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Time-shifting in the digital university: temporality and online distance education

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is situated in the context of the emergence of the 'digital university' in higher education. It addresses research questions which focus on organizational change, particularly on how a strategic shift to increase the provision of online distance education in a traditional, research-intensive, campus-focused university, affects the existing temporal and spatial practices of the institution. The research undertaken focuses on a UK university, during a period of strategic digital expansion in its postgraduate taught degree programmes, where funding is allocated by the institution to support a number of new courses and programmes, developed and designed to be available to students on a fully online basis. I take a narrative ethnographic research approach, which draws on interviews with university staff and students, alongside higher education policy and think-tank documents, and institutional websites. Particular attention is paid to the temporal aspects of each narrative account, in order to surface temporality over what I consider to be the spatial preoccupations of the literature and practices of online 'distance' education.

Sustaining a critique of 'anytime, anywhere' accounts of online education, with a reminder that education takes place over time and in particular times and spaces, I draw on Sharma's (2013) work on 'critical time', and particularly her notion of temporal 'recalibration' (2014), to think about complex temporal relations in the digital university. I go on to explore the idea of the digital university as transtemporal, as an alternative conceptualisation which opens up possibilities for imagining the university beyond its traditional temporal and spatial boundaries. I argue that understanding the dominant times and spaces of the university campus as central, and those accessing the campus in asynchronous or asymmetric ways as peripheral, may not just lead to spatially biased practices of distancing, but to a lack of recognition of emergent inequalities which are digitally reconfigured and potentially invisible. I conclude with some reflections on theoretical and methodological approaches to time and the digital in higher education and propose areas for future research.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

> Without at least a sense of a beginning, nothing can really be done, much less ended. This is as true for the literary critic as it is for the philosopher, the scientist, or the novelist. And the more crowded and confused a field appears, the more a beginning, fictional or not, seems imperative. A beginning gives us the chance to do work that compensates us for the tumbling disorder of brute reality that will not settle down. (Said 1975 p50)

The digital university

This thesis is situated in the context of the emergence of the 'digital university' (Hazemi *et al* 1998; McClusky and Winter 2012; Goodfellow and Lea 2013; Jones 2013; Losh 2014), or what Selwyn (2014) refers to more broadly as 'digital higher education' (px). The following chapters address research questions which focus on organizational change, particularly on how a strategic shift to increase the provision of online distance education in a traditional, research-intensive, campus-focused university, affects the existing temporal and spatial practices of the institution. The research focuses on a case study of a strategic initiative at a UK university which has made a significant investment in supporting the development of a number of new courses and programmes designed to be available to students on a fully online basis.

I take a narrative ethnographic research approach (Gubrium and Holstein 2008) in this study, incorporating narrative and discourse analysis, and drawing on interviews with university staff and students, alongside higher education policy and think-tank documents, and institutional websites. I pay particular attention to the temporal aspects of each narrative account, in order to surface temporality over what I consider to be the spatial preoccupations of the literature and practices of online 'distance' education. My aim is to sustain a critique of 'anytime, anywhere' accounts of online education, which fail to acknowledge that education takes place over time and in particular times and spaces. I therefore draw on Sharma's (2013) work on 'critical time', and particularly her notion of temporal 'recalibration' (2014), to think about complex temporal relations in the digital university. I pay attention to the association of technology with 'fast time' and 'flexibility' which, I argue, is a conflation which leads to propositions that online education is 'better, faster' (Coursera 2015), dislocated and a-temporal.

I go on to explore the idea of the digital university as translocal and transtemporal, as an alternative conceptualisation which, I argue, opens up possibilities for imagining the

university (Barnett 2013) beyond its traditional temporal and spatial boundaries. I argue that understanding the dominant times and spaces of the university campus as central, and those accessing the campus in asynchronous or asymmetric ways as peripheral, may not just lead to spatially biased practices of distancing, but to a lack of recognition of emergent inequalities, which are digitally reconfigured and potentially invisible. I conclude with some reflections on theoretical and methodological approaches to time and the digital in higher education and propose areas for future research.

Organizing higher education

Drawing on the influential work of sociologist Burton Clark, remembered particularly for his work on the 'organizational saga' (1972) and the 'entrepreneurial university' (1998), Fumasoli and Stensaker (2013) undertake a review of organization studies and higher education policy research over a 25 year period, marking the 25th anniversary of the journal *Higher Education Policy*. The authors review the most highly cited articles from the journal which also relate to organization studies. Significantly for this thesis, the review highlights a lack of articles focusing on individual institutions, going on to suggest that,

> By focusing the research agenda on policy studies, articles on the transformations of higher education have disregarded somewhat the point of view of practitioners…those that, within universities and colleges, have to cope with the reforms being implemented. (p488)

Fumasoli and Stensaker (2013) find that while policy makers appear to be taken into account in recent research, this contrasts with a lack of research taking into account the roles of senior academics and administrators who are found to be, 'somehow neglected, or only indirectly addressed' (p488). The authors therefore call for an increase in studies which will give an insight into the organization of the core teaching, research and service activities of institutions. In support of this approach, the authors quote from private correspondence with Clark (2004), who comments that,

> It seems eminently sensible that if we want to find out how universities change, we ought to concentrate research on specific exemplars of organizational transformation…I like actors whom I can see and touch, rather than the wispy general norms for a larger organizational field that supposedly lock universities in iron cages of conformity. (Clark 2004, private correspondence, cited in Fumasoli and Stensaker 2013 p492)

My aim in the following account of my research is to explore one such example of organizing and organizational change, by working with a case study of a strategic initiative, which I describe as a project of digital expansion, in a UK university. I view this project

through the accounts and experiences of a number of university practitioners, including a variety of university staff in both academic and administrative roles, and online distance students studying with the same institution. I consider these accounts in the context of broader narratives of higher education policy and technology, as they have been presented by think-tanks, task-forces and government committees in the UK, alongside media accounts and institutional website material. My intention is to follow accounts of the digital and higher education from macro to micro stories (and back again), from policy narratives to student experiences, to draw out some of the assumptions and implications of the expansion of digital education. In doing so, I seek to uncouple distance education from its spatial preoccupations and work with a temporal analysis to foreground changes in institutional and sectoral practices. I challenge smooth assumptions in higher education and technology discourse where time is presented as an individually or institutionally managed resource which is evenly distributed (Sharma 2013). This is important in the context of higher education particularly as flexible notions of part-time and online study become more prominent. While improved access to education is highly desirable, it is also necessary to recognise that education is effortful, takes time, and happens over time. Importing the marketing discourse of technology in terms of fast and flexible time therefore becomes problematic. As Biesta (2007) sees it, one effect of market discourse in education is that, 'in order to attract learners, learning itself has to be depicted as easy, attractive, exciting' (p10). In this thesis I propose that such discourse also understates and overlooks the significance and complexity of time.

Thesis summary

In the next chapter, I give consideration to the key definitions referred to in the title of this thesis, with the aim of building a critique of the current literature in distance and online education, in the context of what I consider to be the ongoing influence of 'the spatial turn' in education research (Bright *et al* 2013). In support of my critique, I draw on literature which takes a temporal approach to experience (Sharma 2013, 2014), and set the scene for my research approach which seeks to surface temporal issues in relation to organizational change and the digital in higher education. In particular I draw on two approaches to 'recalibration' (Sharma 2014, Coyne 2010), each drawn broadly from cultural and media studies: the first (Sharma 2014) of which takes a social view of temporal recalibration, highlighting social adaption to the temporal influence and demands of others in terms of power relations; the second (Coyne 2010) which considers recalibration in terms of technology and design, with the mapping of one model of operation to another. The notion of temporal recalibration, both in terms of social and digital adjustment, forms a core

theoretical strand in the analytical chapters to follow. This approach draws attention to how temporal narratives are used to drive organizational change and how organizational change, in turn, affects temporal experience. I focus particularly on the digital in this context, as I look at the expansion of online distance education, at postgraduate level, in a UK university.

In chapter 3, in which I outline my research methodology, I present the narrative ethnographic approach which I have taken to conducting my research, including details of the research site, interview participants, the collection and generation of research materials and their analysis.   I pay attention to the temporality of the research process, as well as to a temporal analytic framework.

In chapter 4, 'Edges and beginnings', I am concerned with edging in the narrative sense of beginnings, middles and endings, where shape is given to a story. I consider the shape given to the university conceptually, as it is presented in policy and think-tank reports, and the shape given to the strategic project at *CityName*, as it is presented in the accounts of interviewees and other influential narratives they refer to, such as ongoing government concerns and media stories. Temporal recalibration is considered here as the presentation of a technical, digital market model in policy literature, to which universities are required to adjust. I am particularly interested in the conflation of technology and 'speed theory' (Sharma 2013) here, but also in the recurrence of metaphors of imminent 'natural' disaster (for example, Barber *et al* 2013) in higher education discourse, which depict negative futures for universities in which disaster is expected to strike if change is not instigated.

In chapter 5, 'A state of flex', I draw on the persistent theme of flexibility, as it has already been approached critically in the higher education literature (for example, Edwards 1997 and Nicoll 2006), but also as it finds support in the discourse around digital technology. My argument here is that, while the discourse of flexibility highlights the potential opportunities of online distance education, particularly in terms of access, it also sustains a notion of education which is a-temporal, by depicting education's time-consuming practices as free from time. In Sharma's (2013) terms, time is not viewed here as something which is shared and bound, and which might be experienced unequally or unevenly, but as something which appears individualised, infinite, and of consistent quality.

In chapter 6, 'Designing time', I consider the continued emphasis on spatial terms in accounts of online university practices. This chapter is particularly concerned with digital time and temporal recalibration, as it is explored by Coyne (2010) in relation to digital devices. Here I consider the University of *CityName* in my research materials, particularly

as it is represented and enacted in digital form, through references in interviews to new digital practices and through my observations of *CityName's* institutional 'web presence'. I follow some of these narrative fragments to think about the digital detail of changes in organizational practices which are surfaced in my research.

In chapter 7, I think conceptually about the digital university, by drawing on the notion of translocality (Brickell and Datta 2011), as it has been developed in the field of cultural geography, and by proposing an equivalent notion of transtemporality with which to think about the multiple timeframes and temporal relations in the digital university. In this chapter I draw on the individual experiences of online distance students in relation to time, in the context of their programmes of study, and use these experiences to think about the times that might be brought together in the context of a course. My concerns here are with the recognition of uneven time, in contrast to the discourse of flexibility and associated smooth time which I challenge in chapter 5, and with the challenges of, and potential for, a digital university which is imagined translocally and transtemporally.

It is my intention that the research which underpins this thesis, summarised above and detailed below, will contribute to the literature in higher, distance and digital education, particularly in its exploration of time in relation to organizational change and the digital. While it is my aim that this research will support publications of interest to researchers working in the areas of higher education and digital education, I also hope that the work will find an audience among higher education teachers and administrators with an interest in digital technologies and organizational change, alongside those working in specific education technology support roles. I return to the themes and arguments of the thesis and to implications for current practice and future research in chapter 8.

The 'double reflexivity' of higher education research

Before moving on to explore the relevant literature and concepts which give context to this thesis, I set the scene for the research project which follows, by outlining my personal relationship to the research topic and the research setting, considered here in terms of Clegg and Stevenson's (2013) notion of 'double reflexivity' and Czarniawska's (1997) description of an 'anthropology of doppelgänger'. In this section I explore my relationship to the University of *CityName* by exploring my role as a hybrid student-staff member of the institution, which is also the field site of my study.

Clegg and Stevenson (2013) write about reflexivity in higher education research, focusing on what they call 'the particular double reflexivity of both researcher and researched that is

often entailed in research interviews in higher education settings' (p6). The authors discuss the common experience of academic researchers undertaking research into various aspects of higher education who, inevitably, are party to 'insider knowledge' of the research context, whether the research is at the level of a particular institution, or sector-wide (p7).

> The problem, as well as the advantage, of insider research is the sheer immersion of the researcher in the field she is researching. She is a fish in the water, part of the habitus, with a feel for the rules of the game. (p7)

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1988) work on reflexivity and his acknowledgment, in *Homo Academicus*, of the 'special difficulties involved first in *breaking* with inside experience' (p1), Clegg and Stevenson (2013) pay particular attention to what they consider to be the ubiquity of research studies which promote 'interview data' as the primary research material, without paying due attention to the research context. This, the authors propose, has the effect of, 'relegating much of the rich contextual framing for meaning making to a seemingly neutral description of the research site' (2013 p7). This might include, for example, studies which commonly reduce the institutional research context to characterising a university in terms of its membership of one of the so-called higher education 'mission groups' (Scott 2013) in the UK, such as a 'post-1992' university, or a 'Russell Group' institution. As these groups are self-selecting and have a range of institutions within them, 'elite' or otherwise, such associations say little about an individual organization, beyond its position in a broad status group. Clegg and Stevenson (2013) make the point that interviews are undertaken in, and relate to, particular influential settings, rather than within 'neutral' university contexts.

> Rarely then, if ever, are our data simply the 'interview', but we contrive to pretend they are by making our knowledge of the field invisible. (p8)

Highlighting the practice of research interviewing and policy work in higher education, Clegg and Stevenson (2013) observe that the higher education researcher has a particular understanding of the interviews they undertake with students and academics, which comes from 'repeated immersion in the mundane enactments of the workplace' (p7). In this way, the authors describe the familiarity of the research context to the researcher who also inhabits it. Similarly, the authors view the relationship between the academic researcher and higher education policy as one which needs to acknowledge a situation in which, 'we live the policies we are describing...' (p7).

While the authors acknowledge the existence in the literature of frequent author accounts of reflexivity and 'positioning' in research texts, they find that such positionings are 'rarely carried forward into the description of the methodology of the study' (p8). For me, this

means recognising my research, in my 'home' institution, as always already ethnographic, or as what Clegg and Stevenson (2013) describe as an 'ethnographic immersion' (p8), which requires recognition. I go on to explore my research as a form of 'narrative ethnography' in chapter 3.

Clegg and Stevenson (2013) describe themselves as being 'in a troubled double relationship' to their research in another way, recognising that their own research critiques higher education policy around the notion of 'employability', while at the same time supporting their students to, 'become more competent at the sorts of identity work that could produce them as more employable subjects' (p13). In my research area I recognise the potential for finding myself in a similar position in thinking critically about the expansion of online education in the UK, while at the same time benefiting from its expansion, in my role as both a scholarship student and an online tutor at the University of *CityName*. These are both roles that place me in an employee relationship with senior staff, and in a beneficial relationship with the wider institution. That said, I did not set out to put myself in the position of evaluator in relation to the online expansion project at *CityName* (this was made clear to potential participants), but rather set out to use this project to think about organizational change in a digital context, and about wider implications for the emerging 'digital university'.

In Czarniawska's (1997) overview of the influence of anthropology and 'ethnographically oriented field studies' in the study of organizations, she confronts the question of objectivity and validity in relation to the role of the researcher when, both literally and metaphorically, in 'the researcher's own country' (p4). In doing so, she describes a perceived shift in anthropological studies, at a point when anthropologists began, 'to account for their prejudices rather than to hide from them' (p4), before going on to consider the particular position of the organization researcher.

> Whereas the early anthropologists always studied people who were in a
> subordinate position…organization and management scholars study their
> equals, often their superiors. They study the ways in which things are
> done by people with the same education, coming from the same tradition,
> and advancing the same claims about knowledge validity as themselves.
> It is an *anthropology of doppelgänger*, which creates new perils but also
> new possibilities… (p5, italics added).

This description of the researcher of organizing has particular resonance for me as a researcher in and of higher education. In early research interviews for this project, I found myself talking to those at the most senior levels of management at *CityName* and, although these staff were generous with their time and their experiences, I remained conscious that I

was asking questions of those in positions of the highest levels of authority in relation to my previous 'employee' and then 'student' status. In some respects these conversations were where I was most conscious of time, of 'taking up time' in the diaries of busy people, where time in relation to seniority could be viewed as being of higher value.

I was also aware of the 'ghost of myself past' on the University campus. I was recognised by different people, usually in relation to the capacity in which they had last worked or studied with me, and I found myself in familiar environments and in the company of familiar people with whom I had had multiple professional connections in a number of roles. It would not be unusual to walk across campus and pass one of my undergraduate tutors, a former colleague from later years, and a fellow PhD student, for example, connecting a period of over twenty years of my *CityName* experience in a single journey.

While I return to a more detailed consideration of interview contexts and issues of validity in chapter two, I draw on Clegg and Stevenson (2013) and Czarniawska (1997) in this introduction, as they go some way in helping me to think about and explore my own position as a researcher in relation to my research context and therefore in setting the scene for the research project detailed in this thesis. It seems to me not only important to acknowledge this methodologically, as I do in chapter 3, but also to signal to the readers of this thesis that this position is also my entry into the research field and therefore has a useful place, as a start to the research story, in this introduction. At the risk of solipsism, I begin here with a summary of my higher education experiences, because they emphasise my 'insider' relationship with the University of *CityName* (the 'field site' of my research) over a twenty-year period, while also highlighting my movement between full-time, part-time, on-campus and off-campus experiences as a student and as a member of staff (sometimes both) over that stretch of time.

My undergraduate education was in the humanities and my first degree was in literature, which I studied as a full-time, on-campus student at the University of *CityName* in the mid-1990s. In the early 2000s, while working full-time as an administrator for the University of *CityName*, I completed an undergraduate diploma in computing, this time with the Open University (OU) in the UK as a distance student. After completing the diploma, I went on to take additional modules with the OU, in web design, creative writing and maths. While some of these OU courses required a computer, they also involved large folders of printed materials, videos and CDs, received by post, and I posted all of my assignments (even those which were to be computer-marked) back to the OU in hard copy. We made limited use of online discussion boards at that time, and I attended the occasional tutorial hosted by local tutors in the classrooms of different local education institutions, where I also sat my OU

exams (I remember, for example, handwriting computer code for an OU exam in a *CityName* examination hall). In 2008, while continuing to work in full-time administration for the University of *CityName*, I decided to progress my studies to postgraduate level, and began an online Masters degree in e-learning (now titled digital education), also with the University of *CityName*, which I studied part-time as a 'distance' student. The course was undertaken fully online by all its students from different locations across the UK and internationally, even though I happened to also be employed on the University campus, with access to its campus facilities. I completed the Masters degree in 2010 and applied to take up full-time doctoral study with the University of *CityName*, which I began in 2011. My PhD was funded by a University of *CityName* scholarship with an academic 'career development' focus, giving me, as I once found myself described in administrative terms, a 'staff-like-student' hybrid status.

All this is to say that my relationship with the University of *CityName* has included a number of student and employee roles. I have studied full-time on campus at *CityName*; part-time at a distance with the Open University (while working at *CityName*); part-time 'online' with *CityName*, and finally returning 'full circle' to a role as a full-time, on-campus PhD student. Throughout my doctoral studies, I have also worked as a part-time online tutor at *CityName*, working with postgraduate students on its (fully online) Masters programme in digital education. In a sense, my shift to becoming a PhD student was a full reversal. I went from being a full-time member of on-campus staff and a part-time online student, to being a full-time member of the on-campus student community and a part-time online tutor. I also moved from an administrative management role to the role of academic apprentice.

As I have indicated, in moving from a staff role to a student researcher role on the same campus, I often found myself in the same buildings and, occasionally, in the course of my research, with the same people. The most significant external indicator of the change in my relationship to the organization was perhaps in the way that I dressed (a costume change), less formally, as an adjustment to the change in my relationship with my familiar context. This, for me, was an external reference to the fact that I was no longer turning up at *CityName* to 'work', as my former workplace had become my 'field site'. I had to remind former colleagues, whom I still met on-campus and at meetings and conferences, of my new role and my new project. This was as much about finishing a full-time job and beginning a new piece of work as it was about reminding myself of the change in my situation, encouraging myself to think differently about the University environment.

My thesis research builds on work I began while studying at Masters level. At that time I became interested in the idea of learning as a narrative experience, made visible through texts and images in online learning environments. I chose to focus my dissertation research on the student experience as a transition from traditional educational experiences, gained in face-to-face classroom environments or other 'hybrid' classroom/online spaces, to those gained purely online in digital environments. I took a narrative research approach, as a way of looking at the issues which were foregrounded when online learners were asked to talk about new experiences they had had while studying online. As my interests had evolved from my own experiences as an online learner, I was able to gain access to students who were studying the introductory postgraduate course online, which I had previously studied myself.

By the time I completed my Masters degree in 2010, the University of *CityName* had announced plans to expand significantly its offering of online distance education courses for postgraduate taught (as opposed to doctoral research) students (PGTs). Plans for the expansion of online distance education at *CityName* came at a time when the UK think-tank Demos, in presenting its report on the 'edgeless university' (Bradwell 2009), to which I will return in chapter 4, was proposing that online technologies and an 'open access' approach would, 'offer the means for their [universities] survival' (Bradwell, report cover). I became interested in how this conceptual shift, which has been described as '…the concept of the university campus moving away from a ''bricks and mortar' to a 'clicks and mortar' model' (Selwyn 2007, p84), might affect the traditional campus-based university as an organization, and the higher education sector more widely.

In 2010, the University of *CityName* already offered a small selection of postgraduate programmes online, across several disciplines, in two of its three colleges (representing broad disciplinary groupings). From this starting point, plans were announced for a substantial development in online distance education, which would be increased strategically over a period of five years (2010-15); plans which proposed that ten years later (by 2020), the University would have, 'as many off-campus as on-campus PGT [postgraduate taught] students' (senior manager presentation, 2010). This project provided me with a research opportunity, within a particular window of development, to look at the expansion of online education in a traditional, research-intensive university.

In considering my approach to my doctoral research then, I was conscious that I was engaging with my own institutional doppelgänger in both staff and student forms. I recognized the reflexive nature of my research, and its potential for 'troubled double

relationships' in an organization with which, as I have outlined, I have had multiple roles and relationships, while also recognising that this is research which would not have been possible to conduct in the same way if it were not for a multiple and reflexive engagement over time on the part of the researcher. Being able to blend in, having a detailed knowledge of the research environment, and benefitting from pre-existing professional relationships meant that I had little difficulty in establishing trust with the participants in my research. Moving from administration to academic research meant that I was at the same time an insider and an outsider within the institution, constantly seeing what I had seen before in different ways. For me, the research process is, in part, about a constant shifting between the familiar and the unfamiliar, and about recognising and recording the points where these shifts occur, both for the researcher and in the context of the research site.

2. LITERATURE AND CONCEPTS

> It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories. (Haraway 2011 p4)

I begin this chapter with definitions of the key terms referred to in the title of this thesis, the 'digital university' and 'distance education'. I start by thinking about how we might imagine the digital university, drawing on Barnett (2013), and move on to think about what is meant by distance education, particularly drawing on three articles from the distance education literature (Keegan 1980, Bates 2005, Spector 2009) to consider significant changes in defining distance education over a period of thirty years. I then introduce Adam's (2004) development of the 'timescape' concept, acknowledging the author's considerable influence on the social science literature on time. As temporality is a central concern of this thesis, providing a conceptual framework for the analysis presented in chapters 4 to 7, I then consider the relatively slim literature in the area of higher education and time, moving on to look at that which focuses specifically on digital education and time. I highlight the dominance of space and spatial metaphors in 'distance' and 'online' education literature, which this thesis aims to redress, and I then approach the wider literature on time and organizing, leading into a discussion of selected conceptual work on social theory and time, a broad field which has informed my approach significantly. Finally, I draw particularly on two authors who work with the metaphor of 'recalibration', the first in the area of media and cultural studies (Sharma 2104), and the second in the area of design and digital media (Coyne 2010), to introduce 'temporal recalibration' (Sharma 2104) as a critical and conceptual approach to organizational change in this thesis.

Imagining the digital university

Jones (2013) identifies the digital university as, 'a concept in need of a definition', presenting it as a term used, '…to apply to all university functions as they are revised to make use of digital technologies and to accommodate to their impacts' (p164). Selwyn (2014) draws on a similarly broad understanding of the digital in the university, but uses the phrase 'digital higher education' (px), in which he considers, 'the wider enmeshing of digital processes and practices with the organization of higher education' (pxi). In this thesis I continue to use the term digital university, retaining this broad sense of the term, while particularly exploring changes in those areas of the university directly engaged with developments in, and support of, online teaching and learning. I do not, for example, go on

to explore the implications of the digital in relation to research activities in the university, although this would no doubt be the basis for an interesting thesis in its own right. In thinking about the digital, I focus my research on the expansion of online distance education, and draw on the research detailed in later chapters to consider what happens when a campus-focused university makes a strategic decision to increase its provision in this area. In turn, I consider how this might then inform thinking about the concept of the digital university. As Goodfellow and Lea (2013) suggest, through considering together both the, 'theoretical and pragmatic features of the digital we can perhaps come to a better understanding of 'digitality' as a complex phenomenon' (p8).

In *Imagining the University*, Barnett (2013) opens with the statement that, 'Ideas of the university in the public domain are hopelessly impoverished', highlighting what he perceives to be a current circulation of, 'a small range of possible conceptions…too often without hope' (p14). He goes on to claim that the university in recent times, '…has closed in ideologically, spatially and ethically', foregrounding interests which remain physically and imaginatively close to the institution, including financial interests, rather than those which might be considered 'public interests' (p15). Barnett opposes these ideas of shrinkage and closure with the possibilities of the imagination, refusing to accept the inevitability of a negative future for higher education, and posing the question, '…how might our understandings of the university be expanded?' (p15).

In earlier work (2011), Barnett similarly looks to ideas with which universities can 'go forward', while recognising that, 'it is unlikely that any single institution can be a pure instantiation of any one idea of the university' (p1). Here Barnett looks (after Heidegger 1927/1962) to ideas of the university as '*being possible*', through the presentation of what Barnett (2011) terms 'feasible utopias' (p4). While this is important conceptual work, on which I have drawn to think about the idea of the digital university, I do not position my thesis as a search for, or presentation of, a 'feasible utopia' (p4) for the university, but rather as one which looks at current practices and developments, to consider the potential in thinking differently about the university in its current phase. In doing so, I recognise the need for opening up ideas and understandings of the university at a conceptual level, particularly at a time when prominent academics (at least in the humanities), bring into public debate questions such as, *What are Universities For*? (Collini 2012), and address issues of higher education under fatalistic proclamations such as, 'The Death of Universities' (Eagleton 2010).

In chapter 7 of this thesis, I propose that the digital university, viewed as translocal and transtemporal, engaged with multiple timeframes and temporalities, is one idea which opens up possibilities for imagining the university beyond its traditional (actual or imagined) temporal and spatial boundaries. Although this might be considered utopic, for me it is more a positive conceptualisation of something which already exists, yet one which also recognises aspects of this configuration which may be problematic and which demand critique. In the translocal and transtemporal view, I propose that the university might be understood, not only through its physical and digital environments, but also through the bodies, locales, connections and micro-contexts of its students and staff. I argue that this kind of imagining is one which has the potential to surface new possibilities for learning and teaching, as well as inequalities which may be hidden by what is sometimes the apparent smoothness of the digital.

Distance education

> There are some educators who feel that terminology is unimportant and that there is little need to divert resources for analysis. 'Let's all do more of it without worrying too much about what it is...' (Keegan 1980 p14)

There is considerable academic literature in the area of distance education, with a number of journals in the field. Before moving on to discuss key critiques of literature in the area of digital or 'online' education, I want to look briefly to the recent history of distance education literature, at least in terms of definitions in the field, to give context to more recent digital developments and to consider the persistence of a spatial focus on distance.

In 1980, Desmond Keegan published an influential article, in the very first issue of the journal *Distance Education*, interrogating four (European) definitions of distance education from the previous decade. He concludes his in-depth review of these with a summary of six key points, which he views as significant to any definition:

1) The separation of teacher and learner which distinguishes it from face-to-face lecturing
2) The influence of an educational organization which distinguishes it from private study
3) The use of technical media, usually print, to unite teacher and learner and carry the educational content
4) The provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue

5) The possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialisation purposes
6) The participation in an industrialised form of education which, if accepted, contains the genus of radical separation of distance education from other forms. (Keegan 1980 p33)

Keegan's (1980) list continues to provide a useful framework with which to think about developments in distance education. The focus of his summary is predominantly on the relationship between teacher and learner, who are 'separated' by distance, but 'united' by media, with the potential for 'two-way communication', including the caveat that occasional meetings (here assumed to be in-person, rather than online) need not be excluded from the practices of distance education. Keegan's final point (6), drawing on the work of distance educator and researcher Otto Peters (1973), seems to run counter to the others, however, in its suggestion that a method that seems dependent on 'correspondence' in the form of 'two-way communication' may also be considered to be 'industrial'. Keegan himself is clearly sensitive to this point, inserting the words 'if accepted', and concluding that the industrial form is one which proposes that education, '…lies in packages on the shelves of warehouses until consumer demand causes it to be dispatched' (p34). While there is much potential discussion to be had regarding contemporary 'industrial' education, particularly in the light of recent developments in the form of Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs (Universities UK 2013), I continue to focus here on a reconsideration of 'distance', in order to set the scene for considering time in higher education. I will however note at this point that MOOCs, in their current form, tend to engage large numbers of students in relatively short courses, usually much shorter than a single semester in a UK university (for examples, see Coursera 2015 and FutureLearn 2015). This is the inverse of a 'traditional' university course structure in the UK, which would normally involve a relatively small number of students and run for a minimum of a year, (although this is perhaps already changing). Changes in the temporal mapping of university programmes (in the form of accelerated and decelerated degree programmes) will be considered in chapter 5.

For Bates (2005), a blurring between more traditional forms and distance education, which are due to developments in technology, leads him to consider whether distance education, 'remains a useful concept in the twenty-first century' (p4). However, after conceding that there are varying 'degrees of openness and 'distance'', and moving on to propose that, 'distance is more likely to be psychological or social, rather than geographical, in most cases' (p6), Bates goes on to declare that any suggestion that the concept of distance

education is outmoded is 'a fundamental mistake' (p15), particularly in comparison with online learning, and he goes on to maintain distinctions between these terms.

> Although e-learning or online learning can be a component of both classroom and distance learning, e-learning is not synonymous with distance education. Distance learning can exist without online learning, and online learning is not necessarily distance learning. Students who cannot or will not access a campus have very different needs from those that do, whether or not they are studying primarily by e-learning. To merely replace the term distance learning with distributed learning then confuses rather than clarifies. (p15)

In this defence, Bates appears to extend Keegan's (1980) separation of 'teacher and learner' to the separation of campus and learner. Yet this seems to be based mainly on a perceived difference, perhaps over-generalised, in the socio-economic backgrounds of campus and distance students.

> distance education still has a critical role in serving those who have difficulties for personal, social or economic reasons in accessing conventional campus-based education. Especially for the poor and disadvantaged, for lifelong learners, for those having to work to pay their way through university, and for those already in the workforce. (p40)

Interestingly, physical (travelling) distance from the campus is not emphasised here. While positioning 'campus-based' education as the privileged mode of delivery in this description, with distance education a provision for the 'under-privileged', Bates (2005) complicates his definitions further by drawing on ideological associations between distance education and a 'philosophy of openness', on the one hand, and e-learning with 'commercialization and profit' (p15) on the other. Linking these terms with ideologies, while it may explain, in part, associated developments in the discourse (and narrative) of the field, does little to assist an understanding of the complexities of practice in digital higher education today (or even in 2005), particularly if the notion of increasingly blurred boundaries (between distance and digital education) is accepted. It does, however, serve as a useful reminder that such tensions in the field persist, particularly in the association of online with 'for profit'.

In 2009, Michael Spector set out to revisit the 'notion of *distance*' in distance education (p157, italics in original). His article looks at significant developments in the field, also drawing on Keegan's (1980) work, while considering a number of additional issues,

> a) the multiple dimensions of distance involved in modern distance learning, (b) the expansion of technology in distance education, and (c) the gradual erosion of distinct boundaries between distance and other forms of education. (p157)

Under 'dimensions of distance', Spector (2009) considers the expansion of distance education offerings to students beyond its initial 'homogenous audience', where 'all of

those involved would typically be from the same country or work for the same company' (p159).   In view of the movement of distance education beyond those initial audiences to diverse and international student groups, Spector identifies 'two new dimensions of distance, those of 'language' and 'culture'' (p159).   Here he refers to the delivery of distance education courses to those for whom the language of course materials and communications is not necessarily their first language, and to those for whom cultural differences require, 'the revision of materials so that examples and explanations…make sense', in a student's particular cultural context (p159).   Of course, there is an assumption here that linguistic and cultural differences are not an issue within single countries and companies, which seems highly unlikely at scale. There also appears to be an assumption that linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as differences in educational backgrounds, was not previously an issue among the 'disadvantaged' and 'lifelong learners' described by Bates (2005).   However, what Spector (2009) seems to be acknowledging more generally, is a shift in the *potential* for greater diversity within the context of a course.

Alongside these 'new dimensions' of language and culture, Spector (2009) also reconsiders the 'standard dimensions of space and time', which he describes as 'altered by new technologies' (p159).   Space, in Spector's view, has been altered in distance education by developments in the educational use of 'virtual spaces', which he sees as being accepted into common teaching practice,

> so much so that the notion of a *virtual classroom* can be misleading if
> one takes *virtual* to mean something that appears to be there but is
> actually not there…A virtual meeting place can be as real and as
> concrete as a physical classroom (p159)

He goes on to consider that the 'notion of separation in time has also evolved' (p159).   Here Spector (2009) looks at developments in technology which allow for 'synchronous chat, audio- and video-conferencing systems', with 'hybrid approaches' in distance learning combining the use of both asynchronous and synchronous communications.   For Spector, these developments in distance education add to the 'blurring of traditional distinctions' (p159).   Spector proposes that distance education professionals, 'rather than being a special interest group within an educational association…will increasingly be regarded as mainstream' (p160).

In conclusion, Spector (2009) considers that,

> Distance educators have led the way with regard to making innovative use of technologies, in designing studies to assess levels of engagement and how they might be associated with effectiveness and efficiency, and in placing emphasis on issues pertaining to language and culture. (p160)

While Bates (2005) and Spector (2009) go some way in reviewing Keegan's (1980) understanding of the 'separation of teacher and learner' as essential to the definition of 'distance education', they remain cautious in a shifting landscape and appear rather reluctantly to acknowledge a move from a specialist field to the mainstream. While Spector (2009) 'revisits' distance, there is a sense in which 'distance education', a term to describe a set of practices which came to define a field, has been somewhat protected, incorporating a set of shared values among its proponents which are difficult to challenge. For me, there is a case to be made here that distance education as a *field* has perhaps prevented a closer interrogation of the *term* as practices (and logistics) have changed. It is this continued emphasis on spatial boundaries and the view of the privileged university-as-campus, which has, in part, led me to the consideration of time. How might the practices of 'distance' education be surfaced differently thorough a focus on temporality?

It is my intention then to interrogate and challenge the notion of 'distance' further in this thesis, particularly in relation to 'digital' education, and to consider whether the very focus on the word 'distance', going back to Keegan's (1980) points of definition, might be a factor in restricting a nuanced discussion of current developments in online education by perpetuating a spatial bias. This is not, however, to dismiss the concern of Bates (2005) in terms of maintaining broad access to higher education, or Spector's (2009) identification of language and culture as more recent considerations in the 'expansion' of diverse student participation, but rather to bring together these concerns of continuing relevance to online distance education in a way which does not insist on maintaining either/or distinctions to delineate a complex area of research.

Time-shifting

Finally, in this section on definitions, a note on 'time-shifting' as it appears in the title of this thesis. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED 2015) definition of time-shifting is: 'The action or fact of moving something forward or backward with regard to timing; a change in the time or timing of something', and also, 'The action of viewing a recording of an earlier television broadcast'. These definitions are useful to the current discussion because they refer not only to changes in time, but also to the implication of media in such change. I look particularly at the role of digital media and the detail of time-shifting practices in chapter 5.

However, time-shifting is, for me, also usefully ambiguous in that it draws into question who, or what, is involved in causing, experiencing, or imagining shifts in time. Such questions are key to the analysis to follow.

Reading time

> The apparently simple activity of reading a book either in an academic's room or in a public space - a single book, and not the quick assimilation of great quantities of books and papers for a literature review - is an anarchic act. It interposes private thinking and a personal duration and pacing of time into the organisational spaces and pacings of time in the university. (Barnett 2011 p72)

On reading Barnett's 2011 work, *Being a University*, and paying particular attention to his chapter on 'space and time' (pp72-83), I was struck by the proposition he makes that reading, more specifically reading a single item slowly and at length, might be considered to be an 'anarchic act' in the contemporary university. At the time I was at an early stage of preparation for the research detailed in this thesis, and reading at length was an essential and core part of my research activity, which was taking up a significant proportion of my time. Reflecting on Barnett's words, however, I struggled to think of a time when I had been aware of a senior colleague reading a book on campus (despite many colleagues being located in book lined offices), whether in hard or digital copy. I was very aware of meetings, emails, marking, administration and, perhaps to a lesser extent, writing, as campus activities, but became conscious that reading was not high on the list of activities I was able to observe. For example, the notion of the traditional undergraduate 'reading week', although still clearly featuring in some of the course schedules I viewed, did not appear to attract campus marketing (via posters and emails) in the way that a week focused on 'innovative learning' was promoted in *CityName's* academic calendar. While there can be something of a 'black box' mystery to the activities people are undertaking on laptops and other digital devices, I felt that reading - and even talk of reading - was notably absent, or particularly invisible, outside the bounds of the University library building. Whether Barnett (2011) is right or not in his assessment of the 'anarchic act', or whether he is merely observing that reading has a close relationship to private time, and therefore takes place in more private than public spaces, his proposition led me to think more deeply about the academic relationship with time and, in my own research context, about how time 'appears' digitally, online, in academic work and study, where it is visible and invisible, and how this compares with time 'spent' or experienced in the university. What I became particularly interested in, however, in my work in the field of digital education, was whether there was any evidence to suggest

that time in the university was 'shifting' in relation to the digital, and to the emergence of the 'digital university'.

Turning to time

> What needs to be appreciated from the very start is that taking time
> seriously is not like a cooking recipe: take space and matter, add on
> time and stir. Rather, to make time a central feature of your work
> changes your understanding and your theory at the level of ontology,
> epistemology and methodology. (Adam 2008, p1)

As Adam (2008) notes, once research begins to focus on time it affects all aspects of the approach, not least because the researcher is forced to think about what time is, as well as how it might be possible to study it. For me, it has also affected my ongoing observations beyond the bounds of the research project; when I think about space, I also think about temporality, often finding that when people talk or write about one (or using the terms of one), there is another story to be found in thinking about the other. In an early review of my research I was asked whether I was looking at time, or whether I was using time to look at something else. It became very difficult to make a distinction between these approaches. In the remainder of this chapter, I highlight the key issues and research strands which I have found to be relevant to considering time and temporality in higher and digital education policy and practice in my particular research setting, in order to give context to the approach I have taken in this thesis, and to the analysis which follows.

I begin here by looking briefly at the work of sociologist Barbara Adam and her notion of the 'timescape' (1998, 2004, 2008), particularly as her work has been so influential on studies of time and social theory in the social sciences over the last twenty five years. Adam's work is referenced by several of the authors whose work I highlight below, although my observation is that Adam's 'timescape' (1998), like Bakhtin's 'chronotope' (1981), has been adopted conceptually in the social sciences literature, as a way of thinking and writing about time, without being further developed in relation to methods of temporal analysis. I explore the challenges of temporal analysis in chapter 3 and return to them in the conclusion to this thesis.

Timescapes

> *How* we extend ourselves into the past and future, *how* we pursue
> immortality and *how* we temporally manage, organize and regulate
> our social affairs…has been culturally, historically and contextually
> distinct. Each historical epoch with its new forms of socioeconomic
> expression is simultaneously restructuring its social relations of time.
> (Adam 2004 p123, italics in original)

Adam's influential work, *Time* (2004), provides a conceptual introduction to time which draws on ideas and texts from a wide range of disciplines, while building on Adam's own disciplinary background in sociology and social theory. She describes the work as 'a journey of seeing time through many different lenses' (p1). In embarking on this journey, however, Adam is clear in stating that theories of time on their own are not adequate to understanding it, and that, therefore, 'there is an additional need to ground knowledge of the social relations of time in particular practices and technologies' (p2). As an important consideration in any study which concerns itself with time, I focus in chapter 6 of this thesis on the detail of the digital practices and technologies observed in my research material, giving depth to my consideration of digital time in education. However, on a more conceptual level, one of the key developments of significance in Adam's work is her notion of the 'timescape' (1998, 2004, 2008), which I introduce here and return to in discussing the analysis of my research materials in chapter 3.

> I propose that we think about temporal relations with reference to a cluster of temporal features, each implicated in all the others but not necessarily of equal importance in each instance. We might call this cluster a *timescape*. The notion of 'scape' is important here as it indicates, first, that time is inseparable from space and matter, and second, that context matters. (Adam 2004 p143)

The concept of the timescape becomes Adam's 'base structure' for considering practices which are associated with time (p143). To illustrate what she refers to as the 'timescape cluster', a set of terms with which to think about time, she goes on to develop the following template framework:

> **Timescape comprises:**
> **Time frames:** seconds, days, years, lifetimes, eras, epochs
> **Temporality:** process, irreversibility, impermanence
> **Tempo:** pace, intensity/rate of activity
> **Timing:** synchronization, Kairos
> **Time point:** moment, Now, instant, juncture
> **Time patterns:** rhythmicity, periodicity, cyclicality
> **Time sequence:** series, cause and effect/simultaneity
> **Time extensions:** duration, continuity: instant to eternity
> **Time past, present, future:** horizons, memory, anticipation
> *The time entailed is multiplex.* (Adam 2004, p144, bold text and italics in original)

Adam then works with this timescape notation by giving an illustration of the way in which a 'public industrial timescape' might be characterised in terms of this framework. For example, the industrial 'tempo', in its typical pace or rhythm, is described by Adam as being, 'increased, maximized, optimized' (p144).

To consider the timescape in the context of the current study and my reading of Adam's work, and to provide further illustration, I have sketched a UK city university timescape below, by thinking about the University of *CityName* in terms of Adam's (2004) 'timescape cluster':

UK university city campus timescape:
Time frames: academic years, financial years, semesters/terms
Temporality: regulated and recurrent, for example the 'examination diet'
Timing: internally synchronized, externally in relation to the city and other academic calendars (schools)
Time point: extended (elongated 'now')
Time patterns: cyclical, semester intensity
Time sequences: orderly, controlled (matriculation to graduation)
Time extensions: deadlines, courses, closely related to funding, cost, institutional time frames, external assessment frameworks (eg research excellence and quality assurance) as cyclical processes
Time past: institutional history, institutional memory, architecture, libraries, museums, archives
Time present: regulated, allocated, bound
Time future: regulated, externalized, marketed, research driven

Without dwelling on analysis and interpretation at this point, the example here is intended to introduce the ways in which we might begin to think about temporality in relation to the university, through the timescape, in which time is surfaced without negating its relationship to space (the particular city location and the built environment, for example). I have used the timescape here to think about how the university is temporally bounded and temporally experienced.

However, Adam (2004) also recognizes the importance, in considering the timescape as a way of working with practices (p144), of recognizing the application of the framework as a 'freezing process' (p145), reminding readers of the way in which processes can appear static when categorised in this way. She therefore warns against conflating the framework with the processes it describes (p145). In the university timescape example above, the processes of the university are frozen and ordered, despite the very idea of a process referring to something which unfolds in time. While the timescape offers multiple ways of thinking about time, temporal processes do not stand still for classification.

In a talk given in 2008, Adam returns to the notion of the timescape again, this time emphasising the relationship between time and matter, and time and the body, with a reminder that time is contextual. Here Adam thinks of the timescape as a 'temporal framework of observation' (p2). Presenting her talk at Lüneburg University, she uses the example of time as it is understood in a university context, as I have attempted to explore it

above, where a focus on the detail of a day, attending lectures, visiting the library, might appear in sequence as indicative of linear time, but where a shift in perspective, widening 'the timeframe of analysis' (p2), means that the cyclical elements of the academic calendar begin to appear.

> …with the wider temporal perspective the linear progression gives way to cyclical processes, only to be followed by another linear perspective when we focus, for example, on the historical change of university traditions and pedagogic practices. (p2)

Exploring Adam's work on the timescape here, in the context of this thesis, serves three main purposes. Firstly, as I have suggested, it has a significant influence on subsequent social science literature with an interest in time, some of which I refer to below. Secondly, the timescape illustrates the way in which I first began thinking about time conceptually, in relation to university practices, and provides an introduction to time in that particular context. Finally, as I have mentioned, I return to the timescape in chapter 3, where I draw on it as a way of thinking about temporal analysis in a narrative context.

I now move on to consider the literature which looks more specifically at aspects of time in higher education.

Time and higher education

While there has been very recent interest in time in higher education, notably from Gibbs *et al* (2014) who edit a collection of work looking at 'time and temporality' in the university, and also recent work which looks at time use in digital education, or e-learning more specifically (Barberà and Reimann 2013, Barberà and Clarà 2014, Barberà *et al* 2014), the editors and authors of these works recognise a limited literature on time in both higher and digital education research respectively. It is perhaps the near invisibility of the temporal in higher education which causes time to be taken for granted, beyond what might be thought of as the normalised, spatialised bounds of timetabling and the academic calendar. It takes a significant adjustment, such as that required by the digital expansion project explored in this thesis, to raise questions of time (and space) in the academy, at both a conceptual level and at the level of practice.

My initial work on time in this project was influenced by the work of Clegg (2003), who looks at the higher education policy turn to focus on the improvement of student learning (pp803-4), and researches the implementation of a related strategy in a particular institution to explore how staff working on the implementation perceive their roles (p804). Clegg sees her approach as exploring 'the lived experiences of individuals' in the higher education

workplace, whom she recognises as 'key actors in mediating between institutional and national policy and actions on the ground' (p804). In her findings, Clegg identifies differing conceptions of time as key to the accounts of the academic managers analysed in her research (p803).

> coordinators were constantly engaged in mediating the contradictions between commodified centre time, time as a unit of resource, and the messy, fluid experiences of temporality at the periphery. (p814)

Clegg notes that, while other themes for the analysis of research materials were identified in advance as potentially significant to her study, 'the significance of time was emergent' in her analysis of research materials (p804), leading her to conclude that, 'the exploration of temporality deserves further attention in analyses of higher education' (p805). Suggesting that higher education is subject to 'new forms of temporality through which academic careers are lived' (p807), Clegg concludes that temporal analysis is 'a rich theoretical resource' with which to consider change in the sector (p807).

In later work, which considers the relationship between academic identity and technological determinism, Clegg (2011) returns to conceptions of time, in order to,

> contest linear accounts of the experiences of time assumed in theories of space-time compression and suggest that attention needs to be given to the times of the body and the experiential which co-exist and interpolate the speeded up times of digital technologies. (p175)

Clegg goes on to note that 'while analyses of higher education indicate that the tempo of academic life is changing there is little explicit mention in the literature of time as such' (p181). She considers time to be digitally mediated more often by technology and proposes that this merits further research (p181).

In other recent work, this time addressing the practice of theorising in higher education research, Clegg (2012) accounts for her return to time and social theory, particularly via the work of Barbara Adam, describing it as a prompt to consider methods of approaching time 'in a more systematic way - rather than 'discovering' it in data not collected for that purpose' (p408).

Policy and 'time future'

Drawing on the work of Adam and Groves (2007), Clegg (2010) undertakes an analysis of the 'dominant temporality' of policy in the higher education sector, arguing that the theme of 'employability' as it is developed in policy, leads to 'a conception of the future as empty and open' (abstract). Clegg argues that policy in relation to students in this context,

does not go beyond the life of the individual and in effect restricts the future to the active life of the person. The 'present future' implied by the discourse of employability does not even extend to old age, much less to generations beyond. (p346)

Clegg (2010) raises concerns about higher education policy, which limits conceptualisations of the future (p346). She identifies a 'dominant neo-liberal narrative' in which 'staying put' is linked with 'personal failure' (p346).

Considering patterns of time in the academy, Clegg observes that,

Time and the rhythms of academic life are deeply embedded in the passage of the academic calendar, and in the uneven temporalities of students from neophyte to graduate. The academic teaching year progresses through terms from admissions to examinations, but superimposed on these rhythms are the new timings of semesterization, modularization, different patterns of assessment, and the fast time of research contracts and the scrabble for extra funding. (p348)

Clegg (2010) goes on to present a temporal analysis of a UK White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (Department for Education and Skills 2003), observing its emphasis on accelerated change, and working with a temporal reading which highlights a 'speeded-up present', in which the future is determined by present 'competitive needs' (p350). For Clegg, the White Paper constructs a position in which, 'the imagination and talent of higher education is to be harnessed to filling this future' (p350).

In summary, Clegg (2003, 2010, 2011, 2012) finds a temporal analysis, and particularly an engagement with constructions of the future in higher education policy, a generative and revealing research approach. Following Clegg's lead, I set out with theoretical and methodological approaches to surfacing time in this thesis, to explore the experiences of research participants and changes in organizing practices in relation to a particular example of strategic change.

Temporal politics

Vostal and Robertson (2012) use the term 'third mission' in relation to the higher education sector, proposing that the three contemporary missions evident in the academy are 'teaching, research *and business*' (p5, italics in original). Within the third mission, the authors identify 'tech transfer offices, ideas accelerators and incubators, enterprise boot-camps, knowledge transfer partnerships', as operating 'both in, and on the university' (p5). Vostal and Robertson propose that the presence and development of these areas of university work are bringing about change in 'the temporalities of university life' (pp5-6). Focusing their account on the practices of 'knowledge brokers' in universities, the authors argue that the

work of the knowledge broker is, 'to accelerate the development of ideas into marketable, scalable and profitable goods and services' (p6). Drawing on the work of Rosa on 'social acceleration' (2003), the authors consider ways of looking at, 'structural transformations arising from a critical politics of time in the contemporary university' (p31).

Vostal and Robertson (2012) note that as, 'speed, acceleration, and temporality in general have until recently been under-theorized in social inquiry, it is no surprise that studies in higher education…are relatively silent on this topic…' (p10). Underpinning their paper is a key question, 'What are the implications of a critical temporal account for how we re-imagine the university?' (pp4-5).

Walker (2009) considers 'the dimension of time as intersecting and interacting with space, movement and place…as the other three dimensions of globalization' (pp483-4). Working with the concept of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), Walker notes that while higher education research has paid attention to issues of globalization in academia, less attention has been given to what Walker describes as the 'temporal ramifications of global capitalism'. (p484) She proposes that,

> academic capitalism depends on people holding and acting out certain ideas about time. Academic capitalism requires both the reification of time and an internalization of the importance of managing time in a demonstrably efficient manner. (p484)

Walker (2009) draws on theories of 'time-space' to build her argument for the inclusion of time theory in theories of academic capitalism, but she also draws on Bauman's work on *Liquid Modernity* (2000) to describe a collapse of temporal boundaries, between work and home for example, as time is seen as 'more like a fluid than a solid…spilling or spreading' (p488).

Walker (2014) goes on to develop her work on time theory in relation to academic capitalism as what she terms the 'academic capitalist time regime' (ACTR), proposing that attention to time might support a better understanding of 'what academic capitalism means' for higher education practitioners (para. 2). Of particular interest to this thesis is Walker's focus on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to exemplify her ACTR theory.

Walker addresses MOOCs, as courses which 'shift our relationship with time', giving the example of video lectures which are shortened from the on-campus standard to 'a compilation of short (~8-10 minute)' productions, which in their recorded formats also have a degree of permanence. Walker also notes the relative permanence of 'written

asynchronous interactions' (p6). She observes the relatively short length of a MOOC, noting that the courses she looks at run for less than a full semester (p6).   In summary, she proposes that,

> We can take as much of a course as we like, engage in as little or as much of the topic as we want. This is the ultimate in flexibility, and the ultimate in the neoliberal value of choice. (p6)

Walker concludes, bluntly, that ACTR is 'bad for higher education' (p8). For me, while she undertakes an interesting initial analysis of MOOCs from a temporal perspective, at a level of detail which I explore myself in looking at digital time in chapter 6, Walker's theory needs further development before it can provide a robust framework, both theoretically and analytically, for further research. A more sustained approach to establishing a position in relation to existing social theories of time would strengthen its basis as an aspect of 'academic capitalism' theory work. For this reason, I draw on Sharma's (2014) work (outlined below) in this thesis, as a more fully developed theoretical approach to a 'temporal politics'.

In summary, both Vostal and Robertson (2012) and Walker (2009, 2014), like Clegg (2003, 2010, 2011, 2012), take a critical temporal approach to what Vostal and Robertson (2012) term the 'neoliberal academy' (p6). Where the other authors are more committed to the assumptions of speed-up and 'time-space compression' (after Harvey 1990), my own approach is closer to Clegg's, in that she, like Sharma (2013), challenges the assumptions of theories which draw only on speed-up, to develop a more complex picture of temporal experience. Key for me, and explored in Sharma's (2013, 2014) work below is the notion of time not only as multiple, but as shared and bound.

Education, space and time

Land (2011) also works with the theme of space-time compression in the academy, looking at the transformation of academic knowledge, particularly in the tension between print culture and the digital, opposing (academic) 'slow time' and (digital) 'fast time', and drawing on Virilio's (1997) concept of 'the death of geography', considered in relation to 'virtual space' in education (Land p64).

Fenwick *et al* (2011) provide a recent review of a range of theories of 'spatiality and temporality' in education research, particularly drawing on recent ideas from 'critical, feminist and post-structural geographies' (p130). Although their brief focus on temporality deals mainly with the dominant notion in the literature of space-time compression (pp140-

42), the authors usefully expand on spatial theory in research (pp148-164), to include 'technologized educational spaces' (p156). In doing so, Fenwick *et al* warn against 'the binary of enclosure-openness' in relation to cyberspaces in education, reminding us that,

> Cyberspaces may intensify and highlight the ways in which learning is not confined either to the classroom or to educational institutions. However, whether such spaces and the practices associated with them are necessarily open and egalitarian is another matter. (p157)

For me, this is not just a question of where practices are located, but also when and in what kind of (pace, duration) of time, where attention to time may also draw out questions of openness and equality.

Barnett (2013) also draws conceptually on the themes of space and time, this time beginning an important critique, after Nowotny (1996), of the 'narrative of simultaneity' (p75) in the academy, which Barnett opposes with a university which, 'lives amid *multiple* time-spans, and time-speeds' (p74), arguing that,

> It is *not* the case that slow time has been replaced by instantaneous time; time working by itself'; time that continuously brings global spaces into the academic's work. Such 'chronoscopic time' is present but it is not the full temporal story. (p74, italics in original)

While each of the authors briefly referred to above draws on multiple times and spaces in the academy, their accounts broadly draw on relations between campus times and spaces and virtual or digital times and spaces. What I aim to do, particularly in chapter 7 of this thesis, is to think of the digital university as drawing a number of times and spaces together, including the multiple times and spaces of the campus, and of the digital practices I explore in chapter 6, but also looking beyond the campus and its digital connections, to the times, spaces, bodies and microcontexts of 'distance' students and 'online' tutors. In this view the university is translocal, but also transtemporal, both simultaneous *and* situated.

My own research interests are closely linked to, and influenced by, those of the digital cultures and education (DiCE[1]) research group at the University of Edinburgh. Recent work on higher and digital education within this group has taken a particular interest in theoretical approaches to space and spatiality, notably in the form of its 'new geographies of learning'

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[1] http://www.dice.education.ed.ac.uk

project[2] drawing on the spatial research approaches outlined by Fenwick *et al* (2011), and the literature reviewed in some depth by Leander *et al* (2010) around 'the changing social spaces of learning', which includes work on movement and mobilities. For example, Bayne *et al* (2013) consider, after Mol and Law (1994), the 'topological multiplicity' of the university 'enacted by its distance students' (581), where the authors call for,

> a nuanced theorisation of academic geographies within higher education…which takes into account the new mobilities and moorings enacted through online distance education and the changing relations of universities to their campuses and territories. (pp581-82)

In other work from the same research group, Bayne and Ross (2013) draw on Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia, as a way of thinking about the form of the open web as an education space, and Ross, Gallagher and Macleod (2013) consider the multiple 'arrivals and departures' involved for part-time students studying online, where, 'comings and goings indicate a fluid and temporary assemblage of engagement, not a permanent or stable state of either "presence" or "distance"' (abstract).

My work is sympathetic with the work outlined here, particularly chapter 7 of this thesis, where I work with literature in cultural geography to think about the digital university in terms of the translocal and transtemporal. However, the focus on space in this work on digital education also contributed to my exploration of the absence of time in the related literature. Implicit in Ross, Gallagher and Macleod's (2013) work for example, in drawing on 'arrivals and departures', 'comings and goings', is that this is a temporal as well as a spatial matter. As Barker (2012) suggests in his work on 'digital time', which I return to in chapter 6, a continued emphasis on the spatial means that,

> the drive to conceptualize the way digital technologies may produce new temporalities, in addition to the new experiences of distance and global geography, has somewhat waned in contemporary digital theory (p2).

As I emphasise and return to throughout this thesis, attention to time is important not only because it highlights changes in practices, 'temporal recalibration' in terms of the discussion below, but also because it becomes visible and invisible in new ways in digital environments. Finally, it is important not to lose sight, in the face of theories of time-space compression and the discourse of speed, that education takes

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[2] http://edinspace.weebly.com/index.html

time and happens over time. Spatial preoccupations must therefore be balanced with time.

Temporal dimensions

The concept of time, beyond the concept of time-space compression in relation to the digital and to distance education, has received much less attention in the education literature. A recent exception is a special issue of *E-Learning and Digital Media* (Barberà and Clara eds. 2014), considering 'the temporal dimensions of e-learning'. In the issue's editorial, Barberà and Clara propose that, in relation to digital media, there are particular challenges in thinking about time in relation to the processes of education (p105). In addition, Barberà *et al* (2014) have undertaken empirical work to consider aspects of 'temporal flexibility' in online learning in relation to the higher education institution, and Leeds (2014) has recently written about the 'temporal experiences' of distance students, identifying a theme of 'temporal culture shock' among those undertaking their first online course.

Gourlay (2104) finds that, 'in the mainstream of research into learning technologies the notion of time has arguably tended to be seen primarily as part of what is assumed to be a stable and separate 'context'' (p142), leading to a situation in which, 'the co-constitutive nature of the relationships between educational practice, digital mediation and temporality has received little attention in the literature' (p142). Drawing on research with postgraduate students, exploring their daily interactions with technology, Gourlay finds that, 'the dimension of time is in complex, dynamic and contingent interplay…with a range of networked devices' (p142). Gourlay goes on to outline seven themes identified in her work with students which relate to 'temporal practices' (p145). These are, '*slowness*, *overload*, *keeping up*, *intrusive technologies*, *technological/embodied action*, *making future time*, *and constant entanglements*' (p145, italics in original). While I have not gathered similar research material around the daily interactions of students with technology, and do not focus my analysis on the complexity of such interactions, I do think that Gourlay (2014) goes some way in beginning to explore the temporal dimensions of digital interaction. In particular the actions of pausing, distributing, elongating and rendering simultaneous are of interest to chapter 6 of this thesis, not as analytic categories, but as a way of beginning to explore new times and temporal practices which might be emerging in the digital university. In chapter 6 I think particularly about digital recording, rewinding and replaying as temporal practices, where I also draw on the work of Barker (2013) on digital time to think about the gathering of time in this context.

Outside institutional time and space

In the next section I look in some detail at the work of Raddon (2004, 2006, 2007), as I found it to be, while concerned with distance education rather than having an interest in the digital, closest to the interests of my own research, albeit focused on the learner experience rather than looking more widely at institutional and sectoral concerns. Thematically, Raddon draws on the literature on flexibility, on which I also focus in chapter 5 of this thesis. Raddon's work (2004, 2006, 2007), draws on interviews with a group of 11 distance learners, and a wider survey, to consider the experiences of distance students in 'combining work, home and studying' (2006 p158). These distance experiences are presented by Raddon as taking place 'outside' the time and space of the university. The students interviewed were based in the UK and Ireland, studying on a postgraduate programme in the UK, taught using mainly 'paper based' course materials.

In her work, Raddon usefully critiques the ubiquitous notion of 'anywhere, anytime' study, as a 'decontextualised reading of the multiple times and spaces in learners' lives' (2004 p91).

> if we start to add the different layers of time and space apparent in learners' stories into this picture, we start to see that not only are there many times and spaces within which learners move (from "real" to imaginary), but that learners have differential access to these. Thus…when and where to study is not so much a choice, as an on-going negotiation. (2004 p91)

I find Raddon's (2004) notion of negotiating space and time, identifiable in my work to follow in the experience of both students and staff, particularly useful in highlighting the effort of choreographing scholarly work. In later work, (2006) taking the view that negative attitudes towards distance education are based upon, 'Hierarchical conceptions of time, space, presence and absence' (p158), Raddon perceives distance students as often considered to be, 'other in relation to 'traditional', 'real', on-campus, face-to-face education' (p158). She goes further in proposing that negative views of distance education put the responsibility of access to a 'traditional' education on the student, where a non-campus experience is seen as a failure of the student, '…rather than the 'traditional' system's failure to make learning available to them' (p158). Raddon contrasts this negative view with the findings of her research, in which she claims that,

> this apparent absence from the times and spaces of the educational institution - or being present as learners in spaces and times other than the university - is seen by this group of distance learners as a major opportunity. (p158)

Furthermore, Raddon notes a 'sense of control' among students who co-ordinate course participation with 'demanding jobs and caring roles' (p158), describing her interviewees

as 'choosing absence over presence' (p160). While Raddon makes a convincing case, it seems important to note in her discussion of student interviews, that several of the student participants articulate distance education as their only option, rather than as a clear choice. Recognising this, Raddon notes that sometimes, 'absence…is simply about access' (p163).

Interestingly, Raddon (2006) also finds that, 'absence from the times and spaces of the educational institution is preferable to absence from the workplace…' (p165), drawing attention to a number of responses from interviewees who felt that they would not have been able to get time off work, despite the programme they are participating in being one which is 'professionally oriented' (p159). Drawing on Edward's (1997) work on flexibility and working with Adam's concept of the 'timescape' (2004), Raddon (2007) explores how the participants in her research, '…talk about undertaking their studies as a way of both enhancing their flexibility and combating a sense of insecurity by remaining employable' (p62).

Raddon (2007) takes a narrative approach in her research, but notes that she did not begin with a focus on time and space from the outset (p64). However, when looking for students' motivations for undertaking their programmes of study, she found that they were dealing with, 'issues of flexibility and pressures in working life that were more important to them than choices about how to fit higher education into their already busy lives.' (p64). Raddon particularly notes that,

> wider narratives of flexibility, insecurity and personal responsibility for learning have become such an embedded part of everyday discourse that they can easily be overlooked or dismissed as rhetoric. (p65)

She finds a strong link between flexibility and employability, observing that

> being flexible is about presenting yourself as able to cope with multiple commitments while engaging in strategic, work-related self-development. In effect, this is about being able to use one's time productively both inside and out of work (p76)

Raddon links these narratives with, 'the narratives in the literature and policy of individuals bearing the burden of responsibility for their economic survival' (p77).

What I aim to do in the work that follows is to move away from measuring the time and space of the student in terms of absence/presence and distance/proximity in relation to university staff and a 'central' campus, and to think about the university instead as an enactment or performance across multiple times and spaces, both digital and physical. I

agree with Raddon (2004) that the where and when of studying (and I extend this to think about university organizing more broadly), is 'an ongoing negotiation' in time and space. On this basis, I argue for a more honest approach to time in the discourse around online education, in which talk of 'anytime, anywhere' education continues to be perpetuated. Education may happen in multiple times and spaces, but it is not instant, and it is effortful. Education is something which takes time and happens over time. Times and spaces conducive to reading, thinking, talking and writing, are also required.

An 'anytime, anywhere' notion, which continues to persist in relation to online learning, particularly in connection with mobile technology is, for me, part of the wider discourse of flexibility which also persists in higher education. This is addressed in chapter 5 of this thesis, where I look in more detail at the literature around flexibility.

Time and organizing

Thick time

In a special issue of the journal *Organization*, focused on time and space, Thrift (2004) provides an afterword considering the issues of working with time in organization research. He points to the key problem of time as a term that, 'summarizes a multitude of unfoldings, all making their way into the world at different rates' (p873). Thrift identifies three potential responses to this problem. Firstly, to draw on a single time, such as the time of the clock, which an organization is seen to respond to; secondly, to use an alternative 'frame' of temporality, such as one which is 'non-chronological'; thirdly, to consider organizations as following 'a plurality of times', an approach which is 'polychronic' (p874). Thrift considers each of these positions in turn. He finds 'clock time' to be not only disciplinary (in a negative sense), but a form of time which also allows for positive creativity (Glennie and Thrift 2002), arguing that 'clocks and clock time' make up 'a multidimensional presence', rather than an 'overarching' framework. He goes on to suggest that alternative frames, such as non-chronological approaches are complex to work with in an analytic approach to organization. Finally, he finds that polychronic time has been drawn on in the research literature, but remains a notion which he finds 'easy to state but difficult to do much with…its very diversity is its undoing' (p874).

Thrift goes on to argue, drawing on the work of Gabriel Tarde, that

> time has to be seen as composed in and of a set of practices (often crystallized in objects) that limit difference and so allow directed action to take place.' (p875)

For Thrift this is not only a limiting approach, but one which also allows for 'productive variations, allowing new things to come into the world' (p875). He proposes, for example, that the practices of clock time are 'flexible...and so may be tighter or looser in character according to the demands of the particular situation' (p875). He usefully characterises these practices as allowing for 'all kinds of improvisations around a theme of routine, rather than an absolute frame' (p875).

Chronological and kairotic time

Czarniawska (2004b) in her paper, 'On time, space, and action nets', outlines a proposed shift in organizational studies, as she seeks a balance in methodological approaches which, she suggests, should take into account not only organizational forms such as those of industrialisation, 'simple factories' or 'laboratories', but also more contemporary forms of organizing (p773). In outlining a more balanced approach, she reconsiders the features of 'factory like organizing', focusing on two particular areas which she describes as 'the dominance of chronological time and the existence of centers of calculation' (abstract). For the purposes of my research, I have focused on Czarniawska's analysis of the features of time in organizing, by considering what she describes as 'the contest between chronological and kairotic time' (p773).

In taking a contemporary research approach to organizational studies, Czarniawska (2004b) asserts that,

> In the first place, the time perspective must be changed: 'organization'
> needs to be seen as a type of a final product, and not as a starting point.
> (p774)

She goes on to urge a shift in the research method then, to focus attention on organizing as a verb, a set of actions in process, which she terms 'action nets', rather than on organization as a noun, suggestive of (albeit temporary) stasis (see also, Czarniawska 2008). Illustrating organizing activity and focusing on time, using examples from her research, Czarniawska (2004b) goes on to highlight the difficulty in finding the 'beginnings' of reorganization or reform, comparing varied and conflicting participant responses from previous studies. In this context, she describes a moment of realisation,

> looking as we both [Czarniawska and a colleague, working on separate
> studies] were for 'the beginning', we had failed to notice that it is the
> ending that chooses its beginning, not the other way around. Different
> endings require different beginnings - this is how the construction of a story
> proceeds. (2004b p774)

This observation about beginnings in organizing was particularly influential in my approach to my research materials, and is explored further in Chapter 4 of this thesis, as I look for the beginnings of the strategic initiative on which my research is focused, from those beginnings grounded in policy, to those grounded in autobiography, at a variety of times.

In understanding this construction of organizational narratives and representations of time, Czarniawska (2004b) draws on an important distinction between chronological time and kairotic time, tracing the terms to their origins in Greek mythology.

> Kairos was the god of right time, of proper time…Whereas Chronos measures time in mechanical intervals, Kairos jumps and slows down, omits long periods and dwells on others (p775).

With this distinction in mind, Czarniawska compares in her research, for example, the difference between field notes or 'logbooks', recorded in chronological detail by the researcher, where 'the plot and the point were still missing', with later interviews, where, for interviewees, 'the plot and the point were…highly visible…and where Chronos yielded almost completely to Kairos' (p776). Czarniawska describes then, the use of 'chronological accounts' as the 'raw material for kairotically organized narratives' (p776) and identifies this reproduction or interpretation of time as significant, not only for research participants, but also for the researcher. Czarniawska's (2004b) discussion draws attention then, to representations and re-workings of time in organizing, but also to aspects of narrative time as 'visible' and 'invisible'. I return to this concern in Chapter 6, where I focus on time and design in the context of a course.

I now move on to draw on the work of Castells (2010), where he expands on an earlier edition of his (1996) work, which I select as an early consideration of digital time. I am particularly interested in Castell's notion of timelessness and of the 'eternal' and the 'ephemeral' in this context, as ideas to which I also return to explore in the context of digital education in chapter 6.

Timeless time and the temporal collage

In a new preface to the 2010 edition of *The rise of the network society* (originally published in 1996), Castells notes that his discussion of the 'space of places and the space of flows' has been 'widely discussed although not always understood' (pxxxi). Castells goes on to further clarify his theory as one in which 'space is not a tangible reality', but 'a concept constructed on the basis of experience' (pxxxi). For Castells, space is, 'a social form and a social practice', which is 'the material support of simultaneity in social practice' (pxxxi).

Significantly, for discussion here, Castells asserts that 'space defines the time frame of social relationships' (pxxxi). This is an important element of Castells's 'theory of urbanism', in which he views cities as '…from their onset, communication systems, increasing the chances of communication through physical contiguity' (pxxxi).

> I call space of places *the space of contiguity*. (pxxxi, italics in original)

Castells also recognises that communications have, over time, taken place across distances 'through transportation and messaging' (pxxxii). He acknowledges here that 'with the advent of electrically operated communication technologies e.g. the telegraph and the telephone, some measure of simultaneity was introduced in social relationships at a distance' (pxxxii). What is significant, however, for Castells in his emerging 'network society' is the introduction of 'micro-electronics based digital communication' (pxxxii). In Castells's theory, this area of new technology 'transformed the spatiality of social interaction by introducing simultaneity, *or any chosen time frame*, in social practices, regardless of the locations of the actors' (pxxxii, italics added). So, for Castells, new forms of digital communication, achieving simultaneity, or alternative time frames, lead to new forms of 'spatiality':

> *the space of flows*: the material support of simultaneous social
> practices communicated at a distance. (pxxxii italics in original)

Simultaneity then, in Castells's conceptualisation, is not purely dependent on 'the space of places', but also becomes possible, digitally, through 'the space of flows'.

Perhaps one of the most generative aspects of Castells's original theorisation of a 'new temporality' for consideration here, is his depiction of the 'viewer' of or 'interactor' with media as the creator of 'a temporal collage' (p492). Highlighting new opportunities for 'mixing' time, 'within the same channel of communication', Castells uses the metaphor of the 'temporal collage' as a site,

> where not only genres are mixed, but their timing becomes
> synchronous in a flat horizon, with no beginning, no end, no
> sequence. The timelessness of multimedia's hypertext is a decisive
> feature of our culture. (p492)

While this description of 'timelessness' may seem bleak, Castells's description is one which we might recognise increasingly in current mass media practices and social media opportunities, where greater access to historical and contemporary textual, audio and visual material seems to offer endless possibilities for the digital 're-mix' of media. Castells

evocatively describes this emerging cultural practice as '*a culture at the same time of the eternal and of the ephemeral*' (p492, italics in original).

> It is eternal because it reaches back and forth to the whole sequence
> of cultural expressions. It is ephemeral because each arrangement,
> each specific sequencing, depends on the context and purpose
> under which any given cultural construct is solicited. We are not in
> a culture of circularity, but in a universe of undifferentiated
> temporality of cultural expressions. (p492)

While it may now be possible by digital means to make material from different time periods appear present by means of a 'temporal collage', it might also be useful here to challenge what Castells sees as 'undifferentiated temporality'. If we think of any kind of collage of material, whether digital or physical, what makes it a collage is that it normally draws attention to its own construction from a diversity of textures; texts, images, video and audio. Collages are constructed through a cutting and pasting of mixed media and, I would argue, are often identifiable by the juxtaposition of media and a temporal disjuncture within the new presentation of material, not least because we are often able to source or 'date' media. While a temporal collage seems a useful term, it is perhaps more useful in its evocation of something created from diversity to give texture and depth, rather than flatness, to a new 'cultural expression', one which emerges from differentiation rather than undifferentiation.

Concluding his discussion of 'timeless time', Castells draws the attention of the reader to what he considers the important elements of the preceding discussion, particularly focusing on what he terms the 'conflictive differentiation of time' (p499). For Castells, this differentiation is drawn between,

> on the one hand, the contrasting logic between timelessness,
> structured by the space of flows, and multiple, subordinate
> temporalities, associated with the space of places. On the other hand,
> the contradictory dynamics of society opposes the search for human
> eternity, through the annihilation of time in life, to the realization of
> cosmological eternity, through the respect of glacial time. (p499)

Describing the space of flows and the space of places as having 'contrasting logic' is of particular interest to my research, as it is a contrast which I propose has been overlooked in 'distance' and online education literature, where concepts of simultaneity can be seen to overshadow a nuanced understanding of 'subordinate temporalities'. I return to this idea in chapter 7, when I consider the translocal and the transtemporal in relation to the digital university.

Critical time and recalibration

> It has become rather commonplace to comment upon the exhaustion of living in a 24/7 world. You *can, should, will, end up* working all hours. The technologies that make you instantly retrievable and locatable are a third skin worn between the seams of new clothing, now with built-in compartments for mobile devices. Life needs uploading and updating as soon as it happens. Everyone is tired. No one is sleeping. Sleep laboratories are working tirelessly to figure out just how little sleep is needed in order to keep up. And, when there is sleep, there is plenty to be done to fill this dead time of production; whiten your teeth, download the largest files, and record TV programs you didn't even know you were missing. (Sharma 2011 p439)

Writing from the field of media and cultural studies, Sharma (2013) observes that critical approaches to, 'time, tempo, temporality, and pace now coalesce around the problem of contemporary speed up' (p313). She considers the impact of what she terms 'speed theory' (particularly in the work of Virilio) on multiple literatures, emphasising the given, 'That we are living in a 24/7, always on and on-the-go world continues to be the assumed starting point for much critical analysis of globalization, labor, media and democracy' (p313). Sharma goes on to highlight the common view among speed theorists that, 'new technologies and faster moving capital herald grave political, economic, and social consequences' (p313).

Sharma counters speed theory with the critique that the blanket notion of speeding-up does not account properly for 'temporal difference' (p313), proposing that, 'the complexity of lived time, the multiple and relational temporalities that compose the social fabric are completely absent in how time figures as a central problematic across these [many] disciplines' (p314). Her central assertion is that,

> the politics of *uneven time* still needs to be dealt with. Recognition of the interdependency of differential lived time tends to be ignored in almost any discussion about time, temporality, speed-up, time-management, work-life balance, tempo, and *life getting faster* in general. Time is far more tangled, far more common and bound, than has been accounted for. (p314)

Here Sharma points not simply to the multiplicity of lived time, but to the relationship *between* times; how one experience of time has the potential to affect another. Her emphasis on interdependency here is key, reminding me of Adam (2004) who considers, 'who has the power to impose which temporal structure as norm on whom[?]' (p41).

Sharma relates her work (2013, 2014) to the influence of the Toronto School of communication theory (see Watson and Blondheim 2007 for an overview), and particularly to the work of Harold Adams Innis (1950, 1951). Of particular interest to this thesis, Sharma draws on Innis's concern with 'spatial and temporal biases' (Sharma 2014 p11).

> Spatial understandings of time lack recognition of the cultural politics of time. Instead, spatial treatments of time are individualistic, concerned with control and management. (Sharma 2014 p12)

Innis's work (1951), on which Sharma draws here, considers the relationship between the weight of media and its related capacity to transport knowledge.

> A medium of communication has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting. According to its characteristics it may be better suited to the dissemination of knowledge over time than over space, particularly if the medium is heavy and durable and not suited to transportation, or to the dissemination of knowledge over space than over time, particularly if the medium is light and easily transported. The relative emphasis on time or space will imply a bias of significance to the culture in which it is imbedded. (Innis 1951 p33)

In Innis's view, a focus on a medium such as paper, which allows knowledge to travel relatively quickly and easily, indicates a spatial bias, allowing a central power to expand its commands outwards, spatially. A focus on stone, as a medium which travels relatively slowly, indicates a temporal bias, where knowledge might endure over time, albeit with a more concentrated distribution. Ultimately, Innis argues that successful societies are those that achieve a balance between space and time.

In Sharma's (2013) reading of Innis (1951),

> Civilizations that emphasize space over time tend to be imperial powers, involved in the conquering of space at the expense of the maintenance of culture over time. (Sharma 2013 pp314-315)

Particularly key to Sharma's work (2013) on time, on which I draw in this thesis, is the notion that, 'one's experience of time is always tied to another's temporality' (p314). Building on Massey's highly influential work on 'power geometry' (Massey 1993), Sharma (2013) proposes the complementary term 'power-chronography', emphasising that,

> power chronography is not an argument that points out the multiple, different, many, or plural times within some epochal condition, phase, or stage, of modernity. Instead it incorporates various perspectival accounts

of different types of labor which are understood as very particular positions within the multiple temporalized flows and time-spaces of globalization…my purpose is to highlight how time is worked upon and differentially experienced at the intersections of inequity. (pp316-317)

For Sharma, the power-chronography in the 'political economy of time…provides insight into the processes where bodies are differently valued temporally and made productive for capital' (p317). This is a biopolitical economy of time (Sharma 2011), which Sharma considers to be under 'diffuse control' (p442). Drawing on Foucault's (1979) concept of biopower, as a form of state power in which bodies are controlled to achieve particular effects in the wider population, Sharma draws attention to a contemporary context in which, 'everywhere bodies are differently trying to keep up. *Recalibration* is the temporal component of biopower' (p442, emphasis added). In this sense of recalibration bodies adjust, or are adjusted, temporally, to the more dominant temporal order.

In her recent work, *In the meantime* (2014), Sharma develops her theory of critical time with ethnographic work which looks at the experiences of yoga instructors, office workers, taxi drivers, business travellers, and 'slow-lifers' among others, in order to look at the 'micropolitics of temporal coordination' (p7). Sharma defines her use of 'temporal' as a term which, 'does not imply a transcendent sense of time or the time of history', but which represents '*lived* time…structured in specific political and economic contexts' (p9). This is the sense of the temporal with which I also work in this thesis.

In Sharma's (2014) study of taxi drivers in Toronto, for example, she considers how the drivers she works with are, 'constituted in time in a way that is structurally related to the time of the business traveler' (p57). The taxi driver is required to adjust to the tempo of each new paying passenger, particularly those who are late for appointments and who need to make other urgent travel connections. Sharma thinks about the taxi driver's experience as a form of 'temporal labor', which must synchronise to the 'time demands' of others (p57).

Of particular relevance to this thesis is Sharma's (2014) assertion, 'that what most populations encounter is not the fast pace of life but the structural demand that they must recalibrate in order to fit into the temporal expectations demanded by various institutions, social relationships, and labor arrangements' (p138). She goes on to ask, 'Where are recalibrations negotiated, by whom, and for whom?' (pp 149-150). I return to these points in the chapters to follow.

In this thesis, I am interested in several approaches to time: how it features in organizing (narratively and discursively), how it is experienced, and how it is shared. Sharma's work is

significant for me in that it demonstrates an ethnographic approach to thinking about time and labour, while also drawing attention to spatialized and normative time. My concern in looking at digital education, is that critical work in this field should also incorporate such considerations, particularly where adjustments in time may be less visible and may go unarticulated. I offer, for example, some of the temporal adjustments I found were being made by online distance students in my research in chapter 7.

In conjunction with Sharma's (2011, 2013, 2014) work on temporal recalibration, the adjustments made to adapt to the time of another, I also work with Coyne's (2010) exploration of calibration and recalibration in order to focus on a more literal and digital interpretation. Where Sharma supports my concerns with the lived experience of time, Coyne helps me to think about the process of adjustment, the 'mapping' of one model, or framework, to another.

Calibration and recalibration

A Professor of architectural computing, writing from the field of digital media, culture and design, Coyne (2010), uses 'the tuning of place' as a creative metaphor with which to think about the adjustments that humans make to their environments when using digital media devices.

> I adjust, tweak, and tune my environment. I flick the light switch, turn down the electric radiator, and turn up the stereo. With such microadjustments I shape spaces to suit my immediate requirements and those of fellow occupants, and through operations far less costly and requiring less foresight and planning than relocating a window, moving the fireplace, or raising the roof. It is helpful to think of tuning as a form of constrained microdesign, oriented to immediate requirements. (pxvii)

With a focus on place, but also recognising the temporal as well as spatial aspects of tuning, Coyne (2010) prefers the tuning metaphor to the notion of synchronization, suggesting that,

> Commentators who focus on synchronicity tend to look to a condition in which everything happens at once, a language of instants: instant travel, immediate access to information. Tuning brings to the fore the processes by which people seek or arrive at the aligned condition, recovering when things drift, retuning and detuning (pxiv)

As online communication is often discussed in synchronous/asynchronous terms, metaphors of tuning and (re)calibration seem particularly appropriate in describing more of an effortful negotiation, the process of coming together to communicate,

which is not as instant or as synchronous as it may sometimes appear to be. I return to this idea in chapter 6 in thinking about 'designing time'.

Coyne (2010) uses what he describes himself as a 'provocative terminology' with which to draw out the 'conspicuous character of digital media devices' (pxxiii). In this vein he considers the experience of those who engage with digital devices by using the evocative metaphors of, 'intervention, calibration, wedges, habits, rhythm, tags, taps, tactics, thresholds, aggregation, noise, and interference' (pxxiii). While these are all generative terms with which to consider organizing practices, particularly in relation to time, I focus here again on calibration and recalibration as terms with which to think about the practices of change and adjustment, using Coyne's (2010) work alongside Sharma's, outlined above, to think about digital as well as social practices. In particular I find useful Coyne's observation that the notions of calibration and recalibration, 'draw attention to the seams rather than to the supposed smooth integration of technologies into everyday life' (p19). Put briefly, Coyne describes calibration as a process of adjustment to an external standard, but also as a process, a 'mapping', which 'draws attention to discrepancies between models' (p24). Moving on to describe recalibration, Coyne notes that,

> some instruments have to be recalibrated to ensure their accuracy in that
> particular context of operation. They may also need recalibrating after a
> disturbance to their operation, or when components drift out of alignment
> due to wear and tear. (p25)

I find this description pertinent to thinking about the digital university, where the metaphor of recalibration is presented in various ways as both a response to a disturbance (the digital in the university is often represented as a disruption (Selwyn 2013)), where recalibration represents the maintenance of a system prone to 'wear and tear', the higher education sector is often represented as one which is 'old and tired' and in need of recalibrating to particular models of contemporary society.

Coyne (2010) moves on to describe the ways in which mobile devices may disturb each other and other technologies, giving the example of the mobile phone which may affect the operations of an aeroplane. He also considers 'optical' and 'sonic' interference, detailing irregular effects in the combination of images and sounds, describing the tuning of a radio as another kind of calibration, requiring recalibration when the location of the radio is changed (pp32-35). As Coyne puts it,

> Tuning in [also] involves tuning out - filtering out unwanted frequencies,
> and signals that would interfere with the device's operations, distort the
> final output…or produce other "interference effects". (p35)

While Sharma (2014) draws our attention to the social consequences of a temporal politics of recalibration, Coyne highlights the techno-social 'microadjustments' of calibration and recalibration as aspects of tuning, mapping from one model to another, re-tuning, but also as a description of practices which are subject to disturbance, interference and discrepancies, drawing 'attention to the seams' rather than the 'smooth integration of technologies into everyday life' (p19).

While I am not suggesting here that Coyne and Sharma take the same critical position, I find Coyne's work, as well as being replete with rich metaphors, particularly helpful to this thesis in thinking about the detail of organizational change in relation to digital processes, which I explore further in chapter 6. Where Sharma is useful in thinking about a temporal politics and time as shared, Coyne is helpful, alongside Barker (2012), to thinking about the digital in relation to what I consider to be the production of new digital times in education.

TimeSpace

While I have already made mention of the spatial turn in education research and the dominance of spatial metaphors in online education, to give context to my exploration of time in this thesis, it is important to emphasise that I am not arguing for a turn to the temporal, in the sense of introducing a temporal bias (or turn) to the field. To accept the separation of space and time in social theory, as Thrift and May (2001) argue in their introduction to *TimeSpace*, is to 'work within the confines of a powerful and persistent dualism' (p2). What I propose to do here is to surface and pay attention to the ever present aspects of time in relation to issues of space, those issues of space having previously received greater attention in education research, particularly in the context of the digital. Where I pay particular attention to the time-space relation, in chapter 7, I consider this carefully by drawing from literature of geography in order to think about a layering of strong connections over times and spaces, and to think conceptually about the digital university as transtemporal, in relation to the translocal (Brickell and Datta 2011).

In this chapter I have drawn from literature in the areas of distance, higher and digital education, social theory, organization studies, and media and cultural studies, ending by introducing the theme of temporal recalibration, to give context to my research and to support the analysis which follows in chapters 4-7. I have drawn particularly on work which takes a temporal approach to issues in higher education. In doing so, my aim is to bring together conceptual and theoretical work with which to balance the spatial focus of distance education

with an exploration of time, to draw attention to the when as well as the where of students and staff in the digital university. As I have highlighted in this chapter, my intention is to call for a more honest and nuanced approach to time in digital education, which acknowledges the positive opportunities of digital access to, and engagement with, higher education, but which does not ignore the temporal practices of learning and teaching which take time and happen over time. On this basis I turn to ideas of quality time and sustained time in chapter 5 and in the conclusion to this thesis. Where I find that digital education leads to temporal recalibration on the part of individuals and institutions, I draw on Sharma's (2014) work to consider when and where temporal negotiations happen, 'by whom, and for whom?' (pp149-50).

3. METHODOLOGY

> Just as a picture can be worth a thousand words, an institutional narrative can be worth a thousand statistics. We treat university change as a serious topic when we follow individual universities over time, in all their whirling complexity of generalisable features and specific uniquenesses. (Clark 2003 p100)

> To restore to practice its practical truth, we must therefore reintroduce time into the theoretical representation of a practice which, being temporally structured, is intrinsically defined by its *tempo*. (Bourdieu 1977 p8)

Edging the research and researching the edging

The heading, 'edging the research and researching the edging', draws on the title of a UK 'think-tank' (Demos) report, *The edgeless university: why higher education must embrace technology* (Bradwell 2009), referred to in the introduction to this thesis and discussed further in more detail in chapter 4. In an early summary of my proposed research, I had used the phrase 'edgeless university' in the working title of my project, and the term was queried by a reader who challenged such a concept of the university, indicating that I had, in my research outline, already edged the university in a particular way. While I knew that my research would interrogate the notion of edgelessness, the comment led me to think about my research design and writing as a process of edging, not only the research, but also the university; both conceptually in working with the notion of the digital university (rather than any other version), and through focusing on a specific case study to think about changes in practices. At the same time, I proposed to explore the way in which these edges can be viewed as temporary and shifting (temporally, spatially and discursively), in interesting ways. This chapter details how the research undertaken for this thesis was framed and conducted (edging the research), in order to consider the shifting practices of online distance education in the digital university (researching the edging).

During this research project, I worked with the following guiding research question:

How does a strategic shift to increase the provision of online distance education in a traditional, research-intensive, campus-focused university affect the temporal and spatial practices of the institution?

I also considered the following related sub-questions:

a) How does online 'distance' education present challenges in 'extensibility' (Janelle 1973, Adams 2005) for the university?

b) How are these challenges being met by academics, students and institutions participating in online 'distance' education?

c) Do communication technologies have the capacity to decrease real and imagined time-spaces between learners and educators?

d) Does the 'edgeless university' become a network of 'extensible' individuals and, if so, what are the implications for the future of higher education?

Narrative Research

> Stories don't fall from the sky (or emerge from the innermost "self"); they are composed and received in contexts - interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive - to name a few. Stories are social artifacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or group. (Riessman 2008, p105)

In the sections which follow, I draw on narrative research literature, including that developed in relation to organizational research, to establish the methodological context for this thesis. I begin by framing my approach to the research project as a narrative ethnography, by drawing on the work of Gubrium and Holstein (2008) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007). I move on to a discussion of narrative knowledge, framed by Polkinghorne (1998) and considered here in a digital context. I draw on Boje's (2007) notion of the 'story fabric' of organizations to consider the multiple simultaneous stories unfolding in organizations, acknowledging that the researcher cannot be in all places at all times and that the research must therefore follow the particular trajectory of the researcher.

Narrative Ethnography

In thinking about an ethnographic approach, I find Mills and Morton (2013) useful in outlining what they consider to be three key ethnographic principles (p3). Firstly, the authors think of engaging with ethnography ontologically, 'as a way of being, seeing, thinking and writing' (p3). They go on to describe a research approach which has the potential to be, 'a little unconventional, a little exposed', incorporating a sense of riskiness which is about, in the context of education research, 'being exposed to the profound complexities of the social and educational worlds of which ethnographic researchers are a part' (p4). Finally, they require, 'that ethnography demands empathy, understood as the ability to understand and be attentive to the feelings of another on their terms' (p4). For me, this last definition of empathy is key and highlights the significance of listening and observing (as well as writing) in an ethnographic approach, not hearing, seeing and reading what is expected, but expecting to be surprised, working with the experience of both the

participant and the researcher to understand the terms, relations and context(s), of speakers, performers, writers and texts.

A set of guiding questions for an ethnographic approach are outlined by Green *et al* (2012), from which the following stand out for me in capturing my initial approach to the research project. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, 'What is happening here?' (p310) and, secondly, the set of questions compressed as:

> What is being accomplished, by and with whom, how, in what ways, when and where, under what conditions, for what purposes, drawing on what historical or current knowledge and resources (e.g. artefacts, meanings, tools), with what outcomes or consequences for individuals and the group? (p310)

The 'what is happening?' question, with its open approach, led me to think about the digital expansion project at the University of *CityName* in context, working through the motivations for the project and giving consideration to the wider discourse around online education. Focusing in more closely led me to links between the wider picture and questions of digital practice, noted at the beginning of this chapter, based on my early understanding of the digital education project at *CityName*.

Gubrium and Holstein (2008) make a case for 'narrative ethnography' (pp241-264), defining it as 'the ethnographic study of narrativity' (p250), where narrative context forms part of narrative research. Here I outline my own narrative ethnographic approach, beginning with an overview of my research design as ethnographic, drawing on Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) definition, and then going on to describe my methods of interviewing and analysis, which are also informed by a narrative approach. On one level, as I have already summarised, I am an 'insider' (while recognising this term as problematic; inside what?), in relation to the University community with which I am undertaking my research. As I have already suggested, this makes my work ethnographic as much by research opportunism, or 'accident', as it is by design (Mills and Morton 2013). However, my methodological approach is also influenced significantly by approaches to narrative research, such as the work of Czarniawska (1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2008), who draws on both ethnographic and narrative research methods in her work on organizing.

Cortazzi (2001) also looks at narrative analysis as part of an ethnographic approach, as a method which requires going beyond the structure and content of narrative, to consider 'the functions of particular narratives, the cultural convention and the contexts within which they occur' (p4). He reminds us that narratives are, 'interactive, occasioned tellings' and that it is therefore important to consider their 'performative aspects' (p4). I am particularly

interested here in 'occasioned telling' as a way of thinking about the temporal significance of accounts. The account given in this current text, for example, relates to the occasion of presenting a thesis, the research undertaken is formed around the occasion of a particular strategic initiative, interviews were conducted on a particular occasion, or series of occasions, and give accounts of other occasions of significance to the interviewee.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) outline 'ethnography in practice' with a distillation of five significant 'features' of an ethnographic approach (p3). In the following section I give an account of my research in relation to these features:

1. Ethnographic research takes place in, 'everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher…research takes place 'in the field''. (p3)

As an 'insider', I was already positioned 'in the field' in relation to the research undertaken for this thesis, as I have already explored in my introductory chapter. However, beyond Hammersley and Atkinson's assertion that conditions are not '*created* by the researcher', I think it is important to recognise that the role of researcher, particularly my own role as part-researcher, part-student, part-tutor, in relation to the field site, has particular potential for influence. I needed to keep in mind that I was in a position of potential influence (however limited) within the online education community at *CityName*, of which I was also a part. However, my aim in this research was to collect accounts which lay beyond my own position and experience within the field. I particularly wanted to understand the actions and experiences of senior administrators, programme and course directors and 'distance' learners. For me this was about listening and watching carefully, making use of my own experience to make sense of contexts, but also constantly keeping my assumptions in check. This checking of assumptions was supported by the wide range of disciplines and practices involved in the activities of the University. While feeling like an insider in relation to the familiar locations and faces I described in my introduction, I was also an outsider, in the sense that the courses I looked at were beyond my area of expertise, outside my academic discipline, staff interviewees were senior colleagues, and the student participants were working professionals with their own areas of expertise. Even without physically leaving the campus, I was also 'in the field'.

The notion of 'the field' itself is also arguably changed by the digital. This idea, incorporating a refocusing on time, is explored by Dalsgaard and Nielsen (2013), who observe that,

instantaneous contacts and re-entries to the field made possible through modern media make it apparent that the separation of 'field' and 'home' is being challenged, not just as a spatial configuration, but, equally important, as a temporal one. (p2)

Here the authors consider exchanges with research participants via text messages and social media, beyond the physical notation of the field, and with temporal consequences. Dalsgaard and Nielsen find little in the literature around ethnographic fieldwork which considers 'the field as a temporally defined phenomenon' (p2), beyond issues of the accepted duration of fieldwork. In my own work, based at the research site, and also digitally connected to participants, it was hard to know when the research was over or, as Czarniawska puts it (2014), 'when to stop' (p143).

2. Data comes 'from a range of sources, including documentary evidence of various kinds, but participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p3).

As the online expansion project which formed the starting point of my research had a stated timeframe of five years (2010-15), I began collecting research materials at an early stage, in the summer of 2011. At that point I also began attending a small number of meetings and events involving the University's distance/online education community. I was also offered additional documentation, such as funding applications and planning materials, by interviewees. In the public domain, various websites and marketing materials relating to new online programmes were accessible. I also spent some time researching key published reports, policy documents, and news reports relating to distance/online education and higher education policy, in order to consider the relationship between 'institutional and national policy and actions on the ground' (Clegg 2003 p804). My research focuses primarily on interview material and published reports which had proven fruitful in preliminary analyses.

3. 'data collection does not involve following through a fixed and detailed research design specified at the start' and 'the categories that are used for interpreting what people say or do are not built into the data collection process…Instead they are generated out of the process of data analysis.' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p3)

I began generating research material by taking a narrative approach (outlined below) to interviewing university staff with strategic roles in the initiative, as a way of getting an

overview of the project, its background, and its objectives. I then worked on a brief analysis of one of the published reports which had been mentioned in initial interviews (Online Learning Task Force 2011). I followed up initial threads of interest in the research literature. Categories for interpretation were loosely formed in the interview process, and by a 'three dimensional narrative inquiry space' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, detailed below), while I also aimed to maintain a research approach which was flexible in its design.

4. 'the focus is usually on a few cases…perhaps a single setting or group of people…to facilitate in-depth study' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p3).

By focusing on the online expansion project at the University of *CityName*, I intended to take an in-depth look at how academic and administrative practices which, initially at least, appear to be located in the physical campus, might be affected when they were required to travel and reach beyond the perceived boundaries of the University. By focusing on the developing distance/online education community at *CityName*, interviews included participants with varying degrees of familiarity with, and experience within, the field.

5. 'The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider, contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, explanations, and theories; quantification and statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p3).

As noted in the introduction to this section, my approach to the collection and analysis of research materials draws on a narrative research approach, which is detailed below. A focus on 'human actions and institutional practices' has been key to my methodological approach.

Narrative knowledge

In Polkinghorne's (1988) introduction to *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*, he describes narrative as, 'the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful' (p1), where the process of meaning making, 'narrative meaning', is one which 'organizes human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes' (p1). Viewing narrative as a 'cognitive process' and therefore one which is not necessarily directly observable, Polkinghorne goes on to point to 'the individual stories and histories that emerge in the creation of human narratives', which *are* available for observation, giving the examples of,

'personal and social histories, myths, fairy tales, novels, and the everyday stories we use to explain our own and others' actions' (p1). In a contemporary digital context, there is now a seemingly endless quantity of 'observable' (and audible) narratives, through social media, for example, constructed between the teller, her audience, and numerous digital environments, permitting stories to be told in particular ways. In institutional organizing, websites dominate their digital representation, often linking to other forms of digital documentation, such as strategy documents, marketing materials, formal meeting papers and minutes. Added to this are multiple digital forms of institutional and personal social media narratives via, for example, institutional Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, weblogs, image and video streaming sites, such as Instagram, YouTube and Vine, and social media aggregators such as Storify. Personal narratives, written by employees, members and customers, are woven into such 'institutional' accounts, which can be seen at the same time as accounts of organizing, such as the publicising of events, or as organizing accounts, where web-based materials in large organizations, such as those relating to universities, can be seen as organizing or restructuring institutions in digital form. The institution viewed through websites and other media is of particular interest, where distance students, for example, may only experience an organisation in this way. For Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), an interest in experience as the focus of research is an established starting point for narrative researchers (p37). The authors go on to extend this focus to, 'the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted.' (p43). The authors describe a research process which builds on 'an ontology of experience', where 'reality' is 'relational, temporal, and continuous' (p44).

While I had a grounding in narratology from my undergraduate studies in literature some years earlier, my first encounter with approaches to narrative research in the social sciences was through the work of Riessman (1993), Clandinin and Connolly (2000) and Czarniawska (2004a) in their respective introductions to narrative methodology and methods, relating to their respective research fields and practices. I had become interested in these approaches in undertaking my Masters dissertation research (Sheail 2010) on learning narratives and narrative identity, working with student accounts of their experiences in digital environments in higher education. At this time, I worked successfully with Clandinin and Connolly's (2000) 'three dimensional narrative inquiry space' as a research framework, particularly for interviewing and data analysis. As this framework demands that the researcher pay attention to time, place and interaction, I found that it continued to be a useful and appropriate approach to the research material of the current project. The framework is outlined below.

I first encountered the work of narrative researchers in organizations in the work of Czarniawska (1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2008) and, some time later, in the work of Boje (2001, 2007, 2008). Particularly influenced by Czarniawska's work on organizing (2008), I began work with a narrative approach again, this time to work with a range of organizational narratives around the University of *CityName's* project to expand online education, to think about and analyse the organizational movement between on-campus processes and practices, those online, and those in the local contexts of students and staff.

In earlier work (1997), Czarniawska considers narrative knowledge in relation to her work with organizations where,

> the notion of narrative knowledge comes close to the metaphor of the world-as-text; it alerts us to the ways in which the stories that rule our lives and our societies are constructed. (p5)

This idea of narrative construction and the world-as-text, to be read and interpreted in multiple ways, is close to my own view of knowledge as constructed and co-constructed, although my aim is also to acknowledge the significance of bodies and materials as well as discourse in narrative construction.

Rooms and trajectories: the 'story fabric' of organizations

Boje (2007) writes about the 'story fabric' of 'living stories', which he goes on to explore in relation to his own family history research and his research in organizations. Boje uses the setting of Krizanc's (1981/1989) play *Tamara* as a starting point for exploring the 'qualities' of story fabric, particularly the 'simultaneity' of multiple stories. He describes the staging of the play, performed in a building with many rooms, where the drama takes place in several rooms at the same time.

> a member of the audience, rather than being stationary, observing a single stage, must choose which room to enter. Depending on that choice and the order of rooms entered, one will walk away with understandings … different from those of someone making different choices (p334)

Boje's use of *Tamara* to explore the concept of 'living stories' as a way of thinking about the 'story fabric' of organizations is a useful spatial and temporal imagining of the kind of research which follows activities in organizations. The audience member in *Tamara* is also a participant, engaged with following a story or stories, taking a particular route through simultaneous and overlapping performances. Czarniawska (2004), drawing on Law (1994) makes the related observation that, whatever route is followed in studying organizing, the researcher (audience) will most likely conclude that,

> All important events happen at some other time, in some other place. In the beginning the researchers tend to panic and try to chase 'the action', but in time they learn that 'important events' become such in accounts…Events must be made important or unimportant. (p776)

On the one hand then, researchers make choices about which rooms (physical or metaphorical) to enter from those they have access to, and make choices in the collection and analysis of selected accounts and materials, which lead to a particular understanding, or set of understandings, of events. On the other hand, the 'important events' usually take place elsewhere and are 'made important' in subsequent accounts, those of the research participants, but also of the researcher. This is a way of thinking about narrative research that I return to in looking for 'beginnings' in chapter 4.

In the following account of my research, in which the accounts of interviewees play a significant role, rooms become important in the process. While I undertook the majority of interviews (22) while occupying the same room as each interviewee, a smaller number (7) took place while the interviewee and I were in different physical rooms, but also connected through one of a number of possible digital environments (often imagined or coded as rooms of different kinds), sometimes at different times. Our entrances and exits were announced in ways particular to the digital meeting space. In other rooms and research spaces, both physical and digital (libraries, catalogues, search engines, publisher 'portals', social media streams), I sought out and encountered other texts.

The account below represents a particular research 'trajectory' then, at a particular time, and of a particular duration, a temporal edging. As Boje (2007) describes the trajectory,

> It is not the trajectory of a coherent, whole story with a beginning, middle, and end…it is…a condition of emergence of coherence out of incoherence…as it picks up and sheds meaning along different places and across different temporalities. (p335)

The University of *CityName*

The research project underpinning this thesis was developed in conjunction with a strategic initiative which was launched at the University of *CityName* where I was working at the time (in the academic year 2010/11). I have already outlined in the introduction to this thesis my position in relation to the University (and the research topic), where I had worked for some years in university administration roles and had also been a part-time postgraduate online student at *CityName* myself, studying education and technology. Maintaining a broad interest in this area, writing my PhD

research proposal coincided with the beginning of the expansion of online distance education at the University of *CityName*. As this seemed a significant development for the University, and to the area of higher education in the UK more widely, I drew on my experience as an online student and on-campus administrator to think about what such an expansion might mean for *CityName*. It was clear to me that taking online education seriously and 'mainstreaming' its activities would entail changing a number of academic and support service approaches, as well as signalling a necessary shift in pedagogical approaches. These issues and intentions were confirmed to me in initial interviews I undertook with senior managers and administrators, which I explore in some detail in chapter 4.

The University of *CityName* is a large UK university in a city location, with a student population of over 30,000 (including 7,500 part-time students), and employing over 12,000 staff at the time of writing. The University is a member of the Russell Group of institutions, a select group which claims on its website to represent 'the 24 major research-intensive universities of the UK' (Russell Group 2014). The University of *CityName* is also an institution with a long history, having been established over 400 years ago. It has an extensive estate, spread over several sites in the city, with a number of historic 'landmark' buildings close to the city centre. The University is one of the largest employers in *CityName*.

In 2010 senior managers at *CityName* announced plans for a substantial investment in the development of online distance education at the University, to be made over a five year period (2010-15). These plans proposed that, over a period of ten years, the University aimed to increase its number of off-campus (online, distance) students to a point where there would be, 'as many off-campus as on-campus PGT [postgraduate taught] students' (senior management presentation 2010). For me, this meant that there was a timely opportunity within this window of development to undertake research during the expansion of online education in a traditional, research-intensive university. I wanted to look at the reasons for, and implications of, the changes in the organization and the organizing (Czarniawska 2008), which would be made through this particular project, and to think about what kind of university might be enacted through, and as a result of, such changes.

Research design

> Watch how the stories are being made; Collect the stories; Provoke
> story telling; Interpret the stories (what do they say?); Analyse the
> stories (how do they say it?); Deconstruct the stories (unmake them);
> Put together your own story; Set it against/together with other stories.
> (Czarniawska, 2004a p15)

I conducted five pilot interviews, in the summer of 2011, as the first stage of the research project. Interviewees were members of the strategic management group overseeing the online education development project at the University of *CityName*, each of whom was in a position to give me an overview of the early stages of the project. These interviews enabled me to identify further participants and texts for my research and to plan a realistic timetable for my research design.

Across the University, academic teams had been invited by a central project team to bid for internal funding to support online course development, either to develop a full Masters programme, or a postgraduate professional development course. At a later stage, a second bidding option was introduced which would allow academic units to undertake a scoping study, to look at the possibilities for developing online distance education in their respective subject areas rather than necessarily progressing directly to develop a full course. Guidance information, bidding documentation and the criteria for evaluating proposals were made available online, mainly via a centralised wiki which was developed to organize these materials and other information relating to the project, such as project governance and administration, and information on related University events. I had access to the project wiki during the period of my research, and I was also included on relevant e-mailing lists. I did not plan to focus on the way in which the project itself was organized, although this would have been an interesting study in itself, but was interested rather in the experiences and accounts of University staff involved in working on and with the new courses and programmes that received funding. I did not, for example, focus on the financial management and implications of the project, or the bidding process itself. It is important to note, however, that the digital expansion project was a significant investment for the University, to which it allocated £4.5 million over five years, to include funding for course development and for the development of support services for online distance courses, including professional development for academic staff. For the purposes of my research I was not considering the practices of project management, but was focused instead on the changes which were brought about by, and which unfolded through, the project, and its concern with online, distance, and digital practices, whether or not these changes were anticipated by, or of direct interest to, the project management team.

Following the pilot interviews with the strategic management group in 2011, I approached each of the nine academic leaders who had at that point already been successful in their applications and had received funding for new programmes or courses from the expansion project. This resulted in eight further interviews. Focusing then on a small spread of subject areas across the sciences, humanities and social sciences, I selected four new online courses which I planned to look at in more depth. Two of these were in subject areas with little or no local experience of developing online education, and two were in areas in which closely related online courses and programmes were already running. The familiarity with distance education among academic and support staff therefore also varied. I arranged second interviews with three of the course leaders, and undertook one follow-up interview with a co-leader of the fourth course, whom I had not previously interviewed. I also interviewed one learning technologist who was supporting one of the selected programmes. In the final round of interviewing I asked for the support of the course leaders in asking for student volunteers from three of the four selected programmes (the fourth programme had yet to enrol any students at the time student interviews were conducted), which resulted in seven student interviews in total. The student interviews are detailed below.

In addition, in line with new and related developments which were taking place in online education at the University during the research period, I also interviewed two course developers and leaders of new Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which were not only new courses, but also new as a course format at the University of *CityName*. The concept of MOOCs was generating a lot of discussion, debate and media attention in higher education at the time, and I added these two interviews to my initial research design in order to draw on and compare this development with my core analysis of material relating to the online postgraduate programmes. The MOOCs were due to run at *CityName* for the first time in early 2013.

Alongside the interview material, I chose to analyse a small number of published reports, to give additional narrative context to the research project and the interviews. The three reports, which I draw on particularly in chapter 4, are: *The edgeless university: why education must embrace technology* (Bradwell 2009), which seemed particularly relevant to understanding the wider discursive context for change; *Collaborate to compete: Seizing the opportunity of online learning for UK higher education* (Online Learning Task Force 2011), which was referred to by a senior manager during pilot interviews as part of the wider context of policy interest in online education; and the UK e-University report (UK Parliament 2005). While the report itself was not referred to directly by interviewees, two of

the most senior managers I spoke to at *CityName* made reference to the UK e-University (UKeU) project, also as part of the wider context for, and recent history of, online activity in higher education at the UK level.

Finally, with permission from senior staff, I attended a small number of meetings and events which were aimed at developing a network of online distance education staff across the disciplines at the University. I attended these in order to develop my thinking about the context and themes of my research, and also to build relationships with staff involved in the expansion project. While I potentially had contributions to make at these meetings, based on my experience as an online student and tutor, I chose to limit these in order to pay attention to what was happening within the group, and I made it clear to other attendees that my primary role in attending was as a postgraduate researcher with an interest in the digital expansion project.

While perhaps undertaken over too short a period, with too small a number (4) of repeat interviews, to be considered a longitudinal research project, the period of interviewing was nevertheless spread over two academic years. This was partly to establish good research relationships, in order to generate rich and reflective interview conversations over the research period, partly to follow the story of the strategic project as it unfolded over time, and partly to consider experiences for interviewees over a period of change. As Thomson *et al* (2003) state, 'What distinguishes longitudinal qualitative research is the deliberate way in which temporality is designed into the research process making change a central focus of analytic attention' (p185). In short, I followed stories over this period, threaded between participants, events, texts, objects and software, although I stayed close to those which were surfaced in participant accounts and therefore had some recent significance in the experiences of interviewees. In my research I was following the unfolding of a university initiative, through personal and public narratives, seeing where these narratives led, and considering their implications.

In summary then, a total of twenty nine interviews were undertaken, involving twenty five research participants, four of whom were interviewed for a second time. In terms of the digital expansion project, I considered each of these participants as belonging to one of three broad groups:

Group A: a senior management group (6), consisting of five senior managers and one project administrator.

Group B: a course group (12), consisting of those leading or co-leading one of eight new

courses or programmes which had received funding from the expansion project. In this group I include the two staff leading Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), an initiative discussed by two of the senior managers as closely related to the digital expansion project. I also include the single learning technologist I interviewed, who had been newly recruited to support one of the new programmes.

Group C: a student group (7), consisting of postgraduate students, where each student was enrolled on one of three of the four online courses I selected to look at in more depth. I give further details about the geographic and temporal distribution of the student group later in this chapter.

Summary table of interview numbers:

Group	1st Interviews	2nd Interviews	Total
A. Senior management group	6	1	7
B. Course development group	12	3	15
C. Student group	7	0	7
Total	25	4	**29**

Broadly speaking, this pattern is reflected in the analysis and discussion to follow (chapters 4-7). Chapter 4 was developed with a focus on group A, alongside policy and think-tank documents; chapters 5 and 6 draw mainly on the analysis of group B interviews, and chapter 7 draws mainly on my conversations with group C. That said, there is no tidy separation between chapters, and these accounts overlap, intertwine and lead out to a number of other narratives. It may be useful however, to consider these groups as a starting point for what follows.

Interview participants

As outlined above, interview participants were all either staff or students engaged with new online distance education programmes and courses at the University of *CityName*. All the university staff (18) interviewed for this research project were interviewed in-person, on-campus, usually in their own offices or in a university meeting room. The students (7) interviewed were based at varying physical distances from the university campus. Three students were based in the UK, in England, and four were based outside the UK, in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Singapore. As I have indicated, each student was enrolled on one of three online masters programmes from which volunteer participants were

sought. Course organizers had asked students via email or course discussion forums to contact me directly if they were willing to participate in my research. Some students related their course of study directly to their professional work, while others either made no direct connections between work and study, or explained that these two aspects of their lives were not directly related. Some students were in receipt of scholarship awards, while others were self-funding.

Interviews with students took place either by telephone, by 'synchronous' online text chat (instant messaging), or by email, depending on the preferences of the student, and on what was possible in terms of the most accessible and reliable technology for the interviewee at the time of the interview (those with unreliable internet connections, for example, preferred an exchange of emails, although it may not have been their preference if other technologies were available, reliable and inexpensive). For those using synchronous online communications in their courses, I included an option to use the same digital environment as that used on the course, for example Blackboard Collaborate was an online 'collaboration platform' a little like a web conferencing site (I include further detail below). Interviews conducted on campus or by telephone were digitally recorded and then transcribed. Text conversations were captured and saved in document format for analysis. My focus on text communication was partly because I had used it successfully for my Masters dissertation research interviews with a distributed student population, but also because I was aware from my interviews with course developers that there was limited access to 'fast' internet connections for some students and that video communication may be problematic, or at least unreliable, in connecting to some regions. As a footnote to this project, however, I have undertaken subsequent online interviews for another research project using a video connection via Skype, which has been very successful. With hindsight, I might have considered using video where participants were confident that a connection was fairly reliable. My more recent experience is also indicative, however, of the constant 'upgrading' of technologies and infrastructures, with different priorities and budgets in different countries. This will clearly continue to change the possibilities for online research environments.

The timing of interviews (even those by email) was affected by negotiating around participants' work and study commitments (for students, usually both) and, to a lesser extent, by time zones (either preventing a 'good time' for a 'synchronous' interview, or requiring careful scheduling). All of the students I interviewed worked, and some also referred to family commitments. It was important for me to be able to offer a number of dates, times,

paces and modes of communication in order to arrange and engage in successful interviews in which participants would feel comfortable.

I had previously been to only two of the cities or regions in which participants lived and worked but, as a 'permanent' resident in the UK myself, I felt more confident in terms of my geographical imagination of UK locations and environments than of those in other locations. With the exception of the places I had visited, I spent preparatory time looking at maps and images online of the areas covered by the location information that participants had provided. Internet searches were run on country, city and area names, with online navigation to international news websites, tourist information websites, and blogs. Google Earth software was used to navigate local maps, identify nearby 'historic sites of interest', and to view photographs which had been posted and mapped to locations. Attention was therefore paid to where student participants were located, without making location or 'distance' the main focus of our interview conversations. During this background research process, I was aware that I was piecing together fragments of information from different representations of 'place' in which space and time was being 'done' in particular ways (Law 2006). In online BBC video news reports about Nigeria, for example, or blogged photographs of Rwanda linked to Google Earth maps, different time-spaces were being represented for different audiences. It was difficult for me to access anything other than an English language 'report' from English speaking mainstream media, or English-speaking visitors' accounts and visualisations of these countries and localities. I return to some of these observations in chapter 7.

The seven student interviews undertaken are summarised in the table below, including specific information on the location, time zone, tempo and duration of each interview. This level of detail is drawn on particularly in chapter 7 of this thesis, where I reproduce the table for ease of reference. It is worth noting here, however, that the interview 'tempo' column of the table relates to the mode of interviewing, depending on whether I was in contact with the student by email or by telephone, for example, simplified here as 'asynchronous' or 'synchronous' communication, although these terms are themselves complicated in the course of this thesis. In the 'time zone' column, UTC [*sic*] stands for Co-ordinated Universal Time.

Student interviews (Geography and Temporality)					
Pseudonym	**Country Location**	**Time zone (UTC)**	**Interview location/mode**	**Interview tempo**	**Interview duration**
Jay	Bangladesh	UTC +6	Email	Asynchronous	Number of weeks
Ella	Nigeria	UTC +1	Skype instant messaging	Synchronous	One hour
Theo	Rwanda	UTC +2	Email	Asynchronous	Number of weeks
Chris	Singapore	UTC +8	Email	Asynchronous	Number of weeks
Caitlin	UK	UTC +0	Blackboard Collaborate instant messaging	Synchronous	One hour
Megan	UK	UTC +0	Skype instant messaging	Synchronous	One hour
Robin	UK	UTC +0	Telephone	Synchronous	One hour

Ethics and Anonymity

Ethical approval for the research project was obtained from the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh before interviews commenced. All participants received information about the research project and participant consent forms were completed and returned to me, either in person or by email. While the majority of staff interview participants were experienced researchers in their own field, I was still mindful that the consent form is only part of an ethical approach to research. As Murphy and Dingwall (2001) point out, ethics are as much of an issue of the researcher's work in making 'reasoned decisions in the field', as they are an issue of 'regulative codes of practice or review procedures' (p10). This seemed particularly important to me in conducting student interviews with participants who were less familiar with research practices and processes. On the other hand, one member of University staff, on signing the consent form, questioned my ability to offer them anonymity, given that they were the only member of staff leading a

particular course at *CityName*. In a sense, in my role as a junior researcher among senior colleagues, I was also under scrutiny to perform well as a competent researcher to an interdisciplinary audience of experts, but ultimately I was aware that this performance was as dependent on thoughtful and considered conscientious practices as much as project administration. While participants might be happy to sign forms having conducted their own internal assessment of risk, the practices of minimising risk and maintaining trust were also my responsibility as an ethically aware researcher.

All interview transcripts were anonymized, by using pseudonyms for interviewees and for any other students or staff members who were referred to in our conversations. I have avoided using any details about participants which might make them identifiable. For example, although I have referred to the countries in which participants were based at the time of interview, I have not named specific towns or cities, or specified the organizations with which participants were employed, or their professional roles. The specific titles and topics of courses at *CityName*, beyond their broad disciplinary context, have been withheld, also to give anonymity to participants, given the relatively small number of similar online postgraduate courses currently available in the UK, and given the small number of online courses under development at *CityName* at the beginning of the research period. Such details could make students identifiable among their colleagues, student peers or *CityName* staff. The University itself has also been anonymized, although I recognise that my own relationship with the organization, and with the digital expansion project and its related professional network at *CityName*, may make it fairly easy to identify with minimal research. However, my preference is to aspire to an institutional level of anonymity, to further support the anonymity of student participants in particular in any publications which may follow from this research. The institutional pseudonym of University of *CityName* has been chosen to emphasise the significance of place to the history and reputation of the institution. An institutional place-based naming practice is common to a substantial number of UK higher education organizations.

I found anonymity an area of tension in my research, as at times I wanted to give fuller, richer, more detailed accounts of contexts and situations. I would like to have been very specific about student locations and circumstances, for example, as I wanted to think beyond national boundaries and time zones, particularly as I explore ideas of the translocal and transtemporal in chapter 7. However, as I have indicated, it may have been possible to identify individual students if some of the finer details of their accounts were drawn on. Similarly, at the time of interviewing, there were only a small number of staff working on

online masters programmes and MOOC courses at *CityName*, and only a small number of universities (at that time) developing online programmes and MOOCs. It was therefore necessary, as I have suggested, to make only general reference to broad disciplinary areas, rather than providing the details of courses.

As Murphy and Dingwall (2001) point out in their discussion of ethics in ethnography, 'Where fieldwork is overt, many people come to know that it is taking place and will be able to identify the source of data after publication' (p8). That said, I saw no great risk to the institution, or to individual research participants in the context of the current research project. However, it also seemed important to acknowledge that the students interviewed had not yet completed their courses or programmes of study, and that staff were developing new courses, often with technologies and teaching methods new to them, in which there was a lot of institutional interest. This put both groups in a potentially uncomfortable position in talking openly about work and study. I therefore felt that offering anonymity was not only ethical, but was also the best way of allowing participants to speak freely about their experiences. That is not to say that this research project has not led to me thinking further about tensions in anonymity and research in a digital context, where it seems increasingly complicated to offer anonymity. It might have been possible in this case to identify the institution, for example, while retaining anonymity for participants, yet every piece of specific information made public becomes one more search term in a digital tracing.

Thomson *et al* (2014), in a recent review of qualitative longitudinal research methods, consider anonymity in a contemporary context in which trails of information in research may often be traceable digitally. The authors pose a question to the field which asks, 'What might it mean for people to engage in social research without the promise of anonymity?' (p7). As anonymity seems likely to continue to develop in a complex tension with digital opportunities for text and image searching, alongside further calls for open access to research (Research Councils UK 2014), this question needs to be taken seriously in contemporary research contexts.

Collecting stories: generating research material

Interviews and texts

Czarniawska (2004a) asks the question, 'What is an interview?' (p47), going on to emphasise the idea that for some participants, particularly in organizational roles, such questioning interview-like situations are not uncommon,

> An interview is not a window on social reality but it is a part, a sample of that reality. An interaction where a practitioner is submitted to questioning from an external source is typical, in the sense of being frequent, of the work of many people who, in a world of many and fast connections, have constantly to explain themselves to strangers… (p49)

This seemed particularly pertinent in the cases of senior managers I interviewed. I saw several of them speak on-campus at online education related events at *CityName*, and had access to other interviews and speaking events that the most senior managers undertook elsewhere, where these were made available through live streams or digital recordings by other institutions. As the team overseeing the distance education expansion project, senior managers gave the more authoritative and coherent narrative accounts of events, often seeming to speak on behalf of the University or 'the business' (Alan), as it was occasionally referred to. It was also true of some of the course leaders, all of whom had already put together detailed funding applications for their courses and had therefore rehearsed the context and principles of their course development, the technologies they would be using, and how they would be managing the funds requested. On the other hand, recognising my background in digital education, some interviewees put me in a position of expertise (regardless of whether I considered myself to be an expert) and seemed to make a point of highlighting their uncertainties.

At other times, interviews with senior managers and course leaders seemed to provide a rehearsal for the future, or a working through of the storied events to date,

> A. Len: Are you with me? [Phil: mhm yep, yep]
>
> All making sense? [*both laugh*]
>
> OK, this is quite a good rehearsal for me just to see if I know where we've, how we've got there. (Len)
>
> B. Doug: …[this is] how this was pitched to me and how I pitched it to everyone else…

Czarniawska (2004a) points out that while each interview will be 'unique' in itself, interviewees will sometimes be telling stories which have been told often and have therefore been 'crafted' to some extent (p49).

In the case of student interviews, accounts appeared to be less rehearsed, although they too were working in professional contexts alongside their courses of study. One student, early on in our conversation, for example, sent me a copy of his 'short CV', attached to an email. Sharing this document (with its particular spatial and temporal dimensions) removed the

need to ask some questions, but prompted others, and acted as a reference point during our conversation.

Narrative interviewing

I took a broadly narrative approach to interviews with participants, initially with reference to Jovechelovitch and Bauer (2000), who draw on an unpublished manuscript by sociologist Schutze (1977), in order to provide a detailed guide to a narrative interviewing technique. Jovechelovitch and Bauer recommend Schutze's work as particularly useful in providing 'a systematic proposal for eliciting narratives for the purposes of social research' (p2). While Jovechelovitch and Bauer's (2000) interpretation of Schutze (1977) proved useful in thinking about the potential influence of the researcher as interviewer, not only in structuring the content of an interview, but in influencing the language used in responses by participants, the idea of a 'system' for producing narratives seems not only conceptually prescriptive, suggesting that participants and conversations can be systematised, but works against the authors' notion of the 'narrative interview' as a method which,

> goes further than any other interview method in avoiding pre-structuring the interview', with a focus on '…spontaneous language in the narration of events'. (Jovechelovitch and Bauer 2000 p3)

The authors support this claim with reference to Farr (1982), emphasising that narrative interviewing 'takes seriously the idea that language…is not neutral but constitutes a particular worldview' (p4). With this in mind, Jovechelovitch and Bauer (2000) make a key recommendation that 'the interviewer is advised to carefully avoid imposing any form of language not used by the informant during the interview' (p4).

I did choose to take this approach in terms of the language of interviewing, in order to minimise my influence on interview responses, while accepting that I still have an influence as a particular kind of audience in relation to each interviewee. When a long pause in a verbal conversation prompted me to speak, for example, I was usually careful to review my written notes and to ask a question, or for clarification, using a phrase or term which had already been introduced by the interviewee.

> Phil: You mentioned um identifying the market, or new course providers being asked to identify the market…

I take the view that an interview is a dialogue, regardless of how much, or how little, the interviewer speaks, in that a response is prompted by and directed towards them in the role of audience. However, my aim as an interviewer is also to allow a story or narrative to

develop by listening carefully to long stretches of talk and avoiding unnecessary interruptions.

In agreement with Riessman (2008), my intention in undertaking narrative research was not to look for 'essential selves' in individual and organizational narratives, but to look at how narratives are constructed, with 'taken-for-granted discourses and values' (p3) and, for my purposes, to focus on indicators of time, place, continuity and change within the research material collected. My research aims to record the narrative accounts of individuals engaged with a particular institution and to juxtapose these accounts with others.

Stories and accounts: choice words

I avoided the word 'story' in my conversations with research participants, because I didn't want them to feel that they were being asked for a particular *kind* of account, causing interviewees confusion around the form that their responses should take. I particularly wanted to avoid implying that participants needed to impose a narrative structure (beginning-middle-end), when what I was really interested in was the 'story so far'. I explained in most of the interviews that I didn't have a long list of questions to progress through, but that I was particularly interested in hearing about their involvement with online education at the university, and in newly funded modules or programmes. I asked them instead to 'tell me *about*' a subject, although I often included spatial, temporal, or social aspects to my leading and following questions.

> Phil: So I wondered if you could start by telling me a bit about the
> um your role in the initiative, and about the initiative itself and
> where it came from and um [OK] right up to kind of where we are
> now.
>
> Alan: Right OK, I'll do that in reverse order in that case [OK] um
> I'll say where it came from.

This excerpt from a first interview with a senior manager, shows a version of my standard opening question. While I did not focus on narrative structure in my analysis, it is interesting to see here that Alan reorganizes the question into a more conventional temporal order before responding, by beginning with his understanding of the beginning of the project.

I wanted participants to give me an open, honest account of what had happened/was happening, without feeling that they were being asked to tell 'a good story'. I was also concerned that some participants might feel patronised by being asked to tell a 'story', or that they might, depending on their disciplinary background and familiarity with particular

research methods (I interviewed many senior academics), feel that I was not engaged in 'serious' research. Additionally, for those students based in other countries, I could not be sure how being asked to tell a 'story' might be interpreted.

In this written account of my research, however, I find it useful to use narrative terms with which to describe and think about individual and organizational accounts, and I use the words 'story' and 'account' interchangeably as general terms for open extended talk and for my own constructions of stories out of fragments.

Online interviews: (ex)changing times and places

As all of the students I interviewed were studying online courses at the University of *CityName* and were familiar with using digital environments for course communications and activities, it was practical and desirable to interview all student participants online. Online communications also meant that I was able to interview students wherever they were located and chose to respond from, without travel restrictions. It would certainly not have been practical to visit such a range of countries and locations for one-off interviews in each place, but given that these students interacted online with the University, it was in line with the aims of my research to interview them online, even if personal visits (in the UK for example) may have been possible.

As the courses which the students were participating in were not all using the same software for communications, I proposed using the instant messaging (IM) service provided by Skype (2013) or by the online education platform, Blackboard Collaborate (2013), to which the University of *CityName* subscribed, for synchronous online text chat. I proposed Collaborate or a telephone call for a recorded voice conversation, and email for an asynchronous text conversation. Three of the UK students who had been using Collaborate on their course chose it for our interview. However, two students had difficulties gaining access to the scheduled session at the point we were due to meet. Rather than rescheduling, on each of these occasions I suggested changing to Skype text chat or a recorded telephone conversation as an alternative. One of the students chose Skype, the other telephone. The benefit of participants being familiar with, and having access to, more than one communication channel, was that we were able to switch communication modes quickly and with relative ease. As I had sent students links to their Collaborate sessions by email, they were able to respond by email and let me know that they had access problems. We were then able to exchange Skype addresses or telephone numbers by email and use the alternative connection. Of the remaining four students in the group, three chose email

interviews, due to their concerns around unreliable Internet connections for synchronous conversations, or time zone issues, and one student chose Skype.

Time in interview texts

Once each text interview came to an end, I copied the text from each environment and saved it as a text file. In each case I was careful to preserve the way in which the text had been presented. For example, with messages in reverse chronological order copied from email with the newest message at the top of the file, or messages in chronological order copied from Skype and Collaborate, with formatting and original time stamps, created by the software, maintained. Initially, I experimented with removing the traces of software formatting and creating texts which looked similar to those I had transcribed from audio files, as my interviews with staff had been. This attempt at formatting consistency, however, removed all spatial and temporal indicators imposed by the software, which seemed key to the environmental conditions of the interview. In the original text chat, these are prominent. For example:

1. Collaborate text:

> Caitlin joined the Main room. (7:27 PM)

2. Skype text:

> [10/01/2013 20:23:24] Phil: So, first of all…

3. Email text:

> From: Philippa Sheail <P.Sheail@sms.ed.ac.uk>
> To: Jay <xxxxxxxx@yahoo.com>
> Sent: Friday, June 28, 2013 8:08 PM
> Subject: Re: Fwd: Re: PhD project

In the first example, the text is all provided by the software which 'sets the scene' for my conversation with Caitlin, creating the impression that Caitlin and I are in the 'Main room' together, but also suggesting the possibility of other rooms. In the second example the software indicates to the second (in my time), the moment of posting my first question. In the third example, the software gives a location time and digital place (address) for the action of sending the message and 'Re: Fwd: Re:' in the subject line suggests a chain of message events.

These interview texts contain the regular punctuation of very specific time references (to the minute, or the second of the message being sent), making it almost impossible to ignore intervals of time during a conversation. Email conversations, for example, would include regular apologies from both myself and interviewees for short time lapses between our messages.

> Again so late to reply you. Please never mind to remind me. (Jay)

The face-to-face interviews with staff and the single telephone interview with a student, on the other hand, usually depended on me checking the time at what seemed an appropriate point in the conversation. This action in itself was restricted by my own cultural concern that checking a watch or phone during a conversation is often considered rude, a sign of not paying attention, along with the visual distraction which risks interrupting the flow of a speaker. In contrast, the text time-stamps of the software visualised and materialised time in an overt way, which often seemed to give it undue significance. I would argue that time in this way seems qualitatively different in different cultural and material contexts, where different physical and digital environments adopt different kinds of normative time.

In James and Busher's (2012) chapter on 'the displacement of time and space in online research', the authors highlight a number of temporal considerations in asynchronous communication. Firstly, that an asynchronous conversation means that participants may respond when they feel that they have the time to, at the speed of their choosing. The authors describe the asynchronous environment as enabling, 'the creation of a social context in elastic time and space' (p353). Within this space, the participant (and researcher) may 'move back and forth through their narratives' (p353), particularly as, in an email conversation here, the chain of message exchanges forms a written record which may be re-read. For example,

> …Thanks again for your thoughtful response. I've been looking back over
> our conversation and it occurs to me that I didn't ask about… (Phil)

To which the response contains,

> …By the way, I have been thinking about my responses too and realised
> that I should have put… (Alex)

I would add that text messages in a close to synchronous 'instant' messaging environment also allow for such movement through the text, where it is not unusual to find participants making corrections to earlier messages in the exchange.

> [10/01/2013 21:11:48] MEGAN: Oh, Philippa, I was shoddy in my
> previous reply…

The difference is, of course, in the stretch of time between messages, where an hour's text conversation allows much less time for reflection than an email conversation over a number of days or weeks.

Bodies in interview texts

James and Busher (2012), also consider, in the 'construction' of online interviews, which they divide into asynchronous and synchronous modes, how 'knowledge is constructed' in what they describe as 'disembodied, anonymous and textual' environments (p348). While there is much in James and Busher's (2012) work with which I am in agreement, particularly in the authors' attention to time, I also think it is important to challenge their notion of disembodiment and anonymity in this context. What James and Busher (2012) refer to in relation to the body is the 'absence of non-verbal cues of gesture…and facial expressions', while acknowledging that these can also be factors which can influence a 'social' response in participants, where some might 'shape their responses to fit their interpretation of the characteristics of the other' (p357). However, I think that it is important to acknowledge that the body can make an appearance in texts in other ways. Firstly, the body can appear in the abstract, as participants describe themselves, their environments and their routines, but it also appears through direct reference. The following excerpts from my interview texts serve to illustrate how the body finds its way into the text, sometimes more dramatically than others.

> Sorry for late [response], I had an road traffic accident (now better)…
> (Jay, email)

> …

> PHIL: 8:26 PM

> I can see we're nearing the hour - I just have a couple more questions if that's OK?

> CAITLIN: 8:26 PM

> Sure. But my typos get worse.

> (Caitlin, Collaborate)

> …

> [10/01/2013 20:58:47] MEGAN: …For the [*previous university*] courses I
> used to use the evenings and that worked fine. But now the level is higher

:) and the demands are greater and I am too tired in the evenings to think straight enough…

(Megan, Skype)

…

[10/01/2013 21:30:14] PHIL: Final question I think - I must let you get back to your evening...

[10/01/2013 21:30:33] MEGAN: (make pea soup, you mean, for tomorrow? :))

(Megan, Skype)

These examples serve as reminders that the body is never absent from, and certainly never far away from, the text. The body both produces/inscribes the text and finds its way into it. Jay is involved in a traffic accident (fortunately not a serious one) between my message and his; Caitlin notices the effects of tiredness on the frequency of errors in her typing as the evening wears on; Megan refers to the impact of tiredness on combining part-time study with full-time work, and our conversation refers to (and later returns to) her preparation of food for the next day. Megan also uses punctuation to produce smiling emoticons (appearing here only as :) punctuation marks) in Skype, to which I respond with equivalent emoticons. What I want to emphasise here is that the body features in texts, but that it is the responsibility of the researcher to 'listen' or 'read' for it when it appears in non-visual and indirect ways. Bodies in texts are also contexts.

'I was there': credibility and dependability

Riessman (2008) reminds us that, 'the ethnographer's stance' - "I was there" - is not sufficient for many audiences' of qualitative research (p191) and she goes on to outline 'truths and cautions' for narrative researchers. In narrative research, she identifies 'two levels of validity…the story told by a research participant and the validity of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher' (p184).

> Persuasiveness is strengthened when the investigator's theoretical claims
> are supported with evidence from informants' accounts, negative cases
> are included, and alternative interpretations considered. The strategy
> forces investigators to document their claims for readers who weren't
> present to witness the storytelling event… (p191)

Again, in a digital context, where interviews may be conducted in and through online environments, as was the case with the student interviews undertaken for this thesis, 'I was there' is in tension with 'I was not there'. Interviewer and interviewee are both absent and

present to each other. Such 'storytelling events' take place across time and space in differing configurations.

Although my preference is for use of the term credibility over validity, and dependability over reliability (Lincoln and Guba 1985), Riessman (2008) looks for consistency in the accounts of participants, but also in that of the researcher. While it might be unhelpful to contribute to the confusion of a research methods literature already overflowing with multiple terms and definitions of terms, I have found it useful to think about research accounts in the literary terms of reliable and unreliable narrators (Booth 1983), although here I am more focused on the narrative rather than the narrator, which in the context of research rather than fiction, might be found more or less reliable in relation to other narratives, where narratives may be supported or unsupported, corrected or uncorrected by other narratives (Booth 1983 p159). Here I am also concerned with intertextuality,

> There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems…since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other structures….The theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole… (Martínez-Alfaro 1996 p268)

In my approach to texts and narratives then, I am always looking for references to other texts and narratives, which might be brought together to map or trace the unfolding of events.

Alongside the strength of the researcher's narrative, Riessman (2008) recommends a considered and documented approach to collecting and interpreting research materials. Detailing her own approach, she describes a process (adapted from Mishler), focusing on,

> reliance on detailed transcripts; attention to language, contexts of production…structural features of discourse; acknowledgement of the dialogic nature of narrative; and (if relevant) a comparative approach… (p193)

Riessman's work is particularly useful as a guide to working with narrative research data while paying attention to issues of validity. Polkinghorne (2007) is also useful in this respect, with a reminder to the narrative researcher of,

> (a) the limits of language to capture the complexity and depth of experienced meaning, (b) the limits of reflection to bring notice to the layers of meaning that are present outside of awareness, (c) the resistance of people because of social desirability to reveal fully the entire complexities of the felt meanings of which they are aware, and (d) the

complexity caused by the fact that texts are often a co-creation of the interviewer and participant. (p480)

I am particularly aware in the interviews I have undertaken that participants interviewed about their work have spoken of multiple roles and responsibilities (and performances), and have spoken, therefore, not only as university students or staff members, but also as representatives of their various professions, careers, disciplines, and of other institutions.

A note on 'data'

While I have found Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) outline of the features of ethnography useful in defining my approach, I would like to highlight at this point that I keep use of the word 'data' to a minimum in this thesis. Like Czarniawska (2014), I find the word 'data' problematic. Highlighting the root of the word data in the Latin for 'given' ('classical Latin *datum* that which is given' (OED 2015)), Czarniawska writes,

> If anything, they are 'takens'…even if some field material is given to researchers, it is the researcher who makes the final decision about what to consider and what not to consider. (p27)

In the work which follows, although I do not give up the use of 'data' altogether, I more often use the word material, as in 'interview material', or 'research material'. For me, material is descriptive of the elements (such as documents or conversations), given, found, collected or generated for study, but it also has the tactile quality of referring to the *fabric* of the research, what it is made from. The conversation or interview transcribed, for example, is made material, from voice, to audio recording, to text, in the research process. It is one element of the research fabric, whether viewed digitally on a screen, or in hard paper copy.

Narrative analysis

Riessman (1993) recommends starting a narrative analysis of a text by giving consideration to its narrative structure. She suggests beginning in this way in order to work against the temptation to read 'simply for content' or for 'evidence for a prior theory' (p61). She asks 'Why does an informant develop her tale *this* way in conversation with *this* listener?' (p61). She goes on to describe developing an analysis which begins 'inside', with 'the meanings encoded in the form of the talk', moving on to 'expand outward', giving consideration to that which 'make[s] the talk sensible, including what is taken for granted by speaker and listener' (p61). Riessman highlights the importance of paying attention to the voice(s) in a narrative, considering potential alternative readings of a narrative text and, finally, poses the question, 'How are we [researchers] situated in the personal narratives we collect and analyze?' (p61).

While I do not undertake a structural analysis in this research project, Riessman(1993) poses key questions for any approach and I find her process of working from the inside of a text, outwards, uncovering layers of sense-making, considered in context, particularly useful. She also gives an account of how the narrative researcher might attend to the performance of a narrative, by asking,

> How is a story coproduced in a complex choreography - in spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, and history and culture? (p105)

For Riessman, this approach takes an analysis beyond the 'what' and 'how' of talk to 'when' and 'why' (p105). My intention here is to consider the performance of the University in the material I analyse, how it is performed, or enacted, in different contexts and different narratives, by whom, and, in terms of my research question, what a consideration of changes in institutional performances across time-space might reveal about the contemporary digital university.

The 'three dimensional narrative inquiry space'

Transcripts and other text documents were coded to highlight temporal and spatial references, building on what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as a 'three dimensional narrative inquiry space' for narrative research (p50). Key terms in this narrative framework, drawn and developed these from the influential work of Dewey (1938/1997) on experience in education (p49), are defined as follows,

> *personal* and *social* (interaction); *past, present,* and, *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical *three dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third. (2000, p50, italics in original)

The authors are clear in emphasising that these terms, however, 'are not rigorous extrapolations of Deweyan theory' (p50), and it is important to think about their description of the narrative 'three dimensional' framework in a wider methodological context, in that what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) develop in their work with the 'inquiry space' is an overarching approach to narrative research. The excerpt above is not merely a framework for textual analysis, but for the authors it describes a more holistic way of working narratively, in which narrative is, 'both phenomena under study *and* method of study' (p4). In my work I am addressing time in a similar way, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, but by exploring it in a narrative context. For me, working narratively allowed for a

rich exploration of thinking about the relationships between time, experience and discourse, and to work back and forth between these relationships.

I have found this narrative frame, or 'inquiry space', particularly relevant to the way in which online or 'virtual' activities are experienced, referenced and understood. As I find myself looking at temporality in particular, this frame of analysis is pertinent to considering shifts in the time-space of the university, while also taking into account significant personal (autobiographical), social and material (interactional) aspects of narrative accounts.

Beyond the core set of terms above, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also propose that,

> story lines that interweave and interconnect, gaps or silences that become apparent, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities that appear are all possible codes. (p131)

To the broad category of 'interaction', I also added the term 'material'. This was to enable me to record points in the texts which referred to interactions with physical and digital objects (sometimes also arguably doubling as places), such as notebooks, laptops, discussion boards, with which participants interacted and/or used to interact with others:

> ROBIN: Printing and using a clipboard yeah and doing various drafts and various notes and moving through that way, I do, I still find it difficult reading off a screen [Phil: yeah] I do find it difficult reading [Phil: yeah] I'd rather have a print-out uh and work through it… (Robin, UK, audio transcript)
>
> …
>
> ROBIN: …I've got to sort of ask the questions, run the discussion board and summarise the discussion board at the end. (Robin, UK, audio transcript)

This approach to the research materials enabled me to surface and work with a number of times and spaces, from research time and space (the time-space of the interview, for example), to study time and space, to campus time and space, to the time and space attributed to 'the market' in the wider policy and think-tank literature. In chapter 7 in particular, I draw out some of the detail of differences which emerged in my analysis of student and student related interview texts, in relation to the temporal and spatial experiences and locations of students at varying physical distances from the *CityName* campus.

Interview transcripts and other research documents were imported into NVivo, the qualitative research software environment. NVivo became a digital storage space for

documents and texts, as well as a workspace for analysis. I re-read texts in this environment and used the software to mark-up sections of text as outlined above. Working in this way allowed me to make connections and juxtapositions between the different times and spaces of different texts.

In this analysis it is not my intention to make generalizations across the research data, in the sense of claiming that 'the majority of programme directors expressed X', but rather to highlight individual experiences and institutional processes which might be taken into account in thinking about organizational change in relation to online education. As Friesen (2008) puts it,

> The narrative and the 'case' are valuable in inquiry not so much because
> their particularities can ultimately be generalized to cases deemed similar to
> 'prove' something about them as a category. Instead, they are valuable
> simply because they can help researchers and practitioners learn more about
> the phenomenon in question. (p301)

Juxtaposition

In a chapter titled 'Pinboards and books: juxtaposing, learning and materiality', Law (2006) uses a physical pinboard and excerpts from research materials collected during the foot and mouth outbreak of 2001 (p5), to demonstrate what it might mean to 'make surfaces of tense juxtaposition' (p10). Referring directly to Verran's (2007) chapter, in the same volume, on developing software for children to 'learn about place', Law's rationale for using the pinboard as an alternative surface with which to view research material is that,

> it illustrates the permissive possibilities of working on a surface, flexibly,
> and without a very strong system of classification about what it is that
> goes (or doesn't go) with what. It's about juxtaposition and difference,
> there is no obvious hierarchy or narrative, and…fluidity is being done in
> many dimensions (p11)

The board which Law creates includes 'documents - pictures, poems, snippets of text, graphs or maps - that enact *different versions of time and space*' (p11, italics added), in a similar way to Verran's software, TAMI, which works with 'texts, audio, movies, images' to explore place (Verran 2007 p154). Law's aim in this exercise is 'to create a space of metaphysical tension on the pinboard…to teach myself and others about ontic differences rather than similarities' (p11). He is careful to emphasise that this is effortful work, also emphasising that he is also mindful of the 'hinterland' of the items on the board (p20).

> Like the images and songs in the TAMI system, they belong to and re-do,
> practices done elsewhere. They extend those practices. They translate
> them. But they also belong to them. (p20)

I draw on Law 2006 (and by association, Verran 2007) here, because my intention in the research process outlined in this chapter, particularly in working with research texts (interview transcriptions, website material and policy documents), has been to develop my own form of juxtapostionary practice. In working with theories and concepts from the literature, for example, I experimented with the digital presentation environment, Prezi, which provides what its website describes as a 'virtual whiteboard' or an 'open canvas' with a 'spatial metaphor' (Prezi 2013), to place and navigate between ideas (in this case using text). This digital environment allows for mind-mapping, much like a digital pinboard, but one through which alternative paths (sequencing through material) can be navigated. I had also experimented with the use of hyperlinks in interview transcriptions so that external references, to digital environments for example, in the text linked to those environments, creating a textual and visual movement from one space to another; another form of juxtaposition.

Timescapes and time in discourse

A further key analytic task I worked through was based on Adam's (2004) work on the 'timescape', a concept already introduced in chapter 2 of this thesis. Adam acknowledges the difficulties of working with a temporal analysis which might be seen as being in tension with creating 'pockets of order, invariance and stability' (p144). Yet as Dalsgaard and Nielsen (2013) confirm, the question still remains, '…how do we account for the qualities ascribed to different dimensions of time - its rhythms, durations, episodes and temporal ruptures?' (p3).

I presented Adam's (2004) timescape framework for 'grouping practices around a number of time Ts' (p144) in chapter 2, reproduced for quick reference below, where I illustrated its potential for thinking about the timescape of the university.

> Timescape comprises:
> Time frames: seconds, days, years lifetimes, eras, epochs
> Temporality: process, irreversibility, impermanence
> Tempo: pace, intensity/rate of activity
> Timing: synchronization, Kairos
> Time point: moment, Now, instant, juncture
> Time patterns: rhythmicity, periodicity, cyclicality
> Time sequence: series, cause and effect/simultaneity
> Time extensions: duration, continuity: instant to eternity
> Time past, present, future: horizons, memory, anticipation
> *The time entailed is multiplex* (Adam 2004 p144)

I used the timescape framework in my research, particularly to revisit my interview material, with the intention of surfacing a broader range of temporal processes than may have been addressed by my initial consideration of past, present, future and continuity, which I had approached via Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry space. While working analytically with the timescape was not a straightforward task, in that the timescape terms are not mutually exclusive and are open to adjustment and interpretation, the analytic process forced me to think very carefully about the temporality of processes and practices, and about the language used to describe time, both within the framework itself and in the interview material. The conclusion I drew from this process was, unsurprisingly, that time is processual and mobile and therefore resists categorisation of the kind which simple 'coding' might build on. However, the framework was extremely useful as a set of terms with which to interrogate temporal experience and temporal discourse in narrative accounts. Suffice to say, analysing time, and using time as a frame for analysis, is not a simple matter, but the timescape offers a way of thinking about, reading, listening and watching for, time which also allows for its slipperiness, multiplicity and complexity.

Critical discourse analysis

In an introduction to critical policy research in education, Taylor (2004) describes critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an approach which, 'aims to explore the relationships between discursive practices, events, and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes.' (p435). Taylor highlights CDA's strength in working with policy in that, 'it allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language works within power relations' (p436). In my research, the principles of CDA have been useful in thinking about the discursive relationships between the narratives of policy texts, institutional strategy, website and interview material. This approach has particularly supported my exploration of technology and higher education strategy in think-tank and 'task force' reports in chapter 4, and the persistence of the metaphor of flexibility in higher education discourse, explored in chapter 5. In thinking about narrative and time, I paid close attention to the ways in which the texts I analysed were 'doing time', whether this be through references to speed (for example, rapidity) as a driver of change (chapter 4), or what I consider to be the spatialisation of time in redefining flexible institutional boundaries, through modularisation and the shifting duration of courses and programmes (chapter 5). While I consider what I have undertaken to be a narrative analysis, it shares with CDA an interest in the power relations within and between narratives, temporally understood in terms of Sharma's notion of 'power chronography', as outlined in chapter 2, in which she pays

attention to, '…how time is worked upon and differentially experienced at the intersections of inequity' (pp316-317). As Edwards (1997) puts it, discourse analysis supports, 'an examination of who is setting the agendas, how, what those agendas are and where and how they are contested' (p7). This is the approach I take to looking for the beginnings of the digital expansion project at *CityName* in chapter 4.

The next four chapters (4-7) of this thesis highlight emergent temporal themes drawn from my analysis of the research materials detailed above, each chapter being concerned with working through different ways of thinking critically about time in digital education. In the next chapter, I consider the temporal edgings of the digital expansion project at *CityName*, by looking at the events leading to its inception, as they are described by interview participants, leading to the multiple drivers and motivations for the expansion project, bringing with them different temporalities.

4. EDGES AND BEGINNINGS

> What is a beginning? What must one do in order to begin? What is special about beginning as an activity or a moment or a place? Can one begin whenever one pleases? What kind of attitude or frame of mind is necessary for beginning? Historically, is there one sort of moment most propitious for beginning, one sort of individual for whom beginning is the most important of activities? (Said 1975 pxi)

> to grasp the practice of organizing, it is not enough to study single events. The whole point is to know how they are related to other events, to study *chains of events*…events do not chain spontaneously: the actors or the observers tie them to one another, usually in the activity of *story making*. (Czarniawska 2004 p779, italics in original)

In this chapter I return to the theme of edging with which I began chapter 3. This time I turn to look at the temporal edging of the digital expansion project at *CityName* in terms of beginnings, particularly those described in the accounts of senior staff, including influential narratives which they refer to beyond the institution, such as ongoing governmental concerns and media stories. I also consider the ways in which universities are temporally edged, more broadly, in terms of the formal reports analysed below.

In looking for beginnings in my research material, I seek to identify the key drivers and motivating factors for organizational change at *CityName*, leading to the initiation of the digital expansion project. In Said's (1975) terms above, what kind of attitudes and individuals stimulate beginnings? Or, in Sharma's (2013) temporal terms of power chronography, 'Where are recalibrations negotiated, by whom, and for whom?' (pp 149-150). These questions are raised in the analysis below. In doing so, perhaps unsurprisingly, I find multiple beginnings.

I referred to Czarniawska's (2004b) comments on beginnings in accounts of organizing in chapter 2, and her proposition that endings construct beginnings, where 'different endings require different beginnings' (p774). Similarly, Said (1975), as quoted in the opening of chapter 1, points to beginnings as a way of working with events, '…that compensates us for the tumbling disorder of brute reality that will not settle down' (p50). Beginnings are ways of making narrative order out of complexity, which allow us to progress from a starting point, but which may also be formed or reconfigured with hindsight. The beginnings I draw on in this chapter are, in that case, the beginnings which made sense for participants, around one year into the digital expansion project at *CityName*. Far enough on, in terms of project time, for beginnings to have formed, but not close enough to the project's completion to have settled into a rehearsed narrative.

I begin this chapter by highlighting recent concerns raised in the digital education literature, in relation to the persistence of essentialism, instrumentalism and determinism in the field, as a backdrop to the way in which relationships between technology and education are constructed in discourse, particularly in a relationship in which technology may be seen to predict or determine futures for education. While the authors I refer to here (Hamilton and Friesen 2013, Selwyn 2012) are particularly concerned with these issues in online education research literature, they are also issues which I find are recurrent in related higher education policy, think-tank literature and government reporting, discussed below. I am particularly interested in how this discourse around education and technology brings with it notions of fast time. In this chapter I show that the authors of formal reporting on higher education and technology often construct beginnings or imperatives for change from essentialist, instrumentalist and deterministic accounts of technology, and that the discourse of technological determinism in education brings with it not only the notion of fast time, but the concept of time as managed resource which is evenly distributed. I highlight the way in which a discourse of inevitability, associated with technological progress and metaphors of impending natural disaster, is used in formal reporting to drive change in a higher education sector which is characterized negatively as slow moving. A requirement for temporal recalibration is foregrounded in such accounts. This is in contrast to the multiple drivers of change which I find in the accounts of academic and administrative leadership at *CityName*.

Essentialism, instrumentalism, determinism

Hamilton and Friesen (2013) point to a relationship in the online education literature between higher education and the digital in which, 'innovations are expected to usher in dramatic changes…that are seen by many as both unstoppable and beneficial' (p2). Tracing a number of strands in the literature, the authors find a predominantly positive relationship, in which technology emerges with general 'beneficial value' in education (p2). Given that the authors also find in their review that there is not a strong case to support 'new technologies' in offering anything 'in terms of the enhancement of pedagogical aims' (p3), which shows significant difference in relation to previous methods, they identify a key tension, proposing that,

> …it may be the case that the way in which pedagogical value has been defined in relation to technology has been misguided, leading to an overstatement of…potential for beneficial change and to research that elides a fuller understanding of technologies as social objects. (p3)

The authors go on to elicit two problematic assumptions they find recurrent in the research, which they group as 'essentialist' and 'instrumentalist' approaches, where essentialism as they define it, 'takes technologies to be embodiments of abstract pedagogical aims' (p3), and where instrumentalism, 'depicts technologies as tools to be interpreted in light of this or that pedagogical framework or principle and measured against how well they correspond in practice to that framework or principle.' (p3)

Hamilton and Friesen (2013) go on to argue that there are significant limits to essentialism and instrumentalism, which they see reflected in research in online education (p8). The authors summarize such limitations, as follows:

1. 'depictions of technology as an independent force or a set of artefacts'
2. a 'separation of technology and society'
3. the 'dehistoricisation of technology'
4. the 'externalization of human values from technical things' (p8)

For me, points 2-4 support the key issue of point one, that technology is often depicted as 'an independent force or set of artifacts', pointing to a lack of sophisticated accounts of the complexity of 'technology' in the literature. I am, of course, also aware of using in this very thesis the term technology in such a broad and generalised sense. Yet it is also my intention to look for and surface differences in practices, in relation to technologies and time. Technology is a shorthand term for multiple materials and practices, but one which I also aim to explore in more depth, particularly in chapter 6, where I think about time and design.

Highlighting a 'black box' sense of mystery often linked with technology, Hamilton and Friesen (2013) go on to state that,

> …it is easy to imagine that technologies descend on us from abstract realms of positive knowledge that we *cannot* influence. This view is supported by popular discourses emphasizing the near magical nature of technology, with little regard for its origins in social activity. (pp8-9)

I draw on Hamilton and Friesen's (2013) concerns with essentialism and instrumentalism here, as they are concerns which I go on to highlight in the policy, think-tank and government literature to which I turn in this chapter. Where technology is, according to Hamilton and Friesen (2013), viewed positively in relation to pedagogy in the education literature, I will argue that technology is also commonly regarded positively in relation to education in policy (and policy related) literature. Where it is not viewed entirely positively,

it is at least aligned with a sense of inevitability, bringing with it pre-determined visions of the future.

Similarly, in considering the position of sociological theory in relation to education and technology, Selwyn (2012a) tackles the issue of 'technological determinism'. Looking particularly at the literature in relation to young people and education technology in the 1980s and 1990s as an illustration, he observes that,

> …the majority of academic writing was content to imbue educational technologies such as the television and computer with a range of inherent qualities. These qualities were then seen to 'impact' (for better or worse) on young users in ways which were consistent regardless of circumstances or context...video games *cause* violent behaviour, or…online tuition *enhances* learning. (p83)

While Selwyn (2012a) observes that increasingly in the social sciences, 'researchers are keen to insert disavowals of strong technological determinism into the opening paragraphs of everything that they write', avoiding the presumptions of causation, he also identifies the persistence of 'a more passive form of 'soft' or 'diluted'' determinism in the literature (p84). This 'soft determinism', for Selwyn, takes the form of accounting for 'other contextual influences, while retaining the underlying notion of a technological effect' (pp84-85). He notes that this then often leads to a call for minimising such contextual influences.

Selwyn (2012a) goes on to highlight the influence of technological determinism at the institutional level, where, 'the promises of potential educational improvement through technology also coalesce into powerful and persuasive grounds for educational change with technology' (p85). He identifies two narrative threads at this level, the first being that technology is responsible for new 'learning practices' for a younger generation, which are held to be practices 'that cannot now be ignored or abandoned', leading to the second, which concludes that educational institutions must respond by considering not whether, but, '*how best* to include digital technologies and practices within their provision' (p85 italics added). Such imperative drivers are considered, alongside essentialism and instrumentalism, in the analysis of research material which follows.

There is then, a double determinism here, in which technology is aligned with a determined future which is driven by technology, but one which is also driven by youth, which is also highly associated with the future. Technology coupled with youth is a key characterisation which is well documented and critiqued in recent literature on the notion of the 'digital

native' (for example, Bayne and Ross 2011) and which depicts, I would argue, a future which is not only determined, but desirable. It is one vision of an economic future which must then be supported by education. It is also a vision which, arguably, sells technology.

Beginnings and beginnings

This chapter is concerned with beginnings, temporal edgings, and an analysis of past/present/future (continuity) in the discourse of higher education and technology.   In the next section, I address a set of overlapping accounts, linked by excerpts from interviews with senior managers at *CityName* which also point to other narratives of higher education discourse. I go on to follow these through published reports and news stories. What I show in this chapter is that, despite being temporally edged in the formal project management practices of the University, beginning in that context in 2010, the digital education expansion project at *CityName* has beginnings in a number of coexisting accounts of higher education which are, as in Thrift's (2004) description of 'thick time', part of '…a multitude of unfoldings, all making their way into the world at different rates' (p873). Despite this narrative complexity, I highlight the way in which time in policy, think-tank and government accounts of higher education is treated differently and separately from the time of technology. In this separation, higher education, often characterised as being on the edge of an amorphous disaster, is required to adjust, or recalibrate, to the speed of perceived technological progress. There is little recognition in such texts of the close relationships between technology and higher education, not least those of institutional technology research, development and early adoption, practices which, at the same time, support the emergence of the notion of the digital university. Here I call for a more sophisticated account of such complex relations in higher education discourse.

Considered spatially, organizing activities in universities may be seen to take place on-campus. University organizing happens in campus buildings, in offices, at meetings, and in everyday administrative practices. Meetings are often documented, whether formally or informally and are, at the time of writing, often made publicly available, online, where they form part of the institution's official record. The public nature of this record in the UK is not only a digital trend, but one which is supported by the 'Freedom of Information Act' (2000), where legislation supports public access to public information. Within and beyond the university campus, the university is also a collection of documents, organized and organizing, some more active than others, captured somewhere between the university's physical archives and its digital ones. Considered temporally, overlapping narratives are unfolding

both within and outside the institution and, in terms of human experience, decisions are made based on many experiences and interactions, over many years, across many campuses and, more recently, digital environments. Looking backwards, the institution draws on the professional experience of staff and looks to its own history, from leadership figures to the history of its architecture. Looking forwards, there are strategic and planning documents, risk assessments and anniversaries. Organizing happens cyclically, routinely, but also in response to, and pre-emptively ahead of, external pressures and events. Horizon scanning events and reports, produced both within and externally to institutions, play a part in future-imagining activities which then have an effect on present organizing (see, for example, New Media Consortium horizon reporting for higher education (NMC 2015)).

In reports and events which survey the state of the higher education sector in the UK and beyond, it is notable that future predictions and imaginings for education in recent years (and here I do not refer to the NMC reporting referenced above), have often drawn on metaphors of natural disaster. The following titles, for example, are drawn from higher education reports and events over the last ten years:

> *An avalanche is coming: higher education and the revolution ahead*
> (Barber *et al* 2013)
>
> *Dazzling technologies: seismic shifts in higher education in a fast-changing and unequal world*
> (Association of Commonwealth Universities 2008)
>
> *America's perfect storm: three forces changing our nation's future*
> (Kirsch *et al* 2007)

In *An Avalanche is Coming*, for example, the 'storms of change' are identified as a particular metaphorical threat to the physical campus.

> *An Avalanche is Coming* sets out vividly the challenges ahead for higher education, not just in the US or UK but around the world. Just as we've seen the forces of technology and globalisation transform sectors such as media and communications or banking and finance over the last two decades, these forces may now transform higher education. The solid classical buildings of great universities may look permanent but the storms of change now threaten them. (Summers foreword to Barber *et al* 2013)

This excerpt proposes a one-way process, where a collective 'force', labelled 'technology and globalisation', is responsible for major transformations in seemingly independent sectors, 'media and communications' or 'banking and finance'. There is no suggestion here, for example, that media might influence the development of technology, or that banking might influence the process of 'globalisation'. This kind of deterministic account, not only

imbues a generalised technology with transformative powers, but denies the kind of complex relationship which, I would argue, higher education has with other sectors.

In my analysis of higher education reports, I found several common narrative threads, often clear from the titles alone, as indicated above. Firstly, the metaphors of 'natural' threats and disasters, which are unpredictable and uncontrollable, which position education in the face of 'natural' adversity. Secondly, an embedded imperative or call to action, such as 'collaborate to compete' (OLTF 2011), or 'why higher education *must embrace* technology' (Bradwell 2009, italics added). Thirdly, an indication of the march of time, often referring to technological change and/or globalisation, characterised as in-process and unstoppable. Sometimes this march of time is in the form of heralding changing student 'demand' (the 'digital native'), and sometimes it is tallied with a more competitive higher education 'marketplace' of the near future: a 'revolution ahead' (Barber *et al* 2013), in what Gourley (2010) describes as a

> fast-changing world...with all the environmental forces described earlier - a
> world in which the future is anything but a linear version of the past…
> (Gourley 2010)

Gourley (2010), former Vice-Chancellor of the Open University in the UK, is interesting in this respect because, although she predicts a 'non-linear' future (whatever we might imagine that to be), at the same time she likens higher education institutions to the elephants of Gerstner's (2002) '*Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?*' in which, as Gourley summarises it,

> a very large and hierarchical organization [IBM] - staffed with highly
> intelligent people who basically thought that they knew more than their
> customers did about what those customers needed - almost ran aground.
> (Gourley 2010 p41)

Gourley draws on the near misses of the US private sector's past to predict the UK public sector's precarious future. The slow body of the elephant is far from being symbolic of a 'fast-changing world', and from the flexible and agile bodies (Martin 1994, Gillies 2011) considered in chapter 5 of this thesis. However, elephants also have an interesting orientation to time in popular culture, as animals associated with longevity, which 'never forget'. Agility is therefore valued over history, endurance and institutional memory in Gourley's (2010) account, and technology becomes a 'natural' disruptor of slow time.

In the next section, I explore the 2009 report, 'the edgeless university: why higher education must embrace technology' (Bradwell), one of the texts with which I began thinking about this research project, to consider the concept of the 'edgeless university', a spatial concept used by Bradwell in his report to characterise the state of higher education in the UK at that time. I then move on to look at the context for the *CityName* digital expansion project as it is described in the interview accounts of two senior managers at the University of *CityName*. Where these accounts point to other influential stories in higher education, beyond the expansion project, I go on to explore them further. Consequently, this chapter draws on the UK e-University project, as it is reviewed in a House of Commons inquiry report (2005), and the Online Learning Task Force's (OLTF) *Collaborate to Compete* report (2011), as commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). I also consider the relationship between the higher education sector and the UK Border's Agency (UKBA), renamed during the period of my research as UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), as it appears in contemporary news reports. Finally, I look at the story of a volcanic ash cloud, from the Icelandic volcano, Eyjafjallajökullin, in 2010, and its impact on global travel, also as reported in the UK media.

In analysing these accounts, I also consider their temporal dimensions, identifying the temporal responsibilities, practices and drivers which feature in each of them. I argue that there is an assumption in the policy discourse of higher education that technology, often appearing as a homogenous entity, is developing and evolving at one speed, while higher education, often characterised as another homogenous entity, moves at another. Higher education then, is required to recalibrate in such literature to powerful external 'forces'.

The edgeless university: a spatial account of the future

In the introduction to 'The edgeless university: why higher education must embrace technology', a report from the UK think-tank, Demos, Bradwell (2009) positions higher education, somewhat precariously, between 'rude health' and a 'fragile state' (p7). On the positive side of this position, he lists that UK universities are 'popular destination[s] for international students', that several UK universities are successful in the global rankings he identifies, and that the UK student population has grown over a ten year period. On the negative side, he focuses on the financial insecurity of the UK higher education sector, dependent on public funding during a time of financial crisis, and which continues to be required to 'do more for less' (p7). As Bradwell (2009) summarises the situation,

> With an increasing diversity of students and student needs, fierce competition, and a crunch on funding, it is not surprising that some commentators are predicting the end of the university as we have known it. (p7)

Here he points to changes in the perceived market for higher education, together with competition for that market, driven in part by the impact of a 'global' financial crisis.

In the next section of Bradwell's (2009) report, headed 'why technology is changing universities' (p8), he goes on to state that, 'technology is at the heart of *this story* of institutional change' (p8, italics added). As Friesen (2008) puts it, in the context of other accounts of technology in education, a narrative is developed in which, 'the only 'figurative' protagonist is the technology' (p306). Technology (again, not clearly defined), is characterised with agency, coupled with seemingly unstoppable change, yet technology is not presented as being at the heart of the institution in the same way that it is at the heart of change. In this way, Bradwell (2009) sets the scene for the remainder of the report. The 'story' is one of institutional change, in which the institution provides the setting for the 'change agent' protagonist, technology. Bradwell goes on to represent technology as the driver both of threats to, and opportunities for, the higher education sector, in what he describes as a 'new world of learning and research' (p8).

In Bradwell's (2009) account, universities have become 'just one source among many for ideas, knowledge and innovation' (p8). This perceived change has a decentring effect for Bradwell, destabilising 'their [universities] core position and role' (p8). This rhetorical trend of the opportunity and threat of technology is, of course, not new, and was noted a decade ago by Cornford and Pollock (2005) in their discourse of higher education and technology, where, 'new technologies appear variously as the principal threat to the future of the university, as its potential saviour and, increasingly frequently, as both at the same time' (p111). In the ten years which have followed, I would suggest, little has changed in this rhetoric. In a similar vein, Bradwell characterises digital technology as both the driver of change (deterministic) and as a 'tool with which they [universities] can respond' (instrumental). The report continues to reinforce a narrative in which technology has agency which is uncontrollable, forcing change, but which can at the same time be harnessed to respond. Technology is something which is happening *to* universities, to which they must respond with technology.

Bradwell (2009) characterises universities spatially, as 'stores of expertise and knowledge capital', providing 'hubs for research and support, exposure and promotion for researchers'.

He also views them as providers of 'spaces for developing expertise', 'validating learning' and bringing 'prestige to those affiliated to them' (p9).   The focus for Bradwell is very much on the economic 'benefits' of universities. He then characterises these 'stores' and 'spaces' as ones which are closed, in insisting that, 'they will have to start to open up…to a wider population' (p9).

> Giving more people more ways to learn and research will be *the only way* to reconcile aspirations to maintain a world-class education system with high participation rates and move towards equality of access. (p9, italics added)

Bradwell goes on to link this assertion to indicators that institutions are beginning to make commitments to, 'publish all…research online, with free access' (p9), although he does not connect this to the debates between academic institutions and publishers which, it might be argued, are predominantly financial (Jump 2014), rather than technological. Bradwell views open access to large quantities of 'content' as a situation in which, 'a university's values can reassert themselves', relating this to 'guidance, and expertise in sorting and assessing [it]' (p10). At this point universities seem to be characterised as large static libraries, or repositories, in which the professional role of the academic is conflated with the professional role of librarian or custodian of a pre-digital age.

At this point, Bradwell comes to the 'value of and opportunity for the 'Edgeless University'',

> *At its most radical*, edgelessness can lead to institutions exploring new ways of accrediting learning, of providing recognition of research and learning and of offering affiliation. (p10, italics added).

Here the university is characterised as an accreditation centre (it is difficult to see how this is 'radical', unless it is *only* an accreditation centre), which absorbs the notion that 'people will continue to take advantage of more flexible opportunities to learn outside the system' (p10). This notion of flexibility, again here represented as a threat, is picked up again in chapter 5.

Universities are represented here then as static storehouses of knowledge, which might find 'radical' alternative pathways through providing new routes for affiliation and accreditation. While it can be argued that there is evidence to suggest that this is happening, in the move towards the accreditation of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), for example, it seems to be a representation which denies the complexity of university work, by containing it within particular present and future characterisations of space and function.   In this account, the university looks forward to becoming a broker of 'alternatives' for learning.

Bradwell (2009) identifies a key challenge for the future as being one which focuses on getting 'the relationship between the institution and the technology the right way round'

(p11), although he does not go on to clarify which 'way round' is preferable. He again focuses on openness to 'online content', where technology can 'help universities provide more flexibility' and 'move from where they are now to where they need to be', a negative-present to positive-future positioning (p11). There is a suggestion here that technology will change the position of universities from a static to dynamic state, connecting 'alternatives' to the 'formal system' (p11). At this point the story of the 'public finance crisis', characterised as an additional threat to higher education, enters the account again. While Bradwell acknowledges the crisis as a threat which may 'stifle aspirations', he asserts that 'ambition must remain' (p11). He refers to an article written by the Director of Demos on 'progressive austerity' where, in Bradwell's words, 'strained public resources' are required to 'meet progressive ends', leading to 'difficult choices for government' (p11).

Bradwell (2009) concludes his introduction with a business analogy, by drawing parallels (a connection which he attributes to one of his research participants) between higher education and the music industry, giving an account in which technology, 'undermined certain business models', emphasising that 'the threat was not to music itself, only to the way that current business models worked' (p11). Bluntly, Bradwell asserts that,

> It is no use lamenting the golden age of universities (or record companies).
> The goals of the two 'industries' remain the same, but they must refocus on
> how to achieve them (p11).

Bradwell concludes his introduction by suggesting that the relationship between technology and higher education has, in the past, been developed outside of institutional or sectoral strategy by 'enterprising academics and advocates' (p12). He asserts that future investment in technology needs to be strategic. For Bradwell, higher education,

> …currently lacks a *coherent narrative* of how institutions will look in the
> future and the role of technology in the transition to a wider learning and
> research culture. (p12, italics added).

While I have focused here on the introduction to the 'edgeless' report, Bradwell concludes the report with reference to Grumman (2009), who (referring to Bridges (2003), writing about change management) states,

> we'd like to suggest that we are in what he [Bridges] calls a 'neutral zone'.
> Neutral zones are times of maximum uncertainty and creative possibility
> between the ending of the way things have been and before the way they
> will be has become apparent. (Grumman p1)

Here, the neutral zone, normally a spatial reference to territory, is attached to the temporal, a spatialisation of time which becomes a space of uncertainty and possibility between two

other timeframes, 'the way things have been' and 'the way they will be', a space for recalibration. Bradwell's (2009) account is, ultimately, one constructed out of political time, yet one which builds on spatial metaphors.

A note on 'edgelessness'

Bradwell (2009) draws the attribute of 'edgelessness' from Lang's (2003) work on urban geography and office space in cities, which in turn references Garreau's (1992) work on 'edge cities'. For Lang (2003), edgeless cities are,

> a form of sprawling office development that does not have the density or cohesiveness of edge cities…they are everywhere - no metropolitan area is without them (p1).

But he also continues,

> Edgeless cities are not mixed use, pedestrian-friendly areas, nor are they easily accessed by public transit. They are not even easy to locate, because they are scattered in a way that is almost impossible to chart. (p1)

Bradwell (2009) draws on this terminology from the geography of urban office space, to describe universities where, 'The function they perform is no longer contained within the campus, nor within the physically defined space of a particular institution, nor, sometimes, even in higher education institutions at all'. (p8) He proposes that UK universities 'become edgeless geographically', by highlighting universities which have developed additional overseas campuses, and suggests that universities are 'becoming edgeless in research', as work between universities and 'among academics', becomes more collaborative. In short, he characterises the contemporary university as 'becoming defined by its function…not its form' (p8). Yet edgelessness is also a form, as Lang (2003) has described it. A form which lacks 'density or cohesiveness' and which is 'everywhere' (p1).

In the beginning: digital expansion at *CityName*

When I begin my research, Alan, one of the senior managers I speak to at *CityName*, describes the stage at which the digital expansion project we are discussing is at, in temporal terms, 'we've got to our first birthday in a sense' (Alan). The project has been running then, for approximately a year before I begin my initial interviews. As my research 'joins' the project at that point, I ask all staff I interview about the background to, or context of, the project and how they became involved with it. This leads to a number of 'beginnings' or contextual factors, which are positioned in recent history. Some of these are autobiographical, some governmental, historical, or technological.

While the duration of each interview conversation is around an hour, the time-span covered in each account is quite different. When I speak to Michael, another senior manager at *CityName*, his account refers back to a particular point in his career in the late 1970s, and works through relevant events to the time of the interview and into the near future. His account is autobiographical in its narrative form as Michael draws on key episodes and experiences from his career which he connects to more recent decision making and a strategic vision. In comparison, Alan's account reaches back to the 'demise of the e-University', to the report of the Online Learning Task Force (OLTF 2011), 'about a year ago from now', and stretches forward to an imagined future, 'ten years from now'. His introduction to the project forms more of a historical, sectoral account of the relationship between higher education strategy and technology, as a backdrop to the particular institutional strategy under discussion. Both accounts are kairotic, in that they 'omit long periods and dwell on others' (Czarniawska 2004), in order to draw together what are, for the interviewees, the relevant narratives, times and spaces which will lead me, as a particular audience, to an understanding of the current project.

In the following section, I look in further detail at some of the beginnings and contexts identified by Michael and Alan, who are at the most senior levels of management at *CityName* and each of whom has a significant influence on the strategic direction of the University. I then go on to follow up three contextual strands from their accounts: the story of the UK e-University (UKeU); the influence of the UK Borders Agency (UKBA); and global travel as it was impacted by an ash-cloud in Europe in 2010.

The beginning according to Alan

The first of my two interviews with Alan takes place in June 2011. In Alan's account of the distance education expansion project, it is possible to follow the decision making process relating to the project through two management groups/committees:

> so last summer, the decision was made that, at senior management team level, that we would invest in this area. (Alan)

> about a year ago, just before the summer, there was a decision made and Finance and General Purposes Committee signed off the business case for it, which I was asked to lead and present, so, so, that's the point at which it became *a real thing*. (Alan, emphasis added)

Even within Alan's account, there is slight shift in time, from the summer to, more specifically, 'just before' the summer. Firstly perhaps highlighting that the particular 'when' is beyond specific recall, but also perhaps suggesting that Alan repositions the event

according to something he remembers but does not articulate. For Alan, the project becomes 'a real thing' at a particular moment in time, which is the point at which the 'business case' is 'signed off'. While he is not specific about the date when the meeting took place, 'about a year ago, just before the summer', the meeting itself is a significant milestone in organizational terms, because it allows the project to proceed, it is *realised*. This marks the point in time between the project being discussed and the preparation of a business case, and the point at which the project is 'authorised'. The committee meeting is both an end to the business case planning phase and the beginning of the project. The idea for the project is materialised in a document, a business case document, which goes to a committee. The agreement is noted in the committee minutes, which form a significant part of the historic record of decision making in the organization. These documents also form part of the digital record, made available under 'freedom of information' on the University's website.

I move on to focus here on a long stretch of talk from Alan's account, edged with an opening statement, 'I'll say where it came from...', and a closing statement, which connects to the next phase of talk, 'so that's kind of where it came from and then...'. Within this nested narrative, Alan identifies a number of influencing factors relating to the beginning of the online distance education project.

For Alan, the project relates to, 'an interest of a few people in the University...to find a way to move the University a-away from its quite conservative and traditional approach to delivering educational opportunities'. He identifies the initiative as one element from a potential 'set of things' which will 'enable students who wish to take qualifications...to access it [the University] in a way that's more suited to them'.

He moves on to describe, 'a lot of thought about online distance education' in the UK, including by, 'the last government', leading to a recent ('about a year ago from now') report by an Online Learning Task Force (OLTF), and relating that report to following 'in the wake of the demise of the eUniversity' (UKeU). Here Alan makes the observation that, 'the idea didn't go away, but it came back in a different form', an acknowledgement of a cyclical pattern of ideas.

Next, Alan refers to comparator universities, 'if you look around, around the world, around the UK...universities like us, our peer universities, are stepping more and more into the area...so *CityName* needs, needs to do that'. While I don't ask specifically about timing in the interview, Alan adds, following his outline of the factors above, 'so sometimes the

time's right I guess'. Here Alan observes the coming together of a number of narrative threads to create a kairotic 'right' time for the project.

In this first section of the excerpt then, Alan draws on: the views of senior managers within the University around 'flex' and 'access'; the interest of a previous government and broader 'thought' in the UK, particularly in relation to a previous (unsuccessful) initiative (UKeU) as a returning idea, and to a process of continuous comparison with 'peer' institutions. These lead to an assessment that 'sometimes the time's right'.

Alan then briefly refers to ongoing successful work in the university in the area of online distance education, but stresses that, 'it wasn't something that one could see being avidly taken up across the University', leading to the launch of the initiative, 'last summer, the decision was made'.

Alan's account moves on to discuss the decision to undertake the project as way to 'remove at least one of the barriers' to change, one of funding, 'to grow and change the business'. While I do not undertake a full analysis of word frequency, the word 'business' is used several times in both of my interviews with Alan, making it particularly distinct from the accounts of other *CityName* staff. At this stage, he comments on the recognition that there would need to be a significant investment not only in the academic units of the University, but also in the 'support services', in order 'to drive the change' and 'significantly change the scale'.

At this point, Alan refers to a perceived driver for the initiative, where he perceives that, in other accounts in the University, 'there is a strong tendency for the financial case to dominate over, over other reasons for doing it...if you ask people and say, why are we doing this? Many of them say, because it makes money'. He then counters this assumption by returning to an earlier statement in saying, 'but actually that that isn't the primary driver for it, the prime driver really is educational opportunity'.

Alan's account returns to the theme of access, this time described as 'outreach', but an outreach which reaches those potential students with restrictions which are 'for reasons of...probably time and space more than money'. Alan describes the kind of student the initiative is aimed at; those at 'taught postgrad levels', 'particularly...working professionals', who 'aren't gonna give up jobs and translocate themselves'. Alan gives a

personal example of somebody he knows, who 'gave up a good job' in another country 'and came here' to take a postgraduate qualification, something which would not have been available to him at a distance, 'and he's now doing a PhD and struggles with the same thing...that's not to do with money, it's actually to do with…lack of outreach'.

The next set of issues to be drawn into Alan's account, are those which look towards the future, to a narrative of risk, where additional contributing factors to change are presented 'to offset what are clear risks on the horizon over the medium term, maybe even the long term, who knows' (Alan). The first of these relates to the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) and the difficulties for students applying for visas, 'which may not actually physically prevent people coming to *CityName*, but it might seriously put them off even bothering trying...it's not just the number of visas, it's actually just the sheer hassle'. Finally, Alan refers to issues and potential issues around 'global travel' from 'volcanic ash and all of that kind of stuff', to the broader suggestion that, 'global travel may actually become something which one thinks less glibly about...ten years from now'. Both of these potential issues are presented again as 'risks' which need to be 'offset', with the tail of this section returning to the theme of 'outreach'.

Issues of 'global travel' relate closely to the issues around immigration, as each thread refers to the potential for reduction in mobility. The 'volcanic ash' story refers to the eruption of the volcano, Eyjafjallajökullin, in Iceland in 2010, which led to a significant disruption in air travel across Europe, where as the BBC (2010) described, 'tiny particles of rock, glass and sand contained in the ash cloud from the still-erupting volcano', which were considered to be a danger to the engines of aircraft. In the BBC's (2010) video report, images of the volcanic ash cloud are juxtaposed with images of empty airports, with UK 'airspace restrictions' described as 'the worst in living memory'.

The final section of this except from Alan's interview looks at the proposed economics of the new courses, and what those staff bidding for funding are being asked to do, based on the idea that 'we should not be doing stuff that makes a loss, unless we consciously decide we want to do it for a flagship type reason...for the vast majority of our Masters [degrees], and certainly Masters pitched at working professionals, it doesn't make any sense for them not to at least break even', leading to a further change, which is 'that you cannot really run masters students on tiny numbers, it's only financially viable if you get into serious numbers'.

In a summary of the implications, Alan goes on to identify the key issues for consideration in applying for funding from the initiative:

> so there was a big academic cultural shift there, that we were asking people to design for big numbers...we were asking them to think hard about the fees, we were asking them to think hard about the pedagogy, and also were therefore, we were asking them to think hard about the markets, market intelligence and market research. Um, so, so that's kind of where it came from. (Alan)

Continuing with the language of business and markets, Alan uses the term 'market' in place of a reference to prospective students, where the market stands for the potential future of the digital student population.

In summary, Alan's account is one in which risk is a prominent feature. He draws on the recent past to consider potential risk to the future of the institution using language which draws on business and market models, linked to a positive vision for improved access to higher education, although the question of for whom it will be improved remains where access to funding is also key. Spatial issues of mobility, travel and business 'growth' are also prominent, where risks to the flow of bodies (the market) to the campus are identified. These are also political risks, where freedom of travel and funding for education are political concerns. In a sense, the institution recalibrates according to risk. In Alan's account of what new course leaders are asked think carefully about, pedagogy is somewhat buried amongst 'big numbers', 'fees' and 'markets', leading to academic programmes which are developed around business rather than educational models. The recalibration in Alan's account appears to be one of adjustment in spatial reach, one with a vision of 'outreach' from the campus, which is dependent on a spatial model of business development. As I will explore in the chapters to follow, however, this is a spatial reach with temporal consequences.

The beginning according to Michael

Michael is also in a senior management position with the University of *CityName*. My interview with Michael takes place in April, 2012, and I ask him, as I ask other interviewees, to talk to me about the broader context and background for the digital expansion project. Michael takes a largely autobiographical approach in his response, beginning, 'OK, so my background…I mean the bit of my background

that's salient is…'. Michael's account begins in the late 1970s, with his involvement in a technology project at another university. His account moves to the 'mid 80s' at the same institution, moving to a second institution in the late nineties, and then an additional role at a third institution. An autobiographical career history begins to unfold. Michael draws on his career history to illustrate his long term experience with projects in higher education and technology. He refers to his own academic research over this period including a number of institutions which are anonymized alphabetically below.

> My early research showed, and it was very interesting, because I just took all sorts of examples around *A_University*…
>
> I also saw, in my experience at *A_University* and my experience at *B_University* that for some courses…
>
> I noticed the external programme of *C_University* and that's, you know, essentially it's a way for the different *AcademicUnits* of *C_University* …to deliver online…
>
> I found the *B_University* model particularly relevant to *CityName*…because at *B_University* they levered off the research reputation, you know, it was because they were good at *SubjectName*, they taught *SubjectName* online…so when I came here, I convened like a, a show and tell…and that was nine and a half years ago…

Michael's account then, is not one that begins with *CityName*, or with the beginning or realization of the distance education project at a point of institutional authorization, but with an account of related experiences over a number of years, in relation to a number of educational institutions, education technology projects and software systems, that lead to an arrival point at *CityName*. Here there is a new 'beginning' in the account with an event, 'a show and tell', but even this is over nine years prior to our interview conversation. The arrival at *CityName* then turns to the allocation of 'pump-priming' funding for innovative technology use at *CityName*, a round of internal funding which Michael links directly to the current round of funding for online distance education.

At this point, Michael refers to some disciplinary projects which were successful during the first round of funding, before moving on the current expansion project,

> …and then, for various reasons, one of which was just to do with money…I wanted each of the [academic units] of the University to have diverse income

streams…

…and I was particularly bothered, as I still am, by the Borders Agency…I didn't want the international students to vanish…

I also saw, in my experience, that…you actually gave a better, it was a better learning experience…if technology was one of the primary means of delivery…

…and I also saw that, you know, mostly one wants to do something hybrid, so you use technology, but you allow people to come together, or encourage people to come together in different ways. (Michael)

Here then, Michael identifies four motivating factors which lead to the expansion project: firstly, diversifying the income streams of academic units; secondly, an uncertain relationship between higher education and the UKBA, particularly in relation to visas for international students; thirdly, his view, based on experience, that learning with technology has the potential to be 'a better learning experience', and, finally, that technology allows 'people to come together in different ways'. In doing so, he draws on financial and political concerns, a sign of financial and political time, alongside those of pedagogy and technology, technology and communication.

The first two factors are future oriented and concerned with risk. Financial 'times', as Bradwell (2009) suggests, are uncertain, while Pruvot and Estermann (2012) identify 'risk management' as, 'one of the major drivers for income diversification for universities in Europe' (p711). I draw on Pruvot and Estermann (2012) to trace from Michael's narrative the particular term of 'income diversification' in a higher education context. Here it maps to a European narrative. Michael looks for such diversification in income at the level of grouped academic units and the provision of online education. The second risk relates to international mobility and political time, dependent on current immigration policies, in which 'border' authorities control not only where non-UK citizens are allowed to be, but when, and for how long. Both financial time and space and immigration time and space might be described as geopolitical, particularly the latter, which concerns national boundaries, physical bodies, and an immigration 'system', regulated by the UK government. Of course, the concern regarding international students is not only about diversity in the student body, but also relates to financial diversity. These narrative threads draw on each other. The time-spaces of education, technology, and communication are interrelated, suggestive of positive possibilities which are situated in the recent past, the present, and look forward to the near future. Of course, technology, as defined by its own 'sector' outside higher education, is also

situated in geopolitical times and spaces. The second two factors are oriented to the recent past, and relate directly to Michael's previous professional experience, 'I also saw, in my experience…'.

The account given of the turn to digital expansion here then, is partly about continuity, ensuring that changes which are external to the institution do not have a negative impact on its current practices, by changing those practices in a way which sidesteps a particular geopolitical issue, but which protects, to a certain (or uncertain) extent, the financial and cultural status of the institution. Both accounts, in this sense, have orientations towards uncertain futures and therefore incorporate narratives of risk. In Michael's terms, however, the digital offers, as a positive alternative, a way in which people may 'come together…in different ways'. The tension in existing configurations of time and space are balanced with the making of others. In both Alan and Michael's accounts, there are clear narrative threads of experience, opportunity and risk, which are woven together into narratives of multiple beginnings and imagined futures. I now move on to look in some detail at the example of the UK e-University project, referenced by both Alan and Michael and the Collaborate to Compete (OLRF 2011) report, referenced by Alan, before returning to the case of the UKBA, again referenced by both interviewees. In the analysis to follow, I am particular interested in representations of the past and of the future and the way in which universities and higher education are characterized.

UK e-University project

The UK e-University project (UKeU) was first publicised in 2000 and was later defined in a House of Commons (HC) report (2005) as 'a project to establish the e-University as a single vehicle for the delivery of UK universities' HE programmes over the internet'. (House of Commons 2005 p5). In giving retrospective context to the project, the HC report suggests that the project was 'discussed in 1999' (although it does not say by whom). The report draws on the historic context of the 1990s, to suggest that the 'dotcom era' was influential in leading to a 'highly ambitious' project, proposing that this was, 'a time when there were thought to be no limits to the potential of the internet' (p6). The report also refers to David Blunkett's (Secretary of State in 2000) announcement speech for the UKeU project, in which he states that 'e-learning has become a big business…a new national initiative is needed to maximise Britain's chances of success in this global environment.' (p7)

The HC report I have quoted from is part of a formal inquiry into the UKeU as a 'failed' project, after its premature end in 2004. The HC committee states,

> Our purpose was to account for the expenditure to date (£50 million), to clarify why the UKeU venture failed, what lessons could be learnt from the failure of the project, and to consider the future for e-learning and e-Universities in the UK. (p5)

In this section, I particularly look at the committee report account sections on 'Why the UKeU failed' (p13), its orientation to the past, and on the 'Future for e-learning' (p32), its orientation to the future.

The key reason the HC identifies, leading to the failure of the UKeU, is stated as being, 'largely because it took a supply-driven, rather than demand-led approach'. The report breaks this approach down into three areas of concern. The first of these is that a project pursuing the provision of e-learning, which was dependent on online provision, ignored 'existing research evidence' which suggested that 'a blended learning approach' (a mixture of online and offline modes of communication) was what demand required. The second was a 'distinct lack of marketing and use of market research', and the third, a criticism that the project approach was, 'technology-driven rather than learner-centred, with too much emphasis…on the development of the technological platform' (HC, 2005 p13).

In looking towards 'the future', the report focuses again on blended learning, drawing on previous research by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE 2003), suggesting that e-learning should be, 'augmented by more traditional methods, including classroom sessions' (p32). The report supports this research with an excerpt from the response of Kim Howells, who was the Minister with responsibility for higher education at the time of the inquiry (2005), quoting from his evidence to the committee, stating that,

> We know…from failures in other countries…that what people want is not simply to be able to access information and programmes on their screens; they also want face-to-face meetings and they want to be part of *something that people of our generation called a university*. (Howells 2005 p32, italics added)

Here, the failure of the UK is put into the context of the (non-specific) failures of other countries, drawing attention away from national blame (failure in the area of e-learning is internationally normalised). To emphasise this, Howells is quoted again, later in the report, as saying, 'In terms of some of the things that the Americans have tried and failed at, for example, this is pretty modest stuff.' (p31). But there is also a turn towards a romantic notion of an idealised higher education of the past. Howells uses the past tense here, suggesting that what is referred to as 'a university' no longer exists, or at least not in the

same form, it is 'what *our generation* called a university' (p32, italics added). In Howells's account, the UKeU becomes a project measured against an imagined university of the past, seemingly based on personal, but collective, experience ('our generation'), as an ideal state from which the UKeU should not have attempted to become detached. Referring to Howells's evidence, and to another government report, the white paper, 'The Future of Higher Education' (2003), the HC committee goes on to direct that, 'The Government, through HEFCE, must deliver on its commitment to outline its strategy…for embedding e-learning in HE in a full and sustainable way'. (p33)

Looking forward to the future, the report goes on to claim that, 'All the evidence we have received agrees that there is a great future for e-learning', with the significant reservation that, 'Exactly how that future will unfold is still unknown…' (p34). To this end, the report recommends that research should continue 'into the future direction of e-learning' (p33).

The report describes a 'global market for e-learning', as 'an emerging market that is not well understood…'. In particular, it focuses on what is posed as a 'branding challenge' for a number of institutions working together in a single e-University. While research in terms of, 'process development and pedagogy' are identified for e-learning, the report observes that 'nobody has been identified as conducting market research to understand better the global market for e-learning' (p36). The perceived need for this research provides another of the report's recommendations, where 'robust market research' will be undertaken, 'to maintain the UK interests in the global market for e-learning.' (p36)

In a final point on research, the report refers to a previous Gartner report (2003), which had projected a strength in web based e-learning by 2005 (p36). The HC report observes that this is not the case in 2005 (when the report was written), but maintains the idea that 'there is likely to be a large future global market in e-learning'. The report encourages measures to make sure that the UK has a chance 'to be a part of this market'. (p36)

In concluding its section looking towards 'the future', the report draws on an additional Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) report (2005), which saw the e-learning future for the UK as a, 'need for a bottom-up development of blended learning within departments…', finding that 'it was the human infrastructure that was the most important part of e-learning strategies…' (p38). The final conclusion then, for the HC report is that the Government should provide an 'overarching strategy' to support the higher education sector in e-learning, but not an overarching e-University.

This report then, finds further beginnings dating back to the 1990s, and connects with other (dotcom) failures, and paths not taken, in the form of market research which the report's authors perceive may have led to a blended learning solution. Rather than envisioning a positive university of the future, the report draws on Howell's account to look back to the university of a previous generation against which to review something which it concludes should have been 'learner' rather than technology driven.

Having looked back at the HC account of the UKeU project, I now move forward to the Online Learning Task Force (OLTF) report (2011), referred to in my interview with Alan, with its particular orientation to tempo (rapid change) time and to a vision of an 'exciting future'.

Collaborate to Compete

'Collaborate to compete: seizing the opportunity of online learning for UK higher education', is the title of a 2011 report, which conveys the findings of an 'Online Learning Task Force' (OLTF), a project of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) set up in 2009. The mission of the OLTF is defined in the report as being 'to address how UK higher education might maintain and extend its position as a world leader in online learning' (p3). The OLTF was chaired by Lynne Brindley, who also writes the introduction to the report. Brindley was, at the time of the report, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The British Library.

Sub themes of the OLTF's mission are identified by Brindley as 'international opportunities', 'flexibility in UK provision', 'online pedagogy', 'technology and rich sources of content', and 'quality provision'. (p3). The introduction to the report also summarises the OLTF's conclusion, which considers that online education, '…however blended with on- or off-campus interactions, whether delivered in the UK or overseas - provides real opportunity for UK institutions…' (p3). Seemingly presented as the answer to a number of potential problems, Brindley adds that online education can, '…if offered at scale, deliver quality and cost-effectiveness and meet student demands for flexible learning' (p3). Here the report takes the midway approach proposed by the House of Commons (2005) report, in that 'blended' learning is taken into account. Similarly, the focus on online learning, moves to one on 'flexible' learning, although the account remains dependent on an assumption of 'student demands'.

The report positions itself temporally between two other documents, the Browne report of 2010, and 'the forthcoming White paper'. Although it is unclear from the report which

White paper is being referred to (perhaps because it is, at that time, in the future and untitled), it is clear with hindsight that it is 'Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System', presented to Parliament by Business, Innovation and Skills (2011). These documents are identified by Brindley as providing 'a new and even more challenging context' (p3), for the OLTF. The issues identified are restrictions on 'public spending', a 'market approach to higher education, and an emphasis on 'student demand and choice'. All three of these issues were emphasised in the Bradwell (2009) report, another indicator of the interwoven discourse of this set of documents.

Putting an emphasis on tempo, Brindley goes on to describe the external influence of 'technological change' as 'rapid', balanced with 'developing and adopting appropriate pedagogy for its exploitation', which is described as 'less rapid', with relevant training and necessary 'organisational change' which 'takes even longer' (p3). This is set against the apparent expectations of future students who expect flexibility (p3).

The report goes on to summarise the work undertaken by the OLTF, listing the key stakeholder groups which have been consulted. It also refers to a 'major seminar', organized by the task force, titled 'What next for online learning?', again taking a future orientation, with the aim to 'cross-check our thinking with a…range of experts' (p3). However, at this point, the report also notes that, in undertaking its activities, it found that 'reliable baseline data is scarce, and even definitions of what constitutes online learning are unclear' (p3). This is, of course, a particular problem for a task force with 'online learning' as both its focus and in its title and it also raises the question again of market research and the reports characterisation of student 'demand'.

Brindley goes on to summarise some of the 'differing views' of OLTF, members. For me, there is a key emphasis here on differences regarding 'the urgency of change' in particular. In addition are listed, 'relative importance' of on-campus and online provision, 'strength' in 'competitive challenges', and a 'need for organisational change' (p3).

Framing the report in relation to the case studies on which it draws, Brindley suggests that these offer valuable information for institutions which are thinking about 'strategic options for the next five to ten years' (p4). For Brindley, these case studies demonstrate '…a wealth of imaginative offerings' directing the sector 'towards an even more exciting future' (p4). At the same time, the UK student market is also viewed as an opportunity, as it

'seek[s] more work-based, flexible and part-time opportunities…' (p4). In summary, the report states that,

> 'Going to university' will take on many, varied meanings and
> manifestations over the next ten years. (p4)

Continuing the theme of 'rapidity', previously coupled with technological change, the report identifies an 'international market' which is 'growing rapidly', although again, key for me is the additional note that, 'estimating its size remains a challenge' (p4). This uncertainty appears to depend upon the acknowledgment that there are other universities around the world who are 'strong competitors' in an international marketplace. In particular, 'private sector providers' are characterised in the report as 'moving in quickly and aggressively'.

The report goes on to emphasise 'urgency' in the face of change which is being experienced 'domestically and globally', and as a response to 'rapidly changing student demand', alongside an opportunity to 'exploit…today's web-based technologies to change our thinking and to innovate faster' (p4). Brindley draws on a wide temporal framework with which to conclude her introduction,

> The HE sector has been talking about the potential of online learning for well
> over ten years. The moment has come if we wish to remain and grow as a
> major international player in higher education. This report offers some of the
> ways towards achieving our goals. (p4)

The summary points of the OLTF report are as follows,

> 1. Technology needs to enhance student choice and meet or exceed learner's
> expectations
> 2. Investment is needed to facilitate the development and building of consortia
> to achieve scale and brand in online learning
> 3. More and better market intelligence about international demand and
> competition is required
> 4. Institutions need to take a strategic approach to realign structures and
> processes in order to embed online learning
> 5. Training and development should be realigned to enable the academic
> community to play a leading role in online learning
> 6. Investment is needed for the development and exploitation of open
> educational resources to enhance efficiency and quality (pp5-7)

Among the other analyses in this chapter, the OLTF report is distinct in its emphasis on tempo, on the 'rapidity' of change, linked both with technology and 'student demand', yet its proposals refer to longer term practices of market intelligence, strategic approaches and

investment for development. There is an apparent internal disjuncture in the treatment of time. Putting this text together with the other formal texts, it is possible to trace a pattern of recurrent themes over a ten year period, about the same period of time which Michael describes as having passed in his role at *CityName*, and then even further back to the 'dotcom' boom of the 1990s. These documents provide evidence to support Alan's suggestion in relation to the UKeU that ideas about online education and, by association, the digital university, were not simply following a linear pattern, but circulating among a number of stakeholders, and returning in different forms. In this way narratives of the past and imagined visions of the future are adapted to meet present needs. Beginnings are formed which are constructed on lessons from the past or which project forward to positive future constructions. These are political negotiations with time.

UK Borders Agency

Alan and Michael both voice concerns in our interviews about current and potential difficulties for international students who require visas to attend courses based at the *CityName* campus. This is an ongoing narrative in the higher education sector as it forms an uneasy tension between international student 'recruitment' and UK immigration authorities. At the time of conducting interviews with Alan and Michael, visas were administered by the UK Border Agency (UKBA). At the time of writing, visas are administered by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), recently separated out from other former UKBA services, and now grouped under 'Immigration Enforcement' and the 'Border Force' (GOV.UK 2014). My interviews with Alan and Michael took place prior to a significant event in the higher education sector when London Metropolitan University had its license to sponsor overseas students revoked by the UKBA (Times Higher Education 2012), yet both interviewees clearly saw a tension between the UKBA's control of visas, and universities as host to international students on their campuses, as a potential future risk to the sector. Michael, in particular, points out that around one third of *CityName's* students are classed as 'international'. Neither interviewee goes into the detail of the relationship between the higher education sector and the UKBA at the time, but each makes references which suggest a related narrative of risk:

> I was particularly bothered, as I still am, by the Borders Agency…if the Borders Agency and the visa thing suddenly got really awful, then I didn't want the international students to vanish. (Michael)

> one of them [risks] is the UK Border Agency and visas, you know, which may not actually physically prevent people coming to *CityName*, but it might

seriously put them off even bothering trying…so it's not just the number of visas, it's actually just the sheer hassle… (Alan)

The UKBA references position the distance education expansion project and the University in relation to current political issues around immigration (political time). Where interviewees look ahead to the future for 'risks on the horizon' (Alan), these are indicative of the strategic planning roles which both Alan and Michael hold. Yet both accounts look to balance political and financial safeguarding with positive assertions in relation to 'outreach' and pedagogic value.

The tensions between the UKBA/UKVI and the higher education sector regarding international students and visas extend both prior to and beyond the period of my research. As I first draft this chapter (March 2014), a letter from over 160 academics is published in *The Guardian* newspaper, opposing what its signatories describe as the,

> acquiescence of Universities UK [representative body] members in acting as an extension of UKVI, thereby undermining the autonomy and academic freedom of UK universities and trust between academics and their students. (The Guardian 2014)

This tension acts then, in the context of the research interviews I have mentioned, as a negative driver for change. In this instance, technology offers one form of adjustment in response. It is presented as one narrative strand among those that come together in Alan's temporal statement that 'sometimes the time's right'.

Discussion

What I have attempted to do in this chapter, beginning with the issues of essentialism, instrumentalism and determinism, and then by drawing out narrative strands of 'beginnings' for the digital expansion project which, on closer inspection, become woven among unfolding and recurrent narratives of the past, present and future, is twofold. Firstly, I have attempted to illustrate a narrative complexity of connected events, actions and practices, which cannot, or should not, simply be reduced to accounts of essentialism, instrumentalism and determinism in the context of education technology discourse. While technology and 'demand' drive formal accounts of, and imperatives for, online education, the personal accounts of Alan and Michael also draw on professional experience, autobiography, a deep knowledge of the sector at both the micro and macro level, an understanding of institutional difference, and the effects of a wider web of geopolitical events.

In the accounts examined in this section, the times and spaces I have highlighted are

financial, political and technological, often mapping the concerns of one organization onto those of another. Stories 'unfold' at different speeds, which do not appear to be controlled or controllable. It is difficult to point to anything in the influential factors that drive change which are being driven by technology alone, and there is a sense in which the influential time-spaces are bigger and broader than the organizational time-space. This might be seen then, as a more comprehensive account of the 'edgeless university', than Bradwell's (2009) static containers of knowledge.

In this chapter I have focused on temporality in the form of beginnings in relation to public policy narratives and higher education strategy. I have considered the *making* of beginnings, and, consequently, endings, in order to 'manage' time. I have given particular consideration to depictions of the past, present and future, in public documents relating to technology and higher education, alongside the accounts of senior managers leading the development of new online programmes at the University of *CityName*. I have argued that, while public documents focus on the present as a time of crisis in the face of impending 'natural' disaster which must drive change, institutional accounts communicate a more complex view of overlapping narratives, from both within and outside the higher education sector, which affect each other and develop at different rates. While the policy documents I have focused on depict vision of the future as predictable, insofar as they often predict a negative future for higher education, the institutional accounts I consider recognise risk and unpredictability. In policy, higher education appears to operate in a separate sphere to technology, where technology is viewed as external to institutions, allowing it to take up a position of threat. Universities are characterised as running on slow time, whereas technology runs on fast time, positioning higher education as always behind an often homogenised technology, which is characterised as progressive and agential. The way in which technologies are also developed by, and emerge from, university research departments, which would work against such a clean separation between fast and slow time, is excluded from such narratives. Finally, the senior manager accounts depict relationships between higher education and technology, at the level of their personal and professional experiences, which span several decades. These accounts move backwards and forwards, recognising and performing continuity amid change.

Temporal recalibration is considered here in terms of a technical/digital market model in policy literature, to which universities are required to adjust. Such discourse can be used to make technology and higher education appear incompatible, leading to requirements for processes of change and adjustment within the higher education sector. Policy and think-tank

literature imagines and edges the university in particular ways, both spatially and temporally. As I have suggested, the university is imagined in one kind of time (analogue, slow, unresponsive) and the digital marketplace in another kind of time (digital, fast, responsive), ignoring the way in which digital spaces also emerge out of university spaces. There is a temporal simplification at work, which Law (2006) describes in terms of a metaphysical 'singularity' in relation to government reports which smooth out the differences of multiple times and spaces.

5. A STATE OF FLEX

Full-time, part-time, flexitime, overtime

> full time, *n.*
> The total number of hours normally allotted to daily or weekly work, etc. Chiefly
> *attrib.* (hyphened) and advb., esp. in sense 'that occupies all one's time, that
> engages one to the exclusion of other activities'. (OED 2015)
>
> part-time, *adj.* and *adv.*
> Employed, occurring, lasting, etc., for part of the time or for less than the
> customary time, esp. for less than the usual working day or week. (OED 2015)
>
> flexitime, *n.*
> An arrangement whereby employees, while working a contracted number
> of hours, are free to vary (within prescribed limits) their starting and
> finishing times. (OED 2015)
>
> flexibility, *n.*The quality of being flexible.
> 1.
> a. Capability of being bent; pliancy.
> b. The quality of yielding to pressure.
> 2.
> a. Susceptibility of modification or alteration; capacity for ready
> adaptation to various purposes or conditions; freedom from stiffness or
> rigidity.
> b. Of the voice or fingers: Capacity for free, rapid, and varied execution or
> delivery.
> 3. Readiness to yield to influence or persuasion, pliancy of mind or
> disposition. (OED 2015)

Introduction

In this chapter I work particularly with the theme of flexibility as it arose in my research in relation to higher and online distance education. I argue that, while a discourse of flexibility promises opportunities for access to online education, it also has the potential to devalue it by paying too little attention to education's time-consuming practices, often perpetuating a notion of teaching and learning which is depicted as a-temporal and free from the constraints of time. This is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, because describing education in flexible terms, 'anytime, anywhere', glosses over the commitment and effort required to engage with challenging material in the context of a course in a sustained way. Secondly, the notion of fitting education around other priorities brings with it the suggestion that such an engagement does not require time which is of high quality, which might mean time which is uninterrupted, or a time at which the student feels alert and able to focus. Flexibility as a positive principle also distracts from questions of why learning and teaching practices are required to be flexible in the first place. In this chapter I consider flexibility in relation to the

erosion of the notion of full-time and to other adjustments in the timeframes of higher education (such as the introduction of accelerated degrees), where time is presented as an individual or institutional resource to be managed. Paying attention to temporal recalibration in higher education discourse in this chapter supports a critique which draws attention to the temporal order of things, a critical approach to time which considers, 'the temporal expectations demanded by various institutions, social relationships, and labor arrangements' (Sharma 2014 p138).

I support my argument by drawing on interview material which surfaces an alternative emphasis, that flexibility in the context of online distance education is effortful and requires multiple temporal adjustments, both for institutions and individuals. At the same time, I suggest, such accounts implicitly accept working practices which, in other contexts, would be described as shift-working and overtime, accounts which accept a culture of work and study which is *beyond* full-time. I go further in proposing that the erosion of the notion of full-time is in evidence, where part-time study is becoming the dominant mode, is aligned with affordability, and is made unproblematic by the notion of flexible access to education as a positive project.

I begin this chapter with an overview of flexibility in the higher education research literature, moving on to look at a broader context of temporal shifting in the sector. Here I draw on examples from websites and project material from UK and US institutions which begin to offer alternative temporal models to the three or four year full-time undergraduate degree, a recalibration of the degree model. These models of 'acceleration' and 'deceleration' in degree programmes are explored with reference to a recent UK government report (Business Innovation & Skills 2012), which looks to increase the number of part-time undergraduate students in England. I also draw on a recent Higher Education Academy paper (HEA 2014), which proposes that flexible approaches in the sector aim towards the desired production of *flexible graduates*. I raise concerns here that an emphasis on flexibility may carry through it a positive notion of passivity, and a bending to the will of external demands, which may work against criticality and resistance, both in higher education and in professional environments. I suggest that there is a politics of time (Sharma 2013) at work.

Against this backdrop of temporal recalibration in the sector, I move on to look at the temporal adjustments surfaced in my research project, firstly by drawing on interviews with *CityName* staff to consider institutional adjustments, particularly the notion of 24/7 support, and other changes which begin to trouble the established *when-ness* of the student in relation to her studies and to the University. I then draw on my interviews with distance students to

emphasise that among this small, but international group, there may be no room for temporal flexibility when all hours of the day and night have been accounted for. Study time for these students may occupy any part of the 24 hour cycle, which is not already taken up with professional and personal commitments.

I conclude by proposing that, as the notion of full-time and the cohesion of the student 'cohort' may be being eroded without critique, there is a lack of attention, both in the literature and in the accounts I have drawn on from the field, being given to what might be thought of as *quality time* in education. I return to this proposition in the conclusion of this thesis as an area for exploration in future research.

Referring back to Sharma's (2013) work on 'critical time', this chapter considers what she terms the 'political economy of time', in which she proposes that 'bodies are differently valued temporally and made productive for capital' (p317). In taking a critical view of 'the differential ways in which time is structured and experienced', Sharma contends that it is possible to see 'the social and relational contours of power in its temporal forms…emerge' (p317).

The stretch - in the name of flexibility

As Barnett asks in a recent Higher Education Academy (Barnett 2014) report, *Flexible pedagogies: preparing for the future*, 'Who could not be in favour of 'flexibility'? It is an hurrah concept' (p32). With the rhetorical power of flexibility in mind, Barnett does not so much warn, but reminds readers to approach the flexible metaphor with caution, as a broad term often invoked to respond to, 'many if not all of the alleged shortcomings in and challenges facing higher education' (p32). In this sense, I would suggest that flexibility aligns with technology in higher education discourse, as a loosely defined response to a set of, often undefined, problems. While taking a critical stance, however, Barnett's (2014) report is a concluding one, which draws on a set of HEA reports on flexibility by other authors, which work to support flexibility as a response in the higher education discourse. This concluding report, for example, is prefaced by a foreword by Levy (Barnett 2014) which includes the assertion that,

> …it is very appropriate that a major report such as this… should principally highlight the intended outcome of flexible pedagogies: *flexible graduates*. Graduates who are able to engage with the uncertainties, complexities and demands of a rapidly changing world - some might even say a 'flexi world' - actively and constructively, from a position of what Professor Barnett [the report's main author] identifies as epistemic flexibility. (p4, italics added)

This idea of the 'flexible graduate' here sees flexibility embodied as the positive outcome (or product) of a flexible approach to pedagogy (pointing to a reciprocal flexibility in the teacher), the assumption being that flexibility rather than stability is the most effective and desirable response to 'rapid change'. As Martin (1994) observed in her significant work on flexibility, the flexible metaphor can be traced from discourse, to organizations, to material products, to bodies. I will return to this notion of embodied flexibility in the light of student accounts later in this chapter.

One of the guiding questions for me in thinking through some of the issues addressed in this thesis comes from Nicoll (2011) who, in the context of higher education asks, 'What happens in the stretch to flexibility?' In developing her discussion, Nicoll proposes that, 'To understand the significance of flexible learning is…also to explore changes that are wrought through it, in the name of flexibility' (p313). For Nicoll, this means considering changes in institutions in relation to economic and social change, proposing that '…these wider societal and institutional changes and shifts in educational practices help to raise a question about whether we want our societies to be reconfigured in these ways.' (p313).

Nicoll's (2011) concern is that a drive towards flexibility in education is often accepted uncritically, and that an emphasis on 'how better to implement flexibility' (a concern discussed in the previous chapter in relation to technology) often means a lack of attention to its broader implications (p315). Nicoll argues, 'that flexibility is taken quite generally to be a beneficial characteristic of learning' (p315). This is a kind of flexible essentialism for education. However, Nicoll also draws attention to the way in which flexibility is interpreted in different ways by different groups within an institution,

> …academics may understand flexible learning as increasing access to and
> equity in learning, managers as increasing institutional incomes and wider
> markets, and general staff as meeting student needs more effectively.
> (p315-316)

Both Barnett (2014) and Nicoll (2011) observe that flexibility is problematic when it needs to be defined. At the risk of tautology, flexibility is itself a conveniently flexible term.

Edwards (1997), in an exploration of flexibility in adult education, in 'lifelong learning' and 'learning societies', draws on the temporal aspects of flexibility as he considers the practice of 'modularisation'. Edwards sees modularisation, aligned with 'increasing choice' and offering opportunities for intermittent and 'convenient' education, as an adoption of modularisation practices which also do work to 'normalise a view of adults as not having the time to commit themselves to long periods of study' (p121). This form of normalisation is

something which I want to emphasise in this chapter, from policy discourse, through a shift in temporal practices, to students who appear to expect that it is their responsibility to 'find time' to commit to a course of study, which becomes, in Raddon's (2007) research, a case of how to fit study into busy and complex lives.

Edwards (1997) makes an important point about the recalibration of the curriculum. As institutions seek to increase modularisation and accommodate patterns of intermittent study in order to provide wider access to their academic programmes, he considers that there is also a sense of education as something which must be adjustable, to fit around other temporal priorities. He goes on to link modularisation to funding, in its association with a pay-as-you-go approach to education, based on affordability. In other words, students are enabled to buy into a programme, one module at a time, depending on when they can afford to study. Edwards argues that affordability can be just as significant, if not more so, as choice, in student decisions around how and when to study (p121). Flexible options become important when time and money are limited. As Edwards puts it, 'Alternative ways of funding learners and learning would produce different discourses around which choices could be framed' (p121). I would suggest that one such alternate discourse might be around sustained time, which favours depth of study over short, modular bursts.

Nicoll and Edwards have worked, both independently and as co-authors, in tracing the flexibility metaphor in education over a number of years (see in particular, Edwards 1997 and Nicoll 2006), highlighting the persistence of flexibility discourse in the sector, particularly in relation to 'lifelong' learning. In her 2011 chapter, Nicoll picks up flexibility's entanglement with 'e-learning', observing the reconfiguration of the university.

> As practices shift towards more flexible forms of learning and e-learning, the "architecture" of the university as an organized learning environment is reconfigured…this architecture changes and overlaps with those in workplaces and e-sites and other places…it is understandable, therefore, to talk about the student as potentially "freer," as having more autonomy in flexible and e-learning. However, when you look closely, the architecture for normalization does not disappear. The student is made "open" to disciplining effects from elsewhere, and in potentially less predictable ways. (p317)

Here Nicoll identifies a reconfiguration (in the terms of this thesis, a recalibration) in the 'architecture' or ordering of the university, in this case examined spatially rather than temporally, to consider its extension beyond the campus. In doing so, she highlights a tension in the discourse between the 'freedom' of flexibility and alternative forms of 'normalization' and 'disciplining effects'. This is an important point to make amidst the

implied freedom of the ubiquitous promise of 'anytime, anywhere' in online education, reflecting the marketing discourse with which mobile technologies are sold, and working against the idea that education takes time.

An example of Nicoll's (2011) new 'disciplining effects' could be seen emerging during the period of my research at *CityName*, as the flexibilities and freedoms of 'online' came under the disciplining effects of a growing interest in the sector in 'learning analytics' where, in an online context,

> When learners use an LMS [learning management system], social media, or similar online tools, their clicks, navigation patterns, time on task, social networks, information flow, and concept development through discussions can be tracked. (Siemens 2013)

In a positive framing of what might, in other contexts, be considered to be surveillance, the discourse of learning analytics seeks to establish new patterns of normalization for identifying patterns of 'success', alongside points for intervention in learning and teaching.

For Selwyn (2011),

> The notions of 'flexibility' and 'adaptability' now lie at the heart of post-compulsory education…it is now received wisdom that education needs to be provided by institutions in ways that best 'fit' with the lives of individual learners. (p367)

In this paper, Selwyn points particularly to a lack of research into how 'principles and expectations of flexibility are being encountered and 'worked out' within the day-to-day lives of individual learners' (p368). He goes on to draw on research into the experiences of international students, studying in different countries from their 'host' institution (p369). Alongside the perceived flexible advantages of distance education, Selwyn (2011) also identifies a temporal thread in some of his interviews, where 'a strong sense emerged…of distance learning being compromised by the routine demands and commitments of an individual's day…In particular, the inflexible time demands of family commitments…' (p375).

Gillies (2011) goes further in proposing that 'flexibility' is giving way to 'agility' in policy discourse (p207), finding its way into higher education policy. While agility is not an explicit theme with which I work in the research undertaken for this thesis, its strong association with software development means that it is not an unfamiliar metaphor in digital education. Modularisation in general, and MOOC short course provider straplines such as

'We want to help students learn better - and faster' (Coursera 2014), for example, fit well with the agile trend. In a recent example of the agility discourse in higher education, Mukerjee (2014), focusing on universities in Australia, finds that agility is identified as an essential response to 'disruptive change and innovation', where, 'The digital world is driving innovation and continuous change at such a rapid and random rate that universities are struggling to keep up with demand' (abstract). The New Media Consortium's (NMC) forthcoming annual higher education report includes 'agile approaches to change' as one of two 'long range trends' in the adoption of higher education technology predicted over the next five years (NMC 2015). I do not dwell further on agility here, except to note that, in temporal terms, the word introduces speed to the notion of flexibility in higher education discourse.

Gillies's (2011) focus on 'agile bodies' draws directly on Martin's (1994) work on 'flexible bodies', in which she cautions against wholesale acceptance of the flexible ideal, seeing the potential for what she terms a 'neo-Darwinism':

> …it is no wonder that moving gracefully as an agile, dancing, flexible worker/person/body feels like a liberation, even if one is moving across a tightrope. But can we simultaneously realize that the new flexible bodies are also highly constrained? They cannot stop moving…We need to examine carefully the social consequences of these constraints. (Martin 1994 pp247-8)

Recognising the positive attraction of the flexible metaphor in her own working life as well as those of others, Martin (1994) draws a distinction between the flexible organization and the flexible human body.

> Even as economic processes may seem to force our *corporations* to become flexible, lean, and agile, perhaps when it comes to *persons* we could relish both the flexible, lean, and agile and the stable, ample, and still. (p248)

She continues by highlighting the risk of an internalised flexibility, 'in a culture that prizes being flexibly adaptive', which may lead to an emphasis on, and acceptance of, continued compliance and adaptation, rather than, 'calling attention to - the order of things'. (p249). I present this as a potential cause for concern in relation to temporal flexibility.

Academic time

Alongside an emphasis on flexibility discourse in policy, and flexibility in institutions and students, the literature also highlights concerns around temporal flexibility and uncertainty in the academy for academic staff, with accounts of contemporary academic time including

article titles such as, 'Time to think' (Massey 2002), 'Sleepless in academia' (Acker and Armenti 2004) and 'Flexible and fixed working times in the academy' (Crang 2007). As Crang (2007) wryly acknowledges, 'It has become a commonplace to ironically note academics working long hours to write papers decrying exploitation through long hours cultures' (p511).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore this literature in any depth, but I do want to highlight one particular point raised by Crang (2007). In an excerpt from his own contract of employment, Crang (2007) notes that normal hours (beyond a 'nominal' 35 hour week) are not specified. The staff member is expected to 'manage' his or her own time. However, the contract also expects that staff will also make sure that 'all duties and responsibilities are fully completed' and anticipates that this may include, 'additional time either at work or away from the workplace' (p509). As Crang summarises it, 'we are presented with the ambiguity and flexibility of academic time: an open-ended set of tasks and an indeterminate time period' (p509).

I include Crang's observation here, because I consider it to be more widely indicative of the way in which academic time is experienced, and, over time, becomes normalized. While it is in contrast to the student experience, in the sense that there is temporal guidance and temporal boundaries for the student in terms of proposed study time (at least in theory), alongside the limits of assignment tasks and deadlines incorporated in a course, there is a cultural acceptance of long hours and 'indeterminate time periods' in the academy, described in the literature I have referred to, which I propose leads to an institutional acceptance of a long hours culture for the part-time student, who is also a full-time worker. The academic who works with a notion of flexible time, which may mask what other working environments would consider to be 'overtime', may have already accepted the culture of evening and weekend working which, for students, is presented as a positive opportunity in flexible and online education. As Sharma (2011) puts it, 'You *can, should, will, end up* working all hours…Everyone is tired. No one is sleeping.' (p439, italics in original).

Temporal context: time-shifting in the undergraduate model

One of the shifts I identified in my work with *CityName* were the temporal adjustments, a significant recalibration, which were being made to allow for an increase in the number of part-time students within the postgraduate taught (PGT) model, which was a major element of accommodating online distance students in the University. The accommodation of the part-time student appeared to be as much of a factor in institutional change as the

adjustments being made for students participating online, and I go on to explore this issue as it arose in interview material below. Prior to the expansion in online programmes, the most common PGT model at *CityName* was a one-year, full-time, linear model, with students beginning a programme as a cohort in September, at the start of the academic year, and moving through a selection of courses at a co-ordinated pace.

Before moving on to a more detailed consideration of this temporal adjustment at *CityName*, I first want to briefly consider the wider context of temporal shifts in the contemporary academic model. While *CityName* began making adjustments for its postgraduate model, I also identified temporal shifts in the wider higher education sector, whether already appearing in practice, or in theoretical explorations, in the undergraduate model. Here I give three examples, two from the UK and one from the USA. I outline here two models of temporal adjustment, firstly the accelerated model and, secondly, the decelerated model. I will then return to looking at specific shifts in relation to the online model in my research at *CityName*.

Acceleration: consuming time

In 2014, Abertay University in Dundee introduced a range of undergraduate degree programmes with a new 'fast track option', meaning that it is now possible to study the equivalent of a full-time, four-year honours degree (the most common model for an undergraduate degree in Scotland), in just three years.

> The traditional four-year undergraduate degree has often been regarded as something of a non-negotiable 'gold standard', but Abertay believes that its new model preserves the gold standard while offering students greater flexibility and choice. (Abertay University 2014a)

The University's website emphasises the quality implicit in the established four-year degree model, likening it to a 'gold standard', the highest standard of exchange value. The University makes claims for consistency of quality in the degree award, by making it clear that students choosing the fast track option will otherwise be studying the same course materials, 'to the same high quality standards' as the students who remain on the 'conventional timetable' (Abertay University 2014b). In the accelerated degree model at Abertay, the second two years of what would normally be the four year programme are 'telescoped' into a shorter period of fifteen months. Students on the selected degree programmes all start at the same time and progress through the course at the same pace, but

have the option of choosing a fast track option in their second year, meaning that some will continue at the end of that year at a fast track pace: 'In the first year, you'll study for 30 weeks, and in the second and third years you'll study for 45 weeks...' (Abertay University 2014b). The key advantage of this compressed pattern of study as it is promoted by Abertay is the 'flexibility' of a model which, '…could mean you getting to the jobs market a year earlier than otherwise and with lower overall living costs during your studies'. (Abertay 2014b). The accelerated degree then, is presented as a more efficient and economically attractive option to the established 'conventional' model.

Abertay is not alone in the recent trend for accelerating degrees. While Abertay reconfigures the academic year by extending into the traditional summer holiday with an additional 'term' of study, perhaps an even more unconventional accelerated model is seen in the example of 'full-time evening study' at Birkbeck. Here, students are offered the option of studying a full-time three-year degree (the most common temporal model for an undergraduate degree in England), of the same duration as the standard undergraduate three-year full-time (daytime) attendance model, but by attending the University for three to four evenings a week. In promoting this model of evening study, Birkbeck uses the strapline, 'Welcome to Birkbeck, London's evening university' (Birkbeck 2014).

> We're starting to appeal to 18- to 20-year-olds who ask 'why should I go to university full time and spend my Saturdays stacking shelves in Tesco when I could study in the evening and apply my learning to my employment?' (Latchman, quoted in Grove 2014)

In this quotation, the Birkbeck representative draws on the rhetoric of both flexibility and employability, aligning study with a practical application to the workplace, and presenting this view in the imagined voice of the prospective part-time student, as the University begins to tap into a new market. Like Abertay's accelerated model, part-time evening study is presented here as a way of entering the full-time job market sooner, by focusing on a present which is dependent on low skilled and low waged part-time employment.

If acceleration and compression continue to be a trend for the higher educational model, it is not too great a leap to imagine a university like the Abertay of the future offering a four-year degree in three-years on a 'full-time' evening basis. The attraction would be a 'gold-standard' qualification, coupled with an attractive time-efficient study model. The important point to note here, is that *quality* and *time-taken* in this model are uncoupled.

Deceleration

In comparison, Stanford 2025 is a recent Stanford design school project (Stanford University 2014), which looks ahead to the potential undergraduate experience of the future. The project is presented as a speculative 'time travel' fiction, in which the Stanford community of 2100 looks back at what was happening at Stanford in 2025. In this way, the Stanford community of 2014 explores its near future. An online preface to the project identifies online learning as a disruptive driver for a 'reinvention' of the undergraduate model. Of interest to the current thesis is that this involves attention to changes in time and space.

> The potential disruption posed by online learning allows us to question how time, space, expertise, accreditation, and student agency may also change within higher education. Many parts of the undergraduate experience are ripe for reinvention. (Stanford University 2014)

There are two particular temporal imaginings in the Stanford project, which I outline briefly here, the first being the idea of 'paced education'.

Using its time-travel fictive device, the project looks back to an undergraduate model where 'Structured, 4-year courses of study advanced students by seat [*sic*] hours on a quarterly rhythm', changed to a model in which, 'Three phases of varied lengths provided personalized, adaptive calibrated learning' (Stanford University 2014).

> Schools at that time – society's core mechanism for strengthening people's ability to adapt – were mired in conventional approaches and struggling to change…built upon a metronomic, industrial approach, while the working world was more chaotic and ambiguous than ever before. (Stanford University 2014)

'Calibrated' learning, above, is individualised and personalised, associated with the flexible terms of adaptation. Described as a move from 'frantic to paced', paced education imagines three 'phases of learning' ('calibrate', 'elevate', 'activate'), which the student moves through at a pace based on 'individual readiness'. However, the idea of adjusting pace and slowing down is in tension with Stanford's notion of 'fast growth'. Even in a decelerated model, the University manages to find a sense in which slow does not mean slow: 'Paced education lets you go slow to grow fast' (Stanford 2014).

In the second temporal scenario, the Stanford community imagines the 'Open Loop University'. According to this model, rather than beginning university at the age of seventeen for a linear four years, students can attend 'age-blind' and accumulate six years at university over an extended period, an intermittent model which leads to the fictional strapline: 'Stanford isn't just a time in your life, it's a lifetime' (Open Loop University).

While the Stanford 2025 project is a bold attempt at reimaging a Stanford education, this strength is also its limitation. There is little in the project which looks, or makes connections, beyond Stanford, unless it is about celebrating Stanford's impact on the rest of the world (further stimulated by the imagined creation of Stanford 'impact labs', which are envisioned to be distributed around the globe). Of course, it remains to be seen whether Stanford's imagined, speculative near future become a reality.

I refer briefly to the future imaginings of the Stanford models here as, like the Abertay and Birkbeck 'live' models, they point to wider temporal shifts in the sector, connected with affordability and employability and, at least for Stanford, with the 'disruption' of online education. Interestingly, Stanford's 'elevation' phase of 'paced education' makes reference to removing lecture theatres and replacing them with intensive 'living and learning' spaces. In this, imagined model, on-campus life becomes something specialised and elite, creating 'hybrid environments' for 'meaningful relationships' between staff and students. In its future imagining, the 'LivLern' (Stanford University 2014) environment in some respects harks back to a romanticised image of the imagined elite campus of the past.

Part-time

Expanding and improving part-time higher education is the title of a report published in 2012 by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) on behalf of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) in the UK ('the department for economic growth' (BIS 2014)). The report states that it was undertaken, 'to explore whether part-time undergraduate study in England can be expanded as an alternative for young students' (p13). The report is restricted to considering the sector in England, as education is a devolved power elsewhere in the UK (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

One of the key findings of the BIS report, of interest to this thesis, is that the authors identify 'part-time' as a problematic term, with 'no single definition', noting that the term 'flexible provision' is being used as an alternative in the higher education sector (p13). The authors state that part-time is being used as a category for a variety of students, who simply, 'do not fit the criteria for full-time students' (p45). The report concludes by exploring the idea of 'more flexibility for all' (p268). In this section, the authors emphasise the 'blurring' between full and part-time study in combination with employment, proposing that, 'The more such flexibility is encouraged, generally the less valid the emphasis on part-time study, as such, becomes' (p268). Included in the BIS report's recommendations for good practice

in support of part-time students is the option to vary, 'speed of progression through the course - so they [students] can accelerate or decelerate' (p265).

While it is difficult to oppose, as Barnett (2014) suggests, moves towards flexibility in higher education where it will increase access to the sector for those who may previously have come up against barriers, there is also an underlying (perhaps not so hidden) suggestion here that the practice of, or commitment to, 'full-time' study is being eroded. As Edwards (1997) suggests, the idea that students do not have time to study is normalised. I would go further than this in suggesting that temporal experience is being obscured by the language of 'flexible provision' (p13). This term conveniently masks the 'time taken' in education and removes the, perhaps inconvenient, notion of 'full-time'. In addition, there is an acceptance, indeed an expectation, that students need to undertake paid employment, either to pay for tuition fees, to fund living costs, or both. In turn, this paid employment is presented as a positive, and appears to be unquestioned in relation to the discourse of employability, a discourse in which, as Clegg (2010) suggests, 'students are projected as good, neoliberal, employable subjects' (p346).

Time-shifting at the University of CityName

On *CityName*'s website, a four-year undergraduate degree programme is promoted as offering breadth and flexibility: 'a more flexible education' (*CityName* 2014). Interestingly, one of the advantages *CityName* presents, much like the 'calibration' phase imagined in the 'paced education' of a future Stanford (Stanford University 2014), is the possibility of taking a variety of subjects, 'without the need to commit long-term' (*CityName*). While I do not explore the digital in relation to undergraduate education at *CityName* in the current project, I was interested to see the flexibility discourse entering the promotion of the undergraduate degree, alongside the more established emphasis on 'breadth' in the tradition of a *CityName* education. In my conversations with Alan, a senior academic leader at *CityName*, the flexible notion of studying for a doctorate at a distance was also under discussion in the University. There was evidence to suggest then, that flexibility was both being used to describe existing practices, and being seen as a driver for developing new ways of working. Among the factors contributing to the University's expansion of distance education, Alan talks about the institution's 'conservative and traditional approach to delivering educational opportunities', describing the expansion project as one pathway for change, but also acknowledging that 'there are other ways in which one could flex the curriculum much more…and get out of what is to some degree a straightjacket…' (Alan).

In the second half of this chapter, I draw on the themes explored above, to take a critical approach to flexibility, by looking closely at flexible practices in application. To do this I draw on a range of interview material from my research. Firstly, to consider temporal flexibility in the University in relation to the academic calendar, and an increase in the number of part-time students; secondly, to highlight the beginnings of a temporal (as well as spatial) shift in the provision of support services for online distance students; thirdly, to consider the thoughts of academic staff developing new online courses, on temporal negotiations in relation to the experience of students, and finally to look at temporal recalibration in the accounts of online distance students themselves.

'Lock-stepped by full-timeness': recalibrating for flexibility

In my second interview conversation with Alan, I make the observation that, during my fieldwork at *CityName*, I had so far noted that, in the context of the distance expansion project, 'an equivalent shift, or as significant a shift, to moving online was actually to start to understand and work with part-time students' (Phil). Agreeing with this observation, Alan goes on to note,

> there are a lot of changes, yeah…a lot of organizational changes, a lot of
> governance and procedure and rules and regulations changes, and also a lot
> of um a lot of cultural changes… (Alan)

In terms of 'part-time and masters degrees', Alan talks about 'open universities' (both in the UK and elsewhere) with a well-established part-time student model, in contrast to 'traditional universities that didn't do any of it' [provision for part-time or distance students]. Alan observes that, aside from the Open University model, which has been in existence in the UK for over forty years (Open University 2014a), 'there was a point in time at which you either went to a university or you didn't study, just about' (Alan). Going on to also consider the future potential for developing distance PhDs at *CityName*, Alan's view is that,

> …some of the new universities have actually been much more flexible about
> that part [part-time study] because they've been addressing working learners
> much more, so if you look at their programmes, they have actually been
> offering, geared up for part-time, they've been, they've designed their degree
> programmes to be moduled, they've sold them by it, their rules about how
> you make a degree and all of that stuff are, are much less tied to the
> continuous presence on campus, and some of them have indeed experimented
> into the…distance area, um so it's a bigger shock for us, because we we've
> just stayed so long stuck in this, in this full-time mode, although the truth is

actually in humanities and social sciences there are lots of part-time PhD students um and, and one way or another, they've managed to juggle the research training stuff, but mostly by fudging it, rather than by dealing with it systematically… (Alan)

Like others I speak to, Alan refers to practices which can cope with 'exceptions' in small numbers, referred to here as 'fudging' and to others as 'working around' an issue. The problem identified is that University systems will not cope with exceptions to the rule in large numbers, or 'at scale' (a term that arises in my research interviews) and that it becomes necessary to recalibrate systems to work well with the numbers of online courses and online distance part-time students to which *CityName* aspires in its online expansion. The full-time model and the part-time intermittent model must both be accommodated by the systems which, and staff who are, 'processing' students from matriculation, through various aspects of programme progression or course completion to qualification and graduation.

On changes to the University's systems, supported by various technologies, Alan works with Len, who is the senior administrator responsible for the technology focused strand of the project, by which I mean the infrastructure and software support for online courses. As Len describes it,

> the support for distance learning [previously] was very localized and because the numbers weren't big, it could be localized and it was a really good specialist, almost hand-held service…and that's been, that's been really good. The objective of the [expansion project] is um much bigger than that, you know, double the number of PGTs…we've learned a lot from where we've got to, but it doesn't scale, that model just doesn't scale… (Len)

The limited capacity of one model means mapping to a new one, while maintaining continuity. In describing his role in relation to the expansion project, Len refers back to his previous roles at *CityName* and the continuity of his role, here described in terms of institutional memory, referring back to an earlier reorganization of the support management structure at *CityName*.

> I tended to know about how all the corporate systems…certainly I know how all the uh, the organization, the feeds of the golden copy [master record], I'm probably one of the few people left that really understood what was going on and how you got your [system 'user names'] and your passwords and your entries in directories and how you left as well, or retired, so that whole cycle, and I've sort of carried that on…I knew my way around careers and registry and finance… (Len)

Len's description of his organizational knowledge emphasises the cyclical processing of staff and students through the University systems of organization, from recruitment to retirement, or matriculation to graduation. It is one of several times during my research that I pause to consider the idea of staff and students as 'data doubles' where, in Haggerty and Ericson's (2000) terms of surveillance, the bodies of humans are 'abstracted' into data flows and 'reassembled' into data doubles (p606). At one meeting, for example, I observed the presentation of a student 'mapping' exercise, looking at processes from application to matriculation, and I became aware of the discourse around the student 'lifecycle', processed through software systems.

In my conversation with Alan, he begins to unpack the academic year in relation to online modules. The academic year at *CityName*, as at other, but not all, UK universities, is structured around two semesters per year, with a short break from teaching in December and a longer teaching break during the summer. Courses at *CityName*, according to the standard linear model, enrol new students in September, but a number of online courses during the period of my research had also begun to enrol students in January.

> …so we wouldn't preclude anything that said actually we'll go [launch a course] in January because I mean, strictly speaking, there is no reason why they have to follow the academic year, and indeed actually, some parts of the University don't follow the academic year … it's unlike the undergrad stuff, it isn't essential that you follow the standard academic year.

> …for instance, they [course organizers] might say um well actually we're going to run this three times, we're going to have three semesters so to speak, so semester one, semester two, and we're going to do it again in the summer…they certainly do recruit in at different times in a way that undergrad programmes don't…so we are anticipating that the majority of them are following the normal academic model for recruitment in September, but they may have a recruitment as well in January…so we need to have all the support stuff worked out and in place well before that…

I follow up by asking whether it is a challenge in itself for University staff to start thinking outside the traditional academic year. While emphasizing that the new online courses involve a relatively small number of staff at the time of our conversation, making it difficult to make general statements, Alan goes on to say,

> I guess that the majority have actually accepted the traditional academic year, in other words their recruitment will be done in the spring, for intake in September, um although some of them are now, and actually as they design their programmes and think more about it, may wind up in a position where they realize actually that they will probably also bring in people in January…so they may wind up with more complex years…And where they

are CPD [continued professional development modules], they don't need to be linked to anything especially, so you could, you know, with short CPD courses, you could decide to run them multiple times a year…I don't think that those, the people who are offering CPD, have necessarily thought yet enough about *how they are going to do their time*, they could, they could follow a different model, it doesn't really matter, because if students are just taking a module, a twenty credit module and perhaps another one, they could perfectly do it at Easter, at Easter, you know, in April, or whatever, so there is still quite a lot to be worked out I think… (Alan, my emphasis in italics)

Alan goes on to describe the effect that this shift in the course commencement month, and/or the potential for two intakes of students per year has on student support services.

…you can see in a sense why there are implications for the support services, because, not only can you not make an assumption that somebody can pop in next Thursday [physical location], but you also can't make an assumption about *where they are in their timing*, so if they email you in November, you can't assume that they've been there for two months, they might not, you know, the timing, all of that, kind of gets thrown…they [students] are actually part-time intermittent technically um, so they could decide not to take a module or they could decide to take two, so *they could flex it*…of course, *there's a real timing question* around thinking about how do you identify these students and understand that a) they're at a distance and b) that they aren't doing this in a full-time mode and they aren't even necessarily doing it in a lock-step mode and there's much more variety there than one finds in our masters programmes at the moment. (Alan, my emphases in italics)

Alan uses the phrase 'lock-stepped' several times during our conversations, a term, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2014), associated with the military and prisons as well as education, used as a metaphor for marching in a closely gathered linear fashion.

Because some of them [programmes] may be lock-stepped, you actually may have to do it, 'you do this, then you do that, then you do that' and some of them may actually be more cafeteria like, some of them may run modules more than once in a year and others may not, so you can't actually make any assumptions about them…you have to ask the question in a sense, 'what is this person doing?' because it varies by individual as well, because you know, with our on-campus masters, you basically can't drop out at Christmas and then come back a year later, but actually with this stuff you can. Or even come back six months later, so it produces much more complexity in the support services as well… (Alan)

Alan identifies not only an increasingly complex academic year, in terms of entry points for students and repetition in terms of modules, but also complexity in the individual student path, reducing the number of assumptions that support service staff can make about the temporal and spatial aspects of the student experience. Alan talks about the campus experience as a spatially and temporally bounded one which excludes the professional, temporally and spatially bound worker.

you're trying to reach working professionals and so offering them on-campus degrees wasn't really a solution from their point of view, and so in a sense you didn't really do it. So it's only when you can break free of the campus that suddenly you've actually got a way of making this thing work. (Alan)

In turn, this also requires a review of how students pay fees for their courses,

you're paying as you go, because your pace is not lock-stepped by the full-timeness of it. (Alan)

A number of issues raised by Edwards (1997) and discussed earlier in this chapter, are at work in Alan's account, particularly here positive associations of flexibility and modularisation, together with a pay-as-you-go financial model. Alan's account highlights for me the notion of time-shifting in, or a recalibration of the academic year. While there is no notion of a 'third semester' elsewhere in my research material, it clearly comes into Alan's account as a potential shift in the academic calendar. What is clear is a perceived necessity to adapt the model of educational delivery to the time of the professional market, a temporal recalibration to a market model. Here student time is highly individualised and there is a sense in which time is a flexible, almost unlimited, resource on the part of the institution, rather than something which is shared between students and staff and bound in multiple ways. Flexibility appears to demand that time can be 'done' in multiple ways. Strategic time is almost presented here as being detached from the time of education, in that it becomes a flexible and manageable resource which is removed from experience.

In the next section, I look more closely at what Alan describes as 'complexity in the support services', with an analysis of time-shifting in the University's technical support service, closely aligned with the expansion of online education.

'Out of hours': the 24/7 university

'Supporting students, day and night, all year round!' (NorMAN Helpline 2014)

One of the temporal shifts highlighted for me in the support services at *CityName* was a move towards 24/7 technical support for IT (information technology) and online library queries. This first came to light in my conversation with Len, who describes to me the development of 'help' services for online distance students, introducing plans for technical support which will be available to students 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, throughout the calendar year.

> I think the help, we really do need to do quite a bit on. We're looking at bringing in an outside company to do, to get to 24/7 coverage. So, other universities have done it, it's a service called NorMAN, it's run from…Northumberland um but what it should do is, when we don't want to run our helpdesk, and go to bed, we pass them a baton and they do, they've got the right to do um, the most routine fixes, and so that covers us right the way through, it's 24/7 by 365… (Len)

I'm particularly struck by Len's description of supporting students who are working outside routine hours for the University, as a 'baton' handover, 'when we…go to bed'. For me it emphasises that as one university metaphorically sleeps, indicating a timeframe when it may be *desirable* to be asleep, another stays awake in a digital form. This brings into question not only the quality of support that might be provided 'out of hours', but also draws attention to a new requirement for night-shift working. The provision of a 24/7 service for some has an impact on the temporal working conditions of others. As Sharma puts it, 'You *can, should, will, end up* working all hours' (Sharma 2011).

Further research on the NorMAN website tells me that it is an 'out of hours helpline service', to which universities subscribe. NorMAN offers help with 'IT and library queries' when the 'main support services' of subscribing universities 'are closed' (NorMAN 2014). NorMAN stands for the North East Metropolitan Area Network and is a consortium network of the Universities of Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside. Its technical support service, as described by Len, is organized by the University of Northumbria (NorMAN 2014).

> The service operates from 17.00 to 08.00 weekdays, 24 hours weekends and public holidays. Contact to the service may be made by phone, freephone, email and SMS text. (NorMAN 2014)

Of course, thinking in terms of Sharma's (2013, 2014) temporal economy, in order for the NorMAN Helpline to be available 24/7 x 365, the service requires shift-workers, based at Northumbria University in Newcastle, to be available during the 'out of hours' period in order for the service to operate. This is true of all round-the-clock campus services, including extended library opening hours at *CityName*. The campus service demand is indicative of, aside from the traditional deadline panic, a situation in which students may be in paid employment during normal 'opening hours'. This means that students potentially need to access services, such as library services, outside those hours. The knock on effect is that university services staff then also need to work outside those hours. The campus university begins to shift temporally due to the student need for employment in a way which

is not dissimilar to its online shift to support part-time distance students. At certain points in the year (around exam periods and submission deadlines), for example, the *CityName* campus library also opens 24/7. Its building facilities remain 'open' during this time, monitored by security staff, while its professional services (provided by specialist staff working in library and computing roles) are restricted during the out of hours period, where the 'full-time' library and facilities staff are replaced by security shift-workers. Again, there is a knock-on effect in terms of the temporal labour of others who are outside the full-timeness of the institution.

Len's account of the University's technical support (including some 'digital' library support), potentially moving at the end of the campus day to a different institution, in a different region, captured for me the shift work implied by 24/7 services, but also made me think metaphorically of 'where' the University went at night. *CityName*, in support call terms, would be shifting cities at night, a portion of its work would travel to Newcastle and back again while connecting to the daytime hours of Singapore or New Zealand, for example. What Len describes is a shadow service for support, provided in the same time zone as *CityName*, and therefore provided by evening and night shift-workers. An incoming query from anywhere outside the *CityName* campus, outside 'normal office' hours, would mean that the support work of *CityName*, in terms of both query and response was conducted entirely off-campus and, most likely, in an entirely different local to local relationship (in chapter 7's terms, a transtemporal and translocal connection).

At the time of writing this thesis, the work to develop services for 'off-campus' students has moved on, and *CityName* is able to detail its support services for 'online learning' on its website. As Len had suggested to me during the planning stages, support for technical and digital library queries is now offered 24/7 (via the NorMAN service), although it is less clear (although partially addressed) how other forms of support will be developed. In Len's view these included additional services,

> for the other support units, you know, the likes of careers um, the disability office uh, they, with the numbers [of students] that we're talking about, we've got a duty of care in that direction, how that's all going to map out…there could be issues there and we can't address them the same way as we do uh from [*CityName* campus address]…we're already starting to think about that and trying to get a consistency, so that…you don't need to know your organization, or your way around *CityName* to be able to get the help, because you're distanced, you just want, 'give me help', 'give me advice on this' (Len)

The *CityName* website for online courses now promotes access to online library resources (journals and catalogues), English language resources, proof-reading support, and 'academic and personal development resources' (although it is unclear what kind of development is supported). Counselling services are now offered by email, with an emphasis on supporting students 'at any stage of their career', and 'potential' access to disability services is offered via email or Skype conversations. The careers service offers support by email or telephone. While the timeframe of my research does not allow me to explore the development of these services with University staff, it seems likely that each of these areas developed as an online, distance service is of potential interest for further research. A cultural exploration of support for counselling, careers, and disabilities, when such services themselves, as well as the issues which may arise for students and staff, are likely interpreted and understood quite differently in different parts of the world, seems important. Access to 'local' levels of support will depend not only on student locations, but also on national and local politics and priorities.

Deceleration: organizing time

My discussions with academic staff responsible for new online courses surface the tension between providing flexible options for a path of study through a programme and ensuring that a student has time to complete the work and stay 'on course'. This was particularly highlighted in my conversations with Iain, who is an experienced online tutor and programme director, involved in the expansion project in order to develop additional online courses in his subject area. Iain emphasises the importance of offering flexible access to online programmes, following this through to the detail of the course design where, in his subject area, almost all course communications between students are structured asynchronously.

> a lot of people are coming to us uh mid-career, they've been out of
> university for a while, their brains don't operate in the university kind of
> calendar, so the more flexibility the better, and that's true across the board,
> whether it be when they can start, uh the number of modules that they can
> take, the time period that they can take them over, uh the times when they
> can post on the discussion boards, you know, it's asynchronous, all of these
> things, all of that flexibility is really, really appreciated by our student body.
> (Iain)

Iain tells me in some detail about the range of options within the online programmes he is responsible for, for varying the timescale for completion of a qualification, but also for

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varying the student workload over a longer period of time. He stresses the necessity of advising students on taking a long-term view of their studies.

> I would say one of the things I probably find myself repeating most to people is, think about the longer option, whatever one you're thinking about, think about the longer one…I just don't think people have a full, a real sense of, not just how much the commitment is for this degree, but just what it means to, to take on distance learning as well as everything else that's going on in your life. (Iain)

Mhairi, an academic in the humanities who is working on developing an online programme for the first time, although she has a small amount of previous experience in working with students at a distance, echoes Iain's view of the tension. Mhairi's masters programme will be studied part-time by all of its students over a period of three years. For Mhairi, there is a need to support students in organizing their time at the programme level, where flexibility can come into tension with 'deadlines' and 'timetabling'.

> people who are working perhaps have less useable time, they don't want to, they want to commit to less specific days and…have a bit of flexibility. Again, the business about flexible learning I suppose is something which comes into the equation and my feeling is that an, an amount of flexibility is good, but too much is not particularly useful, it seems to me. I think people need deadlines, they need help to organize their time, and my design of the timetabling is geared towards giving people achievable deadlines, but ones which will push them a little bit. (Mhairi)

Jim, developing a new online programme in the sciences, also raises concerns about the relationship between the time taken to study and the additional commitments of postgraduate students. What Jim introduces is the idea of 'solid time', as a contrast between the block of time indicated in a course description compared with the lived time of multiple responsibilities. Jim goes on to think about the flexibility of exit points on a programme, at certificate and diploma level for example, without leaving individuals or the institution with a feeling of failure.

> my gut feeling is that quite a number of people you know will be attracted by it [the masters programme] thinking they can do it in two years, but they'll get into it and then they'll find uh 'no, no I can't'…because you know they'll see the solid time…the difference between what people think they can do and what they can actually do and, of course, life events…the age group who do distance learning…it's pretty different from undergraduates…they might have at one end children, at the other end ageing parents, at the other end a job and, you know, all these things can put things out of kilter …we have to have this sort of recovery pathway, without making the university feel that it's sort of…encouraging failure in their mindset. (Jim)

Finally Kate, an online programme director with some experience of teaching in a medical field at *CityName*, poses what is, for me, a key question in thinking about the notion of 'full-time' in the context of the project:

> How do you create the permission system that allows people to study during work time?' (Kate)

Kate poses this question in the context of a professional field in which she tells me it has previously been more common to undertake study which is classed as 'training', for one or two days at a time, rather than to undertake a degree level course on an ongoing part-time basis. Kate's question is in response to my asking whether she knows if her students study from home or from work. Here is another tension, between flexible study and the potential inflexibility of the workplace, an issue which seems to arise in both professionally related courses and those which are considered by students to be 'non-vocational'. This tension is revisited in the student accounts explored in the next section.

'Too tired…to think straight'

In my interviews with students, even with those for whom their studies are directly related to their professional work, there is a clear distinction between work time and study time.

> I study at night and on weekends. Since I do not have a laptop, I study at home (is it ethical to use office resources for such intensive personal work?), where I can look up any information I need from the PC… (Chris, Singapore)

> sometimes it is difficult to be regular on studies that I maintain during my weekends. Regular short online discussion with colleagues is not very difficult, but long formal written assignments are challenging. (Jay, Bangladesh)

> This one [course] was perfect because I didn't have to take any time off [work]. (Robin, UK)

In chapter 2, I highlighted Raddon's (2007) observation that for the UK based distance learners she interviews, flexibility is a matter of demonstrating that they are able to manage all of their existing commitments and also participate in 'strategic work-related self-development' (p66). This is certainly something that I also found in my student interviews, both in the UK and internationally.

While students may wish to combine work and study for a variety of reasons, not least in relating theoretical work to professional practice, for many affordability is a factor. The students I interview each study on one of three courses from which I sought volunteers. Three are studying on health programmes, three on a humanities programme, and one on a social sciences programme. Even the two students who mentioned scholarship provision for

their chosen course were working full-time, in busy jobs with significant responsibilities. Kate's question about creating a 'permission system' for study in the workplace seemed significant to these student contexts. For me, it was not just about the value of a course to professional practice, but also raised wider questions about the perceived value of higher education. For those studying courses which were unrelated to their professional working lives, there seemed to be no question that they should be seeking support, whether financial or temporal, from their employers.

> I work full-time and am self-funding. The course is non-vocational so there
> is no way I could have justified doing it any other way. (Caitlin, UK)

Caitlin is participating in what she describes as a 'non-vocational' course in the humanities, and makes it clear to me that full-time work and part-time self-funded study is the only way in which she can contemplate proceeding with the course. The way in which she identifies the course as 'non-vocational' and refers to 'justifying' her mode of study, point to several aspects of education which are normalised in Caitlin's context. Firstly, a division between 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' courses, an assessment of whether a programme of study is relevant or not to a workplace or profession. Secondly, the idea that postgraduate study requires 'justification', whether to an employer in terms of requesting funding or study leave, or a self-justification in relation to personal expenditure or time commitment.

When I ask Caitlin to tell me more about her study routine, she replies,

> I am a morning person, so I get up and do a couple of hours before work, and
> maybe a bit in the evening depending on when I get home from work. I do
> all my studying from home. And Sunday afternoons to meet those deadlines.
> (Caitlin)

As I know that Caitlin works full-time, I am curious to know how early she has to gets up in order to study before leaving for work. She replies, 'I get up around 4.30-5am'. Given that she has already described herself as a 'morning person', I want to know if she would normally get up at this time, and she responds definitively, 'Not if I can help it!'. I go on ask if she commutes to work and she tells me, 'My commute isn't too bad - 45 minutes, but I average a 9 hour work day and it can easily be 12 hours in a busy period' (Caitlin).

To summarise, on weekdays Caitlin gets up between 4.30 and 5.00am, studies for 'a couple of hours', commutes for 45 minutes, works for between 9 and 12 hours, commutes for another 45 minutes, and studies for a little longer in the evening, depending on what time she gets home. On Sunday afternoons she catches up with any deadlines for that week. When I ask about the challenges of participating in an online distance course however, Caitlin refers

to 'the length of time since I've been out of academic education', specifically in understanding what might be required in the online context of keeping a 'blog'.

My reading of Caitlin's responses is that time is a commitment she has made to the course, and that it is managed around the, apparently inflexible, routine of her working life. It is not something that she particularly questions, or that she considers to be of any interest to her employer. Caitlin's long days are expected and, as far as our conversation goes, she does not expect that her overall time commitment could be otherwise. In fact, Caitlin is keen to emphasise that she is able to manage her time effectively. What she does identify as problematic, however, is a course timetable which does not always fit so well with her working hours.

> So in terms of managing my time, I have no difficulty. What I do feel about the course timetabling is that not enough thought has been given to the deadlines - so for instance, forums close at 5pm or midday on a workday, or we have a discussion board that opens at 9am on a Monday. That sometimes means you can't participate in closing a discussion if you are chairing. Also deadlines do feel bunched up…there was no break between the semesters at all. (Caitlin)

While online tutorials are run in the evenings, Caitlin notes that the 'admin structure' of the course is more conventional in relation to office hours. The potential temporal flexibility of online is restricted to some extent by the working patterns of the campus. When I ask about synchronous working with other students on the course, Caitlin highlights that,

> …the challenge my group is having at the moment is that we aren't all in the same time zone…one of my classmates if having to stay up really late. And I can't start much earlier because I don't get home from work. (Caitlin)

Caitlin's stretched day, is reflected in the accounts of other students I speak to, all of whom are negotiating study time with work, in addition to any other personal commitments they may have. There are certainly concerns around 'making time', and financial concerns, yet none of the student participants appear to question whether this is the best way to study, or reflect on the impact working and studying may be having on the rest of their lives. Only one student, for example, refers to being tired, despite a clear commitment to significant study hours every week.

> For [previous] courses I used to use the evenings and that worked fine. But now the level is higher :) and the demands are greater and I am too tired in the evenings to think straight enough (I work till about 7pm every day). So I do a little in the evenings but most of it at the weekends.' (Megan, UK)

> I am studying my course from 16h00-21h00 GMT (17h00-23h00, local time) during working days and day time hours of week-ends. [minor discrepancy/typo in times noted] (Theo, Rwanda)

> The main challenge I have with the program is the same as that faced by many part-time students around me: carving out time for studies while juggling work commitments. (Chris, Singapore)

Chris is the only student who explicitly raises concerns about the cost of tuition fees, but he is one of only two students outside the UK to whom I speak who does not refer to benefiting from a scholarship (the scholarships students can apply for varies between country locations). In a later email he adds,

> I have been thinking about my responses…and realised that I should have put tuition bills as the most challenging issue. It keeps me studying the exchange rate charts and wondering if I am counting down to my days of starvation. (Chris, Singapore)

All of the students I speak to are somehow finding time to study, but I am aware that they would not be studying at all without working hard to fund their studies and/or being awarded scholarship funding. In turn, scholarship funding can be highly restrictive. The two students I speak to who specifically mention that they are in receipt of funding are not funded by their employers, but have been awarded scholarships by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC). The CSC makes a distinction between the funding provision available for 'developed' and 'developing' commonwealth countries. At the time of writing, applications for programmes at Masters level are restricted to applicants from 'developing' countries', where priority is given to applications which, 'demonstrate the strongest relevance to development' (Commonwealth Scholarship Commission 2014). It is difficult to imagine how the international students I speak to would find funding for scholarships in humanities subjects, for example. What is considered to be a legitimate, fundable study subject is not in the control of the student, but is defined by funding organizations with their own particular priorities.

Quality time

Having referred to Raddon's (2007) work on student accounts of fitting study into busy lives, and Selwyn' work on (in)flexibility in relation to distance education, and having analysed the temporal aspects of the study situations of 'distance' students interviewed for this thesis (explored further in chapter 7), I continue to be struck by the effort involved in, and often acceptance of, 'making things work' in order to access education. At the same time, I was surprised to find very little in the literature around notions of 'quality time' in relation to education, apparently, according to a brief literature search, a concept more

frequently discussed in relation to working professionals finding time to spend with their families. One exception to this is in the work of Romero and Barberà (2011), who consider study time for professionals as 'the time left over' (p128), once professional and family commitments have been met, arguing that,

> Maintaining flexibility in the duration, pace, and time chosen for learning might ensure instructional quality but, far from guaranteeing learners' time-on-task quality, it invites time-poor e-learners to choose to spend insufficient time, to work too slowly, and to devote an inadequate number of time slots to learning in terms of the quality of cognitive time. (p126)

While Romero and Barberà (2011) continue to place the responsibility of quality 'time on task' on the learner, in a study which specifically recommends (in my view, unrealistically) that learners be encouraged to spend more of their quality cognitive time (identified as being at a premium in the morning) on study activities, I propose that there is a need for further research in the area of quality time in online distance education. This should pay attention to the wider net of temporal responsibilities and time factors which come into play in the context of online courses, in the wider sector and at the institutional level, as well as at the more focused level of the online programme and the study environment. This would also have relevance to full-time students who spend significant hours in paid work beyond their course environment.

One of the things then which happens in the 'stretch to flexibility' may not be a course of lesser quality (I was reminded repeatedly in my research at *CityName* that online programmes were designed to be of equal, if not superior, quality to programmes studied on campus), but that the time that students were able to commit to study may be of variable quality. For me the following questions are raised. For those who continue to achieve high grades, what kind of personal temporal economy might be at play? Is the stretch to flexibility also strengthening a normalised view of the notion of the education shift-worker? Where full-time workers may also study part-time and full-time students may also work part-time, both temporal terms come into question. Is it currently acknowledged, in the face of 'flexible provision', that anything is a 'full-time' activity? Has full-time come to mean a full 24 hour cycle, rather than something that happens 9-5, Monday to Friday, or the equivalent number of shifts over the course of a week?

The key point I want to emphasise in this chapter is that 'breaking free' from the campus in spatial terms is possible, yet breaking free from time is not a possibility. Flexible time

remains bounded and shared, and there is a need to recognize (in Sharma's terms) that time is uneven (Sharma 2013). A more considered version of 'anytime' in the context of online education becomes 'when you can', rather than 'whenever you want'. To a certain extent, technology allows time to be flattened, made visible and invisible in new ways, with both positive and negative effects. Positive, because online can be experienced as neutral territory, but negative because time itself is not neutral, in that the availability and 'quality' of time varies between participants. For example, those who forfeit sleep to study in the middle of the night are likely to have less 'quality' time with which to work than those who have what seems to be becoming the 'luxury' of daytime study.

Allied with the notion of quality time may also be the idea of 'sustained time', rather than the notion of 'bite-sized' education which requires the flexibility of all parties. Inflexibility may also be seen as an attribute to be valued in its definition as 'firmness of purpose'. As Martin (1994) puts it, we may need to arrive at a point in education where we can come to value the attributes of 'the stable, ample, and still' (p248).

In this chapter I have explored the persistence of flexibility, viewed here in the terms of flexible time, as a positive attribute in higher education discourse, not only as an institutional aspiration, but as a desirable quality to be developed in individual, flexible, students. I have traced the problematisation of flexibility in the higher education research literature, while noting its persistence in current policy, and in the marketing materials and strategic approaches of UK universities. The persistence of flexible time relates not only to postgraduate study for working professionals, but also to the temporal recalibration of the undergraduate degree in its accelerated and decelerated forms, as well as in its future imaginings.

Flexible time and its positive association with the 'anytime anywhere' marketing of technology and education, perhaps more than any other form of time explored in this thesis, demands critique. Flexible time, while it might be in many ways desirable in enabling access to education, is also often an ideal which is at odds with temporal experience, where time is bound and shared, and is frequently reported as being scarce and of uneven quality. As Raddon (2004) observes, time and space for education, particularly in the relationship between part-time study and full-time work, is a constant negotiation. Rather than working with the notion that education of the future will be will be 'better, faster' (Coursera 2014), such marketing straplines need to be challenged by universities. Education is effortful, on the part of both students and teachers. It takes time and happens over time.

6. DESIGNING TIME

> the terms which designate time are borrowed from the language of space. When we evoke time, it is space which answers our call. (Bergson p4 1946/2007)

> An e-reader can also measure your "reading time". The Paperwhite notes how often you turn pages and gives you an estimated time left in book. With physical books, you can see if you are close to the end, and the Paperwhite provides a substitute by counting down the hours and minutes to go. (Schofield 2012)

I begin this chapter with quotes from Bergson (1946/2007) and from a Guardian newspaper review of the Kindle Paperwhite (Schofield 2012), one of a range of 'e-reader' devices, because for me these two excerpts capture a number of ideas developed in the analysis and discussion to follow.

Firstly, Bergson (1946/2007) makes the point that we talk about time in spatial terms. A simple statement such as, 'I don't have much space in my diary', for example, is really a comment on time rather than space, even though a lack of space in a paper or software object might be the visual indicator. Similarly, a deadline is a spatial metaphor for a point measured in time, (interestingly one which derives from a spatial line marking which prisoners were not allowed to cross without threat of being shot (OED 2015)). Such methods of visualising and talking about time allow us to coordinate and manage activities, but also have the effect of spatialising time as a resource to be managed efficiently.

Secondly, the excerpt from a review of the Paperwhite is included above, because the e-reader is a digital interpretation of a pre-digital object, the book, which also interprets the practice of reading in a particular way. The words used to describe the Paperwhite still refer to the prior object, 'paper', 'books' and 'pages', but the e-reader model described here has an added dimension: digital time. Of course this measurement of time, visually represented, which is interestingly a countdown of time remaining before the book is finished, is based on a regulated pace of past reading in order to make a calculation. Variations in reading speed as pages are turned more rapidly when a story reaches a climax, or the slower pace of reading as, say, new characters are introduced, or the reader is tired, must be evened out. What does this measurement allow the reader to do? To schedule the required reading time? To begin thinking early about their next book purchase, also to be made through the e-reader device? To endeavour to read more quickly, or slowly, depending on the reading time available to them? There is perhaps something at odds here with the 'analogue' experience of reading. While characteristics of the physical book and its pages are translated into the

hardware and software of the e-reader, the notion of reading as a timed activity is introduced, a temporal indicator of nearness to 'the end'. Losing track of time is potentially more difficult, as time is tracked by the reading device. Its design does not recognise 'losing track' as a potentially positive experience.

Without going into further analysis of the e-reader here, it is presented as a small example of how an analogue object might be interpreted in the design of a digital device, and how a digital design decision can make a difference to temporal experience. This illustration is an introduction to further discussion in the rest of this chapter, which considers how time might be differently designed, represented and, therefore, differently experienced in the context of an online course. What happens to time in the process of digital recalibration (in Coyne's 2010 terms)? In the digital university, what kind of time is being adjusted to, and by whom? Finally, what kind of university is represented through the adoption of digital practices which have temporal effects? In contrast to the previous two chapters, in this chapter I focus in particularly on a small number of micro-practices of digital adjustment, drawn from references in my research interviews and from my observations of the *CityName* website. The impetus for this comes from the very many conversations I had with course designers and programme leaders about new experiences with digital media as they prepared new online courses, sometimes for the first time. In a sense both personal and pedagogical adjustments were being made to and with digital technologies in the context of a course, yet this was far more complex a process than the adjustment to fast time, as it is characterised by education policy. This was a thoughtful process of planning communications and visualising a course in ways which were as much temporal as spatial.

In listening to University staff talking about designing online programmes and courses, I found, unsurprisingly, that there was still an emphasis on the temporal and spatial practices of the campus. However, in this period of transition from thinking in campus terms to thinking in digital terms, there was also evidence to suggest that digital activities were not so easily contained in classrooms, summer schools and office hours, even if these were the common terms still in use. In this chapter I propose that, if we accept that the digital has the potential to produce new times and spaces, we firstly need to pay attention to detailed analyses of what these are and what changes they may bring with them and, secondly, that we may need to relinquish some of the persistent temporal and spatial categories in current use. As Ruppert *et al* (2013) conclude, in thinking about 'digital [software] devices and data' (p24) in relation to research methods,

we have tried to argue that it does not help to imagine the digital in terms of epochal shifts or redefinitions of life. The lively and productive changes brought by the digital are no doubt large, but they need to be explored carefully, with due attention to their specificities. And, as a part of this, we have also argued that they often turn out to instantiate and reconstitute older practices, forms of stabilization and control. (p40)

Such 'epochal shifts' and 'redefinitions of life' were explored and called into question in the policy related literature of chapter 4. In this chapter I aim to juxtapose such characterisations of fast time and technology and slow time in education, with some of the detailed institutional practices considered in relation to time and design and digital time.

Czarniawska (1997), describes a period 'among Western cultures' in the early 1990s, where '…one could see some sort of puzzling institutional transformation on the go. Things were bursting out of their labels, and words grew short of events' (p1). Among the 'transformations and metamorphoses' she describes, Czarniawska refers to 'industry', 'education', 'welfare states' and 'economies' as, for a variety of reasons, areas of society in flux (p1). All of these areas, it seems safe to argue, have been experiencing transformations, over a similar time period, in relation to digital technologies. A recent example would be the engagement across private and public sectors with the concept of 'big data', defined by the technology research company Gartner as,

high-volume, high-velocity and high-variety information assets that demand cost-effective, innovative forms of information processing for enhanced insight and decision making. (Gartner 2014)

Mayer-Shönberger and Cukier (2013) go so far as to predict the concept of big data as currently 'migrating to all areas of human endeavour' (p6).

However, as Ruppert *et al* (2013) suggest, it is important to also look at the specificities of the digital. At a more detailed level, Czarniawska's (1997) observation of 'things bursting out of their labels, and words [growing] short of events', seems a pertinent way of thinking about changes in the university in relation to digital change, which highlights for me, as I have already noted, a continued dependence on spatial metaphors held in tension with the emergent practices of teaching and learning online. Here I recognise that digital change does not merely produce new practices with old labels, but that it may also 'instantiate and reconstitute older practices' (Ruppert *et al* p40). What is of interest then, in terms of recalibration, is not perhaps the form of old or new models of education, but a continuous process of mapping from one state to another.

In this chapter I focus on some of the particularities of digital practices encountered in my research, and consider those which appear to me to be at 'bursting point' in relation to the terms in use to describe them. At the same time, I consider the persistent practices which may be being 'instantiated' or 'reconstituted' (Ruppert *et al* p40) by digital means. I explore the idea that, for the designers of online programmes and courses in campus-based institutions, the emphasis of course design often remains on the dominant temporal and spatial categories and practices of the campus where, as I have suggested, classrooms, summer schools and office hours, are all suggestive of particular spatial and temporal frames.

The flipped classroom

One prominent example of the spatial metaphor sustained in relation to the digital is that of the 'flipped classroom' (Bergmann and Sams 2012), a hot topic in education media during the period of my research, selected by the New Media Consortium (NMC) for its forthcoming (2015) annual higher education report with a 'time to adoption horizon' of 'one year or less'. The flipped classroom model was referred to in my interview with Steven in relation to the process of designing a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for the University of *CityName*. During our conversation, in addition to talking about the MOOC, Steven also described developing a video course covering the basic concepts of a particular topic which could then be studied by a small number of his on-campus students, who would then have the option of attending a tutorial on-campus. In the flipped classroom model, 'teaching' takes place outside the classroom, in the form of video lectures, for example, which provides the basis for 'problem solving' which then takes place in class. The flipped classroom is a spatial metaphor, but one which represents a proposed shift, for those who adopt it, in time use, or temporal rather than spatial practices. The focus of the change is on pedagogy, on teaching practices, and what is considered in the flipped classroom model to be the best way for students to spend time with a teacher, not on where the teaching takes place. The spatial metaphor, however, remains dominant. The teaching practice of one-way communication, of talking or lecturing to a class, is preserved in this model, and translated into a video recording, a time-shifting device. Ideas of students working 'at their own pace' within the class group are also explored within the flipped classroom model, and a similar shift in temporal practices is also proposed by Salman Khan (2012), an online 'open education' practitioner who also received much education media attention during my research period (Adams 2013) by producing open online educational material in the form of video instruction for school pupils, initially for his own young relatives. Even Khan,

however, retains the spatial metaphor of the 'one world schoolhouse' for open education practices, although digitally distributed and focused on video recordings.

In letting go of some of these traditional spatial container metaphors, such as the classroom and the schoolhouse, particularly where they disguise newer digital practices in the context of an online course, I propose that we might open up thinking towards the new times and spaces which the digital might be bringing to education. At the same time, I want to continue to challenge, as I do elsewhere in this thesis, the ubiquitous idea that digital education means education which is 'anytime, anywhere'. For a recent example of this, the FutureLearn (MOOC) website promotes courses in which it is possible to, 'Learn anytime, anywhere...wherever you are, whenever you want: on mobile, tablet or desktop' (FutureLearn 2015). This text, for me, brings with it the idea that learning occurs at no particular time, in no particular place, reminding me of Gubrium and Holstein's (2008) question, in relation to narrative ethnography, 'Whoever heard of a story being told nowhere, at no time?' (p250).

Time-shifting: recording, rewinding, replaying

The remainder of this chapter is structured around forms of digital recording, rewinding, and playback, considered in the context of my interviews with university staff and in my observations of developments on the University of *CityName* website during the period of my research. I take this particular approach to consider the practices being developed in relation to 'extensibility', the way in which the university and its programmes and staff were 'being extended' in and through digital environments, both spatially and temporally. In doing so I draw attention to temporal effects, where a temporal recalibration is also at work.

Beginning this section conceptually, with Wesch's (2009) notion of 'context collapse' in digital recording, I go on to draw on the example of the digital pen, which made an appearance in my interview with Neil, a member of academic staff at *CityName*, in order to think about the gathering together of a set of analogue and digital, but particularly temporal, practices in new forms. This sets the scene digitally for ideas which I return to in discussing transtemporality in chapter 7. I then move on to consider video as it was being used in course development and research communications during my period of research at *CityName*, particularly considering the moving image representing the academic 'at work'. Finally, I pay attention to the digital text in virtual learning environments, as it was referred to in my interviews with academic staff. Here I also think about the relationship between the narrative of a course, moving forwards, and the design of a course, described by several

interviewees in terms of 'working backwards'. I look particularly in this chapter at references to temporal organization, and think about how time is reconfigured or recalibrated in the context of the digital university. Thinking about the shifting relationship between 'the eternal and the ephemeral' (Castells 2010), I focus on the ideas of performing and recording (the written record, audio recording, video recording), considered here in terms of active recording (recording, communicating) and passive recording (being recorded, being communicated). My focus here is on an analysis of the detail of organizational change in relation to the digital, by working through a set of observations and ideas which point to the microadjustments made to recalibrate the University in a digital context. My concern here is that, in a drive to communicate spaces and bodies, the spatial aspects of campus life may dominate over the temporal concerns of students engaging with online education. I argue that there is a need to balance the spatial concerns of the digital university with those of time in education. To draw on Coyne's (2010) terms, this is about working with a temporal recalibration which might 'draw attention to the seams rather than to the supposed smooth integration of technologies into everyday life' (p19). In this way I think about how the digital university is represented, in the *CityName* example, from the inside out, presenting itself to the 'outside' world, building towards my proposal in the next chapter that there might be other ways of thinking about the university, translocally and transtemporally, which might require different representations of an institution which is formed of multiple places and times.

Wesch on 'context collapse'

In a study of video bloggers (vloggers) posting on YouTube, Wesch (2009) considers the way in which new media brings with it 'new forms of self-awareness' for individuals (abstract). Proposing that 'a new medium emerges every time someone creates a new web application' (p21), he draws on ethnographic research into vloggers and the practices of vlogging in order to think about digital media and contemporary self-reflection. Drawing on the introduction of the photograph in anthropology, as representative of a detachment between the self and the environment in media history, Wesch, with reference to the work of Goffman (1959), notes that in any situation, in order to adjust individual social performances, 'we continuously and often unconsciously take note of the physical surroundings, the people present, and the overall tone and temper of the scene among many other things' (p22). From considering the individual's analysis (whether consciously or not) of the physically co-present context, in order to adjust performance, Wesch moves on to develop an understanding of the shift in context which is presented by the digital web

camera in a potentially open broadcast.

> Now look carefully at a webcam. That's there. That's somewhere else. That could be anybody. On the other side of that little glass lens is almost everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you have ever heard of, and even those you have never heard of. In more specific terms, it is everyone who has or will have access to the Internet - billions of potential viewers, and your future self among them. (p22)

Assuming the implicit multiplicity of potential contexts and audiences offered by the portal of the webcam, Wesch goes on to pose the hypothetical question, 'What does one say to the world and the future?' (p23). Focusing on the moment of the vlogger recording her or his performance in front of the camera, Wesch develops the notion of 'context collapse'.

> The problem is not lack of context. It is context collapse: an infinite number of contexts collapsing upon one another into that single moment of recording. The images, actions, and words captured by the lens at any moment can be transported to anywhere on the planet and preserved (the performer must assume) for all time. The little glass lens becomes the gateway to a black hole sucking all of time and space - virtually all possible contexts - in on itself. (p23)

This idea of 'context collapse', brought about by the potential of the performance in relation to digital media, not only takes into account the multiple physical and digital spatial locations in which the web video may be replayed, but also the temporal possibilities and implications. The webcam is both synchronously and asynchronously located in time-space, 'That's there. That's somewhere else', but the recording also positions the recording present (in Wesch's study, the vlogger's performance), at any other point, or multiple points, in the future. Wesch proposes that the digital 'performer' has to 'assume', although this statement of course presumes forethought, that this performance is 'for all time' (p23).

> Like a building collapse, context collapse does not create a total void but a chaotic version of its once ordered self. (p23)

I draw on Wesch's work here in particular to think about notions of performance, (re)presentation, recording and replay that arise in my conversations with University of *CityName* staff, and in my observations of digital representations of the University, which point to shifts in the context(s) in which staff work and 'perform', as well as shifts in the way in which the University is digitally represented and extended in digital environments. I begin with the example of the digital pen to consider emerging practices of digital gathering, or reordering in an educational environment.

The digital pen

Neil is a senior member of academic staff at the University of *CityName*, working in a scientific discipline, who also has an interest in education research. At the beginning of my interview with Neil, he shows me that he is using a 'Livescribe' digital pen (Livescribe 2014) and describes to me his experimental use of it. He tells me, 'It does what that [*indicates my digital voice recorder*] does, but it also synchronises it with what I write' (Neil). Neil goes on to tell me that he and his colleagues are using digital pens in a research project, in order to develop an understanding of the note-taking practices of on-campus students during lectures. The students are asked to use the pens during a lecture, the pens record both writing and audio, and the lecture presentation is videoed separately, 'so we can see what they're writing, and when they're writing it, in synchrony with what is being presented' (Neil). The digital pen works with specially printed device compatible notepaper, allowing the writer working with the pen to go back through earlier notes and select a point in the writing with which to replay the associated audio. Once a point has been selected, the pen will play back the audio recording from the time the particular note was made. Neil goes on to tell me that he's been experimenting with the digital pen in recording his own meeting notes with the accompanying audio feed.

> I survive with this [*indicating pen*] because so many meetings where, you know, like committee meetings that are three months apart [*whispers*] I can't remember what I said or what I was supposed to do [*ends whisper*] and with this you can just sort of look back in your notebook and click on it (Neil)

Neil uses the pen as a memory aid to retrace aspects of his university work in audio recording, as well as in writing. He also describes using the pen at conferences with headphone microphones,

> the earphones actually have 3D microphones built into them um and what you heard there when I was playing it [audio of our conversation] back, that scratching, is actually the nib on the paper, which I quite like, because it reminds me of when I owned a record player, you know, and it was all crackly (Neil)

The pen records the sound of its own writing and recording action, along with the surrounding audio, reminding Neil of earlier audio recording/playback technology. Each earpiece in the headset has its own microphone, leading to what its manufacturers term 'binaural recording' in order to create a stereo effect with a spatial quality.

> This type of recording provides the most accurate spatial sound quality because the microphones effectively mimic your ears - when you play a

binaural recording back, it sounds like you are actually in the location
where you recorded. (Livescribe 2014)

The pen's manufacturers promote its recording activity as an aim to recreate the spatial as well as the temporal listening experience, by locating its recording function in the listener's ears.

Neil tells me that the pens are also potentially useful for undergraduate teaching. Here he describes the idea of a 'pencast' (Livescribe 2014), where the writing action or illustrative drawing of sketches and diagrams can also be recorded and played back digitally with synchronised audio,

if students ask a question um then you can go through the answer with one
student, say in a tutorial, and then you can post the whole thing online for
other students, so they get the benefit of seeing an answer to a
question…rather than just a typeset PDF of the end product, they can see
the process through a sort of ten minute clip online. (Neil)

The digital pen retains the 'classic' technology of the pen in the activity of writing, but also incorporates two additional kinds of recording; audio recording and the recording of the pen's movement on paper tracked by an integrated camera, which its associated software can then reproduce in digital form. The pen retains its own history as well as the selected history of the writer and the writing environment it is connected to.

Although the digital pen is not the focus of our interview, in which we continue to discuss the online course Neil is developing, the technology of the pen is introduced into our initial conversation and Neil continues to use it as we talk. Both Neil and I record our interview, balancing the recording presence of my digital voice recorder (an influential object) with the digital pen. The technology of the pen synchronises the written text with audio, connecting an external audible process, the conversation, with an internal cognitive process, listening, thinking and summarising, made visible in writing. The digital pen draws attention to the detachment between my digital voice recorder and the 'analogue' pen with which I write my interview notes. The digital pen incorporates a synchronising technology, which keeps writing and listening practices together, but it is also a recording technology which has the capacity to replay what it records in different contexts. The recording function, the pen's 'memory', has the capacity to bring multiple recordings together within the object, bringing physically and temporally distinct events into new temporal arrangements.

In Barker's (2012) work on 'databases and time', he draws on Serres (1990) to engage with ideas of multi-temporality and non-linear time,

> For Serres…every moment in history is not a compartmentalized section of present, holding a position on a timeline. Rather every moment draws into itself other events from other periods in history. These periods need not necessarily be proximate in the traditional sense of linear time in order to be thought of contemporaneously in Serres's nonlinear time. (p162)

Barker (2012) goes on to use Serres's nonlinear time, of moments drawing together other moments, to think about digital time in the context of the database.

> The technological engagements with temporal events, seen in particular in the archiving function of the database, may be seen to manifest just this gathering of time. The database draws together various events, drawing together Serres's multiple pleats, making once disparate occasions proximate and generating relations across varying sections of time. (p162)

I draw on Barker (2012) here, because the digital pen also acts as a database of recorded activities and I propose that this notion of the 'gathering of time' is particularly significant to a temporal understanding of events in digital environments. At the point of recording, the digital pen points to a future of multiple contexts for replay, Wesch's (2009) 'context collapse', but once it holds multiple recordings in its memory/database, it draws disparate recording occasions together, a 'gathering of time'. Like the digital voice recorder, the digital pen has the capacity to capture and contain multiple recorded events, creating, as Barker (2012) describes it, a database of recordings which makes 'disparate occasions proximate' and, as a highly mobile device, retains the capacity to revisit and replay elements of those events in a variety of locations. In Coyne's (2010) terms, it offers a 'tuning of place' which also draws together multiple times. The binaural recording at the point of replay brings the performance of one time-space into another. This is the way in which I propose that there is great potential in the context of a digital course, which has the capacity to draw together times and spaces beyond the times and spaces of the campus.

The simple point I make here, in bringing together Wesch's (2009) 'context collapse' with Barker's (2012) 'gathering of time' in digital contexts, is that digital practices make possible the bringing together of, or making connections between, multiple times and spaces. While there may be many examples of such collapsing or gathering activities in media history, the digital has made such practices easier for individuals in digitally connected environments to undertake and share with relative ease. New times and spaces are configured through these connections. In Wesch's terms, 'chaotic versions' are potentially created out of the 'once ordered' (p23).

The introduction of the digital pen then, draws together a number of aspects of my conversations with programme directors in our explorations of the detailed processes and

practices of designing and teaching courses online, but perhaps more importantly, it also acts as a reminder of the complex temporal and spatial configurations which are made possible in digital environments in contrast with the reproduction of the more familiar, relatively stable, times and spaces of the campus. I now move on to look at some of these familiar times, spaces and practices, giving consideration to how they are both maintained and reordered in digital environments.

Talking heads

During the period of my research, the University of *CityName* began producing short (one minute) 'talking head' videos of academic staff giving brief introductory presentations about their research. These videos were then being made available for general viewing through the University website. Most staff appeared in these short films in their University offices, introducing themselves and talking directly to camera, with a few staff appearing in their laboratories or in outdoor campus locations. On the one hand, summarising the research of academics to the time and space of one minute and a talking head with an office backdrop seemed oddly reductive. On the other hand, I found myself fascinated by the section of the University website which offered such a visual array of video windows onto a diverse range research topics, each topic linked with the talking head of its researcher. The staff presented, all experts in their respective fields, otherwise appeared on the website as authorial names on publication lists or staff names, sometimes alongside static images, on departmental webpages, visually unfamiliar, at least to those outside each academic's particular disciplinary teaching and research networks. Yet the time of these video minutes was deceptive, in that behind each video minute, was also a miniature production. The array of videos represented many minutes and hours of preparation and recording time, and each video referred back to a career-to-date in terms of research interests and ideas. Rather than presenting the chronological time of recording film by film (no video appears with a date stamp), the collection appeared (and still appears) to represent a collective 'present' for the research activity of the University, producing what Castells (2010) might refer to as a 'flat horizon' ('no beginning, no end, no sequence' p492). The way in which these videos are presented on the *CityName* website means that the viewer can draw from the 'random' selection which the software presents on each webpage 'refresh', select videos from a disciplinary grouping, or search within the full set using search terms. Although the videos do not refer to the dates and times of their recording, I consider how long it will take for each film to become dated. The video project becomes an ongoing requirement for organizing in order to remain 'current' in its representation of the academic staff group. But

the one minute collection, producing individuals in the same, or very similar, spatial and temporal frames, also removes the multiple temporalities of disciplines and their research practices, while taking a particular view of the academic 'at work'.

I began to think of this video collection, and the video work described below, in spatial terms, as a sort of inside-out-ness for the university, a representation of faces and bodies through the university 'interface', as an alternative to the ubiquitous images of the external walls of historic or state-of-the art buildings found elsewhere on the website. Yet, unlike the walls of the buildings, the people and processes at work inside them are subject to a greater rate of change. The viewer has access to a collection of, albeit extremely brief, examples across the disciplines of 'what goes on' inside a university, at least in terms of its significant research work. But there is also a sense in which the university is being represented as *alive*. Although the videos show one minute 'snapshots' which are not 'live', but 'set' in the recent past, there is also a sense of *liveliness* that the videos bring to the institution and to the research under discussion. From talking to academic staff, however, I knew that this liveliness was also a time-consuming production, with which those being videoed were not necessarily comfortable. This discomfort, and the decontextualisation of the videos above from their specific academic contexts, relates to Wesch's (2009) description of context collapse in the face of an unknown audience, where the video is a one-way communication.

Doug on video

The 'talking head' experience was introduced into my interview with Doug, who at the time was developing a humanities MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) for the University. The MOOC development project was in line with the institution's strategic move to expand online education and several MOOCs were in preparation during my research period. I asked Doug how he and his colleagues felt about speaking 'to camera' to record their video presentations, rather than the more familiar practice of speaking in physical co-location with campus students and colleagues. Doug's view was that his colleagues had a range of responses to being filmed, but then went on to tell me about his own experiences, beginning with his introduction to 'media training',

> they [the MOOC co-ordinating team] offered us um media training um, which some people took um, but it was yeah, it was run by a team who didn't really have much experience of training people to talk to camera, they were more sort of experienced in training people to sort of go on the radio and be charming um, and sort of talk accessibly about their research um, but I think, you know, it was still quite useful in just getting, getting people experience in talking to a camera. (Doug)

Doug compares this training experience to his initial experience in front of the camera, for the 'talking heads', one minute video,

> I like recorded a…one minute video about my research um, and that was really awful you know, it was really hard and um I, I looked and sounded …really stupid and weird um, and yeah I had to record a sort of, little sort of trailer for, for the MOOC, and that was also…much harder than I expected, although you know I didn't look quite as bad as I did in, in the first thing…
>
> so then I did the media training and I did another take of, of this one minute video…the first one…was really awful, and so we had j- I think just because I've done, you know, yeah, I guess I've done sort of four, four speaking to camera things now, that as part of that I'm much more comfortable with it than I was. (Doug)

While video technology is not new (the Open University documents its 'small screen heroes' from their initial appearances on television in early 1970s (The Open University 2014b)), it became clear to me during my research period that it was in limited use as a communication technology at *CityName*, but that it was being introduced into academic practice by both the digital education expansion project and the development of MOOCs.

I went on to ask Doug about whether it felt particularly strange to be filming for a potentially 'massive' audience, given that he had told me that over fifty thousand people were already registered to study his MOOC at the time of our interview. Here I draw comparisons in the size of the student audience to the campus experience, '…in a lecture theatre you are talking to the number that you can see…' (Phil).

> DOUG: Yeah, I mean I think, you know, if it even felt like it was one to one that would be fine, but I think, you know, the weird thing about being filmed is that it doesn't feel like that, it feels like, you know, having to sort of stare and smile into this weird thing that's pointing at you that is not a person but, you know, act as if it was …
>
> PHIL: Is anybody doing anything different, like doing audio only and not doing video or is everyone pretty much going for…
>
> DOUG: Uh certainly no-one's planning to, I mean I suppose if, if somebody if somebody was like, you know, really couldn't, couldn't talk into the camera at all then, you know, that's an option we could look at, but yeah, at the moment everybody's planning to um…be there on the screen…
>
> PHIL: That's sort of been selected because it seems like the, the most obvious way of doing what you want to do?
>
> DOUG: Mhm, yeah, and I mean I think the, with, with sort of actually being able to sort of see the person um, I mean, I-I just think it's nicer, and also it sort of fits better with the part of the rationale for the course which

> is just to sort of like introduce some of the members of the department at
> *CityName* and give people an idea of um, you know, what everybody
> works on and who we all are, what we're doing.

Given that the majority of academic texts in current circulation appear without visual and biographical information about their authors, I was interested to find that, when the academic staff I spoke to were thinking about themselves in a teaching role, some were concerned with how they would be digitally represented, visually, while others were not considering the use of webcams or video at all, in order to make their courses more accessible to those with less bandwidth, who might find video channels harder to view. On the one hand, as in Doug's example, some academic video performers were uncomfortable with video recording and live web streaming but, on the other hand, often felt that this visual presence was important.

Jim on video

As Jim put it, when describing to me the planned video element of his online Masters programme course design,

> we draw the students into the fact…you know, we actually exist here and we're
> actually doing this research and um this is a person doing it, and this is what he thinks
> is important. (Jim)

Like Doug's reference to viewers being able to see 'who we all are, what we're doing', when talking about teaching, this idea of 'liveliness', of the faces behind the texts, was a recurring topic in several interviews. In the following excerpt, Jim goes beyond the straightforward academic visual representation to tell me about plans to produce videos (some filming has already taken place) for his online course, with the idea that he and his colleagues will feature as semi-fictional 'characters',

> various people in the lab will actually sort of become, sort of [laughs] almost
> sort of characters in this soap opera…we hope that that would make more of
> a…feeling of um…being part of something tangible, rather than being sort of
> on your own, uh and just having a vast amount of data to sort of learn or
> master. (Jim)

Jim's course plans to incorporate video as a means of both engaging the student and communicating the research environment of the university and the laboratory. The people, or 'characters', in the lab are played by postdoctoral researchers,

> so um then the idea was that uh we were going to try and make it very, almost
> to pretend that we were working in a…company and they [postgraduate
> students] have a project to finish in ten weeks, even to the point that, you know,
> I made videos of myself as a line manager sort of saying, this is what we want

you to do in the next five weeks, and in a way trying to model you know what it would be, you know, like sort of working in a lab, that you have a, a line manager who gabbles at you, using words you don't understand uh and concepts you don't understand, but then will say but go and speak to so and so, and then you know we would have say senior postdocs, who I've also videoed, and they [students] would uh they would watch that and uh they would you know be given more insight into what it was that he [the line manager] said, um so we were we were trying to model that. (Jim)

Over the period of two interviews with Jim, the laboratory which he plans to feature in his course shifts. It appears to be imagined somewhere between a university research lab and a corporate research lab. It functions both to demonstrate that 'we exist' in *CityName*, but also to set the scene for a fictional work-based plot, where Jim performs the role of a line-manager and postdoctoral researchers perform the roles of senior colleagues. Jim and the researchers model scenarios, providing different levels of interpretation of complex concepts for students on the course. Jim has developed course materials which are scenario based, where students encounter fictional workplace situations. He and his colleagues represent fictional co-workers who give instructions to the students, but also support them in the interpretation of top-level instructions. Subtitles and transcripts have been provided for students to make the material more accessible, but also because Jim makes the observation that, reflecting on his own attempts at learning to use digital environments through video instructions,

I have to say myself I'm getting increasingly irritated by um, say in Moodle [the course virtual learning environment software], you know, you want to do something, what comes up in Google all the time is some video, and you have to spend your time listening to this god awful video to get to the one piece of information you want, you know, and you realise, that's what was great about the invention of writing wasn't it? You can jump to exactly what you need very, very quickly, you know, and we seem to be using technology to kind of regress in some sorts of ways. (Jim)

There is a tension here then between Jim's view of the expectations of video, and its value in communicating the department to its online students, compared with his own experience of finding information in the same format. Yet Jim, like Doug, and Mhairi below, all appeared to feel that this kind of video performance was necessary in the context of an online course.

Mhairi on Video

Some time after my interviews with Mhairi are complete, I look up the latest information on her course as it is presented on the *CityName* website. Since I first began talking to Mhairi about the programme, when it was in the early planning stages, she and her colleagues have

developed website information about the course for prospective students. There is a video introduction to the course in which the tutors feature, and in which the digital environments used on the course are introduced. The aim of the video appears to be to provide prospective students with an understanding of what it is like to study online, as well as to give an overview of the course content.

The 'talking heads' video, in this case of two of the course tutors in a book-filled room communicates to prospective students that there is an embodied and material presence associated with the course, alongside its online interfaces. The in-person presence of the tutors in this space suggests the traditional in-person setting of a tutorial or seminar. Rather than a talking heads feature, the bodies of the tutors, behind tables, in an academic setting are presented. The video of the tutors is then cut with 'still' images of software interfaces, which are displayed and presented as 'the online classroom' and 'the hub…an informal space' with 'virtual café space' included. The images presented of the online classroom web conferencing environment feature the still faces of the tutors wearing microphone headsets. There are also references to discussion boards and forums, including a 'homework forum'. It is notable that a number of spatial metaphors haunt this online space, which retains its connection with the physical world in the bodies of the tutors in the book-lined room.

This introductory video is embedded in the University of *CityName*'s website. The website, in general terms, presents textual and visual information about the university, including its physical campus, staff, students, teaching and research. The introductory video presents textual and visual information about the online programme referred to, including its interfaces, staff, and teaching (methods and materials). Both the University website and the programme information video embedded within it, bring together aspects of the physical and digital university. In the former, the emphasis is on the digital referring to the physical (images of buildings and outdoor spaces for example), being on the inside looking out, and in the latter the emphasis is on the physical referring to the digital (beginning with bodies and books, but exploring online interfaces), being on the outside looking in. Spatially and temporally, the video is multi-layered. Sitting in my home-space, I use my computer screen to look at a website which displays a video, the video presents people talking inside a room intercut with images of other interfaces viewed on other screens. In some of these images, the people who are talking in the video appear as within the screenshots of interfaces, within the online classroom space.

Considered temporally, the video of tutors brings a 'liveliness' (bodies, movement, audio), to the course described, without being 'live', in 'real' time. The screenshots of interfaces presented, including the frozen images of the faces of the tutors which, 'live' at the time the screenshot was taken are a still reference to the 'live' participation possible within the course. The audio 'voiceovers' have a present to future orientation, focused on *what happens* in a course and what the experience of studying *will be like* to attract future students to the programme, but the video is also in the past. The viewer can watch it repetitively and control their viewing, by stopping, starting, and moving backwards and forwards through the presentation. Like the talking heads research videos, the introductory video represents the time of its recording, without referring to a specific date and time.

My observation in discussing the use of video with staff, and in considering the use of video on the university website, is that the use of video does not seem to relate to a concern with pedagogy, other than in its role as an online equivalent of face to face interaction. The concern here seems to be more a visual and temporal frame which is perhaps more to do with 'liveliness' and giving students the sense that, as Jim puts it, 'we actually exist here and we're actually doing this research' (Jim).

Although in Doug's account, for example, where the potential MOOC audience is much larger, and the emphasis on openness provides a sense in which the camera is a portal to the unknown, in Wesch's (2009) sense of 'context collapse' the self-awareness which I encountered in interviews seemed to be more of a concern for recording and replay, and the potential longevity of the video. Self-awareness was also a concern for Mhairi, but one which was surfaced in considering the 'virtual classroom' and the live communication via the webcam. There was certainly evidence of a desire to communicate the faces, bodies and environments of the campus, and these echoed the campus frames of the lecture and the seminar. As Doug describes it,

> it was it was sort of hard for us to think of anything more um imaginative or spectacular to do than you know basically just do the sort of thing that we'd be doing, giving a seminar or a presentation in a classroom, so um all the, all the sessions pretty much are um just a presentation with um you know slides superimposed in the background post-production, I know we've got one, one week where somebody is, you know, we have a week…where the uh presenter is doing some filming at the [local] museum because she wants to, you know, there's some sort of um…exhibition there at the moment or something like that, that she wants to use as part of her course um as part of her um props um but yeah that's the, I think that's the only sort of remotely adventurous thing that we're doing as far as presentation goes. (Doug)

Having looked in some detail at some of the visual communication practices which were emerging during the research period, particularly in the use of video, which were largely being used to recreate the familiar spatial frames of the campus, I became interested in this idea of recorded time and playback. It seemed to me that academic staff were adjusting to a perceived genre of online education in which the face to face communication practices of the campus might need to be reproduced, albeit in a one-way form. Whilst I understood the desire to represent the University as 'alive', I also saw that this practice also represented the work of the academic being 'constituted in time' (Sharma 2014) in a particular way, where what would, in the campus environment, be an ephemeral performance was being suspended in an 'eternal' timeframe (Castells 2010). Video practices then, have particular temporal effects and they present, in this case individuals, in specific timeframes which represent a short period in time which then endures. In seeking to create liveliness, the digital university potentially becomes suspended online, in its recent past.

Continuing to look in detail at the micropractices of digital adjustment, I now move on to look at some of the wider temporal frame of online course design practices which were discussed during my interviews with academic staff. Here I want to show that the development of online courses was requiring course leaders to visualise their courses in new ways, but that this was also leading to interdisciplinary conversations around temporal design.

The temporal frame of course design: beginning with the end

Positioning teaching as a 'design profession', Wiggins and McTighe (2005) assert that, 'the best designs derive backward from the learnings sought' (p14). The authors draw attention to what they view to be the 'twin sins of traditional design' (p16) in education. The first is a critique of 'activity-oriented design' when the designer believes that 'the learning *is* the activity', rather than perceiving learning as a reflection on 'the *meaning* of the activity' (p16). The second is a critique of design by 'coverage', which assumes a linear progression through course content, 'in a valiant attempt to traverse all the factual material within a prescribed time' (p16). As an alternative, the authors recommend a 'backwards design', which begins with 'desired results' and ends with a consideration of appropriate 'learning experiences and instruction' (p18).

In contrast, Furedi (2012) sees beginning with the outcomes of a course, (a direct response to UK universities being required to define 'learning outcomes' for every course), as characteristic of a 'utilitarian' approach to education,

The problem with utilitarian education is not its single-minded addiction to what is useful…but its tendency to deprive teaching and learning of meaning. Its focus on the end product devalues the actual experience of education. When the end acquires such significance the means become subordinated to it. (np)

Considering teaching as an 'art' rather than a design profession, Furedi (2012) proposes that learning outcomes contribute to an environment which, 'inhibits the capacity of students and teachers to deal with uncertainty'. For Furedi, teaching should be a practice which,

presupposes the capacity to respond to unexpected and unpredictable questions and problems that emerge in the course of a dialogue. It requires a willingness to extemporise, change direction and even introduce issues…that were not anticipated previously. (np)

I introduce these differing views of course development here, as I was interested in the way in which the academic staff I interviewed talked, in terms of direction, about the way in which their courses and programmes were being planned, not just in terms of the digital environments with which they had decided to work (or were in the process of selecting), but in terms of the overall shape of an online course, suggesting that a shift in the media of communication was also triggering a shift in pedagogy, or at least a revisiting of the assumptions of a campus course design. My attention was first drawn to the temporal practices of course design during my second interview with Jim, when he told me about reconsidering how his course would be presented after seeing a course environment design used by a colleague from a different discipline.

The narrative 'revealed'

Like Mhairi, I interviewed Jim twice during the course of my research, as well as catching up with him in meetings of online distance programme staff. By the time of our second interview, the new programme which Jim was leading had been developed but was yet to launch. I asked him to tell me more about the development of the programme over the past year and Jim begins by telling me about his idea, partly influenced by the coincidence of the 2012 Olympics with his course planning, of 'badging' course materials at bronze, silver and gold levels to distinguish for students between elementary, essential and advanced levels of study. He then goes on to talk to me about having second thoughts about this idea following his attendance at a Moodle (virtual learning software environment) 'user group' organized for distance educators at *CityName* (an event which I had also attended). At the user group meeting, Jim had become interested in a presentation delivered by a colleague in the social sciences, who had described, and shown the visual layout of, a course she had led on academic writing. Jim told me that watching the presentation had led him to ask himself the

question, in relation to his own course design, 'is this really the right way to be doing things?'.

> she [colleague] had a course…on academic writing and immediately, you know, I liked that because I sort of saw that…it was kind of written as a sort of narrative…by following it you could sort of see…and uh you know lots of visuals…I liked the look of it, so I asked could I be put on the course and she wrote to the students and they agreed, so I had a look at it and um I was last night trying to find out myself, you know, just by reading it, could I understand what it was that you had to do, but I sort of realised that that kind of gets revealed as you go through and, in a way, um my kind of scientific mindset is you know, what is it we have to, you know, do?

Jim has already described to me aspects of narrative design in his own programme, as described above, in giving the example of producing videos which are set in a semi-fictional corporate workplace, to present students with work-based problems. Those problems are further interpreted in the videos by post-doctoral staff, acting in the problem scenarios as fictional colleagues. In the academic writing course, Jim sees a narrative 'reveal', where students are encouraged to follow 'a particular pathway' through the course materials. He describes a 'tension…in the design' online, 'between getting people to engage properly, or just making them feel that they're in a maze and they can't see where the end of it is' (Jim). In the design of his own programme, he wonders whether,

> we are maybe erring on the side of, you know, saying to people…this is the end point…and you're now going through, 'do I need to know that, do I need to know that, no, no, no'…and…it doesn't allow any kind of…learning to happen sort of adventitiously. (Jim)

While both Jim and his colleague in the social sciences are both planning their courses using the same software environment (Moodle), Jim identifies distinct differences in their approaches to the ways in which students might negotiate course materials. Jim characterises his colleague's approach as a narrative 'reveal', where the end is not immediately in sight, and which might encourage 'adventitious' learning along the way, whereas his own approach, which he aligns with his academic discipline, 'my scientific mindset', is to begin with the end and to work out how to get there most efficiently. What this highlights, for me, is firstly that a single platform can be used, or internally designed, to support more than one pedagogic design approach, and secondly that one significant aspect of such variety is temporal orientation. Whereas the 'navigation' of software might commonly be thought of as a spatial consideration, it is also, and I would argue more importantly, a temporal one. Navigation is a negotiated journey over time. The example also highlights the way in which the digital course design and structure can be made visible

within the course software. This was particularly interesting in my observations of network events of distance educators from across the disciplines at *CityName*, where course materials and designs were often presented visually to a variety of colleagues, allowing not just course materials, but pedagogic approaches to be shared more easily, in the form of a visual shape of courses as participatory events.

Neil also works in a scientific discipline, with colleagues who have some prior experience in digital education, but also in education research.

> for most people in [scientific disciplinary grouping], again this is caricaturing a little bit, if you ask them to design a course on something the first thing they would think about would be what content do I need to cover…what am I gonna have to tell them about, what am I gonna have to teach them um, it's a very sort of content driven forward approach, that the lecturer defines uh we cover this, we cover this, we cover this, then they probably think about the assessment that in most cases in [disciplinary grouping] gets tacked on at the end, right, because it's still principally, most of our courses are examined by a single closed book degree exam at the end of the course um, whereas I think the approach that we've been sort of trying to take and, and even with some of our undergraduate courses, we think about what the outcomes are, you know, what are the objectives for what we want students to learn, um and then what sorts of evidence do we want to gather or what sort of evidence do we require them to produce to be able to demonstrate those outcomes and then, finally, what sort of teaching activities to do we need to build that will allow students to gain the experience to be able to provide that evidence, so *it really starts backwards* and it ends up with the teaching activities whereas a more traditional approach will start with the teaching activities, I will have 22 lectures and they will cover… (Neil, my emphasis)

The approach that Neil describes himself, and his colleagues taking to course design fits very much with the Wiggins and McTighe (2005) approach to 'backwards design', but it is an approach which Neil sees in a position of tension with the typical courses offered in scientific disciplines. His description of the content approach is similar to that which Jim describes, but which Jim contrasts with the unfolding narrative approach which he observes in the academic writing course.

The time-release

In my initial interview with Iain, who is an experienced online programme leader in the social sciences, he describes the online masters courses with which he works as 'very tightly structured',

> we're also very, very careful at the beginning of our uh year to sit down and gather in all the assessment materials but then also to time the release so that people are not getting swamped…they know right from the beginning, this is

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what I'm going to be assessed on, these are the dates for submission, nothing comes as a surprise, they get feedback halfway through the semester on their discussions…it's very structured and the milestones are very visible. (Iain)

He goes on to compare this temporal structure with developing plans for supervising PhDs at a distance,

> with PhD of course it's very much more fluid, it's a longer timescale, it's by no means a linear process, um milestones can be sort of set but they tend to, you know, be knocked over or sink in the sand or have to be re-jigged…it's a much more iterative process I think. (Iain)

Iain's description of the masters course structure supports Jim's observation of a tension between engagement 'along the way' while also being able to see 'where the end of it is'. Where Jim considers the narrative 'reveal' in terms of engagement, Iain thinks about the timed 'release', to prevent students from being overwhelmed, where 'nothing comes as a surprise'. Both consider the course in terms of process and experience.

Iain tells me that the online courses in his discipline don't include any synchronous activities, suggesting that this is a decision based on potential issues with negotiating time zones, '…our discussions are asynchronous um, which is very appealing to make it a global product…'. He goes on to tell me about the 'bespoke' virtual learning environment in use in his courses, developed prior to *CityName's* adoption of Moodle (although other environment are also supported), which was developed on the basis of an assessment of the available platforms in 2004-05 when 'nothing really fitted our needs'.

Iain describes the development of guidance for tutors and students participating in online discussions,

> you know sometimes people come in at the beginning of the week because our modules are time released on the Saturday and then the tutoring begins on the Monday…sometimes people come in and regurgitate everything they think they know in a huge long post with footnotes, it's difficult to read through, it's alienating for other people and it's not in the spirit of what we're trying to do which is to get people to interact. (Iain)

> we don't necessarily tell our students up front what it is we expect of them in [on campus] seminars…I think as a, probably as a direct consequence of the experiences in distance learning, I started to do that with my um early seminars…sometimes it's taking the time to explain, this is what I'm looking for, this is what you'll be assessed on, and having the opportunity to re-emphasis that improves their experience, but I think that only came through having to, really having to take a step back and think how do we teach somebody when you can't have them face to face. (Iain)

My conversations with programme directors in their roles as course designers, emphasised for me that the move to digital only communications had required them to think carefully not only about the spatial design of the digital environment in which they would be teaching, but also about the temporal aspects of designing an experience for their students. A temporal analysis surfaced a number or orientations to and concerns about time in the context of a course. In Iain's case, this in turn, led him to a careful reconsideration of his on-campus practices.

Summer schools, classrooms, office hours

Several summer schools appear in the accounts of interviewees. Ella, a student based in Nigeria, studying for a masters in a medical field, tells me that she attended an optional summer school in Uganda, related to her course, drawing students together from across the disciplines of animal and human medicine. Alison, leading a different medical programme, tells me that students taking her courses, which have a clinical practitioner focus, will be required to attend a summer school on the *CityName* campus. For a previous Masters design she tells me,

> we required um attendance at the [department] quite frequently throughout
> the year and it would be, you know, it would be prohibitively expensive for a
> foreign student to be coming, you know, five times in a twelve week
> period…however, if we're only asking them to attend an annual summer
> school, then it becomes much more approachable for international students.
> (Alison)

Alison's summer school is unusual in that it is the only example I come across in courses funded by the digital expansion project in which students are required to spend time on the campus at *CityName* and it therefore takes the form of the more traditional concept of the 'summer school'. However, other course leaders are working to translate the summer school concept in their online environments.

Neil, for example, is also working with his colleagues on a summer course, in order to try out selected technologies and to develop a network of potential participants, in advance of launching a full postgraduate online course.

> we're going to offer a short, free, open online course in the summer, just two
> or three days and it will focus on one of the topics from one of the courses,
> so it's a taster if you like, partly to build reputation, partly as a marketing
> exercise um but also partly as a way for us to trial an authentic distance
> teaching experience um so we iron out all the bugs in the technology. (Neil)

Finally, Mhairi and her colleagues run a summer school, as an induction for both tutors and students into the online environments they will be using on their new programme in the humanities. I explore this online summer school in more depth below.

The summer schools of the University of *CityName* then, take place in Uganda, on the *CityName* campus, and in multiple digital environments, across a number of disciplines. Each is a temporal gathering of a different configuration. While each 'summer' school takes place during the *CityName* summer, this is a time frame which relates to a particular climate and to a particular pattern of academic calendar. Historically, the idea of a summer school is extra-curricular, yet in each of these cases, the summer school is closely connected to, or a requirement of, a particular course or programme, where the semester spills into the period of the year more often concerned with vacations, graduations and academic research activities.

Mhairi's summer school

I interviewed Mhairi twice during my research at *CityName*, as well as talking to her informally when we met at group meetings on-campus for the online expansion project. Our first and second interviews were roughly a year apart. By the time of the second interview, Mhairi and her colleagues had presented their new programme for one semester. Mhairi describes what she calls a 'virtual summer school' for the programme, which she considers to have been 'a learning experience' for staff, and 'a way of the students getting firmly established as a group'. She goes on to describe the summer school in some detail; a set of scheduled activities which took place intensively over five days as an introduction to the programme.

> we had a two hour live session every day um both in the morning and in
> the evening and students could choose to take part in one or the other,
> depending on which time suited them. (Mhairi)

During the two hour sessions, Mhairi describes student writing exercises; sharing work using the online 'whiteboard' in Collaborate (a web conferencing style 'collaboration' platform); activities to familiarize students with the environments and technologies they would be using during the course, and allocated 'question time'. Each session included an introductory presentation from one of the tutors on a broad area of the programme to come. As Mhairi puts it, 'each thing [topic] was given its own space as much as possible'. The new students were also 'given takeaway tasks to do between one night and the next night, short exercises again, just to get them going, really kind of warm up things'. Finally, three 'visiting' guest speakers (either speaking from Mhairi's office or from their own homes)

were invited to present to students, each presentation ending with opportunities for questions. One speaker session would be presented 'live', with the session being recorded and replayed at the later session, so that students, 'could choose to go to all the live ones or, if they couldn't make it, they could hear the recording' (Mhairi).

The summer school involved Mhairi and her colleagues engaging synchronously with students and guest speakers for four hours 'live' each day, for five days. I suggest during an interview with Mhairi that this is quite a commitment, to which she responds,

> Yeah, it is when you add on the prep time and the set-up time and all the other issues that inevitably come up.' (Mhairi)

Mhairi particularly emphasizes the need for 'building in a realistic set-up time', even when students have had set-up information 'ahead of time', explaining that in terms of preparation,

> not everybody *can* do it, not everybody *does* do it, not everybody reads the handbook, not everybody can *find* the handbook. (Mhairi)

> I think we maybe tried to do too much in the virtual summer school and it was absolute- it was extremely tiring for us, it was five days of virtually twelve hour days, because we would realize that there were problems with the morning group, so we would be trying to rectify them by the evening…so next time we will be obviously better prepared and we're going to cut it down to four days, because I think even the students found, along with their own commitments, that um we were asking a little bit too much of them…it's my habit I think to try to make things busy rather than quiet. (Mhairi)

The temporality of digital text

Mhairi's course, in the humanities, is predominately focused on text, particularly on student writing, peer review, textual analysis and critique. Mhairi tells me about a different kind of recording and revisiting when she talks about communicating in writing with students,

> when you write a response, and I know this from my own experience of mentoring distance…students…you consider what you're saying much more carefully because you're writing it, if you're speaking to somebody you've got the option of repeating yourself, rephrasing. (Mhairi)

Mhairi emphasises the permanence of writing once a comment has been made or message has been sent and the openness of the text to interpretation when it reaches the reader. The written words are carefully crafted in this account, and are contrasted with the repetition and rephrasing of verbal responses. Mhairi also refers to my digital voice recorder (before I

begin recording she tells me that she is pleased to see me with pen and paper, and is then disappointed to see the recording machine), recognising the 'chance to revisit' that it offers,

> It's a more time-consuming thing to respond in-depth to somebody's writing purely by distance than it is to work with a combination of notes and conversation, definitely, there's no doubt about it, it's more time-consuming, but I think ultimately it's possibly more considered, the response that you get, there's also the advantage that everything is written down, it can be revisited…whereas if you're having a conversation with a student about their work, they may take a few notes, you may have written some notes, but as you say, that's why you're recording this [interview], it may be that the important point or points that were made happen to be made on the spur of the moment and went, because you moved on to something else, so there's a chance to revisit, there's a good way of monitoring progress I think. (Mhairi)

Mhairi describes the documentation of a conversation in text and compares it with the 'versioning' which may occur in a physically co-present meeting, 'they may take a few notes, you may have written some notes'. The written, in this case digital, text for Mhairi is 'more considered' in its production, but also more 'time-consuming'.

My aim in this chapter has been to consider in some detail temporal shifts in digital practices, in spite of the persistence of 'containing' terms with spatial references (even the summer school retains a geographical location of 'summer'). A temporal analysis has surfaced multiple temporal approaches and practices which are made visible in the design of an online course. I have considered how the institution, the course, and course tutors are captured and represented digitally, where 'liveliness' is in tension with temporal reduction (one minute talking heads), repetition and 'frozen' periods of time. In a sense, and drawing on Castell's (2010) terms, the ephemeral is potentially made digitally eternal, while the seemingly eternal, or at least long term, traditions and practices take on the form of ephemera in fragmented and reconstituted forms. Understandably, given the early stage at which I spoke to the academic developers of new courses, there was an uncertainty about being represented through video because of the shift in context of the academic performance (Wesch's 'context collapse' 2009), but also a feeling that video representation, whether recorded or 'live' in the form of web conferencing was what was required. Staff were recalibrating in a sense to an assumed model of digital communication.

Such time-shifting practices, for me, are a significant and relatively unexplored aspect of online digital education where, as discussed in chapter 4, essentialist, instrumentalist and deterministic accounts dominate the research field. Attention to the detail of practice begins to surface both technical and pedagogical questions and complexities. Technology ceases to be a homogenous concept with an agency which is beyond influence. Rather than a 'black

box' with magical properties, it is fragmented into a multiplicity of practices, woven into the new, yet also everyday, work of the institution. Like Nicholl's (2011) question, 'What happens in the stretch to flexibility?' raised in chapter 5, I propose that there are key questions to be asked in the context of digital education which pay attention to the stretch and the practices of 'extensibility', which are temporal as much as spatial, which emerge in online courses and in the wider representation of the digital university. Importantly, I suggest that care needs to be taken in considering where such practices might be involved in spatialising time, in a way which simplifies and artificially edges digital activity.

Such temporal and spatial edging in a digital context is problematic, I suggest, because digital environments have the capacity, explored in the first part of this chapter, to bring together multiple times and spaces. This might be in the form of digital material, which forms the 'content' of a course, but might also be in the form of distributed staff and student connections which are brought together in and around 'content' in interesting ways. What I want to argue, and to develop in the next chapter, is the idea that the boundaries of online course communications should not be drawn around the talking head, the classroom, the campus, or the physical University where a staff or student group might be required to recalibrate to the timeframe of another template, but that multiple places and times can and should be 'brought into' the context of a course. This means acknowledging the times and spaces which are connected in the digital university.

7. THINKING TRANSTEMPORALLY

> The contemporary debate over higher education is, then, both narrow *and* is marked by an insecurity about how we might move forward. We require, therefore, in the first place, a *proliferation* of ideas of the university, if only to begin to demonstrate that things could be other than they are. (Barnett 2013 p5)

> Time is far more tangled, far more common and bound, than has been accounted for. And it is from here, from a sense of being tied together in time, that a politics of critical time hinges. (Sharma 2013 p314)

This chapter explores the concept of translocality, a term borrowed from recent literature in geography, defined by Brickell and Datta (2011) as 'simultaneous situatedness across different locales' (p4), and applies it to the notion of 'distance' education in the digital university. I connect this idea of 'simultaneous situatedness' with Sharma's (2013) notion of being 'tied together in time', and work with the concept of the translocal to develop an equivalent understanding of the transtemporal in higher education, where multiple timeframes and temporal relations, as well as locales, are engaged in the work of the university. Rather than conceiving of 'distance' students in relation to the dominant spatial and temporal geography of the campus, from which those students are 'removed', the chapter calls for greater attention to be paid to the complex translocal and transtemporal relationships which form the contemporary digital university.

In this chapter I propose that the digital university, viewed as translocal and transtemporal, the university as 'simultaneously situated' (Brickell and Datta 2011), travelling (physically and imaginatively), and engaged with multiple timeframes and temporalities, is one idea which opens up possibilities for imagining the university beyond its traditional (actual or imagined) spatial and temporal boundaries.   In this sense, the university might be understood, not only through its physical and digital environments, but also through the bodies, locales and connections of its students and staff. I begin here with an exploration of the digital university, drawing on recent literature in digital education and cultural geography, and going on to introduce the translocal and transtemporal terms in relation to recent interdisciplinary research. I then move on to draw on research material to explore and illustrate a translocal proposal for the digital university.

My initial thoughts for imagining the university in this chapter were structured around the idea of 'double exposure' photographs, where one image is layered semi-transparently on top of another, even though each image may have been taken at a different time, in a different place. This was my way of thinking about the digital university as one which is

multiply layered in time and space and the way in which those times and spaces might come together in the context of an online course. I looked at images posted online where a photographer would take a set of photographs in one location, or series of locations, and then rewind their 35mm film (this practice continues in an analogue as well as digital form), going on to send the film to another photographer at some other distant location in the world who would take new images on top of the originals. The resulting photographs are made up of a doubling of images, with one semi-transparent image layered on top of another. Each final image is made up of two views, two places and two times brought together in another time-space. A striking visual example of this doubling of times and places in double exposure photography can be seen in the work of Daniella Zalcman (2015), whose New York and London photography project overlays the images of two cities with which she has strong connections having moved from one city to live in the other. In her description of this artistic project she says,

> So now I belong to two cities. I created this series of double exposures to map the intersections between two sets of streets and skylines. The resulting images are part New York, part London, and collectively represent my vision of home…Brooklyn Bridge Park meets Leicester Square. Whitehall meets the South Bronx. The High Line meets Knightsbridge. After a while, the cacophony of concrete and street life begins to blend into something more universal. (Zalcman 2015)

Each of Zalcman's images are also layers of two moments, from different times. They capture particular locations, rather than whole cities, at those particular times and, of course, the particular view of the same photographer separated from herself in time and space. Two of these images are reproduced on the following page:

Zalcman (2015). These images are reproduced in this thesis with the kind permission of the photographer.

Inspired by the images and ideas captured in the double exposure, I tried to imagine what such an image of the University of *CityName* would look like if it was composed visually of the connections I had made between the times and locations of the students and staff I had spoken to in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Rwanda, Singapore and the UK. What sort of image would be produced if these times and spaces were overlaid? Rather than the 'anytime anyplace' rhetoric, the work of the university would be played out in many times and spaces, capturing particular views, both simultaneous and unfolding in narratives and practices. This made me think differently about the idea of synchronous communication. Rather than the idea of students and staff coming together online, at the same time, in the same digital environment, online synchronicity is a coming together of multiple times as well as places, not synchronous, but differently positioned in time and space. Later I came upon the idea of the translocal, firstly in the work of Hall and Datta (2010) who describe the 'translocal street', discussed below, and then in the wider literature of cultural geography. This translocal term went some way for me in helping to describe the strong connections to other times and places I had been thinking about.

While I do not suggest that those participating in digital education have the experience (necessarily) of migration, or physically moving between geographically distant places, I do propose that multiple locales (physical and digital, spatial and temporal) form a complex 'location' for the digital university. It is 'simultaneously situated', but also moving around, physically, materially and imaginatively. As Bayne *et al* (2013) observe, digital education is '…a mode in which institutional formation and personal identity, location and diaspora, mobility and stasis are continually and creatively re-thought, re-formed and re-shaped'. This chapter proposes translocality and transtemporality considered together as one way of thinking about such formations and re-formations, emphasising contextual differences and the temporal dimension. As Barker (2012) suggests, a continued emphasis on the spatial means that '…the drive to conceptualize the way digital technologies may produce new temporalities, in addition to the new experiences of distance and global geography, has somewhat waned in contemporary digital theory' (p2).

Here I suggest that translocality and transtemporality, in their incorporation of strong, simultaneous, connections between places and times, are useful theoretical concepts with which to develop our understanding (and imagining) of the digital university. The next section of this chapter begins with an introduction to the translocal in recent literature and goes on to relate the concept to research undertaken by Rye and Støkken (2012),

highlighting issues of the local and the global in online education. I then draw on excerpts from my research interviews with students, focusing primarily, for the purposes of this chapter, on student 'locations' in time and space. I use the concept of the translocal and the transtemporal to consider 'thick' descriptions of three locations drawn from my research data, and to begin to think carefully about the spatial and temporal positioning of 'distance' students, beyond the campus-focused institution.

Thinking translocally

The concept of the translocal has been developed, particularly in the field of geography, alongside other disciplines, primarily in thinking about the effects of human migration leading to the experience of 'simultaneous situatedness across different locales' (Brickell and Datta 2011 p4). Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013), in their valuable review of the concept of translocality in recent research, describe an approach in which,

> Authors engaging in the development of a translocal perspective seek to integrate notions of fluidity and discontinuity associated with mobilities, movements and flows on the one hand with notions of fixity, groundedness and situatedness in particular settings on the other. (p376)

The translocal allows us then, to consider the experience of having strong connections to more than one place, and to take the constraints and opportunities of both mobility and fixity into account. A useful and engaging example of translocal research is provided by Hall and Datta (2010) in their work on 'the translocal street'. Working with a visual analysis of shop signage, alongside a face to face survey and mapping activities, the authors explore the location and inhabitation of a single London street, the Walworth Road, which '…is central to the everyday livelihoods of an urban neighbourhood, but…also extends past the area, linking it to other places and spaces' (p70). The authors draw on aspects of their analysis to observe that a translocal view of the street and, specifically, its relationship to migration, lead to an understanding of 'local' which is,

> neither static nor singular: Walworth Road is shaped by passages and journeys of a variety of individuals, who travel, literally and figuratively, between more than one knowledge base of local place. (p72)

It would certainly be feasible to undertake a similar study of a university campus, or perhaps a single campus street or building, in order to think about the connections between the institution, its members, its 'local' geography, its multiple languages, and other more

geographically distant places. However, my application of translocality in this chapter is to use it as a generative way of thinking particularly about the digital university and the spatial and temporal implications of online 'distance' education. To this end, I have chosen to think about the times and spaces which are connected, or perhaps layered, when a number of students and staff in different locations are engaged in an online course. What kinds of locales are connected, and what are the implications for, and related responsibilities of, the institution?

I introduce the term transtemporal in this chapter to emphasize the coexistence of different 'times' when considering translocality and the university, particularly in a digital context. These times include, not only the practical time differences in making translocal connections (across time zones), but also the experiential times of individual accounts, as well as the multiple political and cultural times (the 'times we live in'), which might be significant to the practices of a digital education which aims to engage students and staff in multiple locales.

It is my intention here to explore the idea that, rather than digital connections being viewed as a form of 'reaching out' from the campus to the wider world, perhaps we might think of the digital university, in its translocal and transtemporal form, as an opening up of the idea of the university, as embodied, embedded and imagined through strong connections across multiple locales. In the words of Hawawini's (2011) critical review of 'internationalization' in higher education, this is a university which is understood in a way which heightens its potential, '…to learn from the world rather than teach the world what the institution knows' (abstract).

As Oakes and Schein (2006) define the translocal,

> translocality does not only mean people. It is crucially constituted as well by the circulation of capital, ideas and images, goods and styles, services, diseases...Translocality is also fashioned out of the rise of instantaneous modes of communication…and out of the profusion of media forms...that transmit images of other places. (p1)

It is this idea of 'instantaneous' or simultaneous communication in multiple forms, leading to the layering of 'other places', that I go on to explore in this chapter, beginning by framing my research data in relation to Rye and Støkken's (2012) concern for the significance of the local in 'global' education.

The 'global' and the 'local'

In a discussion of online education in a global context, Rye and Støkken (2012) propose that 'students' local context should be recognized as a significant part of their educational space' (abstract). The authors particularly draw attention to a lack of research into the relationship between 'the local life of students' and 'global interconnectedness' in education, at a time when such relationships are becoming more common in the growth of higher education undertaken online (p192).

Drawing on their own research data, Rye and Støkken outline three significant areas for consideration in relation to student participation in an online environment. These are social, material and cultural concerns (p196). The authors give examples of the role of students' families and extended families (social); internet access, in terms of reliable equipment and infrastructure, but also cost (material); and attitudes and approaches to education, including what might be considered to be acceptable behaviour (for example, whether or not it was deemed acceptable to criticize an idea presented by a tutor), and the value (to the student) of educational opportunity (cultural) (pp196-201).

The authors found in their research, working with a case study of a single course taught mainly from a European university, that in most of these dimensions, participating African students interviewed were affected more negatively than their European counterparts, '…due to technical problems, financial problems, and unfamiliar academic conventions.' (p202). Rye and Støkken observe that '…the assets and experiences that different students bring into the network are not equal, and the resources for negotiating with others regarding the time and space for performing and developing their student role are not the same…' (p202, italics added).

The authors conclude by suggesting that,

> rather than creating a new space of equality the differences between local contexts, and the inequalities between participants, are exposed in such an online environment. (p203)

Here Rye and Støkken make an important point about the digital environment as one that might highlight inequality among a distributed student group. In terms of the current discussion, this would be potentially one effect of the translocal juxtaposition of locales.

However, it is important to make the additional argument here that, although inequalities may often be significant in an online context, and indeed are likely to be, when participants are connecting from multiple locations, it is the way in which the digital often does *not* expose inequality, where inequality may become invisible and therefore be overlooked, which might be considered problematic. This is where I perceive that Sharma's (2013) notion of 'critical time' is particularly useful, where a temporal analysis which surfaces inequalities and unevenness in time is necessary to disrupt the digital smoothness of a unified time.

Rye and Støkken (2012) emphasise the importance of the local for online student participation and highlight the student view of the course in the authors' study as '…a system containing several local learning environments that were interconnected' (p201). Drawing on Rye and Støkken's observations, this chapter proposes the translocal as a concept which might provide a conceptual framework (Brickell and Datta 2011) for developing such research in education. For digital education in particular (although I would argue that it also has much to offer other areas of education research), the translocal enables researchers to focus on 'simultaneous situatedness' as it is experienced through digital connections and 'locations' alongside physical locales. In a digital expansion of online education, the traditional university moves beyond its long established boundaries in interesting ways.

In her influential work, *For Space*, Massey (2005), in a chapter entitled 'making and contesting time-spaces', cautions against the simple opposition of the local and the global, suggesting that such oppositions form part of '…that dualism between Emotion (place/local) and Reason (space/global)' (p184). For Massey, 'An understanding of the world in terms of relationality, a world in which the local and the global really are 'mutually constituted', renders untenable these kinds of separation' (p184). To illustrate, she usefully poses the question, 'Where would you draw the line around the lived reality of your daily life?' (p185).

I refer to Massey's work here for several reasons. Firstly because the translocal and transtemporal view opens up the digital university to a different kind of scrutiny: where would we draw a line, or edge, around it? Secondly, to consider that the university is a time-space which it is useful to consider in terms of openings and closures (both temporal and spatial), particularly in understanding that these may be configured differently online, but that they are certainly not absent from the digital university. Access, for example, is a

differently configured issue online to access on-campus, but it remains an issue. Thirdly, I refer to Massey to emphasise that it is not the purpose of this chapter to set the local in opposition to the global, but to suggest that one way of understanding the global or 'internationalized' university in terms of the experience of the 'distance' student, and how the participants in a course are engaged, is to work through an account of multiple locales which relate to multiple temporalities. As Massey puts it, 'My argument is not that place is not concrete, grounded, real, lived etc. etc. It is that space is too.' (p185). It seems important, as Sharma (2013) suggests in her concept of 'power chronography' which draws on Massey's influential work on space, to make the same case for time. While it is often invisible, time is also lived. The translocal, transtemporal view, where times and spaces are juxtaposed and overlaid, is proposed here as an alternative to an abstract 'global' (Massey 2005).

Here, as I have suggested, I focus on student locations in this research project, although only two examples are taken from student accounts, in order to consider the times and places beyond the university campus which may become significant in the context of an online course. The seven student interviews undertaken are summarised in the table below, duplicated here for ease of reference from chapter 2, in order to give an illustration of the times and spaces which might be brought together in the context of a digital programme (I emphasise that this is an illustration, as I have already indicated these students were studying across three different courses at the time of interview). In this summary I aim to balance spatiality in the form of physical location with temporality.

Student interviews (Geography and Temporality)					
Pseudonym	Country Location	Time zone (UTC)	Interview location/mode	Interview tempo	Interview duration
Jay	Bangladesh	UTC +6	Email	Asynchronous	Number of weeks
Ella	Nigeria	UTC +1	Skype instant messaging	Synchronous	One hour
Theo	Rwanda	UTC +2	Email	Asynchronous	Number of weeks

Chris	Singapore	UTC +8	Email	Asynchronous	Number of weeks
Caitlin	UK	UTC +0	Blackboard Collaborate instant messaging	Synchronous	One hour
Megan	UK	UTC +0	Skype instant messaging	Synchronous	One hour
Robin	UK	UTC +0	Telephone	Synchronous	One hour

Locating students in time and space

Of the following excerpts from interviews, the first example is from a telephone interview with a student currently based in the UK; the second is from a Skype text interview with a student based in Nigeria, and the third is from a 'face to face' staff interview, which refers to a student based in Egypt, studying on one of the courses the staff member supports. I have indicated the 'location' of each interview, and where a digital environment provides textual time-stamps in a conversation, these have been preserved as part of the visible temporality (and the intervention of the software in the conversation) of the text. My intention here is neither to generalise about the nationally bounded locations of these students, nor to generalise across the interview data, but rather to focus on, juxtapose, and highlight the differences in individual contexts, which may remain hidden in the context of an online course, but which form the multiple and temporal and spatial locations of the digital university.

The car park

The location of my interview with Robin (before recording begins) moves from the online 'collaboration platform' of Blackboard Collaborate, to email, to a telephone connection. He has a preference for voice over text for our conversation, but has a problem in accessing Collaborate (potentially used as a 'recording' space) at the point we have agreed to meet. We catch up by email and agree to talk on the phone instead. While Robin and I are each in our own homes, we move between three conversation spaces, although it doesn't take long for us to negotiate the final 'location' of our call. In fact, I don't know where 'home' is exactly for Robin, but I do know from our interview that it is around twenty miles from the city in which he works. Robin tells me he has a history of part-time 'distance' study (prior

to enrolling with the University of *CityName*) and I ask him to tell me more about the times and places that work well for him to study in. Two points in our conversation are highlighted below.

> ROBIN: Um yeah, I started off, I'd get, I'd drive to work an hour early and sit in the in the [workplace] car park and do forty minutes there and then I'll do sort of uh forty minutes at lunchtime reading and then um maybe an hour at night, an hour and a bit at night, just as and when.

Although the words 'started off', suggest that the initial excerpt highlights a temporary routine (perhaps negotiating rush-hour, although I didn't confirm this with Robin), a car park might seem an unlikely place to study, although it does represent a relatively private space in a time demarcated as 'before work'. Robin tells me that his workplace is approximately '200 yards' from the nearest university campus, but that he couldn't physically attend a Masters programme there because he works full-time. So Robin sits in a car park, 200 yards from his nearest 'physical' university, and studies with the University of *CityName*. Robin is temporally distant from the 'local' university and spatially distant from the University of *CityName*. He sits between two imagined universities (he tells me he has never physically 'attended' an on-campus course) and, as he studies, the student work of the University of *CityName* is performed 'before work', in a car, in a car park, almost three hundred miles from its physical campus. There isn't, of course, necessarily anything 'digital' about this time-space. Robin tells me that he is 'old school' and uses paper and a clipboard and writes by hand, as well as connecting with his course online via his laptop, and I don't ask if he is using his phone or a laptop in the car, but it is the digital programme which connects Robin with *CityName*, and with the locations of other students on his course. He is strongly, imaginatively, connected to other people and other places, particularly to those staff and students he communicates with online on a regular basis, '…the actual online and the interaction and commenting on other people's work, I've not come across that before…and that is probably the most useful thing, most definitely' (Robin).

Later in our conversation, Robin tells me more about how he schedules his study activities,

> the biggest thing is…working out your timing, that's the biggest thing and, you know…you've got to work in half-hours um, you know, have a half-hour here, a half-hour…and then your big sessions, you've gotta grab time where you can. (Robin)

Linking the first excerpt to the second is Robin's calculation of valuable study time in units of around half an hour, although he also refers to 'big sessions', indicating to me that it is either difficult to find longer stretches of time, 'you've gotta grab time', or that Robin is particularly 'efficient' in his use of the time that he has available. Robin is a student who reports working in short bursts of time, including several study 'locations' in his interview. There is a mobility to his account, which is more evident than in the interview conversations I have with other students. I interpret this, not as 'anytime, anywhere' study, but as a series of opportunistic engagements where time and space have to be sought out in cars and lunchtimes and in half hours. Robin's 'half-hours' are, of course, in stark contrast with the long-term 'future' thinking of much of the discourse around online learning. Even the University of *CityName* is planning its online expansion over a ten year period. The times and spaces of Robin's interview emphasise that studying, wherever the 'online' connection is made, takes time, and that time has to be found in conjunction with an appropriate space. While it is nothing new to point out that studying part-time while working full-time can be difficult to schedule, surfacing where and when studying takes place can, nevertheless, be revealing.

The curfew

Jo is a member of staff at The University of *CityName*, who has a particular role in providing technical support for learning environments. We meet in her office on the campus and talk about a particular online programme she has been working with. Jo talks to me about the challenges of scheduling regular 'synchronous' sessions (in Blackboard Collaborate) for tutors and students who are based in different time zones, and who have different personal and professional commitments. She stresses that the 'timeframes that we have now for this cohort', would not necessarily work with a different configuration of simultaneously located students, and goes on to point out that once a workable 'timeframe' has been established, the local temporal and spatial circumstances of individual students will often be subject to change. In telling me this, she gives an example from a course she is supporting,

> …one of the…students is in Egypt and because of all the political unrest that's been going on there there's been power out, like they shut the power off for everybody at ten o'clock…so he doesn't have internet, he can't always stay at [his workplace] and so lots of things are disrupted, or just have to be within curfew, before curfew hours, so he's requested if they [student tutorial group] could meet a bit earlier… (Jo)

This example is striking, because it isn't just about finding a convenient 'timeframe' in relation to a time zone, but relates the simultaneity of the student time-space to a national, geopolitical time-space (a state of emergency), and back to the time-space of the University of *CityName*, some four thousand physical miles away. Jo tells me that the student group will discuss whether they can find a better time to meet online with this student, working around the hours of curfew. If there is a good reason for re-scheduling a tutorial, a continued curfew in a state of national emergency must surely be one of the most compelling. When I come back to this interview transcript in preparation for a presentation some weeks later, the curfew and the state of emergency are only just being lifted; they had remained in place for three months, from mid-August to mid-November 2013 (BBC 2013). While drafting this chapter, I look at the BBC news website and navigate the 'Egypt in Crisis' pages with their 'multimedia timeline', 'interactive map' and 'clashes close up' (BBC 2014) and I wonder where the student Jo referred to is studying from, and if he has been able to continue studying through the autumn semester with the University of *CityName*. He is two hours apart, in time zone terms, from Robin in the UK.

The generator

Ella works full-time in a Nigerian university and is taking an online Masters degree at the University of *CityName*. My interview with Ella took place using the instant messaging service provided by Skype. Prompted by my initial message, Ella and I share current location information and our local conditions. From my home in the UK, I tell her that I can see snow from my window; from her office in Nigeria, Ella tells me that the weather is sunny and warm, but that she is in anticipation of the seasonal rain soon to come. It is 12 noon in Nigeria and 11 am in the UK. Although, in terms of physical distance, Ella and I are around 3,500 miles from each other, in time zone terms we are only an hour apart. Through the instant messaging interface we, or our typed words, appear together in the same digital time-space, although I have no idea what Ella's view of the text is like in comparison to mine. Despite our connection, there are disruptions to our conversation, 'So sorry, the internet is fluctuating' (Ella).

Ella tells me that studying with others online gives her a sense of being in a '…global class right in my office/living room'. When I ask Ella what the best place and time to study are for her, she tells me that she studies 'late evening' at work, or 'mid night' at home. Ella's class is mobile, in the sense that it travels with her between two different, yet connected, local spaces; her living room and her office. The traditional educational space, 'globally'

populated, is transferred into the late evening workspace or the mid-night domestic time-space. Spatially imagined, the global class enters the home, or the workplace, at the same time as Ella connects with the global class. Through the technologies of paper and screen, and the processes of reading, writing, viewing and imagining, the university is invoked. As Ella works at a university herself, there is more than one university present in her studies. When studying in her workplace in the evening, one university space meets another. When studying or working at home there are two imagined universities which coexist in the domestic space.

When I ask Ella about the challenges of studying on her course, she identifies 'the internet and power supply (I mean electricity) and occasionally time' (Ella). I go on to ask her if the power supply is very restricted:

> [20/03/2013 12:06:11] Ella: Yes, very very restricted. We have about 5-6 hours of light [electricity] where I live. At work, the power supply is also very erractic [erratic] and the faculty [in Ella's workplace] can only afford to put on the generator for few hours in a day.

> [20/03/2013 12:07:00] Phil: Yes, I see, very restricted. Has that made it difficult to access the online course materials and discussions - how do you manage it?

> [20/03/2013 12:10:41] Ella: I try to work around the challenge. I have a generator at home which I use. I aslo [also] have a Laptop which has 5 hour battery capacity so whenever their [there] is light, I charge it.

Ella outlines the restrictions on electricity in the two study spaces she has identified; the work-space and the home-space. She introduces the temporal restrictions of the power supply in terms of supply time and battery time, and charge time for the rechargeable laptop and lamp, and the financial relationship between time and the generator and grid. Ella indicates the different financial implications which the different power sources have. After our interview, I look for information on electricity supplies in Nigeria and a complex national political economy emerges. When I come back to the transcript some months later, I look for other information sources and I find the story of 'the generator' in Nigeria (Oladipo 2013). Materials and resources on which Ella must draw have their own time-space restrictions; the moveable laptop and its charge time; the domestic re-chargeable lamp; the complex supply time-spaces of the generator and the grid and their relationships with the faculty budget and the priorities of a national government.

I now move on to consider such configurations in time and space from the perspective of a course organizer in the health sciences, not only to consider the potential richness of such a configuration, but also to consider its complexities.

Bringing richness in

When I ask Frances, a programme director in the health sciences, whether staff have thought about offering a full-time online programme, rather than the three year part-time model currently offered, she emphasizes the advantages she sees in working with a distributed group of online students who are also working professionals in the health sector.

> we've not had…occasionally you get somebody saying could I do it quicker, but not very often. (Frances)

> the group that we're aiming at is people who are working and…we aim to provide a way of doing a masters for people who're…they're in their home country doing really, you know, key jobs really, so…one of the really important things for us is that we don't want to contribute to the…health worker crisis and the brain drain, because if people come over here then…that's already them severed from, you know, their home country, so… that's actually a really important thing for us, is that we want…we believe that…it offers people who are working professionals a really good option...and who have families…they bring a lot of richness in… they're bringing their experience and that's really valuable and I think we would lose that. (Frances)

Here Frances refers out to a crisis narrative of health workers, a 'brain drain', which Jensen (2013) summarises as, 'the migration of health workers to wealthier countries in the Global North', a movement which in itself, she suggests, highlights 'high levels of global inequality' (Jensen 2013 p8). In the context of online education, as Frances explains the situation here, rather than leaving their 'home' countries, key workers can continue to support their local services, while contributing their ongoing professional experience to the course. In addition, Frances emphasizes a 'richness' in this account of the online course experience when it is combined with professional practice, and compares it to the full-time, on-campus experience of a similar course.

> I teach on [a similar programme on-campus] as well and I teach the same, essentially the same course…and there's no comparison in the richness of the experience, it's far richer online because… [on the full-time on-campus course] it's a different demographic, they tend to be…more academic, so their written work is better, you know, they're better at writing an essay, but in terms of their experience and their insight and their, what they can contribute,

there's just no comparison and I think if, once you move to…a full-time course then…you're going much more towards that demographic…maybe…they've done a degree and they're immediately following on with another degree, and they're a bit younger…and I think we'd lose, we'd lose something really special.

one of the really nice things about doing one course at a time is they're completely immersed in that course and they're you know they're just able to bring much more to it. (Frances)

In this section Frances links aspects of temporality with the 'richness' of experience. Firstly, the perceived advantages of the simultaneous, perhaps symbiotic, relationship between study and professional practice on the course and, secondly, the potentially immersive experience of taking one course at a time, rather than a combination of courses to make up full-time study.

When I go on to ask whether the online and on-campus groups have the opportunity to study together however, Frances points to issues of timing which make this a complex task of co-ordination.

we tried to do a thing this last semester, with bringing them together at the end…they were doing group presentations…within their course[s]…and the idea was at the end that we would kind of bring them all together and discuss, but it didn't work um, they did their presentations, but the bit bringing them together just didn't work because the [on-campus] people were, they were right at the end of semester one, they had loads of assignments and they were just up to their ears, and the online people also had their written assignment and people were just, you know, not, it just wasn't, it didn't work um, so I just don't think it, I think the two models are, I mean it sounds on paper, we always thought, you know, it would be nice to try and bring them together, and on paper it would. (Frances)

I include this extract because, while a translocal and transtemporal view of the university, viewed at the level of a course, would seem to have positive implications for course design, it would be naïve to suggest that successful gatherings of students online, particularly from more than one course, is necessarily an easy task. In this example, there are separate online/on-campus cohorts working within very different timeframes, with quite different schedules and commitments, and without established relationships and methods of communicating. This is quite different to the potential for developing the rich experience which Frances describes, of a group working together, across different times and spaces, yet within the same overall temporal framework of a course.

Yet the *potential* for building strong translocal, transtemporal connections, drawing on the richness of experience which Frances describes, is there. Frances's colleague, Kate, in a separate interview describes to me the distribution of a student group on another online module shared between Masters programmes,

> they're all over the place, we've got students um, some UK students, but the majority in Sub-Saharan Africa um, in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, some Asian students, students in India, Vietnam, Laos um…we've got some American students I think, Australian students…they're a really global group of students. (Kate)

The example also highlights for me the potential for working with a cohort, in the temporal sense of the term, where working with a distributed group of peers over time allows for the establishment of relationships and the exchange of ideas and experiences. For me, this positive sense of the cohort is held in tension with the progression of flexibility in organizational structures and programme design, as explored in chapter 5 of this thesis. If the emphasis on modular structures and supporting students in working individually, at their 'own pace', continues, do we then run the risk of losing out on the valuable opportunities for bringing distributed students 'together' for the kind of conversations and exchanges which digital education can support? In a sense, for me, the erosion of the cohort might be the reintroduction, or perpetuation, of physical and temporal 'distance' in distance education.

A translocal and transtemporal proposal

The particular value proposed in this chapter, of considering the translocal and the transtemporal in relation to digital education, is to call for, and to surface:

1) The translocal and the transtemporal as ways of thinking about where and when digital education is located. This becomes more complex than the ubiquitous 'anytime, anywhere' notion of online learning and teaching. The concepts encourage thinking about the complexity of the practices and processes of digital education.

2) The translocal and the transtemporal as ways of thinking about the experiences of individuals, across a range of places and times which might be associated with 'home', 'work', and 'study' (for both students and staff), to those places and times which might be associated with the 'host' institution, or the 'home' nation. The translocal/transtemporal may make such distinctions less distinct in digital education.

3) The translocal and the transtemporal as ways of thinking about equality, including the promotion of an equality of value between what might be described as the campus-centric university, and the multiple locales (bodies and objects, times and spaces) in which it can be seen to co-exist, both physically and digitally.

What I want to do here, in thinking about the digital university as translocal and transtemporal, is not to suggest that universities should deny the clear significance of their own physical organizational locales, but that for students and staff, wherever they are based, there will be other locales which are significant. I want to suggest that if these locales are taken into account, and layered in the context of an 'online' course, the university becomes a much more complex organization than the time-space of the campus, or of higher education discussed at the 'national' level of policy may suggest. If the local (rather than the national) is, as Rye and Støkken emphasise, 'a significant part of their [students'] educational space' (2012 abstract), then educators working in translocal online environments need to think carefully about understanding, and perhaps acknowledging pedagogically, the complexity of the spaces and times in which their online courses take place.

The digital and the translocal

Thinking of the research interview excerpts discussed here, in terms of the translocal proposal I made earlier in this chapter, it is possible to see that careful consideration of where and when digital education is located becomes less a question of 'anytime, anywhere' connections, and more a complex, multiply located negotiation. Where some boundaries appear to be transcended, others emerge. Students who are digitally connected, like those introduced above, have opportunities for coming 'together' in digital spaces in synchronous, or close to synchronous conversation, but my emphasis here is that this should not obscure the ways in which they also remain spatially and temporally separated, not least in terms of their multiple geopolitical locations.

For the campus-based university which extends its digital provision, other, previously 'spatial' categories also become less distinct. What is an 'international' or 'overseas' student (terms used frequently in relation to 'fee status' in the UK), in this context? When do we consider a student to be 'home'? Is the institution still a 'host', or is the student 'hosting' the institution? There are many ways in which a translocal approach destabilizes such homogenous notions and may offer many alternative imaginings.

What I want to propose, in concluding this chapter, is that educators and policy makers in higher education have a responsibility to acknowledge the translocal and transtemporal make-up of the contemporary university. Where and when is the 'distance' university situated, and what are the implications for those engaged with it and with each other? Such a consideration may begin with a negotiation of digital environments and time zones, but what else might need be taken into account? It is not simply that it is necessarily significant where students are 'from' or where they are 'based' (although country of 'domicile' seems to be the most commonly available 'data' about students), it is perhaps more important to emphasise the complexity and contingency of the student locale, the education space, at a 'micro' level which goes beyond the 'national' boundary. As the student connects to the university, the time-space of the university itself shifts. The university in the bodies of staff and students, who continue to work and study in multiple spaces and times, never closes. It is always 'at work'. In Sharma's (2013, 2014) terms, this is a way of thinking of time as shared and bound, where the 24/7 university is more than an account of the opening hours of its facilities and support services, although these too must be taken into account.

In this chapter I have begun to explore the role that digital technologies and translocal connections play in shifting the time-space of the university, by focusing on courses studied fully online in what might be considered a 'distance' mode, and thinking about the detail of being 'simultaneously situated' with connections to other places. The time-space shift is particularly evident in the research example of a traditional campus-based university, with no significant history of distance education, which makes a strategic shift in the direction of digital education. While the focus of such a move may initially be on the practicalities and proper administration of supporting such a project, it seems equally important to think about how this shift might impact on the spatial, temporal and pedagogical assumptions which are embedded in the traditional campus, and on the translocal student experience. The digital, translocal university becomes, I have proposed, characterised by a layering of multiple time-spaces, a layering of physical, digital and imagined manifestations. While Rye and Støkken (2012) draw our attention to the potential inequalities of 'the network', how might the university not only address, but think through such inequalities and differences to the generative potential of connecting with students and staff who are 'simultaneously' embodied and embedded in a distributed variety of places and times?

8. CONCLUSIONS, CRACKS AND QUERIES

> The beauty of empirical work is that you have no sooner reached such neat
> and satisfying conclusions than they start to exhibit cracks and queries.
> (Massey 2005, p178)

In lieu of a conclusion to her work on *Flexible Bodies*, Martin (1994) writes of 'the impossibility of concluding', pointing to her text as one which consists of 'observations about processes that are still in process', and resisting making what she considers to be a 'foolhardy' prediction of the future (p249). Over twenty years later, with Martin's work continuing to be relevant and generative, the concluding section of this thesis considers endings and exits, referring back to the multiple beginnings of the thesis, the research project and its subject, described in detail in chapters 1 and 4. In agreement with Martin (1994), however, the conclusions presented here do not represent a sealed and final closure, but a process of ending and edging which signifies disengaging with the research process, an exit at a particular point in time and in the text. Endings, of course, are also beginnings, there is always a 'what happens next'. Indeed, the cracks in research conclusions, as Massey (2005) describes them above, are the openings for new questions and for future research. In this chapter, I therefore draw together some of the 'conclusions, cracks and queries' which have been reached or opened up in the course of this thesis, and look ahead to the future research which might emerge from the cracks.

In the foregoing chapters, I have considered ways of thinking differently about aspects of the digital university, while focusing on a particular study of emerging digital practice in online distance education in the UK. Beginning by troubling the 'distance' in distance education led me to develop an interest in the temporality as well as the geography of higher education and digital practice. I have shown that drawing on ideas of critical time (Sharma 2013) and temporal recalibration, in both social and digital forms (Sharma 2014, Coyne 2010), can support, if not a confrontation, at least a complication of what I have described as the spatially biased practices of distancing in distance education discourse and practice. As I emphasised in chapter 2, I have been particularly drawn to Sharma's (2013) notion that 'one's experience of time is always tied to another's temporality' (p314), leading me to consider how temporal relations of power are formed in relation to and through the digital, and what kinds of time are dominant in the discourse of higher education and technology.

At the level of policy and think-tank literature examined in chapter 4, I found texts which were engaged with dramatic visions of the future, drawing on metaphors of natural disaster,

coupled with technological determinism. Such futures are predicated in these texts on technology as an unstoppable and seemingly independent homogenous force, bringing with it rapid change, with which organisations are entreated to embrace and keep pace, or ignore at their peril.

In chapter 5, I drew attention to the discourse of flexibility and flexible time in digital education, finding academic time to be recalibrating in complex ways, and sometimes adopting, or adapting to (in the case of the promotion of MOOC platforms, for example), the discourse of technology marketing. The ubiquitous 'anytime, anywhere' (FutureLearn 2015) or 'faster, better' (Coursera 2015) phrases and their equivalents are aligned with positive principles of access to education in a way which, I argue, smooths over unequal and uneven relations to time, including the time available for study. As I emphasise at several points in this thesis, education does *not* happen anytime, anywhere, but in particular places at particular times. It is false advertising to associate the fast time of technology with a 'faster, better' principle in education. Education takes time and happens over time, and its relationship with technology, as I explored it in some detail in chapter 6, is far more temporally complex than the language of speed-up would suggest. I have argued that we need to take a critical position on flexibility in relation to the digital, and that this needs to take account of the temporal notion of flexible time. Sharma's (2013, 2014) work on critical time is one way in which this might be approached, by drawing attention to time as shared and bound rather than as an individually or institutionally managed resource. In agreement with Sharma (2014), that not everyone experiences 'the fast pace of life', but that most will experience a 'structural demand that they must recalibrate' to the temporal expectations of others (p138), I propose that there is much further work to be done to understand temporal relations in digital education. This work might take account of the temporal at the level of policy, of academic work, of student experience, of pedagogy, of the temporal relationships between home, work and the academy (and the places in-between), as well as at the level of digital time in software environments.

While the digital may well offer opportunities in terms of access, it does not necessarily offer the same opportunities for all. I found a contrast between the times and spaces of the physical campus, often perpetuated in digital form, and the times and temporalities which might be different in the context of an online course. In chapter 6, I aimed to question some of the presumptions made about digital time, where the focus of digital education is often on choices between asynchronous or synchronous discussion and the problems of time zones. I

also sought to trouble the way in which I found digital media was being used in ways which were perpetuating the campus practices (and times) of *CityName*. This led to a wider consideration of temporality in course design and how this was being surfaced in my conversations with course leaders working on online programmes, where making courses visible in online environments was also raising interesting pedagogical questions around the narrative of a course.

Building on the findings of the previous chapters and returning to think about the temporal contexts and connections of student participants led me towards considering an alternative, transtemporal imagining for the digital university, building on the notion of the translocal (Brickell and Datta 2011, Hall and Datta 2010, Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013), on which I expanded in Chapter 7. In concluding this research project, I continue to consider not only the theme of temporal recalibration (Sharma 2014, Coyne 2010), but also the transtemporal and translocal, to be rich terms, each of which is worthy of further exploration in a higher education context. In agreement with Sharma (2013), such work requires the development of a critical approach to time. In the remainder of this chapter I return briefly to three areas for future research which I have touched on in this thesis, considered in relation to critical time. These are quality time, temporal analysis, and transtemporality. Finally, I argue for greater temporal responsibility in higher education discourse.

Quality time

The first theme for future research, which I proposed in concluding chapter 5, is the notion of quality time in digital education. For me, this is a not simply a temporal aspect of formal 'quality assurance', but an opportunity to think about time in terms of the qualitative temporal experience of students and staff. In this sense, considering the quality of time in digital education brings into question the notion of 'anytime, anywhere' study, which I have addressed in this thesis. It also has potential as an approach to digital course design, where design decisions may benefit from more nuanced attention to time, beyond those decisions which, as I suggest above, are limited to the timeframes and timings of discussion based activities. This seems particularly important at a time when the discourse of 'learning analytics' (Siemens 2013) may be in danger of limiting an understanding of learning and teaching to measures such as the frequency and duration of time spent 'on task' in digital environments. This is not to say that such decisions and explorations of data are not important, but that there are also other opportunities for designing and researching temporal experiences in the context of online courses which deserve greater attention. How do

teachers, for example, design the pace of a course? Is it possible to experience what might be considered to be 'slow' time, in a digital environment? What a role might cultural or political time play when a course is studied across multiple locations each with its own cultural and political concerns?

As I also suggested in chapter 5, the notion of quality time can be considered in relation to sustained time and to sustaining time, the time taken in scholarly work, which may need to resist institutional over-emphases on flexible (as well as fast) time. Where online education might be seen to offer flexible access to a greater choice of modules with which to make up a degree programme, or to intermittent study, it is also important to balance those gains with the losses which might be incurred as an unintended consequence, by appearing, for example, to devalue sustained engagement with a single topic over a sustained period of time, or by consequently structuring education in such a way that sustained engagement with a topic over time becomes an elite form of education.

As Sharma (2013) suggests, 'there is much work needed to elaborate the temporal counterparts of…spatial dynamics and experiences in order for the study of time to be a critical intervention' (p316). In Sharma's (2014) terms, we might also look at how online students, as in the brief examples I explored in chapter 7, who are working full-time and studying part-time are '*constituted in* time' (p13, italics in original), with attention to lived experience. What is it to be a part-time, online, 'distance' student? How do we bring a greater understanding of these students to the campus-focused institution in which such students may be invisible to those beyond their particular course contexts? Similarly, how might staff be better represented digitally than in the form of 'talking heads', such as those of the institutional research videos explored in chapter 6, where the bodies of researchers are reconstituted and recalibrated in time into one-minute (re)presentations of a research career. How might the time 'consuming' practices (which can be positive as well as negative consumptions) of teaching and research be communicated digitally?

Temporal analysis

The second, and closely related, area which I propose for future research is the development of temporal analysis in relation to the digital. While there is a great deal of philosophical and theoretical work on time which may be drawn on conceptually, there is much less on which to draw in considering methods for studying time qualitatively in the social sciences. While it could be argued that temporal concerns are already prominent in ethnographic work,

I would still argue that there is currently a gap in the literature which would benefit from further work and exploration in the area of time studies in the social sciences, particularly in the area of research methods for analysing time, temporal discourse, and temporal experience. One strand of work, for example, might be to develop further Lefebvre's (1992/2013) work on 'rhythmanalysis' in terms of method (outlined as a qualitative method by Pigrum 2008), not least because Lefebvre emphasises in his 'rhythmanalytical project' that rhythmanalysis does not, 'lose sight of the body. Not the anatomical or functional body, but the body as polyrhythmic and eurhythmic' (p77), and where, 'The theory of rhythms is founded on the experience and knowledge…of the body.' (p77). Analytic frameworks which develop Lefebvre's notion of rhythmanalysis could work well with Sharma's (2013) work on critical time, particularly given the significance of temporal experience and the biopolitical to her work (2011). I propose that a rich analysis of the digital university, moving between the physical (embodied), digital and material, and paying particular attention to temporal experience, could benefit from further work on temporal methods in the social sciences.

Transtemporality and the digital university

The third area I propose for future research, which I see drawing on the first two, and which I have discussed in some detail in chapter 7, is the development of studies which work with the concept of transtemporality in digital higher education, particularly as a way of troubling the spatial biases of a distance education discourse which does little to surface and work with time. For me, a critical temporal framework has the advantage of enabling a better analysis of the practices of education, which goes beyond attending to the physical and organisational structures (in terms of formal governance, for example) of universities. As I suggested in chapter 7, a translocal and transtemporal analysis, beginning with (but moving beyond), for example, a university building, department, campus or other unit of organising, building on the work of Hall and Datta's (2010) analysis of the 'translocal street', has the potential to open up an understanding of the multiple temporal and spatial relationships of both the physical and digital universities and the complex relations between them. This is one way in which the university beyond the campus, in its social, cultural and material aspects might be described, and perhaps visualised, in order to make visible those relations which are often invisible. Such studies would inevitably begin to link teaching and learning activities and relationships with those of research, in potentially generative ways.

Considerations for future research might also include an exploration of how the digital university could be visualised. I suggest visualisation here as a way of unsettling images of the physical campus as the key representation of university work. In addition to the kind of creative images exemplified in Zalcman's (2015) photographs, illustrated in chapter 7, explorations might include data visualisations of universities as configurations of translocal connections across time. In *CityName*'s case, this might be through a visualisation of temporal connections to its virtual private network (VPN), for example, but in a way which also considers the views *out* from those connections, the contextual and uneven times and spaces from which students and staff connect (beyond views of their digital devices). At the moment, I consider such visualisations of 'online' students in a higher education context to be dependent on website images and marketing materials which depict students on-campus, or 'in the field', with mobile devices, laptops or smartphones, alongside images of students 'in the laboratory' engaging with the apparatus of modern science (for an example of this, see the Russell Group (2014) video, 'What do Russell Group universities have in common'). There are images therefore of students looking into devices, within the institution, but not images of what they might be looking towards and engaging with.

I propose that, beyond such smooth images of connection in marketing discourse, universities have a responsibility to surface the effortfulness of such temporal and spatial connections in the context of education, not least a responsibility to acknowledge, as I have already suggested in this thesis, that education is effortful and takes place unevenly, over time. While I do not imagine that the marketing of education and technology will begin to include UK car parks and Nigerian generators in its promotional materials, I do suggest that those engaging in online higher education discourse have a responsibility to recognise that these are a part of digital education, at least as much as the hardware and software objects which often dominate discussions. Thinking temporally, this is about raising a *coeval* awareness of others in space and time (Massey 2005), where those others might currently be invisible if viewed only from the perspective of the campus. Surfacing a digital transtemporality is one way of working with this idea in digital education. Digital time has the capacity to gather bodies, objects and materials as well as multiple times together in complex, but also creative, configurations.

This transtemporal and translocal approach has particular application, not only as a way of thinking about the digital university at the operational level of organising, but also with application at a course level in terms of digital academic practice. I propose that attention to

the temporality and geography of digital practice encourages thinking differently about what it is to participate in, or spend *time with*, a course, giving consideration to the complexities of the *when* and *where* of teaching and learning, but also, again, to what might be (in)visible in digital course environments in terms of the experiences, practices and local contexts of students. I also consider the translocal and transtemporal to have wider implications for examining other relationships supported by digital environments and I propose that these terms may be valuable to research in the wider field of digital culture and digital media.

While I would argue that no digital environment could be described as politically or structurally 'neutral', the notion of digital time and space has the capacity to both neutralise and conceal difference (Sheail and Ross 2014). This is, of course, both beneficial and problematic; beneficial in allowing times, spaces and individuals to come together in a seemingly neutralised time-space, which might be thought of as offering equality, while masking the multiplicity of times, spaces, bodies and materials which are drawn into and come to constitute that environment. I have described the way in which, as an underpinning argument of this thesis, understanding the dominant times and spaces of the university campus as central and those accessing the campus in asymmetric/asynchronous ways as peripheral, may not just lead to perpetuating practices of 'distancing', but also to a lack of recognition of emergent inequalities (digitally reconfigured and potentially invisible) in the digital university.

As noted in chapter 2, Coyne (2010) proposes that the notions of calibration and recalibration might also offer the capacity to 'draw attention to the seams rather than to the supposed smooth integration of technologies into everyday life' (p19), where calibration 'draws attention to discrepancies between models' (p24). This can currently be seen in the processes of adjustment that may be surfaced, say, in coming together 'synchronously' in a digital environment, which might involve the testing of headphones, microphones and webcams, for example. Where the temptation might be to hide such organising or tuning practices away, 'behind the scenes', perhaps they might also be necessary to recognising the effortfulness and artifice of 'coming together' in such a way.

Running through chapter 5 on flexible time and chapter 7 on the transtemporal is a reminder that access to education, an ongoing concern for the physical campus, remains an issue in the digital university. Access becomes problematic in different ways, as an issue of national digital infrastructure (access to electricity) for those located in some nations but not others, for example, and in the financial implications of paying for education, which will not simply be solved by a pay-as-you-go modular structure or scholarships which are geographically

limited and restricted by discipline. Even among the small number of students I interviewed, there were a number of financial openings and closings, where an opening might be the availability of scholarship funding, and where a closure might be the limited selection of disciplines deemed fundable, either at a national level or at the level of what is considered to be 'professional' development. One question which I think is particularly worthy of further pursuit is Kate's, which I highlighted in chapter 5: 'How do you create the permission system that allows people to study during work time?'. For Kate this is an international question of professional development practices, but it is also a question with relevance to the local UK context, where study is always a question of time as well as of space and funding.

Temporal responsibilities

At the time of writing, digital education at the postgraduate level continues to expand at the University of *CityName*, both in terms of the number of online courses available, and in the number of students taking those courses. As courses continue to be developed and accumulate new students, the current point in time appears to be critical in making new programmes both sustainable for the future and embedded in the core processes of the institution, issues which are now being addressed at *CityName* as the distance expansion project, a temporary initiative, is absorbed into the organising mainstream of the University. An essential element of this organisational work is the recognition of a student population growing and changing demographically at its digital edges. As I have argued in this thesis, this is a temporal as well as a spatial matter, as the university comes into being in new temporal as well as spatial configurations.

I have also highlighted, as a recurring critique, that there is a responsibility in online distance education to acknowledge that education takes time. This means uncoupling higher education from discourse of technological determinism in education, which brings with it not only the notion of fast time, but the concept of time as an individually managed resource which is evenly distributed. A major risk of the current environment is that students are encouraged to see speed as a positive principle in education, where continued efficiencies brought about by technology will mean that there will be quicker ways to complete qualifications and where the qualification is the only goal. This works against academic experiences in which education takes time and happens over time, not in a way in which time should become characterised as a resource of the elite, but where it is integral to scholarly work.

While uneven and unequal time must be recognized, transtemporality should be also recognized as a potential digital advantage. It allows time to be configured and overlaid in interesting ways, which might be brought into the context of a course. Questions of course design could draw more effectively on the connected 'coevalness' (Massey 2005) of participants in relation to course topics for example. For Sharma (2104), an understanding of coevalness must include an understanding of how each of us is implicated in the 'temporal vulnerability' of others (p149). In Hawawini's (2011) terms, what are the opportunities for 'learning from the world', rather than aspiring to 'teach the world what the institution knows?' (abstract). These are issues which it would make sense to address, not only in challenging the spatial dominance of the campus, but also in opening up ideas of what universities are, what they do (a temporal matter), what they are for (Collini 2012), and what they might be (Barnett 2013).

Building on Edwards (1997) and Nicoll (2006, 2011), I have also drawn attention to the problem of students who are potentially exploited in a temporal economy which requires them to work full-time in order to (afford to) study part-time, and where part-time study continues to be a significant mode in online education. Students continue working and thereby contribute to the economy, contributing further by spending their earnings on course fees. In this scenario students must also commit time beyond full-time. While some employers may contribute both funding and study leave, there were no examples of this in my research from either students or tutors. It is therefore highly problematic if reports into part-time study in the UK (such as Department for Business Innovation &Skills 2012), while recognising full-time and part-time as problematic terms, continue to propose that this problem can be overcome by offering 'more flexibility for all' (p268). Flexible time is attractive where it provides genuine choices in when a particular activity might take place, but it does not produce additional time. There is a danger that flexible time becomes a term which ignores the time-consuming practices of education, making it appear that these can take place at any time, in periods of short duration, but also at times which are 'out of hours' in relation to the workplace and often in a student's 'own time'. As Martin (1994) puts it, 'can we simultaneously realize that the new flexible bodies are also highly constrained?' (p248). While the research undertaken for this thesis has focused on an institution in a UK context, which is therefore linked to the UK model of higher education funding, it may also be interesting to explore the online distance models of other nations which may stem from other views of part and full-timeness in education. How different funding models for and attitudes towards higher education are then 'exported' may be revealing.

As I move towards the completion of my thesis research, the area of online education moves on, as does the University of *CityName*. I recently attended a talk given by a senior manager at the University, for whom 'future gazing' sees the successors of MOOCs, albeit perhaps less massive in the future, taking root in amongst the University's relatively 'ordinary' online business. The students and staff I interviewed have also moved on. Some staff have moved on physically, to other higher education institutions, and others I speak to find that online education, once strange, has become a more familiar habit. The students I interviewed, I hope, will have moved on towards the completion of their online studies with *CityName* and, of course, will have moved on in multiple ways in other aspects of their lives. The end of the thesis, as well as offering the beginnings of future research projects, in a sense reflects how I too, as a researcher, have moved on, taking some strands of research forward from this work and leaving others behind. As both Sharma (2014) and Adam (2008) acknowledge, however, thinking through time changes everything. The effects of this turn to time may be seen in my work for some time to come.

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