

Chapter 1

Tracing the Definition of Networked Learning in Networked Learning Research



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1.1 Introduction

The latest Networked Learning Conference held in Kolding, Denmark, in 2020 was the 12th addition to the biennial conference series started in Sheffield, UK, in 1998. Much has changed in the theory and practice of networked learning research as the community of networked learning researchers grew in size and depth. Indeed, as Heraclitus once said, change is the only constant in life. This chapter is about changes in networked learning research, but it does not simply discuss the zeitgeist of the years preceding the biennial conferences. Rather, it documents the ways in which networked learning researchers have interpreted the fundamental concepts that define networked learning research. I believe this is important for at least two reasons.

First, practical reasons. The definition of networked learning is necessarily open ended; thus, the variety of theories we apply, methodologies we employ, contexts we explore, and technologies we use hinder us from clearly defining our identity and communicating it to the outside world. We need to understand *what we do* as scholars and researchers interested in the theory and practice of networked learning. So far, attempts that analyse the research trends in the Networked Learning Conference series are scarce (see, for example, de Laat & Ryberg, 2018). The findings presented in that paper provide a great insight to the research within this community. However, those findings are based on the quantitative measures of word counts and, as the authors rightly acknowledge, what can be meaningfully drawn from that analysis is limited. This manuscript builds on the findings presented in de Laat and

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Ryberg (2018)'s work and qualitatively explores the ways in which the concept of networked learning is utilised.

Second, theoretical reasons. Practice is always epistemic (Hodgson & McConnell, 2018); therefore, we need to define the epistemology of our research practices if we are to define ourselves as a research community. We need to understand *what we do* to understand the epistemic practice of the networked learning community. The work described in Hodgson and McConnell (2018) is the first ever attempt to define and understand the networked learning community as a knowledge community. While the findings presented in that paper provide a great insight to the characteristics of this community, data are collected from selected participants of the previous conferences and thus the perspectives presented are only a small proportion of the entire community. This manuscript builds on the findings presented in that work, but it shifts the focus from participants' attitudes to the research presented in the conferences.

The aforementioned studies from de Laat and Ryberg (2018) and Hodgson and McConnell (2018) are important steps towards understanding the epistemology of networked learning research. Yet, I take a different approach in this work. I qualitatively analyse how the concept of "networked learning" has been utilised in the proceedings published at the Networked Learning Conference series. In specific, I semantically analyse the discourse in the papers presented (Fairclough, 2001) and explore the theories, technologies, networks, and contexts in relation to the definition of the concept of networked learning coined by Goodyear et al. (2004).

In what follows, I discuss the definition of networked learning as it is the anchoring point by which the proceedings are analysed. Then, I reflect on the technologies (means by which such connections are facilitated and mediated), connections (interactions between a learning community and its resources), and network (the space or community in which networked learning is conceptualised).

1.2 The Gold Standard: The Definition of Networked Learning

"Networked learning is learning in which information and communication technology is used to promote connections: between one learner and other learners, between learners and tutors; between a learning community and its learning resources" (Goodyear et al., 2004, p. 1). While the authors did not claim (or intended) their definition to define the epistemology of the networked learning community, by and large, it is the most widely accepted explanation; and thus, it has been subject to scrutiny (Sinclair, 2018). It is worth discussing when the concept is coined and why it is coined in that particular way.

With the boom of the Internet at the end of the 1990s, the millennium witnessed the emergence of online education both as a research discipline and as a research space. With the exponential growth of online technologies came the opportunities to

deliver education in formats and ways that were not possible before (Harasim, 2000). Technological affordances had been largely informing educational activities and there was a discord concerning pedagogical practices in online spaces (Ely, 1999). For example, the terms e-learning, web-based learning, and online learning were widely used to label any sort of teaching or learning activity that employed online technologies. The hype around the use of technology was much more prominent compared to voices concerned with pedagogical processes or outcomes (Harasim, 2000). As a reaction to *using technology for the sake of technology*, researchers defined a distinctive theory of learning that necessarily values cooperation, collaboration, and dialogue. The concept of networked learning emerged as one answer for such attempts. It differentiates itself from other applications of e-learning by stressing the importance of connections: interactions with others or online materials in isolation are not sufficient enough to constitute networked learning (Goodyear et al., 2004). Fundamental to this perspective is that learning is a matter of engagement with others in a community (Oztok, 2019). While this approach is not specific to networked learning research, as I argue below, relational perspectives are at the core of the activities *we do*.

The definition of networked learning, therefore, implies certain theoretical beliefs and practical perspectives about who *we are* and what *we do*. Deconstructing this definition is essential for understanding the epistemology of networked learning research.

There are three notions inherent in the definition of networked learning: technology, connections, and network. While these notions operate in uniformity to define networked learning, each of them provides a focal point through which the practice of networked learning can be further explored in detailed. Below, I will explain how I conducted the analysis and then will present my findings in relation to these three notions.

1.3 Method

I downloaded 412 papers presented in the Networked Learning Conference series between 2004 and 2018, a time frame from when the definition was coined to the latest conference. I catalogued these papers using NVivo, and then I searched the term “networked learning” in order to narrow my focus down to papers that make explicit references to networked learning. About one-third of the papers were eliminated during this process. Then, I searched the remaining 266 papers using the terms “technology”, “connections”, and “network” in three separate searches per the reasons explained above. In order to deal with linguistic or contextual diversity, search terms also included semantical derivatives, such as technologies, connecting, networks, and networking. For each category of analysis (technology, connections, and network), I employed descriptive and critical discourse analysis in order to construct meanings across different papers (Fairclough, 2003). Instead of relying on quantitative measurements or distributions (for example, frequency of words in use,

corpus linguistics, cluster analysis), I qualitatively analysed the meaning in context. This approach is fundamental to interpretivist perspectives in two ways. First, it allows data to be analysed across different contexts, disciplines, and time frames, providing a more holistic view of the phenomenon. Second, it refuses to employ predefined categories that are imposed by established theories or frameworks but allows data to emerge subjectively, providing a more interpretive understanding of the phenomenon.

Several meanings emerged through this process and I combined, compared, and contrasted them in order to create more comprehensive yet more distinct meanings. Therefore, the findings presented in this chapter do not report each and every single paper that deals with technology, connections, or network; rather, the findings summarise my subjective interpretation of what these terms mean and how they are utilised in research. In this sense, the papers that are cited in this manuscript typically represent the general approach rather than standing out because they offer a counterargument or an unorthodox approach.

Needless to say, findings in this manuscript should be considered in relation to the limitations and biases in my analysis. First, I only analysed the papers that specifically use the term/concept “networked learning”. This was purely a logistic decision. Second, I only explored how the concept of networked learning shaped the design and delivery of the research without really making any judgements on the research itself. Third, I based my judgements on Goodyear et al.’s (2004) definition of the networked learning without considering whether the author(s) in those papers I analysed subscribe to that definition or not. Overall, the sample size is somewhat limited based on the including/excluding criteria and the conclusion is somewhat detached from the content of the papers analysed; however, these limitations do not concern the tracing of the conceptual developments themselves and therefore do not discredit the validity of the analysis or the subsequent interpretation.

Although not necessarily a limitation, it is also worth acknowledging that I am a relatively new member of this community. My peripheral membership, surely, means that I cannot know the previous discussions and debates among the participants, which had an impact on my capacity to understand the spirit of the past conferences. On the other hand, I aimed to use my “fresh look” into the networked learning community as an opportunity to question the established practices and agreed-upon meanings. In other words, I tried exploiting the advantages of being both an insider and an outsider in my analysis. Lastly, I can only reiterate the words of others whose work I have drawn upon as a point of guidance for my sense-making (de Laat & Ryberg, 2018; Hodgson & McConnell, 2018): this is not an authoritarian analysis, but a step towards a better understanding of ourselves as a knowledge community.

1.4 Technology

The definition of the concept of networked learning does not specify certain technology or favour one over the other. Nevertheless, it tailors a certain role for technology: it should be used to promote connections.

The analysis of the proceedings revealed that networked learning researchers rely on *online learning* to promote connections. However, I concur with de Laat and Ryberg (2018) that online, distance, and blended learning are often used synonymously. The interchangeable use of these concepts surely blurs the distinction among these different forms of mediation. To be fair, I acknowledge that these modes of delivery are inherently very close to each other. Yet, the implication is that the networked learning research does not clearly tease out which practices best optimise the connections that serve as the social fabric for the networked learning to occur. Despite the confusion with the terminology, it was evident that the members of the networked learning community continue to conceptualise and utilise the technology in line with the original definition; that is, technology is tailored for mediating connections among participants and resources (for example, Creanor & Walker, 2010; Zenios & Steeples, 2004).

Another important finding was that the networked learning researchers are quick to experiment with the affordances of emerging technologies. In specific, when a new form of technology emerges (for example, mobile learning) or a new platform gains worldwide popularity (for example, MOOCs), that particular technology is scrutinised for its capacity to promote connections within a learning community (see, for example, Czerniewicz et al., 2016; G. Jones et al., 2008; Mackness & Pauschenwein, 2016). It is important to explain here what “new” means or what “quick to experiment” refers to. New technologies or platforms refer to emerging technologies whose practical applications and pedagogical potentials are relatively under-realised. For this analysis, it refers to educational uses of such emerging technologies. Following the same line of thought, whether researchers are quick to experiment is a qualitative judgement about how fast these pedagogical potentials are tested out in research studies. The analysis revealed that certain technologies were at the focus of networked learning research in certain years (or in proceedings corresponding to those years). The latest example to this phenomenon is the use of MOOCs in networked learning. When MOOCs first appeared in the proceedings, much research reported what MOOCs are and how they can be optimised for educational purposes; then, in later years, the focus shifted to analysing networked learning practices in such platforms. It was evident that researchers discussed the ways in which such technologies can best support networked learning activities.

Interestingly, at other times, technology remains mostly invisible. That is, a discussion on the role of technology is less prominent when the technology or the platform being utilised is already known in the community. The analysis did not yield an immediate conclusion, but one suggestion is that the interest in that particular technology does not wane, but it becomes normalised enough, whereby

a great deal of discourse focuses on actual teaching or learning practices using that particular technology rather than studying the technology itself.

As discussed above, the definition of networked learning was born out of attempts that go beyond using technology for the sake of it. It might be concluded that after two decades, the networked learning community continues with this stance towards the use of technology.

1.5 Connections

It is beyond doubt for the networked learning community that the connections between community members and learning resources are key for networked learning to occur. The overwhelming majority of papers I analysed—regardless of research context, target population, technological choice, and theoretical approach—concerned with relational aspects of learning. Thus, it was clear that orchestrating connections to form a learning community has always been an interest for researchers in the networked learning community.

The results indicated that networked learning is closely aligned with other sociocultural theories of learning (C. Jones et al., 2015), including social constructionism (i.e. Ask & Haugen, 2008), activity theory (see, for example, Guldberg, 2010; Karasawidis, 2008), constructivism (i.e. Brown et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2018), and actor-network theory (i.e. Gourlay, 2014; Johnson, 2016) just to name a few. This was evident in the papers I analysed. While the variety of perspectives both enriches and blurs the conversation on conceptualisations of connections, these theories are fundamental for understanding *what we do* as the community of networked learning researchers. The results showed that the networked learning research studies how knowledge is cultivated (Gerdes, 2008), utilised (Dohn, 2012), and distributed (Carmichael & Tracy, 2018) within a community of learners (Carvalho & Goodyear, 2014). The point by which these theories part ways from one another is in how they are utilised. Below, I will summarise some of the most commonly used theories.

In constructivism, knowledge is believed to be constructed individually and resided in people's head; thus, those networked learning researchers who adopted constructivism probe how knowledge can be mobilised and shared (Brown et al., 2006). Actor-network theory puts more emphasis on social ties. It argues that nothing exists outside constantly shifting networks of relationships. How people interact within these networks of relationships carries the utmost importance. Those networked learning researchers who adopted the actor-network theory describe how objects, ideas, and processes create the social fabric for networked learning (Roberts, 2004). Activity theory recognises human activities as a systemic and socially situated phenomenon. This theoretical framework aims to address the sociocultural factors by bridging the gap between the individual subject and complexity of real-life activities. Networked learning researchers who adopt this framework regard connections as culturally mediated human activity or a collective system

(Czerniewicz et al., 2016). They discover patterns of interactions (Guldberg, 2010) and explore the nature of them (Karasawidis, 2008) with a particular focus on the use of tools (Kaulback, 2012). By and large, other theories can be studied under the umbrella term of sociocultural perspectives. In those studies, the focus is on the social learning activities within a community—albeit *sociocultural* is used loosely as a unit of analysis. That is, theoretical discussions are relatively invisible or largely implied. It is important to note that these studies are not necessarily weak but rather they are not determined (and thus limited) by what theories dictate.

It is possible to conclude that networked learning researchers study connections in line with the original definition. Interactions with resources in isolation are not sufficient to constitute networked learning; interactions should connect a learning community and its learning resources (Goodyear et al., 2004). This remains the guideline for the networked learning researchers. Regardless of the learning theory that is being used, the networked learning community tackles the ways in which connections are created, sustained, and utilised for sharing knowledge and experience in order to form a learning network. How this should happen and what impact it has on learning are rather a matter of theoretical standpoint. While I appreciate the richness of perspectives, arguably, the variety of approaches blurs the boundaries of the networked learning community. Perhaps, this is where the networked learning community should concentrate its focus. The original definition does not make any reference to what learning is but rather speaks about what a network is. How to design networked learning should not be an open-ended endeavour but a careful pedagogical design, distilled through a clear understanding of what learning is.

1.6 Network

The original definition regards network as the connections between a community and its learning resources. In broader terms, the network is the context in which learning occurs (Goodyear et al., 2004). The findings suggest that community is the concept by which *networked* is overwhelmingly associated with and studied through. This is not entirely surprising given that the concept of community resonates well with the concept of network. The question, then, is whether network and community are the same concepts or whether every community can represent networked learning.

Etymologically, community is derived from the Latin word “*communis*”, which means common. The idea of commonality is inherent in the meaning of community. According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, community is a group of people with common values, attitudes, and interests. What are the common values, attitudes, and interests the networked learning researchers study? The findings suggest that the ties that bind a community are conceptualised in three different ways: a sense of community, pedagogical activities (e.g., collaboration or cooperation), and social engagements within a community. These three categories should not be understood in opposition with each other or as mutually exclusive.

By and large, sense of community attracted the most attention from networked learning researchers. Whether explicitly used as a research aim or implicitly discussed as an outcome, the concept of sense of community was manifest in an overwhelming majority of research analysed in this chapter. Admittedly, this is not surprising given the importance of the collective pedagogies for networked learning research. Referring to the degree of one's sense of belonging to a community (Oztok, 2016), the concept is at the heart of the idea of networked learning. Indeed, the pedagogical value of the sense of community has long been established within the networked learning community. This was evident in the fact that the use of the concept spans over decades, from the early conferences (i.e. Guldberg, 2010; Ramanau et al., 2008) to the late ones (i.e. Hammond, 2016; Tremblay, 2018). It is a fundamental concept as it allows networked learning researchers to study how people perceive the networked environment as a space, wherein the members can develop relationships among one another (Carson, 2014). Since the definition of networked learning strongly argues for establishing healthy connections among participants, the concept of the sense of community provides means by which the networked learning researchers can study the quality of those connections. Dialogue, sense of isolation, consensus, trust, and identity are among the directions that the networked learning researchers explored in relation to the sense of community (see, for example, Brouns & Hsiao, 2012; Davis et al., 2014; Tremblay, 2018).

Networked learning research links the concept of community with cooperative and collaborative forms of learning (Goodyear et al., 2004). This is reasonable since the pedagogical principles underlying these learning activities are inherently concerned with how people engage with and react to each other in group-based work. Networked learning researchers, then, study dialogue (Crosta & Gray, 2014), knowledge construction (Lee et al., 2018), cognition (Parchoma, 2016), high-level thinking (Ramanau et al., 2008), and critical thinking (Corich, 2006). The findings suggest that for networked learning researchers, “network” meant approaches to teaching and learning that involve a group of people working together towards a common goal, whether this common goal is learning a subject, solving a problem, or creating an artefact. This is an important finding because it shows that “network” is conceptualised in line with perspectives that put cultural aspects to the fore. As I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, the community of networked learning researchers comprises diverse set of theoretical approaches and frameworks. Theories, such as actor-network theory, activity theory, or socio-material perspectives, have long been impinging on the literature of networked learning. As I will conclude below, the term network should be conceptualised and studied more broadly.

An alternative approach that can help with broadening our perspective to study network is socialisation. It refers to the social engagements within a community. It is a process of learning that is acceptable to society, a process of internalising the norms of a community (Kehrwald & Oztok, 2016). Although the term socialisation is not widely used in the networked learning community, research concerning how people create and sustain social relationships (Simmons et al., 2018), whether these relationships are strong or weak, and whether there is a sense of coherency and membership within a learning community can be grouped under socialisation (Allan,

2006). I believe that it is an important term as socialisation can provide means to discuss whether the connections between community members and its learning resources are meaningful enough to form a network. While some researchers employed socialisation, it is an underexplored concept.

Of course, it is erroneous if we only focus on the benefits associated with the concept of network (Oztok, 2019). While research concerned with the exclusive nature of group work is not new to the networked learning community, it is arguably thin in volume and nature. The findings suggest that the negative impact of normalisation is only studied under the sense of community (Johnson, 2012). What impact social hierarchy has on pedagogical practices and outcomes, and how to address these problems, remains largely understudied. It is possible to summarise that networked learning research can be more attentive to questions concerning social justice in networks. This is an important research strand given both the collective nature of networked learning practices and the complexity of the concept of network.

Lastly, as I have argued above, the findings suggest that community is the concept with which *networked* is overwhelmingly associated and through which it is studied. However, there can be other forms of network. What are the alternative frameworks for and approaches to networked learning? How can networked learning research go beyond the concept of community in its understanding of what networked is? Perhaps, these are the questions that the networked learning community can pay more attention to.

1.7 The Gold Standard Redefined: Re-conceptualising Networked Learning

Let me reiterate the philosophical stance behind this chapter: change is the only constant. Networked learning research should change and evolve as the members of the community change and evolve. Then, where does this leave us after 22 years since the first conference? What does this change mean for our epistemic practice? There are two recent developments to take into account.

First, the gold standard definition of networked learning went through a rigorous scrutiny by the Networked Learning Editorial Collective. It was an attempt to re-conceptualise networked learning as the research and practice of complex entanglements among various stakeholders. Parallel to the analysis I provided here, the Networked Learning Editorial Collective acknowledges that the old definition can be broken down to three sets of phenomena for explaining these complex entanglements: (1) human/interpersonal relationships, (2) technology, and (3) collaborative engagement in valued activity. The new definition is built on these phenomena, but it goes further to suggest five intertwined “parts” that comprise networked learning:

Firstly, it involves processes of collaboration. . . . Secondly, it involves processes of ‘coming to know’ and of acting on the implications of that knowledge . . . Thirdly, these processes

depend on human relationships: they require and strengthen trust and reciprocity . . . Fourthly, a network's activities have a larger purpose: they matter to the people involved . . . Finally, there is the matter of enabling technologies.

These five principles, then, lend themselves to depict the revised definition of the networked learning as:

Networked learning involves processes of collaborative, co-operative and collective inquiry, knowledge-creation and knowledgeable action, underpinned by trusting relationships, motivated by a sense of shared challenge and enabled by convivial technologies. Networked learning promotes connections: between people, between sites of learning and action, between ideas, resources and solutions, across time, space and media.

Surely, the revised definition provides a much more comprehensive scope for understanding and studying complex pedagogical entanglements. The emphasis is on collective inquiry, knowledgeable action, trusting relationships, and shared challenges that are promising concepts by which the networked learning researchers can probe in detail the dynamics of participatory pedagogies. There is no doubt that the fruitfulness of this definition will be tested as networked learning researchers apply it in their work.

However, many questions emerging from the analysis reported in this chapter remain to be unanswered. For example, the new definition does not imply what learning means but simply suggests that it will occur as a result of collective actions. It is an idealistic approach and only vaguely defines the nature of these activities or the expected outcomes from them. But most importantly, it does not specify, define, or explain what *networked* means. As the analysis in this chapter showed, there were a wide range of perspectives for and approaches to studying the concept of network. How, for example, perspectives different in their approach to network (i.e. actor-network theory, sociotechnical theory, activity theory) can study learning if their aims, scopes, and goals are different? The new definition does not explicitly provide a direction forward. But we should not take this as something bad or missing in the definition. First, perhaps this is a chance for the networked learning community to continue discussing what we mean by networked or learning with the way we conduct research and apply these principles in our practices. Second, perhaps this is a chance for the networked learning community to continue embracing its diversity. The variety of theoretical frameworks for, approaches to, and perspectives in networked learning has been providing a fertile and healthy ground for the theory and practice of networked learning.

Another important point to mention is the lack of reference to questions concerning social justice and equity in the definition. To be fair, the five principles mentioned above take social justice into consideration, and the Networked Learning Editorial Collective discusses social justice and emancipatory activities as one of the fundamental values of networked learning. Arguably, however, the lack of reference to these emancipatory principles in the definition renders social justice-related work as a by-product or an afterthought to networked learning. It is important to note that this does not mean social justice is ignored in networked learning research. Analysing the literature of networked learning in relation to questions concerning

social justice is beyond the scope of this manuscript (but despite thin in nature and volume, examples can be easily found in proceedings). My argument here is that *equity* and *justice* are inherent in any collective pedagogy and thus should be explicitly acknowledged in the definition of networked learning.

Second development to take into account is this book. It is the latest addition to the Research in Networked Learning Book Series, which provides a contemporary picture of networked learning research. It makes sense to very briefly discuss the chapters in this book, not only because each single chapter illustrates different ways in which the definition of networked learning is manifest in *who we are* and *what we do*, but also because when the chapters are combined together, the book provides a unique account of what networked learning research is.

The first section of this book puts professional learning into focus and explores pedagogical design frameworks for understanding collaboration and community dynamics. This is an important agenda because, as this chapter argues, there is a need for a careful pedagogical design that is distilled through a clear understanding of what learning is. These three chapters collectively offer insights concerning design considerations for learning. The second section brings the development of networks to the fore. The chapters in this section concur with the analysis I provided above: (1) networked learning researchers are quick to adapt new and emerging technologies and (2) technology plays a mediating role to form a learning space. Taken together, these chapters show that technology is a pedagogical tool for the creation, utilisation, and sustainability of networked practices. Indeed, networked learning researchers will continue exploring the pedagogical uses of emerging technologies. If the analysis in this chapter showed anything, these current emergent technologies will be the main focus during the next conference as they will gradually become integral in our epistemic practices as researchers. The last section of this book represents a multitude of approaches for and applications of participatory practices in networked learning. These chapters provide means for going beyond the concept of community to understand what networked learning means. This is important because the analysis above indicated a need for critical discussion to better understand the concept at the very centre of this community. Overall, works presented in this book not only show examples of networked learning in action but also offer novel ways to think about frameworks for and approaches to technology, connections, and networks.

Of course, the chapters presented in this book do not provide means for addressing the concerns emerging from this analysis; this was not the intention behind these chapters. Yet, the research presented in this book suggests that we have started to tackle with these critical questions implicitly. And we need a scholarly debate and discussion about them.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with the extent to which the definition of networked learning is manifest in networked learning research. To this end, it explored how the definition is utilised in the design and application of the research through three categories: technology (mediation and/or facilitation), connections (interactions), and network (community and/or context). While the definition of the networked learning is open ended in nature, the findings show that networked learning researchers have arguably enough commonality in their conceptualisation of networked learning.

In my approach to the definition of networked learning, I wanted to explore *who we are* and *what we do* as networked learning researchers. My intention was to better understand ourselves both as a knowledge and as a research community. I never aimed to draw lines on what we do and set boundaries on who we are as a community. It is important not to see the membership in binary terms of being in or out, but to use *who we are* and *what we do* as pockets of interests by which to negotiate our membership with the community. This is why I carefully avoided even a slightest implication of what “we” means. Anybody who subscribes to the principles of networked learning can find a pocket of interest. In this sense, the findings in this chapter concur with the perspectives from one of the previous attempts of studying the networked learning research that are worth citing in detail (de Laat & Ryberg, 2018, p. 30):

from a theoretical perspective it seems clear and that network learning is strongly associated with theories that emphasise social, relational and cultural aspects of learning . . . it is a field interested in community oriented and collaborative forms of learning . . . it is a field that—being interested in digital technologies—also reroutes its interest or object of study as the technological landscapes and trends change.

To a great extent, the findings in this manuscript provide further qualitative explanation to these claims.

The notion of “network” is more prominent than “learning” in the definition of networked learning, and this was evident in the approaches to networked learning. Learning is studied under various theories; and in accordance, networked learning researchers adopted numerous ways of studying learning. The findings in this research concur that “networked learning is not a unison theoretical perspective, but rather is a theoretical perspective that is composed by or underpinned by a range of other theoretical outlooks” (de Laat & Ryberg, 2018, p. 9). There are two important implications of this.

First, despite the variety of perspectives available, the networked learning community inclines towards the learning theories that support relational perspectives within sociocultural settings. Yet, there is a need for more discussion on learning. What do the members of networked learning community mean when they study learning? This is an important point for a further conversation since designing networked learning should not be an open-ended endeavour but rather a careful pedagogical design, distilled through a clear understanding of what learning is.

Second, despite the prominence of the notion of network, the findings suggest that community is the concept with which *networked* is overwhelmingly associated and through which it is studied. There is a need for a discussion and debate on other forms of network. What are the alternative frameworks for and approaches to networked learning? This is an important question if networked learning research is going to adapt itself to the changing nature of the educational uses of technologies.

The Networked Learning Editorial Collective suggests five intertwined principles to conceptualise networked learning. A comprehensive approach to *what we do* and *who we are* requires us to understand these principles in relation to one another. The arguments I provided in this chapter concur with this approach: it is important to foreground the dynamics of one principle while keeping the others in the background. This process of analytically shifting between foreground and background allows us to see how the dynamics of each principle operate distinctly yet always in relation to others. Is it more productive, then, to pay more attention to the fundamental principles of networked learning and use them as guiding frameworks for understanding our epistemic practice?

I should, perhaps, end this chapter with some provocative thoughts to catch some attention. This is not to satisfy a narcissistic urge but to start a discussion that is long due. I will not reiterate questions whether networked learning is a unified field of study or whether it is an unbounded dialogic space (Sinclair, 2018). I will, instead, try to strengthen the ties that bind us. The findings of this chapter, and in fact from this book overall, warrant for two agenda items for the society of the networked learning. First, we need a more nuanced definition of networked learning, one which accounts for the current practices where we are almost always “connected” to each other due to the ubiquitous nature of digital technologies. Second, we need to put the concept of learning to the centre of our attention and debate, discuss, and hopefully agree upon what learning means and how we can research it. The current definition has, perhaps, served its term and deserves a well-earned retirement.

I hope this chapter will spark curiosity and encourage others to join the debate and discussion.

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