it's just partitioned as well, like they've just put a wall up just to make one room into two. Because the window, it seems to be half a window but it's one window behind that wall.

S16: And there's an identical one next to us, and it's really distracting with the big glass wall where everything is going on outside and it's a bit opaque so you're distracted by legs walking past.

S15: I quite like that though. Because I saw on the open day the tutors were on about some lessons you'll just be given a pen to just draw your ideas on the wall, and that's just your room and it's left up there. So I quite like the idea of just drawing on the wall.

S16: That room's not really inspiring considering we're designers.

S17: This room is actually more interesting!

S16: Yes, because there's stuff going on, color.

You have a studio, the studio in design; what's that like?

S17: I really like that. There's a photography studio we went for one lesson and I thought that was quite professional.

S16: It's a good size and a good shape as well because it's long and square.

And that's in the . . . ?

S15: A couple of rooms down from us. It's the floor we're on. Literally, as soon as you walk in on the floor, it's right next to you. . . .

[. . .]

S17: It is well equipped; there is a lot there.

TIME/ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES AFFECTING POSSIBILITIES FOR FLEXIBILITY, MOVING FURNITURE AROUND

S16: We finally got the light switch going so we can actually. . . . Yes, we can turn it on. But the wheels, the foldable tables and wheelie chairs and all of that, they're a bit annoying. Like, when we're doing laptop work and stuff, I can feel my table sliding away. And then someone hooks it and pulls it away from you.

S15: They're basically a table on wheels.

S17: Like fold-up to save space. . . .

S16: So you can't just throw them in, you have to arrange it, all different sizes.

S15: It can take the first 15, 20 minutes of a lesson setting up the classroom, if we're doing, like, software or something.

S15: You can't fit the whole class in when we're doing software, like, we split into two so. . . .

S16: It'd be better if we were, if we did classes in that area which you were waiting in with the big long tables, because of our first class with Ben. . . .

S15: Yeah, we were out. . . .

S16: We were in a big square and that was much better because we could see everyone.

S17: . . . but we don't use that space because they use the projector.

VARIED PREFERENCES FOR SEMINAR FORMATS

S4: Every time you go in the tables are in a completely different way. Sometimes it's horseshoe shaped and sometimes it's in island tables, and if you want to sit with specific people it's quite hard to do that every single time, and when the tables are in islands it's easier to talk because no one really talks in seminars and if it's a horseshoe shape, as soon as you start speaking everyone's kind of like, "Why are you speaking?" because nobody says anything in seminars. So it's better when you're on the little island tables because you can then focus what you're saying on the lecturer as opposed to everyone staring at you.

S6: Yes, it's Squires Annexe, 204.

S2: I like that the tables are set out, they're all around so it's like a big circle with a big space in the middle, and there's one desk in there but no one sits on it. I like it because you can see what's going on with everyone and when you have to talk you can talk to everyone.

S3: It does encourage debate more [*agreement*] when it's in that thing, because you can look at who you're talking to as well.

S5: It's bright as well, there's the window sill in one of the walls so you can see everything going on outside without distracting you, and it's a nice temperature, not too hot or too cold because you have got the windows in there.

S2: Feel as though you're ready for a debate.

S5: Sounds daft but it kind of wakes me up. You just walk in and it's bright and you're alert when you walk in, but not in the sense that you're overwhelmed by light, it's just bright and open.

S2: I think the structure of the room keeps you on your toes as well because everyone's always looking at you so you can't sit there and doze off because they're all looking at you.

S2: I think it feels like it should be sort of a debating room, a place where everyone can see each other and you can just make a point and everyone can hear you. It's easy to hear people even if they're quiet, because some people don't like talking out loud, but even in this room everyone's voice can be heard.

S4: It does feel fit for purpose.

S6: [Then there is] 301. It's got desks that go around the whole room, so obviously you're sat and you can see everyone so it is good for discussions, because that's what we're mostly doing in our seminar. But the desks change sometimes and they can be in totally different places and in rows and stuff. But it's quite good because you always end up sort of sitting next to someone new. It just depends on what time you're coming in, so it's quite good for interacting with people, like, especially when you're doing debates and that, getting other people's points of view.

S4: [Seminars] are a lot more interactive and there's less chance of you lulling into a state of not responding to what anyone's saying, and you can debate, and if people are genuinely interested and have done the reading then you can get some decent discussions going, whereas with lecturers it's not really a discussion, it's just rhetoric and you might really disagree with what someone's said or no one will put their hand up and ask a question, it's just listen for an hour and leave, and it's quite intense if you're writing every single thing down because they speak so fast.

S6: In lectures you're being talked "at" and so you just, everything they say you take as what it is, and when you

go to seminars you have to think about it and I find that when I have all the facts in a lecture I don't connect with what they're telling me, I just see it as history, but when we do a seminar you are made to think about how those people would've felt at the time. . . .

S3: The success of a seminar does depend on the tutor though. There are seminars where the tutor doesn't, isn't as interested in sparking up a debate but just sort of wants people to. . . . They'll put you in a pair and say, "Talk about these questions," and I don't think that's as good as someone who tries to get people talking with each other. If you're in a pair then you might end up with someone who doesn't really want to talk and isn't up for that, then if you're in a big group then the people who are like that are going to end up discussing anyway, but I think it could be more beneficial for everyone if there's a bit of debate.

S1: I think there's a fine line, because it gives some people the opportunity to not chip in at all, like if you are in a big group, some people just don't say anything, don't have any contribution whatsoever and you're left to do the work.

S4: . . . when the lecturer's sat down on the same level as you, like if it's a horseshoe shape and the lecturer is sat as part of the horseshoe shape, it kind of feels like he is getting as involved as you, it's not like so much higher up, he's not trying to impose himself on you proximity wise. Instead it's more like he's trying to engage with you and encourage you. So it's less him talking at you and more trying to create a genuine debate.

CHOOSING WHERE TO STUDY

DIFFERENTIAL PREFERENCES FOR STUDYING AT HOME OR ON CAMPUS

S6: I don't like working at home.

S2: I can't work at home either.

S6: No, mainly because when I go home I associate it with bed and food and sleep, and so that's what I do; I don't work, because if I work there I can stay in bed and can watch a film, but if I'm at the library then that's all I do, and I think it's a lot easier, especially because you haven't got someone telling you to do your work. It's easier, I find it easier to distinguish the two parts of my life and not have them cross over so I know that when I go home I can go to bed and can go to sleep instead of trying to do it all in one space. It relaxes you more because you know that's where you can relax.

S2: I find that even on my days off that I come into the library especially just to do work and that's it, because it's just impossible to do it at home.

S3: If we've got a big essay to do, I can write a portion of it at home but even though there are eBooks and stuff, I wouldn't research it, I wouldn't be inclined to research it.

S2: I think there are too many factors that distract you, like you've got your iPad and phone and Xbox and TV; there's just constant things to distract you, but you come to the library and you just, even though there's still sort of, that's like, you can use the computer, you know the library is for work and that's what you're going to do there.

S5: I've got a really small room in my house, basically if you have a desk it's a choice between having a desk and being able to open your wardrobe or drawers or your bedroom door, so my writing desk has been taken into the living room. So I'd basically be sat in my bed so I'm more likely to lay back and not get on with my work, and if I were to go in the living room and sit at the dining room table, I'd probably get distracted by my housemates. I'm also an obsessive cleaner, so I'd just be tidying and cleaning, so I just come into uni.

S17?: I choose home at the minute because I just. . . .

?: Home, or like, the floor that's got our books on, for our topic.

S7?: I like the basement in the library.

?: Like, if you go [to your study place] and you've forgotten to pick the book up, you just go and pick it up, or it's meant to be quiet and stuff like that, and you've got enough space if you get one of the desks, because it's got extra room at the end and you can spread your stuff about and make a mess.

S12: I usually study in Habita during our breaks, usually just [put] all my books out. Again, I can sort of wangle a free glass of water out of the Habita staff so it looks like I'm. . . . The library, as we've all said, is jam-packed for the majority of the time, even down in the bottom with people just on Facebook, which actually really annoys me [agreement] because I'm anti-Facebook anyway so the fact they are all on Facebook I think, "You've got your phones; go and do that, sit down on a chair and go and do it, don't sit there on a computer taking valuable time away."

And do you do any work at home?

S16: Yes. In my flat.

And what's it like there? Are you comfortable working there?

S15: I prefer working in the lounge area instead of in my room, but my whole flat is like that, none of us really sit in our rooms, we all go in the lounge.

Do you work together, individually but working side by side?

S15: Yes, sort of. Like, some people sit on the floor if they're doing sketches and things, and on the sofas, and then there's like a breakfast bar as well, so if anyone's on computers they tend to sit up on that and type away. One person will start and then everyone else will just sort of. . . . It's nice.

Do you feel it's a bit more social, even though you're. . . ?

S15: Yes, sometimes if you start sitting down with work you'll get bored very quickly, where I think if everyone's doing it you sort of get into the mind of "just get it done."

And do you tend to sit quietly or do you have little bits of chat?

S15: Talking as well, yes.

S15: I don't own a laptop so I stay in my room because I've just got a [desktop] computer, but I've got plenty of equipment available to me so I have a really good learning environment. [At the university] I don't really have all the software I need and tools and stuff which I need to do my work, so, I like working [at home] because it's kind of, I kind of have more than the university has to offer straight away without having to chase people up and borrow equipment and stuff, so I like working at home.

NEGOTIATING AVAILABILITY AND SUITABILITY OF SELF-DIRECTED STUDY SPACE AT HOME, ON CAMPUS, AND BEYOND

S18: I sometimes go to the library at West Denton. Wallsend Library is disgusting.

S12?: Oh, go to North Shields! Honestly, they've just rebuilt it. . . . Or City Library.

S9: I'm in halls at uni so sometimes in there if it's quiet, but if we've got people in the flat then it's quite hard to work in there because it's quite loud, and my window backs onto a courtyard so I can hear people there and it's too hot to not have the window open. So in there if it's quiet, but if not I'll go to the library.

S17?: Home, because you can never get a computer in the library, unless you come ridiculously early or stay late, but that's not an option for me, and if I try to do it in that few hours off, you just can't get a computer.

S9: I think it's quite good using the library at night; I'm close to campus so I can just literally take two minutes to the library, and at night it's quite good to study then because when there's not many people it feels a lot quieter.

USING EMPTY CLASSROOMS FOR SELF-DIRECTED STUDY

S10: I think you can go into rooms in Squires and use them for private study.

?: I didn't know that!

S10: Yes, you can.

?: You can do the same in the Ellison Building, but I haven't done it yet.

?: Tells you on a little screen . . . what lecture's on and then if it's free.

?: How come this hasn't been made public knowledge then?

?: I don't know, the only reason I know is because of the little screens.

S12: See, I've seen "available" and who's in there but

I've never known that, which obviously, how many other students don't know?

24/7 OPENING OF THE LIBRARY— VALUED, WELCOMING, MOTIVATING

S5: My housemate, he left the house at 10 at night and got back at half 11 in the morning because he'd just been sat in the library and had just managed to get everything done, he was happy to just stay sat in there.

S1: It's good on a night, but obviously there are people who are just there to sleep which is a bit weird and really distracting, because I was trying to finish off an assignment and I could just hear this person snoring behind us. It's not great, I think it's a bit weird. Some people have quilts and everything. [Laughter]. They all just go there to sleep.

S4: People reserve tables with loads and loads of books, or sometimes they'll play their iPod then go to get some food or something and they'll leave it playing and you can hear Florence and The Machine playing while you're trying to write your essay. It's quite annoying.

S5: You seem motivated when you're in there. You see other people working.

S4: I think it's because you're free to go there, like with this lecture room that we don't like, you *have* to go there, you are supposed to go, but the library, you are more than welcome to go when you don't want to, and if you feel motivated to go to the library then you'll go and you'll see it as a nice environment because you're willing to do work and that's why you're there.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

DR. JOS BOYS is currently an academic developer at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. Previously, she was a teaching fellow and director of student enhancement in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences (FADSS) at Northumbria University. Before that she worked as a senior research fellow, learning spaces, at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Design (CETLD), University of Brighton, United Kingdom, until 2010, having joined the CETLD in 2007 as an academic developer. Her background is in architecture, and she has taught at various institutions, including the Architectural Association and London Metropolitan University. She is particularly interested in exploring the intersections between social, spatial, and material practices and new ways of learning in tertiary education, both within and beyond the university.

She is author of *Towards Creative Learning Spaces: Re-thinking the Architecture of Post-Compulsory Education* (Routledge 2011). She co-edited with Anne Boddington *Re-Shaping Learning: A Critical Reader* (Sense Publishers 2011). She has just completed *Building Better Universities: Strategies, Spaces, Technologies* to be published by Routledge at the end of 2014.

DR. CLARE MELHUIISH is an anthropologist of architecture and the built environment based in London. She has employed ethnographic research methods to explore processes of architectural design work and the impacts and social experience of built form in various different

settings. She is currently research associate in the Urban Lab, University College London, undertaking mixed-method case study research in university-led urban regeneration in order to document and analyze the processes and effects of university expansion on university and local communities in the United Kingdom and abroad. From 2011 to 2013 she was research associate in geography at the Open University, investigating the use of digital visualizations in architectural practice on a large-scale urban redevelopment project through multi-sited ethnographic research in the offices of architects, visualizers, and the client. In 2009–10 she worked with Jos Boys on an ethnographic research project exploring perceptions of learning experiences among staff and students in new learning spaces at the Universities of Sussex and Brighton in the United Kingdom. She has published and presented widely on architecture and design matters.

ANGELINA WILSON is currently undertaking a Ph.D. at Northumbria University, United Kingdom. Her research examines how students from different disciplines work together in a mixed-disciplinary environment and the effect this has on both individual and group learning. Her background was initially in information management, both as a lecturer and a researcher working on a number of research projects relating to electronic libraries. She was involved in the national People's Network project, training public library staff in the use of new technology in libraries. After a brief period in the NHS where she managed IT training for over 8,000 NHS staff in Sunderland, she returned to academia as a researcher in the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: Assessment for Learning at Northumbria University. She has published a number of papers on both information and library management and assessment for learning.



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