

# Ludic Engagement and Collaboration in Social Learning Space



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# Learning Space

- At the age of strong Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) research agenda considering higher education campus spaces for learning requires seeking a more general definition of how a learning environment should be understood.
- The problem on the field is that the term “learning environment” is widely used but rarely defined (Abualrub, Karseth & Stensaker 2013).
- In general the definitions on learning environments seem to purposelessly decouple the subject (learner) and the institution perspective.



# Learning Space

- For our needs learning environment is defined as a combination of physical, mental and social elements, where learning takes place:
  - Physical (buildings, environment, equipment),
  - Mental (cognitive, affective aspects),
  - Social (interaction, relations) (Finnish National Board of Education 2004).
- When considering higher education campus space, the learning environment is a learner-defined mental structure reflecting the institution-specific academic learning culture.



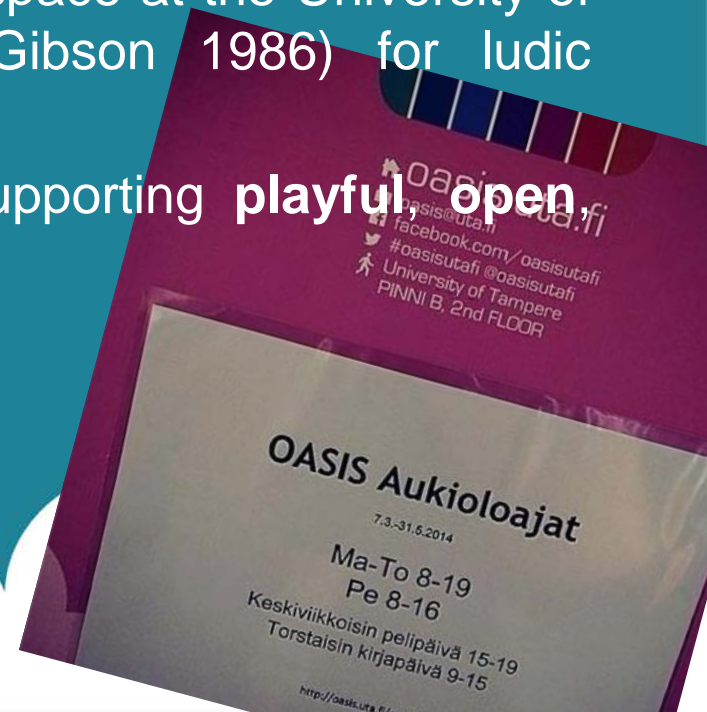
# SLS

- A purpose-built informal Social Learning Space (SLS) is a strategy to improve student and staff commitment by supporting active learning, social interaction and sense of belonging (Matthews, Andrews & Adams 2011).
- Can spaces transform University student and staff identity by driving adoption of certain practices and culture?



# OASIS SLS

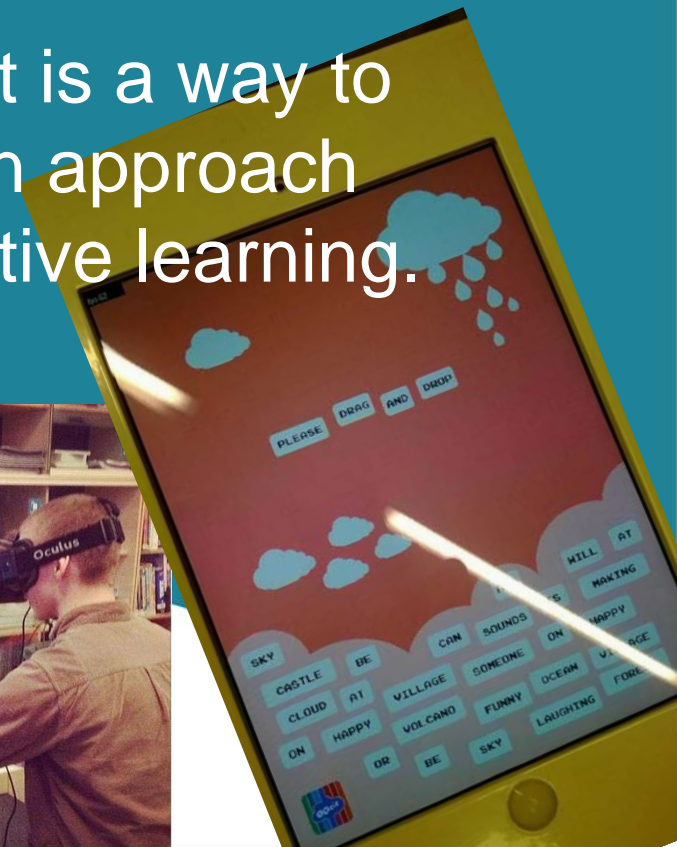
- Playful environments for ludic engagement is a means to break away from norms and hierarchies. Designing the space to incite ludic engagement (Gaver et al. 2004) is a way to support curiosity, exploration and aesthetic appreciation. The aim is to support open collaboration by enabling users to find one's own meaning and uses for a space.
- OASIS is a social learning and research space at the University of Tampere with designed affordances (Gibson 1986) for ludic engagement and collaboration.
- The design strategies are for supporting **playful, open, informal and opportunistic use.**





# Playful

- Playfulness is ideal for breaking conventional learning and inciting creativity - play itself is a powerful learning method.
- Designing for ludic engagement is a way to thwart overly formal or utilitarian approach towards inventive use and creative learning.



# Open

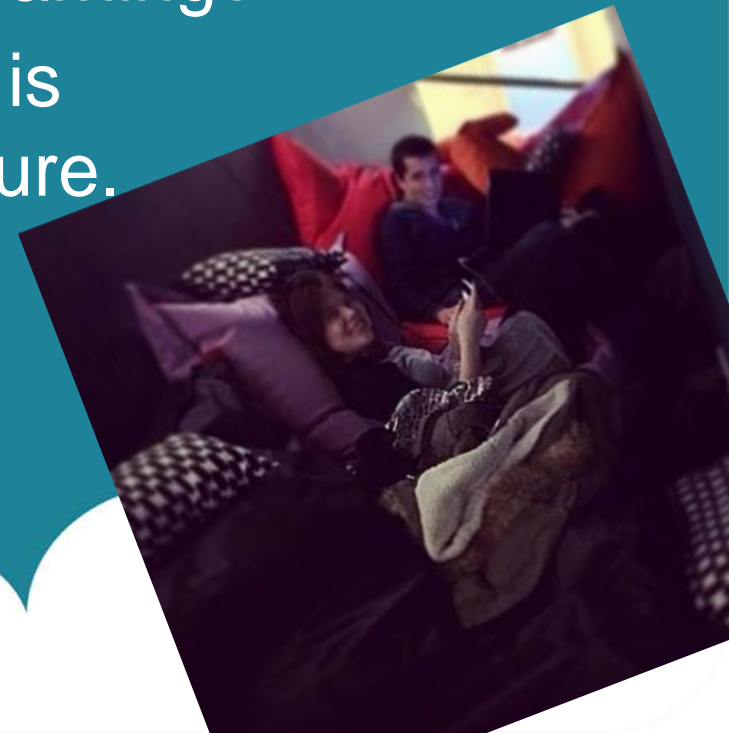
- Creating an open learning culture can prove delicate and the space should advertise openness any way it can.



- Not only is equal interaction within the space a requirement but between people in it if ideas and information are to be shared casually.

# Informal

- Institutionally planned (formal) or unplanned (informal) use of spaces.
  - Lectures, silent study vs. e.g. group work, collaborative ideation.
- Mandatory or interest-based learning?  
Better part of human learning is un-formal and informal by nature.





# Opportunistic

- The student or staff member has an "opportunist" mindset of the SLS.
- Opportunistic use is informal, sudden, unplanned and takes place with the support of resources that happen to be available.
  - Supporting Bringing Your Own Device (BYOD) culture.



# Studying the emergent culture

- What are the learning practices and cultures being adopted?
  - In which way are they playful, open, informal, opportunistic?



# Early findings and experiences

- Based on the feedback of test sessions and from occasional visitors of the yet-not-opened space the design details were tweaked concerning physical (clothing racks), technological (instructions for the devices) and social (rules and guidelines).
- A survey one year prior the space found contradictory expectations:



- 1) Expectation of the space to be dynamic and lively and
- 2) Expectation of the space to be quiet and relaxing.
- 3) Concerns were raised for the openness of the space. This was considered in the communication plan.

# Final thoughts

- The OASIS SLS seeks to advocate learning as a general and dynamic human condition: not as formally initiated studying activity for goal-attained studying activity but as a goal itself.
- OASIS provides interesting possibilities to study SLS solutions in connection with ludic engagements and collaboration in a true Living Lab environment.



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