

the socio-cultural ecological approach
to mobile learning

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what is new?

- the capability and functionality of the technology, its affordances, in particular the convergence of services and functions into a single device, its ubiquity and abundance, portability and multi-functionality
- conditions for, and environments of learning resulting in a marked increase opportunities for learning in informal contexts: the world as curriculum; boundary and context crossing; augmented/mixed reality
- new forms of social organisation: distributed resources, distributed information, distributed power, distributed across life-worlds organised as life-styles
- the need for learners to shape their knowledge out of their own sense of their world
- texts/artefacts as dynamic, fluid, contingent, multiply authored and 'shared', and consequently provisional
- the need for provision of navigational aids

mobile complex

- the ongoing changes in the world are important contextual factors
- the world is increasingly marked by fluidity, provisionality and instability
- responsibilities for meaning-making as well as other risk-taking have been transferred from the state and its institutions to the individual, who has become a consumer of services provided by a global market
- the current changes in the authority in and over education, changes to consumption and production as well as current characteristics of the media landscape, such as participation, distribution, local and global content, ubiquity and multimodality, are central
- disappearance of the world of discrete, bounded and clearly framed media compared with the complexity of modes inherent in the emerging resources
- the current changes are akin to social, cultural, media-related, technological and semiotic transformation

cultural resources

- we consider mobile devices and applications, as well as the artefacts produced with, and accessed through them as 'cultural resources' with considerable affordances for learning
- we are concerned with and about how cultural resources are distributed and whether that distribution is 'fair'
- our aim is to support individuals in the use of such resources in their everyday life-worlds, which includes a critical stance on resources and practices where that seems called for
- mobile devices make a wide range of cultural resources, content and functionalities available as well as disposable to users in everyday situations
- everyday learning practices, which make use of digital cultural artefacts, can be viewed as cultural resources for learning to be brought from outside into formal education and be enhanced inside school and in turn feed back into the digital world at large

what do we mean by 'learning'?

- the process of 'coming to know' and 'being able to operate successfully in and across' new and ever changing contexts and learning spaces
- utilisation of everyday life worlds as learning spaces
- a process of meaning-making through signs and communication in and across multiple contexts within a triangle of structures, cultural practices and agency
- an augmentation of inner, conceptual and outer, semiotic resources
- transformative engagement with the curricular ground provided by educational institutions, in the light of learners' interests
- we contend that the frame of institutional pedagogy is neither necessary nor necessarily most efficacious for learning

- actions of learners through which they are seeking to augment their conceptual resources are not directly on the world, but mediated by socio-semiotic tools such as language, as well as by material artefacts incl. technology
- learning is socio-culturally-bound or contingent, e.g. in terms of time, location, co-learners, pedagogical approaches, technical means etc
- in a socio-cultural dynamic of individualisation, fragmentation and provisionality, individually constructed life-worlds and individual appropriation of cultural resources are central and no longer socially guaranteed traditions
- therefore, user-generated contexts are central

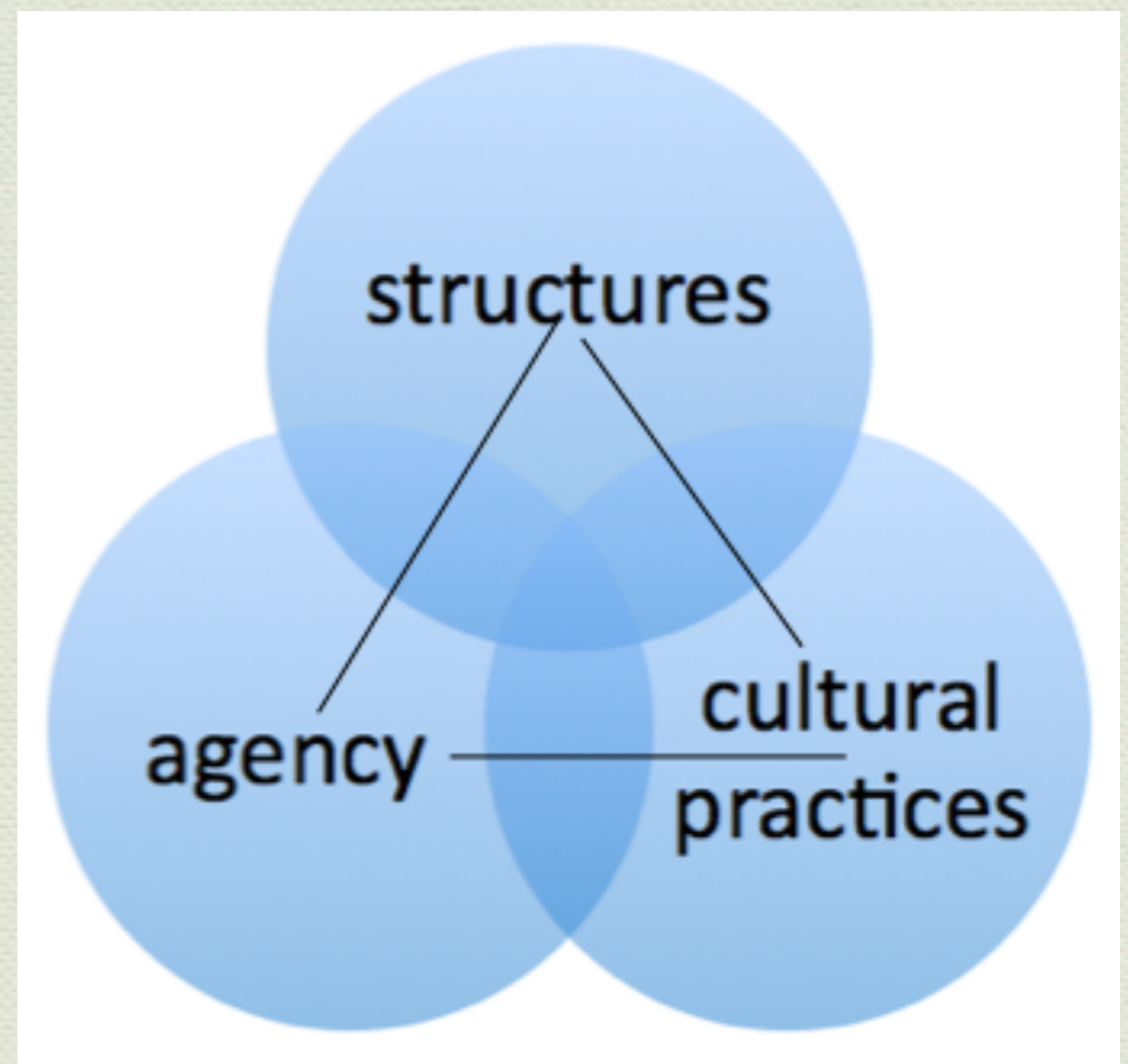
who or what is mobile?

- mobility is a feature of the contemporary social, political, economic, cultural and technological world
- mobility is an individual's habitus characterised by immediate access to the world (to be) framed; an expectation of ubiquitous availability of cultural resources for learning and a constant readiness to be a 'learner'
- an expectancy, a state of contingency, of incompleteness, of moving towards completion
- mobility is turning the environment, in which I am, whatever it may be and wherever I may be, into a site of learning

some key aspects of the socio-cultural ecology

- learning as meaning-making and as individual appropriation of cultural resources according to personal criteria of relevance
- assimilation of naive (i.e. unreflected), native expertise from the everyday life-worlds of users through conversational threads
- focus on user-generated contexts and content

- agency: appropriation, meaning-making, habitus of learning, naïve native expertise
- practices: normalization, self-expression, communication, user-generated content and contexts
- structures: convergence, milieus, fragmentation, provisionality, discontinuity



agency

- young people can be seen to increasingly display a new habitus of learning in which
 - they constantly see their life-worlds framed both as a challenge and as an environment and a potential resource for learning,
 - their expertise is individually appropriated in relation to personal definitions of relevance and
 - the world has become the curriculum populated by mobile device users in a constant state of expectancy and contingency

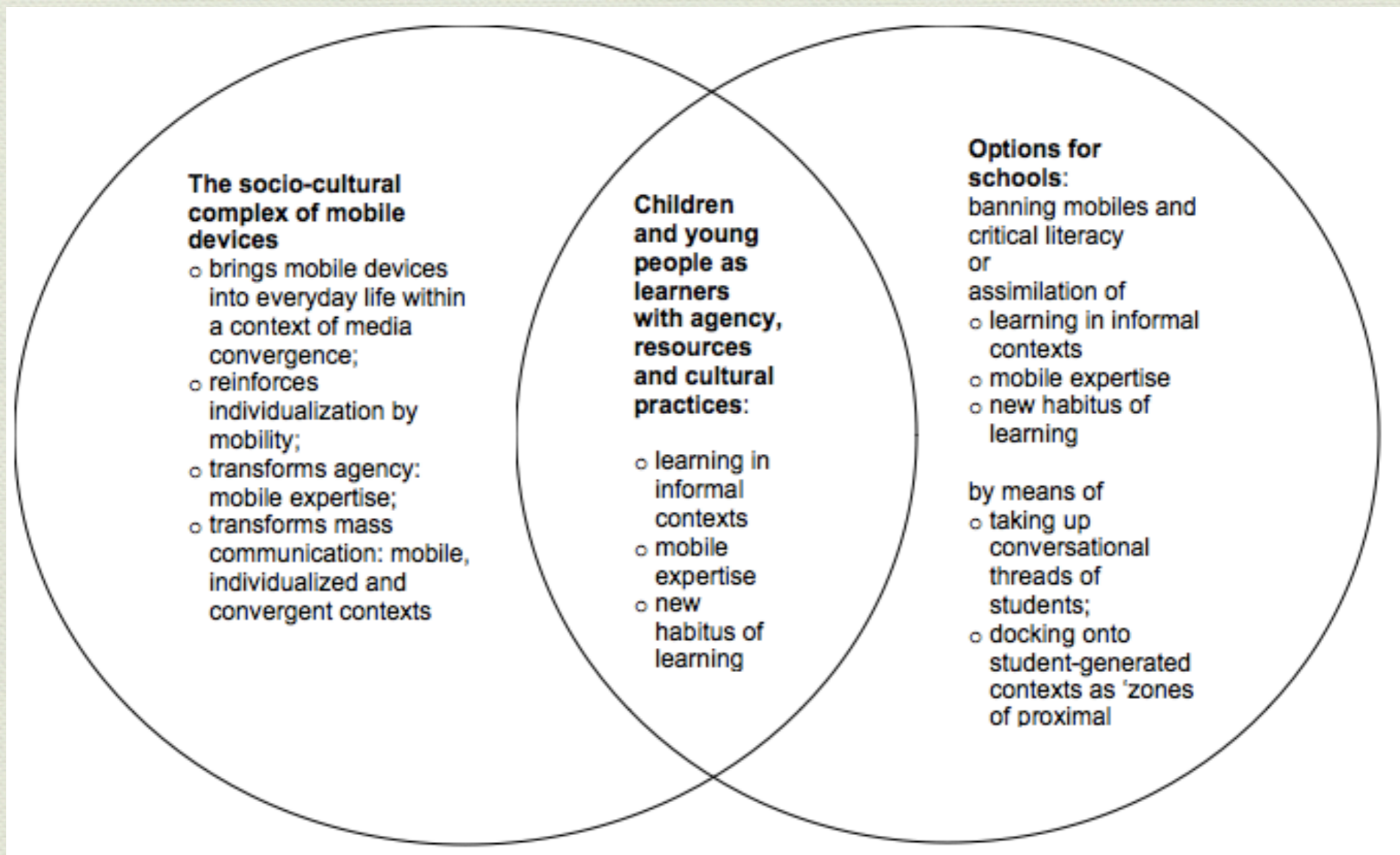
cultural practices

- mobile devices are increasingly used for social interaction, communication and sharing;
- learning is viewed as culturally situated meaning-making inside and outside of educational institutions;
- media use in everyday life have achieved cultural significance

structures

- young people increasingly live in a society of individualized risks, new social stratifications, individualized mobile mass communication and highly complex and proliferated technological infrastructure;
- their learning is significantly governed by the curricular frames of educational institutions with specific approaches towards the use of new cultural resources for learning

disjunction between life-worlds and educational institutions



challenges

- issue of recognition and valorisation: mobile learning not a facile pandering to orientations towards entertainment and not an expression of a narrowing conceptualisation of learning
- need for the recognition of learning that takes place outside formal educational settings, constituted around different principles of authority, power and values, as well as strategies for encouraging learning using notions of pleasure rather than necessarily only of work
- canonicity of knowledge is no longer guaranteed in the context of fragmentation and provisionality
- 'reproduction', of society and its culture(s), is no longer possible as stable 'givens' are breaking away; new forms of appropriation, curricular, conceptual, social and ethical resources are required

