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**DESIGN FOR THE  
CHANGING  
EDUCATIONAL  
LANDSCAPE**

SPACE, PLACE AND THE FUTURE  
OF LEARNING

# Design for the Changing Educational Landscape

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The whole landscape of space use is undergoing a radical transformation. In the workplace a period of unprecedented change has created a mix of responses with one overriding outcome observable worldwide: the rise of distributed space. In the learning environment the social, political, economic and technological changes responsible for this shift have been further compounded by constantly developing theories of learning and teaching, and a wide acceptance of the importance of learning as the core of the community, resulting in the blending of all aspects of learning into one seamless experience.

This book attempts to look at all the forces driving the provision and pedagogic performance of the many spaces, real and virtual, that now accommodate the experience of learning and provide pointers towards the creation and design of learning-centred communities.

**Part 1** looks at the entire learning universe as it now stands, tracks the way in which its constituent parts came to occupy their role, assesses how they have responded to a complex of drivers and gauges their success in dealing with renewed pressures to perform. It shows that what is required is innovation within the spaces and integration between them. **Part 2** finds many examples of innovation in evidence across the world – in schools, the higher and further education campus and in business and cultural spaces – but an almost total absence of integration. **Part 3** offers a model that redefines the learning landscape in terms of learning outcomes, mapping spatial requirements and activities into a detailed mechanism that will achieve the best outcome at the most appropriate scale.

By encouraging stakeholders to create an events-based rather than space-based identity, the book hopes to point the way to a fully-integrated learning landscape: a learning community.

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OF LEARNING

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# Acknowledgements

The dominant theme to emerge from these pages is that space, place and learning have become inextricably bound up with each other into a blended whole which is beginning to achieve a critical mass of importance across society. In great part this spatial world view is the legacy of almost 30 years of discussion and shared information with colleagues at the international architects, DEGW, and in particular Frank Duffy, John Worthington and Despina Katsikakis. We would like to record and acknowledge both their professional rigour and personal generosity of access to a wide range of new ideas, many of them instrumental in the formulation of our own thoughts.

DEGW was a rich centre of enquiry about the workplace in all its manifestations and as a forum for innovation will be sorely missed. Many of its values, fortunately – and certainly its chief quality,

intellectual curiosity – are present in the work of the worldwide diaspora of DEGW people who continue to find new ways to describe, analyse and systematize the built environment, among them the business strategists and designers of Strategy Plus, our colleagues at Spaces That Work and Tom Weaver, whose assistance was especially invaluable at the early stages of this book's development.

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# Introduction

This book attempts to look at all the forces driving the provision and pedagogic performance of the many spaces, real and virtual, that now accommodate the experience of learning – from purpose-built school and higher education buildings to museums, galleries, hotels and conference centres – and by means of this examination provide pointers towards the creation and in particular the design of learning-centred communities.

It is our belief that this move to putting learning at the centre of our lives is well advanced and universally observable across the learning landscape at all scales and in all societies. There is no doubt, however, that the overwhelming weight of academic evidence for this phenomenon lies in a relatively small handful of territories worldwide – the UK, the US, Scandinavia, Australia and New Zealand – and deals disproportionately with formal, mandatory education at the expense of compelling new narratives involving business and cultural spaces.

We are unapologetic about concentrating on the findings that have emerged from this narrow band of academic and organizational enquiry – particularly the astounding ten-year period in the UK when the debate about learning and space reached a sustained fever pitch before collapsing with the arrival of the 2008 world economic crisis. This coincides intellectually, geographically and chronologically with our main (though not sole) areas of experience and expertise but it is also sufficiently suggestive of innovations in educational space worldwide to claim universal significance – to justify our concentrating on the mass of data to emerge from such initiatives as the Building Schools for the Future programme and the blizzard of higher education research conducted during the course of 2006.

We must similarly justify our delimitation of our conceptual framework. Because we are fundamentally concerned with design, aiming to provide designers, procurers and users of space with the means to effect useful change in their own sphere of influence, we take a place-based approach to this learning universe. And because our purpose in looking at these places is not primarily to systematize (although that is an essential and rather neglected first stage) but to assess their performance as a necessary precursor to prescriptive action, we must acknowledge that this transformational imperative inevitably privileges certain spaces at the

expense of others: classrooms will always command more of our attention than hotel conference centres and coffee shops.

The learning environment is not alone in having to deal with this opening up – and, critically, running together – of possibilities. It is taking place in organizations of all sorts – part of a wider pattern in which the whole landscape of space use is changing: the hybridizing of space, the dispersing of work, the annexing of non-traditional spaces or the freedoms and constrictions that come with new technology and the blending and layering of virtual and physical work arenas. The learning environment is, though, we would contest, in the front line of these volatile developments, as we illustrate in [Part 1](#), in which we look at the entire learning universe and track the way in which its constituent parts came to occupy their role, assess how they – individually and collectively – have responded to a complex of drivers and gauge their success in dealing with renewed pressures to perform. We show the gap widening between what learning space could support and what it in fact does support, during the course of which two things become clear: the costs of the loss of transformative potential are rapidly becoming economically insupportable and societally damaging; and a piecemeal response, however reflexive, is damned to fail both case-by-case and systemically.

What is required is innovation within the spaces and integration between them. [Part 2](#) looks at the many examples of innovation in evidence across the world – first in schools, then the higher and further education campus and finally in business and cultural spaces. It finds and celebrates many examples of best practice, fewer – though shining – examples of innovation, and almost no strategic vision at the level of the community or city. The innovation that is taking place is happening at different rates in different institutions, as organizations have responded to changing imperatives and to some extent met them – but the response is undeniably piecemeal. It is notable that while there has been a great deal of innovation within building types – and a lot of talk about shared community resources and partnerships – there is little concerted effort to take an overview about holistic learning and remarkably little concentration on the spatial implications of any cross-cultural partnering that does exist – in short, an absence of integration.