

Identity, Place and Space: the case of ambient Streetart

This paper uses concepts from Visual Studies and from the New Literacy Studies to explore how new technologies are impacting on street-artists, their work, the spaces in which they are contextualised – and on identity.

Previous papers (Davies 2007) have explored ways in which learning can be traced through multimodal interaction in online affinity spaces (Gee, 2004). I have identified ways in which participants in the online space of Flickr demonstrate learning about culture, about identity and ways of reading the world. Building on these ideas, this paper reflects on how learning in online spaces impacts in other spaces off-line - and vice versa. Through close textual analysis of streetart and online interactivity, I show how new technologies bring about the creation of new cultural resources and ways of making meaning.

The paper reflects a number of years of research carried out in an ‘ethnographic spirit with a commitment to situated enquiry into what people do, say, and think’ (Collins and Slembrouck 2007). I have spent time interacting in online spaces and in sites where streetartists work and show their work, as well as tracing the activities of photographers who keenly capture images of the art. The paper describes specific aspects of streetart and the ways in which artists and those interested in streetart use the Internet in ways that change the artwork, the meanings within it and how these processes in turn impact on identity and space. This research is framed within a wider discussion about ways in which new technologies are suggesting a reconceptualisation of text, and the ways in which meanings can be traced across space and time and in multiple modes through a range of media. This then is a study of cultural resources, of social semiotics, of communication across a whole range of communication landscapes.

References

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