

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

Becoming third space: Co-designing SoTL through hybrid practice

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This Pecha Kucha presentation offers a reflective autoethnographic narrative of one third space educational developer's transition from operational course-level support to co-leadership in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), curriculum transformation, and digital innovation. Working within a faculty-based initiative that integrates embedded scholarship with academic partnership, this role illustrates how hybrid professionals contribute to institutional transformation through relational, scholarly practice.

The presentation is grounded in Third Space Theory (Whitchurch, 2008), which conceptualises the space between academic and professional roles as a site of emergent identity and leadership. Turner's (1969) concept of liminality further describes the transitional nature of this work, situated within and across organisational boundaries. The approach is also informed by Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone's (2011) integrative vision of SoTL, which emphasises embedded scholarly practice as a catalyst for institutional change. Drawing on Felten's (2013) principles of good SoTL practice and Lukes et al.'s (2024) strategic tools for building SoTL cultures, the presentation showcases the scholarly agency of third space professionals in enabling evidence-informed teaching and learning improvement.

The twenty-slide narrative unfolds in four interconnected arcs. First, it traces the role evolution from reactive support to proactive scholarly partnership in SoTL. Second, it reflects on hybrid professional identity, including the emotional labour, invisibility, and pursuit of legitimacy often associated with third space roles. Third, it illustrates practice-based contributions to student learning through program-level assessment design, capability framework development, and collaborative SoTL projects. Fourth, it considers institutional enablers and constraints that influence the sustainability and visibility of third space contributions.

Although focused on a single professional trajectory, the presentation contributes to broader sector insights. It foregrounds the methodological and strategic capacities third space professionals bring to academic development and SoTL. It argues that advancing educational transformation requires institutions to embrace more inclusive models of academic-professional partnership and to recognise hybrid roles as core to future-focused learning environments.

Aligned with ASCILITE 2025 themes of Your Journey, Collaborative Futures, and AI and Human Synergy, this Pecha Kucha offers a practitioner-scholar perspective on educational innovation. It invites reflection on how third space professionals can be positioned as co-designers of pedagogical change, and how institutions can foster cultures where collaborative expertise is both valued and sustained.

Keywords: third space professionals, autoethnography, professional identity, educational development, curriculum transformation, SoTL, institutional change, hybrid roles, reflective practice, higher education reform

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