Themenheft Nr. 24: Educational Media Ecologies
Edited by Dorothee M. Meister, Theo Hug and Norm Friesen

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From educational gaming through portable e-readers to cell phones, media are inter-penetrating educational spaces and activities. Accordingly, understanding media in environmental or ecological terms has become increasingly important for education internationally. In North America, for example, the centenary of McLuhan's birth has focused attention on approaches to media – whether oral, textual, electronic or digi-tal– as a kind of environment in which education takes place. In parts of Europe, the so-called mediatic turn – following on the linguistic and iconic turns – has similarly emphasized the role of media as a condition for the possibility of educational activi-ties and programs.

With a few exceptions[1] the papers in this special issue were first presented at the conference «Educational Media Ecologies: International Perspectives» which took place at the University of Paderborn, Germany, on March 27–28, 2012.[2] The event was an interdisciplinary and transatlantic endeavor to bring together a wide range of per-spectives on various issues relevant to educational media ecologies,[3] and on related debates on mediation, medialization, mediatization, and mediality.[4] The purpose of this volume, like the conference, is to foster and deepen international dialogue in the area of educational media. Areas of research and scholarship relevant to this dia-logue include educational media, media literacy, educational philosophy, and media and cultural studies.

The contributions, described below, put conceptual issues as well as social prac-tices and applications at the center of the debate.

Klaus Rummler opens the issue by clarifying the concept of ecology itself. Ref-erencing a range of work over the past 50 years, Rummler describes how ecological models have been cast in sociological, semiotic, cultural, mediatic and other terms, and he explains the implications of these various perspectives for the study of edu-cational contexts. Rummler also briefly introduces the reader to the triangular mod-el used by Bachmair, Pachler and Cook in this issue (and in other publications) to

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1 The exceptions are the papers by Rainer Leschke and Norm Friesen, Michael Kerres and Richard Heinen, and Theo Hug.

2 See: http://kw.uni-paderborn.de/institute-einrichtungen/mewi/arbeitsschwerpunkte/prof-dr-dorothee-m-meister/tagungen/educational-media-ecologies-international-perspectives/ (2014-7-8).

3 Cf. definitions of the Media Ecology Association (MEA): http://www.media-ecology.org/media_ecology/index.html (2014-7-8).

4 For more about these variations on the terms «media» and «mediation», see: Norm Friesen and Theo Hug. 2009. «The Mediatic Turn: Exploring Consequences for Media Pedagogy.» In Mediatization: Concept, Chan-ges, Consequences, edited by Knut Lundby, 64–81. New York: Peter Lang. http://learningspaces.org/pa-pers/Media_Pedagogy_&_Mediatic_Turn.pdf.

analyse the socio-cultural and cognitive possibilities opened up by various mobile media.

Sandra Aßmann and Bardo Herzig discuss three theoretical approaches – a network perspective, systems theory and semiotics – in order to conceptualize and analyze learning with media in a range of formal and informal settings. They use the example of «friending» someone via Facebook, a context in which the formal and informal often intersect in unexpected ways. In this way, Aßmann and Herzig demonstrate the manifest complexities of communication analysis and pragmatics in these relatively new networked, mediated contexts.

Judith Seipold provides an extensive overview of the burgeoning literature on the use and potential of mobile technologies in learning and educational ecologies. The research perspectives or frameworks covered by Seipold include critical, ethical, resource-centered, learning process-centered as well as ecological frames of reference. In her coverage of the last of these, not only does Seipold help to reframe the theme of this special issue as a whole, she also provides an excellent segue to the ecologically oriented analysis of «mobile learning» that follows.

Ben Bachmair and Norbert Pachler's contribution, «A Cultural Ecological Frame for Mobility and Learning», reflects the work of the London Mobile Learning Group, examining mobile resources and affordances from the ecological perspectives of Gibson, Postman and the seminal German media-pedagogue, Dieter Baacke. Using the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens, Bachmair, Norbert and Cook elaborate the aforementioned triangular model for understanding both the agency and the cultural and structural constraints offered by mobile technologies.

In «Building as Interface: Sustainable Educational Ecologies», **Suzanne de Castell, Milena Droumeva and Jen Jenson** connect learning and media ecologies with the material, global and ecological challenges that have become a part of the anthropocene. They do so by examining the mediation of a physical, architectural environment, their own departmental environment at Simon Fraser University. De Castell, Droumeva and Jenson uncover a range of practical and theoretical challenges, and explore the implications for both body and mind.

Markus Deimann takes the reader back into the history of continental educational theory, to Humboldt's (and others') expansive understanding of Bildung, to suggest a conceptual ecology germane to the manifold possibilities that are now on offer through open education. Deimann sees the «open paradigm» as changing education utterly – and for the better. It will do so, Deimann predicts, by «unbundling» resource and service provision, and assessment and accreditation functions that have for too long been monopolized by the educational monoliths known as «universities».

Theo Hug's contribution, «Media Form School – A Plea for Expanded Action Orientations and Reflective Perspectives» similarly looks to the past to envision possibilities for the future. Hug's concern is with the narrow confines in which media

are conceptualized and operationalized in many K-12 educational ecologies, and in the corresponding policy and curricular documents that further constrain and direct this action. Hug suggests looking to the recent past, the 1970s and 1960s, in which alternatives were envisioned not only by figures like McLuhan and Illich, but also intimated in the works of Austrian poets and artists.

Norm Friesen provides the third «rearview mirror» perspective in his examination of the lecture as a trans-medial pedagogical form. From the late medieval university through to today's IGNITE and TED talks, the lecture has accommodated and reflected a wide range of media ecologies, technical conditions and epistemological patterns. New media technologies –from the (data) projector to lecture capture media– have not rendered the lecture obsolete, but have instead foregrounded its performative aspects and its ongoing adaptability.

Michael Kerres and Richard Heinen take as their starting point Deimann's, Hug's and Friesen's stress on the manifold possibilities presented digital and open educational resources. They then seek to answer the question: How can this embarrassment of riches be put to good use in K-12 educational contexts? Their answer: «Edutags», a way of making resources more accessible and usable by providing descriptive and evaluative information along with such resources.

Heinz Moser and Thomas Hermann present the concept and first results of the project «Visualized Vocational Aspirations: Potentials of photography for career counselling and vocational preparation».[5] The research project is a cooperation between the Zurich University of Teacher Education (Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich) and the «Laufbahnzentrum» (Centre of Vocational Counselling) Zürich. Based on an ecological approach of narrative career education and a design-based research methodology the undertaking aims at creative applications of visual storytelling in career counselling.

Rainer Leschke and Norm Friesen conclude the issue with what might be called an aesthetic- or formal-ecological perspective. The digital convergence of textual and other media forms, Leschke and Friesen maintain, means the erasure of formal and material distinctions traditionally embedded in separate media. Educational (and other) institutions have oriented long themselves on the basis of such distinctions; and what is now left are distinctions based only on recombinant, virtual aesthetic markers.

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5   The project is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (project 136617, duration: March 1, 2012 – February 28, 2015).