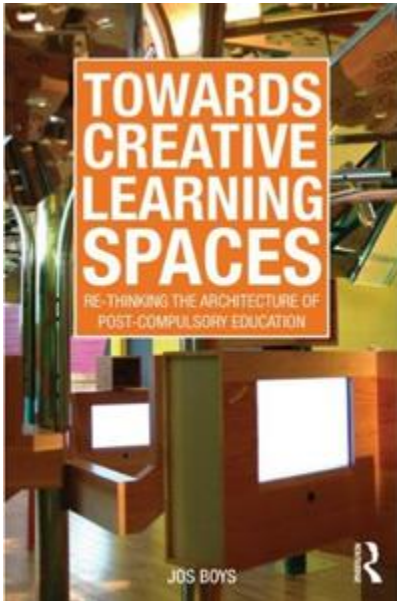


Book Review:



Towards Creative Learning Spaces: Re-Thinking the Architecture of Post-Compulsory Education

Jos Boys. Abingdon Oxon; New York: Routledge. 194 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-57064-0

In *Towards Creative Learning Spaces: Re-Thinking the Architecture of Post-Compulsory Education* author Jos Boys discusses the ways in which designers, architects, educational researchers, environmental psychologists, facility planners, and administration can question the existing relationships between space and learning, beyond simply identifying the differences between informal and formal learning spaces and examining functional, comfort, and dimensional considerations. The author, experienced in architectural practice and education, presents an argument for an interdisciplinary approach to the design and development of current and future college-level learning spacing. The need for collaboration and shared understandings between designers, management, and educationalists is emphasized, particularly in regards to the process of identifying and questioning the types of spaces needed for learning, the spatial identities and what they represent, shared and unique affordances related to occupant type, and the appropriate utilization of technology.

Using and analyzing excerpts of written work from an expansive collection of architectural and educational

sources, the author builds a strong justification for the need to explore new ways in which to question how we research and design for learning spaces in order to provide for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how occupants engage and experience those environments. Architects and designers may build a greater understanding of how occupants interpret, utilize, and respond to an environment through post-occupancy studies carried out after the completion of construction. The author openly criticizes the lack of these types of evaluations and argues that we are neglecting an opportunity to develop and use a more complex and thorough evaluation method. In addition to noting the lack of research and evaluation of currently-used learning spaces, the author discusses the pitfalls associated with participatory design, the spatial representations related to identity, location, hierarchy, materials, and user perception, and the importance of equal balance between comfort and risk within a learning space.

The book is organized into three parts with three chapters in each part. Although the writing at times is complicated with verbose descriptions, the author continuously summarizes her intentions and arguments in each chapter as a mechanism to keep readers on track. The organization of the book takes you through the author's analysis of literature, ending with a collection of case studies that have incorporated a creative design approach, providing the occupants with opportunities to engage in individual development, improve their understanding, build relationships within and beyond the classroom, and participate in community engagement.

As an instructor and a designer, I find that the book offers valuable information in its discussion of topics concerning affordance, function, interpretation, and representation as it relates to the built environment. The book presents information that may encourage students and professionals alike to question the very idea of space and where learning actually occurs in relation to space. The author is careful to stress that this piece was not written as a "how-to" for designing learning spaces but rather a discussion starter about the questions that we should be asking when designing spaces for learning and teaching.

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Additional Recommended Readings

Burke, C., & Grosvenor, I. (2008). [School](#). London: Reaktion Books.

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION*

Day, C. (2007). [Environment and children: Passive lessons from the everyday environment](#). Amsterdam; London: Architectural.