On the Disappearing Boundary Between Digital and Physical Spaces in Academia

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OVERVIEW

• Context
  • Distance Education
  • Distributed Research

• Themes
  • Groups
  • Values
  • Intertwined spaces

• Challenges
  • Scale
  • Personalisation

• Takeaways
Lero – The Irish Software Research Centre

Founded 2005 | grown to 11 HEIs

~€100m Funding
~2,500 Publications

70 Nationalities

~€1 → €5.25 To Irish Economy
~285 Researchers

11 HEIs

52 Industry partners
80+ Industry projects
36 Patents

HEIs = Higher Ed. Institutions
The Open University – UK’s Largest University

173,927 formal students
34% enter with two A Levels or less
88% of the FTSE 100 have sponsored staff with the OU
3 in 4 students are already in work
61,000 STEM students
Open University – Lero Collaboration
Distance Learning

• Multiple models of delivery
  • Online lectures
  • Blended learning

• Challenges
  • Developing practical skills
  • Building community

• Shifting landscape
  • Higher education finance policy
  • Changing competition
  • Shifts in media
Supporting Dialogues, Understanding Values

OU Mission & Values
- Open to People, Places, Methods & Ideas
- Innovative
- Flexible
- Responsive
- Open
- Inclusive

Academics
Tutors
Students
Groups, Departments, Centres, Institutes

• **KIT – Keeping in Touch**
  - Random & Social
  - Non technical

• **WIT – Working in Teams**
  - Thematic & functional
  - Project aligned

• **SPIT – Spontaneous Interactions**
  - Creative and unconstrained
  - Inter-disciplinary
  - Collaborative
Values We Live By

• **How we work**
  • Excellence
  • Inter-disciplinarity
  • Collaboration

• **The way we live**
  • Justice & Discrimination
  • Wellbeing & Disease
  • Happiness & Fear
  • Diversity & Integration
  • Sustainability & Development
  • Me & Us

• **Making a difference**
  • Responsible Software Engineering
From spaces to places

places

socio-cultural subjective meaning of location’s functions

functions of geographical location

geographical location

spatial co-ordinates

spaces
EMERGENT CHALLENGES

Supporting Scale

• **Opportunities**
  • Greater geographic reach
  • Support larger groups
  • Include diverse perspectives

• **Challenges**
  • Need to consider values
  • Limits to economies of scale
Enabling Personalisation

- **Divide & Conquer**
  - Using group structures & dynamics

- **Technological Solutions**
  - Learning analytics
  - Chat bots
  - etc
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Understanding the Disappearing Boundaries

Wisdom of Groups

Shared Values

Places & Spaces
THANK YOU

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