

Not just brains on sticks: An embodied approach to learning

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- Published in April 2021
- Introduces six principles of embodied cognition science and how it might apply to teaching and learning
- Challenges reductive ‘disembodied’ systems in academia: student registers, online grade entry

1. Our bodies are in constant motion

- Bodies are 'ecosystems' within ecosystems
- We 'think better on our feet'
- Ability to move around a space fosters a sense of ownership (and vice versa) → how might we promote this?



2. Our bodies prize energy efficiency

- Ecosystems use energy, especially under stress
- Predictions reduce energy load (but have implications)

→ How do our spaces promote energy recovery?

3. Our bodies use tools, technology, and others to extend our capacities

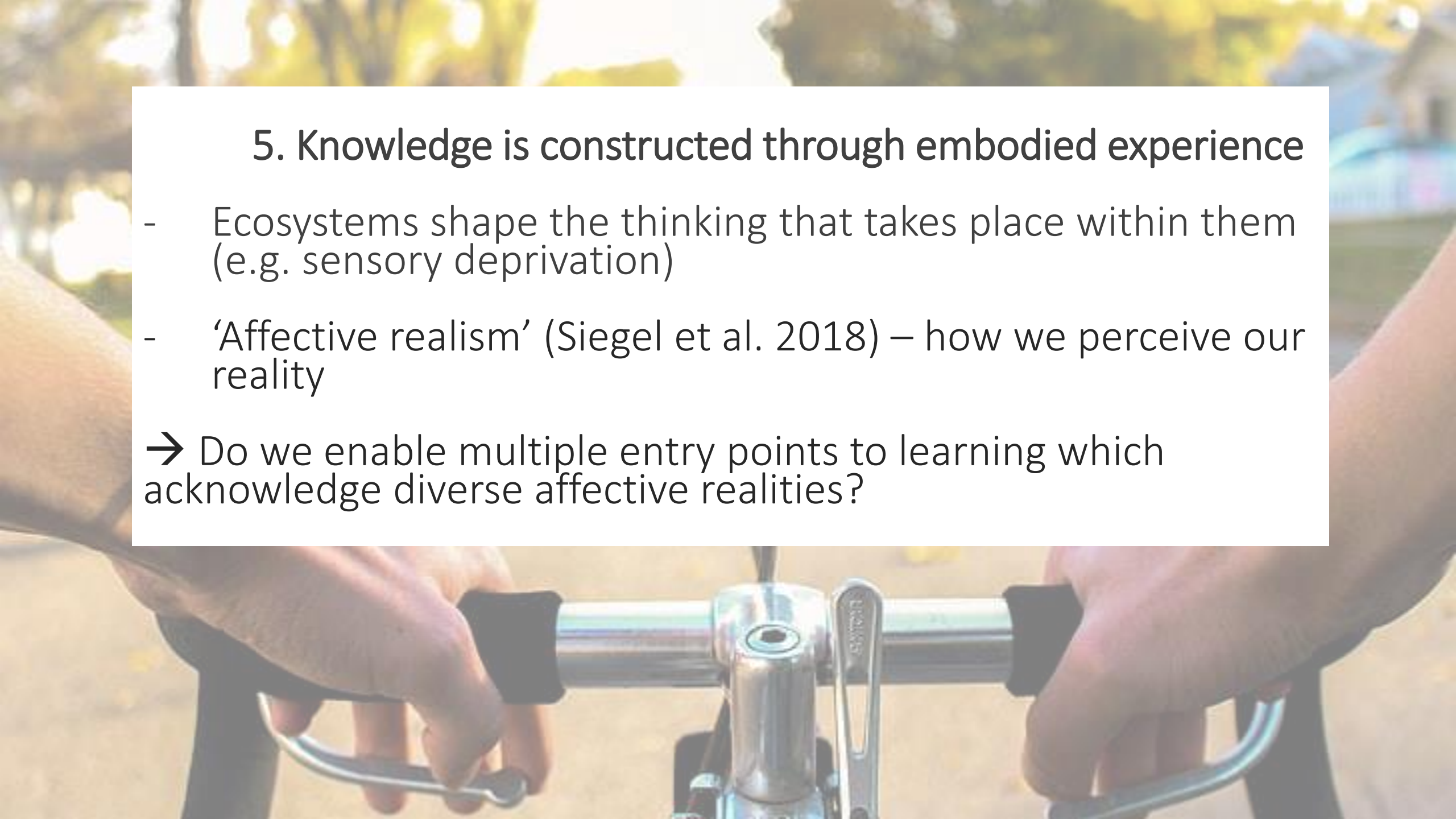
- 'Peripersonal space' = our 'sensory boundaries'
 - 'Affordances' = how we interact with tools (and others) is relative
- Does our use of tech enable learning? How about our spaces?

4. Each of us affects the embodied ecosystem of others

- Daily stresses – ‘everyday indignities’, feeling out of place – impact our ‘bandwidth’
- ‘How can we support the best environments for learning, including behavioural and social variables?’
- How can/do Library spaces encourage ‘intentionally equitable hospitality’ (Bali et al. 2019)?

5. Knowledge is constructed through embodied experience

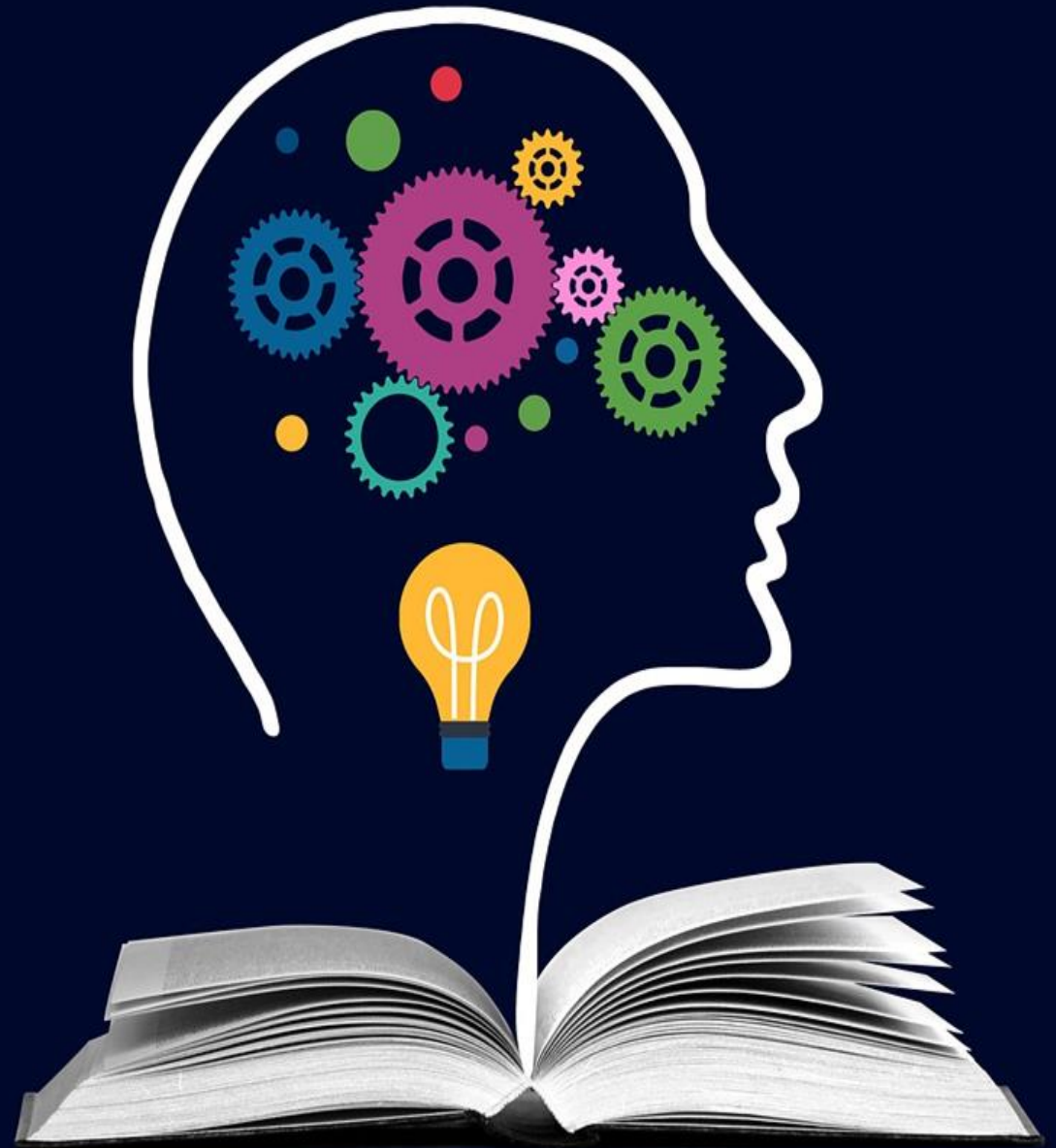
- Ecosystems shape the thinking that takes place within them (e.g. sensory deprivation)
 - 'Affective realism' (Siegel et al. 2018) – how we perceive our reality
- Do we enable multiple entry points to learning which acknowledge diverse affective realities?



6. Our bodies reward learning

(How do we picture 'learning'?!)

- Humans are 'infovores' (Biederman and Vessel 2006)
 - 'If nothing else is calling on our time and energy, we are built to be both acquisitive and inquisitive' (Claxton 2015: 115)
- How can we best promote tending to our ecosystems to support teaching and learning?



Over to you!

How might an embodied approach apply to/influence:

- Our Library spaces (for students and staff)?
- Our teaching and learning in the Library?
- How we work together (alone, as a team, with students and the community)?