

Round table: Introducing Phenomenology in Action for Researching Networked Learning Experiences

Round table hosts

hanfod.NL, more specifically:

Nina Bonderup Dohn, Department of Design, Media and Educational Science, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark, nina@sdu.dk

Cathy Adams, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Canada, cathy.adams@ualberta.ca

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Mike Johnson, School of Healthcare Sciences, Cardiff University, UK, johnsonmr1@cardiff.ac.uk

Elevator pitch

This Round Table aims to introduce and discuss the book *Phenomenology in Action for Researching Networked Learning*, forthcoming (2024) in the Springer Book Series *Research in Networked Learning*. The wider aim of the Round Table is to continue our explorations of the place of phenomenology in networked learning. After a brief introductory overview of the book, our four invited discussants will present their response to the book, thus initiating general discussion with the audience on the roles, possibilities and challenges of using phenomenology to investigate networked learning.

The book's outset is the realisation that phenomenology – as a specifically mentioned approach – has been fairly absent in networked learning research, despite the latter's focus on human experience, a key term in phenomenology. Building on a double symposium and workshop at NLC 2022 (Adams et al, 2022; Johnson et al, 2022), the book seeks to remedy this with a set of chapters centring on three questions:

- How do you do phenomenological research in networked learning? This question is explored in four chapters that between them demarcate the kinds of thematic areas in networked learning that can be accessed with phenomenology and delineate the focus of investigation for these thematic areas.
- What does a phenomenological investigation of specific phenomena in networked learning reveal? Three chapters engage with this question, at once providing significant insights concerning the investigated phenomena themselves and exemplifying what phenomenological investigations of networked learning looks like.
- How can phenomenology challenge networked learning? This question has both a conceptual aspect and a practice aspect. The first aspect queries how conceptualizations of networked learning can be challenged. The second aspect looks at how habitual practices within networked learning can be questioned and perhaps developed for the better, given a phenomenological approach. Two chapters discuss these issues.

First and foremost, the book insists on placing the focus on humans in networked learning – relinquishing technology from the centre stage and rediscovering the human heart of digital learning. Thus, through phenomenological inquiry, we unveil the intricate interplay between humans and technology, underscoring human existence in digital realms.

We are thrilled to have with us as discussants of the book the following esteemed scholars:

- Lesley Gourlay, PhD, Professor of Education, University College London
- Maria Cutajar, PhD, Senior Lecturer in Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education, University of Malta.
- Vivien Hodgson, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Networked Management Learning, Lancaster University
- Mark Vagle, PhD, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota (present via Zoom)

Several of the book's collaborating authors will be in attendance to answer questions from their perspective. We warmly invite interaction at the round table with conference delegates.

Join us for a journey beneath the tech surface, where human experiences intertwine with the digital realm, offering a richer narrative of networked learning!

Goal

We aim to champion phenomenology as a foundational philosophical underpinning for future conference contributions. Our endeavours, including this book, serve as a testament to that commitment, fostering an environment where phenomenological work remains in the spotlight. The book lays down a marker for that, developed, in part, from an initiating Round Table at NLC2020 (online) (Healey-Benson, 2020), a hanfod.NL node event in 2021 (Adams et al., 2021), and the abovementioned double symposium and workshop at NLC 2022 in Sundsvall (Adams et al, 2022; Johnson et al, 2022).

Thus, we expect a collective outcome of the Round Table to be a more nuanced understanding of the roles, potentials and challenges of phenomenological research into networked learning, combined with concrete new ideas for phenomena lending themselves to phenomenological investigation in the future. Not least, we hope that our community around hanfod.NL will gain new members amongst the participants in the Round Table.

Engaging participants

Voluntary pre-event engagement

We will make a series of short blog/pods/VLOGs (3-5 minutes) on the chapters available for access ahead of the conference. This format promotes informal, yet insightful discussions, and a great way to showcase the essence of each book chapter. Each VLOG will feature conversations with the respective chapter's contributor(s), diving into the nuances of their chapter and its significance to the book as a whole. In doing so, we draw upon our experience in organising the hanfod.NL node event in 2021, where a VLOG suite inspired by Heidegger's analogy 'Voices from the River' – 'Lleisiau o'r Afon' was made available in advance, [vlog suite | hanfod.NL](#).

The VLOGs will be released prior to the conference on our <https://hanfod.NL> Website, which will obviously be available to all at the live conference and afterwards.

Event engagement

Participants will fall into ~3 categories: invited discussants; book editors/chapter authors; interested conference delegates. We are planning for discussants to respond to the book for 10-15 minutes each, after which we will facilitate a more general discussion with the following conversation starter questions:

- How can phenomenology redefine our understanding of networked learning experiences?
- What challenges and opportunities arise when integrating phenomenological perspectives in networked learning research?

References

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- Johnson, M.R., Healey-Benson, F., Adams, Bonderup Dohn, N., & Goetz, G. (2022). Symposium: Phenomenology and Networked Learning – a found chord. Proceedings for the Thirteenth International Conference on Networked Learning 2022, Sundsvall, Sweden, 16-18 May 2022. Edited by: Jaldemark, J., Håkansson Lindqvist, M., Mozelius, P., Öberg, A., De Laat, M., Dohn, N.B., Ryberg. https://prod-audxp-cms-001-app.azurewebsites.net/media/ebadergh/1274674_proceedings-for-the-thirteenth-international-conference-on-networked-learning_.pdf p. 423-482

Author details

Discussants at round table

Lesley Gourlay is a Professor of Education in the department of Culture, Communication and Media at University College London. Her scholarship focuses on technologies and knowledge practices of students and academics, with a particular emphasis on textual practices and the digital. Her recent theoretical work has focused on sociomaterial and posthuman perspectives on engagement in the university, exploring themes of space, inscription, nonhuman agency, and digital media. She is a recipient of a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2021-2024) and is writing a new monograph for Bloomsbury on the topic of *The Datafied University: Documentation and Performativity in Digitised Education*.

Maria Cutajar holds a PhD in e-Research & Technology Enhanced Learning by Lancaster University. She is currently affiliated to the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, engaged in postgraduate teaching and research supervision. Additionally, she coordinates the Masters in Open & Networked Higher Education and chairs the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) Dissertations Committee. Her research interests broadly focus on learning and teaching using networked technologies in the higher education context and adult education settings more broadly. She is concerned with the theory, practice, experiencing, and sense-making of contemporary teaching, learning and academic being and becoming.

Vivien Hodgson is an Emeritus Professor of Networked Management Learning at Lancaster University Management School, UK. Vivien's interests are in collaborative approaches to both onsite and online learning. Her research includes the study of dialogue and critical reflection in the theory, pedagogy, and practice of networked learning in a postdigital age. She was a founding co-chair of the international bi-annual conference series 'Networked Learning' and one of the first joint editors of the Springer book series; Researching Networked Learning.

Mark D. Vagle is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota, USA. He has written extensively on phenomenological research in journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry*, *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *The Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies*, *Field Methods*, and *Teaching Education*, and regularly teaches university courses and professional workshops on the subject. Currently, Vagle is using his conception of post-intentional phenomenology to critically examine various ways in which issues related to social class take concrete (lived) shape in the curriculum and pedagogies of elementary education.

Hosts of round table

Nina Bonderup Dohn, Professor, Department of Design, Media and Educational Science, University of Southern Denmark. Nina holds a PhD in Learning Theory and a Higher Doctorate Degree in Applied Philosophy. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the International Networked Learning Conference and editor of the Springer Research in Networked Learning book series. Her main research areas integrate epistemology, learning sciences, and technology-mediated learning, focusing on the role of tacit knowledge.

Cathy Adams is a professor of educational computing in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. Her research investigates digital technology integration across K-12 and post-secondary educational environments, ethical and pedagogical issues involving digital technologies including Artificial Intelligence, and K-12 Computing Science curriculum and computational thinking (CT) pedagogy. Cathy employs a range of posthuman-postdigital methods in her inquiries including interviewing objects, postphenomenology, phenomenology of practice, media ecology, and other new materialist and sociomaterialist approaches.

Felicity Healey-Benson is Lead Researcher and Entrepreneurial Learning Champion at the International Institute for Creative Entrepreneurial Development, University of Wales Trinity St David. Her expertise spans sustainable leadership and management development. She is co-founder of 'hanfod.NL' and the 'Harmonious Entrepreneurship Society'. Felicity recently completed a doctoral hermeneutic phenomenological study of the lived experience of lecturers in Higher Education facilitating Higher Order Thinking Skills development. Her findings, presented in a 'persona vignette' format provide evocative insights and support reflective practice.

Mike Johnson is a lecturer in Information Management and Teaching at Cardiff University's School of Healthcare Sciences. His Lancaster-based PhD thesis project was a multi-method study of mobile phone use by healthcare students, which drew him into the realms of phenomenology. Mike's longstanding commitment to the networked learning conference caused him to notice and then help fill a gap in the take up of phenomenological concepts and methodologies in networked learning research, not least through forming hanfod.NL with Felicity.

About hanfod.NL [<https://hanfod.nl/>]

hanfod.NL (pronounced 'han-vod', Cymraeg for essence) is an online "learned society" which serves as a joyful intermediary in the development of this book that builds upon the success of the double symposium of phenomenological research for NLC 2022 in Sweden. This significant undertaking stems from the origins of hanfod.NL which emerged through a fortuitous meeting of minds and a shared passion for phenomenology within the networked learning community. A journey which began when Mike and Felicity connected prior to Felicity's round-table discussion at the online NLC 2020 conference. This round-table event delved into the challenges and potential variations in design, results, and value arising from different phenomenological and phenomenographic approaches within networked learning. The discussion at the event got both Cathy and Nina hooked on continuing the collaboration and Mike was subsequently offered the opportunity by the conference co-chairs to host a sponsored node event. Undeterred by hurdles presented by the pandemic, hanfod.NL was birthed as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue, exploration, and collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and enthusiasts of networked learning and phenomenology.

