

# Changing spaces of learning: a case study of the design studio

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If we think of university teaching in terms of the kind of spaces involved, this raises questions about the different opportunities for learning provided by different kinds of spaces. While university classrooms have been theorized in a range of different ways, including as discourse communities and communities of practice, these have often not been empirically investigated (Prior & Bilbro, 2012). The pedagogical space focused upon in this paper is the ‘design studio’, which refers both to the physical space in which architectural design is taught/learned in the academy and the activity of learning architectural design. The paper reports on a study of a fourth year design studio at an Australian architecture faculty. The study involved observations, recordings of studio sessions, and interviews with teachers and students over a semester period.

Previous research has argued that the spatial organization of the ‘traditional design studio’ is one of its ‘signature pedagogies’ and thus an important part of what distinguishes it from other academic classrooms. Such studies also conclude that the studio replicates professional design settings. The findings of the current study suggest that the studio investigated was unlike the traditional studio. On the basis of these findings, an alternative characterization of the studio space is proposed; one that sees the studio as made up of a web of practices that extend beyond the boundaries of the studio (and the university) both in space and time.