

SEDA Autumn Conference 2024



Session Title: Am I in Higher Education's third space? Who's here with me?

Session Type: Provocations (10mins)

Main presenter(s): Zoë Allman, De Montfort University

Co presenter(s): N/A

Session Summary: The third space is a concept I regularly encounter in articles, calls, and at conferences, but am I in the third space? And who else is here?

Following my SEDA blog article (21/08/2024) of the same title, colleagues across the sector, from various roles, some known to me and many unknown, reached out to share their thoughts and responses. This session extends that discussion, are you here too?

Session Outline: The third space is a concept I regularly encounter in articles, calls, and at conferences, but am I in the third space? And who else is here?

Following my SEDA blog article, 'Am I in Higher Education's third space? Who's here with me?' (21/08/2024) colleagues from across the sector, embracing a range of roles, some known to me and many unknown, reached out to share their thoughts and responses to my questions about being in the third space. This session seeks to extend that conversation, facilitating discussion in the physical space to enrich the contributions and considerations that many of us are pondering.

This provocation will situate the concept of the third space, providing an introductory approach so that all delegates can engage, whether the third space is a well-recognised concept or completely new. In the 10 minute session there will be mention of the history of the term initially coined by Celia Whitchurch in 2008 through to recent writings by Springou (2023) and others, and how I came to be wondering about this concept.

The aim is to open discussion with delegates to further explore the third space as a concept for 2024 and beyond. Responses to my article indicated real interest in this topic and that this is an area for further exploration, perhaps leading to future SEDA activity and/or publications. With colleagues across the sector wondering about their role, alignment to very binary concepts of the 'academic' and 'professional', this raises interesting and timely challenges and opportunities for educational development.

References: Springou, F. (2023). Building bridges between academics and professional services. Times Higher Education: Campus, 23 June 2023. Available at:



<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/building-bridges-between-academics-and-professional-services> (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

Whitchurch, C. (2008). Shifting Identities and Blurring Boundaries: The Emergence of Third Space Professionals in UK Higher Education. *Higher Education Quarterly* 62(4): 377-396.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2008.00387.x>