The Expanded Classroom – Spatial Relations in Classroom Practices using ICT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to raise some key issues about how spatial relationships between learning contexts can inform us on the implications of using ICT in classroom settings. Data from an international research project on using social media for learning in school is presented. The findings show the relevance and importance of studying learning practices using digital media as a way to expand traditional conceptions of spatial relationships in classrooms, challenging ways of understanding where learning takes place, and of what and how students learn.

Keywords: space, ICT, expanded classroom, learning lives

INTRODUCTION

The Internet, like any other cultural artefact, and the ways users appropriate it for their own purposes, is unavoidably affected by the social, cultural, historical, and institutional context in which it is embedded (Wertsch, 2002). Viewed in this way, young people’s perceptions and experiences of the Internet are closely related to their offline social environment, and directly reflect their experiences as real persons (Rheingold, 2000; Wacker, 2003). This means that in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between young people and the Internet, rather than studying them as mere Internet users, we need to take a holistic approach towards their experiences in “real” life into account (Nunes, 2006).

Our understanding of the classroom as a site for learning must be expanded through the increased use of digital media, both inside and outside of schools. The changing role of media in our societies, and especially the impact of digital technologies since the mid-1990s, has implications for where and how learning might happen, whether online or offline, situated or distributed. On one level, being a learner has always implied operating within and across different spaces and places. Still, current opportunities to move across “sites of learning” means that understanding how one context for learning relates to another has become a key concern when conceptualizing and investigating
learning and knowledge in contemporary societies (Edwards, Biesta & Thorpe, 2009; Leander et al., 2010).

As such, we should develop more expanded notions of learning sites, conceiving classrooms as “intersections” (Leander et al., 2011) where different experiences and interests are interwoven through knowledge creation using digital media. School-based learning has obvious challenges with relation to increased complexities in the classroom and the use of new digital technologies. For research in this area, these developments raise methodological challenges concerning ways of studying “learners in motion” (Erstad, 2013), and conceptually, in ways of developing analytical categories and perspectives that grasp the dynamic interrelationships between learners, cultural resources that are used across different learning contexts and situations. For the next few years, this field of research might point us in the direction of how to better understand ways of engaging learners that build on their cultural identities, and which represent competencies of importance for the 21st century (de Haan & Leander, 2011; Binkley et al., 2012). Students do not only learn in instructional settings; for example, a growing body of research on learning and literacy practices in semi-formal and informal settings has emerged over the last two decades (Hull & Schultz, 2002).

The Nordic countries have certain preconditions that make them especially interesting to study within this field of research. First, access to and the role of ICT in these societies at large and within education, in particular, is high. Second, schools are interesting as social mechanisms, since there is an emphasis on education for all, and equal opportunities within a public education system. Third, there is a long tradition of using media as part of lifelong learning, and distance education as a mediational means for education.

This article has two main objectives. The first is to explore key concepts and approaches relevant to studying expanded notions of learning. The second is to provide an empirical example of how expanded notions of learning are experienced by students in a classroom setting. By building on former research that studies how multiple knowledge sources can be used as ways of bridging the extended classroom towards sites like museums (Pierroux & Kluge, 2011), this article focuses on how learners can expand their spatial orientations towards other students and content matter as part of learning activities within schools when using digital technologies. In which ways do digital technologies represent new spaces for learning and engagement among students? I will relate to former research in this complex area in order to highlight the connection between activities offline, as in the classroom, and online spaces.

In this article, I will build on findings from an international research project called “Space2cre8” (S28), using social media for learning in school (Hull, Stornaiuolo & Sahni, 2010). My focus is not on the learning outcomes for the students, but rather, on the ways the students take advantage of the new spa-
tional environment online made available by S28 for creating an identity and ways of combining school interests and personal interests. The data presented here is taken from the Norwegian part of this international project. The findings show the relevance and importance of studying learning practices using digital media as a way to expand the traditional concepts of spatial relationships in classrooms, challenging ways of understanding where learning takes place, but also what and how students learn.

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR LEARNING – KEY CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

In several fields of study, there have been what is called “a spatial turn” (Soja, 2000; Withers, 2009), especially in geography and history, but also as related to learning (Nespor, 1994; Leander, Philips & Taylor, 2010; Hemingway & Armstrong, 2014). Obviously, space and place related issues become fundamental aspects of how we use different digital media in our everyday lives (Nunes, 2006). Of relevance to my discussion here is both research on “spatial literacies” (Leander & Sheehy, 2004) as a general way of relating to digital media and interfaces, and as an expression of different contexts in which we learn, both online and offline (Nunes, 2006).

Time and space as analytical lenses

The time-space relationship as a unit of analysis within educational research is still quite rare. In studies of young people and learning, there is a tension between traditional ways of conceiving schools and classrooms as situated and fixed, and conceptions of social life as changing the form of movement, which some describe as “liquid life” (Bauman, 2005) or “new mobilities” (Leander, Philips & Taylor, 2010). One term that has been referred to in such studies is the “chronotope”. This term was coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in order to describe the way time and space are described by language and, in particular, how literature represents them. Others are now using this term as a way of understanding social practices, such as learning in and out of school (Rajala, Hilppö, Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2013). The reason for a new interest in these issues is partly because of the complexity of the social phenomena studied, which implies a need to include time-space relationships, an understanding of the importance of context, and how literacies and learning are framed within space and time relationships.

An important contribution to the conceptual exploration of spatial approaches to learning is a meta-review done by Leander, Philips and Taylor (2010) on time-space relationships within educational, as well as other fields of research, in what they describe as “new mobilities”. Kevin Leander has also contributed earlier with important research within this field, both on “spatial literacies” (Leander & Sheehy, 2004) and online-offline activities (Leander & McKim, 2003). The meta-review by Leander, Philips and Taylor (2010) made
an argument for bringing the relationship of learning to space and places more in the focus of educational research, especially by challenging the “classroom-as-container” discourse of most educational research (p. 329). Their alternative discourse centres on terms such as learning-in-place, learning trajectories, learning networks, learning geographies and mobilities, and emphasizes studying the role of new technologies in supporting this type of an alternative approach. This meta-review is important in the way that it argues for a new agenda for educational research that builds on research from different fields, and as a contribution in a publication that asks the core question, “What counts as evidence in educational settings?” (Luke, Green & Kelly, 2010).

Ecologies of online/offline identities

Another approach to studying the spatial understanding of learning is linked to the US based network of researchers called “connected learning”. The argument is that in studying connected lives, we must go beyond issues of access and context-bounded use and look more closely at the everyday practices of young people, and how digital media creates different trajectories of learning for different people. Mimi Ito and colleagues in the US (Ito et al., 2010) describe this as “media ecology”. In the large scale “Digital Youth” project, they manage to document the broader social and cultural contours, as well as the overall diversity in youth engagement with digital media. The concept of ecology is used strategically to highlight that:

The everyday practices of youth, existing structural conditions, infrastructures of place, and technologies are all dynamically interrelated; the meanings, uses, functions, flows, and interconnections in young people’s daily lives located in particular settings are also situated within young people’s wider media ecologies. … Similarly we see adults’ and kids’ cultural worlds as dynamically co-constituted, as are different locations that youth navigate such as school, after-school, home, and online places. (Ito et al., 2010, p. 31)

These genres of participation are then interpreted as “intertwined with young people’s practices, learning, and identity formation within these varied and dynamic media ecologies” (ibid.). However, we should be careful in emphasising differences between online and offline activities. In exploring digital youth, it is also important not to get caught up in conceptions that are too general (Buckingham & Willett, 2006). There is great variation in how digitally competent and technologically interested young people are.

There has been an increasing interest in elaborating on the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ as related to learning, and the use of digital technologies (Bekerman, Burbules & Silverman-Keller, 2006). Technological developments during the last 20 years have created whole new ways of conceptualizing learning spaces, from early attempts at virtual realities in the mid-1990s, to parallel
worlds such as Second Life (Boellstorff, 2008). There are also many online spaces developed for learning, either as e-learning courses or as a combination of face-to-face and online learning activities. However, one must be critical of these overly optimistic beliefs in alternative learning spaces and what they can accomplish with regard to learning. As Mark Nunes (2006) does in his book, Cyberspaces of Everyday Life, we need to study how online spaces, used by young people, function as continuations of their physical activities and doings in everyday life.

**Contextualizing**

The concept of “context” has explanatory value because it informs us – in an analytical sense – of the way we interpret and understand the interrelationships between people and the circumstances they are involved in at different times and places. The research literature has been dominated by two primary sets of studies of learning and learners: firstly, studies of “learning in context”, which are done within specific contexts in classrooms, homes, sports, and so forth; and, secondly, studies of “context in learning”, where knowledge gained from one context is studied as part of another context, traditionally understood as transfer (Beach, 1999). My intention is to challenge these studies as ways of understanding learning and learners, because of how digital media has made a fundamental impact on our societies as a way of crossing boundaries (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

Van Oers (1998) explored different conceptions of context, identifying its basic intentions as “particularization of meaning” and “providing for coherence”, dependent on “cognitive structure” and the involvement of the person in a situation. He then presents an alternative approach to studying context, denying the dualism between subject and object, and instead focusing on the notion of context amounting to embeddedness in cultural activities (see also Nardi, 1996; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). Van Oers argued in favour of using the concept of contextualizing rather than context:

Context, then, is the result of this process of identification of a situation as a particular activity-setting. Or to put it differently: the basic process here is the process of context making (which I will call contextualizing), which is an intellectual activity by itself, embedded in a current sociocultural activity. (p. 482)

Edwards, Biesta and Thorpe (2009) have made a more recent contribution to discussing context. In their introductory chapter, entitled “Life as a learning context?”, Edwards related this concept to a broader discourse of lifelong learning. In relating this discussion to actor-network theory (Nespor, 1994) and activity theory (Tuomi-Grohn & Engeström, 2003), Edwards elaborated that:

Practices are not bounded by context but emerge relationally and are poly-contextual, i.e. have the potential to be realized in a range of strata and sit-
uations based upon participation in multiple settings. … Once we look beyond the context of conventional situations for education and training, such as schools, colleges and universities, allowing learning contexts to be extended into the dimension of relationships between people, artefacts and variously defined others mediated through a range of social, organizational and technological factors, then the limitations of much conventional pedagogy come into sharp focus. (p. 3)

This raises an important point concerning how contextualizing involves different types of learning and different contents, and implies different purposes, which might be variable in value as defined by different people. Should we work to overcome the gaps between learning in different strata, or should certain practices be left where they emerge (Edwards, 2009, p. 5)? The point to make here is that it depends on the issues at stake, and upon who defines something as learning, and under which circumstances.

**Schools as part of learning lives**

Schools are important institutions in our societies, but it must become more apparent how schools relate to the overall “learning lives” (Erstad, 2013) of students, with their learning identities and trajectories of participation across different contexts of learning (de Haan & Leander, 2011). Change is created by supporting students in their learning lives more than through the alteration of physical boundaries and conceptions of the school of the future (Walden, 2009). The support concerns how students can use technologies in different ways: not as a tool on the premise of teacher-initiated knowledge reproduction, but as a tool supporting mobilities and learning identities.

**METHODS AND CONTEXT**

The data presented here is related to a project called “Space2cre8” (S28), funded by the Spencer Foundation in the US. This is an international project involving young people in several countries, and the project was developed at UC Berkeley and led by Professor Glynda Hull. The Norwegian school, which takes part in the project, is situated in the Eastern part of Oslo, and the project activities took place over a period of 6 months. S28 is an online platform designed to have many of the same functions and appearances as commercial social networking sites such as Facebook or Myspace. Each student creates a personal profile and is able to communicate and interact with others by sending messages, chatting, writing blogs, creating theme groups and sharing photos, music, videos and digital stories. We1 studied one class of eighth-grade students (13–14 year olds) at a lower secondary school who had taken part in the S28 community over one academic year – mostly within the subject of

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1. The other participants in the Norwegian part of this project are Kristin Vasbø and Kenneth Silseth.
English (Vasbø, Silseth & Erstad, 2013). The methodological approach is inspired by ethnography (Heath & Street, 2008; Holland et al., 1998); primarily, we used qualitative methods, such as observing and video-recording classroom interactions, and interviewing students.

“Space2cre8” (www.space2cre8.com) connects 12 to 18 years old students in the US, India, Norway, South Africa, Australia and the UK. However, students in other countries are also joining. Students in these countries communicate about school related issues, as a part of their project activities, and about leisure issues, such as their interests and daily lives, but also about being young in different cultural settings. S28 is a closed, username and password required, social network, exclusive to the youth affiliated with specific schools and after-school programs taking part in the project. Each participant creates a personal profile from where she/he can be linked to other youths in the network by using what is called “the toolbox”. This toolbox consists of different artefacts for interacting with other people in the network, such as sending messages, writing blogs, creating groups, adding photos, music and/or videos to your profile for others to watch, etc. Just as in any other social networking site, you accept friend requests or add friends, and post messages on the wall of another person’s profile. There is also a chat function, which makes it possible to participate in synchronous communication with other members of the network.

At the Norwegian school, we were particularly interested in how young people with a diversity of cultural backgrounds make use of social media, and what they express through media production within a school context (see Image 4). Participating in social networks such as S28 represents a context of identity in practice where cultural resources can be combined and developed in new ways.

Image 1: Students in the class working on Space2cre8.
The class we studied had 29 students, equally distributed in terms of gender. They were 8th-grade students (13–14 years old) at a lower secondary school during one academic year (2009–2010). Almost all of the students grew up in Norway, with parents from Tunisia, Pakistan, Kurdistan, Albania, Somalia, Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, China, Poland, and Norway. At the beginning of the project, access to technology and the Internet was a challenge, due to a lack of good support at the school; however, this improved during the school year. The school has a computer room, but most of the time the students used a class set of laptops, which could be rolled into the classroom, but which they shared with three other classes. Furthermore, primarily one teacher – always an ethnic Norwegian – ran the classes.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The class as a common ground

Spending time in the classroom, following the work on S28, we observed how students and teachers interacted in ways that gave the impression of a regular classroom. This was done through activities initiated by the teacher, but which were at the same time more challenging. Indeed, it also involved noise, loud voices, and disruptive students. Compared to other classes observed in Norwegian schools at this level, we will characterize this specific class as especially challenging for the teacher, with interruptions from several of the boys in the class, as well as some of the girls. Some students required a considerable amount of attention from the teacher. The teacher had problems handling interactions in the class and spent time on issues of authority and organizing activities for the students, which meant less time for learning. It was striking how the different cultural backgrounds among the students were made explicit during lessons, as tensions between the multicultural students and the ethnic Norwegian teacher, but also misunderstandings due to language issues. The activities with S28 were then introduced as a class activity involving all, with introductions given to the whole class. Even though this had to be repeated several times, the students seemed to be engaged and interested in what this might represent as a school activity.

Looking at the class as such, and the students’ ways of working with S28, we experienced that the students had different approaches to using this particular social networking site. Of course, it is important that S28 was introduced as a school project in the English lessons. Although several of the students also started using S28 at home, we soon discovered that the class was divided into two categories of users. The first category consisted of students that used many of the activities connected to the project to position themselves academically, both online and offline, in the classroom. For users positioning themselves in this particular way, they drew on resources derived exclusively from the school space (classroom and LMS). The second category of users employed S28 as a way of drawing on their more personal interests and experiences and made use of different resources from a wider range of spaces.
when engaging with S28 related activities within the school space. Non-academic and more personal interests then seemed to be the most dominant in how they engaged themselves in activities and presented themselves online. These two ways of using S28 as a virtual space represent two ways of positioning oneself as learner: as “school oriented” and “interest oriented” ways of participating in and around S28.

Below there are three activities that illustrate the negotiations between the online and offline activities within the school setting in different ways. The main interest in this article is how this new online space plays a role for positioning oneself as a learner and, for these students specifically, as a way of negotiating cultural identity and movement between different learning spaces. Some of the activities are linked to specific school subjects, while others are not. Some activities take place online at S28, others go on offline, in the classroom, and some are a mix between offline and online activities.

The data presented in this article shows how students in a multi-ethnic classroom use the online platform S28 as a space for negotiating cultural identities and positioning themselves as learners. The main focus in this article is not on cultural identities as such, but rather, on how students position themselves and explore spatial affordances created by this new social media made available for both school related activities and more personal engagement. Cultural resources, such as ethnic and local belonging and global youth culture, are mixed together in spatial relationships and ways of communicating on S28. Through the different cultural resources available, the youngsters can create their own personal expressions in what Holland et al. (1998) describe as a “space of authoring”.

Activity 1: Working on their profiles

The student profiles are interesting as ways of exploring performative spaces within the virtual environment that S28 represents. When presenting themselves through their profile, the majority of the students chose to promote their ethnic identity more than Norwegian belonging, even though the majority were born and raised in Norway. In addition to ethnic identity, they also promoted their interests and leisure activities, as illustrated by the following examples of student profile texts, written in English by the students.

Hi everybody, my name is Yasmin. I'm 13 years old and going on 8th grade on Greendale. My home country is Turkey. There I have a house and my aunts, uncles, grand-parents and my relative’s lives there. My interest is to be with friends, shopping and much another fun things.

My name is Kim. I am from Vietnam, but I live in Norway. I have 1 little sister and 1 big brother. I play the piano and I like it: D
My name is Adil, I like football and my favourite team it’s Manchester United FC. I play for Greendale IF. I’m born in Norway, but my parents are from Macedonia and Kosovo. I speak Albanian with my family, but with my teachers and friends I speak Norwegian.

I am a girl who likes Korean music I come from Vietnam likes to be with friends.

Some of the students also chose profile names that connected them to their parents’ homelands. For instance, Tarek calls himself “Iraqi”, because his parents originally came from Iraq. Ahmed calls himself “Tunisiano”, a name that connects him to his Tunisian father’s homeland, but also to a French rapper of Tunisian origin who calls himself “Tunisiano”. Khamil’s parents are both from Turkey and he calls himself “Turkish-B”. He is a breaker, and the last letter “-B” might indicate a reference to hip hop music and break-dancing. Through S28 they are able to create an identity for others in the network and position themselves as learners in a different way than what is possible in the classroom, where the teacher directs most of the communication and task orientation.

Activity 2: Spatial communication on their own terms

The students worked in groups during an English lesson, producing five to 10 questions about Norwegian issues. They then posted them on S28 for the other kids to answer. This was an activity that highlighted cultural belonging and what it means to be a Norwegian. The teacher introduced the activity by writing up examples of different themes for which the students could formulate questions, such as climate, sports, food, national day, celebrities, and leisure activities. When writing the particular questions in English the students used “Google translator” to translate single words and sometimes even whole sentences.

Some groups, such as the one consisting of Kim, Ali, and Mona, pushed each other to get the English spelling correct and addressed questions to other students in class. When Mona formulated the question, “Do you think it is strict in Norwegian schools?” this raised a discussion with Waseen from another group in the same class regarding differences on punishment in school between Pakistan, Somalia, and Norway. Ali, who was born in Norway, stayed one year in a Pakistani school in Pakistan. He responded to the question and made use of his experience from this particular school when he expressed that Norwegian schools are not strict at all. He showed the others how his fingers were hit with a stick by the Pakistani teacher, and Waseen – both of whose parents are from Pakistan – nodded and said, “Yes, it hurts for sure, doesn’t it?” Ali followed up by telling the others about how he was sometimes kicked by his teachers in Pakistan. Mona, who moved to Norway when she was five years old, told them about Somalian school teachers who whipped their students. In the end, they decided not to follow up on the issue of punishment in school.
Mona and Kim formulated another question, “Clear water or not?” Mona suggested “Water closet or not,” while laughing. The others did not like her idea. Mona told the others about the toilets in Somalia, which are holes in the ground, and she burst out laughing, “We cannot ask the Americans about toilets, they invented them”. When telling these stories, while working with the questions, the students were involved in both academic and non-academic knowledge construction. They reflected on their cultural background when producing questions about Norwegian realities in school, and on how to frame the questions in a more international perspective when referring to their experiences from Pakistan and Somalia. By discussing these issues, the students brought up different experiences in relating to their classmates, but also by negotiating a focus that could address other young people in other countries online.

Activity 3: School vs. friendship oriented chat

S28 gives the members of the network an opportunity to chat with each other. Basically, there are two different orientations among the students in the way they use the communicative tools in S28, primarily the chat function. One orientation is school oriented in the sense that the students communicate mostly with classmates about school related issues. The other orientation is friendship oriented, where students use S28 as an opportunity to build new friendships, such that S28 represents a new space extending classroom activities.

The more school-oriented communication online is exemplified by the following extract concerning two girls in the Norwegian class that chat about grades and teachers at their school.

| Girl 1: I got 5 at the book presentation [a school project]:D:D |
| Girl 2: Lucky |
| Girl 2: Not me, because I had Kari [teacher] |
| Girl 1: What did you get? |
| Girl 2: She said average level like 3 |
| Girl 2: Oh my God! |
| Girl 2: She is actually kind, but she demands a lot! |
| Girl 1: Oh My God! |
| Girl 1: You were not so bad! |
| Girl 1: Just wait, I will be back soon |
| Girl 1: yes, we will have many more tests. |
| Girl 1: But actually it’s good, because we cannot get 6 on our first presentation |

Figure 1. Two girls chatting about school issues.

The two girls went on to discuss other teachers and students in their class. Although both of the girls were at home during the chat, they constructed their online space around familiar school events and people in their class. They continued discussions online that they had probably had at school and when they met.
In contrast, another girl in their class engaged herself in exploring new friendships online. She is a Muslim girl and had no Facebook account. She was a quiet student in the classroom, but perceived S28 as an interesting new space where she performed different activities that expanded her personal repertoires in ways of positioning herself and being more active (Vasbø, Silsø & Erstad, 2013). Below is an extract from a chat communication she engages in with a boy in the US.

Figure 2. Girl chatting with a US student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Girl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how old r u?</td>
<td>13 how old are you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13, too</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where r u from?</td>
<td>ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hehe yes</td>
<td>ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is it like really hectic there?</td>
<td>u kno, wit all da war and stuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wats it like there?</td>
<td>I'm not actually from iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wel...then where r u from?</td>
<td>I am from kurdistan but it is not a country but Kurdistan is in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am from iraq</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then where r u from?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdistan but it is not a country but but Kurdistan is in Iraq</td>
<td>so r u in kurdistan rite now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am from kurdistan but it is not a country but but Kurdistan is in Iraq</td>
<td>now i am in Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i live in Norway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this chat sequence, the girl participates in negotiations about spatial issues when she expresses her belonging to different places and connecting these places in positioning herself (Kurdistan, Iraq, Norway). In their chat, the girl and the boy link together online and offline spaces, while making the local context relevant for their interactions online. In sum, these different chat sequences show how the students take on different identities when they make use of experiences from different practices when constructing conceptions of space as embedded in learning.

DISCUSSION

As shown in the conceptual explorations in this article, there are several different ways in which spatial approaches to learning and technology use are apparent in the research field. From what has been presented above, we might divide these approaches between those that are more inclined to focus on the learner across contexts, and those approaches that argue for media ecology as a frame of reference for studying the time-space relationships of learning. My
own approach is linked more to the former, even though the two are interconnected. However, the emphasis on following the learner across learning contexts, as in my own research on "learning lives" (Erstad, 2013), implies a closer understanding of how learners experience the boundaries or connectedness between different contexts.

Contexts provide different ways of structuring activities, which can make it easier or more difficult to re-contextualise skills and identities developed in other practices. It is the complex negotiation at work in and between these practices that determines whether individuals are able to successfully engage in their learning lives. As shown in recent research on “context” for learning, this is not understood as something outside or surrounding the individual, but as something interconnected with the ways we are and how we act. As learners we co-construct conceptions of contextual affordances.

An important finding is the way students can negotiate communication and performative expressions within S28, without the task orientation or instructions given by the teacher. In the offline classroom the teacher defines the communicative flow and the assignments that define the student activities. Within S28, the students to a larger extent can create the context for interaction and thematic discussion from their own interests and orientations. These self-initiated interactions might enhance agency and motivation for learning, both in formal and informal ways. Even though some of the students are very much school oriented in the way they use S28 for interacting with others, some of the students see this as an alternative space to the classroom, which provides opportunities to perform as learners in new ways. For some of these students, especially some of the Muslim girls, this becomes very important in conceptualizing themselves as learners.

THE ‘EXPANDED CLASSROOM’

A dichotomy has been established between online and offline activities in the literature (Nunes, 2006). However, the more interesting dynamic to study is the interrelationship between conceptions of literacy and learning as combinations of offline and online practices. What has become evident, due to the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICT) in classroom settings, is the need to move beyond traditional conceptions of formal versus informal ways of learning, because students use mobile devices across different sites and that reading and writing is opening up to the outside world to a larger extent than ever before through the use of social media in schools. However, a central problem remains in defining the limits and nature of a learning context, and the idea of spatiality: online and offline. The aim of this article is to raise some key issues about how spatial relationships between learning contexts can inform us of the implications of using ICT in classroom settings.
The argument in this article has been to study the use of technology in schools as expanded beyond the traditional classroom, understood as “new mobilities” (Leander, Philips & Taylor, 2010), both in the ways technologies become more mobile, and in the ways we conceptualize learners as moving between different spaces of learning, where the classroom is merely one of several in young people’s everyday lives. The main challenge in the years to come is to study the implications of such boundary crossings (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011), between inside and outside of school, facilitated by digital media, for learning and literacy among young people in the 21st century (Binkley et al., 2012).

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