Critical Intersections: 12th Biennial Conference of the Association for Academic Language and Learning, University of Wollongong 25-27th November 2015

Image credit: Bjarke Ingels Group, the BIG maze
http://www.big.dk/#projects-maze
maze | shortcut | network

Image credit: Bjarke Ingels Group, the BIG maze
http://www.big.dk/#projects-maze

Kate Bowles
the maze
The social design process is inevitably political.
Donald Schon, Frame Reflection, 1994
“including the gallery of public opinion, whose shifts may change the meanings constructed for the object, and for the values and constraints that determine how the object can or should be shaped.”

Donald Schon, Frame Reflection 168
YOUNG PEOPLE NEED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE FOR JOBS OF THE FUTURE, NOT THE PAST

70% of young people currently enter the workforce in jobs that will be radically affected by AUTOMATION.

OCCUPATIONS: ENTRY LEVEL roles for young people are DISAPPEARING.
when universities say “real world” curriculum, what are we saying about ourselves?
It is there that the university is in the world that it is attempting to think.

Jacques Derrida, The Unconditional University
Visions always belong to someone, and to the degree that they translate into curricula and pedagogical practices, they not only denote a struggle over forms of political authority and orders of representation, but also weigh heavily in regulating the moral identities, collective voices and the futures of others.

Henry Giroux, Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education
visions always belong to someone
Canada, 2014

32 post-secondary institutions agreed to pool data from 34,039 students.

89.3% felt overwhelmed; 63.9% felt very lonely; 56.5% felt overwhelming anxiety; 37.5% felt so depressed it was difficult to function; 9.5% seriously considered suicide; 6.6% intentionally hurt or injured themselves; and 1.3% attempted suicide.

Kelley Castle, The value of being porous, June 2014
“a comprehensive approach that optimises the curriculum as a structure for student learning and experience”
As you travel deeper into a maze your path typically becomes more convoluted. What if we invert this scenario and create a panopticon that brings clarity and visual understanding upon reaching the heart of the labyrinth?

Bjarke Ingels Group, the BIG maze. 2014
What if we create a panopticon?
Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used.

-- Michel Foucault
In fact, with their large brick buildings, authoritative hierarchy and obsession with routine, universities are more similar to prisons than I had ever assumed.

What if we create a panopticon?
What if we create a panopticon?

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a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole

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Michel Foucault
“now you can see the experience”
now can you see the experience?
Between structure and function is the notion of intelligibility, defined as the degree to which what can be seen and experienced locally in the system allows the large scale system to be learnt without conscious effort.

Bill Hillier, Space is the Machine
At orientation we were given a bag full of stuff that included a map. To this day, I still have the map in my Uni bag, and use it at the beginning of each semester to find my classrooms.
Image from the work of Professor Alan Penn, UCL: http://www.90percentofeverything.com/2011/04/10/alan-penn-on-shop-floor-plan-design-ikea-and-dark-patterns/
Mostly learned how things worked through experience, normally takes about a year to learn most of it... never learned everything though, even after four years.
Unintelligibility and disorientation removes your autonomy. They’ve extended the threshold at the beginning of the store to this whole showroom, and used it to remove your knowing-of-where-you-are.

You have to submit. You can only give in and follow the route that they set out for you, because to do anything else is really difficult.

Alan Penn, Who Enjoys Shopping in IKEA? 2011
If there was more information out there then you won't have kids like me apply for something then transfer 3 times trying to find the right degree. It also doesn't help that transferring degrees doesn't count as extra time on your Centrelink payments for a uni student. I nearly had to quit uni because I wasn't going to be paid if not for Centrelink finding ways around it for me.
I really knew nothing about the student services stuff that were available to us. I'd equate knowing about that to reading the terms and conditions online... like they're there, and the university "probably" tells us they're there in some sort of pamphlet or peripheral, but who ever reads the full terms and conditions?
I'm enrolled in a degree which includes two minors. Recently this degree has been changed to include a major. I didn't know anything about this, and I'm slightly annoyed about it. I've only heard rumours about students moving into the new degree structure.
It's slightly strange how complex and inflexible this seems.
The labyrinth affects everyone differently. Some immediately stop moving.

Simon Barron, The Labyrinth. 2009
BASED ON THE TRUE STORY OF
DAVID DECHANT
I tap my feet under the desk, I try to keep formal and I watch the way I talk to people. I basically go into what I used to call ‘parent mode’ essentially. In fact the me I thought I was basically changes and I become this other me, a me that is more polite and more respectful of those around him, compared to the normal me that really couldn’t give 2 shits about anything anymore. … People always ask what is wrong with me when I am like this, and I sorta seem to understand it more now.
I handed in something late for the first time ever earlier in the semester and that one late hand-in became two and three late hand-ins. I was so stressed and anxious that every time I would sit down to do an assignment my heart would race, my brain would turn to mush, I would feel physically ill and like I was going to pass out or cry. This led to me getting very sick, but I still had to work 6 days a week. I have never been closer to dropping out.
Experiencing the winning combo of depression and anxiety puts me on the fast track to deadline disappointment. This is unfortunately due to the fact that on some days I am too drained to even get out of bed and on many other days the mere thought of all the work ahead of me causes me to shut down and block it out as if it never existed.
And shame really is a big problem, even when handing something in. ... What you are trying to achieve is to fit your full self into a system that often measures your ability and worth in the ability to follow an essay structure with a new paint job every semester rather than your level of understanding of content or your ability to put it into practice.
I clenched my jaw and continued. I’m proud of that.
the shortcut
Before the grass even had a chance to take hold this Spring, time conscious students were cutting corners and breaking through hedges in all sections of the campus. (Kent State U., 1962)
We have tried to put walks in places convenient to students, yet enhancing to the natural beauty of the campus,” said Wooddell.

“But new shortcuts are continually developing.”
as new shortcuts develop, how do we respond?
when lecture attendance is compulsory and I need time to work on other assignments, I partially attend or get a "friend" to sign it.
I never once went to lectures, With the edustream stuff it was easier for me to stay home and listen to the lecturers while I was doing more constructive things. I never did readings either, I just read the abstract and skimmed over the first page of all of them. even when it came to "references in assignments" no one ever bothered to call me out on it and I got good marks no matter what.
I've cut plenty of corners. I used to do the maths on what marks I needed to get a pass.
Other shortcuts I've used has been completing second or third level subjects earlier than necessary. This has meant I got the boring or difficult subjects out of the way early.
Design moves inevitably produce some unintended effects which the designer may see either as flaws to be corrected or as happy accidents that suggest new opportunities.

Donald Schon, Frame Reflection, 1994
I got lucky in first year and had some help from someone who switched degrees so they gave me some pointers on what I can and can't get away with.

my older sister, who did the same degree before me, definitely proved most helpful for understanding how the university works. I had friends who had been around for a long time as well, so they knew things when I needed them as well.
Being a year younger than most of the people who started that year was also challenging because it meant I didn't really make friends very easily as a lot of the people knew each other from school etc.

My friends and the uni website have come in most handy when I've needed to know something. I haven't really bothered to go and see people at uni when I've needed help because I'm not at uni very often and I just don't have time to waste going and seeing someone.
I'm overly independent, I don't like asking for help even when I need it, and this is a tragic flaw.

I was lucky enough to have friends already at uni, but these friends aren't studying the same degree and aren't in any of my subjects.
It’s impossible to make community without networks

-- Jane Jacobs
Fused grid planning: a walkable neighbourhood, connected by spaces to think.
if city mixtures of use are to be more than a friction on maps, they must result in different people, bent on different purposes, appearing at different times, but using the same streets.

-- Jane Jacobs
And others wonder whether a community counts as a course, whether a course must be devoted to a specific curriculum, or specific objectives, or involve an instructor, or be based in an institution. We believe a course has value in creating temporary networks and in creating temporary associations, all of which increase diversity and improve the chances for serendipity. This, too, is a conversation we continue to have.

-- Stephen Downes, 2015 Where there are networks, life exists
I'm surprised that I've become so emotional and began interpreting appreciation as a form of grading over actual marks.

I'm most surprised by my personal growth. I'm still quiet and wouldn't consider myself to have lots of friends but I can get along with everyone without freezing up and locking myself in my own little bubble.

I'm currently averaging 75% overall. My high school self would be very surprised.

I didn't think I would miss it much, but once you get to know people after working with them for 3+ years, you learn to miss it all.

I personally expected to walk out of university a failure with a worthless piece of paper ... But the actual task of HAVING academic conversations, of watching as people tell me things and talk to me about things - not argue, just sharing ideas - has been really wonderful.
The Sleeper: David Dechant and Mike Wesch [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZedcQoY0iw]

The BIG maze, National Building Museum, Washington DC, 2014
Bjarke Ingels Group: [http://big.dk/#projects-maze]

Matthew Perkins, glass maze, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/mattyp/6236676127/in/photostream/]


Urban Grammar, Santiago’s Emergent Fused Grid, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/22392855@N08/19162498168/]