

# LOOK, LISTEN AND LEARN

Using aural and visual data to understand the learning spaces of online students

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What do we *really* know about the study space of online learners?



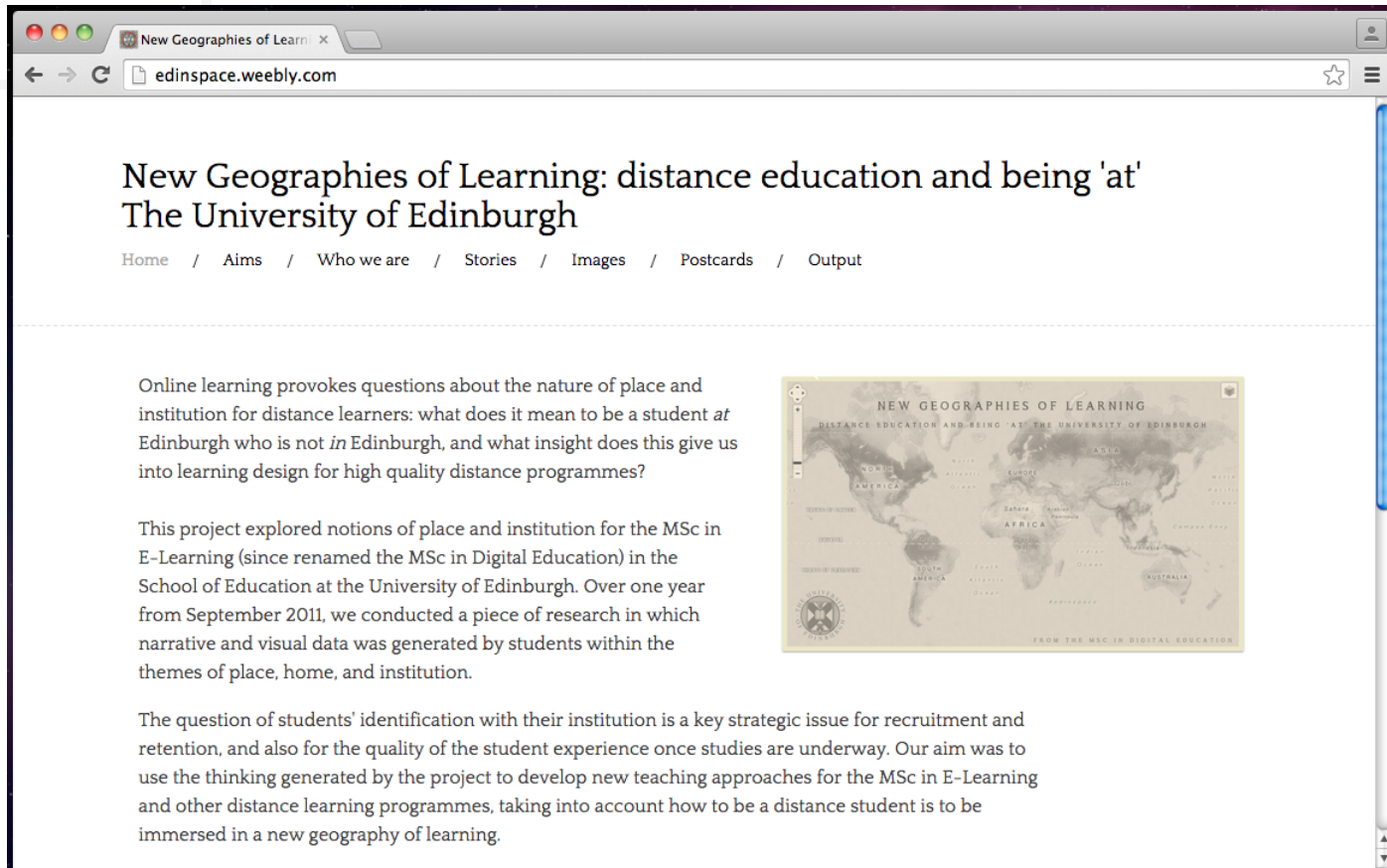
Kirkwood (2000), Kahu et al. (2014), Moss (2004)





The campus is reconfigured to meet the changing needs and habits of learners

# What does it mean to be a student *at* Edinburgh, but not *in* Edinburgh?



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying 'edinspace.weebly.com'. The page title is 'New Geographies of Learning: distance education and being 'at' The University of Edinburgh'. Below the title is a navigation menu: 'Home / Aims / Who we are / Stories / Images / Postcards / Output'. The main content area features three paragraphs of text and a world map. The first paragraph asks about the nature of place and institution for distance learners. The second paragraph describes the project's exploration of place and institution for the MSc in E-Learning. The third paragraph discusses the strategic issue of student identification with their institution. The world map is titled 'NEW GEOGRAPHIES OF LEARNING' and 'DISTANCE EDUCATION AND BEING 'AT' THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH'. It shows a world map with various regions labeled, including North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. The map is credited to 'FROM THE MSc IN DIGITAL EDUCATION'.

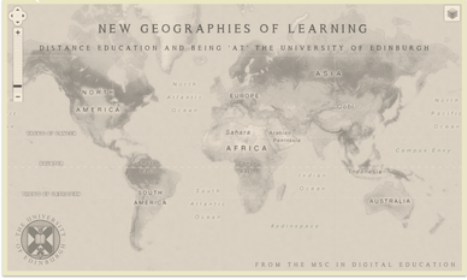
New Geographies of Learning: distance education and being 'at' The University of Edinburgh

Home / Aims / Who we are / Stories / Images / Postcards / Output

Online learning provokes questions about the nature of place and institution for distance learners: what does it mean to be a student *at* Edinburgh who is not *in* Edinburgh, and what insight does this give us into learning design for high quality distance programmes?

This project explored notions of place and institution for the MSc in E-Learning (since renamed the MSc in Digital Education) in the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. Over one year from September 2011, we conducted a piece of research in which narrative and visual data was generated by students within the themes of place, home, and institution.

The question of students' identification with their institution is a key strategic issue for recruitment and retention, and also for the quality of the student experience once studies are underway. Our aim was to use the thinking generated by the project to develop new teaching approaches for the MSc in E-Learning and other distance learning programmes, taking into account how to be a distance student is to be immersed in a new geography of learning.

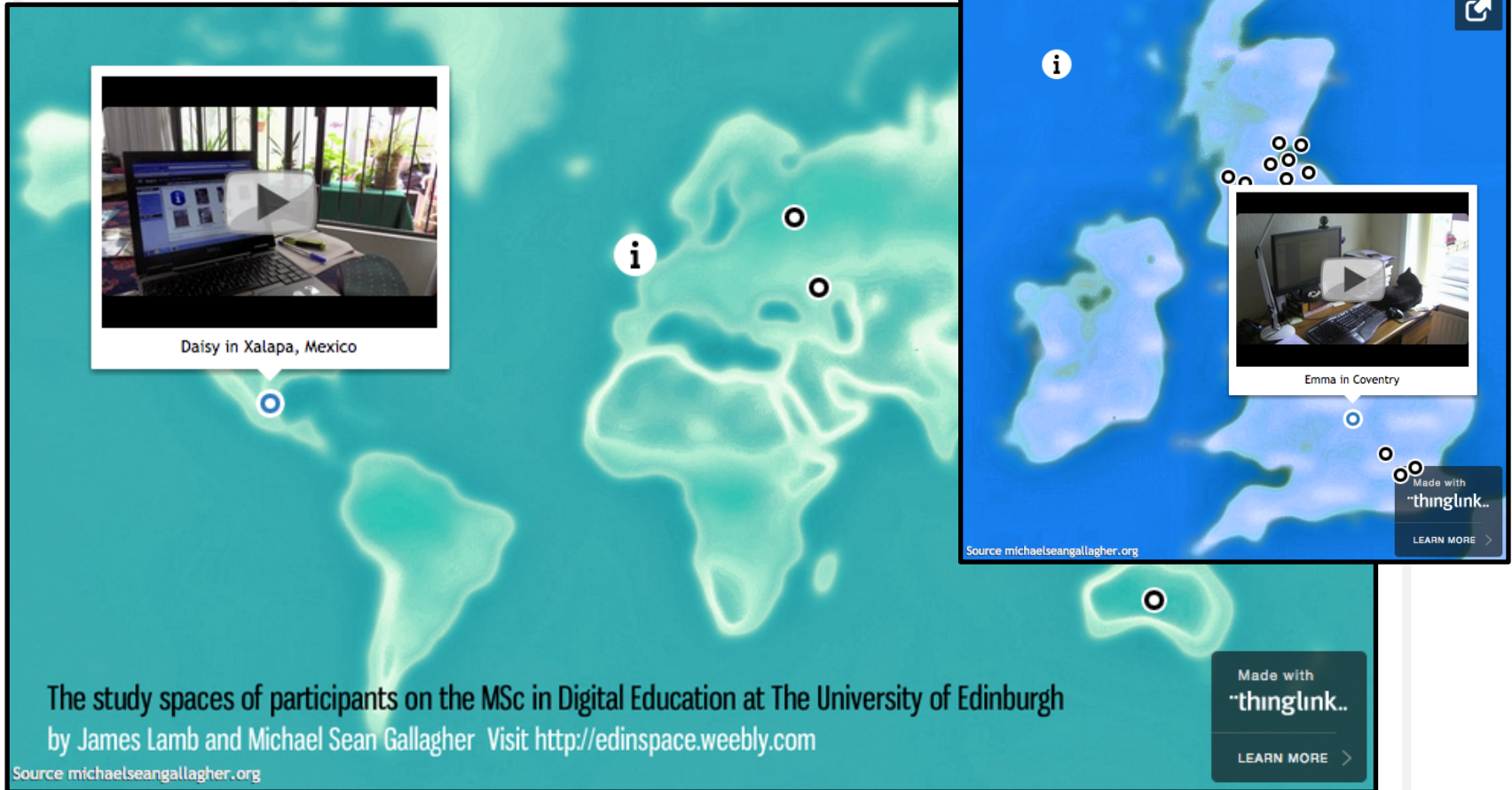


Bayne et al. (2013), Ross et al. (2013)

Visit: [edinspace.weebly.com](http://edinspace.weebly.com). Project funded by Principal's Teaching Awards Scheme.



# What does it mean to be a student *at* Edinburgh, but not *in* Edinburgh?



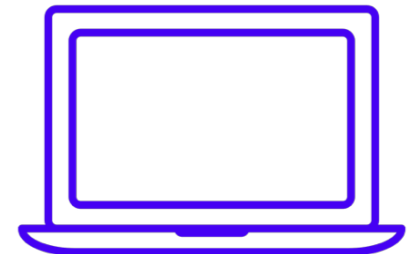
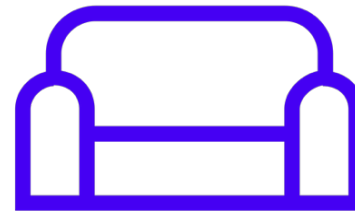
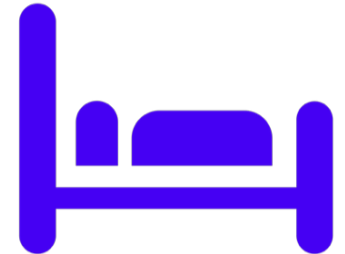
View the maps at: [edinspace.weebly.com/postcards.html](http://edinspace.weebly.com/postcards.html)

## Transcription and analysis

- Avoided the tendency to amongst Internet scholars to privilege image over sound (Sterne 2006)
- Visual methodologies with particular attention to image sites and audiencing (Rose 2012)
- Sonic methodologies with a particular ear to personal sound space and sonic territory (Fluegge 2011)
- A multimodal approach that allowed for the construction of meaning through the interplay of different semiotic material (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, Jewitt 2009)
- We looked for coherence and information linking between different modes (Monaco 2009, van Leeuwen 2004)

## Transcription and analysis

- Personal sound space (Fluegge)
- Territorialism and contested space (Fluegge 2011)
- Spatial acoustic self-determination (Fluegge 2011)
- Sites of image and audiencing (Rose 2012)
- Coherence (Monaco 2009, van Leeuwen 2004)

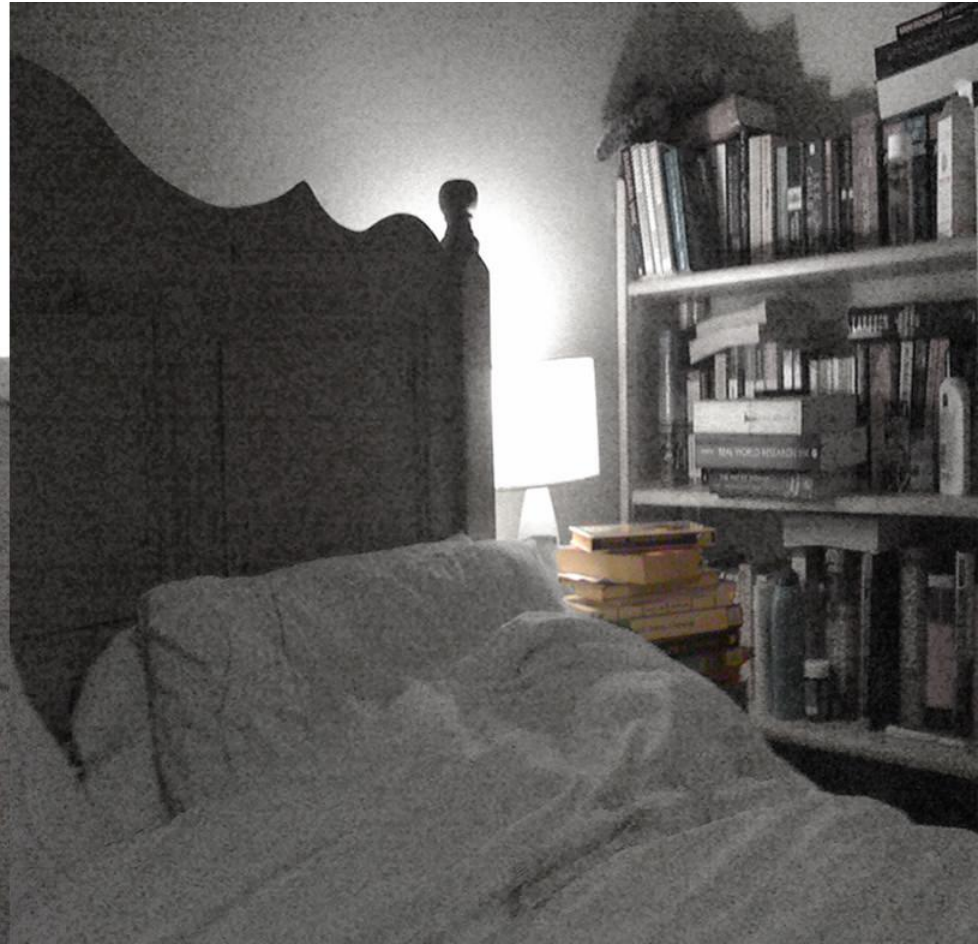


## Josie's learning space(s)





## Josie's learning space(s)



# Aggie's learning space





## Emergent themes

1. The prevalence of informal, homely and domestic spaces – a body of ‘comfort learners’
2. Attempts to mark out a material and/or aural territory -a corner or haven for personal study
3. Creation of learning space within a shared space (rather than carving out a distinct personal territory)
4. Sonic trespass, where the learning space was penetrated by the intrusion of sound and its material agents
5. A contrast between manufactured silence and sound (including music in attempts at spatial acoustic self-determination)

## Some concluding thoughts

- We need to question preconceptions we might have about the highly technologised and mobile nature of online learning.
- Conventional academic resources and tools continue to feature prominently in the learning spaces of what we might see as even the most digital students.
- Students configure the aural and material components of their learning spaces in different ways.
- As distance educators we need to understand how territoriality is enacted across aural and material planes, and how this in turn influences a student's engagement with her programme and institution.



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