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***Optimising the university third space professional partnership in the world of work(er)
dislocation***

Author

Dr Natalia Veles

Affiliation:

College of Arts, Society and Education

James Cook University, Australia

Email: Natalia.Veles@jcu.edu.au

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6010-2653>

In the higher education context, university *third space* is a clever and relevant metaphor describing how the new and emerging ways of academic and professional staff's working together are accompanied by crossing, disrupting and transcending the boundaries of their respective roles and identities, thereby challenging the confines of organisational structure (Soja, 1996, 2009; Whitchurch, 2008, 2012, 2018). It is a space characterised by appreciation of diverse thinking, co-creating new practices, and challenging and changing outdated systems and processes. It is also an imperceptible space of professional tensions and challenges that boundary crossing inevitably produces (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011a, 2011b).

Drawing on the selective findings from the doctoral research of the university *third space* of professional collaborations in the intercultural (Australia and Singapore) environment, this paper presents an argument for the *third space* as a site of practice to enable and sustain university collaborations. Provided that certain motivational factors are met *for* staff, and cross-boundary capabilities are developed *by* staff, *third space* becomes a representational site for developing the organisational collaborative capital – an intangible form of capital fostering growth and development.

In this paper, I provoke critical reflection on how the interconnected concepts of *third space*, boundary learning and collaborative capital can be mobilised strategically in the environment where technology continues to shape the future of work leading to perceived and actualised dislocation of traditional work(ers), redefinition of professional identities, reconceptualisation of competence and learning in the new digital economy.

Keywords: higher education, *third space*, collaborative capital, boundary learning, digital economy, university collaboration

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Dr Natalia Veles

Natalia combines her work as a College Manager at James Cook University with post-doctoral research and academic writing. She spans the boundaries of education sectors, geography and culture. Natalia has extensive experience in higher education, vocational education and international education leadership. She has worked in strategic positions worldwide, including Russia, China, New Zealand and Vietnam. Natalia’s research interests are focused on the university *third space*. In the higher education context, university *third space* became a metaphor describing the new ways academic and professional staff work together crossing, disrupting and at times transcending the boundaries of their respective professional roles and identities and navigating the organisational structure. Natalia is particularly interested in the impacts of culture and organisational boundaries on university

collaboration and creating the collaborative capital. She has published on the topic and presented at national and international conferences and established a Third Space Community of Practice under the auspices of the Australasian Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) to share insights into university cross-boundary practices and assist professional staff with making sense of their changing identities in the continuously changing local and global higher education.