



OBTC 2017 at Providence College June 14th – 17th, 2017

Transforming “space” into “place” in the Virtual and Blended Classroom

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Title: Transforming “space” into “place” in the virtual and blended classroom.

Keywords: Spacemaking; Placemaking; On-line education, social-emotional learning

Abstract

This session takes the concepts of “spacemaking” and “placemaking” that have been used in urban design, and applies them to classroom “spaces” that we create as educators. With the growth of on-line and blended courses, these concepts are stretched even further. The author shares techniques and processes inspired by from programs such as the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and the Moonshot Program for primary education in Florida. Principle goals of these programs can challenge educators to create places that are vital, engaging, and connected to community and also support the social-emotional needs of learners, to foster integrated and connected learning.

2) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

On-line education has been a significant component of educational systems for more than a decade. Advances in technology and simulations have made it possible to make on-line courses more dynamic, yet the challenge remains of how to create not just a space, but a sense of place in our learning environments.

William H. White, author of *The Social Life of Public Spaces* wrote: It is difficult to designing a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”

One could ask if the same applies to our on-line courses—do we truly create a “space” that has a unique feeling, that attracts students, that fosters their engagement with each other? In an article in *Fortune Magazine* in 1958, Jane Jacobs, a colleague of William Whyte, noted that it is the interaction of people in a particular space that gives I the quality of “place.”

The author has taught at several different institutions in two different countries, and is currently teaching at a university of science and technology, where the students are focused on highly scientific and quantitative material. She is teaching management courses which are electives for these students, and after seeing the course descriptions and on-line courses developed by information systems and engineering faculty on

management topics, felt an even greater urge to create innovative learning spaces that provided integrative learning that include social-emotional elements for the development of these students that will be managing people.

In this session she shares challenges and techniques for making the virtual space of learning more engaging of the whole person, and as part of this quest, creating learning spaces that are attractive and foster as much interaction between the students as possible. With virtual and blended learning classes, the “places” for student interaction, visual symbols and complex information must be designed and dynamically enacted when there is no one classroom for the continuous display of key themes, student work, or inspirational corners.

Participants are invited to share in a activity for the creation of symbols and themes which can be carried across virtual and physical boundaries.

[\(http://moonshotmoment.org/\)](http://moonshotmoment.org/)

3) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.

Total Session Time: 60 minutes

This session opens with a display of definitions for “spacemaking” and “placemaking”. The leader will then quickly engage participants with the question “What are your biggest challenges in on-line and blended courses? (5 minutes)

Then we will break out into small groups (4-5 persons each) for sharing techniques that they have used in on-line courses to create interaction among students, and to specifically develop the social system of the class. (10 minutes)

Next a list of “Placemaking” definitions will be handed out to the small groups which was developed by a survey of people who were interested in creating significant spaces in urban areas for social interaction and placemaking. The small groups will look at these definitions, and pull out some that they feel could be translated to the sphere of academic learning spaces, and discuss how the concepts of physical space can be enacted or developed in virtual space. (15 minutes)

Then the group will come together as a whole, and individuals from the small groups will share the thoughts and ideas for implementation in our management courses to create more connected, integrated learning through interaction in a virtual social space/place. (20 minutes)

This will be followed by a discussion of possible symbols that can be used to carry themes of community and space throughout the course materials. (10 minutes)

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

The increasing use of course management systems to support traditional classrooms, and the increasing number of blended and online classes are changing currents in our learning programs.

Another current that has been present for a long time in some educational programs, is the concentration on the sciences, (STEM) to the exclusion of the social development of students who will be managers and leaders, As organizational behavior and management educators, it is a special calling to provide more experiential and embodied learning where the students are lead to consider and develop themselves in conjunction with their scientific expertise.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

The author previously taught organizational behavior and management courses in business schools. With this new challenge of teaching management at a University of Science and Technology, where management courses are considered “electives”

and the teaching colleagues are not organizational behavior or management focused, providing students with learning opportunities that are engaging of the whole person, and foster reflective development and social interaction with their peers presents a great contribution.

The author has not presented this work before,

Handout:

In 2006 The Project for Public Spaces asked people how they defined placemaking. They had more than 750 submissions from across the globe. Some of these responses resonated with the author for a making a “place” out of “space”, virtual and blended.

<https://www.pps.org/reference/placemakingis/>

PLACEMAKING IS...

“...making Public Space a Living Space.”

“...a dynamic human function: it is an act of liberation, of staking claim, and of beautification; it is true human empowerment.”

“...creating for everybody.”

“...opening your heart to the beauty of a community.”

“...the seed of democracy.”

“...recognizing that cities are not just a collection of people but can be places of beauty and innovation.”

“...feeling like you belong here.”

“...thoughtful design.”

“...designing a public space that can be used by the community as a meeting place for communication, fun, relaxation, bonding, civic involvement, to name a few.”

“...creating value, worth, destination. ”

“...an act of liberation.”

“...a tool which gives professionals and the public the skills to create better environments in which to live, work and visit.”

“...connecting with each other.”

“...all the little things that make a spot memorable.”

“...making places that have meaning to people, enduring patterns of community use and memorable physical qualities.”

“...devotion to the collective effort.”

"...taking back the public realm to create memorable, beautiful, vibrant places where people want to gather and participate in the community."

"...space design through the people's eyes."

"...capturing the soul of a neighborhood."

"...creating an environment that people gravitate to."

"...embracing people, buildings, events, nature. "

"...the art and science of developing public spaces that attract people, build community by bringing people together, and create local identity."

"...creating public spaces that serve the public."

"...bringing concrete and enlivened connection to the spaces we share."

"...the process of giving space a story that is shared by many."

"...the art of harmonizing physical place to the need of people's gathering."

"...the process of incorporating humanity into space."

"...purposely creating character and meaning in a public space."

"...a great tool for building communities from the bottom up, using places where the community can come together, build consensus and learn civic engagement."

"...the art of creating and enriching space for the people."

"...leaving a legacy for our children."

A bibliography of resources that addresses pedagogical issues in the context of virtual learning environments will be shared with participants