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Call for Papers

Special Issue

Reconfiguring Educational Spaces under Conditions of Digitality

Innovative Learning Environments, Artificial Intelligence and Social Transformation

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Theme

In the face of accelerating social transformations – ranging from technological disruption and environmental crises to demographic shifts and global pandemics – education systems are increasingly called upon to create resilient, inclusive, and future-oriented learning spaces. The traditional boundaries between physical classrooms, digital platforms, and community contexts are dissolving, necessitating a fundamental rethinking of the interrelation of pedagogy, space, technology, and community.

This special issue invites contributions that explore the concept of «Educational Space» as a holistic ecosystem. We seek to move beyond the mere delivery of content to examine how teachers and students actively co-construct knowledge through their interactions with spaces, technologies, and one another. Educational spaces can be understood as socio-material and media-mediated configurations that encompass physical, digital and social dimensions (Meister, Hug, and Friesen 2014). From this perspective, platforms, data practices, and AI systems are not simply added to existing learning environments. They are socio-material arrangements through which these environments are constituted, shaping what can be taught and learned, who can participate, and how agency, visibility, authority, and how responsibility are organized and negotiated. Against this background, this special issue explores educational spaces across a range of contexts, including Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs), digital and hybrid learning settings, and emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) mediated practices.

Drawing on recent international research and on presentations and symposia organised in response to the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) 2026 special call, this special issue adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that brings into dialogue, media education, architectural design and educational policy. In this context, it is worthwhile to build on earlier media education debates on digital spatiality and physical-digital learning and creative spaces (Pietraß et al. 2018; Spieler et al. 2024). We are particularly interested in how educational spaces – spanning formal and non-formal education – respond to social and socio-technical transformations, balancing innovation with academic excellence, democracy, sustainability, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Simultaneously, the rapid integration of AI and other data-driven technologies into European classrooms is reshaping educational practices and learning environments, creating both new opportunities and new challenges. While international frameworks in policy and research often assume that technological literacy and AI competencies can be universally defined, emerging research suggests that AI literacy is a contextually embedded practice. It is shaped by national infrastructures, pedagogical autonomy, and cultural norms.

The concept of ILEs has gained significant traction since the OECD's seminal report in 2013 (OECD 2013). ILEs are defined not merely as physical structures but as the merging of innovative technologies and spaces with innovative teaching and learning practices. They are characterized by open and flexible environments that range from traditional closed classrooms to open-plan layouts with flexible walls and multi-functional zones.

However, scholarship increasingly demonstrates that changes in spatial design do not automatically lead to changes in teaching practices. Successful implementation requires institutional support, teacher education, and the active involvement of learners in participatory design processes. Furthermore, the sustainability crisis urges an extension of human, physical, and psychological wellbeing towards planetary wellbeing, requiring learning environments to be ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally sustainable.

Topics

We invite empirical studies, theoretical reflections, interdisciplinary and methodological contributions as well as critical analyses that address the following interconnected themes. Contributions should ideally bridge the physical, digital, and pedagogical dimensions of educational spaces.

Across these themes, we particularly invite contributions that conceptualize educational spaces as socio-material and media-mediated configurations. Contributions should address how digital media, infrastructures, data, platforms or AI interact with physical spaces, pedagogical practices, institutional conditions and the agency of learners and educators.

1. Educational Spaces: Design, Pedagogy and Participation

This theme explores how educational spaces are designed, experienced, and enacted across formal and non-formal learning contexts.

- How do spatial design, digital infrastructures, and learning environments influence teaching, learning, inclusion, and wellbeing?
- How are educational spaces shaped through participatory approaches involving teachers, learners, and wider communities?
- How do innovative learning environments support new pedagogical practices, learner engagement, and educational change?

2. Digital and AI-Mediated Learning Environments

This theme examines the integration of digital technologies and AI in educational spaces and their implications for teaching and learning.

- How do digital, hybrid, and AI-enhanced environments transform educational practices, participation, and learning processes?
- How are AI literacies and digital competencies shaped by different educational, cultural, and policy contexts?
- What opportunities and challenges emerge in relation to ethics, equity, data privacy, and the responsible use of technology in education?

3. Educational Spaces, Sustainability and Social Transformation

This theme focuses on the broader societal, political, and environmental conditions that shape educational spaces.

- How do educational spaces respond to contemporary societal challenges such as climate change, migration, social inequalities, and democratic participation?
- What role do policy frameworks, governance structures, and institutional conditions play in enabling or constraining innovation?
- How can educational spaces contribute to sustainable, resilient, and future-oriented forms of learning and development?

Within each of these themes, we also welcome conceptual, theoretical, and methodological contributions that advance the study and understanding of educational spaces.

Submission Formats and Submission

Full texts must be submitted by March 31st 2027, via https://www.medienpaed.com/about/submissions.

Subsequently, the full texts will undergo a double-open peer-review process, involving the authors, until approximately May 31st 2027, followed by revision.

The publication of the special issue is planned for autumn 2027.

Requirements for Full Texts

- Submitted articles, in English, must be original contributions or first publications.
- Scientific contributions (full texts) should comprise approximately 40.000 characters (including spaces, excluding abstract and bibliography).
- An abstract of 150–200 words briefly summarizes the central arguments and results.
- Both the title and the abstract must be provided in German and English and submitted together with the article.
- The guidelines for authors apply: https://www.medienpaed.com/about/submissions#authorGuidelines.
- In the interest of scientific transparency, we encourage all researchers to make their research data (e.g., software, datasets, questionnaires used) available upon submission.
- Submission of full texts via: https://www.medienpaed.com/about/submissions.

Use of AI

The MedienPädagogik. Zeitschrift für Theorie und Praxis der Medienbildung has set the highest ethical standards, compliance with which we kindly request:

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> Reviewers and publishers may use AI tools as supportive aids, but not as a replacement for human judgment. Editorial decisions will never be made exclusively by algorithms.»

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Please contact the editors if you have any questions.

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