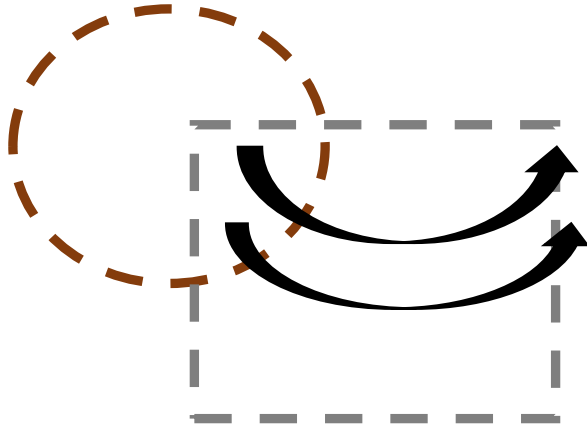


Part-time spaces: rethinking 'belonging' in HE

**Enduring Inequalities and New Agendas for Widening Participation in
Higher Education: Student Access, Mobilities and 'Success'**

27 July 2016, University of Leeds



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thinking 'spatially'

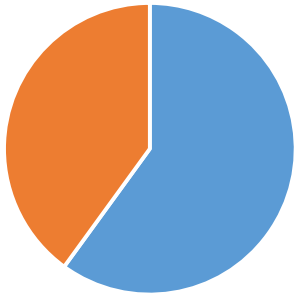
- spatial/power relationships of higher education
- how spaces are appropriated and inhabited and by whom

space: the product of social relations shaped by power ... a confluence and product of histories, relationships ... the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist' (Massey 2005, p.9),

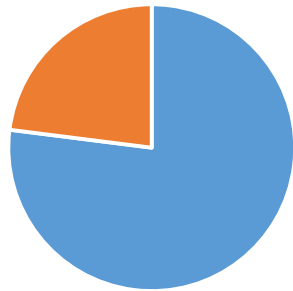
activity space: the spatial network of links and activities, of spatial connections and of locations, within which a particular agent operates ... within each activity space is a geography of power. (*ibid.* p55).

part-time spaces?

Mode 2010

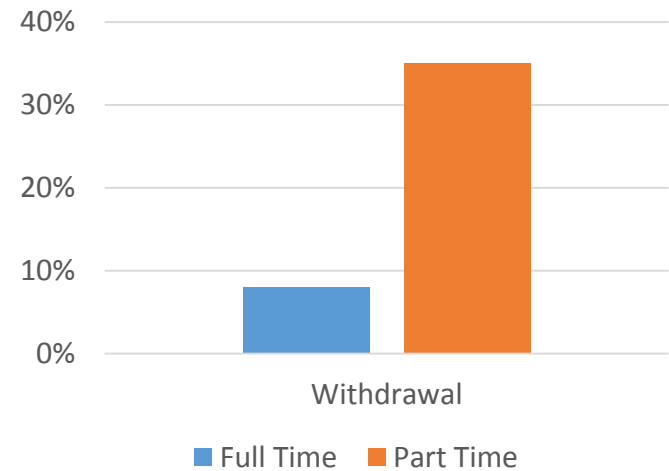


Mode 2015

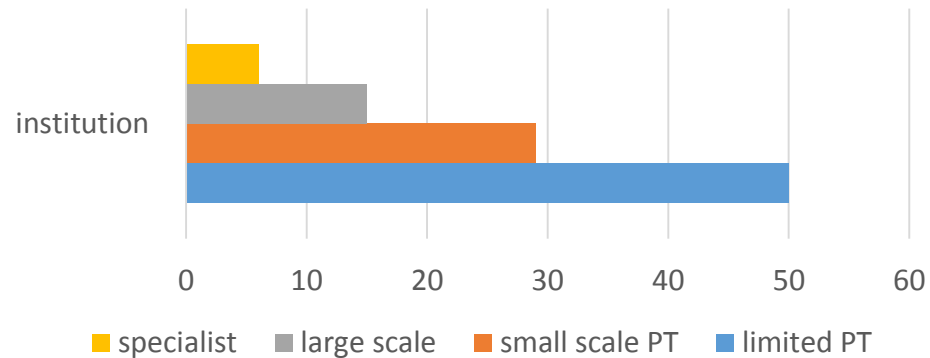


■ Full Time ■ Part time

Withdrawal Rates



Part time provision



retention and belonging

At the heart of successful **retention** and success is a strong sense of **belonging in HE** for all students. This is most effectively nurtured through mainstream activities that all students participate in ... our definition of 'belonging' is closely aligned with the concept of student engagement, encompassing both academic and social ...

... choosing to continue to live in the family home rather than university accommodation or with student peers ... combining part- or full-time study with employment ... postponing entering HE and thus studying as mature students. All of these factors may make it difficult for students to fully participate, integrate and feel like they **belong in HE**, which might have a detrimental impact on their **retention** and success.

Thomas (2012) *Education at a time of change; What Works*

problematizing 'belonging'

Belonging ... is often used in a way that implies a **common understanding** of what belonging is and why belonging is important. Needless to say, no such common understanding exists.

Practices of belonging within a place not only mark the claims of particular groups to particular territories, but in doing so, inevitably identify '**the other**', excluding on the basis of difference, defined and implemented through relationships of power.

(Mee and Wright 2009, p772)

practices of belonging



- academic: disciplinary/cohort
- social: sports/enrichment/voluntary/leisure
- presence on campus/outside contact hours

... **a geography of places** – the bars and ‘student-friendly’ pubs where students can meet new people, the hall of residence, the canteens ... the student community is stitched together out of these places; it relies on this geography.

(Crang 1998, p.5)

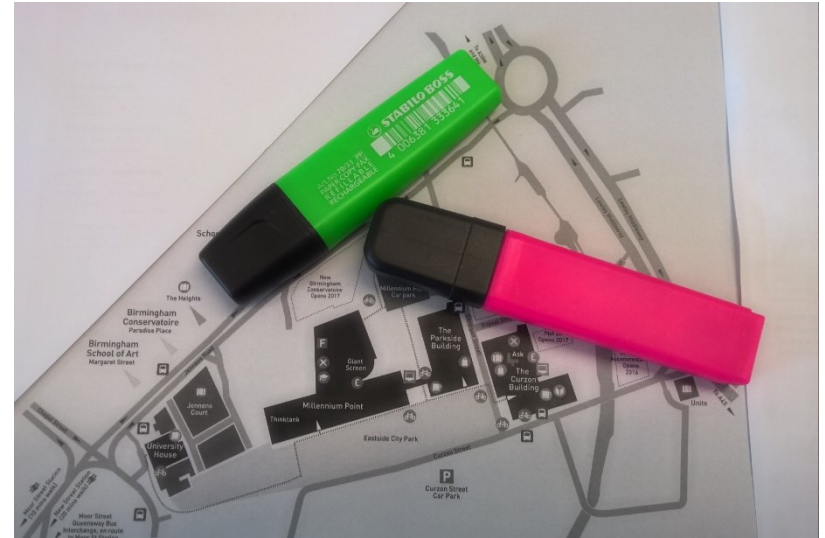
who belongs?

- mature part-time undergraduates occupy a peripheral – and increasingly precarious – position in English HE
- dominant ideas of ‘belonging in HE’ are problematic in the context of a diverse undergraduate population
- *... mature, working-class and minority ethnic students often choose to apply to post-1992 universities in order to increase their chances of belonging in an academic culture ... to reduce their feeling of ‘otherness’.*

(Read *et al.* 2003).

mapping belonging

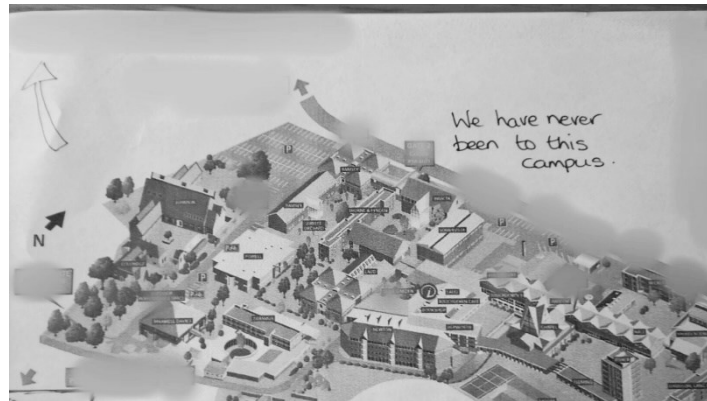
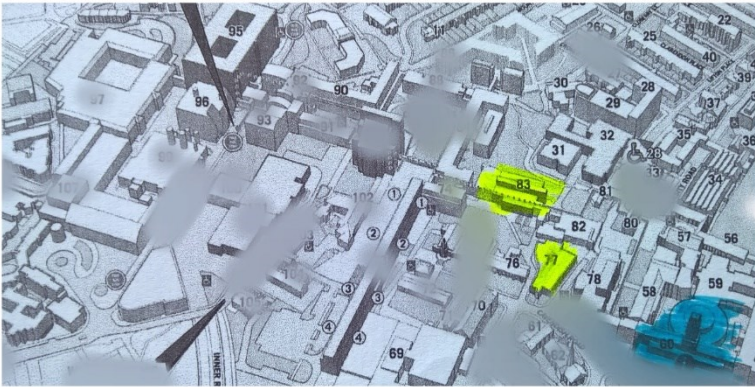
- student participants
- campus maps/coloured pens
- hot/cold spots, different colours
- trigger for discussion
- on the map? off the map?



Participant-generated visual materials are particularly helpful in exploring the taken-for-granted things in their research participants' lives ... involves the participants reflecting on their activities in a way that is not usually done; it gives them distance from what they are usually immersed in and allows them to articulate thoughts and feelings that usually remain implicit.

Rose 2014, p.27

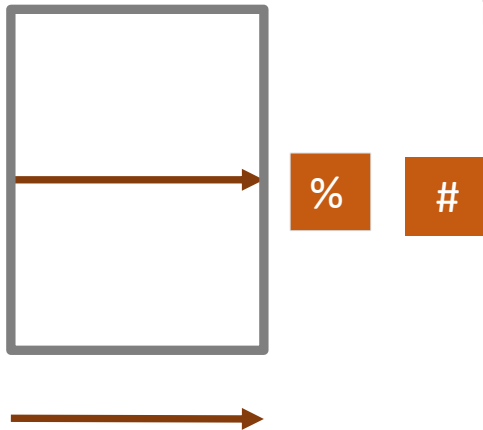
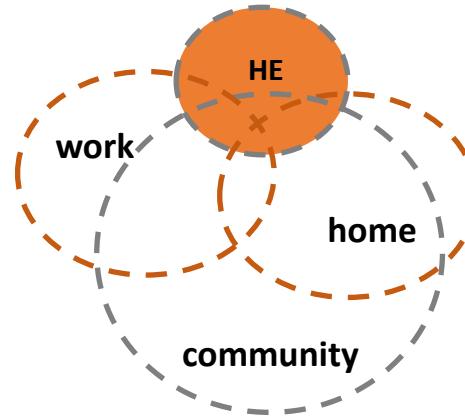
mapping belonging



mapping engagement ...

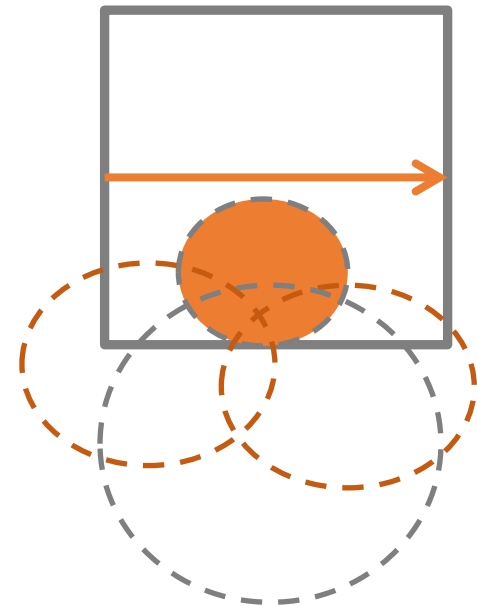
mature part-time engagement in HE

- heterogeneous individuals
- simultaneous, multiple commitments
- complexity



institution-centric retention

- linear
- bounded
- homogenous



TEF

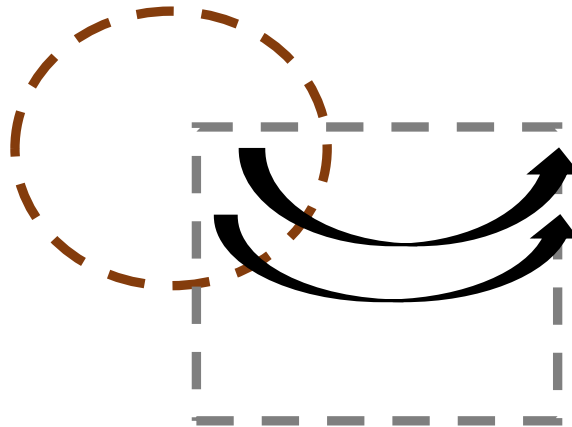
assessment metrics
student satisfaction
retention
graduate employment / earnings
<i>qualitative institutional submission</i>
<i>expert judgements</i>
=
tuition fee increases

dimensions of belonging

- belonging as uniform and finite (common understandings) and belonging as a **relational, contested, dimensional process**
- 'belonging in HE' – common space(s) experienced in multiple ways
- negotiated engagement with space:
 - Facebook pages/groups
 - shared lunches
 - group outings
 - professional identity
 - roles of responsibility
 - branded clothing


shared ownership

- at the interface of the individual and the institution
- coinciding interests, common effort, through and beyond the university
- localised – tutors, teachers, support staff
- bridging rhetoric and experience with compensatory behaviours
- hard to measure but critical work



thinking spatially?

- relationships of power
 - dominant and marginal practices of belonging
- negotiating space(s) to belong
- dimensions of belonging, spaces between: cohort, professional identity
- implications for institutional practice? transferability?



QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU

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