

Holger Jahnke · Caroline Kramer
Peter Meusburger
Editors

Klaus Tschira Symposia

Knowledge and Space 14

Geographies of Schooling

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Knowledge and Space

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This book is dedicated to Peter Meusburger (1942–2017), one of the founding figures and the most visible and dedicated representative of Bildungsgeographie. Almost 50 years before geography of education became a leading subdiscipline of international human geography, Peter Meusburger ventured out to start his pioneering research on the geography of schools and schooling in peripheral areas. Over the following decades, he developed this work into a school of Bildungsgeographie at Heidelberg University. This volume of the Knowledge and Space series thus deliberately carries the title “Geographies of Schooling.” Peter was the initiator and main organizer of the 14th symposium of Knowledge and Space, but he sadly passed away while the presentations from the symposium were taking on a textual shape. As former students of Bildungsgeographie and co-organizers of this symposium, we would like to express our deep gratitude to a generous, encouraging, and inspiring teacher. Caroline Kramer, Holger Jahnke, and his former students

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Chapter 1

Geographies of Schooling: An Introduction



Caroline Kramer and Holger Jahnke

Researchers across different disciplines have shown a growing interest in the spatial dimension of education and learning in its different forms. The number of publications on geography of education (Brock, 2016; Butler & Hamnett, 2007; Hanson Thiem, 2009; Symaco & Brock, 2016; Taylor, 2009), radical geographies of education (Mitchell, 2018), geography of education and learning (Holloway & Jöns, 2012), geographies of alternative education (Kraftl, 2013), as well as children's and young people's geographies (Holloway, Hubbard, Jöns, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010) has risen considerably in human geography, especially in the Anglophone academia. Even researchers outside the discipline of geography have explored the spatial dimension of education and learning, for example those in educational sciences (Baroutsis, Comber, & Woods, 2017; Gulson & Symes, 2007; Nugel, 2016) and the sociology of education (Ares, Buendía, & Helfenbein, 2017; Löw & Geier, 2014).

In German geography, the geography of education or *Bildungsgeographie* as a subdiscipline of social geography has a more than 50-year research tradition in terms of geographical research in educational institutions. It ranges from preschool education to tertiary and posttertiary education (Freytag & Jahnke, 2015; Freytag, Jahnke, & Kramer, 2015; Geipel, 1965; Meusburger, 1980, 1998). In French and Belgian social geography, already existing and more scattered research in the field has only recently begun to form a more institutionalized *géographie de l'éducation* (Wayens, Marissal, & Delvaux, 2017), whereas in other countries such research is currently in the process of institutionalization.

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The growing research in the field has led not only to an extension of the research topics, but also of the methodological approaches and the types of education and learning processes they study, ranging from formal to nonformal and informal education. In its broadest understanding, any kind of experience of the natural, social, or cultural world can be conceptualized as a learning experience. In that sense, the research field has become rather broad.

Researchers of the geography of education and learning seem to display three tendencies: (1) a preference for single case studies that exemplify broader social, political, and economic tendencies; (2) a preference for qualitative methods, which at the same time have been broadened in their variety; and (3) a growing interest in informal learning processes and informal education (Kraftl & Mills, 2014). At the same time, schooling and formal education in general have gained less attention in human geography.

For the present volume of the *Knowledge and Space* series, the editors have deliberately chosen the title “Geographies of Schooling” in order to gather contributions that focus around the school as the still dominant state primary or secondary education institution. This includes its various—social, political, pedagogical, and economic—dimensions on the one hand and its different spatialities on the other. Within the broad field of “Knowledge and Space,” the present book complements existing volumes that focus on different forms of knowledge, knowledge creation, knowledge production, and knowledge distribution. The geography of schooling has not yet been directly addressed in the series with a clear focus on the spatiality of schools, teaching, and formal learning processes in its different forms.

Perspectives on Schools and Schooling

With this collection of articles, the book explores school and schooling in their educational and cultural, but also social and political dimensions. The articles’ authors do so on different levels—ranging from single institutions to the local, the regional, and the broader scales of national levels—by looking at national educational systems in regard to their social and political role in society. Schools and schooling are understood as institutions and practices that are currently undergoing fundamental changes, processes that seem to be profoundly embedded in the more general societal and economic transformations often labeled as neoliberalization. Throughout all chapters, a critical understanding of schooling and education becomes apparent, and thus the taken-for-granted positive connotation of education and *Bildung* is questioned.

This critical perspective becomes most apparent in the political dimension of schooling and national school systems, which several authors address. The examples of Hungary (see Chap. 6 by Gyuris), the Czech Republic (see Chap. 7 by Kučerová et al.), and France (see Chap. 5 by Giband) illustrate how state governments still implement ideas of society through national education and school policies. Education policies can shape not only the reproduction of ethnicity (see Chap. 9 by Basu),

colonial structures (see Chap. 8 by Schaeffli et al.), gender roles (see Chap. 17 by Schmude), and class stratification (see Chap. 14 by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson), but also territorial development (see Chap. 2 by Jahnke) and school systems (see Chap. 11 by Kramer).

The recent restructuring of national education systems—a phenomenon that apparently does take place in most countries across the globe—seems to have weakened state control over schooling. However, schools themselves as public state institutions become an important part of the neoliberal reorganization of states (see Chap. 14 by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson and Chap. 9 by Basu). The introduction of norms and mechanisms according to the rules of new public management combined with policies of decentralization and individualization (see Chap. 5 by Giband and Chap. 2 by Jahnke) slowly establishes an entrepreneurial idea of schools that also changes the tasks and role of head teachers and teachers. The role of the state gradually shifts from school planning—exemplified by former socialist countries—to different forms of educational governance (see Chap. 4 by Altrichter). Responsibilities are devolved from the state ministries to the individual schools, and thus from the centers to the peripheries. The apparent increase of economic school autonomy turns out to be ambiguous, as it brings about a growing dependency on local resources that in turn tend to be unevenly distributed. School autonomy creates new potentials for the development of new school profiles (see Chap. 12 by Raggel). It also, however, bears the risk that small schools in peripheral communities have to close (see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund and Chap. 11 by Kramer), especially when the introduction of free parental school choice fosters competition between small schools in contexts of demographic decline. This in turn creates pressure on the head teacher, who is pushed into an entrepreneurial rather than a pedagogical role.

In the social dimension, schools can also be regarded as social microsystems, in terms of an assemblage of actors and actions in a given material and institutional setting. The contributors to this book address the role of head teachers (see Chap. 13 by Hillyard and Bagley), teachers (see Chap. 12 by Raggel), parents and families (see Chap. 14 by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson), and pupils (see Chap. 15 by Reutlinger, Chap. 12 by Raggel, and Chap. 16 by Sliwka and Klopsch), but also of other local actors such as politicians (see Chap. 2 by Jahnke and Chap. 11 by Kramer). In most of these studies, those involved have extended the idea of schooling beyond the institutional and spatial school boundaries into the local community, thus devolving parts of the responsibility for formal education and schooling to the community level. The complex set of formal, nonformal, and informal learning environments, sometimes metaphorically coined “educational landscapes” (see Chap. 3 by Coelen et al.), offers a more holistic view on schooling by placing the school institution in the center of a set of other available institutions.

Last but not least, researchers must take into account the educational or pedagogic dimension of school and schooling. From this perspective, teaching and learning practices in and around schools become the focus. Here, the question of school size becomes pivotal when it comes to school closure, especially in rural areas. Multigrade teaching, historically developed as a necessity due to the small number of children in rural schools, has recently seen a revival as a pedagogical tool in

urban and even metropolitan contexts (see Chap. 12 by Raggl). Some analysts stress the need for a critical review of existing practices of teaching (see Chap. 9 by Basu) as well as the content of teaching materials such as curricula and textbooks (see Chap. 8 by Schaeffli et al.); others underline the need to take students' perspectives and informal learning practices into consideration (see Chap. 15 by Reutlinger and Chap. 16 by Sliwka and Klopsch) in order to gain new insights into the pedagogical dimension of schooling and formal education.

Spatial Dimensions of Schooling

When focusing on the territoriality of school systems and of everyday school life in regions, towns and schools, one can find that although school systems follow national and federal guidelines, laws, and standards, smaller-scale territories seem to be gaining influence. Their influence on education policy decisions and school structures is growing as is their responsibility for school system institutions. This process of territorialization of educational policies, however, often excludes the decision power on how financial resources are allocated (see Chap. 5 by Giband, Chap. 10 by Kvalsund, and Chap. 11 by Kramer). Political decision-makers often justify this decision on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, yet it must remain an empty shell if the power to allocate resources is not granted.

Another territoriality aspect impacting school systems is that the responsibility for school system elements are distributed on different territorial levels, an organizational structure which triggers complex processes of coordination. Often, teachers are recruited and paid for by national or state governments, student transportation is organized on county level—and the construction and maintenance of school buildings falls to the responsibility of local governments. Because the scope of duties and the financial allocation powers do not fall on the same spatial level, frictions are likely to occur with regard to questions of cost efficiency. For example, although merging school locations reduces personnel costs (national or federal level), they lead to higher spending for student transportation (middle regional level) and place a higher burden on students because they need to spend more time commuting to school.

Some federal governments are currently reorganizing territorial responsibilities. On the one hand, this presents opportunities for forming new territorial alliances; on the other, it carries the risk of some regions and locations being marginalized, thus creating new regional disparities and jeopardizing the principle of equal opportunity in the school system.

The urban-rural divide is the most commonly used juxtaposition to describe spatial structures in school systems. Typically, analysts use indicators such as settlement size or rank in the central local system to set urban and rural areas apart from one another. They evaluate key figures for the school system with these analytical categories, and support programs are implemented with the same. Scientific studies also tend to differentiate between schools in urban and in rural areas. Researchers

studying schools in urban areas are also interested in questions such as socially disadvantaged neighborhoods, the integration of children with immigration backgrounds, or social and spatial segregation. Researchers studying schools in rural areas often focus on questions such as school closures and long school commutes, mixed-graded teaching, or the situation of those acting as both head teacher and teacher in peripheral schools.

Nevertheless, one must keep in mind that urbanity and rurality are social constructs (see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund). Their exact meaning depends on the intentions of those making use of the contrasting pair, and thus the terms always must be deconstructed. Researchers quite often understand rurality synonymously with remoteness and isolation, which immediately reveals an urban-centric perspective. This perspective expresses a belief that in today's world urban life as well as globalized and mobile urban societies are the norm, whereas rural schools are believed to be part of the local, natural, and life-world context. Furthermore, rural schools are often associated with small schools in which mixed-graded teaching is a typical organizational form. What should not be overlooked here is that this rural idyll with a small village school and teachers living in the same village and doubling as "bearers of culture" is also a construction and is not always reflected in reality (see Chap. 12 by Raggl). The professions of teachers and head teachers are continuously being professionalized. On the one hand, this phenomenon does lead to the demystification of the rural idyll; on the other hand, it can also make teaching positions in small rural schools more attractive, especially for younger teaching staff.

How the school as an institution is embedded in its spatial and social surroundings is of importance not only for students' everyday school life, but also for the neighborhood in which the school is located. A number of contributors to this book address these interrelationships for both the rural and urban context (see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund, Chap. 12 by Raggl, and Chap. 11 by Kramer). When social spaces are also conceptualized as educational spaces or educational landscapes, close connections can be shown between educational policy and urban or regional development policies. Often, socially and economically marginalized neighborhoods are the starting point for concerted social, urban, and educational planning measures. The study of these neighborhoods makes the interconnectedness between children and adolescents' different social and physical spaces—along with their specific rules and practices—readily apparent. School buildings and the activities offered there carry meaning beyond being "just" a place of school lessons; they serve as places where the social lives of children and adolescents are interconnected and as places that are appropriated and occupied by those who use them (see Chap. 15 by Reutlinger). That the architecture of those buildings can either promote, enable, or limit appropriation processes also becomes evident. Thereof follows the recommendation to conceptualize school facilities in both rural and urban areas in a way that they not only serve for teaching purposes, but can simultaneously function as possibility spaces for young people and for people living in the same neighborhood.

Across Europe, rural regions—often already only sparsely populated—are subjected to demographic changes that will classify them as shrinking regions. Within a few years, an ageing population and the selective migration of young people will

lead to a steep decline in school-age children. However, the commute to and from school for young children cannot be prolonged at will. School-location planners often react to these demographic changes by closing schools and by spatially concentrating the school-location networks. Politicians may like to argue that large and central schools lead to an improved teaching quality, fewer cancelled hours, and more options to choose from, but school closures are primarily economically motivated. Maintaining small schools means higher costs for personnel per child and for school buildings, sports halls, and personnel for the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities in many different locations. A number of contributors in this book are concerned with the negative impacts of school closures in rural areas and present measures through which small schools can successfully be integrated into village life, and they show which opportunities can arise thereof (see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund and Chap. 11 by Kramer). Small schools are currently experiencing a renaissance and their typical features—namely mixed-graded teaching, project-oriented lessons, and individual support—are being newly appreciated in rural but also in urban regions. In fact, evidence suggests that students from urban areas commute to schools in the rural hinterlands, thus reversing the typical central-location divide. Urban-rural commutes occur especially when communities outside of cities offer special pedagogical concepts (see Chap. 12 by Raggl).

Researchers are in agreement that local schools have a positive influence on the social life in these locations, the local population's local and regional identification with the area, as well as the region's long-term overall development (see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund). The importance of a school as a socialization instance cannot be overestimated, because lessons and everyday lifeworlds are closely intertwined, and a school building's exact construction and use can further that role. Swedish and Austrian examples show that school buildings equipped to serve in multifunctional ways offer far more than merely class rooms and sports facilities. They instead have the potential to serve as a meeting point for local clubs, adolescents, families, and senior citizens and to offer space for local libraries, kindergartens, and shops providing for local supplies. Children's experience of their school life as part of community life, life in clubs, and other specific activities contributes to how they identify with the place and region in which they live. Successful students who identify with their region do not necessarily follow the pattern of "learning to leave" as Corbett (2007) described it for Canada; instead, these experiences can lead them to "learning to stay."

Methodological Approaches to "Geographies of Schooling"

The contributors in this edition approach the topic of "Geographies of Schooling" in many different ways: Some take a theoretical approach and support their arguments with empirical material, others focus more on empirical material, such as regional statistics, surveys, and case studies. Researchers concerned with long-term

developments in school systems take a historical approach and ask about political upheavals and school reforms.

The authors in this edition use methods covering a wide range of empirical approaches. Quantitative analyses of official data allow statistical spatial analyses and cartographic representations that reveal school structures on a small scale and in time-spatial patterns (see e.g., Chap. 7 by Kučerová et al., Chap. 6 by Gyuris, and Chap. 17 by Schmude and Jackisch). Time series of school data reveal developments and spatial interrelationships of processes, which allow conclusions on the spatial spreading of a phenomenon to be drawn, for example waves of school closures in rural areas (see Chap. 11 by Kramer). Quantitative surveys of actors in the school system, such as head teachers and parents, reveal the consequences education policy measures have on those affected (see Chap. 14 by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson). Qualitative interviews with experts, teachers, pupils, or parents augment and deepen those findings by giving insights into individual decision-making processes, motives for taking action, and assessing school-based actors (see Chap. 13 by Hillyard and Bagley and Chap. 12 by Raggl). Quotations from head teachers, teachers, parents and children convey their perspectives on their school, the community they live in, responsible actors, as well as the roles they play and this in turn allows deep insights into the connection between the institution school and its local and regional environment. One contributor in this edition employs mental maps as a particular form of visualization in order to reveal more about the subjective spatial constructions of individuals (see Chap. 15 by Reutlinger). Another contributor's focus is linked to written constructions of societies and spaces, utilizing document analysis to learn more about the curricula covered in school books (see Chap. 8 by Schaeffli et al.).

The diversity of theoretical and methodical approaches that have been brought together in this volume emphasize the variety of research in the new field of geographies of schooling, which in turn contributes to a better and wider understanding of spatial education systems and their actors. They enable readers not only to learn more about the characteristics of school systems on different levels of scale, but also to take the value systems, motives, and preferences of the responsible individuals into consideration.

The areas investigated in this volume include Canada, Norway, Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Czechia, and Hungary. In many cases, the authors start with their home countries and make cross references to countries that show similar processes in their school systems, thus generating comparative cross-national studies. The analysis of the influence actors have on different spatial scales shows that their goals often do not coincide. Gathering evidence on how those spatial scales in school systems are intersected is one result of this volume and that this intersectionality is a prerequisite for making a goal-oriented and holistic structure and design of school systems possible.

The Geographies of Schooling in This Volume

The contributors to Part I, “Governance of Schooling in a Spatial Perspective,” look at the interdependency of the political and the spatial dimension of school and education policies. They highlight the spatial effects educational reforms have had in different countries since the beginning of the twentieth century and more specifically in recent years. As the different case studies show, implementers of recent education reforms and school policies have introduced processes of territorial restructuring, which lead to the emergence of new spatial configurations of formal and nonformal educational institutions.

In the first article, Holger Jahnke considers the territorial dimension of educational policy in Northern Germany. In rural areas that suffer from population decline and shrinking pupil numbers, many small elementary schools with often very long traditions are threatened by school closure. On a conceptual level, Jahnke critically examines the interconnection between school governance policies on the one hand and territorial governance on the other. Both policies share the goal of population growth and are thus usually discussed in terms of a synergy—eventually leading to a stabilization or even enhancement of local development. Looking at concrete case studies, however, Jahnke points to the inherent ambiguities when local school development is done in the name of demographic stability and growth.

Thomas Coelen, Anna J. Heinrich, and Angela Million examine the interfaces and interlacing between education and urban development in the context of Germany. In recent years, the political concept of local educational landscapes was established to draw together local institutional actors from the formal and nonformal education sector. This tool was supposed to strengthen the quality of the educational offer on the one hand and the spatial development of certain urban areas on the other. Following this logic, some cities have started investing in schools in order to foster the revitalization of certain urban areas. Based on empirical case studies from different cities in Germany, the authors question the generally shared assumption among city planners that the development of educational institutions will automatically have a positive impact on urban development.

In a broader view, Herbert Altrichter explores school autonomy policies and the changing governance of schooling. Since the mid-1990s, the governments of German-speaking countries have passed a series of reforms in their school systems that have also had strong effects on the mechanisms of school governance. The author analyzes recent school reforms, focusing on the changing governance of schooling in Germany and Austria that eventually lead to more decision-making powers for the single institutions, thus allowing for more school autonomy. Using the specific example of “curricular profiles,” which allows schools in Austria to shape their individual school curriculum according to a specific profile, the author critically discusses the outcomes of such educational reforms in a multilevel governance system.

Similarly, David Giband looks at the territorial dimension of educational policies in the French context. He critically examines the transition from what he calls

“republican spaces of schooling” to educational territories (*territoire*) and the paradoxical outcomes of spatialized education policies. He provides a historical reconstruction of the emerging territorial paradigm in the governance of schooling and education as a republican ideal, as well as critically discussing partial decentralization processes within the education sector. In the light of a relational conception of space, the created territorial arrangements of education policies result in a “new educational order” with growing educational inequalities.

The contributors to Part II of this volume, “National School Systems in Transition,” focus to a greater extent on different spatialities within the education system in selected countries. With a focus on the national scale, they address two spatial dimensions in particular. The contributors of the first two studies examine historical changes in two Eastern European centralized education systems in a spatial analysis approach focusing on spatial disparities of school provision. Those of the other two critically evaluate the construction of national identities as well as the subalternity within nationally defined education systems and even beyond. All contributions in this section take particular note of the growing spatial and social inequalities and structural injustices that are produced through different nationally defined education systems.

In the first contribution to this topic, Ferenc Gyuris looks at the impact political ideologies had on national spatial planning and the school network in twentieth century Hungary. With a focus on the politics of small schools in the country’s rural areas, the author discusses different phases of rural school policy and how they reflect the dominant political ideology of the time. Whereas the nationalist conservative regime in the interwar period fostered large-scale school development projects in the entire territory, the Stalinist dictatorship after 1948 aimed at the demolition of small settlements, including their schools. The 1970s witnessed a decentralization of power to the regional level, which resulted in a regional school centralization policy and further closures of small schools in the respective regional peripheries.

In a similar approach, Silvie R. Kučerová, Kateřina Trnková, and Petr Meyer analyze the changing spatial structures of school provision that national reforms produce in the Czech education system. In light of structuration theory, the authors explore the connection between socioeconomic and political conditions on the one hand and education policy on the other in different periods of the transition from the communist government to a democratic society. Through the use of thematic maps, the authors highlight how educational reforms in this specific historical period resulted in different spatial patterns of elementary school provision across the national territory.

Laura Schaeffli, Anne Godlewska, and Christopher Lamb present a very different approach to the national dimension of education. In their contribution, they look critically at the representation of colonialism and Indigenous peoples in Canadian curricula and textbooks. Focusing on three provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and British Columbia—they analyze strategies of inclusion and exclusion at play in state-approved curricula and textbooks and discuss their educational impact on students’ consciousness. Their findings reveal a representation of the disappearing indigenous peoples that minimizes colonial violence, and precludes

the imagination of self-determining Indigenous nations. The authors come to the conclusion that state-approved textbooks and curricula contribute to the perpetuation of colonial modes of thought and action among students.

In the next contribution, Ranu Basu considers the geopolitical framings of subalterity in state-funded public education. Presupposing that state-funded public education has transformative effects on the evolution of the public realm, she examines how current ideologies, policies, and practices shape various aspects of social justice. Looking at displaced migrants in urban areas across the globe, she advocates for an adequate representation and participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in publicly funded education systems. These observations on the geopolitical framings of subalterity are related to broader transformation processes in neoliberal welfare states across the globe.

In Part III, “Small Schools Versus Large Schools in Their Local Context,” the contributors focus on the already mentioned dichotomy between large and small schools. At first glance, this dichotomy refers only to the size of the institutions, but upon closer inspection it becomes clear that many more (stereo)typical characteristics of schools come into play. Large schools are mostly urban schools in which the students are taught in single-age forms; small schools are mostly located in rural areas and pupils are often taught in mixed-age forms. This melange not only produces “typical” schools and stereotypes, but they are founded on constructions of the world that must be deconstructed. The spatial approach furthermore makes it possible to take the different scale levels and regional, social, historical, and institutional contexts of schools into consideration.

Rune Kvalsund takes on the job of deconstruction by taking schools in rural Norway as an example and asking the rather provocative question: “Bigger or Better?” With his question he targets the difficult issue of how to measure the “quality” of a school and, taking it a step further, asks who defines the criteria and goals by which success is measured. In light of the “quiet” reforms that have taken place especially in the rural Norwegian school system, Kvalsund analyzes these processes from a number of different perspectives. Through deconstructing places and rural schools, he for instance reveals how both the understanding of what constitutes learning and the quality norms of small schools have changed. He also takes national research funding, research designs and methods into consideration, and finally makes the case for valuing the cultural meaning of the inner life of schools and communities.

Caroline Kramer centers her attention on small schools and the role they play in school systems. Her study areas are the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg and the Austrian federal state of Vorarlberg, and her research spans more than 25 years of development there. In order to learn about the collective and individual actors that have influenced small schools, she utilizes a comprehensive multilevel view to analyze the process of “making of small schools.” Whether small schools are closed or kept open depends on national state interests, economic situations, as well as the educational policy and ideological affiliation of relevant actors. An important and maybe counterintuitive conclusion she draws from her findings is that the fate of small schools is dependent not so much on ever-present demographic

changes, but on whether the decision-makers are advocates or adversaries of small schools. Her empirical research includes both quantitative and qualitative methods, and she used both to identify a number of different factors that influence the “making of schools” on different spatial levels.

Andrea Raggl’s research area is also Vorarlberg in Austria, but her interest focuses on the potentials and challenges of specific teaching and learning situations in small rural schools. Her focus is on the characteristics and current situation of small rural primary schools in Austria, the working conditions for head teachers and teachers, as well as on student’s learning contexts. Her empirical approach is a mixed-methods one through which she can extract both the strengths and the weaknesses of small schools. Among the strengths are providing a caring ethos and individual support for the students, as well as school lives for teachers that are exciting and never boring. At the same time, however, it becomes evident that teachers in very small schools may grow lonely and have difficulties coping with being both the sole and the head teacher. Raggl’s contribution manages to uncover the most likely unexpected plurality of small schools and that small rural schools can be places of innovation, especially in cases in which they manage to attract children from urban centers by developing a special profile.

Samantha H. Hillyard and Carl Bagley’s contribution investigates the developments of two small schools in very different English villages and is rooted in tradition of ethnographic research. The villages differ in their cultural heritage and the individual leadership styles embedded in the locals. Hillyard and Bagley analyze the different developments of small rural schools in the light of Lefebvre’s theoretical works on spatial contexts and Bourdieu’s conceptions of field, habitus and capital. The authors come to the conclusion that even though small rural schools are shaped by their local contexts and social histories, their head teachers still enjoy a certain degree of relative autonomy.

In Part IV, the focus shifts to “Schools in and for Society” and the societal contexts of which schools and their relevant actors are part of as well as to the functions schools fulfill in a society. School is an early and important socialization environment for children and adolescents; it is an important place where their character is built, where they learn to integrate into forms, and last but not least it is the place where they acquire their cultural and economic capital for their personal development and their professional careers. The authors of this section hence address topics such as the influence of education policy measures, how the socialization instance of schools is intertwined with the primary socialization instance of family, as well as the role that neighborhood’s characteristics play. They also cover the question of how school as an institution must develop in order to become a space for collective learning, a space where young people can develop and further their identities and their talents. Important accompaniment is provided for through teachers and head teachers. Another focal point in Part IV is the role played by the social and regional origins of the teaching staff, how they fill their positions, how their line of work changes, and in which esteem society holds their work. This is especially true for the primary school sector, in which the teaching profession has undergone a process of feminization. The last contribution in this part is dedicated to that process.

Sarah L. Holloway and Helena Pimlott-Wilson place their focus on the connections between “schools, families, and social reproduction.” They have observed a process of restructuring of education in Great Britain through which the education system contributes to producing competent workers fit for the neoliberal age. Its members achieve this by offering extracurricular activities and all-day school child-care for working parents on the one hand and parenting classes through which the parents are meant to be more included in educational tasks on the other. The authors question how these education policy measures affect parents and children from different social classes and how they impact the respective neighborhoods. Through quantitative and semi-structured interviews, they reveal that these state interventions mainly work in favor of middle-class families and that they can contribute to the (re)production of socially unjust landscapes.

Christian Reutlinger takes on the perspective of children and adolescents and sets out to learn more about how they perceive and assess school as a central institution in their neighborhood. He views school as a social space in that he asks about the spatial appropriation processes, especially in the context of city neighborhood development. This concept of space consequently means that the relevant actors are constantly constructing their social spaces, including schools; consequently, the author asks to what extent schools are a reflection of the local neighborhood and whether they are a part of socio spatial problems or a solution for them. In finding an answer to that question, he had students from two different neighborhoods in St. Gallen, Switzerland, draw their social spaces into individual and subjective maps. The maps show that children and adolescents see them as spaces where they have the opportunity to participate in independent activities and in educational processes. In best case scenarios, schools provide not only educational spaces but also facilitate a wide variety of activities.

Anna Sliwka and Britta Klopsch examine how educational spaces for adolescents’ engagement could be designed and how schools could be redefined. They are convinced that learning should reach beyond merely acquiring knowledge and should instead include problem-solving skills and the power to act demanded by the manifold challenges encountered throughout life. What Sliwka and Klopsch call “learning engagement” could be formed through “deep learning” in authentic learning tasks and through curricula that foster solving real world problems. They introduce a number of projects geared in that direction, reaching from integrating the digital world into “learning worlds” in which young people plan and implement international projects themselves or in which extracurricular institutions and actors become part of school learning. The facilitators of such hybrid learning environments aim at linking traditional and non traditional, nonformal and informal learning environments and thus enhancing learning engagements.

Teaching staff and school management play important roles in everyday school life and their social and regional origins, their selection and assignments to schools through the education authorities are subject to many societal and education policy parameters. It is rather remarkable that this professional field underwent the process of feminization earlier than others. Jürgen Schmude and Sascha Jackisch have probed that topic in their empirical study on the developments in the German federal

state of Baden-Württemberg and concentrated on regional disparities as well as causal and correlative effects of women's participation in the teaching workforce. As a result, they are able to identify different feminization phases and types. When female teaching is seen as a process of innovation, urban-rural disparities in the process can be discerned that can be explained by particular geographical, social, economic, and legal conditions. If modern learning environments are to be developed, the teaching staff, the role they play, and their needs must be taken into consideration.

The contributors to this volume have revealed just how diverse "Geographies of Schooling" perspectives are. The book's reach, however, goes beyond taking a closer look at systems and structures. It also includes individual schools in their quarters, neighborhoods, and villages, as well as looking into the schools themselves. If schools are to be hybrid learning spaces, places in which children and adolescents are prepared to become individuals responsible for themselves and for their social and regional environment, a context-based perspective on school life is indispensable. The authors of "Geographies of Schooling" aim to contribute to this goal.

Questions and Outlook

In sum, the authors of this book seek to offer new insights into current transformations of schools and schooling across different local, regional, and national settings in the international arena. A look at the various case studies reveals some general trends in the global transformation of education, with all their ambiguities and contradictions. One central theme in the text is the tension between homogenizing processes on the one hand and individualizing and localizing processes on the other.

Most education systems discussed in this book show a tendency towards a more homogeneous globalized education, directed by output orientation, market mechanisms, and competition. Apparently, the model of the highly standardized state school, which has been developed during the rise of the modern nation state, is challenged by a policy in support of a place-based, more localized school. The latter offers more space for the recognition and development of local cultures, norms, languages, and traditions. From this point of view, the multiplicity and diversity of cultures and traditions might finally mirror in the multiplicity of school cultures, curricula, contents, and schooling practices. But as the cases of Canada and Norway illustrate, marginalized groups and regions still struggle to find full recognition and visibility in the education systems of the respective majority.

However, the growing autonomy of schools and the shifting responsibilities to the local communities also bring new challenges in terms of equal opportunities and participation in society. In the past, responsibility fell on the public administration, usually represented by the ministry of education, not only to assure but also to enforce accessibility to formal education and the minimum standard quality of education in each school. However, the new place-based school policy founded on

norms and principles of new public management leaves this position of responsibility in an unclear vacuum. The slow withdrawal of state support from more localized schools creates dependency on municipal resources—financial, social, material, and cultural—that are unevenly distributed in space. The fishing village in Norway, the marginalized quarter in the banlieue, the local ethnic minority in Toronto, and the rural village in Northern Germany not only share the potential for development but also the threat of school closure and school deprivation due to the lack of local resources. Decentralization in the education system in these cases might enhance existing inequalities and lead to even more unjust landscapes of education.

The place-based school will probably be better embedded locally and will strengthen local cultures and traditions, eventually preparing children for their future lives in the community much better. Whereas in the past the standardized and homogenized national language, culture, and curricula would put young children at risk of alienation from the communities they were born into, a diversified place-based schooling might lead to isolation and deprive children of the opportunity of pursuing a career and a life elsewhere. The traditional critique of the modern school system, famously labeled “learning to leave,” (Corbett, 2007) might be turned into its opposite: “learning to stay.”

Schools and schooling are increasingly conceptualized in a more holistic approach, with the entire social system of education and learning in the community—children, teachers, head teachers, administrators, mayors, and families—taken into consideration. At this point, what impacts the opening of schooling will have on broader social developments—in the schools themselves, the families, the local communities, but also society at large—is still unclear.

But what will happen to education as a universal right if states continue to withdraw from the obligation to provide a functioning public education infrastructure across the entire territory? The resulting lack of financial and educational resources in many peripheral and disadvantaged communities will have to be substituted somehow. There is the danger that the pedagogical work in these schools will have to be done by volunteers, often women and mothers, so that eventually new (or old) gender inequalities might arise. Although voluntary community engagement in its different forms means a mobilization of local resources, it also appears to replace the growing absence of the centralized welfare state. Unconsciously, the high number of volunteers can pave the road for the complete withdrawal of the state from education. The burden of education is then shifted from the society to the community, the family, or the parents. For the disadvantaged—poor families, single parents, peripheral communities, and marginalized city quarters, just to name a few—that means the loss of the responsible party from whom to claim their children’s right to a qualitative formal education.

Last but not least, if the responsibility for education is increasingly shifted to the local level, who will be responsible for guaranteeing the quality standards of the schooling offered? If school closures leave parents feeling deprived of their child’s right to formal education, to whom can they address their claims—the head teacher? The mayor? The community council? The regional board of education? The central

government? If a local curriculum becomes too traditional, too “localist” in the view of single actors, where can they make their claims for a different curriculum that prepares their children for the world outside the community? Will they have to move their children into the private education sector? Is this accessible only for the advantaged?

From a global perspective, research on the geography of schooling is only just beginning. The authors of the present volume show that not only schools and schooling, but also the spatiality of schooling are embedded in constant processes of transformation.

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Part I
Governance of Schooling in a Spatial
Perspective

Chapter 2

Territorial Governance of Schooling and Education in Rural Areas: Case Studies from Northern Germany



Holger Jahnke

Introduction

Schooling, understood as the provision of and participation in formal public education, has become a subject of discussion in many rural areas. Under the demographic pressure of shrinking pupil numbers in peripheral regions, a number of rural schools have been closed across Europe in recent years. In some countries, central national or regional education boards have accelerated this process by cutting support for small schools in peripheral regions; others, especially in the Scandinavian context, have followed a policy of decentralization by shifting resources and responsibility for schooling to the community level. Consequently, schooling has been (re) embedded into complex local processes of decision-making and resource distribution.

In this contribution I explore the interaction of two parallel processes, which researchers in different political and academic contexts have described as territorial governance on the one hand, and governance of schooling and education on the other. Whereas the former refers to a specific type of regional policy aiming at the development of a defined territorial entity such as a region, the latter refers to the application of new public management-strategies to the education sector by means of a politics of decentralization of power and growing autonomy of individual institutions or local communities. As will be shown, schools can be targets of both types of governance—territorial and educational.

In this chapter I analyze the impact these two distinct practices of governance have on schooling in declining peripheral areas. I have developed my conceptual ideas out of a series of empirical studies on schooling and education in rural areas conducted in the region of Schleswig-Holstein in Northern Germany between 2011 and 2018. Most of the data has been generated in applied research projects financed

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by the German federal government and the state government of Schleswig-Holstein, as well as some smaller projects carried out with the support of local authorities. The empirical material is based on quantitative data from official statistics, historical document analyses, as well as qualitative data mostly drawn from expert interviews.¹

The Schleswig-Holstein region has been experiencing a strong demographic decline since the late 1990s, with a continuous acceleration throughout the 2000s. In the first decade of the 2000s alone, the number of children at elementary-school age dropped by roughly 20% in the regional average; in some rural counties, this process was particularly pronounced after 2005, with a loss of up to 25% in only 7 years (Jahnke & Hoffmann, 2014, pp. 8–9).

My aim in this contribution is to highlight in more theoretical terms the territorial dimension of schooling in rural areas, which are currently characterized by demographic decline. I utilize the concept of territorial governance to analyze the territorial dimension of selected recent educational reforms in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, which have decentralized decision-making power to local communities on the one hand and introduced mechanisms of competition between schools on the other. I stress the territorial consequences of three reforms and projects related to schooling and education—*free parental school choice, all-day schooling, and educational landscapes*—using two neighboring rural districts as case studies.

The Territorial Dimension of Schooling

Since the introduction of compulsory education in most European countries by the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century, schooling can be understood as a territorial practice. Though it was originally restricted to men and national citizens, it has been extended to all children living on the territory. The obligation for children to attend public schools also obliges the state to provide facilities and staff to insure equal access to high-quality education regardless of the location of residence. Researchers of early German geography of education have therefore been mostly concerned with the spatial accessibility of primary and secondary schools, especially in peripheral and remote areas.

The principle of compulsory education clearly expresses the state monopoly in controlling the processes and institutions of the education of all citizens. This is the case for Germany, where, for example, deschooling and homeschooling are prohibited and every child up to the age of 18 is obliged to attend a state school or a state-recognized private school. State-control over basic education is thus directly exercised by the schooling institutions—public or private—which must go through

¹The data and material have been documented in detail in several (mostly German-language) reports, local case studies, and selected academic publications (Hoffmann & Jahnke, 2017; Jahnke, 2015; Jahnke & Hoffmann, 2012, 2013, 2017).

a process of accreditation in addition to regular controls. On the other hand, compulsory education also forces the state to offer a public schooling opportunity in the geographical proximity of each child. This right to access adequate schooling—even though not legally defined—was a guiding principle for the expansion of the school system during the 1960s and 1970s, especially in peripheral and remote areas.

The responsibility for the provision of school education in Germany is traditionally divided between the regional ministry of education, the county administration, and the local level—the district or the municipality. In brief, the ministry of education is responsible for so-called *inner school affairs*, meaning all pedagogical concerns including the appointment of teachers and head teachers and the creation of the curriculum, which must pass through the regional parliament. School planning is mostly coordinated at the county level in collaboration between the county government and the respective administration of the ministry of education, which is also responsible for the assessment of school performance. The local-level actors of the municipality or district must provide school infrastructure and administrative personnel such as the secretary or the caretaker. Because education and culture have historically been the full responsibility of the regions, no federal ministry of education exists. In the past years, however, the federal government has tended to intervene indirectly in education policy through specific measures and initiatives to foster school development. For example, the introduction of all-day schooling was indirectly supported by federal investment funds for the construction of cafeterias or other architectural changes (Hoffmann & Jahnke, 2017).

In this paradigm of centralized administration, the ministry of education and its representatives at the county level are fully responsible for the qualitatively adequate provision of basic schooling and education. The central administration controls the schools, the ministry of education selects the teachers, and the regional parliament determines the curriculum, whereas the ministry and its employees at the county level control its execution.

In terms of territorial organization, the provision of schooling is organized in fixed school districts, which means that pupils must attend a set school in their district. It thus binds pupils and parents to “their” school—at least at the elementary-school level. At the same time, the organization by school district ensures that the entire territory is covered by an adequate provision of schooling. Apart from some exceptions—so-called *school avoidance strategies*—the only way to change schools is to change residency—an action taken only rarely, particularly in rural districts. So far, only two out of 16 regional states in Germany have introduced free parental school choice: Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Spatial school planning presupposes a sufficient number of pupils in each district. In recent years, the declining number of pupils in many rural areas has challenged the survival of many schools. The accelerated demographic decline and the consequent lack of pupils especially in rural elementary schools has made the maintenance of a school infrastructure with high quality standards a challenge for the educational administration. The elementary school is often one of a small village’s last remaining infrastructures, so local politicians are very much concerned

about school closures—giving rise to the widespread conviction that “with the school the village dies” (Jahnke & Hoffmann, 2017). The presence of a school thus symbolizes the hope for a better demographic future—even in times of a rapidly shrinking population. Many mayors and local politicians therefore view young couples and families as a major resource for future development. This is one of the reasons why the provision of schooling has become part of a broader territorial governance strategy, particularly in rural areas.

Territorial Governance and Education

Researchers have mostly discussed the term *territorial governance* in the context of European territorial policy in relation to cohesion and convergence policies (Böhme, Zillmer, Toptsidou, & Holstein, 2015; Lidström, 2007; van Well & Schmitt, 2015). The concept first appeared in 2007 in EU documents as the “Territorial agenda of the European Union” (TAEU) (Petersen, 2016, pp. 10–11). It stresses on the one hand the cooperation of actors at different levels (supranational, national, regional, local) and different sectors (public and private in the fields of economy, science, administration, NGOs, and different political resorts) but on the other also its territorial dimension (Faludi, 2012). In a broad sense “territorial governance can be defined as the process of organization and coordination of actors to develop territorial capital in a nondestructive way in order to improve territorial cohesion at different levels” (Davoudi, Evans, Governa, & Santangelo, 2008, p. 37).

In distinction from other forms of governance—such as educational governance—territorial governance does not target one specific domain but stresses the territorial dimension by managing territorial dynamics, assessing territorial impacts and delineating policy boundaries (Stead, 2014). Territorial governance’s impact can transcend existing administrative boundaries, with new geographical entities emerging as a result of the process. Territorial governance processes themselves—despite their integrative intentions—can then turn into new bordering practices.

The target of territorial governance measures is thus the *territory*—even though its boundaries are usually neither fixed nor clearly defined, as they can transcend existing administrative boundaries. According to Davoudi et al. (2008), the term territory itself is rather vague and can be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, territory can be considered as a set of (institutional) actors—public and private, collective or individual—present in a set space. Territorial governance in that sense is a form of organization and coordination of these actors. *Governance*, then, is the capacity to build an organizational consensus involving different actors in order to define common objectives and tasks, agree on the contribution of each partner to attain the objectives previously defined, and settle on a common vision for the future of their territory (Davoudi et al., 2008, p. 35).

On the other hand, territory can refer to territorial capital—a concept that has been developed by Dematteis and Governa (2005) and which comprises the following elements: a localized set of common goods and immovable goods, which

are place-specific, as well as heritage goods, which are produced and stored over a long period on the territory (Dematteis & Governa, 2005, as cited in Davoudi et al., 2008, p. 36). In that second sense of territory, territorial governance becomes more complex because it involves not only the (institutional) actors, but also the identity of the territory in its material, social, and cultural complexity. Territorial governance then needs to be understood

as the process of territorial organization of the multiplicity of relations that characterize interactions among actors and different, but non-conflictual, interests. This organizational dimension refers to the construction of a shared territorial vision, based on the recognition and valorization of the territorial capital to create sustainable territorial cohesion at different levels. (Davoudi et al., 2008, p. 37)

Territorial governance actions can take place on different scales—from the transnational to the local level—depending on the target of the governance action. Territorial governance actions are often related to organizational cooperation and dynamics at the transnational or the state level. They become more complex at the regional and local levels, where they demand a widespread participation and actions that refer to the specificity of the territory in terms of territorial capital (Davoudi et al., 2008, p. 45).

In both understandings, schooling and education facilities are part of any given territory and can thus be target of territorial governance action. Rural areas in northern Schleswig-Holstein have a very long tradition of schooling, which historically often goes back to the establishment of village schools by the church in the eighteenth century. These old school buildings are part of the region's cultural and architectural heritage. Some of them still host the local village school, whereas others are now used as local museums, preschools, restaurants, or other venues. Besides the school, other institutions of nonformal and informal education or culture can be part of the territory: the youth club, the adult teaching center, the fireworks, sports clubs, cultural associations, and the local library—but also individual actors like artists, writers, or any kind of teacher in the broadest sense. In this understanding, educational institutions play a rather important role in rural territories.

In a 2012 survey (Jahnke & Hoffmann, 2012, 2013) on culture and education in rural districts in Schleswig-Holstein, almost all interviewed political stakeholders would only rarely consider schools and schooling as part of their territorial governance strategy, because they were—and still are—formally directed and controlled by the regional ministry of education. However, the same interviewees felt slightly more responsible for the educational institutions of the nonformal sector, because some of them—such as kindergartens—were their direct responsibility. However, the idea of provision of education was still dominant. The stakeholders' major concern regarding future development was how to manage the demographic transformation with an ageing population in increasing need of medical and transportation facilities. Territorial governance was thus strongly linked to demographic transformations, which needed to be managed. It was only when local schools were threatened with closure that local politicians would develop an interest in school and education. In a general climate of growing political attention

for education, which was fostered by parents mobilizing against school closure, schooling and education became part of the local development strategy.

According to the respective concepts of territory, two different approaches to the local territorial governance of education can be distinguished: The supporters of the first take into account the educational institutions within a given territory—such as a district—and try to coordinate their actions towards a common goal. This is in essence the idea of the so-called local educational landscapes, which I will discuss later on in this text. The other is a more place-based approach, whose supporters consider educational institutions as part of the place identity and the cultural heritage. Researchers of territorial governance of education in this second sense would pay more attention to the relations of the educational institutions and actors with the specific territory in its material, social, and cultural dimensions. Territorial governance action in the first sense is more concerned with coordination and organization of educational institutions and thus impacts on the level of territorial representation, which will eventually lead to a common orientation; in the second sense, actors might have to intervene more directly in the educational institutions, related processes, and relations in the territory and thus in the territorial capital in its different dimensions itself. It needs to be considered, however, that educational institutions and processes themselves, especially public schools, are the target of another governance process, which researchers usually refer to as *educational governance*, or more specifically *governance of schooling*.

From School Planning to Governance of Schooling and Education

The term educational governance has been used in the Anglo-American context since the late 1970s in the general climate of neoliberal state reforms (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1980). It is a part of the new public management strategy, a term that describes the introduction of management mechanisms in different sectors of public administration. Educational governance is often connected to a decentralization of power and decision-making from the central administration (i.e., the ministry of education) to the local authorities or the individual institutions. Educational governance thus usually involves institutions at different levels—state, regional, and local. Most of these institutions are public, but may involve private actors as well.

A vast amount of research has been published around the topic of educational governance, especially in the German and Austrian context (i.e., Altrichter, Brüsemeier, & Wissinger, 2007; Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2010; see also Chap. 4 by Altrichter in this volume). In terms of terminology, the distinction between educational governance, governance of education, school governance, and governance of schooling is not always very clear. In this chapter, I use the term educational governance or governance of education to refer to governance processes that theoretically involve all actors from the educational field, whereas governance

of schooling more specifically refers the processes and practices directly related to schools, thus including both formal and nonformal education that takes place in the school or is organized by the school; it includes afterschool activities.

In Germany, and more specifically in Schleswig Holstein, school legislation, school reforms, and new school development programs at different levels offer the necessary conditions for a growing freedom of choice and decision-making for schools and families. At the same time, a general shift of responsibility from the central state ministry of education to the local authorities and the individual school institution can be observed. However, because schools were not supplied with sufficient financial and human resources, they could only acquire new resources by applying for additional funding, and cooperative endeavors were opened and resources were made available only through specific projects and programs.

From a geographic perspective, many of these political measures had an implicit territorial dimension. In the following, I will discuss three different educational initiatives from the federal state or the regional state government in order to highlight how schooling has slowly shifted from state provision of schools towards governance of schooling.

Introducing Competition Among Schools: The Schleswig-Holstein School Act 2007

The 2007 Schleswig-Holstein School Act (*Schleswig-Holsteinisches Schulgesetz vom 24.1.2007*) had a decisive influence on the shift from school planning to governance of schooling, as it introduced elements of free market competition at the level of elementary schools for the first time. Most important was the introduction of free parental choice, which allows parents to send their children to the elementary school of their choice. If they pick a school in another district, the sending municipality must pay a share of the additional schooling cost to the receiving municipality or district. Despite the demographic decline that had already been perceivable in many rural areas, the minimum number of pupils in each elementary school was generally fixed at 80, with the possibility of administratively uniting smaller schools. In order to profile their school in this new competitive context, head teachers were given the opportunity to seek sponsoring, develop specific school curricula, and exercise some influence on the selection of teaching staff. Initially, there was little evidence that these changes led to a general reorientation of parents' school choice in rural areas; however, they indirectly transformed parents and children into school clients. As a consequence, schools, and especially head teachers, had to invest in marketing activities such as the setting up of webpages, open school days, and information campaigns. At the same time, the ministry did not provide the schools with additional resources for these supplementary—and nonpedagogical—activities. Sometimes it was the parents who set up the webpage, helped to apply for additional funding, or supported the

head teachers in these activities. In all cases, the supplementary “competition costs” depended on the local resources—from within or outside the school. In some cases, the actors on the municipal level, as school providers, tried to offer support to their school (Jahnke & Hoffmann, 2014).

Opening Schools to Noneducational Actors: Afterschool Activities

Another major reform was the introduction of all-day schooling, which was initiated by the federal government and then put into practice through the regional ministries (Coelen & Rother, 2014; Kagelmacher & Hollmer, 2010). As a result of the so-called Pisa shock, which pointed to Germany’s rather weak results especially in terms of social mobility through education, demands for all-day schooling rose considerably. In most states, however, afternoon schooling was set up on a voluntary basis and only few schools were fully turned into all-day schools. In Schleswig-Holstein, obligatory all-day schooling was introduced only in social hotspot areas of big cities, whereas rural schools, in particular elementary ones, were all-day only on a voluntary basis. The federal government did provide funding for the construction of school cafeterias or other necessary renovations of the school buildings, but schools needed to apply for it. However, funds for teaching staff salaries were not made available. The ministry only financed the position of a coordinator for the organization and administration of the afterschool activities, whereas the teaching staff was hired on a voluntary basis—they only received a financial compensation for their expenses. Accordingly, most schools had to rely on the local resources of associations, sports clubs, and other volunteer-based structures to cover the necessary hours. In addition, the ministry’s financial support was rather symbolic, as it was calculated on the basis of pupils’ actual participation, which from the very beginning turned out to be weak and irregular. As a result, the introduction of all-day schooling, which began as a groundbreaking reform of the German school system, turned out to be based mainly on local resources. Both economic and cultural capital are unevenly distributed, especially in rural areas (Jahnke & Hoffmann, 2017).

Territorialization of Schooling and Education: Educational Landscapes

The third initiative—the creation of educational landscapes (*Bildungslandschaften*)—also came from the regional state of Schleswig-Holstein, but similar concepts have been developed in other regions as well. The reformers intended to coordinate all institutions related to education in a very broad sense—formal, nonformal, and informal—within the same territory (Emmerich, 2017;

Olk & Schmachtel, 2017). The central pedagogical idea was to facilitate children's as well as other people's access to these offers and activities. In many cases, these educational landscapes were centered around the local school(s) and the organization of afterschool activities was a major driver in most projects, as they depended on the collaboration with other providers. In Schleswig-Holstein, reformers promoted this idea since 2009 through three different calls, in which schools and local authorities could apply for initial funding to set up a network. Only three educational landscapes were funded in the first round, whereas more localities were supported in the later waves. The funding was limited to the coordination of the different institutions as well as the organization and administration of the network itself. The extension of the network was not strictly limited in geographical terms, so that partners could be acquired from outside the administrative boundaries of the applying district or municipality. At the same time, schools or education providers could also opt not to join the network, so that the geographical extension of the network could differ from the area of the municipality or district. The emergence of these new spatialized education-based entities with their own administrative centers can thus be characterized as the territorialization of schooling and education. Although this shift led to the emergence of new educational territories, the majority of municipalities in Schleswig-Holstein today still do not belong to any network. As a consequence, the homogenized state school provision has been overlaid by a patchwork of isolated local educational landscapes—with some educational flagships and a high number of areas, districts, and municipalities that do not appear on this map.

The mentioned reforms can be understood as different steps in a form of educational governance which on the one hand gives more decision-making power to the local and institutional level, but on the other hand also adds new tasks and responsibilities. The free parental school choice set the basis for schools increasingly competing for children in a period of rapidly shrinking pupil numbers. Part of the assessment of school quality was ultimately left to the parents who, through the means of school choice, had the strongest influence on the closure of a school.

Political stakeholders promoted the introduction of afterschool activities as a means of providing all-day schooling for all children, ensuring less influence of social background on education, and thus reducing social inequalities. In practice, however, it implied introducing voluntary afterschool activities only for schools that applied for the funding—federal funding that, as already mentioned, was rather symbolic and inadequate. To keep their activities running, schools still depend on volunteers—usually, none of the late afternoon hours are taught by professional teachers. This also means that the quality depends entirely on the material, social, and cultural resources available locally.

The third instrument to promote education—the educational landscapes—clearly follows the idea of territorial governance as developed at the beginning of this chapter, but is limited to educational resources in a very broad sense. The idea of promoting educational landscapes explicitly brings the territorial governance of schooling into a political practice. In the name of better local educational provision, all actors in the field are being coordinated and organized in order to mobilize all

educational resources available and to promote the newly emerging territories. A territory's profile can become an important factor in the competition between rural municipalities for demographic stability, as it can even attract children and families from neighboring communities.

The state funding itself follows the traditional structure of governance: Financial support is basically limited to organizational costs as well as the position of a coordinator, though only for a few years, after which he or she is expected to be employed by the local district or municipality. The same strategy applies to the coordinator of afterschool activities—instead of hiring teachers and qualified pedagogues, the state finances a coordinator, who is in charge of mobilizing local human and cultural resources on a voluntary basis.

Both initiatives—the afterschool activities and the educational landscapes—primarily aim at strengthening the schools' performance by means of mobilizing the multiple local educational resources in order to extend the time of schooling to the afternoon and to compensate for the lack of professional teachers and pedagogical staff. In theory, the catchment area of these resources is unlimited in both space and quantity, so that the emerging educational landscapes can be extended and gradually form their own territoriality, transcending administrative boundaries and integrating educational actors and institutions from neighboring districts.

Integrating School Development into Local Territorial Governance: Concrete Examples

Apart from their impact on education, the three mentioned reforms have also triggered concrete territorial consequences. As the case studies of two neighboring districts—Mittelangeln and Süderbrarup—show, educational and school development have had an impact.

Mittelangeln: A Model Educational Landscape in the Center of a Territorial Development Strategy

The municipality of Satrup in the district of Mittelangeln was among the first municipalities to apply for support during the first wave of the educational landscapes policy in 2009. Based on the initiative of a young and highly dedicated coordinator, the municipal actors succeeded in creating a strong and well organized network of cultural and educational institutions in the formal, nonformal, and informal education sector under the heading “Bildungslandschaft Satrup.” The network included two secondary schools and their common afterschool activities, although it was started and initiated by the local authorities, especially the social and youth workers. The coordinator, together with the local authorities, became very creative

in channeling other project funds into the network, such as funding for family centers and a financial educational support program for families in need. Interviews carried out in 2012 revealed that local representatives initially considered education the responsibility of the regional state ministry. As the network's size and visibility grew, however, the educational landscape became a local trademark and eventually moved to the center of local marketing. In the beginning, network partners were mostly located in the central municipality, but with time the educational landscape rapidly extended. In 2013, when the municipality of Satrup and two other municipalities were merged into the new municipality Mittelangeln, the educational landscape's name was changed to "Bildungslandschaft Mittelangeln." Even after the municipal reform, Mittelangeln remains a small rural town with no more than around 5000 inhabitants. However, education in its different forms—including care services—has moved to the heart of the local identity and become an important draw. Even the official webpage of the municipality directly points to the educational landscape, which now has its own central office at the local adult education center (www.gemeinde-mittelangeln.de). The educational landscape adds to the attraction of the municipality for young families. In addition, the freedom of school choice has contributed to the fact that even children from neighboring districts started attending the schools in Satrup, due to their good reputation. Through the coordination and networking of all institutions and offers in the field of formal, nonformal, and informal education and care, the educational landscape has become a key part of territorial identity in the municipality and beyond.

Süderbrarup: Preventing Decline Through Centralization of Elementary Schooling

A very different case is the neighboring district of Süderbrarup, a rather peripheral area that has been hit by rapid demographic decline, especially of children at elementary-school age. The district is composed of 13 municipalities, which have historically all been equipped with at least one elementary school. Many German refugees from the former German territories in Eastern Europe were allocated to rural areas after World War II, and many new schools were built in Süderbrarup in the early 1950s. At its peak in this decade, the district counted 15 elementary schools—most of them in traditional historical school buildings established by the church since the eighteenth century. According to the statistics from the district administration provided in 2016, the number of school children in the district had declined sharply: In only 7 years (2008–2015), the number of children at elementary school age dropped from 563 to 361. During a period of about 50 years, 10 out of 15 schools had to be closed; only five elementary schools were left in 2013, and further decline was predictable. The district administration at the time therefore predicted the closure of two more schools. In addition to demographic decline, some elementary schools on the district's periphery suffered from the already mentioned free parental school choice.

The neighboring district of Mittelangeln was particularly affected, as school buses there were running to bring children to the upper secondary school in Satrup, causing some parents to send their children to the elementary school there as well. This out-migration eventually threatened the survival of all elementary schools in the peripheries, so the district administration opted for a fairly radical solution to interrupt the vicious circle of decline. They designed a new “education campus” with a central elementary school for up to 330 children, hoping that the rather prestigious architecture would improve the quality and visibility of the educational offer. At the same time, they reorganized the bus system within the district in order to guarantee every child a maximum of 20-min bus travel time to the school. The idea was to not only stop out-migration of children at elementary-school age, but also to strengthen the position of their own secondary school, which due to its tradition as a lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*) suffered from a relatively negative reputation—especially in comparison to the schools in Satrup. Due to the considerable size of the new central elementary school, the district decided to close all other elementary schools—even those that theoretically could have survived despite the minimum number of pupils imposed by the ministry. In this case too, schooling became central for territorial development policy—as a reaction to the shining attraction of the competing educational landscape in the neighboring district of Mittelangeln.

In both cases it has been interesting to observe the changing attitude of local politicians in the period between 2010 and 2015. It was in those years that the consequences of the 2007 school act—namely free parental school choice, a minimum number of pupils, and financial compensation—became apparent. Local politicians were confronted with the threat of actual school closures with all its consequences: Politically, parents were usually expressing their opposition to school closure, and economically the sending municipalities had to cover both the expenses for the receiving school and the cost for their own school infrastructure. Even in the case of school closure, empty school buildings still demanded rather high expenses for heating and maintenance, as it is almost impossible to find new tenants for a school building in peripheral rural areas. This has been a major concern in Süderbrarup. Satrup-Mittelangeln was one of the first municipalities to recognize the importance of formal, nonformal, and informal education for future territorial development, whereas in Süderbrarup the centralization of schooling within the district is an attempt to reorganize the district’s territorial coherence.

Conclusion

As the examples have shown, schooling in rural Schleswig-Holstein has to some extent become part of local territorial governance—especially because demographic decline has become a major concern and barrier for future development. Recent school legislation as well as educational development policies have set the frame for a territorial governance of schooling, where education and population policies are merged in the name of territorial and school competition.

The three reform measures discussed in this text—namely the introduction of parental school choice and other market mechanisms, the option of all-day schooling, and the introduction of educational landscapes—have led to an opening of the schools and a weakening of the strict boundaries between state elementary schools and their local environment. Only a few years ago, local stakeholders fundamentally perceived the local elementary school as a state institution directed by the central regional ministry of education; now, local actors have opened up those same schools and integrated them into local development strategies. Local authorities do more than invest in and support their school—they even make it central to local development strategy: In Mittellangeln the educational landscape has become a keystone of territorial identity, whereas in Süderbrarup the new education campus has led to a spatial, material, and social reorganization of the district territory.

I have presented two different examples of local governance of schooling and education: The actors of the first engage in the cooperation and coordination of existing educational institutions and activities in a territory without hard boundaries; those of the second use the spatial centralization of all schools in the district as a trigger to reinforce and reorganize the territorial structure of the district—from a decentralized agglomeration of different municipalities to a district with a unique center. In terms of territorial governance, they go along with the two concepts of territory that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter: In the first case, the territorial governance actors target the organizational dimension of educational institutions in the territory, whereas in the second case, they directly invest in—or disinvest from—the assets of territorial capital—such as school architecture, infrastructure, and public transportation flows.

Researchers of the geography of schooling and education have often praised the recognition of schooling as a means of development as an achievement—and the growing importance of and political support for education clearly underlines this idea. In this contribution, however, I have offered a more critical perspective of some processes of territorial governance of schooling. If a local elementary school is being integrated into territorial strategies to cope with demographic crises, if the development of a school depends on the engagement and networks of single coordinators and local political support, if part of the teaching is done by underfinanced nonprofessionals or volunteers, if the quality of teaching increasingly depends on the availability of local resources—what does this imply for the future provision of schooling and education in rural areas, especially in terms of spatial equality, equal opportunities, and participation in society at large?

From the case studies in Schleswig-Holstein it becomes evident that a new geography of schooling and education in rural areas will eventually emerge from this type of territorial governance of schooling and education. Territorial competition—and school competition—will probably lead to more diversity among the schools in the region, and a more place-based offer of schooling is to be expected. The quality of the respective local educational provision, however, will reflect the economic, social, and cultural resources of each local reality, and will thus influence the future perspectives of the children who attend it.

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Chapter 3

Local Educational Landscapes in Germany: Interfaces and Interlacings Between Education and Urban Development



Thomas Coelen, Anna J. Heinrich, and Angela Million

Introduction

For some years now, experts and policymakers in Germany have been discussing how local educational infrastructure can be developed into local educational *landscapes*, and they are increasingly coming to the conclusion that issues around child raising, care, and local education (all-day schools and childcare centers) can no longer be dealt with separately from problems related to urban development (e.g., marginalized neighborhoods, site redevelopment). Although the discourses and practices of those working in education and social affairs have long run parallel to those in urban development, initial experience gathered in practice is increasingly being drawn upon to test out integrated approaches and model projects (e.g., Bildungsoffensive Elbinseln in Hamburg, Bildungsverbund Gropiusstadt in Berlin; for more detail, see Burgdorff & Herrmann-Lobreyer, 2010). Both educators and planners engaging in theoretical discourse on the subject are showing signs of an increased interest in the mutual relationship between education and urban development (e.g., Coelen, Heinrich, & Million, 2015, 2016; Kessl & Reutlinger, 2013a; Million, Heinrich, & Coelen, 2017; Reutlinger, 2009). For a long time, however, the flow of ideas between the two disciplines was restricted to a dialogue on terminology; until now, there has been a lack of empirical research viewing education and urban development as two systematically related processes (examples are Böhme, 2009; Kessl & Reutlinger, 2013b, p. 7; Westphal, 2007).

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In view of this, the Siegen Centre for Socio-Scientific Educational Research (SiZe) has been running a DFG¹-funded research project on this subject since October 2014, in association with the Institute of Urban and Regional Planning (Technical University Berlin). In a study titled “Local Educational Landscapes and Urban Development: Interfaces and Interlacings,” the interdisciplinary team of researchers are investigating how education and urban development are connected spatially and in terms of content. Their investigation is based on the concept of local educational landscapes (as a currently prominent example of an interface between education and urban development), aiming to pinpoint the potentials and limits of coordinating the fields of education and urban development, and helping to systematically reconstruct and contextualize the links between the two fields—links which are frequently said to be positive but which have as yet received little verification. This contribution studies the current German debate on the interplay between education and urban development, focusing on the concept of *local educational landscapes* to offer an insight into the above research project, along with some initial empirical findings.

The Relationship Between Education, Space and Urban Development

Researchers increasingly believe that the fields of education and urban development have relevant effects upon one another (Tibussek, 2012, p. 7). This can be described with two theses:

The thesis “urban development is of educational relevance” (Tibussek, 2012, p. 7) proposes that urban development should have an enabling component, because it directly and indirectly influences the development and transformation of educational settings in the urban space (Million, Heinrich, & Coelen, 2015a, p. 2; Tibussek, 2012, p. 7). Educational processes of children and young people are embedded in the urban space. According to this thesis, the neighborhood, district, and city as a whole serve more than a residential purpose. Rather, neighborhoods, districts and city quarters with their manifold educational settings form the basic framework of educational processes. Thus, urban space can also be interpreted as a learning experience (Mack, 2008, pp. 743–744). Depending on how the urban space is created and structured, it can enable or restrict the opportunities of individual educational processes (Deinet, 2008, p. 727; Nonnenmacher, 2015, pp. 138–139). Therefore, processes of creating the urban space as a varied learning experience are related to questions of urban development and urban planning (Mack, 2008, p. 744). The extent to which urban space enables educational processes depends on the processes by which urban development comes about.

¹This abbreviation stands for “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft” (German Research Foundation).

The thesis “education is relevant to urban development” (Tibussek, 2012, p. 8) emphasizes the importance of education for a sustainable and integrative development of districts and of the city as a whole. At the level of communal policy, especially, education has transformed from a weak into a strong locational factor for urban development (Deutscher Städtetag, 2007; Hebborn, 2011, p. 140) and has become an essential component of good urban development (Burgdorff & Herrmann-Lobreyer, 2010; Coelen et al., 2015). Researchers discuss the relevance of education to urban development processes from various viewpoints: The further development and conversion of a quarter’s educational infrastructure might have an effect on shaping good educational opportunities in the urban space and therefore serve as a starting point for preventing educational inequality. It could also prevent the resulting social costs (e.g., increasing social transfer payments), which are caused by failed individual educational biographies and employment histories (Meier, 2008, p. 15; Olk, Somborski, & Stimpel, 2011, p. 155). Furthermore, joint efforts in education could contribute to the social and economic stabilization and general improvement of the quarter (Biernath et al., 2009, pp. 2–3; Coelen et al., 2016, pp. 145–146). Keywords for this are social desegregation, a higher quality of urban living, social integration, and economic uptrend.

From this point of view, in the context of urban development, schools are gaining particular importance as the central focus of community life in neighborhoods and districts. It is assumed that schools work as a mechanism for sociospatial segregation, because families who value education often consider schools decisive when establishing their place of residence (Häußermann, 2002, pp. 78–79; Merkle & Wippermann, 2008). These mostly high-income families want the best schools for their children. However, this means that the implementation of good-quality schools in so-called socially deprived districts might counteract social segregation and promote the improvement of sociocultural life in these quarters by attracting households with an interest in education (Baumheier & Warsewa, 2009, p. 21; Häußermann, 2002, pp. 78–79).

The prospective of the two areas of practice—education and urban development—being connected is coming to the foreground in debates on local educational landscapes, as a currently prominent example of a touch point between education and urban development. This touch point is at the focus of the empirical work in the above research project and will be outlined in more detail below.

Local Educational Landscapes as an Interface Between Education and Urban Development

In the sociopolitical debate on “up-to-date education,” the significance of the world in which people live and learn—municipal or urban spaces—has risen significantly in recent years. Since the 1990s, there has been a trend towards municipalizing education

(Weiß, 2011), expressed in various concepts and programs on federal and regional policy levels (e.g., the “Semi-Autonomous Schools project” 2002–2008; the “Selbständige Schule” project, 2004) and various funding programs organized by the EU and the federal government (e.g., “Learning Regions—Providing Support for Networks,” BMBF/ESF, 2000–2008; “Learning Locally,” BMBF/ESF, 2009–2014) (Million, Heinrich, & Coelen, 2015b, p. 5; Olk & Stimpel, 2011, pp. 169–170). This generally includes the development that local regional authorities (municipalities, rural districts) are increasingly being given greater responsibility for educational coordination and management (Deutscher Städtetag, 2007, 2012). This paradigm shift comes from increasing requirements made of municipalities as a result of changes in social structure (demographic change, globalized economic processes). The municipalities are concerned that current challenges such as the polarization of social spaces and related tendencies towards the spatialization of social inequality or social disintegration could have a negative effect on cities’ social makeup, local competitiveness, and future economic development. This is one reason why experts generally see a functioning education system and well qualified citizens as key factors. Education is becoming a central pull factor for municipalities. However, as the federal states are in fact responsible for shaping the education system under constitutional law, processes of educational municipalization imply a call for municipalities to be given greater powers to shape the education system if they are to have a more active, formative influence on local educational development (Hebborn, 2011, pp. 152–154).

From the point of view of educational policy, the discussion on local educational landscapes in Germany can also be seen as an extension of the PISA debate to include the increase in the number of full-service community schools and the development of a coordinated system of education, childcare, and child raising. The plan put forward involved the local coordination of all institutions and schemes involved in processes of formal and informal education. This would extend the scope from classic educational institutions (such as schools) to include all local educational activities and promote an understanding of city or urban spaces as a space for education (BMFSFJ, 2005, pp. 31–32; Mack, 2008). In view of this, the subject is not only relevant for education, but is also turning into a field of discussion and action among urban developers and planners.

The Current State of the German Debate on Local Educational Landscapes

In recent years, practitioners’ and policymakers’ calls for innovative pedagogical approaches to achieve more equal opportunity education for all have almost all been answered with the concept of local educational landscapes.

However, the professional discourse has yet to come up with a satisfactory definition of what is currently meant by a local educational landscape (Mattern & Lindner, 2015, p. 82). Working definitions have been established as an initial means

of access to the concept: For example, Bleckmann and Durdel (2009, p. 12)² understand local educational landscapes as “long-term, professional education networks formed through municipal policy to follow joint plans for learning from the standpoint of the subject, including formal and informal learning environments and related to a defined locality.” Bringing together all previous attempts to describe the concept, Mattern and Lindner (2015, p. 82) see local educational landscapes as “a small, defined conglomerate of actors of all kinds, joined in any form ..., trying in unison, as an interconnected system, to institutionalize what can very generally be described as ‘education.’”

The institutionalization of this kind of education system is linked to a wide range of intended goals. Generally, the concept is based on the idea of helping to promote education and iron out inequalities caused by education by introducing integrated educational opportunities and linking various educational establishments and actors locally, within a social space (Berse, 2009, p. 205; Bleckmann, 2012, p. 290; Mattern & Lindner, 2015, pp. 87–88). Other expectations linked to the term local educational landscape include close interconnections between schools and the youth welfare services, bringing actors from outside the professional field (companies, foundations, etc.) into the social welfare and education system, or renegotiating municipal responsibilities for the field of education (Hebborn, 2011).

Within the debate on education and educational science, efforts are being made to link the concept to pre-existing conceptual approaches such as all-day schooling (Bleckmann & Durdel, 2009; Coelen, 2009; Stolz, 2009), cooperation between the youth welfare services and schools (e.g., Maykus, 2009), and the concept of appropriation (Deinet, 2015), or to question the validity of organizational and regulatory structures in the context of local educational landscapes (e.g., Lindner, Niedlich, Klausling, & Brüsemeister, 2015a, 2015b; Olk & Stimpel, 2011; Tibussek, 2009). Furthermore, findings from accompanying projects are making their way into the discourse on practical implementation within municipalities (e.g., Kucharz, Bohl, Eisenach, Fink, & Müller, 2009; Olk, 2015), or to support programs (such as the “Learning Locally” program) aimed at establishing the concept (Lindner et al., 2015a, 2015b). Spatial theorists are also increasingly interested in the concept; they mainly discuss local educational landscapes from the point of view of education as a strategy for sustainable urban and district development, or as a component of urban or regional space (e.g., Reutlinger, 2011; Tibussek, 2015). An interdisciplinary anthology by Coelen et al. (2015)³ describes the current status of the debate on interfaces between the education system and urban development.

Only recently have some researchers also attempted to adopt a critical stance towards the concept of educational landscapes. For example, some have pointed out that the discussion has avoided fundamental pedagogical and conceptual questions on how formal and informal education processes can be linked, that the concept shows signs of being limited to formal education settings (schools, daycare institutions) (Stolz, 2012, pp. 29–30), and that any critical reflection on local

²The term has also been described by others such as Coelen and Croonenbroeck (2011, pp. 338–339).

³See also Million et al. (2017).

educational landscapes as a postulated answer to current processes of social change is as of yet lacking (Mattern & Lindner, 2015, pp. 86–87).

The National State of Research on Local Educational Landscapes

Despite increased research into local educational landscapes in recent years, discussion within the German debate on local educational landscapes has so far mainly been characterized by basic programmatic or normative issues, well meant statements of intent by municipal policymakers, or best-practice examples (e.g., Bleckmann & Durdel, 2009; Bleckmann & Schmidt, 2012; Bollweg & Otto, 2011), rather than by research-based work on empirical studies or findings. Initial accompanying studies and evaluations of federal and regional funding programs (e.g., DKJS, 2012a, 2012b; Huber, Kilic, Schwander, & Wolfgramm, 2014; Meinecke, Schalkhauser, & Täubig, 2009; Projektleitung “Selbständige Schule,” 2004; Stolz, 2008; Tippelt, Dobischat, Hagen, & Nuissl von Rhein, 2006) have provided some initial ideas and indications of what causes municipal educational landscapes to succeed or fail. Other national studies on local educational landscapes have mainly shed light on potentials, cooperative work, and cooperative networks in and around school networks or local educational landscapes, and the organizational structures within them (e.g., Berkemeyer & Bos, 2010; Berkemeyer, Kuper, Manitus, & Müthing, 2009; Huber, 2014a, 2014b; Huber, Ahlgrimm, & Hader-Popp, 2012; Lindner et al., 2015a, 2015b; Niemann, 2014; Olk, 2015). Not until recently has the empirical spotlight also been shone on the users of local educational landscapes (e.g., Wüstenrot Stiftung, 2015).

Following Berse (2009), the state of research and practice regarding cooperation between the child and youth welfare services and schools or local educational landscapes can be summed up under four types of local educational landscapes: (1) cooperation between the youth welfare services and schools, (2) schools and the how they are improved, (3) lifelong learning, continuing education, and business, (4) social spaces as educational spaces (see Berse, 2009, p. 198).

Maykus (2009, pp. 49, 53) points to the urgent need for research into local educational landscapes, including their conditionality on context (e.g., the social space, municipality, region). Current research work on local educational landscapes has, however, rarely explicitly addressed educational associations focusing on shaping living conditions within social spaces as a basis for educational processes (Berse, 2009, p. 202) while also looking into the role played by aspects related to social spaces or urban development (e.g., Kessl & Reutlinger, 2013a; Olk & Somborski, 2013; Olk & Woide, 2014).

As work has only just begun on developing theories and carrying out empirical investigations on local educational landscapes in the context of urban development, the state of the research on this matter is generally lacking, and there is an ongoing need for research, which the research project “Local educational landscapes and urban development,” among others, is intended to meet.

The State of Scientific Research in the Field of Educational Landscapes on a European Level

In many European countries, a discourse is being held between politics and academia which is increasingly taking up the subjects of economic, educational, and social policy (e.g., related to social spaces) (Butler & Hamnett, 2007, p. 1162; Du Bois-Reymond, 2011, pp. 518, 525). In the EU, for example, efforts are being made to introduce binding, unified standards in the field of education (e.g., Europäische Kommission, 2008). However, education is not (yet) being discussed at the EU level as a matter of urban policy (Du Bois-Reymond, 2011, p. 531). International examples similar to the concept of local educational landscape with a link to social spaces are being implemented in some European countries: The *brede scholen* are a kind of full-service community school being introduced at the primary level in the Netherlands, planned as a networked school with links to the neighborhood (Du Bois-Reymond, 2011, pp. 519–521). The British concept of *extended schools* plans for an extensive range of full-service community schools also directed at the neighborhood (Coelen, 2009; Otto & Coelen, 2005). Comparable projects are being carried out in practice in Switzerland and Austria (e.g., the Vienna Education Campus). Nonetheless, local educational landscapes are a very new field of action and discussion, even internationally (Heers, van Klaveren, Groot, & Maassen van den Brink, 2011, p. 17). Initial studies on educational landscapes in Britain and the Netherlands indicate that there is a positive connection between education and urban development. Cooperative schemes involving schools and external partners have positive effects on attendance and individual learning performance, among other things (Baumheier & Warsewa, 2009, p. 15; Heers et al., 2011, p. 6). As a whole, though, even in other European countries there is a need for empirical research on educational associations and their effects (e.g., on urban spaces) (Heers et al., 2011, pp. 2, 18).

The Research Project “Local Educational Landscapes and Urban Development: Interfaces and Interlacings”

The research project “Local Educational Landscapes and Urban Development—Interfaces and Interlacings” uses a qualitative investigative design to study conceptual and practical connections and relations between contextual and spatial aspects of education and urban development in theory and practice at different scales (federal, regional, municipal). Its investigation of the link between education and urban development at the municipal level is grounded in the concept of local educational landscapes, as a currently prominent example of education meeting urban development. The focus is on local educational landscapes specifically aimed at “social spaces as educational spaces” (Berse, 2009, p. 198). The central lines of questioning behind the investigation are as follows:

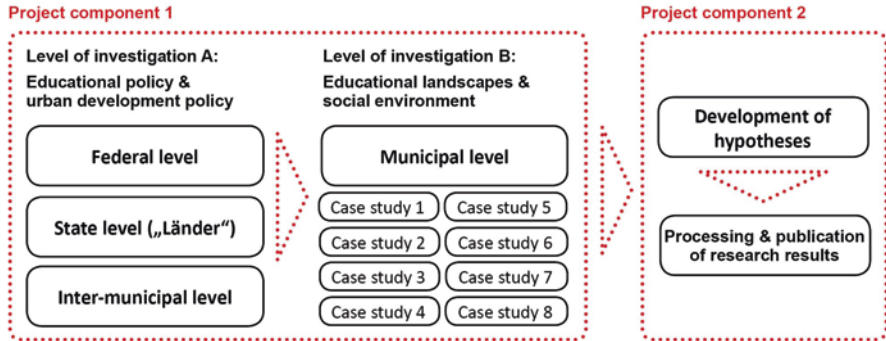


Fig. 3.1 Overview of the research project structure. Source: Design by author

- What contextual and spatial interfaces and interlacings exist between education and urban development at the federal, state, municipal, and local level?
- What meanings and significance do stakeholders in education and urban development attribute to the different common and overlapping thematic areas?
- What aims and strategies for action addressing cross-cutting issues of education and urban development are discussed within the two policy fields?

To answer these questions, we have chosen a qualitative mixed-methods design (see Fig. 3.1) divided into two components as our methodological approach:

Project Component 1: The first phase of Project Component 1 includes empirical research on the relationship between education and urban development at different levels: federal, state, and municipal. Initially, we explore cross-sectoral lines of discussion on educational policy and urban development policy at these levels. The basis of the investigation is formed by interviews with relevant representatives of federal and state ministries and national federations of municipalities (e.g., the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, German Federal Environment Ministry, German Association of Cities (DST)). We supplement our analysis of the interviews with an analysis of policy documents from both policy fields, such as political papers and reports and documentations of programs run by these players. We analyze the entire set of material by applying a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015), which we carry out by using the policy cycle (Blum & Schubert, 2011) as a heuristic framework. The aim of the policy analysis is to investigate policies and their principles, contents, results, and effects (Blum & Schubert, 2011, pp. 15–16; Schneider & Janning, 2006, pp. 32, 48). Accordingly, we take the three main stages of the policy cycle into account: (1) agenda setting, (2) policy formulation, and (3) implementation.

In the second phase of this project module, we will analyze eight examples of local educational landscapes in German cities that have a particular focus on the social and built environment. To narrow down the range of educational landscapes examined in this research project, we selected those in which social spaces act as

educational spaces—educational landscapes “where education policy networking is based on social spaces as an educational location”—and which see “shaping the living conditions of social spaces ... as a foundation for educational processes” (Berse, 2009, p. 202).

The aim is thus to examine educational landscapes with goals related to urban spaces, those which have an effect on spaces. We have therefore searched for educational landscapes that can be characterized as follows: (1) educational networks that focus on the social space as a space for education and (2) those whose actors want to shape sociospatial conditions as a basis for educational processes. After looking at all the educational landscapes that currently exist in Germany, we found eight projects with this spatial dimension. These eight examples make up our case studies.

We chose a mixed-methods research design for these case studies, combining interviews with local experts in education and urban development (e.g., political and administrative stakeholders, deputy speakers of the local projects) with analyzing the content of relevant documents and urban planning analyses to document the spatial form taken by the educational landscapes.

Project Component 2: The second project module will include an integrated interpretation of the research results and the development of hypotheses that describe the interfaces and interlacings between education and urban development. These hypotheses will form the basis for further research.

At the current stage of the research project, initial findings are available for Project Module 1: the programmatic positions taken by federal, regional, and intermunicipal policymakers in education and urban development with regard to points where education and urban development already meet, and the importance that the two sets of policymakers ascribe to such points. We have reached our initial findings by analyzing documents and expert interviews with relevant ministers at the federal level, ministries related to the subject in three German *Länder* (state level), and two leading municipal organizations working at the federal level (intermunicipal level).

Initial Findings of the Research Project

A central topos at the administrative interface between education and urban development policy at the federal, state, and intermunicipal level is what is known as socially deprived districts. One aspect that interviewees saw as important was the widening social rift and increasing segregation (especially in German cities) leading to growing differences in the social structure of the population in each urban setting. Policymakers at the federal, state, and intermunicipal level are concerned that this may be closely related to downhill trends in individual districts, or even to neighborhoods losing their function. As a result, considerably worse social problems then cumulate and gather in these neighborhoods than in other districts (e.g., long-term unemployment, the threat of poverty, etc.), accompanied by disintegrating structures (e.g., poor quality of urban life, lack of investment in building renovation, weak infrastructure, lack of employment opportunities), “which then frequently

gives the neighborhood a generally neglected appearance” (officeholder in the field of urban development). This cumulation can, in turn, negatively affect the living situation of the families and children residing there; for example, families may lack the financial resources to individually invest in education or high-quality educational institutions to make up for the deficit.

In conclusion, negative long-term effects on the individual (e.g., educational biographies which have gone wrong, resulting in occupational and social exclusion) and the social cohesion of the city (e.g., processes of sociospatial segregation and polarization, tendencies for social inequalities to be spatialized) are associated with socially deprived quarters. This creates a new pressure for political action in both political fields and leads to socially disadvantaged neighborhoods being prioritized as target areas requiring preferential treatment through strategies and funding programs.

And then we also had a priority, the social trouble spot—that’s where we did it first. So, there was actually an order in terms of urban development policy. (officeholder in the field of education)

The overriding aim is to fund and provide resources to disadvantaged districts and thus the people living there. However, one could criticize that this spatializes social problems, turning them into spatial problems (Belina, 2006, p. 26). The neighborhoods where social cartographers identify social problems and unfavorable urban situations (criminality, etc.) are turned, so to speak, into the territorial starting point for implementing what are intended to be precisely tailored intervention strategies. In other words, the intention is to deal with challenges where they occur, or where they can be localized. In some ways, this thus combines the level on which social problems are manifested with that on which they are resolved (Kessl & Reutlinger, 2010, p. 122). In this context, it therefore becomes extremely important to take into account and reflect upon mechanisms of social division that promote selection and exclusion, and which originate at a supralocal level (e.g., selective mobility among wealthier households).

The federal and regional ministries for education and urban development see education and schools as a segregation mechanism that has both social and spatial effects, as households that are interested in education (usually those with greater purchasing power) frequently use local opportunities for schooling and education as a criterion for choosing where to live, at least when their own children reach school age. This encourages processes of social separation and polarization, as a result of which those households with fewer educational resources tend to be left living in marginalized neighborhoods. It is therefore unsurprising that at the federal, state, and intermunicipal levels, policymakers view investments in improving the quality of the local educational infrastructure as a fundamental instrument for improving the sociospatial situation in socially deprived neighborhoods. Both sets of policymakers view improving the quality of the local educational structure as a means of promoting education and thus of promoting social integration.

In this context, children and young people are the main target groups at the interface of education and urban development. The central focus is on issues around children and young people having successful educational biographies. Special attention is given to children and youths living in socially deprived quarters, which nega-

tively affect quality of life and childhood development. This is because an insufficient or nonexistent educational infrastructure reinforces educational disadvantages in certain social spaces—an infrastructure that lacks places for people to communicate and meet that would encourage learning, or organizations such as clubs, child and youth welfare institutions, or public and private educational establishments promoting personal development. In this context, key questions about the intersection of education and urban development ones like these posed by an officeholder at the intermunicipal level: “Where do the children live? Where are most of the children in the city born? Which districts are home to the children who are in particular need of support as their situation in life is precarious?” This adds a territorial aspect to promoting children’s opportunities for education and participation, in that the place children live is used to draw conclusions about the likely problems, needs, and corresponding support they could be given. The central idea is that their opportunities for education and participation should not depend on the neighborhood where they live and grow up, expressed as follows by an officeholder on the intermunicipal level: “[W]herever I live, there is a certain equality of opportunity ... and ... that equality of opportunity does not depend on the neighborhood where I live.”

On the other hand, young people who do not have a good education or training are also seen as a potential encumbrance on neighborhoods and municipalities, as education and employment biographies that have gone wrong may result in costs (e.g., social costs) for the municipalities (e.g., rising transfer payments, a rise in the unemployment rate).

Thus, the strategy of improving the quality of the local educational infrastructure aims at promoting equal educational opportunities for all children and young people. The central aim of both educational and urban development policy is to create a good environment for children and young people to live and be educated, thereby helping to achieve fair equality of opportunity.

Although the overall concept of Lifelong Learning is established both nationally and internationally, adults and older people play only a marginal role at the interface between education and urban development.

Another programmatic aim of both political fields is to stabilize and upgrade socially deprived quarters by improving the conditions of educational processes and settings in the urban space. This involves education-related measures that are suited to reducing existing disparities between neighborhoods or to reversing processes of sociospatial segregation. Actors of both policy fields postulate sociospatial educational support as a fixed element of integrated urban development strategies.

In conclusion, actors in both political fields select a territorial approach for dealing with current sociopolitical problems (social segregation, socially deprived quarters, educationally disadvantaged people).

At the interface of education and urban development policy, schools, which are usually formal educational institutions, are the central starting point for improving the quality of the local educational infrastructure. As well as improving the quality of schools, this also encompasses aspects related to the spatial/structural features of school buildings and rooms and how they relate to the success of pedagogical processes (space as a “third educator;” Beek, 2001, p. 197; Dreier, 2004, p. 137; Reggio Children, 2002, p. 40).

Even though the implementation strategies still lack a more encompassing approach, the school's position is evidently being improved.⁴ Considering that schools, as formal educational institutions, are allocated a central status in modern society, this is not entirely surprising. Every debate on educational reform starts and ends with schools, and there is no denying that schools play a key role in how children and young people gain skills and grow up (see also Rauschenbach, 2007, pp. 440–442). In the context of urban development, so the argument goes on the level of federal and regional policy, schools are the new central spots of many areas—“the most important cultural centers” in the neighborhood, according to an officeholder in the field of urban development. One interviewee makes this clear as follows:

Frequently, the school is the only public institution left in a neighborhood of this kind. I mean, lots of neighborhoods don't have any community centers or any other gathering places to use, apart from schools. They [schools] are actually increasingly becoming a place for people in the neighborhood to meet up. (officeholder in the field of urban development)

Developments such as local shops or churches shrinking in size or being lost entirely mean that people are turning to schools as what is usually the only infrastructural establishment in the neighborhood, or the one that is easiest to manage. Schools are consequently seen both as a component of the city and as central educational institutions. It can thus be said that schools (and school buildings) are gaining a new and special status as key actors in the discussion on education as a component of urban development and on the level of policy and administration on education and urban development.

This can also be seen from the fact that discussions on improving the quality of local education often prioritize the implementation of all-day schools cooperating with various, usually nonformal educational institutions. Accordingly, at the point where educational and urban development policies meet, the (all-day) school acts as a sphere of action where the two fields operate simultaneously (the only other such sphere, if any, being institutions providing early-years education). The school thus plays a dominant role in education policy work and now also in urban development activities.

One aspect undermining this development, at least on the level of federal and regional policy referred to here, is the role of other education-related actors (such as child and youth welfare, social work support activities) in the field of discussion and practice around education and urban development. Although an evaluation of “Soziale Stadt,” the most important German urban development funding program (since 1999) ascribed great significance to projects and activities related to the practice of district social work (e.g., promoting social infrastructure, supporting social structure, promoting culture within the district; IfS, 2004, p. 140), federal, regional, and intermunicipal policymakers within education and urban development who were questioned on the topic ascribed such actors no than a marginal role. The architectural development of the public space as an educational setting currently also seems to be of minor importance.

⁴The only phenomenon to shake the firmness of that position is the increasing trend towards bringing aspects of early childhood education into childcare, following the motto “education from the very start.”

Conclusion

Participants in the debate on local educational landscapes frequently state that there is a positive connection between education and urban development, without verifying this claim with scientific research. To this day, no recent research studies have explored the interfaces and interlacings between education and urban development. Thus, the expected outcome of our research project is a new, integrated, and interdisciplinary reflection on education and urban development in the context of local educational landscapes.

The investigation of interlacings between education and urban design is especially important in view of the sociospatial dimension of urban development as well as of education. They are intertwined with social segregation and [equal opportunities](#) in a [knowledge-based](#) society.

As this first insight into the contextual and spatial connections between educational policy and urban development in Germany at the federal, state, and municipal policy level shows, both political fields directly and indirectly deal with issues of education in the urban space. Although urban development policy and educational policy at federal and state levels share common lines of discussion (e.g., socially deprived quarters, children and young people) and have similar programmatic goals (e.g., educational equality), educational administration/policy and urban development administration/policy primarily act independently of one another and development programs and measures are only weakly coordinated. It can be assumed that interdepartmental cooperation between educational policy and urban development policy in the context of local educational landscapes will be more pronounced at the local level.

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Chapter 4

School Autonomy Policies and the Changing Governance of Schooling



Herbert Altrichter

Since the mid-1990s, but in particular since the so-called *PISA shock*, German-speaking countries have seen major changes in the governance of their school systems. This chapter aims to offer some conceptual tools for analyzing governance changes and to give some examples of research into governance changes using these concepts. The argument starts with clarifying the special conceptual view on education systems and on educational reforms provided by the *governance perspective*. Section “[Modernization policies](#)” continues with an overview of major educational reforms during the last two decades in German-speaking school systems and explains how they are analyzed and interpreted with the help of governance concepts. In the final parts of this chapter, the Austrian *school autonomy policy*, which allowed schools to develop specific “curricular profiles,” is taken as an example for discussing governance changes in a multilevel governance system.

Analyzing Changes in Governance

What does the term *governance* mean? Common German parlance contains no such word, nor any equivalent. This is in fact an advantage, because it leaves room for a precise explanation. Since the late 1980s, governance has been used as a technical term in German-speaking political and social sciences to conceptualize phenomena that were previously labeled *regieren* (to govern) or *steuern* (to steer) (see Benz, 2004, p. 15; Brand, 2004; Schimank, 2007; Schneider & Kenis, 1996). Political scientists and sociologists such as Renate Mayntz (2009), Uwe Schimank (2007), and Arthur Benz (2004) have developed an array of concepts around the central

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term of governance that has become known as the governance perspective. The aim is to provide “a general analytical framework for studying all kinds of coordination problems among actors” (de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007, p. 138): The coordination between actors produces a “structure of regulation,” a social order that regulates interaction and actors’ contributions in a given field. This “structure of regulation” is intertwined with a “structure of performance” by which the system-specific performance is generated. Both social order and performance in a given field are conceived as arising from the coordination of the independent actions of social actors (see Benz, 2004, p. 17).

Starting a decade ago, this conceptual framework has also been introduced into educational research in order to study the changes in the regulation of school systems that German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, Liechtenstein) have seen since the early 1990s (see Altrichter, Brüsemeister, & Wissinger, 2007). Under the name *governance perspective*, *governance research*, or *governance studies*, a body of work has evolved whose authors aim to understand these changes by concentrating on the question of how regulation and performance of school systems is achieved, sustained, and transformed under the perspective of action coordination between various social actors in complex multilevel systems (see Altrichter & Heinrich, 2007; Kussau & Brüsemeister, 2007; Schimank, 2007).

This seemingly abstract definition—*coordination of actors*—invites one to spell out what exactly is happening when social processes are governed, regulated, or steered and to study empirically who is contributing what to a system that appears to be governed or coordinated in a specific way (Altrichter, 2010a). The traditional view of system governance assumes a dominant actor, the government, who by the help of its administrative staffs and specific instruments such as legal norms, differential financing, and bureaucratic and executive powers can govern the *operative actors*, can make the actors at the bottom levels of a system act in a specific way in order to produce the system-specific performance.

Multitude of Actors

The term governance firstly indicates that the assumption that school systems—and their reform—are not necessarily shaped by a single dominant actor, such as the government and its administrative staff. More actors are involved in a system’s formation, maintenance, and change. Although proponents of the governance perspective strongly argue that many actors have some influence on the steering of a system, this does not mean that they usually have equal chances of participation and support (see Altrichter & Salzgeber, 2000). Nor does it signify that the central state can no longer be an important actor. However, it does allow researchers to attend to situations in which the state itself is regulated (e.g., by supranational bodies, such as the European Community) or enters negotiation relationships with actors who are in principle under their jurisdiction (e.g., firms, foundations).

Coordination of Action

A central and crucial concept is *coordination*. Researchers tend to consider something to be regulated or governed if the relevant system actors coordinate their action. The governance perspective uses a nonevaluative concept of coordination to analyze the method and functionality of the actors' combined action (see Altrichter, 2010a; Lange & Schimank, 2004 for analytical instruments).

A major analytic strategy of governance studies is to establish those *governance mechanisms* that are characteristic of and explanatory for a social system at a specific point in time and space. Different conceptual instruments are used for this purpose (e.g., Benz, Lütz, Schimank, & Simonis, 2007; Dupriez & Maroy, 2003; Lange & Schimank, 2004). For example, de Boer et al. (2007, p. 138) have claimed that at least five specific dimensions may be used to trace characteristic changes during the contemporary transformation of the European higher education systems. These dimensions are as follows (and are organized as *governance equalizer* in Fig. 4.1):

- The dimension *state regulation* denotes the traditional regulation of public systems by the top-down state authority using legal measures, directives, and distribution of earmarked resources aiming to prescribe in detail the behavior of subsystems.

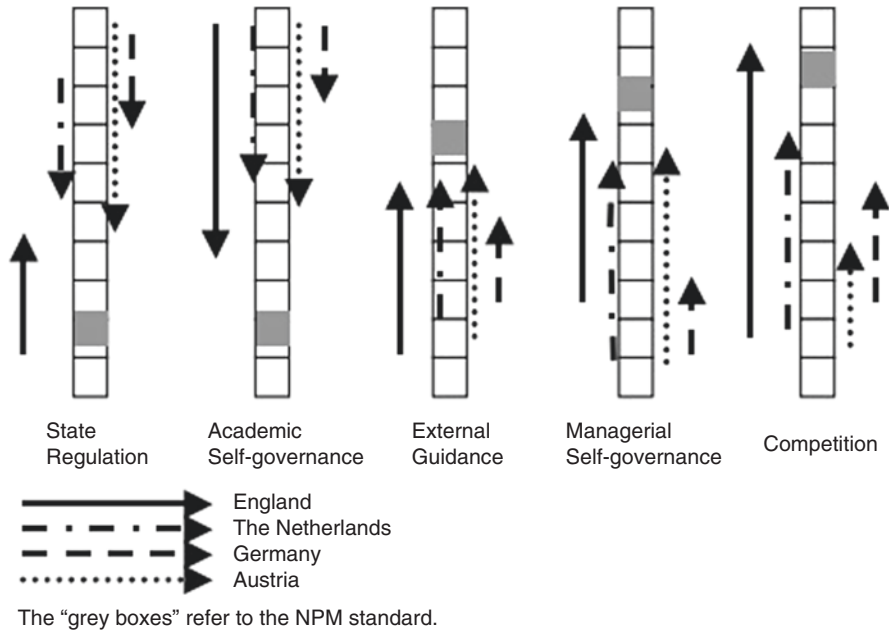


Fig. 4.1 Shifts in university governance. Reprinted from de Boer et al. (2007, p. 149). Reprinted with permission

- The dimension *academic self-governance* refers to the professionals' power in decision-making, for example, "institutionalized in collegial decision-making within universities and the peer review-based self-steering of academic communities" (de Boer et al., 2007, p. 139).
- The dimension *external guidance by the state or other stakeholders* describes regulatory activities that direct systems and institutions through goal setting, advice, and evaluation usually exerted by the government or other stakeholders.
- The dimension *managerial self-governance* refers to the regulatory power of the internal hierarchies in organizations (such as schools, universities, or hospitals) and to their leadership's power in internal goal setting, distribution of funds, and decision-making.
- The dimension *competition for scarce resources* (such as money, personnel, and prestige) refers to system coordination through market or "quasimarkets" processes.

This rationale was used to analyze both specific changes in university systems (see e.g., Schiene & Schimank, 2007) and more general transformations and differences between European university systems. Figure 4.1 summarizes the findings of de Boer et al. (2007, p. 140) with respect to changes in university governance in England, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany over the last 20 years: All countries have undergone changes on all five dimensions, yet the degree of change varies between countries and dimensions. The most common feature seems to be that academic self-governance is the main loser, while external guidance by performance targets, the powers of managerial self-governance, and competition between the actors of the university systems have increased in all countries studied.

Schimank's governance equalizer obviously has some heuristic value for analyzing the transformation within systems and differences between systems. In this study, I also found this approach useful for analyzing changes in school systems over time (see Altrichter, Brüsemeister, & Heinrich, 2005) and in the working conditions of different actors in the school system (see e.g., Altrichter, 2010b).

Agency and Structure

It is not the erratic or accidental actions that are interesting for governance analysis, but the structured and structuring actions that contribute to the (relative) sustainability of system coordination. The capability to act in social systems is based on structural elements, on a structure of regulation that organizes actors' rights and competences in a way that is specific to the particular system (see Braun, 2001, p. 247; Kussau & Brüsemeister, 2007, p. 21). Thus, conductors of governance analyses are looking for rules and resources (see Giddens, 1992) that are already existent in a system and how they are used (or not used) and transformed by action.

In order to promote and implement change, promoters of a reform must offer—in part—new norms and resources and must stimulate relevant actors to take them up. If the norms of a reform fit to the motives and values of relevant actors, it will be easier to establish relatively stable constellations. The same holds true for reforms that build

on resources that are already available and usable by actors. If this is not the case, reformers must invest in developing the values and resources of relevant actors.

Turning to the *performance standard policy* as an example of innovation (see Altrichter, Rürup, & Schuchart, 2016): A reform is more likely to take roots in schools if teachers and other relevant actors are committed to boosting students' performance and if they consider competence-based teaching an appropriate and feasible strategy for doing so. Appropriate resources are of help, that is, they know how to practice competence-based teaching, relevant teaching material is available, and so forth. When they receive data feedback about the performance of their classes in standard-related assessment, they must know how to read and interpret it, and if the performance data indicate problems they must also know how to do better—for example, have alternative teaching strategies in their repertoire. Above all, they must be motivated enough to change their teaching.

If these elements are not present, if the actors are not ready to perform the innovation that should be standard in innovatory times, then additional measures are taken to (gradually) close the gap between existing rules and resources and those rules and resources the innovation necessitates. Staff meetings, for example, are held to explain the reform to teachers and motivate them to implement it. Laws and guidelines that pronounce good practice are changed. Performance contracts are introduced to bind the administration and the schools more closely together, or to bind school leaders and individual teachers more closely to the new tasks. Professional development is offered to build up competencies; teaching material is developed and distributed to schools to provide examples of innovative teaching.

Multilevel Systems

Another characteristic of the governance perspective is that complex social systems such as the school system are considered to be multilevel phenomena. This notion points to the fact that not all actors interact with all other actors in the same way. Instead, there are typical constellations of actors, typical levels with special principles of action, that may differ widely from the logic of action on another level.

The concept of multilevel systems draws our attention to questions of *cross-border coordination* between system levels that appear to be among the most crucial problems of system development. The plans and blueprints for a governance reform (produced and propagated by politicians, the administrative top levels, and some social scientists) are not the whole reform. They are above all *structural offers*—in part, new rules and resources (see Giddens, 1992)—that are inserted into the transactions of a school system. They must be taken up by actors on various levels of the system, and they must also be translated and redesigned for the specific context, in order to have a chance of acquiring social relevance. The potential effect of these structural offers (and whether or not the propagated effects materialize) can only be determined through their use and through the way various actors (such as teachers, students, school leaders, inspectorate, parents, and textbook producers) adapt and transform their actions and arrive at a new pattern of coordination.

Taking up these structural offers is more than merely following prescribed action programs or implementing given structures (see Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012); it necessarily entails constructive and productive features. Actors must make these structural offers more concrete—they must develop them in view of the specific logic of action and of the work conditions of their particular level and translate them into feasible versions of action. Fend (2006) has developed the concept of *recontextualization* to account for these processes. He considers it important to adequately describe how actors “act together” within the education system (Fend, 2006, p. 174).

Acting on one level of a multi-level system implies that the superordinate level is present for the lower level as a context which, however, will be reinterpreted in view of the context conditions and action resources of this level and will be transformed for practical action. The superordinate level in this way is preserved, but, at the same time, transformed. (Fend, 2006, p. 181¹)

It is obvious that the multilevel structure is also an issue for my example, the implementation of performance standard policy. Students may find it difficult to make sense of performance standards for their learning. Equally, teachers in German-speaking school systems may have difficulties in interpreting performance feedback as didactic cues and reacting with alternative teaching strategies (see Altrichter et al., 2016; Maier & Kuper, 2012).

It has been argued that governance researchers must not limit themselves to the systemic and organizational questions on macro- and mesolevels before classroom learning happens. The central concept of *action coordination* is also relevant for the microlevel. Classroom teaching and learning may also be understood as a coordinative effort that contributes to the specific performance of a multilevel system: A number of learners and teachers must coordinate their individual actions in such a way that individual and social functions are fulfilled.

Modernization Policies

Governance studies are interested in analyzing

1. From a macroperspective: Do the governance regimes and their characteristic coordination mechanisms change in the course of educational reforms, and if so, in what way?
2. From a microperspective: By what interactive and structural arrangements on the level of institutions and interactions are these new coordination mechanisms enacted?

In this section, I will turn to recent modernization policies in German-speaking school systems and propose an interpretation of important changes in their coordination modes on a macrolevel. In the third section, I will attempt to analyze how some of these changes are enacted on the mesolevel of the individual school and of the microlevel of staff and classroom interaction.

¹Translation from German by the author.

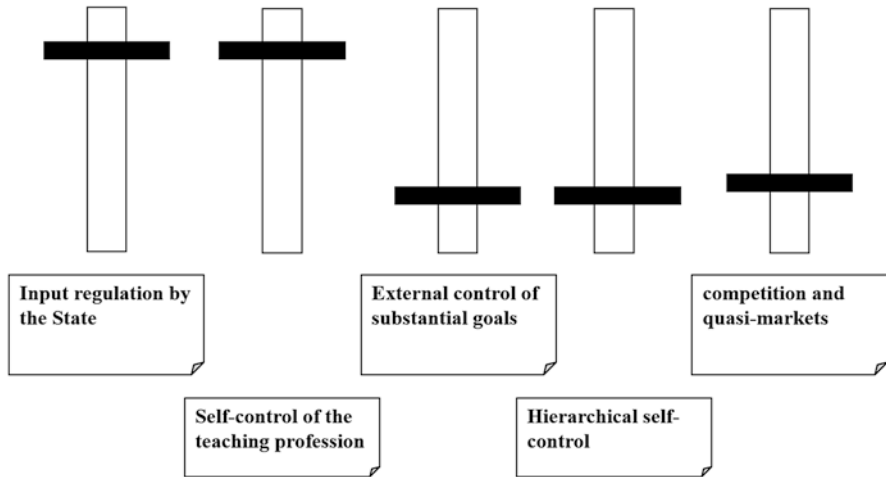


Fig. 4.2 Coordination mechanisms in phase 0: dual regulation. Source: Design by author

For the time being, I will concentrate on the German-speaking school systems. Of course, most concepts used in this section are also to be found in other countries of Europe and the Northern hemisphere, as well as quite a number in the global South (see UNESCO, 2016). Many of these policies are obviously “traveling” across national borders. However, Ozga and Jones (2006) have warned that they may acquire a new meaning when they are embedded into different cultural contexts.

Phase 0: Dual Regulation

After post-World War II reconstruction and the investments in education of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s were a time of stagnation in many European states, a “strangely motionless time with respect to education policy,” as Fend (2006, p. 225) observed for the German-speaking school systems. Some demands were made for new education styles and more autonomy for individual schools and teachers, but the majority of schools and school systems worked according to the traditional governance mode of *dual regulation* (Brüsemeister, 2004; Maroy, 2009, p. 72): On the one hand, regulation is based on a state-led administrative hierarchy with general bureaucratic rules; on the other hand, the teaching profession has considerable individual and group-related autonomy when it comes to implementing these rules. Figure 4.2 uses the governance equalizer proposed by Schimank (2007), which was already introduced in section “Analyzing changes in governance” to characterize the governance regime of this phase.

Altrichter et al. (2005) have claimed that there were three waves of reforms that changed the modes of governing German-speaking school systems. These waves of innovation were not exclusive in the sense that the later reforms pushed aside the previous ones; rather, they are rather to be conceived as layers: The new reform

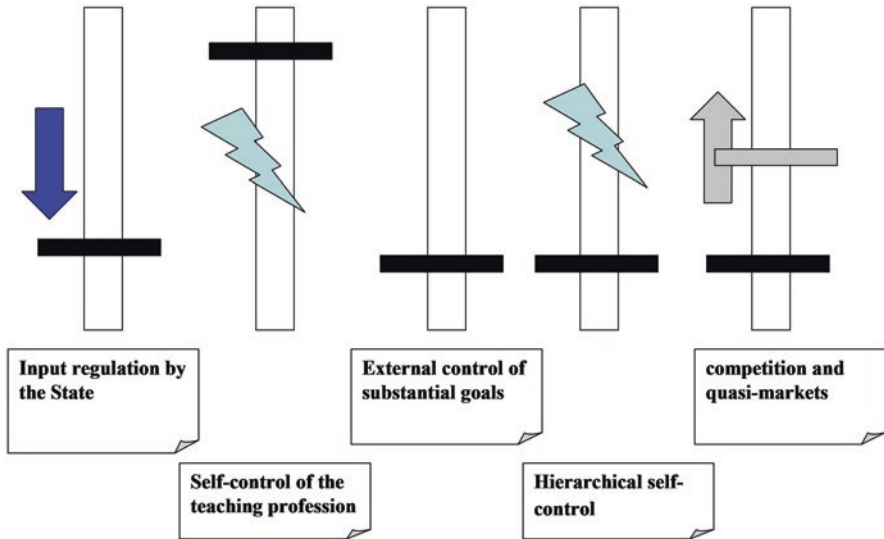


Fig. 4.3 Coordination mechanisms in phase 1: school autonomy. Source: Design by author

wave was placed over the older one, thereby not negating its arguments but merely pushing it somewhat into the background and making new principles more dominant, while still upholding older arguments where it seemed appropriate.

Phase 1: School Autonomy

The first of these major reform ideas was school autonomy. *School autonomy policies* aim to expand the room for maneuver on the level of individual schools, but also their responsibility for results and development. They do this through *decentralization* (i.e., redistributing decision-making rights from superordinate administrative levels down the hierarchy to individual schools) or *deregulation* (i.e., doing away with regulations or making them less detailed). Rights to autonomous decision-making may be granted (or not granted) in various fields, such as the budget, personnel, organization, and educational decisions. The general aims of these policies are to strengthen the “quality and effectivity of education in schools” and the “responsiveness to local needs” (OECD, 2008, p. 524).

Autonomy policies can be found in virtually all developed countries (Blanchenay, Burns, & Köster, 2014; Eurydice, 2007, 2008); however, their actual content and their impact on system governance vary widely. In 1993, Austria passed *school autonomy* legislation to open up a room for maneuver for in-school decision-making, particularly with respect to curricular matters. This policy allowed schools to develop specific in-school curricula as the basis for so-called *Schulprofile* (school profiles).

In terms of Schimank’s governance equalizer, the situation may be described as follows (see Fig. 4.3): The state decreases the coordination mechanism *input regulation* through its autonomy legislation. This should enhance competition between

schools (although no explicit policies were recorded with respect to this topic). These moves also put some pressure on teachers (who have to invest more time and energy in coordination in order to fulfil the promises of the school profile). It also puts pressure on headpersons who have to orchestrate some coordinated development, although they were not provided with new instruments for leading and managing the school.

Phase 2: School-Based Management

The question of system governance was explicitly raised in the second half of the 1990s. Concepts like school programs, self-evaluation, quality management, new ways of school inspection, coordination of classroom work through sample exercises (i.e., *Aufgabenbeispiele*), and “parallel tests” (*Vergleichsarbeiten*; i.e., tests using identical items to compare the performance of different classes) became more prominent. Still, the idea of teachers self-evaluating their schools remained central, with the qualification and loyalty of teachers still seen as prerequisites for the productive development of schools. However, administrations increasingly called for complementary measures: School self-evaluation was to be challenged and checked by external demands (e.g., performance contracts with schools, school programs) and external evaluations (see Holtappels, 2004). These measures were, on the one hand, to provide instruments for *in-school management and leadership*, for the internal government of schools (see BMUK, 1998). On the other hand, school administration itself began to look for levers to “orchestrate variety” (see EDK, 2000), which had been produced by the policy of school autonomy. Reforms were not communicated as a departure from the previous strategy of school autonomy, nor as a step back to the old centralist models of regulation, but as some complement that should—for the sake of the coherence of the system—provide top and intermediary levels of the school system with new options for control and intervention.

In terms of my analysis of changing governance modes (see Fig. 4.4), I see attempts to increase in-school management and leadership as the main issue in this phase. They are accompanied by early experiments with externally formulated goals. Strengthening the powers of the management should also put some pressure on individual teachers’ autonomy.

Phase 3: Evidence-Based Governance

A new round of changes was triggered by the results of the international large-scale assessment studies TIMSS and PISA, which were not flattering for the education systems of the German-speaking countries (see Baumert, 1998; OECD, 2001). This PISA shock paved the way for more and more powerful *systemic instruments of external governance of schools*. Performance standards (*Bildungsstandards*) and centrally administered standard-related performance assessment were to form the

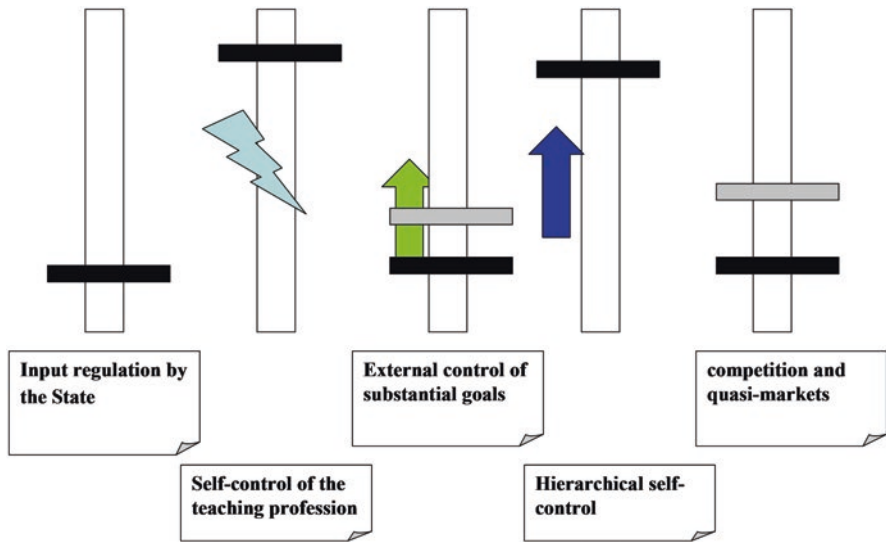


Fig. 4.4 Coordination mechanisms in phase 2: school-based management. Source: Design by author

basis for a more sophisticated *output-oriented system governance*. Additionally, experts interpreted PISA and TIMSS results as indicating a growing need for classroom development; teaching strategies for stimulating more thorough understanding and for dealing with heterogeneity in a more sophisticated manner were required. These reforms used normative arguments, operational arrangements, and instruments from two major sources.

The first is *New Public Management*, which may be characterized by the following concepts (Rhodes, 1991): It argued in favor of shifting the focus of governance and control from input to output and aimed to measure the performance of public institutions by controlling their results (Maag Merki, 2016). Secondly, the creators of NPM wanted to make public institutions more responsive to their stakeholders' concerns and to increase their customer orientation. In education, this is reflected by more choices, improved information, and increased reporting to parents, but less often by participation of students and parents in in-school decision-making (Altrichter & Heinrich, 2005). Thirdly, comparative testing of schools and publication of the results were intended to reinforce efficiency pressure. Increasing options for school choice and competition for student numbers were to work into this direction, too (Altrichter, Bacher, Beham, Nagy, & Wetzelhütter, 2011).

The second source is the *development of sophisticated instruments for comparative performance testing*. On the one hand, studies such as PISA and TIMSS provided an advanced technology (and more people able to handle it) for comparative testing; on the other hand, these studies and their public recognition produced international pressure to improve the performance of national education systems in an era of globalization.

The main thrust of the reform lies in formulating system-wide substantial goals and in controlling performance according to these goals (see Fig. 4.5). This, however,

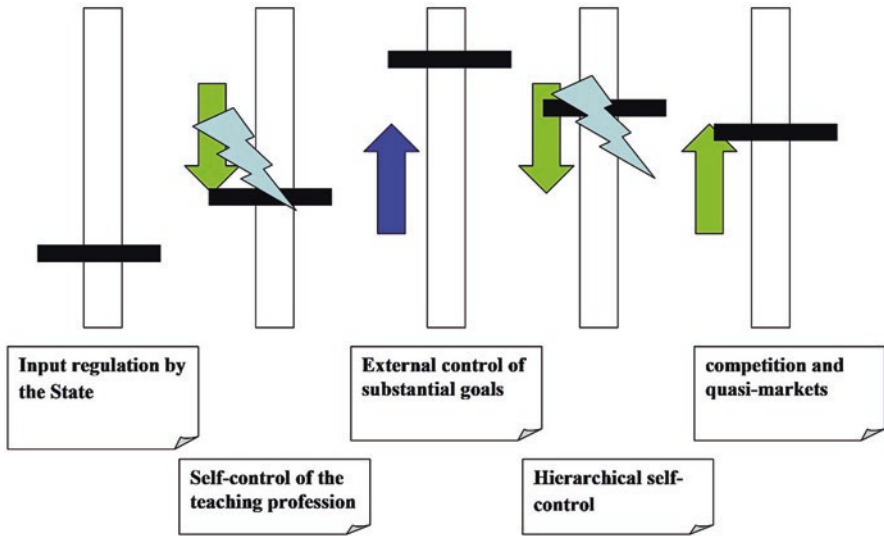


Fig. 4.5 Coordination mechanisms in phase 3: evidence-based governance. Source: Design by author

should also exert some pressure on the teaching staff, who was confronted for the first time with externally formulated and measured performance goals for students that could, however, also be used to measure the performance of the teachers themselves. The policy also affected the headpersons' discretion in postulating goals for development, which were now externally regulated. On the other hand, external performance standards might also give some lever to the school management to stimulate development in fields that may previously have encountered more teacher opposition. Performance-related information may eventually strengthen parents in their will to discover the best schools for their children and, thus, fuel competition between schools.

The dominant ideas of this third wave of reform are epitomized by a so-called evidence-based model of educational governance, which may be characterized by the following features (Altrichter & Maag Merki, 2016):

- (i). The evidence-based governance model *sets expectations and goals* for the performance of the education system and communicates them more clearly than before, for example, through formulating measurable performance standards or developing quality frameworks for school inspections.
- (ii). *Accountability for goal fulfilment*: Evaluation and accountability are considered to be key issues in ensuring quality provision for all. Evaluation instruments are to produce evidence as to whether or not expectations have been met by the practical operation of the system units.
- (iii). Evidence is fed back to all system levels in order to stimulate and orientate *system improvement*. Actors on all levels of the system—politicians, administrators, school leaders, teachers, students, and so forth—are supposed to use evaluation information to make more rational choices in developing their contribution to the education system and improving their performance.

- (iv). *Involve stakeholders and the wider public*: In many cases, evaluation results are not only communicated to the professionals in schools, but also to the schools' stakeholders and even to the wider public through the media. This reflects the idea that schools will be more responsive to developmental needs if they are directly accountable to their constituencies.
- (v). *Link different levels of the system*: The idea that cycles of goal formulation, evaluation, and feedback will dynamize improvement is implemented on all (or most) levels of the system: Regions, and in some cases central ministries, are subject to similar instruments of performance management; for example, the results of standard testing are communicated in personalized reports to different system levels. Instruments such as contract management between schools and regional officers, regional officers, and central authorities are used to link information flow and loyalty between system levels.
- (vi). *Align and improve support systems*: Finally, existing support systems must be aligned with the governance models and new support instruments must be developed (e.g., developing teaching material for competence-based teaching and diagnostic tests by which teachers can prepare their classes for comparative testing).

Recently, some countries seem to be streamlining their evidence-based accountability systems. Most notably, some countries have introduced “proportional inspections” in order to focus inspection resources to those schools most in need of evaluation and development with well-functioning schools receiving less, or less frequent, external attention (see e.g., Ehren, n.d.; Scheerens, Ehren, Slegers, & de Leeuw, 2012). These developments may be triggered by financial restrictions, by disappointing research findings, or by the will to find a more prominent space for professionalism. Nevertheless, I do not believe that this can be seen as a thoroughly new phase of school modernization, as the idea of *evidence-based control* remains central to educational policy. The idea may seem to encounter more criticism than before, but there is no new, comprehensive paradigm that can replace that of evidence-based control. In parallel to Thomas Kuhn's (1996) argument, I assume that a governance regime paradigm also does not vanish to leave a vacancy, but must be pushed aside and replaced by an alternative. In my opinion, such an alternative is not in sight, despite all the disillusionment in educational debates. With only minor adaptations, the evidence-based control model remains a major point of orientation for contemporary education policy.

Research on Governance Reforms: Coordination in and Between More Autonomous Schools

The last section of the paper turns to the meso- and microlevel of schools: How are educational reforms taken up and enacted on the level of schools and classrooms? My empirical example is the Austrian school autonomy policy that allowed schools to

develop specific curricular profiles (Altrichter, Heinrich, & Soukup-Altrichter, 2014). Data comes from two research projects based on 11 school case studies. The first study was on secondary schools developing a specific curricular profile in ICT. Cases were sampled in the second study to complement the original ICT cases with different types of school profiles (e.g., language, social learning, arts, and inclusion profiles). Data was collected through qualitative interviews and documents sampling. Individual case studies were written and compared in a cross-case analysis (Altrichter, Heinrich, & Soukup-Altrichter, 2011). Emerging results were confronted with findings by studies using other methodologies. Given the data basis the following statements should not be generalized too quickly; they claim to be valid for the case studies of our research and certainly may be taken as hypotheses for further research.

Many schools used the Austrian autonomy legislation to develop specific school profiles. These are usually packages of specific curricular elements (characterized by a thematic and/or methodical specialty) with some additional features (such as extracurricular learning opportunities, special aspects of school culture, specific services). Individual schools use this profile to make themselves visible for special target groups of students and parents, and to attract a sufficient number of students in times of decreasing enrollment.

The empirical data revealed that various reasons for developing a specific profile exist. For example, a group of teachers may hold specific educational ideas and jump at the chance to roll out an innovative plan. Too few students may be enrolling in the school. Assignments by the regional administration may induce schools to develop a profile. Or a problem analysis by the school itself may have unearthed challenges that can be met by the new profile. It is not rare for different groups of teachers in the school to contest the profile and the process of its establishment.

Whatever the original reason for the profile may have been, one condition must be met for its continuation and survival: It must be successful, that is, it must attract a sufficiently high number of students to enable the school's administrators to fill the classes and to choose among applicants.

The transitions or gaps in a noncomprehensive school system are "situations of choice" (in Austria, students are channeled to different educational options after primary school at the age of 10 and after lower secondary school at the age of 14): Depending on their market position, students/parents can choose schools or schools can choose students. A successful curricular profile is a major means of boosting the attractiveness of the school and of improving its opportunities for choice.

Attractive schools can use these choice opportunities to select "good students," who are—according to the choice rationales emerging in this study's interviews—well-performing students and students who come from social groups interested in and supportive of education. Success in this area further increases the school's attractiveness: Most teachers like to teach "good students;" most parents prefer to send their children to schools whose clientele is unlikely to include "difficult students."

In a systemic perspective, it may be said that *coordination by competition* is becoming more important in the school system. This is an (unintended or 'transintentional') result of this specific enactment of the autonomy policies, although no relevant political force in Austria had explicitly argued for more competition in the school system.

These new profiles not only increase the diversity of choices but they are in a hierarchy of attractiveness. As the Austrian lower secondary system is bipartite (i.e., distinguishing between high-status academic *Gymnasiums* (AHS) and low-status *Neue Mittelschulen*), the choice did not previously take place on an equal level, but favored the Gymnasium. However, autonomous school profiles produced a new and additional hierarchy within the two systems, and as a consequence new selection processes as well as new opportunities of success and failure, because schools are allowed to choose between students if there are too many applications (Altrichter et al., 2014).

But what happens to the “many unchosen” who are excluded from the attractive profiles? Researchers comparing “profile classes” with “leftover classes” that cater to those who are not chosen (or are not choosing) regularly show that these latter classes usually contain more boys, more immigrant children, and more low performing students. In short: Students with problematic school careers and who are most in need of support are most likely to be in “leftover classes” or “leftover schools” (see Specht, 2011).

But it is more than that. A study by Ferdinand Eder (2011) indicates that more lessons are cancelled in “nonprofile leftover classes” and that qualified replacement of these lessons takes place far less often. Thus, there is some indication these “leftover classes” or “leftover schools” that emerge in the course of developing attractive curricular profiles are, on average, characterized by less careful teaching and assistance, affecting exactly those students who might be in particular need of support.

What do these autonomy changes mean for the traditional governance regime of the Austrian school system, which has been characterized as a hierarchical-professional dual regulation (Brüsemeyer, 2004; see the black bars in Fig. 4.6)? A school reform inspired by New Public Management is indicated by grey bars in the same figure (see de Boer et al., 2007, p. 149): less state regulation and teacher autonomy, and more institutional management, competition, and performance control.

The Austrian policymakers pushing for school autonomy explicitly attempted to decrease “state input regulation” and to strengthen “institutional leadership and management” while remaining comparatively silent with respect to other dimensions. However, the concrete processes of developing school profiles have affected more coordination principles (see the hatched bars in Fig. 4.6).

This is particularly true for “competition,” which (although present in earlier coordination relationships; Zymek, 2010) has been upgraded to a more important coordination principle between schools. “Institutional leadership and management” have changed far less. I judge that the case studies show that demands on in-school management have increased without being accompanied by structural changes with respect to school leadership. In-school management still needs skillful leaders and sensitive attention to the traditional coordinative principles in the teaching community. The new instruments of evidence-based governance (which are indicated by the coordination principle “external control through performance goals” in Fig. 4.6) are not yet relevant in the schools included in this study, although the ministry invested strongly in propagating school programs and quality management. This situation may change after the performance standards and standard-related tests, which were only in their initial stages at the time of the data collection, are broadly implemented.

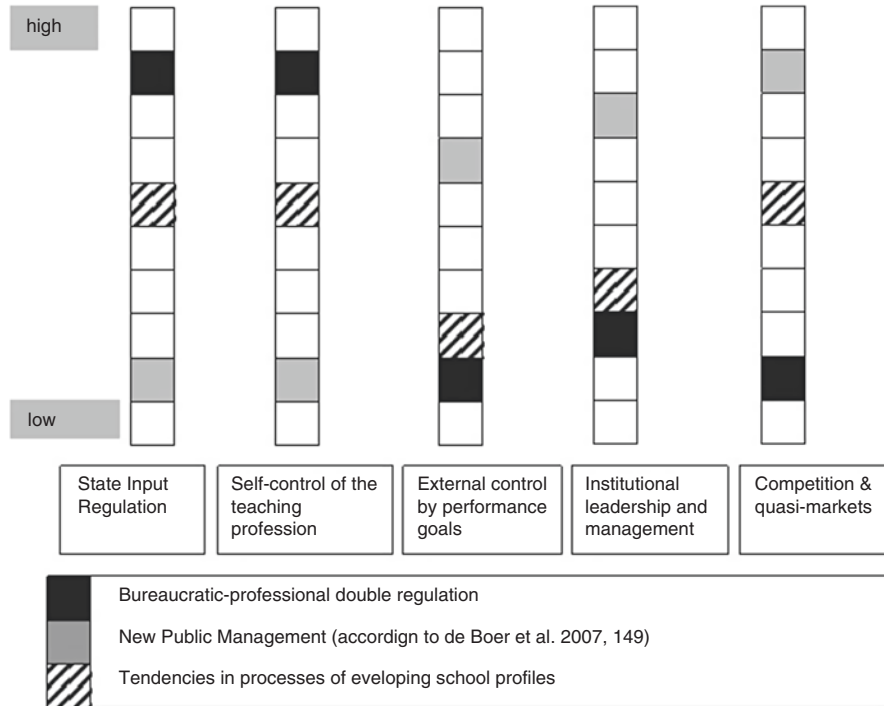


Fig. 4.6 Governance constellations visualized by Schimank’s governance equalizer. (Source: Design by author)

Conclusion

During the last two decades, many European school systems have undergone major changes in the way they are governed. In its first section, this chapter proposes some conceptual tools for making sense of governance changes. These concepts are used in the second section to analyze changes in the governance of German-speaking school systems. It is suggested that three waves of modernization policies may be distinguished: A first wave introduced some degree of “school autonomy;” a second one emphasized leadership and in-school management; while in a third phase, instruments for an “evidence-based governance” of schooling were gradually built up. While section “[Modernization policies](#)” argued on the macro level of policies, the third section turns to the meso and micro level of schooling to study how reform policies are taken up, appropriated, and transformed in schools and classrooms. Data derives from a qualitative empirical study on the implementation of school autonomy policies in Austria (Altrichter et al., 2014).

The changes I have described in this paper have not fully overturned the traditional governance regime of hierarchical-professional dual regulation. Rather, a hybrid coordination constellation has been made even more hybrid (Dupriez & Maroy, 2003) by new accents. If one dares to convert these qualitative trends into

the logic of Fig. 4.6, the hatched bars result. They indicate that the changes point to the direction postulated by New Public Management. However, old coordination principles have not been fully replaced, but persist, in a somewhat “weakened” state, side by side with relatively “new” (or newly emphasized) coordination principles that have been promoted by the waves of modernization. The result is a “new unclarity” that is typical for situations of transformation, and which is experienced by actors as a growing number of reference points to be attended to in their daily actions and decisions.

Note

The paper follows the presentation the author gave in the Heidelberg symposium “Geographies of Schooling” on September 14, 2016. It draws on the author’s previous work, in particular Altrichter (2010a), Altrichter and Heinrich (2007), and Altrichter et al. (2014).

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Chapter 5

From Republican Spaces of Schooling to Educational Territories?

The Problematic Emergence of Educational Territories in Postdecentralized France



David Giband

Like in many other Western countries, schooling and spatial planning in France have been subject to synchronous changes rooted in the state decentralization process (Vanier, 2008). In Europe, most of the decentralization reforms enacted since the 1980s have tended to reorganize relationships and regulations between the national and the local level and between education and spatial planning issues in accordance with a “post-bureaucratic paradigm” (Kernaghan, 2000; Mons, 2004, p. 24). Many scholars (Cowen, 1996; Mons, 2007) have underlined the changes affecting the *education state* and the emergence of postbureaucratic rhetoric, norms, and ideologies (Olssen, Codd, & O’Neill, 2004). These changes are synchronous with: the crisis of a public school system seen as inefficient; the neoliberal turn in education witnessing the introduction of new public management norms in the public administration sphere, including both urban/spatial planning and education policies; and international pressures from large institutions (such as OECD) promoting new education policies, introducing or reinforcing stakeholders in education (parents, local authorities, private sector, etc.). Breaking with centralized models, a differentiated approach to education and spatial planning has emerged whose practitioners take in account national, regional, and urban locations.

In France, educational policies and spaces have been subject to incomplete phases of decentralization. Starting in the 1980s, proponents of the decentralization process, popularized as the “three acts of decentralization,” have experienced difficulties in transforming the education state—inherited from the construction of the French Republic in the late nineteenth century and characterized by a centralized space of schooling (Prost, 2004)—into autonomous educational territories. This long decentralization process seems to have proceeded in two distinct phases.

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The first phase (Act 1 and 2 of the decentralization, 1983–2004, 2004–2011) is synchronous with a postbureaucratic rhetoric valuing *territorial logics*, aimed at easing the emergence of local educational spaces ensuring national equity in education and favoring “a local mode of educational governance” aligned with the new territorial architecture of the country (Faure & Douillet, 2005, p. 110). The *local, le territoire* (territory), seems to be both the horizon and the ideal space for educational decentralization policies even if it obviously lacks a strong conceptual definition (Vanier, 2008). These changes are also linked to the implementation of national policies of affirmative action in urban education, favoring the development of *Education Priority Areas* (EPAs; *zones d’éducation prioritaire* (ZEP); Heurdiere, 2011). Newly entrusted with responsibilities in education, municipal authorities are part of the emergence of local educational territories according to a rhetoric inspired by the urbanism field. The local is to be understood under the auspices of an educational territory (*territoire éducatif*). The notion of territory is specific to the French administrative system and also to the French social geography (Di Méo & Buléon, 2005). Widely disputed and trivialized (Agnew, 2010; Barreteau et al., 2016), the word *territoire* is commonly used to describe sociospatial entities in which stakeholders—through social, cultural, and political practices—claim territorial appurtenance and identity.

The second phase (2011–...), known as Act 3 of the decentralization, modifies the geography of schooling following a neoliberal path, its developers questioning the relevance of the concept of educational territory that previously structured the regulation of schooling on a local scale. Because of its new commitment to decentralization, the French state introduces logics of accountability and assessment. In a context in which the state is transforming itself from an education state into an *evaluator state*, the local must be reconsidered (Charlot, 1994). The purpose of this paper is to question evolutionary relationships between schools and its spaces in recent major French educational and spatial planning reforms. The watchword *territoire* brings with it complex strategies, practices, ideologies, and policies for the local to adapt to paradoxical directives. After discussing the emergence of territory as both a structuring spatial figure and an ideal for public action in education priority areas, I will examine the spread of the *territorial paradigm* in the spatial governance of education. I will then use the concept of *spaces of interdependency* (Bartho & Monfroy, 2005) to understand—in a competitive (and neoliberal) context for schools and local authorities—how the *territoire* produces *territorial arrangements* in order to fit with various issues and directives in the spatial organization of education (international competition, educational inequalities, demographic challenges). Spaces of interdependency are more than just an incomplete decentralization process attached to a French case study; rather, they are the base of a new educational order (Ben-Ayed, 2009) answering diverse directives in a hybridized sociospatial system.

Territoire as an Ideal Space of Schooling: The Territorial Paradigm

A historical figure of the republican ideal, school used to be the guarantor of national equity and cohesion. From the birth of the Third Republic (1875) to the de Gaulle administration (1958–1969), its spatialization was conceived as a homogenous and equitable national space ensuring national order in place of local disorder (Lelièvre, 2008). A pillar of the Republic, school was a state matter, centralized and depending on the state authority. The national French educational space is divided into territorial academies (as Fig. 5.1 shows), delimiting strict administrative perimeters placed under the authority of the local representative of the state Ministry of Education (*Inspecteur d'Académie*). This centralized model was called into question with the social movements of 1968 and the democratization of secondary schooling in the 1970s (Prost, 2004).

Decentralizing the Education State

Following the lead of most European countries, in the early 1980s France committed to implement state reforms through a decentralization process that remains unfinished. In what scholars have characterized as *minimal decentralization* (see Fig. 5.1), education and spatial planning play a central role (van Zanten, 2012). The objectives of the first act of the decentralization (1982–2004) are to articulate in a single movement the reform of *the territorial state* (centralized state controlling spatial planning) and of the education state (the central state as the organizer, planner, and leader of educational policies) into a territorial, governance-combining state decentralization, devolution, and *Europeanization*¹ of public policies on a local scale. Its proponents seek to face issues and critics denouncing rising social inequalities and the inefficiency of the national educational system. As Derouet (2004) quoted, in the early 1980s the French system of education witnessed the end of a traditional educational order in which education was a state concern. The massive expansion of enrolments in secondary schools, settled in the 1970s,² led to a *schooling explosion* and the unprecedented growth of educational inequalities (Broccolochi, Ben-Ayed, & Trancart, 2006). The generalized access to secondary education and the opening of secondary schools and high schools to low-income children failed to offer equal educational opportunities. The purpose of such reforms is also to transform and adapt the nation-state and its territorial instruments (spatial planning, education) to the new emergent global order of the end of the twentieth century (Olssen et al., 2004).

¹Europeanization refers to the translation of the European Union policies and rules into national and local educational policies (Mons, 2007).

²Through the national policy of *collège unique* (uniform secondary school system; 1975).

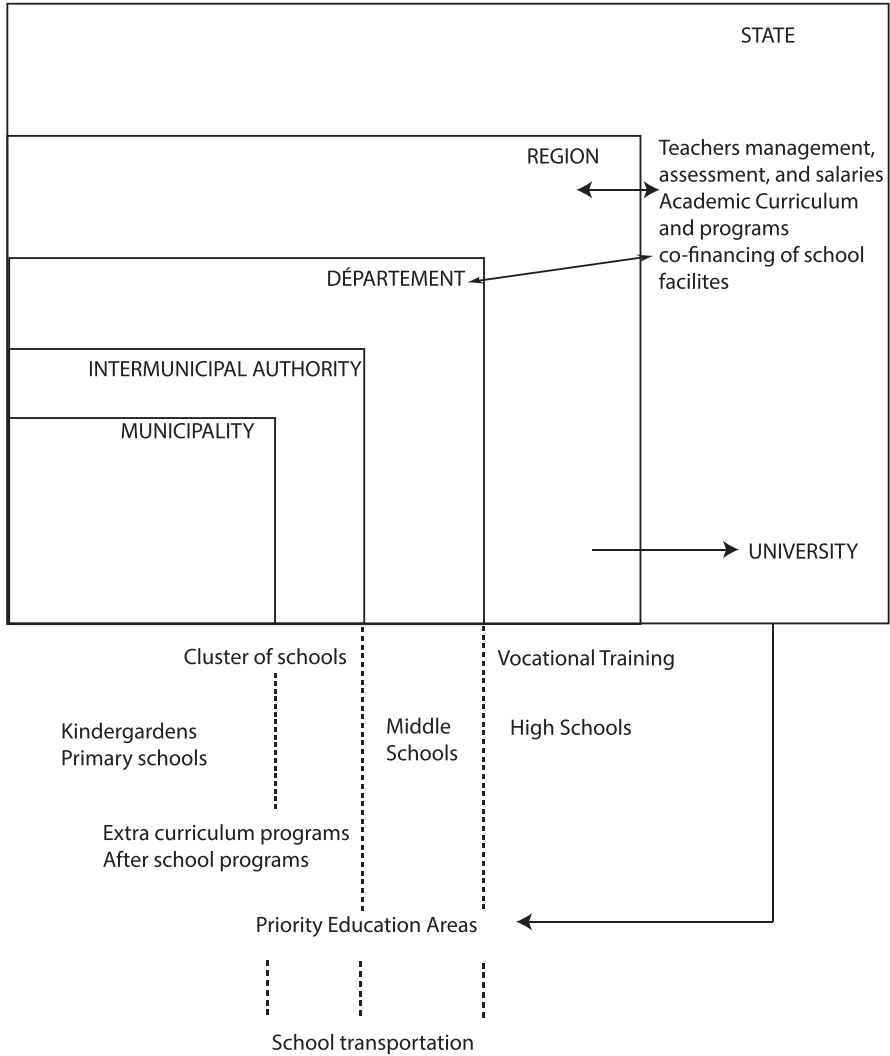


Fig. 5.1 A minimal and complex educational decentralization. Source: Design by author

Simultaneously to the state decentralization policy, an educational territorial framework was set dividing educational responsibilities according to the new institutional architecture of the country: The *région* manages and finances high schools, the *département* middle schools, and municipalities primary schools (see Fig. 5.1). Decentralization is described as an incomplete transfer of responsibilities related to school planning, management, financing, and allocation of educational resources and facilities from the central state to local authorities (van Zanten, 2013). Although local authorities manage school buildings, maintenance, and financing, the state

promulgates educational programs and norms and has a monopoly on teacher recruitment and career management.

The Education Priority Areas Model: The Time for Territoire

The involvement of local authorities in education is not new. As Glasman has noted (2005), the French state has relied on municipal actions in the democratization of schooling since the early 1900s. But the impetus for municipalities to be more active in educational issues dates from the decentralization acts (1982 and 1983). This first step towards decentralization was synchronous with a postbureaucratic rhetoric³ valuing territorial logics: local authorities and stakeholders' involvement in education and the contractualization of public action on the local scale.

Entrusted with responsibilities in the schooling and educative fields,⁴ municipal authorities developed their own agenda, policies, and administration favoring the emergence of local educational spaces according to a rhetoric inspired by the urbanism field. This is particularly true in urban areas where the implementation of local urban educational policies appears with *la politique de la ville*⁵: a multisectoral and compensatory policy dedicated to the improvement of disadvantaged neighborhoods in *la banlieue*.⁶ This set of urban and housing policies is intended to align housing and social programs with educational issues. A national education priority policy is locally settled into EPAs, a ground for municipal/national partnerships.

This first act of decentralization still refers to the republican values of national equality inherited from the construction of the French republic in the late nineteenth century. It leads to design of educational decentralization following directives of social justice and equality. Considering this, the democratization of education has been implemented not in terms of spatial homogenization and unification, but merely through social differentiation according to a new slogan: Give more to those who have less. This slogan organizes new modes of urban and educational planning (EPAs and priority geography programs following the British experience).⁷ Following EPAs and social housing policies (priority geography programs), there is strong alignment between education and urbanism in the deprived neighborhoods (*la banlieue*).

³These changes cover new emphases such as innovation, risk-taking, empowerment, teamwork, and continuous improvement.

⁴In the financing and maintenance of primary school buildings and amenities, in the organization of extracurricular activities.

⁵Many urban, educational, social, and housing policies in favor of peripheral disadvantaged neighborhoods.

⁶Peripheral deprived neighborhoods mainly composed of public housing.

⁷In 1982, French ZEP began channeling additional educational resources towards schools in deprived urban areas. This compensatory education policy was based on the British EPAs experimented with in the early 1970s following the Plowden Report (Brady, 2007).

Rhetoric, norms, and tools are transferred from the urbanism field to educational and schooling issues. Using urban planning norms—such as spatial proximity, social mixing, urban project—, the educational priority policy promoting a rhetoric of projects developed into many EPAs projects established on a contractual basis between local and national authorities. The purpose is to help the emergence of local educational spaces ensuring national equity in education and favoring a local mode of educational governance. In the EPAs, the local scale appears as a social space devoted to the coordination of various stakeholders and articulating national policies at the local level. The EPAs introduce the notion of educational territory. Facing school failure and growing educational inequalities in these deprived neighborhoods, EPAs develop a territorialized conception of national educational policies. Schools inside EPAs are asked to open their doors to local partners (families, municipalities, social workers, etc.) and to cobuild actions in favor of educational success, anti-school-violence, or social programs (literacy, free lunch programs, etc.) in accordance with national programs and incentives. They all rely on a territorialized regulation of schooling following two watchwords: *territoire* and *contractualization*. According to this assumption, priority education policies must be territorialized. This involves a territorial and spatial rooting of national policies at the local scale. It relies on the belief that the local (the *territoire*) is socially, culturally, and politically built by stakeholders and constitutes a sociospatial territory that is both a priority target of public policies and central to their implementation by local stakeholders.

In the public policy and academic domains, territory has a specific meaning (Di Méo & Buléon, 2005). It refers to the concept of a social space (a local space that is socially, culturally, and historically appropriated and the object of social representations and local identities) and a political space (a space that has been institutionally delimited). Ethological (territory as a daily social space) and political dimensions are constitutive parts of this concept, which grew increasingly popular in the late 1980s in the academic and political sphere (Faure, 2005; Hancock, 2001; Moine, 2006). *Territoire* became a dominant paradigm for public action experimented with in particular in Education Priority Areas. This concept justifies politics of affirmative action according to the acknowledgement of the specific requirements and needs of some deprived neighborhoods. It is also a means and a rhetoric used by the state to modernize public action on the local scale, even if territory clearly lacks strong definitions. The so-called *modernity of territory* brings new notions: projects, partnerships, and capacity building used in order to ease the involvement of the local and to rationalize public action. A large set of tools and instruments are locally implemented to help local authorities meet national requirements in both educational and urban treatment of deprived neighborhoods: Examples are the *Local Education Contract* (LEC; *Contrats Éducatifs Locaux* (CEL)) and the *Territorial Education Project* (TEP; *Projets Éducatifs Territoriaux* (PET)). Contractualization is the main means used by the state to decentralize education to local authorities: financing local educational actions and programs according to national incentives and directives.

Urbanism Norms and Rhetoric as Commonplaces

This cobuilding process is influenced by urban planning ideologies promoting the rhetoric of projects. Emerging at the end of the 1970s as a reaction against modern urbanism and functionalism, the notion of project (used and named as the urban project, the *projet urbain*) appears among urbanists and professional planners as the most theoretical and practical way of dealing with current urban and spatial planning issues (Ingallina, 2010). The success of the notion of the urban project (*projet urbain*) can be explained through its suitability to the growing demand of local democracy and because it also fits with the state directive to modernize local public action, following a devolution process in education and urban planning. The *projet urbain* is designed as an answer to a bureaucratic and centralized urbanism and to foster local dynamics. Similarly, the educational project is expected to locally implement national policies and coordinate actions and stakeholders involved in education issues (teachers, social workers, local associations, health services, etc.).

Following the practice of the urban project in the urban planning field, promoters of the *politique de la ville* fostered the idea of TEPs. Thus, one of the most popular operational tools, the TEP, appears as a clear extension of such urban planning norms. It participates in the notion of urban project, meaning the implementation on a local scale of a strategic schooling plan associating many stakeholders in connection to the urban planning issues (demographic forecast, social mixing issues, health and care programs, public housing policies, etc.). It relies on a project engineering process, locally developed and embedded in the strategic urban master plan. TEPs are contractual procedures running on a 4-year period focusing on educational success, parent involvement, out-drop programs, and extracurricular activities; they are locally managed and nationally financed. A TEP is embedded in the *contrat de ville*, an urban planning contractual procedure involving education in the urban and neighborhood planning process (along with housing and public transportation issues for instance). School planning is therefore established under the auspices of urban planning in deprived neighborhoods and urban renewal programs. These contractual logics and practices involve a network organization between stakeholders drawing new institutional and territorial limits: turning priority education zones into new educational territories, implementing social development programs in urban deprived areas, and so forth. In the first years, EPAs are associated with an emancipatory scope, paving the way to innovative actions and partnerships between schools, local authorities, and other stakeholders.

However, local educational priority territories rapidly appear as schizophrenic spaces: instruments of national educational (and urban) policies on the one hand, and spaces of growing local autonomy on the other hand.

EPAs as Educational Territories of Problems (territoires éducatifs de problèmes)

By the end of the 1980s, education priority areas and programs faced many critics. Many observers denounced the failure of a policy leading to the reinforcement and stigmatization of deprived schools and their catchment areas. The rise of inequalities in educational attainment between schools located in the EPAs and schools in other catchment areas, the concentration of school violence, the *school avoidance syndrome* towards EPAs, and the representation of EPAs as schools for ethnic minorities produced an image of territories of problems. Moreover, observers underlined that rural areas (also concentrating a growing number of educational problems) were not included in the EPA system. The failure of the *politique de la ville*⁸ to improve life in the *banlieue* and the urban riots of 2005 modified the perception of EPA as relevant spaces for public action and its capacities for allowing a fair redistribution of educational resources and opportunities. Furthermore, the territorialization of education priority programs in EPAs appears less as an increasing power for local stakeholders than as a tool to maintain state legitimacy and control on the local. These experiments in EPAs and their critics ease the shift from earlier conceptions of education priority programs (based on social justice and equity) to an enlarged vision carrying new norms: flexibility, local development, proximity. The 2008 Act on education guidance (*Plan de relance de l'éducation prioritaire*) thus enlarged the EPAs' experiment beyond deprived urban areas to urban, suburban, and rural localities. In leaving EPAs, the notion of educational territory thus embraces local development issues.

The Spread of the Territorial Paradigm and the Ideology of Proximity

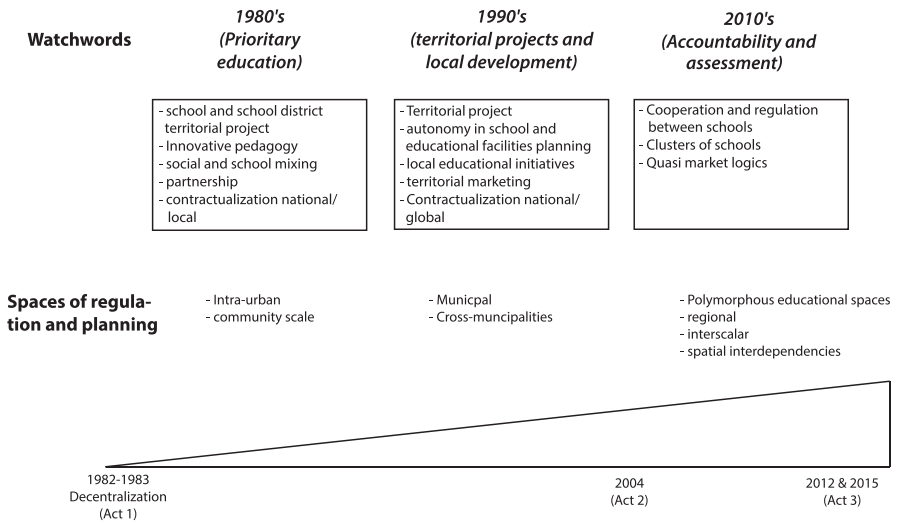
Basically conceived as a temporary experience limited to deprived neighborhoods, the territorial paradigm, founded on the Education Priority Areas model, was largely spread and trivialized as a common procedure for local authorities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. As many authors pointed out in other national cases (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998), the growing concern for *localism* in education is associated with the dismantling of the education state and more specifically with the dismantling of centralized educational bureaucracy (popularized in 1997 by the formula of the French Minister of Education: "We have to degrease the mammoth"⁸), and with the attempt to create local devolved territories of education (*territoires décentralisés d'éducation*).

⁸ In a press conference by Claude Allègre, French secretary of national education (1997–2000), on July 24, 1997.

The Trivialization of the Notion of Educational Territory

The notion of educational territory progressively becomes the main instrument for local educational policy and school governance in this second phase of decentralization, concentrating the partial devolution of education on local authorities. The territorial paradigm acts as a dominant figure in the thinking, planning, and governance of education on the local scale, largely spreading to all levels of institutional authority (see Fig. 5.2). It relies on an ideology valuing proximity (understood as neighboring) using the rhetoric of *territorial project* (a rhetoric valuating the mobilization of stakeholders, the implementation of local educational programs, the definition of priorities according to educational demographic prospective, and local development issues) largely fuelled by the urbanism and regional planning practices and ideology, and leading to new territorial arrangements. Although the territorial paradigm spread in suburban and rural areas, it progressively lost its directives of spatial and social compensation in the most deprived urban areas. By the mid-1990s, TEPs are multipartner projects that aim to implement a schooling and youth policy (extracurricular programs) in a specific administrative territory. The scales cover both the municipal limits and the school catchment areas. The Territorial Educational Projects lay out many initiatives and tools territorialized on the local scale, such as:

- School district planning and allocation of resources (employees, location of school facilities),
- A large set of tools initiated by the state government on a contractual basis,



Territorial paradigm and local education planning

Fig. 5.2 Territorial paradigm and local education planning. Source: Design by author

- The involvement of local communities in extracurricular programs and activities,
- Different scales, from the very local (the school and its surrounding neighborhoods) to the city, the school district, and the region.

By the 2000s, the directives of social mixing and equity were seen as secondary objectives (see Fig. 5.2). The purpose now became to build local educational territories based on larger local development objectives combining school and educational amenities planning, and local development issues. Practices and experiences of territorial education projects nurture a growing autonomy in school and educational planning answering new needs: in school and educational facilities, in school demographic forecast, and strategic planning explaining a profusion of local initiatives on different scales (regional, municipal, etc.). The use of the territorial paradigm by local authorities involves three steps (see Fig. 5.2). Basically, it follows national directives of social mixing and local partnership (parental and community involvement), and leads to social and educational innovations in the name of affirmative action and priority education. The spread of the territorial paradigm towards local authorities (outside the perimeters of priority education) opens a second step in which local authorities develop their own agenda answering local needs and perspectives: constructing new schools and facilities, reorganizing school perimeters according to local housing priorities and objectives, a growing involvement in vocational education, and so forth. According to their agenda, local authorities in the regional and municipal scenes organize and manage their own department of education and implement extracurricular programs focusing on and encouraging local cultural programs (such as regional languages and culture). Proximity is here understood as both geographical (physical distance) and institutional (cooperation between stakeholders) that allows social, cultural, economic, and political interaction and cooperation inside an enlarged territory (Torre, 2009). Proximity applied to educational territories thus takes the shape of *polymorphous spaces* that encompass spaces of the school, catchment areas, the school district, the city, or the region, depending on the number of stakeholders involved. It tends to organize three kinds of education on the local scale: formal (national rules inside the school system), nonformal (extracurricular programs enacted by local stakeholders), and informal (by local communities, association of neighbors, the private sector, etc.). Proximity depicts a dialectic relationship between the school system and its sociocultural environment, and covers two interrelated dimensions. It first considers territory as a stakeholder in itself, participating in the production of school supplies and educational opportunities (because of its social, economic, and cultural resources). Second, it is understood as a context impacting schools and the educational landscape (its symbolic dimension).

A New Local Educational Order Source of a Territorial Complexity

Despite the numerous initiatives, decentralization appears less as local control over educational issues and much more as a manipulation of the local by the state in order to ease and legitimate national policies (transferring a mode of financing from the national to the local, adapting local authorities to new management issues), partly dedicated to school planning issues. This conjures up a picture of a decentralization without power, depicted as the *les faux-semblants de la décentralisation* (false pretences of decentralization; Mabileau, 1997). In this context, local authorities have only narrow margins in which to act. Tensions and rivalries between stakeholders are exacerbated. Despite these limits, this phase of decentralization favors a new local educational order (Ben-Ayed, 2009) characterized by a growing autonomy for local authorities, the spread of a *state territorial thinking* diffusing a new semantic universe on the local scale: governance, new management, partnership, professionalism, expertise, and so forth. If educational local planning was guided by social directives (to fight school segregation and educational inequalities), it slowly turns into local development issues according to new standards in the managing of education imposed by the national level: building and planning education facilities, financing extracurricular programs, fighting rural desertification, forecasting population growth or decline, and so forth.

The proliferation of initiatives by local authorities from the 1980s to the 2010s lead to a growing complexification of the educational map on different scales (regional, county, municipality, neighborhood), leading to an institutional and territorial fragmentation, and to a lack of legitimacy for local authorities who exceeded their mandates and legal competences. Some territorial innovations were possible, such as the development of school clusters in rural or suburban areas. But a territorial complexity emerges and asks for another spatial regulation and mode of planning. Once built in closed territorial limits, dictated by education priority programs, the territorial governance of schooling overflows the initial perimeters and turns into a more network-oriented, managerial governance. At the turn of the twenty-first century, critics denounced the territorial complexity that was making it impossible to meet the century's educational challenges, such as school choice and international competition.

This debate arouses the need for new institutional/territorial arrangements and governance that take into account the management of spatial interdependencies created by the second phase of decentralization (local/national, private/public) and the need for more flexibility (such as school choice).

Looking for the Good Scale: Hybridization of Norms and Local Spaces of Educational Interdependencies

The transfer of authority in education from the national to the local scale has transformed the national educational space into a complex set of local educational territories with limited responsibilities. Facing what has been described as a territorial complexity (Leloup, Moyard, & Pecqueur, 2005; Vanier, 2008), the third act of decentralization (2012–...) marks the transition from territorialized schooling and educational policies (national norms and directives implemented at the local scale) to local educational policies placed under a stronger regional authority. Critics of the first and second acts of decentralization underline a complex interdependency of competences and responsibilities, the poor legibility of local initiatives in schooling, and the excessive dispersal of resources, preventing stakeholders from facing locally new issues such as institutional fragmentation, school choice, rural desertification, educational inequalities, or social and ethnic diversity.

The Region or the Territorial Optimum

The 2015 territorial reform, known as the third act of decentralization, has changed the issues and the context, reshaping the institutional map into 17 new administrative regions that cross the boundaries of the new 17 academic regions (see Fig. 5.3). The issue relies on the quest for the “good scale” and what has been officially named as the territorial optimum. Behind this new territorial rhetoric, one can see less a real decentralization process and much more a partial regionalization of education and also the return of the state (and paradoxically of its centralization). State reforms in 2012 and 2015 (known as the third act of decentralization) signal the repositioning of the state, whose role is now less to locally implement contractual national policies than to merely develop on a new scale (the region) a space of coordination and regulation between local stakeholders. This conception of state action in education relies on new watchwords: accountability, assessment, and the implementation of new tools to regulate state resources, such as strategic steering, partnership (with the private sector), and school assessment. Schools and school principals are invested with new responsibilities and autonomy: in the staff management, in the management of the flow of pupils, in the supply of new curriculum. This autonomy allows them to adapt to the local context (answering local needs in school choice, defining extracurricular activities) and initiate a more dynamic system of exchanges, relationships, and interdependencies between schools and between schools and local authorities. The former system of schooling embedded in proximity in the microlocal space (mostly the catchment areas) is breaking apart while a new system of regulation is being set, one in which relationships between schools and school principals, as well as between schools and the different local authorities (from the local to the regional), that are characterized by forms of cooperation and concurrence redefine

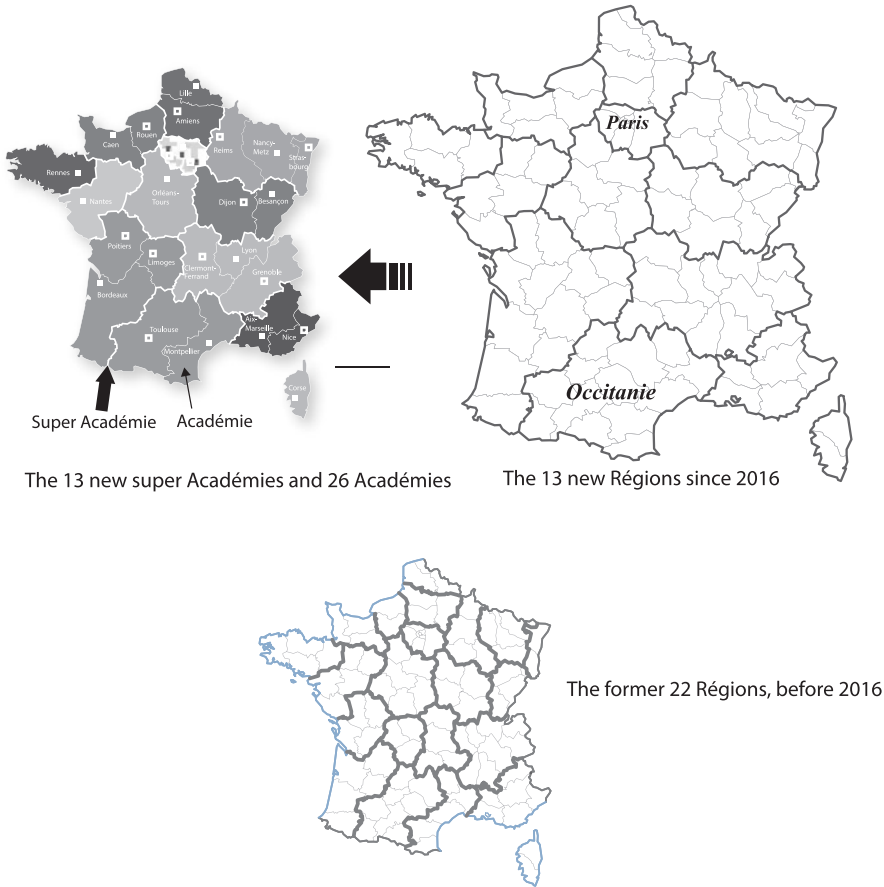


Fig. 5.3 The third act of decentralization from 22 to 17 new administrative and academic regions. Source: Design by author

the spaces of schooling as polymorphous. These spaces are less dependent on institutional perimeters and more dependent on the numerous interdependencies generated locally (between different stakeholders, between schools, between schools and local authorities, and between local authorities). These rely on a local spatialized system of regulation/concurrence and on instances of coordination and dialogue (in the transfer, in the regulation of the optional courses). Local spaces of schooling must thus be considered as local educational spaces of interdependency characterized by sociospatial system of regulation, instances of multiscale coordination and by hybridization of norms, favoring, in a postdecentralized period, a local educational entrepreneurship (see Fig. 5.4).

This mode of governance redefines and redesigns the local not as a single socio-spatial unit but as a set of local educational spaces of interdependencies placed under a partial regional authority and characterized by (Fig. 5.4).

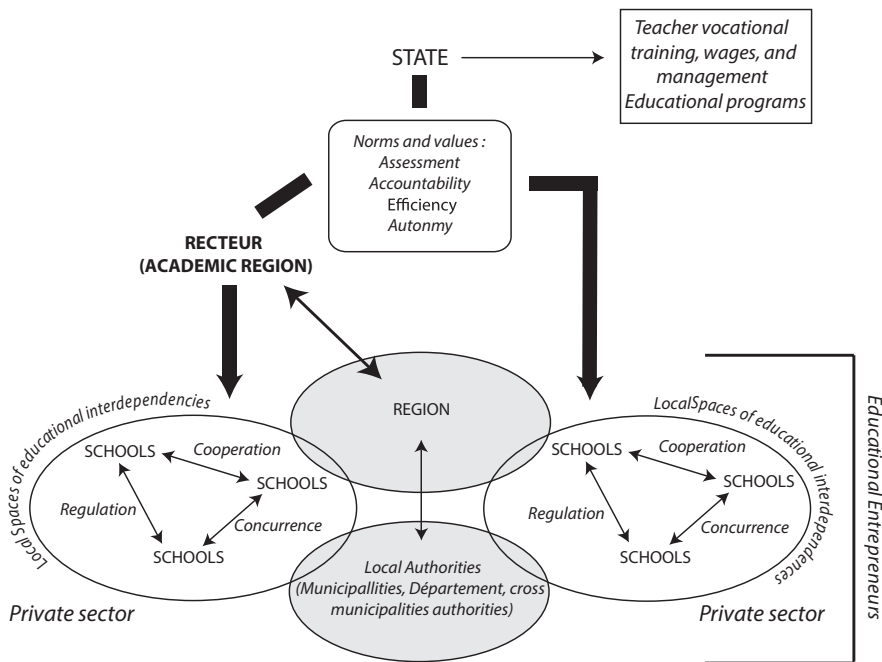


Fig. 5.4 Regulating the local: Regionalization and educational spaces of interdependencies. Source: Design by author

- A rescaling process articulating different scales (regional, municipal, local) and institutional levels connected by interdependency links
- A growing autonomy for schools and principals and school board of education who are invited (in a more competitive educational landscape) to differentiate themselves and to be visible in the new map of local educational supply
- Diversification of the sources of school financing: The 2015 reform allows inter-communal institutions to finance and plan primary schools in their district.
- Introduction of new principles for the local authority in charge of education: accountability, optimization of resources, assessment
- The capacity to make strategic plans, associated with educational demographic forecasts and land planning

As in many European countries, these reforms and structural changes are associated with institutional autonomy and a variety of forms of school-based management, the enhancement of parental power, an increased emphasis on community investment, more efficient management, and more transparent accountability, as well as deregulation, devolution, dezoning, and greater school autonomy, all of which assist schools in responding to market forces (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 210).

The Omnipresence of the State: Towards the Evaluator State

The context is one of the end of the education state and the emerging of the evaluator state (Broadfoot, 2000) accompanied by new modes of governance of local school issues and spaces. In this mode of governance, the relationships between the national and the local are no more regulated by logics of contractualization embedded in specific territories. It relies on a system of devolution in which the state operates at a distance through a new administrative and territorial level: the *région académique*. The former and historical territorial unit (*Inspection académique*) has been reshaped under the auspices of larger perimeters on the regional scale in order to fit with the new territorial framework (see Figs. 5.3 and 5.4). This one is led by a rector (*recteur de région académique*) named by the French Minister of Education (see Fig. 5.4). Since 2015, the *région académique* introduces another institutional level federating under the state representative (*le recteur*) all the local educational territories. *Le recteur* (presented as a *super recteur*) centralizes national subsidies and coordinates education programs and stakeholders. Its role not only consists in regulating public subsidies; it also includes setting norms, procedures, technics, goals, and instruments for public action. For instance, he puts local authorities in competition for financing of some educational programs, according to norms valuating efficiency and entrepreneurship. This is an important break and shift in French educational policy, which has traditionally been structured by the republican and territorial equity dogma. These changes answer incentives for a neoliberal turn in the French educational system, valuing new ideologies:

- Efficiency versus equity
- Strategic steering in place of contractualization
- Educational entrepreneurship: policies and school planning as part of the regional economic development. The new regions have to implement “projected training plans” expressing regional economic and educational objectives. They define a long-term investment plan for school financing and set objectives at the infra-levels.

The 2015 reform tends to reinforce school and educational regionalization valuing forms of *educational entrepreneurship* on two different and interconnected scales: the regional and the local. Educational territory, once the figure of a renewed Republic carrying republican values in the EPA (equity, brotherhood, etc.), is now the leading figure of the entrepreneurial shift of public policies.

Tensions, Resistances, and Hybridization

In reaction against what appears as a hidden deregulation and neoliberalization agenda of education, many tensions and resistances have arisen around the new territorial issue. The strength of the republican educational model firmly established

on the local level (institutional and social representations) and the stakeholders' reluctance (parental associations, teacher unions) are seriously delaying the integration of new educational norms (assessment, accountability). These changes are also the source of political conflicts. Since the 1990s, and the former socialist Minister of Education's provocative statement comparing the French educational system to an immutable mammoth, every educational reform is subject to conflict and protest on a national scale. Growing educational competences and responsibilities at the regional level lead to tensions between the region and other local authorities. In the region of Occitanie, for instance, vocational schools are a shared competence (state, region, chambers of commerce), subject to two opposing strategies. The regional and state actors plan to reorganize vocational high schools according to a high-tech strategy valuating the aircraft industry and school locations in a few large cities. While local authorities ask for more alignment with small business needs and a large spread of the vocational high schools in the region. Beyond these tensions, different directives appear, leading to a hybridization of education politics revealing multiple and complex interdependencies. In Occitanie, the state operates a partial regionalization of education. Indeed, *le recteur* still retains most of the authority in the educational system (controlling the teaching personnel, establishing teaching norms and procedures). Meanwhile, local actors have a new but partial autonomy, allowing some of them to develop new curricula (mainly in the vocational education system) and facilitating for others the setting of spatial interdependencies. In this context, catching areas tend to loosen their binding nature in favor of a spatial organization of education in a network of interdependencies. Many middle schools and high schools are reorganizing their educational supply on a larger scale. New interdependencies are being developed between school principals: in sharing the distribution of the school population, in the geographic distribution of educational supplies and curricula, and in developing educational niches. These educational spaces of interdependency are also the ground for concurrence between schools. Far from just applying national policies and norms, local education stakeholders (school principals, regional department of education) use their spatial capabilities to produce hybridized policies in education between contingencies of inherited republican norms (catchment areas, republican directives or equity) and a limited autonomy mixing interdependencies and concurrence. Local educational stakeholders show a capacity to produce territorial arrangements that differ strongly from one location to another, are heavily dependent on local issues, and are alternating spaces of interdependencies and concurrence.

Finally, an on-going hybridization of norms and practices occurs. Local school and educational planning strongly articulates three territorial logics:

- State centralized and republican norms: The state is still in charge of teacher training, wages and management, and education programs.
- Partial local and regional autonomy: in school planning and locations
- The introduction of quasi market logics: school choice for high school, introduction of business needs and objectives

Conclusion: Neoliberal Educational Order or Institutional Tinkering?

Many observers of the spatial governance of education regard the French situation as one of territorial complexity. It is obviously organized into spaces of educational interdependencies that have succeeded to the local educational order inherited from the first phase of decentralization. The reforms of 2012 and 2015 instituted a growing but partial regionalization of education. These changes lead to a hybridization of norms and practices, mixing on different scales: an inherited state centralization, a partial regionalization, and neoliberal norms. But behind an apparent territorial complexity—and much more than a neoliberalization of education—, we can see how the local adapts to changes according to the logics of hybridization, institutional arrangements, and territorial tinkering. This hybridization seems to be poorly institutionalized and spatially produces what can be described as territorial arrangements or tinkering in which stakeholders face state directives, paradoxes, and social needs and implement their own strategy in accordance with multiscale dynamics. This territorial tinkering can be explained by the omnipresence of the state, partial regionalization, and local cooperative and regulation relationships. Beyond this territorial complexity, one can find a sociospatial organization structured by local educational spaces of interdependencies with uncertain and changing perimeters, multiscale governance, and a profusion of initiatives according to various relationships experimented by stakeholders. What has been claimed as a deterritorialization of education through regionalization can be first described as a further step in the long process of adapting the local to education reforms alternating territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. If local authorities have been granted only a limited educational autonomy, local educational stakeholders (school principals, regional and local departments of education, associations involved in education) have benefited from a new context allowing them to implement territorial strategies and to organize spatial networks of interdependencies.

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Part II
National School Systems in Transition

Chapter 6

Ideology, Spatial Planning, and Rural Schools: From Interwar to Communist Hungary



Ferenc Gyuris

The development of education systems has always been strongly linked to dominating ideologies and their notions about the structure and functioning of society. What is a desirable spatial distribution of physical infrastructures of education, such as school buildings and teaching equipment? What sort of knowledge and norms and value systems are teachers expected to convey to their pupils and students? What role should formal institutions play in education, and where is the place for informal learning? Who is to cover the related expenses? One can answer these questions in many different ways, and societies with various ideological stances might have different preferences even if their material realities (such as the physical geography of the given area, technologies of construction, technically accessible equipment, and characteristics of the urban network) are similar. The outcomes of such varied preferences for ideological reasons might be the most visible in geographical settings which undergo significant political ruptures in a given period, especially if political structures are centralized and relatively few actors have the actual power to shape the education system.

In this chapter, I focus on Hungary between the World Wars and during the communist period; both timespans provide remarkable evidence for how changing ideologies impact the education system. My main interests are twofold. On the one hand, I am interested in the interwar nationalist-conservative regime, which considered education an essential means of assuring *cultural advantage* and the “revival” of the nation after the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, an outcome of the post-World War I peace negotiations that forced the country to surrender more than two thirds of its territory and roughly one third of its native Hungarian population. On the other hand, I want to reveal how official ideologies in the Communist system emerging after World War II influenced the improvement of the education system. I will

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employ small rural schools as key loci of basic education in what are mostly peripheral regions as a case study to identify the major ideological shifts and the way these played out in everyday practice. In doing so, my goal is also to provide a more sophisticated view of both periods and to underline that neither the interwar period nor the communist epoch were profoundly homogenous (including in terms of education), especially for the changing power geometries of international political and economic relations into which Hungary was embedded. In addition, I will argue that some continuities existed even in times of remarkable political changes.

Literacy, Education, and the “Torch of Civilization”: A Brief History

In the early twenty-first century, a broad consensus exists in most parts of the world that the ability to read and write is fundamental knowledge that should be accessible for every human being. Likewise, basic education as a framework for spreading literacy and as the main mediator of various sorts of knowledge commonly regarded as essential is often seen as a *merit good* (Musgrave, 1957), which everyone has the right to. These views were not given a priori in human history; instead, they are socially constructed outcomes of a perpetually changing political discourse. They emerged only when some specific social circumstances were already given and they met the interests of both the “power elites” (Mills, 1956) and the broad masses (Titze, 2006). As Meusburger (1998, 2015) and Schriewer and Nóvoa (2001) stress, teaching everyone to read and write by providing them with a basic education became a fundamental European goal hundreds of years after the Reformation and the reformers’ attempts to enable people to read the Bible. It accompanied the emergence of modern nation states, the politicians of which expected their citizens to internalize national ideology, and the rapidly increasing demand for a skilled workforce during the Industrial Revolution.

Yet, as soon as striving for universal literacy and education became the norm in many parts of Europe, statistics reporting on the advance of the process gained political relevance. Countries that proved more efficient in improving these numbers were increasingly considered more “civilized” and “cultured,” and thus “superior,” and to possess the right and duty to spread advanced civilization.¹ This became a central argument to justify the colonial attempts of European great powers as a *mission civilisatrice* or *civilizing mission*, to “help” “inferior,” “savage,” and “barbarian” peoples gain a level of culture they have failed to reach so far (Bullard, 2000; Butlin, 2009; Conklin, 1997) and may remain “unable” to achieve on their own in the future, due to detrimental factors such as “unfavorable” climatic

¹ Meanwhile, people with little or no formal education in countries with otherwise relatively high literacy and education standards were often othered as “immoral,” “criminal,” or “vicious,” in France (Dupin, 1826), the United Kingdom (Booth, 1902–1903), as well as North America (Bateman, 2001; Hunt, 2002).

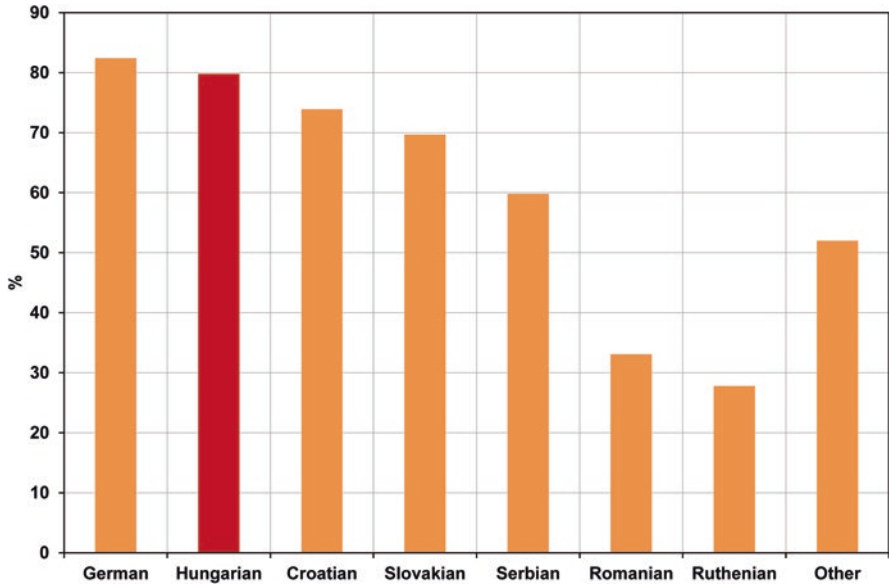


Fig. 6.1 Literacy rates of inhabitants over 6 years of age by native language. Adapted from *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása. Hatodik rész. Végeredmények összefoglalása* [The 1910 Census of the lands of the Holy Crown of Hungary. Vol. 6. Summary of final results] (p. II/179), by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1920, Budapest: Athenaeum. Copyright 1920 by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Adapted with permission

conditions (Livingstone, 2002, 2011). Political struggles in Europe were subject to similar interpretations. In World War I, countries on both sides claimed the distinction of being “more civilized” for themselves, portraying themselves as fighting against the “less civilized” Other. This language also infiltrated the official documents of the postwar peace negotiations and their academic commentaries in the countries concerned (*Treaty of Peace with Germany*, 1919; Schroeder-Gudehus, 2014).

Hungary was no exception. After the 1867 compromise with Austria, which guaranteed Hungary equal rights and sovereignty in the empire, a massive project of nation-building, similar to those in other parts of the continent, started in the Hungarian part. Therefore, political and academic statements on disparities of education predominantly focused on the ethnic aspect. Their authors emphasized that the literacy rates of Hungarian native speakers over 6 years of age were higher than those of any minority inhabitants, with the exception of German native speakers, to whom both Austrians and Hungarians traditionally attributed an advanced culture (see Fig. 6.1).

Such trends brought into being the notion of Hungarian cultural advantage, which claimed that Hungarians possessed a “superior” level of culture, compared both to the country’s minorities as well as to neighboring countries to the east,

southeast, and south.² Given that the literacy rates of Romanian and Serbian native speakers in Hungary were still higher than in Romania and Serbia, the dominant view of the native Hungarian political and academic elite was that these minority groups, although “less civilized” than the Hungarians, still managed to gain “more culture” as inhabitants of the Kingdom of Hungary. They claimed this vindicated the state of Hungary as a more efficient framework to “civilize” people than Romania or Serbia, and thus a framework that should be kept in the future to the benefit of the entire European civilization. One of the most detailed explanations of this argument was published in the 1918 article “A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság szózata a világ Földrajzi Társaságaihoz” (Manifesto of the Hungarian Geographical Society to the Geographical Societies of the World, 1918), published anonymously but actually written by Pál Teleki (Fodor, 2006), the most influential geographer of the interwar period, who also served as Prime Minister for two terms (1920–1921 and 1939–1941). The manifesto’s explicit aim was to explain the territorial interests of Hungary and present the arguments of Hungarian geographers for an international public before the peace negotiations.

The concept of cultural advantage also emerged in a number of works from other authors, especially with regard to Hungarian economic and political interests in the Balkan Peninsula (Havass, 1912, 1913). Jenő Cholnoky, then vice president (and from 1914 onwards president) of the Hungarian Geographical Society, referred to this as an area that Hungary “could have made use of ... just like from a colony” (Cholnoky, 1912, p. 3). A 1916 article in *Földrajzi Közlemények* [Geographical Review], the official journal of the Hungarian Geographical Society, argued that “we and our allies have the task ... to bring the lighting torch of culture to the inhabitants” of Greater Serbia (Kemény, 1916, p. 107). The head of the Hungarian delegation to the peace conference after World War I, Count Albert Apponyi, also referred to disparities of education and culture as a main argument for maintaining the boundaries of Hungary instead of accepting the territorial claims of Romanian, Serbian, Czech, and Slovakian political and intellectual circles. As he put it in 1920:

I believe that, from the point of view of the great interests of humankind, one can observe neither indifferently nor with satisfaction the national hegemony being vested in nations that, even if holding up the best hopes for the future, still stand at a low level of culture. (Apponyi quoted in Romsics, 2007, p. 170)

In this social and political context, other aspects of education inequalities were also interpreted in conceptual frameworks oriented around ethnicity. Hungarian geographers claimed that regional disparities of literacy rates—which in 1910 ranged from 95.0% in the town of Sopron close to the Austrian border to 26.8% in Máramaros County in the northeast and 25.1% in Lika Krbava county in the southwestern Croatian districts—reflected the different ethnic and linguistic structure of the population in various parts of country (see Fig. 6.2).

²This sort of thinking was pervasive across Europe, even in political discourses. As Teleki (1936) ironically underscored: “We should just ask the peoples of Europe about their neighbors—almost each of them will consider its Eastern neighbor barbarian, or at least not a European on a par with itself” (p. 360).

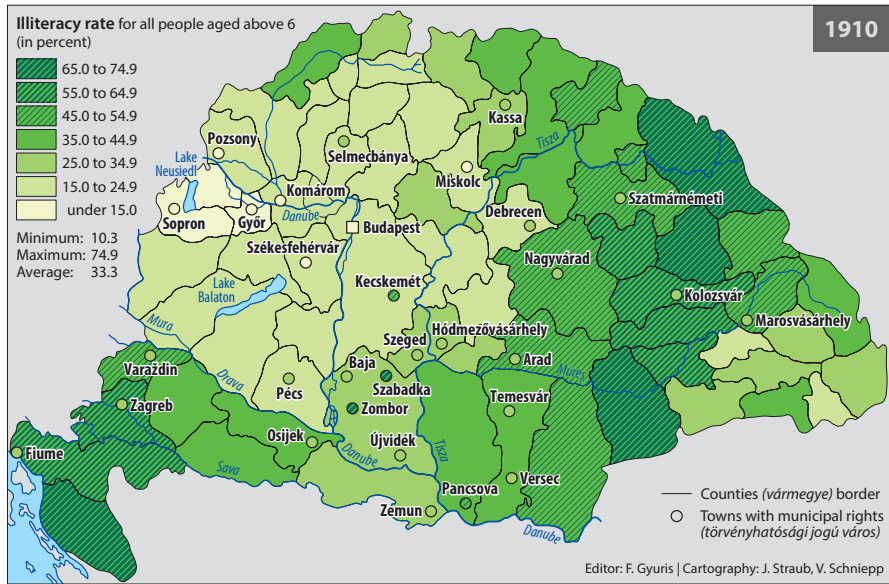


Fig. 6.2 Illiteracy rates of the population over 6 years of age by county in 1910. Reprinted from *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása. Hatodik rész. Végeredmények összefoglalása* [The 1910 Census of the lands of the Holy Crown of Hungary. Vol. 6. Summary of final results] (pp. 166–169), by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1920, Budapest: Athenaeum. Copyright 1920 of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Cartography by V. Schniepp and J. Straub

Arguments about the claimed cultural advantage of the Hungarian people and the civilizing mission of Hungary, however, fell short of convincing the representatives of the peace negotiations’ winners to maintain the country’s territorial integrity. Not only did the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapse a few months after the end of the war, but the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty resulted in devastating territorial losses for Hungary, equaling roughly two thirds of the country’s area.

After the Trianon Trauma of 1920: Education as Defending the Homeland

Ideology and Political Goals

The Trianon trauma shocked Hungarian society, and led the authoritarian nationalist-conservative regime that was leading the country in the interwar period to define territorial revision as its ultimate goal. The corresponding development of the education system became the task of Count Kuno Klebelsberg, a veteran of cultural politics, who had already served the governments as Secretary of State

Fig. 6.3 Count Kuno Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Education between 1922 and 1931. Reprinted from *Hungarian National Museum, Historical Photographic Collection, Ltsz. 1659/1957 jk.* Copyright 1900s by the Hungarian National Museum. Reprinted with permission



between 1914 and 1917 (see Fig. 6.3) (Huszti, 1942). Klebelsberg made the notion of cultural advantage a cornerstone of his political program, although in a remarkably different meaning to how it was broadly used in the 1910s. Instead of referring to the cultural “superiority” of the Hungarian people as a condition that was already achieved and provided justification for territorial interests per se, he claimed that cultural advantage was a key precondition for international actors to accept Hungary’s claims, but one that had not yet been achieved, and for which much had to be done. Klebelsberg underscored the remarkable gap in education statistics between Hungary and the most powerful winners of the war. He did this in a period when Hungary’s illiteracy rate for the population aged over 15 was still 13.4%, whereas it was 8.2% in France, 7.8% in Belgium, and only 6.0% in the United States (UNESCO, 1953, pp. 200–213). Moreover, he warned that the neighboring countries, against which Hungary had territorial claims, might soon improve the education of their citizens and surpass Hungary (Klebelsberg, 1927).

Klebelsberg’s goal was therefore a massive development of education, including all levels and forms. As he put it, also with regard to the severe military restrictions issued for Hungary in the peace treaty: “Today it is mainly not the sword, but culture that can defend the Hungarian homeland and make it great again” (Klebelsberg, 1927, p. 604). Therefore, as he emphasized at a speech in Stockholm in 1930 on the “calling of Hungary in world history,” “we now consider the ministry of education as the ministry of defending the homeland” (Klebelsberg, 1931, p. 182).

In Klebelsberg’s vision, educational development had to incorporate both elite and mass education. As he phrased it: “Thousands of leaders at European standards should be placed on the top of national production, and millions of masses with high moral and mental culture in the service of [it]” (Klebelsberg quoted in Glatz, 1990, pp. 444–446). Whereas the former goal served the establishment of an efficient

diplomacy and economy, to “advertise the Hungarian truth to the nations of the world with the word of mind” (Klebensberg, 1930, p. 92), Klebensberg considered mass education as a prerequisite for an efficiently functioning economic and political system. In this sense, he envisaged a modern “economic competition of the nations” (Klebensberg, 1928, p. 209) where “the masses of Hungarian workers” should stand their ground in “the competition of working masses of more educated nations” (Klebensberg, 1927, p. 318).

Furthermore, he considered mass education a key to “social evolution.” In the context of the 1920s, with a multiparty parliament but a conservative authoritarian framework in the style of the nineteenth century, the interwar regime consciously wanted to prevent the lower social classes from gaining influence on political decisions (Ablonczy, 2009). Count István Bethlen, the elitist conservative Prime Minister between 1921 and 1931, considered mass democracy “the blind rule of the raw masses,” which he contrasted to “real” and “healthy democratic development ... ensuring the leadership for intelligent classes” (Bethlen, 1933, pp. 158–159). Hence, the 1922 election law reduced the share of elective citizens above 24 years from 75% to 58% and provided a secret ballot for only one fifth of the voters (Romsics, 2010). Klebensberg also claimed that educating the masses was necessary to prepare people for political democracy, for which many of them were considered “immature.” He ironically underscored that “[u]niversal secret suffrage operates with ballots. I would love to see how one can work with ballots with around a million illiterate voters” (Klebensberg, 1928, p. 206). “Political democracy will become a benefit for the peoples only if prepared by real cultural democracy” (Klebensberg, 1929, p. 168).

The Klebensbergian concept of cultural advantage thus urged a large-scale development of the entire system of education, which was a highly expensive project, especially considering Hungary’s war casualties, the reparations declared in the peace treaty, and the loan the country had to take from the League of Nations in 1924 in order to stabilize its economy after a period of extreme inflation. Klebensberg, however, had the ears of Prime Minister Count István Bethlen, who had been his friend and political ally for a long time. Bethlen provided stable support to Klebensberg’s plans. As a result, the Ministry of Religion and Education’s share of the government budget doubled from 4.54% in the financial year of 1922/1923 to 9.15% in 1924/1925, and exceeded 10% after 1928/1929 (Ujváry, 2009, p. 400). These values were twice as high as between 1900 and 1913 (Romsics, 2010), and meant that Klebensberg’s ministry had become the largest one in terms of funding (Ujváry, 2009). The special position of education and culture was also symbolized by the fact that Bethlen was often deputized by Klebensberg at government meetings and official events he could not attend (Ujváry, 2014).

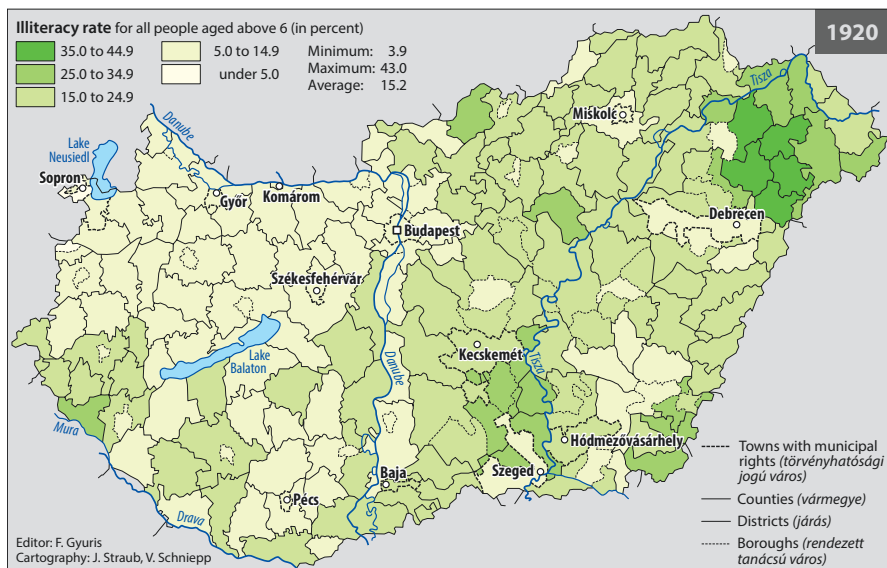


Fig. 6.4 Illiteracy rates of inhabitants over 6 years of age by district in 1920. Adapted from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1929, p. II/138. Copyright 1929 by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Adapted with permission. Cartography by V. Schniepp and J. Straub

Changing Geographies of the School System

The implementation of the plans on mass education had to respond to the strongly geographical nature of the problems to be cured. Contrary to the ethnicity-oriented interpretation of education disparities before the peace treaty, post-Trianon Hungary also had remarkable inequalities of literacy, such as spatial ones, although 89.6% of the population had Hungarian as native language in 1920 (KSH, 1929, p. II/39). Still, illiteracy rates at the district level (the second administrative level below the national one) varied between 3.9% (in the town of Sopron) and a remarkable 43.0% in Ligetälja District in the northeastern county of Szabolcs (see Fig. 6.4). Moreover, several districts had values above 25%.

This problem had its roots in the geography of the settlement network. Compulsory education was introduced in Hungary in 1868 and school attendance had been free of charge since 1908. In rural areas with small villages, however, the number of school buildings as well as their spatial distribution was insufficient to truly provide all children with access. Hence, in the school-year of 1920/1921, 17.2% of school-age children did not attend formal education (Szabó, 2007, p. 41). The specific settlement type of scattered farms (*tanya* in Hungarian) faced especially strong challenges. The history of these farms goes back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Hungary was in the contact zone of the expanding Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire. Ongoing conflicts in the frontier devastated a considerable part of the villages in the Hungarian Great Plains, and



Fig. 6.5 New rural school in Domaszék during the 1920s, named after Klebelsberg. Reprinted from *Hungarian National Museum, Historical Photographic Collection, Ltsz. 82.772*. Copyright 1920s by the Hungarian National Museum. Reprinted with permission

Ottoman troops subjected most towns to lootings. A remarkable exception were the so-called *khas* towns, which were directly subordinated to the sultan even in terms of paying tax and thus protected from raids. This distinction made between towns caused many people to flee from rural areas, now mostly deserted, to *khas* towns. After the end of the Ottoman occupation, agricultural production radically increased, and many urban dwellers erected small buildings in their plots, which were often far from the town, and used them during the months of intensive agricultural work. From the late nineteenth century onwards, however, a rapidly growing number of people, mostly belonging to the poorest strata of agricultural population, moved out to scattered farms, which thus became permanent settlements (Beluszky, 2003). In 1930, roughly 800,000 people, almost one tenth of the country's population, lived on scattered farms (Becsei, 1996, p. 46). The physical infrastructure was poor, however, and in many cases neither the landowners nor the nearby villages provided the children of domestic workers on large agricultural estates with education (Pornói, 1995).

In order to cope with this situation, Klebelsberg's ministry launched a national program of building "people's schools" in 1926. By 1930, the ministry had established 5000 new elementary schoolrooms and flats for teachers. The spatial focus was rural areas with small villages and scattered farms. Thus, two thirds of the new physical infrastructures—including 2315 schoolrooms and 1130 flats for teachers—

were installed in scattered farm regions (Zátonyi, 2006, p. 49) (see Fig. 6.5). It speaks volumes about the scale of the project that between 1890 and 1913, the last two dozen peaceful years before WWI, the number of newly opened elementary schools in the entire country was only 302 (Romsics, 2010).

Since Klebelsberg considered efforts to promote cultural advantage a national project, the government expected all actors concerned to contribute to the costs. Therefore, the education system was financially based on funding from an array of contributors. The expenses of the people's schools program were mostly covered by the state, but some other actors were also expected to take part. In the academic year of 1937/1938, out of the 7376 elementary schools in Hungary, 18.7% was maintained by the state, 12.0% by localities, 2.6% by associations and private supporters, and 66.7% by various churches (41.4% by the Roman Catholic Church, 15.6% by the Calvinist Church, 5.7% by the Lutheran Church, and 4.0% by other churches including the Jewish community) (Szabó, 2007, p. 45).

In fact, both decentralized financial schemes and limits on the resource side maintained certain inequalities in the system. Parochial schools were strongly independent from the state as well as higher administrative levels of the inner hierarchy of the church. They were managed by the parishes, whereas the share of state transfers in their income was usually less than 45%. Differences were even larger for secular schools, where localities covered 81.8% of all expenditures, and state transfers constituted only 18.2% (based on data from Nagy, 2005, p. 120). Hence, more affluent parishes and localities could achieve a considerably higher standard of education. Besides, in 1936/1937 only 9.1% of the elementary schools were fully divided, that is, exclusively running single-grade classes, with one teacher for every class. Almost half (45.2%) were not divided at all, meaning that they had multi-grade classes only, where a single teacher was in charge of all six classes of compulsory elementary education, and these six classes were educated in one room (Zátonyi, 2006). This was a moderate improvement compared to corresponding values in 1920/1921—6.6% and 50.1%, respectively—(Pornói, 1995, p. 317). However, as the institutions with divided classes were larger, only 19% of the pupils learnt in undivided schools in 1924/1925, and 18% in 1930/1931 (Romsics, 2010, p. 177).³

Another characteristic outcome was that school development programs seemed to sustain a dual-track system in the sense of social mobility. Secondary and higher education remained—and was intended to remain—dominated by children from the middle and higher classes. Elementary education also hid considerable unevenness in the standard of education. The number of teaching hours per week according to the official curricula increased in divided schools from 21 in the first class to 30 in the fifth and sixth classes. For undivided schools, the corresponding values were between 7.5 and 10. The curricula's content also differed, for undivided schools

³Although in more recent literature several authors refer to the potential advantages of undivided schools, such as heterogeneity or that older pupils can contribute to teaching younger ones (e.g., Freytag, Jahnke, & Kramer, 2015; Kramer, 1993; Meusbürger, 1998), in the Hungarian context of the 1920s and 1930s undivided schools were commonly regarded as a lower-standard alternative to divided schools.

mainly focused on mediating knowledge the pupils could utilize in their everyday life while helping their family, instead of preparing them for higher stages of education (Zátonyi, 2006). This was in general more in line with nineteenth century Western European views that education should serve social stability instead of social mobility (Meusburger, 1998, pp. 275–276). Such notions were also in concert with the political concept of the Bethlen government and the entire interwar period, a main feature of which was low social mobility compared to Western European countries (Romsics, 2010).

Yet, as Ujváry (2014) underlines, Klebelsberg indeed made remarkable efforts to decrease disparities in education and to make possible in the long run what he called “cultural” and “political democracy.” He considered the entire authoritarian political framework of the day only temporarily acceptable, although the same was not true for several other leading politicians, including some of Klebelsberg’s fellow ministers. He also urged the introduction of 8-year elementary schools instead of 6-year ones, although the related law was issued only in 1940, and a nationwide shift to the new system did not take place before the post-World War II period (Romsics, 2010). Moreover, the thousands of new elementary schools meant an actual and radical improvement in access to formal education in scattered farm districts. Social consequences were also very positive and in line with intended goals: The national illiteracy rate decreased from 15.2% in 1920 to 7.6% in 1941, a value almost on a par with what was typical in Western European countries (Ujváry, 2009, p. 393). Klebelsberg also put emphasis on educating those generations already above school age, for example by establishing more than 1500 “people’s libraries” and 1580 “people’s houses” or “houses of culture,” which provided cultural and popular science events for rural dwellers (Romsics, 2010). Given that secondary and higher education as well as scientific research also gained massive support in the meantime, remarkable investments in elementary education, and mostly in rural regions, were running parallel with developments at higher levels of education in large urban centers.

Klebelsberg’s projects and their outcomes gained recognition from influential foreign actors in the politics of education and culture, too (Ujváry, 2009). One of these actors was Carl Heinrich Becker, Prussia’s Minister for Culture (1921 and 1925–1930) and a main reformer of education in the Weimar Republic (Ujváry, 2006). Friedrich Schmidt-Ott, a predecessor of Becker at the ministry and President of the 1920-founded Emergency Association of German Science (*Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft*), who was fired from his position by the Nazis in 1934 (Hentschel & Hentschel, 1996), also praised Klebelsberg and his efforts in his memoirs (Schmidt-Ott, 1952).⁴

⁴In the 1920s, both Becker and Schmidt-Ott paid visits to Hungary (Ujváry, 2009).

Fig. 6.6 Bálint Hóman, Minister of Religion and Education from 1932 to 1938 and 1939 to 1942. Reprinted from *Hungarian National Museum, Historical Photographic Collection, Ltsz. 1563/1956 fk.* Copyright 1930s by the Hungarian National Museum. Reprinted with permission



Changing Circumstances from the Early 1930s: People's Schools Versus "Overproduction of the Intelligentsia"

In the years of the Great Depression, the Bethlen government resigned in 1931. This put an end to Klebelsberg's term as well, who died one year later. Yet, personal stability at the top of education and cultural politics remained characteristic for the coming years. After Klebelsberg's 7-year term, his close colleague and the already renowned historian Bálint Hóman, whom Klebelsberg himself had desired as his successor, was the minister from 1932 to 1938 as well as 1939 to 1942 (see Fig. 6.6). In some ways, Hóman followed his predecessor's policies. He adopted the notion of cultural advantage, secured the budget of the ministry,⁵ and launched a new people's schools construction program in 1934 with a focus on rural areas, which resulted in more than 1800 new school units and the renovation of several others by 1940 (Ujváry, 2009).

Another similarity was the sort of criticism Klebelsberg and Hóman permanently faced. Many contemporaries, including politicians of the Ministry of Finance, considered their projects a waste of money. Protests by local actors, who were now expected to contribute to the costs of education programs, also took place, for example from the side of landlords who did not want to spend money on scattered farm schools. Moreover, Dezső Szabó, an influential populist writer of the interwar period, criticized the "German consanguinity" of both Klebelsberg and Hóman.

⁵The Ministry of Religion and Education's share of the government budget kept increasing, from around 10% to 13% in 1940, although this still meant some decrease in nominal terms, because the total budget declined after the Depression (Ujváry, 2009, p. 400).

The “ministry of Hungarian culture,” he argued, had become a “German ministry” (Szabó, 1937, p. 3).⁶

However, the two minister’s concepts also differed in some important ways. Hóman considered Klebelsberg’s cultural program “oversized,” especially with regard to higher education, which he believed to fuel “the overproduction of the intelligentsia” (Hóman, 1938, p. 540). In contrast, Hóman’s initiatives clearly aimed to increase social mobility and enable “talents from below” to catch up with and gain access to middle-class occupations, and he launched various programs to financially support the secondary or even tertiary education of outstanding pupils from poor families (Ujváry, 2009). As a result, *people’s education*—including all primary schools and primary-level education programs for adults—gained an increasing share of the ministry’s budget, rising from the typical 32% to 35% of the 1920s to around 40%, and later to roughly 50% (Hóman, 1942, pp. 180–181). As Hóman put it in a speech in 1938, “a school teacher is more important than a university lecturer, because national culture depends” on the former (Hóman quoted in Joó, 2006, p. 15).

These changes were inseparable from Hungary’s evolving political atmosphere, which again was strongly influenced by shifting power relations in international politics. After the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933, the Hungarian political leadership, like considerable parts of Hungarian society, increasingly regarded Germany as the country which might provide the most support to Hungary’s revisionary attempts. This led to increasing cooperation with Germany compared to the 1920s and the government of Bethlen, who was a committed supporter of British orientation. Modernist methods gained more legitimacy as well. Hóman’s initiatives were accompanied by a tendentious centralization of education, whose implementers were attempting to reduce unevenness (including geographical disparities) in the school system on the one hand, while reducing the impact of local communities on their schools and increasingly subordinating them to state-level decision-making on the other (Nagy, 2011).

Right-wing radicalism and antisemitism were also gradually growing, which resulted in firm attempts to reduce the share of Jewish people in higher education and occupations requiring a university degree (Ungváry, 2016). Therefore, as Nagy (2004) also emphasizes, the concept of the “overproduction of the intelligentsia” was strongly intertwined with anti-Semitic attempts, and the notion of “talents from below” (p. 253) was not independent from the willingness to achieve ethno-political changes in culture and the economy. In Hungary, a *numerus clausus* law was issued as early as 1920 with the aim of preventing ethnic groups defined as non-Hungarian from being overrepresented in higher education compared to their total population share. In 1928, pressure from the League of Nations forced the Bethlen government to change this law. The ethnic quota was eliminated and replaced by an occupation quota, which partly improved the actual opportunities of Jewish students and constituted a symbolically important move against far-right political attempts. However, Bethlen consciously tried to reverse this effect, while partially substituting open antisemitism with a latent form in social politics (Paksa, 2014). During

⁶Klebelsberg’s family was partly of Tyrolian descent and Hóman had some German ancestors. In fact, both of them were born in Hungary to families with strong Hungarian identities, and with several ancestors from the Hungarian nobility (Ujváry, 2009).

Hóman's term in the 1930s, such radical voices were much stronger, however, and Hóman himself was openly antisemitic. Moreover, although he personally did not feel much sympathy for the German orientation, he was convinced that Hungary could only choose between Germany and the Soviet Union. He therefore supported all three anti-Jewish laws in 1938, 1939, and 1941, and did not resign from his parliament mandate either after the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 or the coup of the extreme-right Arrow Cross Party in October 1944 (Ujváry, 2009).

After the Communist Turn: Stalinist Modernization and the Village as “Feudal Vestige”

Attempts to Make a Clean Slate of the Past

World War II, which Hungary entered in 1941, left the country in ruins. Until 1945, roughly 900,000 citizens were killed and approximately two fifths of the national economic wealth was destroyed (Romsics, 2010). The country became part of the Soviet occupation zone, although in the first years a multiparty regime was allowed to function, until a Stalinist dictatorship was established in 1948. Education also suffered severe losses, including school buildings, teachers, and equipment. Multiparty governments therefore had to focus on restoration and did not have the resources for massive development. Yet they still carried out many institutional reforms that had been planned as early as the interwar period. For example, although Klebelsberg had already propagated the introduction of the 8-year primary school system, its actual implementation proceeded very slowly. After 1945, however, the reform sped up and was completed the end of the decade (Zátonyi, 2006). The number of new teachers also grew rapidly, although at the cost of shorter teacher training programs and the resulting lower standards (Romsics, 2010). In these years, in politics in general and in education policies in particular, most steps were aimed at the democratization of education and increasing social mobility, which most parties tried to achieve by copying Western examples.

After the Stalinist turn, however, the underlying ideology, the notion of planning and education, and the role of rural schools underwent radical changes. The Communist regime was, on the one hand, interested in providing equal access to education at the same standard. This was firstly because party leaders considered some basic education a necessary prerequisite for building communism. Just like in the Soviet Union, where the top leadership launched a program for the “liquidation of illiteracy” as early as 1919 (Downing, 1988), Hungarian communists were aware that the modern large-scale industry they envisaged could only function on the basis of a sufficiently educated workforce. What they actually judged erroneously was, as Meusburger (1998, pp. 93–96) underscores, that increasing division of labor did not reduce the need for highly qualified experts in efficiently organizing labor. Hence, providing primary education to all and some secondary education to many could

only complement but not substitute top-notch expertise. Second, the Communist leaders realized the crucial importance of school education in controlling society and that schoolroom spaces were an optimal arena to create the new “socialist type of human” (Sáska, 2005, p. 85). Third, the Communist regime drew great propaganda value from providing equality of chances in education (Kovács, 2003), as it could advertise the “just” character and moral superiority over capitalism that it claimed.

The new political and economic system, however, also had some inherent features and fundamental ideological as well as practical concepts that conflicted with the aforementioned views. Communism presented itself as “more advanced” than capitalism for cancelling the unnecessary waste of resources resulting from the competition of private actors and ensuring a higher level of cost efficiency. Moreover, given the considerable economic handicap of the Eastern Bloc compared to the United States and its allies, the system fundamentally focused on investing as many resources as possible in economic growth and modernization. The outcome was that Communist regimes tended to notoriously underfinance sectors and occupations considered to be “nonproductive” in the narrow material sense, such as those based on nonmanual work (Gyuris, 2014a). Besides, all prominent Stalinist politicians regarded centralization, or “democratic centralism” in the Leninist vocabulary, as an essential prerequisite for efficient control, orderliness, and economies of scale. They believed that a successful implementation of the commands from above, the “vanguard party,” was only possible if these were not distorted by any potentially ill-informed autonomous actors at the lower levels.

The outcome of these controversies was a virtually profound nationalization of the school system in 1948 (Kelemen, 2003), including the dispossession of physical structures, the collectivization of the production and retail of textbooks and equipment, and an extreme centralization and Stalinization of the curricula (Horváth & Probáld, 2003; Kardos, 2003). Only ten parochial secondary grammar schools were maintained from the churches’ more than 4000 primary and roughly 100 secondary schools, which had to testify that the new regime “did not persecute religion” (Drahos, 1992, p. 49). Moreover, the entire framework of public administration underwent massive centralization. In 1950, the so-called *council system* was introduced in Hungary with 19 county-, 140 district- and roughly 3000 local-level councils in towns and villages, which actually had no local autonomy. Their exclusive task was to execute party-state decrees (Beluszky, 2003). In the words of János Beér, a key expert of public administration in the Stalinist period, “[local] councils are not the organs of local authorities, but local organs of the authority” (Beér, 1951, p. 595).

Small rural villages soon proved incompatible with the regime’s notion of centralization and large-scale industrialization. They were seen as a feudal vestige, remnants of a feudal economic and social order that could not adapt to the planned modern future. In the words of János Kolta, who became a regional planner after the political turn in Baranya County, an area with an especially big number of small villages:

Small settlements with an almost exclusively agricultural population are unable to keep pace with the rapid development that began in the political and social life of our country after the liberation [from the German occupation]; they make it harder to locate industrial facilities at suitable sites or create agricultural production units and in addition, they almost entirely prevent any form of equitable social, cultural, and administrative network from being established and sustained. (Kolta, 1979, p. 234)

Furthermore, the regime presented scattered farms as the locus of wealthy peasants—or kulaks, after the Soviet terminology—and thus justified a radical restructuring of these settlements as a decisive step against “reactionaries” and “counterrevolutionaries” (Hajdú, 1990/1991). This interpretation was in fact erroneous, given that wealthy peasants mainly lived in larger villages and rural towns, and scattered farm dwellers mostly belonged to the most impoverished stratum of rural society. The population of scattered farms also increased after the Soviet occupation, since the radical, communist land reform of 1945 created a vast number of extremely small plots, and motivated even more people to move to scattered farms, close to their newly gained land. In consequence, the number of inhabitants in such settlements increased to 900,000 in a country of 9 million (Beluszky, 2003).

The regime’s firmly negative attitude towards small rural settlements resulted in severe regulations. The leadership soon considered settlements with less than 3000 inhabitants, constituting roughly one half of the Hungarian settlement network, as “uneconomical” to maintain (Beluszky, 2003). Hence, a 1949 government decree banned the construction of permanent flats or public buildings, including schools, on scattered farms, whereas a 1951 official plan for the urban network urged for a total ban on investment in these settlements (Hajdú, 1993). New education laws and decrees adhered to policy and did not provide any updated curriculum for scattered farm schools (Kömlössy, 1997).

The Communist regime tried to propagate these changes as necessary concomitants of modernization and thus referred to them with a strange mixture of technicized and biologized terms. Planners interpreted the envisaged mass demolition as a “process of remediation,” “reconstruction of the settlement network,” “dissolution of settlement density,” and an “honorable, nice task for planners” in order to create an urban network that is “healthier and more capable of life” (Kolta, 1979). For ideological reasons, the Communist leadership, which perpetually claimed that its regime was the most “democratic” ever, also stressed the “voluntary” nature of the process. As Kolta said: “We shall guarantee in the entire process that it will be ... profoundly voluntary, administrative or political measures must not be taken” (p. 235). Yet, the subtext of this sentence’s conclusion reveals the true link between plans and the actual punitive reality of strict decrees: “... however, the concentration of the population of small villages in larger ones should be accelerated by influencing people in a planned way” (p. 235).

Continuities Between Interwar and Postwar Modernism

Although the Stalinist period brought about radical changes in the political, social, and economic domains, the dilemma about scattered farms it faced was not new in Hungarian academic thinking (Györi, 2009). Before Hungary joined World War II, a scientific debate took place between Ferenc Erdei, a sociologist and founder of the National Peasants' Party, part of the leftist opposition of the interwar government, and the urban geographer Tibor Mendöl, head of his department at the University of Budapest after 1940. On the basis of his research, Erdei argued that scattered farms and their central towns formed an optimal structure with units that complemented each other well. He also argued that this model of rural development should be promoted by planning in other parts of the country as well (Erdei, 1939). Mendöl, however, also highlighted the negative aspects, emphasizing that "it is ... easier to provide simple public infrastructure for a village ... than for a scattered farm fifty to a hundred times smaller" (Mendöl, 1939, p. 231). He therefore suggested that scattered farm centers and bigger villages should be developed instead. However, it is important to emphasize that Mendöl underscored these difficulties to provide a more sophisticated explanation of the issue than Erdei did and to explain why a migration from scattered farms to bigger villages was already taking place in some parts of the country. He considered any forced intervention to be intolerable. If people were not willing to move from scattered farms, he argued, one should not "get them into the habit of doing so" (Mendöl, 1939, p. 231).

It is one of the many controversies of the Communist period that Mendöl, who formulated these views, was as a *bourgeois* geographer permanently blocked after the political turn in his later academic career, whereas Erdei was appointed Minister for Agriculture and head of the so-called Scattered Farm Council in 1949, which the Stalinist regime established in order to find a *scientific solution* to the scattered farm problem. Moreover, Erdei now had to justify extremely antirural plans that were diametrically opposed to his interwar views, which the Communist regime promoted in accordance with expectations from Moscow (Györi, 2009; Györi & Gyuris, 2015).

In fact, despite all the radical breaks after 1948, some of the trends that hallmarked the Stalinist period were not totally new and without precedent in Hungary. Evolving social and economic changes during the mid- and late-1930s and early 1940s, including in the education system, were also motivated by international trends of modernization and centralization, and openly inspired by the increasing belief in state planning that developed in Western, Soviet communist, Fascist, and Nazi contexts as well.⁷ Hence, paradoxically, voluntarist Stalinist attempts at centralization and a more efficient spatial allocation of resources in some sense constituted more of a radical exaggeration of modernist notions that were already in play (although in

⁷For some analysis of emerging state planning in Hungary in the 1930s and the international influences that fostered the process, see Lampland (2011) and Ungváry (2016). Lampland also reports on remarkable continuities of interwar and postwar (communist) state planning.

a remarkably different political framework) than a profound rupture with the recent past.

Finally, the grandiose plans of the Stalinist leadership largely failed to flourish. The Scattered Farm Council had severe difficulties with functioning from the very beginning, especially as its participants increasingly realized the impossibility of a rapid and successful implementation of anti-scattered-farm concepts (Hajdú, 1990/1991). The necessary material, financial, technical, etc. resources for such a program were also lacking, and Stalin's death in 1953 and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 resulted in the Communist leadership revising many radical initiatives. Despite the plans that had been made, scattered farm schools mostly remained and the number of elementary schools in the country did not decline.

Non-Stalinist Communism After 1956 and the “Rationalization” of Rural Schools

After the Soviet troops crushed the 1956 Revolution, the Communist regime was re-established. The new party leader, János Kádár, enjoyed the support of the Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and took advantage of the somewhat increased flexibility in national political and economic decision-making within the Communist Bloc. He distanced the system from orthodox communist ideologies, and in the early 1960s introduced what later became known as “soft dictatorship” or “Goulash communism.” Extremely radical political, economic, and social decisions of the Stalinist era as well as the very low material standard of living were seen as major reasons for the revolution. Therefore, official goals and the means of their implementation changed to some extent, and Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy was increasingly replaced by a technocratic attitude (Romsics, 2010). This had a visible impact on education and schools. In 1961, the government issued a new education law that (for the first time since the communist turn) gave new curricula to scattered farm schools, implicitly justifying their existence (Kömlössi, 1997).

Besides, the leadership wanted to promote “proportional development” by allocating more resources to formerly neglected areas. As early as 1958 an order of the Party stimulated industrial investments in the countryside, and official plans aimed to slow down the extreme concentration of the economy in Budapest (Hajdú, 1992). In several industrial sectors a ban was issued on increasing employment in production units in the capital city (Kondor, 2013).⁸ The Kádár regime carried out

⁸Actual outcomes were controversial. Rural areas indeed gained numerous industrial workplaces, and Budapest's share of the national total decreased from 44.6% in 1960 to 25.7% in 1980 (Bartke, 2003, pp. 124–129). Yet, this was just accelerating the upscaling of economic production in the capital city, which kept its extreme primacy in key economic and political branches (Meusburger, 1997) as well as corporate decision-making (Barta, 2002), and after further economic liberalization in the 1980s, became the main center of the so-called “second economy.” As Nemes Nagy and Ruttkay (1989) revealed, 30.5% of the economic labor cooperatives (*gazdasági munkaközösségek* (GMKs)), which were semiprivate forerunners of small private enterprises, were in Budapest.

some political decentralization as well. In 1970, it introduced a new council law that to some extent limited the nearly absolute dominance of national-level institutions and provided some competencies and resources to county-level councils as well. State funding for housing, for example, was now allotted to the counties, which could decide on their own how to distribute it among their localities (Illés, 2003).

These developments seemed to have a rather positive impact on rural areas. Yet, the system's inherent aim to maximize growth and reduce costs did not change, and the monolithic structure of the Party remained unchallenged. Hence, arguments for the "liquidation of inherited disproportionalities of the settlement network," as a 1963 official concept study of the Ministry of Construction put it, were still in play (Hajdú, 1992, p. 32). The 1971 National Concept of Settlement Network Development (*Országos Településhálózat-fejlesztési Koncepció* (OTK)), which created a spatially-oriented development plan for the country and served as the most influential such document for over 10 years, also sketched up a hierarchical structure of the urban network.

Although this gave impetus to regional centers in order to counterbalance Budapest, it also tended to provide decreasing resources to small settlements with fewer (or no) central functions. In light of agricultural collectivization, which had its decisive phase between 1958 and 1961 and caused many people to leave the countryside, and also because of the increasing need for additional labor force in cities and towns due to accelerated industrialization, the leadership calculated that the maintenance of small settlements would be inefficient in the long run. Since the regime believed that many rural schools would soon be unnecessary, it judged that the best chance for improve the standard of education lay in diverting pupils from ill-equipped institutions in small villages and scattered farms to well equipped town schools (Kömlössy, 1997). It propagated these notions of centralization in a technocratic language as "rationalization," to present the possible outcomes as positive and serving the interests of the entire country.⁹

Relocating resources from small rural settlements to larger centers was not only in the interest of the national leadership. The shortage economy also strongly motivated county-level leaders (Kornai, 1992), who now had some power over resource allocation in their county, to withdraw resources from their own periphery to stimulate faster growth in the main centers of the county, especially in the county capital. As a result, public services and infrastructure rapidly declined in many small villages during the 1970s (see Fig. 6.7) (Gyuris, 2014a). The total number of primary schools nationwide also dropped from above 6000 to nearly 4200 in a period of only 10 years (see Fig. 6.8).

Furthermore, as Kondor (2013) shows, the lobby force of large industrial enterprises and branch ministries was strong enough to slow down the planned relocation of industrial activities from Budapest to the countryside.

⁹ Flyvbjerg (1998) and Basu (2004a, 2004b) explain in great detail the logic of similar discursive strategies in Western contexts.

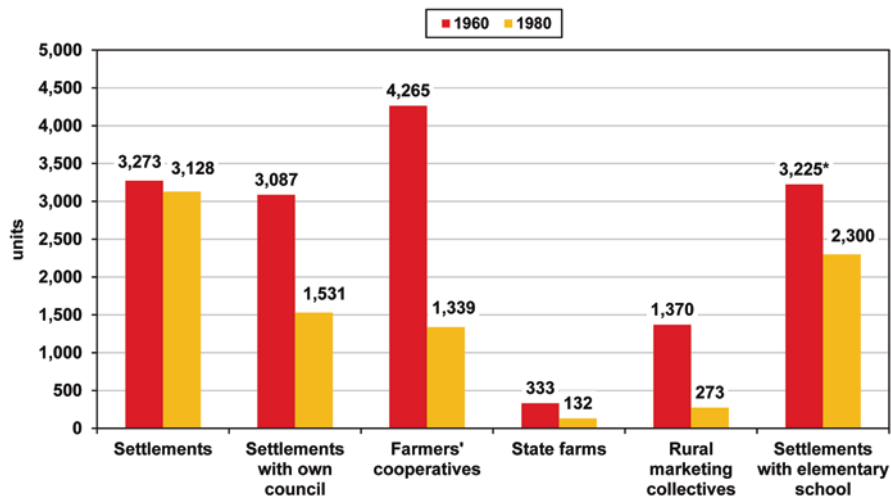


Fig. 6.7 Infrastructural changes in Hungarian settlement network due to “rationalizations” between 1960 and 1980. Adapted from Gyuris, 2014a, p. 308. Data from Nemes Nagy, J. (1987). *Regionális folyamatok a nyolcvanas évek első felében* [Regional processes in the first part of the 1980s]. Budapest: Országos Tervhivatal Tervgazdasági Intézet (p. 71). Reprinted with permission

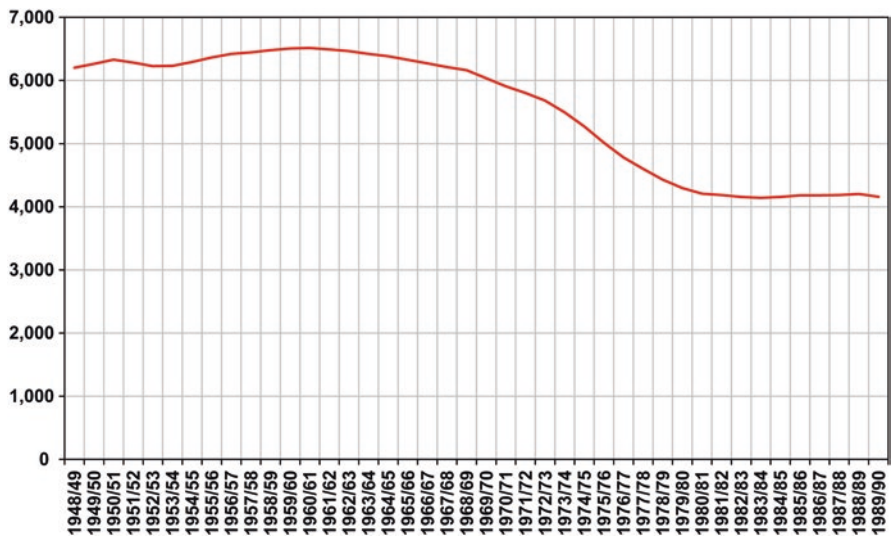


Fig. 6.8 Number of primary schools in Communist Hungary (1948/1949–1989/1990). Adapted from Gyuris, 2014b, p. 546. Data from Hungarian Central Statistical Office. (1996). *Magyarország népessége és gazdasága: Múlt és jelen* [The population and economy of Hungary: Past and present]. Budapest: KSH (pp. 229–230). Copyright by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Used under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported. Retrieved from <https://www.thecommonsjournal.org/articles/10.18352/jc.458/>. Reprinted with permission

Massive attempts to centralize infrastructure were in fact specific features of neither Hungarian communism nor the Communist Bloc (see chapter by Kučerová in this volume). As Bondi (1987), Meusburger and Kramer (1991), and Basu (2004a, 2004b) reveal, such considerations were rather typical in capitalist countries as well, which suggests that they were fundamentally rooted in modernism in general and not communism in peculiar. Yet the different political frameworks on both sides of the Iron Curtain resulted in remarkable variations in implementation. Whereas in Western countries mass protests and other organized forms of resistance often succeeded in at least slowing down centralization, in Communist regimes modernist plans could be carried out without considerable opposition. Schools were collective property, and local party leaders were appointed by their superiors, whom they loyally served in most cases instead of articulating the interests of local community. As Forray (1990, 1995) reveals, teachers themselves, with very few exceptions, also offered no resistance. Although they usually had some opportunity to formulate professional arguments in favor of sustaining small schools, they generally accepted the final decision of their superiors because they did not want to wreck their (or their family members') careers in a system where virtually all workplaces were provided or strongly controlled by the state.¹⁰

The outcome was severe. Virtually all scattered farm schools were closed in the 1970s (Komlóssy, 1997), and many villages were left without schools as well. This accelerated the already massive outflow of population from these settlements, which was fueled not only by the pull factor of rapid industrialization and improving services in cities, but also by the firm push factor of agricultural collectivization and worsening access to even some basic infrastructure in small villages. Scattered farms thus lost 43.2% of their inhabitants during the 1970s (Becsei, 1996, p. 48), and villages with fewer than 500 inhabitants in 1970 suffered a loss of 17.8% (based on data from Beluszky, 2003, p. 301). For villages with the same size, those which lost their schools had a significantly stronger decline than those where this institution survived (Nemes Nagy, 1982).

The conflicting interests and goals of the Communist regime therefore ended up subordinating the school system in general, and the management of small rural schools in particular, to the modernist goals of the system. Since these were aimed at promoting industrialization and urbanization, the Stalinist period brought about extremely radical plans for demolishing both small settlements and their schools, although these concepts remained largely unrealized due to a lack of resources. In the decades of post-Stalinist technocratic communism, the national party leadership's official attitude towards small settlements and small rural schools turned more tolerant. Yet the growth-oriented framework of the regime and the drive of more powerful urban centers for additional resource investment in a shortage economy, even at the cost of siphoning these resources from their own rural hinterland, resulted in an unprecedented decline of small rural schools during the 1960s and 1970s. This had a historically enduring impact on the school system, with small

¹⁰For a more detailed explanation of the lack of resistance, see Gyuris (2014b).

rural schools generally remaining mired in their massively subordinate position from the 1970s until today.

Conclusion

The Hungarian education system in general, and rural schools in particular, had a turbulent history in both the interwar and communist periods. Their development trajectory reflected all significant shifts in the overall political, social, and economic framework of the country, and mirrored the manifold changes in dominant ideologies and the notion of spatial planning. After Hungary suffered immense territorial losses through the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, education became an even stronger cornerstone of nation-building than before. In a country that had surrendered two thirds of its territory and a vast amount of resources, schools were assigned a decisive role in defending the homeland. They now had to educate an internationally competitive elite and a mass of well-trained labor force in order to make Hungary economically competitive with other nations and to create millions of patriotic people supporting the revisionary goals of the political elite. Rural schools constituted a crucial means of this strategy, as the lack of sufficient education (including the problem of illiteracy) was the most pervasive in small rural settlements. Influenced by these considerations, the national political leadership backed large-scale school development projects, which thus enjoyed massive political and financial support.

Beyond these general features that were characteristic for the entire interwar period, however, the school system's development in some sense took a different path around the mid-1930s. In accordance with shifting international power relations after the Great Depression (including the Nazi takeover in Germany) and internal political changes in Hungary, which were not independent from the former process, the education system became increasingly centralized and dependent on state funding. It was increasingly focused on creating additional labor for the economy instead of increasing the intelligentsia, and more devoted to promoting social restructuring, including a conscious decrease of the share of Jews in specific occupations, instead of sustaining social stability.

The first few years after World War II witnessed multiparty governments trying to restore the education system after the damage of the war and carrying out several changes in institutional settings as well as regulatory frameworks, including ones that already been planned by interwar governments. The establishment of the communist dictatorship in 1948, however, opened the floor for extreme centralization in every sphere of life. Education became a means of creating "the new, socialist type of human" who is indoctrinated with Stalinist views and trained to provide manpower for large-scale industries. For its drive for maximizing material production and growth, the communist regime gave first priority to industrialization and urbanization. In contrast to egalitarian propaganda, this soon resulted in

grandiose plans to demolish small settlements and their schools. Despite all these ruptures after 1948, however, radical attempts at centralization in the Stalinist period were rather an extreme exaggeration of modernist notions that had already been present in Hungarian politics and public administration since the 1930s than a complete break with the recent past.

Furthermore, just like the interwar period, the decades of communism were not homogeneous in Hungary in terms of education management. After the post-Stalinist shift and in accordance with decreasing orthodoxy in the entire Soviet Bloc, the emerging technocratic communist regime from the late 1950s onwards tried to counterbalance regional polarization and one-sided development of heavy industries. It now provided rural districts, small settlements, and their schools with more flexibility. The extreme level of centralization also decreased. Still, given the regime's inherent aim to maximize growth and the consequent pressure on every actor to find additional resources for investment in a shortage economy, villages now became massively exploited by regional urban centers. This resulted in a historically unprecedented decline of small schools in Hungary during the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, although the technocratic communist regime made several changes in its economic and social policy compared to its Stalinist predecessor, it finally merely accelerated those processes that were rooted in the communist framework, and which had negative impacts on small settlements and schools that have lasted until today.

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Chapter 7

Changing Structures and the Role of Education in the Development of the Educational System in Czechia



Silvie Ríta Kučerová, Kateřina Trnková, and Petr Meyer

Since the mid-twentieth century, economically developed countries have witnessed crucial changes in their elementary school systems. Some of these changes were transformed conceptions of educational politics and formulations of educational reforms (e.g., Dvořák, Starý, & Urbánek, 2015a; Tyack, & Cuban, 1995); others were altered school spatial patterns. After the nineteenth-century wave of school construction, the late twentieth century brought a reduction in the number of schools and the concentration of educational functions in larger centers further up the urban hierarchy (Ribchester & Edwards, 1999). Although this general concentration process was inevitable (Hampl, 2000), as it was rooted in organizational principles as well as demographic trends, it gave rise to a discussion of school's role in society and for local communities (Kvalsund, 2009). The school closures that followed were connected with overall development and quality of life in rural and remote areas (Dostál & Markusse, 1989).

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Critical voices first arose in the 1970s, when the largest transformation of the elementary school pattern began—especially in democratic European countries, but also other developed countries across the world—leading to emancipation of small rural schools (e.g., Bell & Sigsworth, 1987; Kramer, 1993; Lyson, 2002; Solstad, 1997; Witten, McCreanor, Kearns, & Ramasubramanian, 2001) and their later appreciation as an important elements of educational system with their specific pedagogical and social culture (e.g., Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009; Smit, Hyry-Beihammer, & Raggl, 2015). Nevertheless, the reforms continued in former countries of the Eastern bloc, changing the elementary school network with consequences that have lasted to the present day (Bajerski, 2015; Kovács, 2012; Kučerová & Kučera, 2012).

In this chapter, we present the changes undergone by Czechia's system of elementary education. In recent decades, the country of Czechia has transformed itself from a centrally planned economy controlled by the Communist regime towards a democratic society and free market economy. This chapter will explore ways in which, in the course of the twentieth century to the present day, the spatial organization of elementary education in Czechia has been transformed along four dimensions: The first dimension refers to changes in the objective external conditions of education (mainly the evolution of settlement structures, the evolution of the number of persons in need of education, and subsequently the transformation of the management of education across a territory). The second concerns the development of political doctrine and the economic situation and direct connections with the development of both educational and regional policies. The third dimension entails those changes of the concept, forms, and content of education itself that are dealt with pedagogical-psychological theories. The fourth dimension involves how the perception of education's role, recognized competencies, and social relevance has evolved.

An analysis of the spatial distribution of schools as well as a discussion of the consequences of regional and educational policies in Czechia help us answer the following questions: Are changes in the spatial organization of education related to regional education policy as well as to pedagogical concepts? Are territorial and educational organization connected in any way? How is elementary education characteristically provided and utilized in a directive and unfree social system in comparison to a system with a decentralized administration that provides actors with greater autonomy?

Factors Affecting Spatial Distribution and the Organization of Elementary Education

We are restricting our attention to elementary education, and the conditions of its provision and realization can be specified as follows on the basis of the four aforementioned dimensions.

From the general perspective of its external objective conditions (the first dimension), education's spatial organization is primarily affected by population and settlement characteristics. For one, there exists the spatial distribution of the population

itself at the macroregional level—which is particularly contingent on altitude, climatic conditions, and historical path dependencies (Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009; Green & Letts, 2007)—as well as at the meso- and microregional levels—which are especially influenced by orography (e.g., Kučerová, Bláha, & Kučera, 2015a). Another important factor is constituted by the structural characteristics of a population inhabiting a particular territory (demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic) (Barakat, 2015), settlement structure (Bajerski, 2015), and transport characteristics, that is, the existence and functioning of road networks and means of transport (Kučerová, Mattern, Štych, & Kučera, 2011). The relationships between an educational system and the above-mentioned factors can be quantified and spatially visualized quite easily, such as by using geographic information systems and maps (Kučerová et al., 2015a; Taylor, 2007; for older publications see e.g., Marsden, 1977).

Capturing those social system factors and mechanisms that fall under the second and third dimensions of conditions of education is rather more complicated. In compliance with the mechanisms emphasized by Giddens's (1984) structuration theory or with the new institutionalist paradigm (Berg, 2007), we can state that education's spatial organization within the second dimension mainly depends on three groups of factors:

The first group encompasses the manner in which the education system is managed, its funding mechanisms, and its regulation methods. The basic challenge in managing that system is to determine the degree of centralization versus decentralization (see Kvalsund, 2009; see also Chap. 6 by Gyuris in this volume). That is, it consists of determining the degree of concentration of state authorities managing and controlling powers, as well as the related degree of financial autonomy. Maroy and van Zanten (2009) or Altrichter, Heinrich, and Soukup-Altrichter (2014) mention a wide range of approaches to regulation and intervention in education. These approaches comprise curriculum control, control of the work of school staff, and competition on the educational quasimarket (see below).

The mechanisms of governance are regulated by legislative frameworks that enable the enforcement of a definite form of organizational structure and equipment of particular schools (e.g., minimum school size) (Meusburger, 1998, 2015; Trnková, 2009). School structures and *the norm of the shape* of elementary schools constitute the second group of factors. A school's structure depends on its operator (public, private, ecclesiastical, etc.) or on its focus (e.g., schools for students with special needs or, by contrast, selective schools), which conditions their conduct on the educational market as well as their catchment area (Jennings, 2010). The term *norm of the shape* of an elementary school refers to the dilemma of educational policy: whether to maintain more larger, fully organized schools (regularly situated in cities) or to promote system diversity, that is, to also support small schools (namely the rural ones) (Ribchester & Edwards, 1999). A large urban school has often been used as the "norm of what schools can be and should be like" (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987, p. 55), and preferred to rural institutions. In urban society, these problems have been defined more strongly in urban terms and in line with urban perception (cf. Cloke & Goodwin, 1992). Accordingly, many discussions about small schools in rural and remote areas began in the late 1980s and continue to the present day (e.g., Kramer, 1993; Smit et al., 2015; Solstad, 1997).

Thirdly, the spatial distribution of schools is influenced by factors on the side of learners, or more precisely by school enrollment terms. Constructors of a school catchment system are thus faced with this last organizational challenge: Who is allowed to make decisions about school enrollment? The students themselves, or rather their parents, schools, or public administrators (Jennings, 2010)? On one side, there is the concept of school catchment districts under which schoolchildren living in a school's hinterland are enrolled on the basis of their place of residence (Bajerski, 2015). On the other side, there is the system of parental school choice that has largely evolved under the influence of liberal economic approaches to education. In conditions close to a free market (Maroy & van Zanten, 2009), parents choose which school their child will attend according to their own preferences. A number of theoretical concepts explaining school choice mechanisms and strategies subsequently emerged in sociology, psychology, economics, and geography (e.g., Cucchiara & Horvat, 2014; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012; Noreisch, 2007; Straková & Simonová, 2015).

In the third dimension of conditions of education, spatial organization of education is affected by pedagogical-didactic principles of how teaching, classes, and forms of knowledge transmission should be organized (Bertrand, 1998). Different demands on educational organization arise when classes that are homogenized according to age cohorts are preferred than when it is admissible to teach more grades together in a heterogeneous class. Similarly, what matters is whether emphasis is put on frontal instruction, research-oriented teaching, or even on individual instruction and other alternative forms of education.

The fourth dimension, involving the goals of education and related social expectations, seems to be decisive for the second and third dimensions of educational conditions. These factors determine the setting of both educational policy and regional development policy, as well as the strategies of how individuals act in a particular territory. Beyond the main educational function, the school system provides a range of other functions for individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole (Lyson, 2002).

Van de Werfhorst (2014), for instance, defines four tasks of education: (1) The "labor market task" is specified as preparing youth for the labor market and ensures economic development. (2) The "optimization task" consists of efficiency in sorting students into tracks according to their talents and interests. (3) The equal opportunity program's goal is to provide quality basic education for all children, regardless of their ethnic or socioeconomic background. (4) The "socialization task" denotes socializing citizens into active civic engagement. Experts' perceptions on the importance and the rate of accomplishing individual tasks have evolved incessantly over time along with social system changes.

The labor market task was the first to appear crucial (Halsey, Lauder, Brown, & Wells, 1997). Since the nineteenth century, state authorities in developed countries have therefore been systematically constructing a network of institutions ensuring compulsory and uniformly organized school attendance. Liberalism and pragmatic pedagogy grounded in Dewey's (1966) thought subsequently strengthened the optimization task by advocating equal opportunities for everyone so that he or she could attain more benefits through the development of his or her abilities with the aid of educational capital. In contrast, economic nationalism claiming a qualified and

loyal workforce for the national economy (Halsey et al., 1997) amplified the labor market task. In countries that came under Soviet influence after World War II, this idea, together with a unilaterally, ideologically targeted socialization task, governed their educational system until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1990 (Zounek, Šimáně, & Knotová, 2017). Contrarily, a vast majority of democratic countries had been accentuating the equal opportunities task since the 1970s. During that period, diverse societal groups, or territorial communities, became emancipated, and their efforts for equal opportunities and equal access to education flourished. These groups called attention to the injustices of educational concepts and management that favored only certain societal groups, areas, or types of schools (Corbett, 2007). Since the 1980s, emphasis has again been placed on the optimization task: Combined with the application of some market principles to education—such as free parental school choice—this task tends to be rather detrimental to equal opportunity (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). The new institutionalism (Berg, 2007) and the widening enlargement of the European Union at the beginning of the millennium have reinforced (new transnational) socialization and labor market tasks.

Researchers have developed various possible scenarios for education system development to estimate which of the tasks will be determining for the future. A good example is the 2001 OECD report, which presented six so-called “Schooling for Tomorrow Scenarios.” Its authors take into consideration the preservation of the existing status of school as an institution as well as its consolidation involving broadening its functions and forms, and possibly also the extension of market approaches of education providers, or, by contrast, the weakening and decline of educational system in favor of other forms of education.

Just like other components of the social system, educational system is a semi-complex whole (Hampel, 2000) cocreated by many interacting factors. It is almost impossible to capture their full extent. Here, we therefore take Czechia as a case study to merely describe the basic connections of changes concerning spatial organization of elementary education with the transformation of broader social circumstances.

Changes of the Czech Educational System and Policies

Research Organization and Methodology

In the present study on changes in the spatial organization of elementary education provision in Czechia, we conducted a quantitative analysis of how the geographical organization of elementary schools has evolved on the national level from the middle of the twentieth century. We mainly chose such a long time span because a large number of elementary schools were closed during this period (Trnková, Knotová, & Chaloupková, 2010). In the second phase, we have attempted to interpret the key development tendencies of the elementary educational system, taking into account educational and regional developmental policies treated by other authors in secondary sources.

Our quantitative analysis was limited by the availability of relevant statistical data and by the time required to gather such data. Although the analysis covered a very long time period, only a few statistical publications provide data on the number of schools in basic administrative units, such as municipalities. In general, the data were based on the results of the preceding population censuses and provided information about schools in the whole territory of Czechia at four points in time: 1961, 1976, 1990, and 2004. However, information about the presence of a school in a particular municipality often appeared to be incorrect. Therefore, the information provided in the statistical lexicons and databases had to be compared with the data on the number of schools in larger territorial units or corrected with the use of archival sources.

It is here necessary to point out some important specific features of Czechia's education and settlement system that influence all other characteristics and the development of the country's elementary education. Above all, measured by European standards, the settlement pattern is extremely fragmented (Hampl & Müller, 1998). Czechia's territory (78,000 km²) includes approximately 15,000 settlements (towns, villages, hamlets) that are governed by 6250 local self-government units (municipalities) (Kučera, 2007). For that reason, municipalities are usually divided into rural and urban pursuant to the size limit of 3000 inhabitants (see e.g., Hampl & Müller, 1998; Perlín & Šimčíková, 2008). Also for the purpose of our research we selected this population limit on the basis of Act No. 128/2000, Coll., on Municipalities, according to which only a municipality with more than 3000 inhabitants can become a town or a city.¹ However, it must be noted that opinions about how to define rural areas diverge widely, and no universal definition exists (see e.g., Halfacree, 1993; Hruška, 2014). Although only 30% of Czechia's population live in small municipalities with less than 3000 inhabitants, these constitute 90% of all municipalities in the country. The remaining part of the population is concentrated in urban settlements. If rural space is defined in this manner, a little over 2000 elementary schools operate nowadays (60% of the total in Czechia) (Kučerová & Kučera, 2012).

On the basis of the data provided in our statistical sources, we have drawn up a list of almost 5500 settlements in which an elementary school existed during at least one of the four designated time spans. In the next step, we integrated the list into a GIS database of Czech municipalities (the boundaries of the municipalities were defined as of January 1, 2016). Taking into consideration the amount of territorial-administrative changes that occurred during the observed period (consolidation of municipalities and in some cases, especially after 1989, their division into new units—see e.g., Hampl & Müller, 1998), we used the Statistical Lexicon of Municipalities to verify the location of the listed settlements in appropriate municipalities.

¹Legislators introduced this limit in reaction to the excessive self-identification of municipalities during the 1990s to consolidate a definition of an urban municipality, as some municipalities had retained their town status from the ancient times, although their population comprised only several tens or hundreds of inhabitants.

This process of data collection and organization produced a database that has allowed retrospective historical comparison of the number of elementary schools for all the municipalities in Czechia, according to either the rural or urban status of their municipality in four distinct years: 1961, 1976, 1990, and 2004. The database also included information on school type. Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on Education dictates that elementary school education in Czechia is compulsory for a duration of 9 years. It is provided either by large “complete” elementary schools, which contain all nine grade levels, or by smaller “incomplete” schools, wherein fewer grades are taught (normally first to fifth grades, but sometimes even fewer—see Trnková et al., 2010) and whose students must subsequently commute to a larger 9-year school to complete their elementary education. Moreover, the majority of the latter schools are organized as schools with *composite classes*, that is, they contain at least one class where students of two or more grades are taught together.

In order to carry out subsequent cartographical visualization, it was necessary to find a way to distinguish between complete elementary schools and incomplete schools, and to indicate the total number of schools in each municipality on a single map. For the purpose of this chapter, we have divided Czechia’s municipalities into three categories depending on the highest school level situated therein: municipalities with at least one complete elementary school, at least one incomplete school, or with no elementary school. We have therefore given up on enumerating schools in municipalities, as—especially in more distant time spans—more schools would often be located in the entire municipal territory. We have applied other methods of thematic cartography, accentuating absolute numbers to the detriment of qualitative data, for example, in Kučerová and Kučera (2012) or Kučerová et al. (2015a). In this paper, we will use the outcomes to interpret our data.

Heritage of a Dense School Pattern: The 1960s

The origins of the dense elementary school network in Czechia date back to the turn of the twentieth century. In 1869, the compulsory education system was constituted according to the *Reichsvolksschulgesetz* school act in the Habsburg Empire, which Czechia was a part of. Compulsory school began at age six and lasted 8 years for all children. This was the classic period of construction of a network of schools that were distributed as evenly as possible (Váňová, Rýdl, & Valenta, 1992). The Habsburg Empire’s aim was to provide the entire population with uniform elementary schooling for its own needs. Accordingly, most elementary schools, with the exception of ecclesiastical and some private schools, came under state (municipal) authority. Elementary schools, referred to as *common schools*, were internally structured into *starting schools* of six grades, with a relatively even spatial distribution, and *burgher schools*, more frequently found in regional centers. The distance between starting schools ought to have been delimited by a circle with a radius of 4 km or by 1 h walking distance (Váňová et al., 1992). Schoolchildren went to the school that was closest to their home. With

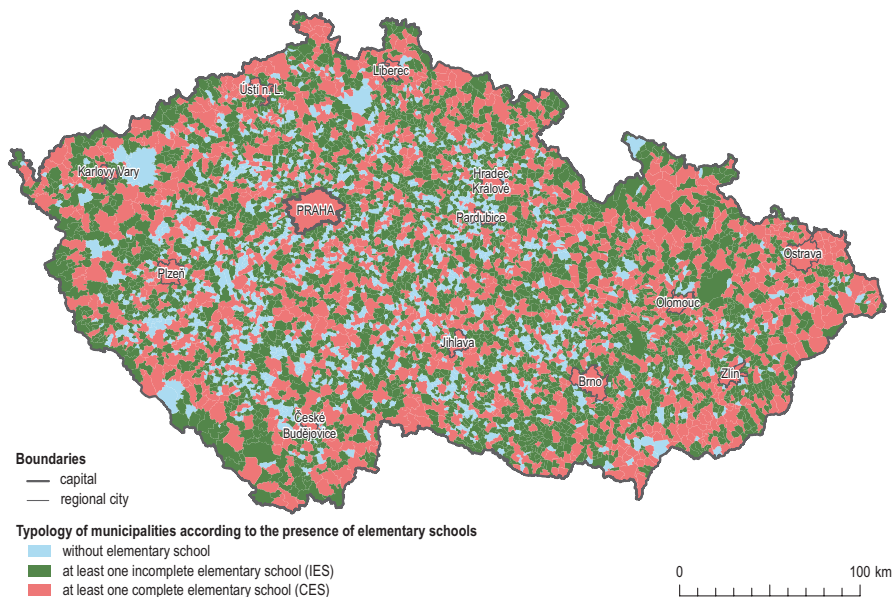


Fig. 7.1 Elementary schools in Czech municipalities in 1961. Source: Petr Meyer. Data from Kučerová, 2012

regard to Czechia’s population development—the reverberating demographic revolution (Srb, 2004)—the number of schools showed an upward and then gradually stagnating tendency until World War II (Šimáně, 2010).

The Communist party seized power in Czechia in 1948, incorporating the country into the so-called Eastern Bloc, which lived under communist rule with a centrally planned economy. In the 1950s, the party nationalized the entire schooling system and placed its management and curricula under central supervision (Jelínková & Smolka, 1989), in compliance with the educational principle of economic nationalism. In 1960, the government radically transformed the school system by adopting the School Act No. 186/1960 Coll., which introduced nine-grade elementary schools (herewith called “schools”) consisting of five grades at the first level and four grades at the second level. Mostly rural municipalities with a small number of children in their school’s catchment area were still allowed to run schools constituted only of by first-level grades (incomplete school) (Trnková et al., 2010). Such small schools, which symbolized “uneven educational conditions for socialistic state citizens,” were gradually abolished from the early 1960s onwards (Kořínek, 1975, p. 216). In 1961, the country had approximately 8000 schools—almost one school per municipality (Kučerová & Kučera, 2012). Although the network of schools was dense and their spatial distribution relatively even, some areas showed a lower density of schools. This was in particular true for upland regions lying along the state border, which suffered from insufficient resettlement after World War II (Kučera & Kučerová, 2012) (see Fig. 7.1).

Settlement and educational policies greatly influenced the development of the school network in rural areas in the 1960s and 1970s. The Communist regime was keen to centralize state administration and remove local public administration by developing the concept of a so-called *system of central settlement units*, whose goal was to manage settlement network development and to unify all citizens' access to public infrastructure. The policymakers' main tool was the forced concentration of the population in fully equipped settlements, instead of providing widespread public services. Every settlement unit was classified as either "forward-looking" (e.g., these "worth to be maintained," equal to central) or "not-forward-looking" (other, e.g., might be abandoned). Only central settlements could keep their civic amenities and were supported in their urban development and in economic investments (e.g., building up industrial plants) (Musil, 2002). In other settlements, service sector facilities were either closed down or restricted to basic services. Moreover, it was desirable to let such settlements perish due to migration or demographic decline (Hampl & Müller, 1998). Other European socialist states employed the same method of regional planning (see Bajerski, 2015; Kovács, 2012; see also Chap. 6 by Gyuris in this volume).

These policies had a significant influence on the rural school network as well. A decline in the number schoolchildren reduced the number of rural schools, and most elementary schooling was concentrated in complete schools situated in central municipalities. In certain respects this was justified, as school buildings in peripheral and border regions were in poor condition and often failed to conform to norms of hygiene (Slouka, 1967). Small schools were allowed to carry on only in places where transport, student numbers, or other circumstances preserved the local school from closure. Such reasons included, for instance, bad roads in many regions in the 1960s and the fact that many rural settlements were off bus line routes. Later improvements in public transport service led to massive school closures (Kučerová et al., 2011).

Massive Centralization: The 1970s and 1980s

The communist regime's efforts to centralize management and decision-making had an impact on, among other things, increasing placement of children in schools strictly depending on catchment districts, leaving their parents with no free choice. Free schooling choice in disregard of the assigned catchment area was illegal (cf. Maroy & van Zanten, 2009). Although catchment district policies had existed since the beginning of compulsory education and were simultaneously applied by Western European democracies (Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009; Echols, McPherson, & Williams, 1990), in Czechia's small rural settlements these policies encouraged animosity towards central municipalities (Perlín & Šimčíková, 2008). Whenever a school was closed down, its students were transferred to another school by public notice, most often to one situated in the nearest central municipality, which was therefore not faced with a lack of students (Kučerová & Kučera, 2012).

The blanket closure of incomplete schools and the construction of complete ones was markedly influenced by the school reform introduced in the 1970s. Based predominantly on a concept developed by Leonid Zankov in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, this reform further elaborated Vygotsky's and Cole's theory of proximal zones (1978). It emphasized children's intellectual development, to the detriment of their social and emotional development. The reform had two key aspects: First, it stressed the necessity of using elements of abstract thinking, even in the first stage of elementary school. Second, according to the principle of effectiveness, it modified the distribution of curricula over individual elementary school grades and accelerated the learning pace. The curricula's volume remained unchanged, but compulsory school attendance was reduced by 1–8 years. Unlike simultaneous reform in states of the former Western block, Czech educational policy forbade any discussion of the disadvantages of these modern ideas or attempts to halt the reforming efforts (Dvořák et al., 2015a). The reform changes were nowhere more perceptible than in primary-level teaching. Initial experience indicated that elementary-level teaching was more demanding in terms of both content and organization and hard to sustain in the smallest schools (Spilková, 1997).

Thus, central schools in key settlements were internalized as a social norm in contrast to small mixed-age schools, similarly to other socialist countries (see Barakat, 2015; Fickermann, Weishaupt, & Zedler, 1998; Kovács, 2012). This educational policy and the above-mentioned settlement policies of the 1960s and 1970s forced nearly half of Czechia's schools to close down; most of these were rural schools (Kučerová & Kučera, 2012). One-class and two-class composite schools saw a decline from 4800 in 1960 to 1200 in 1980 (see Fig. 7.2).

Transformations in the spatial distribution of schools are also significant. Figure 7.3 shows the situation after the first stage of school closures in 1976; Fig. 7.4 shows the situation in 1990, after the political turn. The government first abolished schools in border and peripheral regions, generally in the western part of the country, where the population was distributed in a fragmented manner and where school closures were justified due to a lack of students or economic costs. The eastern part of Czechia, which had more populated rural settlements (of over 1000 inhabitants), was only affected by school closures during the 1970s, as a direct consequence of the policy changes discussed above (Kučerová & Kučera, 2012).

In the 1980s, the main factor conducive to the construction of large schools in bigger rural municipalities was a significant fluctuation in the increased number of schoolchildren. These were children born in the early 1970s, during a period of rising birth rates. The increase was caused by a large, postwar cohort of mothers entering the reproductive age and was combined with short-term, propopulation policies (Srb, 2004). The school-aged population grew rapidly, which led to an imbalance in the population structure and temporary discrepancies between the numbers of children attending compulsory school and school capacity. Teaching was often divided into shifts in a limited number of classrooms and the highest grades were prematurely transferred from small schools to the nearest big schools (Trnková et al., 2010).

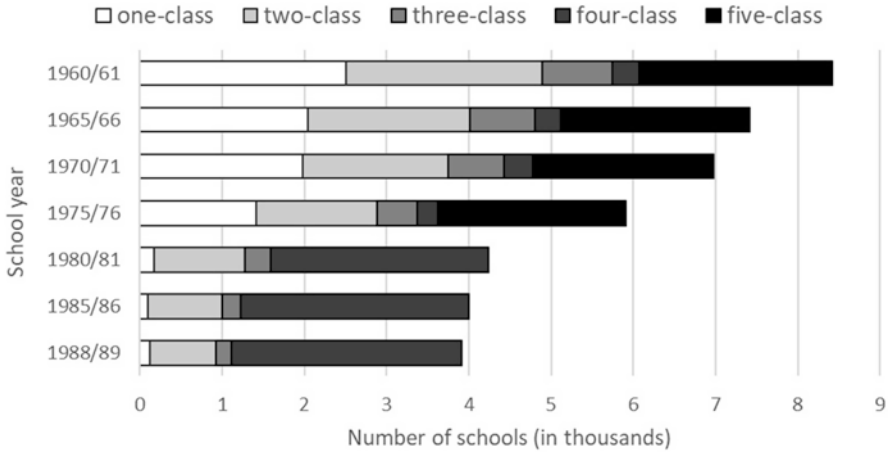


Fig. 7.2 Structure of elementary schools in Czechia according to first-stage organization (ISCED 1) from the 1960s through the 1980s (selected years). Source: Design by author, following Jelínková and Smolka, 1989. Note: Five-class (from the school year 1960/1961 to 1979/1980) and four-class schools (from the school year 1980/1981) are complete schools where each grade has a class of its own. Since the school year 1980/1981, the first stage has been composed of only four grades

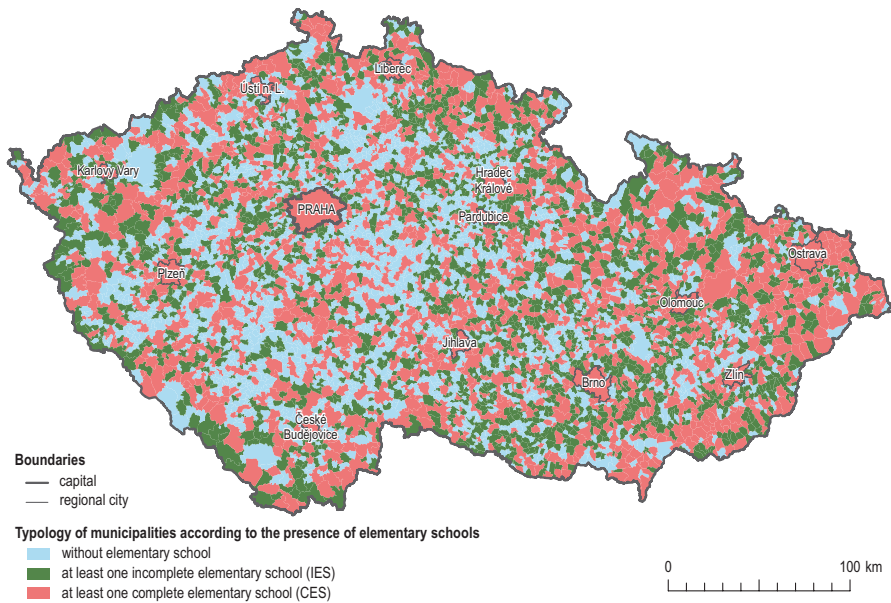


Fig. 7.3 Elementary schools in Czech municipalities, 1976. Source: Petr Meyer. Data from Kučerová, 2012

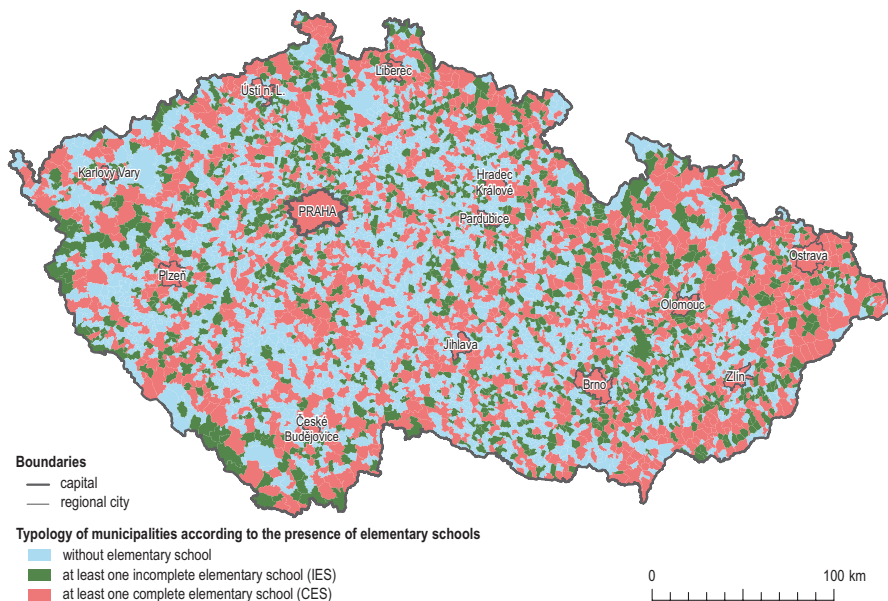


Fig. 7.4 Elementary schools in Czech municipalities, 1990. Source: Petr Meyer. Data from Kučerová, 2012

Transformation of Society: From the 1990s Until Today

Significant qualitative change in Czech education began only with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the onset of the democratic regime of 1989. The transformation of Czech society included a comprehensive transformation of its educational system—its curricula, didactics, school management, and spatial planning (Dvořák, Starý, & Urbánek, 2015b; Janík, 2016) have been a part of two forms of transformation. Hampl (1999) refers to the first as a posttotalitarian transformation and to the second as a global societal transition from modern to postmodern society.

The effect of posttotalitarian transformation manifested itself in the transformation of the organization of public administration. The year 1990 saw more than 4000 municipalities return to self-government, while approximately 2000 others disintegrated from their central settlement units (Hampl & Müller, 1998). The decentralization of political and economic governance passed more autonomy and responsibility on to schools and their operators. The new public administration legislation made municipalities responsible for providing children with schooling (Act No. 128/2000, Coll., on Municipalities). It now thus falls to the local administration to decide whether or not a municipality can run a school. If it cannot, it may make an arrangement with another municipality's school to admit its children (Perlín & Šimčíková, 2008). Some municipalities decided to restore their local schools that had previously been shut down. Beside the establishment of new private or nonstate schools, this is one reason why roughly 200 new schools emerged in the 1990–1996

period. Most of these institutions were rural schools with composite classes (Trnková et al., 2010).

The educational system's decentralization is also connected with the transformation of elementary school funding, which is based on two principal sources: the Ministry of Education, which funds schools through a lump-sum per student (to cover teacher salaries and key school equipment), and municipality budgets, which fund school operation and related investment (especially school buildings). A norm regarding the minimum average number of students per class (13) remained incorporated in the School Act until 2009. Unless it achieved the required number, every municipality had to guarantee that the missing costs of teacher salaries and school equipment would be paid from its own budget (Trnková, 2009). Since Czechia's accession to the European Union in 2004, the regional governments have also laid emphasis on acquiring irregular financial resources for school budgets through European cohesion policy funds (e.g., as a part of projects for renovation of buildings or modernization of technological equipment).

In spite of the fact that self-governing municipalities are the dominant operator of Czechia's elementary schools (95% of schools), more than 100 church and private schools have been established since the 1990s (Kučerová, 2012). At present, we can observe a partial trend of founding other alternative forms of schooling ensured by, for example, parental associations (cf. Hána, 2017; Kraftl, 2012). Further processes related to system decentralization that have been developing in Western European countries since the 1980s (see e.g., Dvořák & Straková, 2016; Echols et al., 1990; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012) have clearly differentiated forms and types of institutions providing education. They have increased their specialization, but also intensified the competition between them. Schools now participate in the curriculum development process, and student admission is based on the principle of free choice. In the 1990s, the government abandoned its policy of compulsory placement of schoolchildren in their district schools. The School Act No. 561/2004, Coll. leaves parents free to choose where their children will go to school. Nevertheless, some elements of the preceding school district policy have persisted. Municipalities are still obliged to delineate school districts by means of a binding regulation and give preference to local students rather than applicants from other districts (cf. Nekorjak, Suralová, & Vomastková, 2011).

Although the number of schools has been decreasing slightly since 1996, researchers have observed no distinct changes in their distributions, as illustrated in Fig. 7.5. The possibility of attending a school in one's place of residence is, however, markedly influenced by society-wide trends in population development. On the one hand, student numbers decreased due to the significant birthrate decline after 1989 (Burcin et al., 2010). On the other hand, increased immigration from the large cities to their immediate or wider hinterland at the beginning of the twenty-first century has put a halt to this decrease, or almost reversed it in some regions. Although peripheral rural areas were struggling with a lack of students, mass suburbanization often doubled the population of the villages in the hinterland of the cities (Ouředníček, Špačková, & Novák, 2013), rendering the capacity of local schools insufficient (Hulík, Šídlo, & Tesárková, 2008).

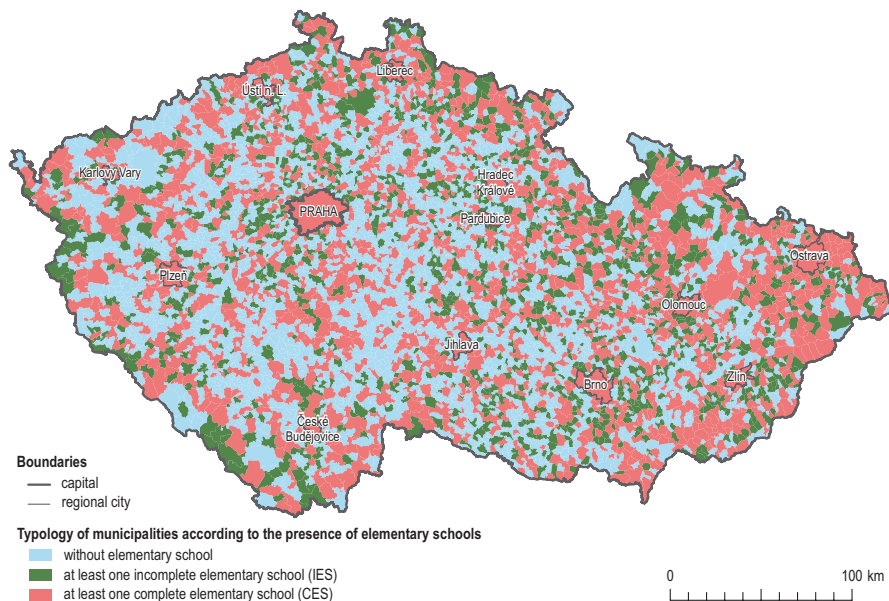


Fig. 7.5 Elementary schools in Czech municipalities, 2004. Source: Petr Meyer. Data from Kučerová, 2012

In 2004, the government adopted a new School Act as part of the school management decentralization process. At its core was a curricular reform shifting part of the responsibility for curricula development to individual schools by means of so-called School Curricular Programs (Dvořák et al., 2015b; Kučerová, Bláha, & Pavlasová, 2015b). On the one hand, it increased the potential of place-based curriculum, taking into account the particularities of both schools and students; on the other hand, it cleared the way for a yet stronger market environment and quality-based school differentiation (Dvořák & Straková, 2016; cf. Geppert, Knapp, Kilian, & Katsching, 2015). The market behavior of schools is most noticeable in metropolitan areas, not only in terms of parental choice, but also in how schools themselves seek new clients (Dvořák et al., 2015b). Although urban schools have maintained their status of superior institutions in terms of hierarchy and quality (Trnková et al., 2010), small schools—namely those proposing alternative teaching methods—have been appreciated as well (Kučerová et al., 2015b). Czechia’s opening up towards the West and globalization tendencies have not merely affected the shape of school curriculum, but also lead to the formation of a new, hierarchically higher social norm of a school that is integrated with international structures (e.g., through interschool cooperation) and positively evaluated in national comparative tests, such as PISA or TIMSS (Dvořák & Straková, 2016).

Conclusion

It is quite challenging to embrace, on a limited number of pages and in a complex manner, the intricate, long-term development of an educational system that often displays contradictory tendencies. We have therefore selected only the most crucial processes provable by primary data or bibliographic sources.

To conclude, the development of Czech elementary schools over the observed period can be divided into five key stages: (1) an increase in school numbers in parallel with the construction of a system of accessible local education until World War II; (2) a decrease of redundant schools in areas with a population decline during the 1960s; (3) an extreme nation-wide decrease in rural schools due to settlement system regulation and educational centralization policies in the 1960s and 1970s; (4) a revitalization of the school network associated with the renewal of local, democratic self-governance in the early 1990s; (5) a continuing slight decrease in school numbers and significant spatial differentiation in education provision due to demographic and migration changes, decentralization, and liberalization of the educational market from the 1990s to today.

As suggested by this chronological listing, the development of the educational system involves mutual relationships among the four dimensions of the provision and realization of education mentioned in this chapter's introduction (changes in educational conditions and demand; view of the role of education; transformations of pedagogical conceptions; educational and regional policies). Various policy combinations (e.g., the system of central settlement units), educational principles (e.g., Vygotsky & Cole's, 1978 theory), and notions about education's function (e.g., van de Werfhorst's, 2014 tasks of education) are materialized by those who have the power to implement them. It is thereby that a structure is formed in correspondence to Giddens's conception (1984) of the educational system. Various types of schools, along with their relationships to their environs, are deployed spatially. Actors are limited, as they must act within the confines of this structure. Some of them help maintain the structure, whereas others modify or disrupt it.

In the period of the unfree communist regime, Czechia's educational system functioned within a centralized and authoritatively controlled structure whose makers were striving for unification. The spatial population distribution was dictated by a policy defining which settlements should prosper and where local services (schools) should close down. Students' distribution across schools was determined by the catchment district system. The structure thus forestalled any free choice, which could only be exercised secretly. This structure, too, was differentiated due to the effect of various factors (Hampel & Müller, 1998). A complete, nine-grade urban school became the social norm in education. The structure was especially disturbed by the frequent declines of small rural schools, whereby relations in every environment were changing (Kučerová et al., 2015a).

After the renewal of the democratic regime and Czechia's integration into European structures, the country's educational system began to transform into a system of autonomous units participating in the formulation of educational principles and objectives. The distribution of inhabitants in space and that of school-

children across schools followed the rules of free market and free choice. Freedom, however, imposed limits on the scope of schools' activities, forcing them into commercialization. The national norm is now a school that ideally enables every individual to succeed in subsequent levels of education (Dvořák et al., 2015b). Actors have a great possibility to create and recreate the structure, although both physical and mental obstacles exist (e.g., the impossibility of choosing a local school that was closed in the past). Choice thus becomes a limitation as well, as not all individuals and schools can succeed in the competition (e.g., the chosen school cannot admit a student due to insufficient capacity). The varying success rates therefore polarize the system.

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Chapter 8

Securing Indigenous Dispossession Through Education: An Analysis of Canadian Curricula and Textbooks



Laura Schaeffli, Anne Godlewska, and Christopher Lamb

Introduction

The beliefs and attitudes that were used to justify the establishment of residential schools are not things of the past: they continue to animate official Aboriginal policy today. Reconciliation will require more than apologies for the shortcomings of those who preceded us. It obliges us to recognize the ways in which the legacy of residential schools continues to disfigure Canadian life and to abandon policies and approaches that currently serve to extend that hurtful legacy (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, pp. 103–104).

We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them. (Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006–2015) presenting to the G20 summit in Pittsburgh on September 25, 2009; quoted in Wherry, 2009).

In the quotations above, we hear two views of reality: an Indigenous view of Canada as a colonial country with a powerful legacy of destructive policies toward Indigenous peoples; and a state view of Canada as an innocent place, untouched by colonialism.¹ The contrast is even more striking as Prime Minister Stephen Harper is the prime minister who in 2008 apologized for the harm inflicted on Indigenous people by Residential Schools, a more than 100-year policy of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families for placement in under-resourced schools dedicated to the assimilation of Indigenous children—in short, a colonial project. How can such contradictions exist within a society and within a single mind? As we

¹We use the term *Indigenous* as an umbrella term for all people in Canada who identify as such, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. We use the term *Aboriginal* in legal contexts and in the context of Newfoundland and Labrador, where it is the favored term.

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know, denial and continued support for the violence that is colonialism takes work. The ideologies supporting colonialism—the myths of a hierarchy of civilizations, the white man’s burden, and the vanishing Indian—and the imaginative geographies of spatial exclusion have resulted from sustained intellectual and cultural labor (Battiste, 2013; Fitzmaurice, 2007, 2014; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Williams, 1990). Intellectuals, authors, artists, bureaucrats, educators, and everyday citizens, working on multiple levels in society, conceive and carry out these efforts. Working together, these ideologies and their purveyors are a powerful force. However, as we argue in this chapter, it is the formal education system that plays the most important role, through its cultivation of colonial epistemes—entire ways of understanding the world and one’s place in it. Our examination of curricula and texts in three provinces in Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and British Columbia—suggests that in all three educational jurisdictions, students are learning a logic of relation premised on the disappearance of Indigenous peoples as sovereign, self-determining nations. Silence around Indigenous philosophies and territories, apologetics for colonial incursions on Indigenous territories, and reinforcement of racialized hierarchies of being all work to minimize colonial violence and preclude imagination of distinct, vital, and self-determining Indigenous nations. Particularly troubling are the ways in which curricula and texts invite students to participate in the perpetuation of colonial modes of thought and action.

We have carried out research in three jurisdictions: Newfoundland and Labrador, in the far east of the country—Ontario, in the center and the region that holds the nation’s capital—and British Columbia, in the far west. These regions are fundamentally different in terms of the Indigenous peoples of the territories, the physical geography of the provinces, their history of colonial settlement, and the degree and nature of engagement between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Newfoundland and Labrador was the first region to encounter European colonialism. It was also the last to join the Confederation of Canada. When it did so in 1949, it failed to recognize the existence of Aboriginal peoples within the province, including Mi’kmaq, Innu, and Inuit (Hanrahan, 2003). Ontario, formerly Upper Canada, was the heart of the British colony and ultimately the nation’s economic and political center, instrumental in developing and implementing colonial policies including the Indian Act and residential schools (Lawrence, 2004; Milloy, 1999). In British Columbia, in contrast to many other parts of Canada, the provincial and federal governments did not sign treaties with Indigenous peoples, preferring to force them onto tiny reserves which governments and settlers proceeded to erode over time and in a variety of ways (Harris, 2002). Since the 1990s, the provincial and federal governments have sought to negotiate modern treaties, with the aim of securing the forms of political and economic certainty attractive to capital investment. However, many First Nations in the province have refused to take part, given government denial of Indigenous sovereignties and insistence on conversion of collectively held lands to fee simple title. For these reasons, relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in British Columbia are perhaps more unsettled than elsewhere in Canada.

As a first step to our contribution to decolonizing college and university curricula, we have analyzed the curricular documents and the textbooks used in primary

and secondary education in all three jurisdictions. We were interested in the degree to which students were undergoing colonial or decolonizing education and what strategies of inclusion or exclusion these educational systems deploy. Our research to date has shown that these educational systems are all colonial and work to marginalize Indigenous peoples, though they employ subtly different strategies of exclusion. As members of a colonial society and as non-Indigenous academics, we cannot escape colonial thinking. Thus, we began by educating ourselves through reading critical Indigenous theorists and by working closely with Indigenous educators and community members. Part of our research, which is not presented here, has involved the development of knowledge tests for entering and exiting postsecondary students. It is through codesigning the knowledge tests that we have gained insight into what colonialism and a decolonized society might look like. This process has informed our word-by-word and multidisciplinary analysis of curricular documents and textbooks across these three provinces of Canada.²

Minimizing Colonial Violence

Vanishing Indigenous Sovereignties and Critical Perspectives

Curricula and textbooks in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and British Columbia all work to deny the violence of colonialism. A principal strategy is evacuation of Indigenous sovereignties from discussion of European arrival in what is now known as Canada. By omitting Indigenous territories, legal traditions, and critical perspectives, the curricula and texts assume European jurisdiction and encourage students to think about land as empty of Indigenous peoples. In Newfoundland and Labrador, whitewashing language works to minimize dispossession: Land acquisition resulted from “interactions between European and Aboriginal Peoples” (N.L.D.E., 2011a, p. 204). Reserves, the tiny remnants of Indigenous lands to which status Indians largely have been restricted, are “parcels of land set aside by the federal government for the exclusive use of a First Nation.” There is no discussion of the federal government’s right to that land, how reserves were created, the parcels’ adequacy, or limited First Nations freedom to govern reserve land (Clark & Wallace, 1996, p. 99). Texts in British Columbia similarly present the Canadian government as always already sovereign and generous, describing the reserve system with no attention to the coercion, betrayals, and violence they entailed (Deir et al., 2000; Francis, 2000; Sterling, 2000, 2002). This perspective consistently undermines Indigenous sovereignties: Colonists are portrayed as coming from “countries” and the places they colonize are “areas of land,” always already “other” and “for” the colonizer (Clark & McKay, 1992; Sterling, 2000, p. 143). In Ontario, curricula and texts work to vanish Indigenous sovereignties by framing settler history as the

²We analyzed curricula and associated textbooks in Newfoundland and Labrador up to 2013, in Ontario up to 2015, and in British Columbia up to 2016.

totality of history. Indigenous traditional territories are never discussed. In fact, the closest mention of Indigenous territories in the entire K-12 curriculum is a parenthetical aside focused on contemporary populations: “[I]llustrate and explain the regional distribution patterns of various peoples across Canada (e.g., Aboriginal peoples, Francophones, immigrant groups)” (OME, 2005a, p. 31). When Indigenous peoples are discussed, the focus is on settler benefit (OME, 2004, p. 34). Additionally, several high school history and civics texts frame Canada as developed exclusively through British and French democratic traditions (Blair, 2003; Brune & Bulgutch, 2000; Clark & Wallace, 2003, p. 176; Gini-Newman, 2001, p. 6), which is a formulation also present in British Columbia’s curricula and texts (BCME, 1997, p. 26; Buckingham, Marcotte, Epp Buckingham, Manning, & Thompson, 1997, p. 19). One Ontario text goes so far as to claim that it is only now that Indigenous people are healthier and better educated than they are “beginning to make their mark in Canada” (Gini-Newman, 2001, p. 394). Such patronizing portrayal neglects the pivotal roles of Indigenous people(s) and political philosophies in shaping the governance of New France, British North America, and Canada, a characterization that perpetuates terra nullius (empty land) logic, casts Indigenous peoples as passive nonagents, and thereby reinforces assumptions of settler dominance (Borrows, 2010; Brooks, 2008; Delâge & Sawaya, 2001; Sawaya, 2002).

Denying Colonialism in Canada

Curricula and texts further minimize colonial violence by underplaying, or denying outright, the presence and endurance of colonialism in Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, this denial is achieved principally by framing Indigenous people as settlers “like everyone else,” a dynamic that works to undermine any claims by Indigenous people rooted in prior presence. At least two of the textbooks used by most students, the Grade 5 text and the high school Newfoundland and Labrador Studies text, contend that, as Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador migrated at some time to what is now Newfoundland from the mainland, they are not indigenous to the territory. The Grade 5 text (Cram & Fizzard, 1991, Chapter 3) teaches students that both earlier and later Aboriginal people were all settlers. In the high school Newfoundland and Labrador Studies text, science, in the form of archaeological evidence and cartographic display, is harnessed to frame Aboriginal peoples as “immigrants” like “all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador” (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2010, p. 114). The text does include a sidebar critique of this contention by Daniel Ashini (Innu), but the main part of the text critiques his assertions, letting the students know how they should be thinking about any claims to prior presence (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2010, p. 123). Also in this text, assertions of early Mi’kmaq presence (Martijn, 2003, p. 121) are dismissed as tainted by the existence of disputes over land rights—disputes which are not assumed to taint the perspective of non-Indigenous players. The link between archaeological data and

nationalist discourse, and the weakness of archaeological data unsupported by ethnographic and sociological research and evidence, is not discussed (Kristensen & Davis, 2015, pp. 524–526; Smith & Wobst, 2005). Nor is the political nature of cartography (Brealey, 1995; Sparke, 1998). The argument that all people living in what is now Newfoundland and Labrador are ultimately settlers also works to convert treaty obligations from rights to privileges. One of the high school Canadian geography texts makes explicit the association of Aboriginal people with privileges (Cartwright, Birchall, & Pierce, 1996). Without nuance or reference to treaty obligations, the text describes “Indians” on reserves as non-tax paying (p. 294) and asserts that “tuition as well as travel and living expenses” are provided for all “aboriginal students for the first four years of post-secondary education” (p. 297). Using this strategy, non-Indigenous people can disregard centuries of dispossession and cultural and personal assault, even though the perception of Indigenous privileges is belied by the statistics on Indigenous disadvantage in Canada.

In Ontario, the principal strategy of colonial denial is silence, which, together with silence around Indigenous traditional territories, works to legitimate contemporary Canadian political formulations that dissociate Indigenous peoples from political and economic self-determination. The word colonialism is never used in the curriculum. Instead, the arrival of Europeans is referred to as contact, settlement, or migration (OME, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Texts present exploration as an exclusively European phenomenon that constituted the first major expansion of human horizons (Asselstine, 2000c, p. 51), was an inevitable outcome of the heroic pursuit of knowledge (Francis, 2000, p. 56), and is inherently exciting and fun (Asselstine, 2000a, p. 22, 2000b, p. 134). Other texts present colonialism as natural, inevitable, and ubiquitous, invoking the Bering Strait theory of Indigenous migration to argue that ultimately, Indigenous peoples are settlers too, as in Newfoundland and Labrador (Asselstine, 2000b, p. 10; Busato & Takacs, 2002b, p. 209; Smith & Pelech, 2002, p. 2). Still others are entirely silent about the presence, endurance, and consequences for Indigenous traditional governance of legislated racism including the Indian Act and residential schools. At the same time, curricular directives frame Indigenous peoples as one amongst many ethnic minorities to be accommodated in a multicultural society, and cast government as an innocent and benevolent arbiter of Aboriginal rights. For example, students are required to “identify contributions to Canada’s multicultural society by regional, linguistic, ethnocultural, and religious communities (e.g., Aboriginal peoples, Franco-Ontarians, Métis, Black Canadians, Doukhobors, Mennonites, local immigrant communities)” (OME, 2005a, p. 55). In this multicultural framework, the sovereignty of the Canadian state is taken as given and conflicts around land, resources, and cultural continuity are reduced to a matter of majority rule (Bannerji, 2000; Coulthard, 2014; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Razack, 1998). The existence and diversity of Indigenous legal traditions are disavowed, and the government and multicultural rhetoric are presented as innocent of alignment with assimilative interests.

Curricular documents and textbooks in British Columbia deny the existence of colonialism in two principal ways: by representing colonialism as a phenomenon Canada moved beyond as it emerged from colonial status, and as a problem of else-

where. Only three of the mandatory social studies curricular documents mention colonialism and the titles and organization of these courses relegate colonialism to the past. The thematic organization of Grade 5's "Canada from Colony to Country" (BCME, 2006a) portrays Canada as emerging from British and French colonialism to autonomous nationhood, free of colonialism. Primarily concerned with the "development of the nation," this course recounts resource exploitation in British Columbia, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the establishment of Canadian Confederation. None of the content makes any direct reference to colonialism. This theme is repeated in Grade 10's "Canada from 1815 to 1914," where students learn to analyze "British support for colonial independence," as one of the "factors that led to Confederation and to the development of Canada's provinces and territories" (BCME, 2006b, p. 27).

Only in the Grade 9's "Europe and North America from 1500 to 1815" are students expected to "define colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism," and to "analyze effects of colonialism on trade and conflict" in Canada, yet the discussion is limited to the period up to 1815, ignoring ongoing colonial presence (BCME, 1997, pp. 26, 28). Beyond representing colonialism as a past event, the curricula and texts in British Columbia present it as a problem of elsewhere. The secondary-school text "Canada Revisited" (Social Studies 9) limits its discussion to British and French colonialism and policy (Clark & McKay, 1992, p. 80). In "Across the Centuries" (Social Studies 8), "Greeks established colonies along the coast of Italy in 750 B.C.," and "[d]uring the 1800s, Europeans began to explore and claim land in Africa" (Armento, 1994, p. 469). Here colonialism "runs its course" during the 1900s in Africa, colonies in the "Western Hemisphere" having "won their independence in the 1700s and early 1800s" (p. 469). The History 12 curriculum and texts focus only on "colonial rule" in "Palestine and the Indian subcontinent" and "decolonization of India and Indochina" (BCME, 2006c, pp. 31, 33–34). Sustained and coherent discussion of colonialism in Canada is restricted to optional courses, available to students in their last 2 years of study, which few students take. Social Justice 12 does suggest coverage of the "continuing legacy of colonialism and its effects on Canada's Aboriginal peoples in contemporary Canadian society" (BCME, 2008, p. 40), and British Columbia First Nations Studies 12 includes significant coverage of contemporary colonialism in British Columbia with a focus on "the resistance of First Nations people to colonialism, especially land encroachment" (BCME, 2006d, p. 5). However, only around 2% of students in the province take either of these courses each year as opposed to, for instance, the 14% taking History 12 or the 13% taking Law 12 (BCME, 2016, 2017; Lamb, 2015). The relegation of meaningful discussion of colonialism in Canada to optional courses so infrequently taken by students subtly reinforces the representation of colonialism as "a problem of elsewhere;" topics related to colonialism in Canada are framed as "fringe" content peripheral to the "mainstream." In the British Columbia curricula and texts, colonialism apparently happened long ago and far away.

Reinforcement of Racialized Hierarchies of Being

Curricula and texts across all three provinces work subtly to legitimate colonial interests by invoking racialized hierarchies of being. Relegating Indigenous peoples to the past is a common strategy. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the curriculum and texts describe the original inhabitants of the island of Newfoundland, the Beothuk, as extinct, even though Beothuk blood is present in the general population and the Beothuk and the Innu of Labrador are closely related (Macleod & Brown, 2005, p. 27; N.L.D.E., 2005, pp. 34, 125). Commonly used in Newfoundland and Labrador to describe the Beothuk, the word *extinct* places all the Indigenous people of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the Mi'kmaq, in an absolute past. The use of the term *extinct* is important in other ways: As its common usage is for plants and animals, the term places the Beothuk in that realm of being. Further, most people think of extinction as an unfortunate by-product of the incursion of agriculture, resource extraction, and industrial activity into formerly undeveloped or economically inactive areas. The word, then, fits neatly into two other formulations in the curriculum and texts: Indigeneity as inherently contradictory of modernity and Indigenous people as not part of the economy. Firmly ensconcing Indigenous peoples in noneconomic realms denies the history, presence, and relationships of Indigenous peoples in and with their lands and thus effectively turns Indigenous lands into “wastelands of non-achievement,” ripe for potential settlement and development by settlers (Fitzmaurice, 2007, 2014; wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 3). The portrayal of Indigeneity as contradictory to modernity appears early on, in the Grade 5 curricular directive “[Aboriginal people] want to progress in the modern world but they also want to preserve their traditional way of life” (N.L.D.E., 2012, p. 59). The key word in this assertion is *but*, which creates a contradiction. Language linking Indigenous people to “primitivism” is pervasive in the texts: Indigenous peoples use tools; the Europeans use equipment (Cram & Fizzard, 1991, pp. 44, 194), and Indigenous people are always present before European arrival but rarely possess continuity. Absence from the economy appears in the curriculum and in Canadian geography texts, which take a chronological approach to the demography of the country that begins with Indigenous peoples but makes no further mention of First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples when discussing immigration, urbanization, resources, energy, economics, globalization, finances, trade, or culture (Clark & Wallace, 1996). The high school economics text reinforces this by relegating Aboriginal people to reserve lands, poverty and “a traditional economy” (Bolotta, Hawkes, Mahoney, & Piper, 2002). The portrayal of Indigeneity and economy as mutually exclusive reinforces discourses of social progression that demand Indigenous assimilation into contemporary economic and social life. The sense of hierarchy with non-Indigenous people at the top and Indigenous people at the bottom is encapsulated in the frequent use of the possessive, “our Aboriginal people” (N.L.D.E., 2011b, p. 57), “our forests” (Cram & Fizzard, 1991, p. 194), and “our culture” (N.L.D.E., 2007, p. 105), which combined reinforce the sense that non-Aboriginal Canadians own everything, including the Indigenous people.

Curricula and texts in Ontario also work to reinforce racialized hierarchies of being, but do so by portraying Indigenous peoples as nonexistent, past, or weak. As early as Grade 3 and continuing into high school, maps and other geographic strategies insinuate that Indigenous peoples and contemporary land title do not exist in the southern Canadian provinces (Bisset & Permanand-Collins, 2004, p. 38; Clark, Wallace, & Earle, 2006, p. 203; Cruxton, 2008; Gutsole & Gutsole, 1998, p. 6). Textbooks as early as Grade 5 portray Indigenous worldviews as static and irrational and Indigenous cultures as legitimate insofar as they adhere to pre-European contact practices. Change, it is implied, is antithetical to Indigeneity (Asselstine, 2000a, p. 158, 2000b, p. 10; Busato & Takacs, 2002b, p. 253; Draper, Andrew, Duncan, & Roth, 2006, p. 161; Gini-Newman, 2001, p. 13; Smith & Pelech, 2002, p. 2). Still other texts portray Indigenous peoples as technologically unsophisticated, a framing that works to legitimate colonialism by casting European technologies as a gift (Busato & Takacs, 2002b, p. 189; Gini-Newman et al., 2000, p. 303; Healy, 2003, p. 150). Moral claims about government and the nature of Indigenous rights are also mobilized in Ontario textbooks in ways that naturalizes the authority of the Canadian state. Texts consistently portray government as benevolent and generous with regard to Indigenous rights, yet are silent about the instrumental work of Indigenous leaders and activists in advancing protection of those rights. At the same time, Indigenous struggles for self-determination are presented as irrational, criminal, and opportunistic. This appropriation and negative characterization of Indigenous struggle is deeply racialized, constituting a “possessive investment” in the goodness of white Canadians that serves to rescue “settler innocence” while undermining critiques that illuminate the contours and mechanisms of systemic racism and colonialism (Lipsitz, 2006, p. 1; Srivastava, 2005; Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1). As early as Grade 5, textbooks frame prejudice as a historical phenomenon that has been addressed successfully in contemporary times by government initiatives (Clark et al., 2006; Draper et al., 2006, p. 63; Francis, 2000, p. 34). Other texts describe contemporary Canadians and their government as enlightened benefactors who have moved beyond colonialism and racism. A Grade 10 history text relegates racism to the past and excuses it, stating that “the racist attitudes toward Aboriginal people led many immigrants to believe they were doing something positive for these people.” The text then lauds the inclusion of Aboriginal and treaty rights in the 1982 Constitution with no discussion of the sustained efforts of Indigenous leaders to advance that inclusion (Gini-Newman, 2001, p. 41). A Grade 9 text takes a similarly congratulatory approach, praising “Canadians and their government” for realizing “that the Aboriginal people of Canada have been treated unfairly over the centuries.” The same text makes no mention of the work of Indigenous leaders and activists to challenge assimilative policies (Clark et al., 2006, p. 204). Still other texts are more explicit in their undermining of Indigenous people and rights. Some texts present the evacuation of Indigenous self-determination as a foregone conclusion: “[G]overnment treaties deprived Aboriginal peoples of the right to govern themselves” (Clark et al., 2006, p. 201); Indigenous peoples “lost their ability to control their own destiny” (Healy, 2007, p. 189). Others present Aboriginal rights as inherently criminal. A Grade 11 Law text places discussion of Aboriginal and treaty rights in a

chapter on “Defenses for the Accused” and warns students that “there are times when Aboriginal peoples may argue that they have an Aboriginal or treaty right to act in a way that would be illegal for anyone else” (Blair, 2003, p. 263). A Grade 10 Civics text considers that Canadian governments “have signaled their willingness to give Aboriginal communities more control” but “they always have a bottom line...Aboriginal peoples must respect the laws of this country and the rights of its non-native citizens” (Brune & Bulgutch, 2000, p. 147). One text even implies that inequities do not really exist, reinforcing the portrayal of Indigenous people as untrustworthy: “Many workers, such as visible minorities, women, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities, have already adjusted to [new] employment situations, whether by choice or necessity ... and thus have a subtle advantage” (Busato & Takacs, 2002b, p. 79). Textbooks’ portrayal of racism and colonialism as past, Canadians and their government as inherently benevolent, and Indigenous people and rights as criminal and untrustworthy work to obfuscate the existence of and reasons for Indigenous resistance while dissuading critical thought about systemic racism and colonialism.

Inviting Students to Model Colonial Dispossession

Curricula and texts sometimes invite students to model colonial dispossession, either under the guise of designing sound social policies for Indigenous people or just as an exercise. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the clearest example of such an exercise can be found in a high school Geography text, “Contact Canada” (Cartwright et al., 1996), in which students learn the stages of development of a fictitious land, Innuvial, and map the terrain (pp. 288–294). In a chilling re-enactment of relocation tragedies that rocked Inuit in the Eastern Arctic through much of the twentieth century (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994), the textbook asks students to relocate the fictitious Innuvial so that their location makes more sense in the Canadian economy. A Grade 8 Ontario textbook likewise encourages the development of assimilative policies, inviting students to develop proposals detailing the steps the Brazilian government could take to encourage the Yanomami to “leave their traditional technology behind so that they can take advantage of better health care and deal with outsiders coming onto their land” (Busato & Takacs, 2002a, p. 173). In these exercises, students appear to be being prepared to assume the mantle of colonialists: bureaucrats who make decisions for and about Indigenous people, on the basis of statistics, maps, and general principles, in the name of economic and social advancement with no on-the-ground knowledge, no accountability to Indigenous people, and no consciousness of the violence relocation entails.

Some of the most troubling normalizations of colonial dispossession in British Columbia curricula and textbooks occur in activities where curriculum and text direct teachers to ask students to inhabit imaginatively the role of colonizer. The Social Studies 9 curriculum portrays colonialism and imperialism as adventurous

and exciting when students are to “compare the exploration mandate given to Captain James Cook with that of the charter of the starship *Enterprise*, focusing on reasons for exploration” (BCME, 1997, p. 28). It is worth noting that the fictional Federation embraces a policy of do no harm/do not interfere, which is a far cry from the realities of colonialism on Earth. Yet the curriculum does not use the Star Trek comparison to make this point. Students learn to identify with the colonizers when asked to become a colonizer for a day and develop their own “charters.” Many of the exercises in the texts also treat Indigenous peoples as a problem to be managed. An exercise in the secondary-school text “Across the Centuries” (Social Studies 8) asks students to imagine how they would “establish a colony for [their] country,” including how they would “manage the colony” and what they would do if “natives already lived on the site” (Armento, 1994, p. 470). The Social Studies 9 text “Canada Revisited” includes an exercise in which students are to “prepare an official report for the British government outlining your point of view regarding what you think should become part of British policy on what to do with the Native peoples” (Clark & McKay, 1992, p. 81). The geographical focus of many exercises draws on and reinforces colonial notions of land and resources. An exercise in the Grade 4 text “Islands” encourages students to imagine the type of island they would choose to live on, and then “build a model” (Peterson, Asselstine, & Luks, 1996, p. 47). For this exercise students start from scratch and populate their island as they see fit, an activity uncomfortably similar to the colonial European perspective of land in North America as *terra nullius* (Fitzmaurice, 2007, 2014; Pateman & Mills, 2007). Grade 5 takes this treatment even further in a fascinating exercise that ties together physical geography, natural resources, and settlement patterns. Students must “work in groups to design an island,” to make maps, “name the region of Canada where their island could be found,” and “write a diary or journal entry of the first settler on the island and the discovery of a resource on the island that could sustain the development of a community” (BCME, 1997, pp. 177–178). In order to “assess the role of geographical factors in the development of trade and settlement in Canada and other colonies” the Grade 9 curricula challenges students to “design real estate advertisements to attract settlers to New France” and encourages them to “consider what features would attract prospective settlers” (BCME, 1997, p. 30). None of these exercises includes mention of Indigenous peoples and all three encourage insensitivity to the consequences for Indigenous peoples.

Implications

It is possible to track the affective consequences of the curricula and texts’ colonial ideologies in student’s imagination and words. We have surveyed 1st-year university students in Newfoundland and Labrador, measuring their knowledge against their social attitudes, where they were taught, what they think of what they were taught, and how they identify themselves. In that survey, prior to administering a knowledge test, we asked students to “name three things” they knew about

Aboriginal people (Godlewska, Schaepli, Massey, Freake, & Rose, 2017). Over 40% of respondents chose Indigenous absence from the recent Canadian past, the Canadian present, and certainly from any Canadian future as what they know about Indigenous peoples. In spite of the fact that Indigenous people have long been the fastest growing demographic in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2005), in spite of significant Indigenous work and success in securing land and resource rights and in transforming the Canadian political landscape (Asch, 1984; Asch & Macklem, 1991), and in spite of national attention in the form of apologies for wrongs committed (CBC News Canada, 2008), for far too many of these students Indigenous people are simply gone, not there, vanishing, or insignificant in number and culture. These students' voices eloquently echo the "Vanishing Indigenous sovereignties and critical perspectives" purveyed in texts and curricula and reflected in sustained Canadian political and legal strategies (Borrows, 2017):

- "A dying culture" (respondent 34, score 14%);
- "They are dying off" (respondent 43, score 39%);
- "There are very few 100% aboriginal people living" (respondent 47, score 18%);
- "They are an at risk demographic" (respondent 52, score 21%);
- "Very few in Canada today" (respondent 70, score 18%);
- "Their traditional way of life is being lost through assimilation" (respondent 75, score 27%);
- "People came in and took their land, gave them diseases, and killed them" (respondent 84, score 25%);
- "Their culture is near but gone" (respondent 109, score 9%);
- "We almost genocided them. We assimilated them to the point where their culture almost doesn't exist anymore" (respondent 157, score 34%);
- "They were killed off by the white man" (respondent 249, score 32%);
- "They were kicked out of Canada, All the aboriginal's were killed, and they fought hard for the land" (respondent 250, score 11%).

While over 40% of the students who took the time to respond to our question expressed this "Vanishing Indian" myth, only 8% of the 1st-year students surveyed at Memorial University recognized that the Indigenous population of Canada is increasing, suggesting that the myth of absence is deeply embedded in young people's imaginations.

Quantitative results from our survey of over 40,000 1st-year students at 10 Ontario universities likewise reveal a prevailing misconception that wherever Indigenous people are, they are not here, not present, and by implication not relevant to students' daily lives or to Canadian society. It is significant, given the Canadian government's commitment to resource extraction and the disproportionate impact of that extraction on Indigenous people(s) (Cameron & Levitan, 2014; Preston, 2013), that students have little understanding of Indigenous land and resource rights. Students are also substantially ignorant of Indigenous presence around them. Although about a third of students have some awareness of the Indigenous nations in Ontario, over 96% cannot name the Nation(s) upon whose traditional territory their university campus is built. Moreover, despite the fact that

the Indigenous population is not only growing but is the fastest growing population in Canada, fully 65% of Ontario students believe the Indigenous population is decreasing. When students are aware of Indigenous presence at all, the majority associate that presence with First Nations reserves, even though at least 70% of First Nations people in Canadian provinces live off reserve and reserves are not applicable to Métis and Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2013). Students' ignorance of the extent and importance of Indigenous traditional territories, their relegation of Indigeneity to reserves, and their conviction of Indigenous decline is deeply political: Ignorance of Indigenous presence, either here and now, or in resource extraction, for example, means that they cannot have the imagination to engage respectfully with Indigenous people on issues of major importance to all people in Canada today.

While we have not yet completed surveys with students in British Columbia, the prevailing discourse in the curricula and texts we have analyzed subtly reinforces a representation of Indigenous people in the province and country as disappearing and absent. This representation finds its foundation in the frequent use of sanitized and passive language, removing colonists and governments from the action and subtly absolving them of responsibility in dispossessing Indigenous peoples. "Many of the treaty lands were absorbed" (Cranny, Jarvis, Moles, & Seney, 1999, p. vii); "Everywhere (Aboriginal people) were being forced out of good farmland" (p. 10); "It was believed that Aboriginal Peoples would disappear, either by being assimilated or by dying from diseases" (Deir et al., 2000, p. 347). Such passive language also naturalizes the development of colonial legal and economic structures. Settlers' "farms grew bigger and bigger." There "*were* also new laws about fishing and chopping down trees" (Sterling, 2000, pp. 43, 177). "Hunting land disappeared." "Native fishing rights vanished" (Peturson, Asselstine, & Luks, 1997, p. 39). Reading colonialism as a neutral and inevitable process of history insinuates Indigenous absence, exonerates colonial actors and their actions, and obscures settlers' relationship and responsibility to any kind of future conciliation.

Conclusion

It is very clear that there is more commonality in approach to Indigenous peoples across the provinces than difference. Provinces separated by thousands of kilometers all engage their students in minimizing colonial violence, reinforcing racialized hierarchies of being, and practicing dispossession. It is indeed probable that such strategies are pancolonial, extending into Australia, South Africa, and the many nations shaped by settler colonialism (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). Yet there are important differences that speak to the particular challenge of settler existence in each place. Jurisdiction in settler colonies has always been fragile, especially in resource-dependent settler colonies (Smandych, 2013). In Canada, all marginalizing strategies are ongoing attempts to assert settler control, particularly over territory and resources, because Canada has always been overly reliant on resource extraction. This reliance has been acute in Newfoundland and Labrador, creating

economic vulnerability and political marginality vis-à-vis the national core areas. The “we are all settlers” narrative, perhaps given verisimilitude by the Beothuk extinction narrative and the relatively recent entry of Newfoundland and Labrador into Canadian Confederation (1949), frames all people in the province as marginalized while obfuscating Indigenous land and resource rights that the resource-dependent province frames as complicating potential future resource development. The “we are all settlers” narrative captures something of the myopia and inability to imagine a healthier society created by the economic vulnerability of a people on the edges of a country that has often neglected them. British Columbia, another heavily resource-dependent economy, has, thanks to the land eviction strategies long employed by the Federal and Provincial governments, such a politically active Indigenous population that any “we are all settlers” argument would seem immediately absurd, even to the myopic. In both British Columbia and in Newfoundland and Labrador, the curricula and texts construe resources and settler need as demanding Indigenous dispossession, which must be practiced. Encouraging students to think like colonists is a long-term strategy for clearing the land of Indigenous people. Ontario, the seat of Federal government, seeks to imagine all of the diverse and feuding parts of Canada as assimilated into the Canadian national imaginary. It is not surprising, then, that multiculturalism, which minimizes difference while apparently acknowledging it, is a preferred tool for Indigenous assimilation in the Ontario curricula and texts.

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Chapter 9

Geopolitical Framings of Subalterity in Education: Compounding a Neoliberalized Welfare State



Ranu Basu

State-funded public education—long valued as a critical tool for reducing inequality, promoting economic mobility, and advocating for social justice—can have an ongoing transformative effect on the evolution of the public realm. The ideologies, policies, and practices of state-funded education distinctly shape various aspects of social justice, including the way urban spaces are produced and contested by those most vulnerable. However, researchers and the broader public are increasingly acknowledging the inability of publicly funded education systems to sufficiently address the needs of poor and marginalized groups. Within the context of this systemic shortcoming, *displaced migrants*—whose relegation to the subaltern already disconnects them politically, socially, and geographically from power—face conditions of extreme precarity. This chapter is drawn from a broader project exploring the challenge of displacement and spaces of refuge in the three disparate cities of Toronto, Havana, and Kolkata, where displacement is experienced in different forms.¹ Its core argument highlights the dire consequences of forced mobility and immobility, a result of imperialist wars, geopolitics, hegemonic relations between nation states, and the historical legacies of colonialism; these must be given serious consideration should the field of geographies of education remain politically relevant. Given the context of pressing challenges confronting global societies, this chapter presents preliminary theoretical deliberations incorporating these themes, highlighting the geopolitical framings of subalterity² in education and its contradictory relation with the

¹The findings in Kolkata are not discussed in this chapter.

²“As a group experiencing subordination, subalterity is understood as the *process* of this subjectivity, conditioning the ways of *being* a subaltern that is constantly in an unsettled relation with the state” (Basu, 2013a, p. 261; italics in original).

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neoliberalized welfare state. Such framings are useful if we are to seriously envision the geographies of nonviolence and peace within the spheres of education.

The first section of the chapter presents five propositions or imperatives, framing the geopolitics of subalterity in education to explore the tensions and contradictions between, on the one hand, the ideal notion of state governance and the public good and, on the other, the realities of marketized hegemony and its close connection to the violent geographies of war and displacement. The framing incorporates a spirit of praxis towards a theory for social change within the realm of schooling and education as spaces of transformation and intervention. The second section presents two very different empirical cases related to the spatial politics of displacement. In “Displacement I—Subalterity through Exile,” I explore the spaces of displacement and refuge in Toronto, Canada, and the political discourses that preceded them. In “Displacement II—Subalterity through Blockade,” I address the context of the economic blockade imposed on Cuba and utilize a case study to examine the effects schools have as revolutionary frontiers in Guantánamo. Both case studies allow us to reflect on the structural significance of engaging with the geopolitics of subalterity in education as a praxis-oriented theory for social change.

The Geopolitics of Subalterity in Education

The encyclopedia entry on the “Geographies of Education” reviews the complex interactions between education, space, and civil society (Basu, 2010). The geographies of education reflect the various sites and scales of opportunities available for investigating an array of diverse concerns. Educational spaces, the entry’s author argues, are imbued with multiple purposes and meanings where the ideologies of the state and its corresponding discursive and material realities become discernible. This is a crucial point I will return to later on in the chapter. Critical studies within this broader realm are concerned primarily with social justice, power relations, and structural inequities relating to or emanating from the educational system. Manzer (1994) defines schools as human communities, public instruments, and political symbols, as well as the means by which people in a political democracy collectively strive for civic virtue, economic wealth, and cultural survival. Apart from its educational mandate, schools are places where neighborhood integration, social capital formation, and the fostering of civil society are ideally endorsed and contested (Basu, 2004). The city-school relationship is also intrinsically linked to the planning and sustainability of urban regions through the quality and vibrancy of its educational institutions; with the increasing rationalization of the neoliberalization of education, however, the public realm is often compromised.

Subalterity of Education: Five Imperatives

A few years ago in a paper published in the *Canadian Geographer* (Basu, 2013a), I argued that to research the spatialities of subalterity in education was to grapple with a differential and complicated terrain. The “political and theoretical importance

of this conceptual framing,” I argued, suggested that its “form, function, and structural significance posed a number of new challenges for those investigating social justice and rights in education” (p. 261). In a time of “global economic crisis, cultural divides, and social and political uncertainties,” it was crucial to understand how subalterity was further accentuated through the impacts of neoliberalized education. In this paper, I explored how the “terrain of subalterity in education had multiplied in heterogeneous ways accentuated through the project of neoliberalism” (p. 260). I argued that unpacking these “socially, politically, or ideologically—through three contradictory imperatives—revealed intersecting spaces of marginality, hegemonic discourses, and complicated outcomes related to the governmentality of educational rights” (p. 261). The three contradictory imperatives discussed in this article included: (i) the premise of a state-funded educational system for a broader public, a universal good that would (ii) maintain equality and equity through proper policy driven redistribution and recognition approaches but in which such mandates would be governed through (iii) the logic of the market in a postcolonial settler/multicultural state. I argued that the act of silencing or subordinating different social groups was embedded within institutional practices and structures of power. This was the realm of subalterity reproduced through spaces of alienation and fragmentation and further legitimized and institutionalized through the rational discourses of neoliberalism. Through different case examples of subalterity and activism, I reviewed the spatialities of contestation.

One aspect that became increasingly evident in subsequent work but that has not been sufficiently theoretically addressed in the literature on the critical geographies of education is the importance of geopolitics in the subalterity of education alongside the radical question of spatial praxis for broader structural change. In this chapter, I thus extend the underlying spatial framing to include a possible fourth and fifth imperative, which allows me to take into account these political conditionings: (iv) Geopolitics in the subalterity of education is a driving force of displacement further complicated by the rationalization of neoliberalism. (v) This in turn leads to serious theoretical and political reconsiderations if we are to indeed engage in any kind of spatial praxis and solidarity for social justice and change. The conceptual framing below (Fig. 9.1) highlights the intersections and contradictions between the governance of territorialities on different scales, the hegemonic influences of neoliberalism and geopolitical regimes, and the tensions between ideal notions of the welfare state and the actual implementations through the microgeographies of school spaces. These are evident in the case studies presented below. In the instance of Canada, international geopolitical strategies and policies designed at the federal level are in contradiction with the legacy of neoliberal policies instituted by the state at the local level. In the case of Cuba, the economic ramifications of over five decades of a financial blockade by the US have constrained and severely limited the flow of resources; at the same time, the presence of the Guantánamo Naval base and detention camp against the will of the Cuban people undermines its sovereignty. I then offer politics through theory and praxis of subalterity in education as a radical alternative.

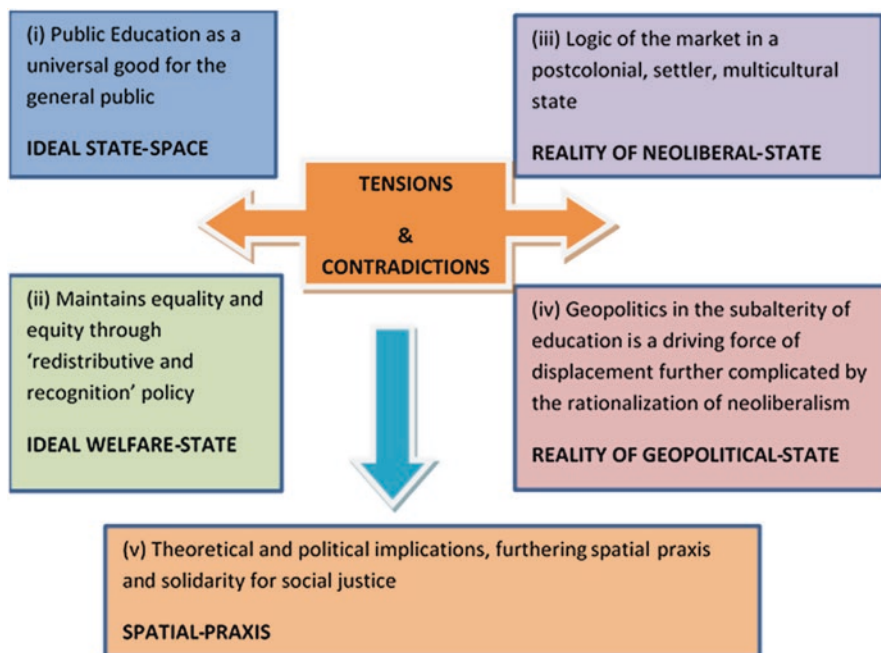


Fig. 9.1 Five imperatives on the subalterity of education. Source: Design by author

Geopolitics and Neoliberalism

Discussions on the linkages between geopolitics and neoliberalism are not new. In their paper “Neoliberal Geopolitics,” Roberts, Secor, and Sparke (2003) connect the “geopolitical world vision” to the “neoliberal idealism of free markets, openness, and global economic integration” (p. 886). They warn against the totalizing economic narratives of neoliberalism and recommend paying attention to its “interarticulation with dangerous supplements,” including the violence of American military force, alongside the presumptuous myth of the “prosperity and peace building capacity brought about by free market reforms” (p. 887). They articulate a particular kind of *neoliberal geopolitics*, observing that “[t]he economic axioms of structural adjustment, fiscal austerity, and free trade have now, it seems, been augmented by the direct use of military force” (p. 887) through the logics of state-managed liberalization. Historically acknowledging that most imperial wars have been fought over economic concerns, they note that current interventions are carried out with a “much more open, systematic, globally ambitious, and quasi corporate economic style” (p. 888). As such, the geographies of such militarization and securitization are closely linked to investment capitalism and developmentalism, closely controlled by an elite minority; the market-state-civil society relations remain ambiguous. They then make the important case that neoliberal practices on a global scale have come to depend on violent interventions (p. 895) that are not solely

restricted to war zones but are part of the workings of state institutions themselves. In fact, disposable and readily available subjects are not accidentally produced but can be traced to a chain of institutional linkages for the profit of the neoliberal state. Roberts, Secor, and Sparke note how neoliberal sites of such violence and aggression range from “maximum-security prisons [and] aggressively policed inner cities [to] workfare administration offices” (p. 894), and they note “perhaps the most exemplary site of antiliberal authoritarianism of all—Guantanamo Bay” (p. 894)—a site I will return to later on in this chapter. Such sites, they argue, “should be seen, not as exceptions to neoliberalism, but rather as neoliberalism’s necessary spaces of exemption” (p. 894). Child detention centers and spaces of education for youth are not exempt from these geopolitical-neoliberal dynamics and are often used as sites of control and resistance.

Feminist and Critical Geopolitics

Aside from the logic of the market discussed above, it is important to note the strategies and techniques of governance that bind these two realms further. The neoliberal governance of such sites is aided by the biopolitical instruments and tools central to geopolitics. Hyndman highlights the feminist insights that link geopolitics closely to biopolitics. She notes that “the biometric management of outsiders with its assemblage of new laws, policies and border practices render geopolitics and biopolitics inseparable” (Hyndman, 2012, p. 246). Hyndman argues that the State’s role in managing and containing migrants through the process of securitization is a “defining feature of the current state of geopolitics” (p. 243). Through a feminist geopolitical lens, she disrupts dominant thinking in the field by bringing attention to the migrants themselves rather than to the political and abstract constructs of borders that minimize, she argues, the experience of “border crossers.” Within the realm of critical geopolitics, Dalby (2008) cautions that a number of elements must be carefully interrogated when exploring imperial interventions that might be considered “more hegemonic rather than dominance” (p. 430). Drawing on Joxe, Dalby (2008, from Joxe, 2002) suggests that the “mode of imperial rule defines the terms and conditions of trade and disciplines local regimes that do not follow policies broadly congruent with American financial and security interests” (p. 426). This is most explicitly evident in the case of Cuba, where the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed on its people by the United States continues to exist after five decades, despite being rejected 24 times by the UN General Assembly. Further, the territory illegally occupied by the US Naval Base in Guantánamo continues to challenge its sovereignty. In this case, the *displacement through economic sanctions* and regulations that have isolated this Caribbean island for over five decades are implemented through exclusionary policies. According to Shaw (2013), such “permanent wars” are spatial strategies used by “predatory empires.”

Geopolitics and Displacement

Geopolitical processes are most explicitly evident in the mass displacement of migrants across the globe. According to the most recent data from the UNHCR (2016a), the world is currently witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record: Nearly 34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution. As of June 2016, the UNHCR reports that “an unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also ten million stateless people who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement” (2016a). Hyndman (2012) has argued that migration has long served as a “barometer of geopolitics, from human displacement generated by war to containment practices in particular territories or camps” (p. 243).

The consequences of subalterity through geopolitical displacement—whether through forced migration, exile, internal displacement, or the blockades and sanctions imposed by wars and conflict—become evident in the struggles and resistance of everyday life. The realms of education, particularly schools, often become the spaces where such daily negotiations take place. For displaced migrants, for instance, schools are frequently the first sites of the settlement experience and the collective community-building opportunity within this realm can either be inclusionary or exclusionary. School spaces are also ideological terrains where structural conditionings can be decolonized from previous histories of colonialism (Battiste, 2000).

In the following section, I turn to two very different cases related to the geopolitics of subalterity in education through the cases of exile and blockade. These cases provide an opportunity to empirically explore the framings presented in this section.

Case Studies

Displacement I: Subalterity Through Exile: Neoliberal Contradictions and the Geopolitics of Displacement: Redefining Educational Spaces of Refuge in Toronto, Canada

In 2015, Canada accepted 271,662 migrants; of these, 32,099 (11.8%) were refugees (Government of Canada, 2017). A large proportion settles in the major urban centers of the country, making multiculturalism a largely urban phenomenon. Based on the 2011 National Household Survey, one third of the immigrants in Toronto have arrived in Canada during the past 10 years. Toronto prides itself on its identity as a “City of Diversity;” the city’s residents have over 230 different ethnic origins, and over half of them were born outside of Canada. The refugees arriving in Canada during the past 10 years have come from many different parts of the world, most recently from Syria, Iraq, Sri Lanka, and Columbia. After the World War II, the

largest single-source countries included Hungary, with an estimated 37,500 Hungarians arriving in 1956 and 1957, and Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, with approximately 69,000 “boat people” arriving between 1975 and 1980 (El-Assal, 2016). Canada admits five categories of refugees, their admittance based either on resettled categories from overseas or on successful refugee claims made in Canada. These refugees include government-sponsored refugees (GAR), privately sponsored refugees (PSR), blended visa office-referred refugees (BVORs), refugees landed in Canada (RLCs), and refugee dependents. The predominance of privately sponsored refugees has been critiqued to being limited to families and excluding single men, who are often perceived as security threats.

The current Canadian context has made international headlines and been influenced by geopolitical intentions and civil society interventions. When the Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau won a majority government in the October 2015 elections, he soon after announced the federal government plans to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees by December 2015 and 35,000 by December 2016. This effort to endorse Canada’s image as a peace-building nation, especially after a decade of conservative rule, was promoted as a radical initiative.

The announcement came at a time when most other countries were grappling with draconian measures such as closing borders, building fences, and confiscating assets. Furthermore, the reported death of 3-year-old Ayan Kurdi (in September 2015), who drowned while crossing from Turkey to Greece and had been denied resettlement to Canada, caused a public outcry. Communities across the country rallied for more compassionate grounds for refugee admissions. The official web site of the Liberal Party notes:

Canadians have been deeply moved by the suffering of refugees in Syria and the surrounding region. Canada has a strong history of helping those in need, from Hungarian refugees in the 1950s to Ismaili Muslim refugees in the 1970s to those fleeing South East Asia by boat in the 1970s and 1980s.

[W]e will expand Canada’s intake of refugees from Syria by 25,000 through immediate government sponsorship. We will also work with private sponsors to accept even more. To do this, we will invest \$250 million, including \$100 million this fiscal year, to increase refugee processing, as well as sponsorship and settlement services capacity in Canada. (Liberal, n.d.)

The admission of privately sponsored refugees, a policy unique to Canada, sparked numerous collaborative efforts among different community groups, religious and nonprofit institutions, public schools and universities, and other actors. The government anticipated that by the end of 2016, the resettlement effort could prove to be Canada’s second largest from a single-source country since World War II.

Yet the importance of civil society in altering the geopolitical strategies of neoliberalism provides a framework for subaltern praxis and change. For example, in its recently published report “Global Strategy beyond Detention” (2016b), the UNHCR reports a 14% decrease in the total number of children detained across 12 countries—from 164,248 in 2014 to 141,180 in 2015. The report notes that as a result of the efforts of civil society, the two countries that were taken to court have now stopped detention. The work of the “sanctuary cities” movement in US and Canada

has provided protection to nonstatus migrants against prosecution related to immigration law. Although successful movements like the Toronto District School Board's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" approach have allowed for nonstatus migrant children to attend school without fear of deportation, this is not a given in the Canadian context. Contradictions emerge when ideal meets reality on the ground and the politics of redistribution and recognition are brought into question. As recently as September 2016, "Education Without Borders" activists noted that as many as several thousand undocumented migrants were not eligible to attend free public school in Quebec. The legislature continues to debate this issue (News Montreal, 2016).

Discrepancies between grand federal geopolitical visions meeting the local realities of the neoliberal welfare state on the ground rattle the terms of engagement. Years of neoliberal regimes and the retrenchment of the welfare state have left most Canadian urban centers with inadequate physical and social infrastructure, in areas including affordable housing, health care, employment options, education, transit access and equity, and community centers. The large and rapid influx of refugees has thus strained settlement services in all sectors, which lack sufficient resources to adequately cope with the needs of refugees. This is particularly evident in the smaller towns across Canada where many refugees have been directed. Aside from access to settlement services, the geopolitical impacts of war and terror have had serious impacts on the health and mental well-being of students suffering from trauma and grief, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Yet defenders of the right-wing populist explanations that currently prevail often blame the inadequacies of the state structures on the refugees themselves. This convenient shifting of blame diverts attention from the marketization of the neoliberal state or the imperialist wars that created the conditions of displacement in the first place. Decades of neoliberalization of education in Ontario, for instance, have resulted in school closures, crowded classrooms, and insufficient resources, as well as reduced funding for ESL and Special Education programs, settlement workers, and psychiatrists, among other changes. Many schools are crumbling and in disrepair, which has produced particularly difficult learning environments those in working class and migrant neighborhoods. According to a recent report released by the Ontario government and published by the Toronto Star, there is a \$3.4 million backlog in nearly 600 of Ontario schools. For 2015, the report lists 226 schools—38% of all Toronto District School Board (TDSB) schools—as being in "critical" condition (Sachgau, 2016). In these circumstances, it is difficult for a school to function as a "community hub."

How, then, do you create a *sanctuary city school system* within the broader context of urban neoliberalism? How do you raise awareness that the larger geopolitical regimes of displacement compounded with the retrenchment of the neoliberal state lead to cities with structural impediments and continual exclusion? Where can the Right to the City be recognized as a radical reconditioning of social and political policy? Countering dominant narratives of insecurity, criminality, and victimhood, refugee communities themselves have over the years also responded by creating creative hubs as spaces of refuge through various grass-root initiatives. These hubs often function within the public school setting. For example, the case of multilingualism in Toronto schools has redefined meanings of "multifarious integration"

and created *Cities of Nimmathi* or *Peace* (see Basu, 2011, 2013b). Using the example of heritage languages, this study's author demonstrated how diverse migrant students, due to the close proximity of living and studying in similar neighborhood schools, have had the opportunity to become multilingual and learn international languages with their classmates. Aside from learning an official language (English or French, a process defined as "unidirectional integration"), or language of ancestral heritage (Italian or Tamil, "mutual integration"), students were keen to learn new languages (Mandarin or Spanish, "multifarious integration"). From unidirectional to mutual to multifarious integration, the schools provided unique opportunities for the settlement process to work in ways that made migrants feel at most ease. The schools provided unique multifarious spaces where integration processes worked in informal and heterogeneous ways as a way of countering destabilizing experiences. The school in these examples often provides local institutional spaces where such power dynamics are creatively explored and become materially evident. The interactions then spilled into the public realm of the city, where common challenges of the settlement experience led to alternative social and political networks. Other subaltern resistances in Toronto that have redefined the imagination of the city have included the "Black Lives Matter" movement and indigenous responses to the "Truth and Reconciliation Report" (2015).

The spatial discrepancies between different levels of governance as indicated in the current context of the migrant crisis often bring into question the fickleness of geopolitical strategies with the more long-term effects of neoliberal governance. At the time, observers speculated that the radical response to the Syrian migrant crisis would allow Canada to play a leading role on the global stage and thereby secure a seat on the UN Security Council. The speculations were correct. In March 2016, at the UN headquarters in New York, Trudeau announced Canada's plan to seek the 2021 UN Security Council seat with a "mandate to focus on tackling climate change, helping Syrian refugees and promoting gender equality" (Harris & Kent, 2016). Trudeau noted that his government was "determined to 'revitalize' Canada's peacekeeping efforts, support civilian institutions that prevent conflict and promote international peace and security," arguing: "This is the Canada of today, this is how we will build the world of tomorrow" (News Montreal, 2016). On August 26, 2016, the Liberals announced their commitment to provide up to 600 troops and \$450 million to UN peacekeeping missions.³ As political observers noted, Canada was seeking to be recognized as a "middle" rather than a "super" power in the new geopolitical order.

Agnew's (2001) emphasis on the distinction between "formal and practical geopolitics" (p. 30) is relevant here. This distinction becomes evident at the scalar level. On one hand, the linkage between geopolitical strategies, global displacement as a result of war and violence, and international discourses of the Canadian State (formal geopolitics) work alongside the neoliberalized retrenchment of the welfare state (practical geopolitics). The site of education is a local example of resettlement tensions and of contradictions arising and playing out in different ways (practical level).

³<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-peacekeeping-announcement-1.3736593>.

Displacement II: Subalterity Through Blockades: Resisting Sanctions, Blockades, and the Military Base: Schools as Revolutionary Frontiers in Guantánamo, Cuba

Since the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed on the people of Cuba by the United States has had serious detrimental effects. Despite being rejected by the UN General Assembly 24 times, the blockade continues to exist. In his State of the Union Speech of January 20, 2015, President Obama spoke of beginning to set an end to the embargo, followed by a much publicized visit to the island. Regardless of this initiative and of the resumption of flights and discussions of trade and exchange, the embargo policy continues to remain intact. A June 2015 report to the UN by the Government of Cuba describes in detail the outdated nature of the policy. Based on ten blockade laws, the report outlines the serious repercussions on the Cuban economy and consequential effects of any right to development for the Cuban people—including health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, and other sectors of the economy. The report’s authors estimate the cumulative damage to amount to over 121.192 billion dollars and note the unjust nature of the policy and the deep extent of international control. The text clarifies the workings of the blockade as “not merely a bilateral issue;” its “extraterritorial nature” is further evident by “sanctions applied to third parties.” The report states that announcements of December 17, 2014, act as a “violation of International Law,” in particular as it relates to the “the principle of sovereign equality of States established in the Charter of United Nations” (Cuba, Report to UN, 2015, p. 37). Examples include the imposition of million dollar fines on banks and financial institutions as a result of transactions with the nation. Penalties include prohibitions on the import and export of products and services from the US, or holding accounts in any US currency at an international financial institution, including the World Bank, the IMF, and the IDB (p. 3). The laws and regulations supporting this policy, the report notes, are applied most “rigorously by US government agencies, especially by the Departments of the Treasury and Commerce and the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)” (p. 4). The report’s authors regard the policy as “absurd, illegal, and morally unsustainable” and judge that “the effects of the blockade restrict Cuba’s economic possibilities and harm its right to raise the living standards of its people” (p. 37). In his work on New Imperialism, Harvey (2003) called the blockade imposed on Cuba a form of violence.

Another serious point of geopolitical contention has been the demand for the return of the territory illegally occupied by the US Naval Base in Guantánamo. This base holds the infamous Guantánamo Prison, which since 2002 has held 779 prisoners from the “war on terrorism.” The base’s closure is a condition for the full normalization of relations. For over five decades, the Cuban government has refused to cash \$4085 annual rent checks for the military base, as a stance of sovereignty.

In November 2015, I participated in the Fourth International Seminar on Peace and for the Elimination of Foreign Military Bases held in Guantánamo, City. The

conference was organized by the World Peace Council, the Cuban Movement for Peace and the Sovereignty of the Peoples (MOVPAZ), and the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), and was attended by a large international delegation. Approximately 800 military bases exist worldwide today, and the international delegates gathered to discuss the implications of military bases, war, and securitization for their local communities.

As part of the conference, cultural events were held in Guantánamo City with a special trip to Caimanera, the town closest to the military base. Caimanera has been a neighbor to the 73-square-mile US naval base since 1903, and the purpose of the trip was to hear first-hand from local residents their experiences of living in such close proximity. On the way we were greeted by rows and rows of children in school uniforms and women and men in neatly attired work clothes, many holding banners, demanding the closure of the military base from their home town, and waving flags, delighted to welcome visitors. The mayor of Caimanera along with the governor of the Province of Guantánamo presented to us an historical overview of the city, including its imperial past and role in the revolution. They proudly showcased an overview of state-funded planning and infrastructure investments, health and education initiatives, and cultural programs particularly focused on youth. We were then escorted on a tour to observe the base, followed by a community town square meeting and proclamation of the international peace resolution. Despite living in the metaphorical backyard of one of the world's most notorious prisons, efforts concentrated on cultivating a sense of stability among local communities and minimizing the impending fears. The US naval base's illegal occupation violated the territorial sovereignty of Cuba and was a constant reminder of impeding danger and violence. Further, its strategic location on a critical part of the bay hampered possibilities for any trade in the region. The looming danger of living in the shadow of imperialism is noted by Castro in his address to the Congress in Education in 1971:

... problems of a nation 90 miles from the United States threatened by planes, by warships, by the millions of imperialist soldiers and their chemical, bacteriological, conventional, and all other kinds of weapons; they are not the problems of a nation waging an epic battle against that empire that wants to sink us and blockade us on every side. No, they are not the problems that we face as an underdeveloped nation having to sustain itself under difficult conditions. They are not the problems of more than two million children and youth or of students whom we must care for, supply with textbooks, materials, pencils, clothing, shoes, furniture, desks, blackboards, audio-visual means, chalk, and quite often food—since we have nearly half a million who eat in school—and also provide with classrooms, school buildings, clothing, and shoes. No! For such men living in such an unreal world, these are not problems. They do not exist. (1971⁴).

During our visits to both Caimanera and Guantánamo City, we conference participants positively noted the strong efforts to maintain peace and harmony within the schools and local community spaces through the engagement with culture, music, dance, and solidarity. We attended many shows that included school children singing, dancing, and reciting revolutionary poetry. The messages were often ones of peace, the singers redefining their own subjectivities through joyful practices. Songs

⁴<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1971/19710501.html>.

of peace, poetry, Cuban dance celebrating their rich culture, and orchestras in the public square all contributed to the discussions about peace and solidarity. As Lefebvre reminds us (1991), space is political and ideological. In Cuban cities, ideological space is embedded in the landscape and further evident in the public spaces and monuments dedicated to revolutionary heroes, as constant reminders of their years of success despite the struggles.

Marxist societies such as Cuba, after all, consider ideas weapons in the class struggle, stress the function of education in particular in facilitating political indoctrination of the population, and value universal education as a way to bring about social equality. (Aguirre & Vichot, 1998, p. 118)

Schools have countered the tense spatial relations resulting from the close proximity to the Guantánamo prison and the area's troubled history acting as crucial institutions to maintain stability and security. Spatio-historical relations are simultaneously social, geopolitical, and neoliberal. Schools were crucial to building a culture of peace and resilience.

Conclusion

In this article, I have addressed fundamental theoretical questions in the field of geographies of education by drawing on broader theoretical concepts of subalterity, geopolitics, and neoliberalization. I have previously argued that in a time of global economic crisis, cultural divides, and social and political uncertainties, an expanded notion of subalterity is crucial to understanding the underlying embedded and strategic workings of neoliberalized education (Basu, 2013a). I have used this chapter to argue that the spatialities of subalterity in education must also contend with a geopolitical framing if the question of displacement is to be addressed structurally and systematically. Whether displacement occurs through exile or blockades, it is fundamentally an act of violence that leads to dispossession and loss. Schools often form the spatial frontiers of such resistance in which the impacts of displacement are most visibly evident and in which critical consciousness can be raised for emancipatory change. In Toronto and other cities undergoing a large influx of forced migrants, the settlement experience is one of inclusion or exclusion. Schools are critical local institutions in cities of diversity and in constant flux. In Guantánamo or other cities where imperial military bases are a cause of discomfort and anxiety among local communities, or where the effects of the blockade have left local institutions in dire circumstances, the creative interventions within schools allow for consciousness building and spaces of resilience. In Cuba, schools have always been central to the project of the Revolution. Geopolitical framings on subalterity in education provide one possible direction for intervention that is both intellectually challenging and practice-oriented towards a theory of social change. As scholars in the field of geographies of education are closely investigating the realm of power and knowledge, the question of radical spatial praxis then reflects initiatives that build on protecting human rights, social justice, and peaceful societies.

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Part III
Small Schools Versus Large Schools in
Their Local Context

Chapter 10

Bigger or Better? Research-Based Reflections on the Cultural Deconstruction of Rural Schools in Norway: Metaperspectives



Rune Kvalsund

Patterns of the demographic balance between rural and urban life in Norway have changed fundamentally during the last hundred years. In 1900, 80% of residents lived in a rural setting and 20% in an urban one; in 2015, this proportion was reversed. This pattern of settlement indicates an uneven balance of political power between the country's center (the capital and its region) and its periphery; School history in Norway is therefore largely the history of rural primary schools in sparsely populated areas. Local communities and schools are social units and institutions for developing, delivering, implementing, and maintaining services within the welfare state and can be seen both as instruments for the benefit of the nation-state and simultaneously as a broadly contributing recruitment arena for meaningful community life at the municipal and county level. Closer analysis of the Norwegian situation, however, reveals a hegemonic relationship and conflicting conceptions of this relationship, with long historical roots representing a tension between “ordinary people” and the “power elite” (cf., Karlsen, 1991, 1993; Rokkan, 1987; Slagstad, 1998; Telhaug & Mediås, 2003) that have left the “ordinary people” at a disadvantage, particularly in rural parts of the country. Thus, Norway has a historically grounded rural-urban division. Small places and communities seems to be excluded from the hegemonic concept of space.

It is therefore necessary to sketch some contextual main lines in legitimizing the discussion of research themes (and indirectly the design and theory). The heading of the present paper—“Bigger or Better?”—implies questions on school quality, and quality for whom? Important conceptual dimensions that would clarify these qualities cross each other in this field of research: rural-urban, local-global, place-space, security and grounding-freedom. Researchers often formulate these dimensions normatively—what rural places and schools ought to be—towards the right rather than the left point of the dimensions. At the same time, they indicate the

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cultural deconstruction of rural schools. However, rural variation is too broad for this normative way of thinking to be constructive. Researchers must treat these concepts and dimensions of research analytically and empirically, inviting comparisons by specifying the concrete contexts of how they are applied when judging the quality, conditions, and processes of living in a rural setting and learning in rural schools.

On Research Themes

To judge the relevance of research themes, it is necessary to sketch and discuss what might be indicators of the deconstruction of rural schools and the development of the rural-urban transition or transformation such as rurality and scale; changing patterns of migration; remoteness and isolation; cultural deconstruction of places and communities; norms of quality and deficiency; closing rural schools; periods and patterns of decision making; production models of schooling; international educational governance.

Scale and Localization: A Reduction of Educational Space and Cultural Deconstruction of Rural Schools?

School size and localization are important for people living in a rural area. Rurality is strongly associated with a small scale. Such a scale—an historically important characteristic of everyday life in Norway—is clearly weakened by the ongoing processes of centralization. Rurality in Norway includes smaller communities, villages, and sparsely populated areas along the entire Norwegian coast, the islands, the Western fjords, and valleys, as well as the valleys of the eastern parts of the country and the mountain communities. This is contrary to the misleading proposition that in Norway a key locus of peripherality is spatialized as the “north” (cf., Corbett, 2015, p. 10).

Rurality is also associated with *remoteness* and *isolation*—as seen from the center. Remoteness, however, is bidirectional. Rural places have the potential to be more integrated into challenging nature; cities would be more integrated into mobile and socially crowded culture, living more on the run. Rural living is a choice of social grounding in a place, becoming place-competent, as a primary quality of rural life compared with urban freedom to move from place to place within the urban and global space. Adding to this, one can observe a change in the concepts of house and home. Homes and houses are usually understood as places to live, something material and cultural that one grows into—something that is contextualized by close nature, culture, and observable production even for children

growing up. Houses are part of a cultural life, world, and history (Bryson, 2012). What about small rural schools?

A new economic concept seems to be gaining hegemonic momentum: Houses are primarily conceived as a good or bad investment, meaning that the value of homes and houses is detached from their location and its physical and cultural grounding, rendering them more abstract by being defined by their potential economic value in a market. The focus on school costs indicates a similar thinking about rural schools: They are not primarily cultural and educational institutions, ensuring identity building, qualifications and recruitment to the region and local community, they are rather items of expenditure in a budget. Paradoxically, small rural schools are being closed during a historical period in which Norway is one of the richest countries of the world (Solstad, 2009). The closure of rural schools did not happen when the country was poor. In this process of dissociating people and persons from communities and places, homes are reduced to potential objects for sale, objects associated with an abstract economic freedom—an investment—that can be exchanged by migration for other “freedoms” elsewhere, most often in the cities. Everyday sociocultural thinking about homes and places is becoming economically directed. Childhood, children’s bedroom talk, family traditions, and associations connected with one’s own identity seem to be disappearing in the sales process, changing to something that the person can choose themselves after calculating their individual and personal benefit. The concepts of local rural place and community are sought reduced to urban and global space. Rural schools and their local communities are being culturally deconstructed and devalued as well.

Places and communities also have concrete contextual grounding and borders related to nature, culture, production, and history, and as communities they have inscribed different relations of discipline and power, with profound consequences for social learning (Foucault, 1984a). Their patterns of discipline and power would characterize their schools and other local arenas as well, and must be described, analyzed, and compared in each case for villages and sparsely populated rural areas, while respecting the variation of rural settings as arenas of learning. Present reformers of the Norwegian school system seem to be ignoring this aspect. The school owner, it seems, will no longer pay for small rural schools as institutions for building local and regional identity. Small rural schools can be sold to private interests.

This is an aspect of what Giddens (1991) more generally and theoretically refers to as disembedding or deconstructing social life in the late modern society. A paradox might be that rural people who learned to leave (cf., Corbett, 2007) and now have an urban freedom to move between places might experience the stronger need to belong to a place—perhaps a romantic dream of the place where they grew up to relieve their present estrangement? In a national study, Sørli, Aure, and Langset (2012, pp. 17–23) analyzed the motives of returning migrants in rural regions of Norway and found that work, residence, place qualities, identity, and family were central factors. Small-scale fishery and farming is protected by legislation. Fishing resources belong to the Norwegian people and cannot be sold to private interests,

even by the government. Only those who take part as fishers can own fishing boats. The sale of farms is restricted by the Allodial Rights Act.¹

This reflects a kind of local life-world defense of rural resources that became grounded in national legislation after pressure from defenders of tradition. Because of the scattered nature of Norwegian settlements, children traditionally have a right to education in their neighborhood environment. During the first 120 years of Norwegian school history, (1740–1860) the school came to the pupils. Teachers travelled to children's homes. During the next 100 years, schools were built and democratically located as permanent schools with as equal distances from homes as possible for the pupils living in the different parts of a municipality. Neighboring environments or local communities are not defined in objective terms of time and distance. However, sparsely populated areas (SPA) are defined as local communities in which less than 30% of the population live in places/villages with more than 200 inhabitants. (In 2000, 142 municipalities of 435 in total were SPA municipalities). In the years after 1960, the hegemonic belief that large schools have better educational qualities produced a wave of centralization across the country. More than 2000 schools were closed and challenged the tradition of schools in the local environment of the pupils. Research did not support this belief of "bigger is better." The education act of 1969 consequently recommended small lower secondary schools and that each municipality have the right to decide its own school structure, while the nation state paid for the main costs, teacher wages.

The national curriculum plan included many locally decided qualities underscoring the importance of grounding school content in the local environment: the school supporting the family as an institution of primary education and upbringing, teaching themes/subjects reflecting pupil experience of a local nature, production, and culture; home-place knowledge; outdoor pursuit center; the procedures for school-parent cooperation. These educational qualities are founded on the "Norwegian Education Acts" and detailed in the "National curriculum plan" from 1987 (pp. 21, 24) and from 1997 (p. 44) emphasizing *the community active school*, for instance, not only preparing teaching connections to local nature, culture, and production, but also for the school to contribute to solving challenges of the local community, whether urban or rural. The new income system for the municipalities—the block-grant system—introduced in 1986 challenged the place-conscious content pattern and reinforced the standardization of schooling by teaching and learning abstract school subjects and starting a new wave of centralization that is still ongoing. The closure of small rural schools therefore represents a contradictory practice and is changing what rural schools were meant to be.

¹An allodial right to a property is an old Norwegian legal tradition. Unlike other countries' inheritance rights, the Norwegian allodial right is a right to reclaim, not to inherit. Only properties with at least 25,000 m² of cultivated land or at least 500,000 m² of productive forest can be allodial properties. The first person to own the property for 20 years establishes allodial rights for him-/herself and his/her descendants. Although others can buy an allodial property, those with allodial rights have 6 months after the owner's registration to reclaim the property. Every owner of cultivated land and some areas of pasture must farm the land. The general rule is that the owner must reside on the property.

Learning by Imparting and Acquisition or Learning by Participation?

The contours of two competing perspectives of schooling are becoming visible—learning by *participation* and learning by *imparting and acquisition*. The perspective of participation is associated with the community-active school, a sustainable, place-based, and place-conscious education most frequently found in rural communities: It says that place matters—not least in educational processes (cf., Berg-Olsen, 2008; Corbett, 2013, 2015; Edvardsen, 1981, 1983, 2004; Gruenewald & Smith, 2008; Karlberg-Granlund, 2009; Kvalsund, 1994; Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009, 2014; Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chávez, & Angelillo, 2003; Schafft & Jackson, 2010; Sigsworth & Solstad, 2005; Solstad, 1978, 1994, 2009; Solstad & Andræ Thelin, 2006; Solstad, Leka, & Sigsworth, 2012).

In contrast, traditional *desk and classroom teaching* imparting second-hand knowledge in selected abstract school subjects is more characteristic of urban schools. The later primary school reforms represent a considerable pressure for changing rural schools in line with the imparting and acquisition perspective (Berg-Olsen, 2008). This represents a dissociation of school from local nature, culture, and production and the community-active school. A second main intention of the primary school reform of 2006² was to place the acquisition of school-subject knowledge at the forefront of teaching and learning, focusing on formally tested results and consequently on the measurement of pupil achievement in fairly abstract school subjects rather than on education for the broader moral values formulated in the general section of the national curriculum plan.³ This seems to be an additional indicator of rural schools changing in the direction of what one might describe as “placeless service consumption.” By its abstract quality school content is supposed to qualify rural youth as work force in a global, competitive economy.

Quality Norms of Small Rural Schools

A related theme exemplifying normativity has been the increasing hegemonic perspective of rural schools as *deficient schools*—deficient versions of larger urban schools in formal as well as in informal learning. Seen from this perspective, small rural schools are something to leave behind. The counter-perspective is that keeping rural schools and the long-lasting alteration of their content to better fit urban values in classroom teaching and learning, represents a direct challenge to the role schools are meant to play in local place-based identity building and local community survival. However, if these arguments of deficiency are valid, only cities are acceptable locations for schools. The *hegemonic concept of normality* in this sense

²The reforms is called *Kunnskapsløftet* (The knowledge lift).

³See <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/generell-del-av-lareplanen/>

has for years been—and still seems to be—urban, most often large and single-graded. This concept of the deviance or deconstruction of rural schools can be observed again and again in many individual cases of the closure of small rural schools, which were based solely on economic arguments referred to in economic reports from consulting firms rather than research. The reports do not even consider qualities and values small rural schools gain through being educationally place-based and place-conscious. Examples also exist of educational researchers advising the closure of rural schools without grounding their recommendation in relevant research (Kvalsund, 2014, 2017; Nordal, 2014; Solstad, 2009, pp. 188–206).

The School Conceived as a Knowledge Enterprise for Production

A concept of schools as knowledge-industrial production units (school as a knowledge enterprise) prevails and is the core presumptions in several analysis reports requested by the governmental Office of Municipalities and Regions and Modernization. Researchers of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology's (NTNU), Department of Economics have analyzed the efficiency potential of lower secondary schools by calculating the relationship between pupil grades in the abstract school subjects Norwegian, English, and Mathematics after 10th grade (dependent variable) and resources spent in the form of the number of teacher-labor years and teaching hours, controlled for parental social background. Municipal revenues, the fragmentation of political parties, and the proportion of socialists in the municipality council are additional independent variables and are said to have negative effects, increasing resource use and lowering performance. The conclusion, however, is that large savings can be achieved without reduced learning outcomes (grades) by continuing the process of closing small rural schools (Borge & Naper, 2005). A similar analysis is completed for 2010–2012 and the primary school sector has an efficiency potential of 24% (Borge, Nyhus, & Pettersen, 2014).

Another report—“Achievement Differences Between Schools and Municipalities: An Analysis of Standardized National Tests 2008”—was published in 2010 (SØF-rapport nr. 01/10) with regression analysis of test scores in abstract school subjects as the dependent variable. Independent variables were aspects of the pupils' social background (parents' education, occupation, and income), school characteristics (category of school, number of pupils in school and classes, gender distribution in the grades, teacher gender and education) and aspects of school localization (county, municipality size, municipal revenue). Theoretically, 100% of the variance and relative explanatory power of each factor could be explained—if all relevant factors were included in the model and could be measured precisely. However, the report's authors state that the study lacks information on pupil intelligence and quality of teaching, behavior, and interaction between the pupils—which are probably among

the more important factors in understanding and explaining differences in pupil subject learning and achievement. This lack of data turns interpretation of relationships between dependent and independent variables into a challenging and difficult process. The researchers report that 10–20% of the variation in test scores is explained by the variables in the model of the regression analysis, meaning that the major part remains unexplained. The statistical significance for many variable relationships reveals only very small effects, ones that are occasionally unreasonable and even in conflict. However, with many variables and a high number of participating units (e.g., a complete age cohort of pupils), relationships that are substantially without importance and interest would be presented as statistically significant and thereby imbued with a false educational importance. This low-quality SØF-report includes many results of this kind. Despite the restricted value of this research, the leader of the national Directorate of Education reported the results to deputy majors and members of the municipal councils at national meetings for small rural municipalities. The false and misleading message is that a small rural school is a risk factor in pupils' subject knowledge learning and thereby indirectly a risk factor for their future development. After the introduction of the block-grant system in 1986, local decision makers (and even a minister of the government) have therefore received and present seemingly research-based empirical evidence for closing small rural schools, evidence that a closer look reveals to be invalid (Solstad & Kvalsund, 2010). The empirical "evidence" was presented by what Solstad (2016, p. 30) describes as false prophets.

This oversimplified and misleading conception of schools and education at the elementary level, based on the logics of material production, stems from economic rather than educational research institutions. Studies like these lie behind the silent centralization in process. It is thought provoking that test results in abstract school subjects are accepted as the main indicator of educational quality, although children in many cases spend 11–12 h per week being bussed at only 6 years of age. That closing of small rural schools reduces children's spare time activities, conditions of physical exercises, and well-being (Solstad & Solstad, 2015)—that the rural community loses the local school as a cultural institution and intergenerational meeting place (Melheim, 2011)—that important local work places are centralized as well and the fact that young families will hardly settle down in places without schools—none of this is part of the regression equations and models of the referenced studies and production models above. Neither do the reports refer to peer-reviewed research whose authors analyze the potential qualities of small rural schools, such as social and educational interaction across age and gender, natural learning of responsibility, extended contact with adults in the local community, use of social context and nature in teaching and learning, as well as closer and more integrated contact with parents and caretakers—these qualities are among the more well-documented ones published in three PhD theses (Berg-Olsen, 2008; Johansen, 2009; Kvalsund, 1994). Changing the concept of schooling to better fit the logic of material production rather than cultural communicative interaction is part of the process of deconstructing the concept of rural schools.

Educational Governance and Achievement Testing

The present and reinforced centralization of schools is part of a larger picture associated with result-oriented economic production models of education and an emerging global educational governance observed internationally. Meyer and Benavot critically discuss the OECD PISA system in their book “PISA, Power and Policy: The Emergence of Global Educational Governance” (2013). The logic of PISA and of a global testing culture (Smith, 2017) is obvious. Norway can serve as an example. Without discussion of the founding historical, cultural, and ideological presumptions on which the Norwegian educational system and the national curriculum plan is built, PISA testing and teaching in selected theoretical school subjects now have priority in curriculum planning and daily practice in rural schools, communities, and municipalities. Teaching is practiced as if these measures were covering the content of the national and local curriculum plans—a quality they do not have. Within this reductionist educational regime, place-based content of rural schooling and teachers as knowledgeable agents are challenged by standardized teaching programs that are commercially developed and based on Randomized Trial Control (RTC) logic. Teachers are treated as a potential educational problem (Smith, 2016), because how the teacher in fact acts in the classrooms cannot be known or controlled under these programs (Kvalsund, 2017). An important aspect of governance and governmentality is making the professionals and ordinary people accept the logic by unnoticeable persuasion rather than arguments and conviction—indirectly deconstructing the meaning and qualities of rural schooling and invading local democratic processes.

Biased globalized and abstract school subject knowledge and curriculum content contribute substantially to the weakening of place-grounded thinking on identity and in many cases seem to be a push factor for out-migration from rural local communities and regions. The transition of rural youth to the urban areas of the country has been going on for years—in too many cases socially draining the local community by exporting the best and brightest recruits to urban areas and cities. To use Corbett’s (2007) term on this process of qualification, these young people are in school learning to leave the rural. This is also the direction of migration and settlement.

The Block-Grant System: A Mechanism for Change of Rural Schooling

The pattern of school localization and the procedures for making decisions on school localization have changed dramatically. Until 1986, a municipality could not decide to close a school or change the school’s structure unless the people of the catchment area and the county director of education had been heard. Each municipality was granted earmarked money from the Ministry of Education if the

county director approved the local school structure. Municipalities could not save money for other service sectors by closing small rural schools.

1986 can be identified as a historical turning point for schools, a change from an expansive phase in developing the school system of the welfare state to a contractive phase: This was the year policymakers decided on a *block-grant system* for transferring money from the national to the local/municipal level. The block-grant system challenged the tradition of having a relatively decentralized school system across the country, which had been based on the educational qualities associated with place-based schooling and the connection between children's life experiences from the local community and school learning (Solstad, 2009, pp. 31–33). These values were even embedded in the national curriculum plan of 2006 (LK06), in the period in which policymakers had decided on a new direction: focusing on selected school subjects and achievement testing.

However, policymakers precalculated the grant for each municipality's schools by applying *the Agder model* (Hannevig Friestad, 1990; Hannevig Friestad & Johnsen, 1992) identifying theoretical school districts for standard schools. The block-grant system is the mechanism that makes room for strategic calculation in the field of schooling. Analyzing the census districts in the municipalities and counties, policymakers set the precalculated size of a school at 450 pupils (a school size that in Norway is to be found only in urban schools) and a minimum bus travelling time of half an hour, meaning that municipalities with a decentralized school structure were exposed to a heavy centralizing pressure. This was followed by a descaling of school-competent persons in the municipal school administration, not least the chief municipal education officer. The Agder model formed the conceptual core of a computer program used at the ministry level for precalculating theoretical cost-effective school structures in Norwegian municipalities. Within this technical and seemingly neutral perspective, schools and communities are considered and transformed into "industrial-like production units" (Hannevig Friestad & Johnsen, 1992).⁴ Hanushek (1981, 1989) tells us that increasing teacher density has no educational effect. Based on these studies Norwegian policymakers claim that amalgamation and centralization have no negative educational consequences. Maintaining the small schools would mean "throwing money at schools," according to Hanushek (1981).

These narrow and limiting models of schooling focusing on test results in abstract school subjects as the only outcome and quality indicator may be judged consistent with New Public Management (NPM) concepts of individual freedom of choice, transforming the role of teachers to that of public service providers responsible for fostering their "customers" (pupils') individual careers as general service consumers. In this perspective, schools are conceived as production units and are expected to be effective independent of place. However, the realities of mountains, fjords, and valleys in rural Norway in most cases limit the available alternatives. Freedom to choose, therefore, is transformed into something very different from voluntary

⁴Bonesrønning and Rattsø (1992), for example, applied the school effectiveness model to upper secondary schools. Bonesrønning and Vaag Iversen (2010) analyzed differences in 2008 test results of national standardised tests as measures of effectiveness.

consumption: People must choose—to stay or leave. This is the true situation, although the authors of the Norwegian Education Act and the National Curriculum Plan insist that children in Norway have a right to go to schools in the near and local environment, independent of parental social background and where they live in the country. Closing small schools threatens important political aims about the whole country as a living landscape with local resources that should be only sustainably exploited. This was announced in St. Meld.⁵ 21 (2005–2006), “Heart for the Whole Country.” Once again, what was said and written was one thing—what is done seems to be something else.

However, the block-grant system established a new decision pattern—*centralized decentralization* as a first step. The central government in this way exports difficult and conflicting decisions about closing small rural schools and changing the local school structure to the municipal council (a kind of enforced governance by reduced funding of the block grant for the schools in the theoretical school structure, aimed at forcing local stakeholders to accept the changed economic possibilities as inevitable). Further centralization takes place at the municipal level—in other words, decentralized centralization, meaning closing and relocating schools from the sparsely populated places, most often to the municipal center, enhancing local conflicts, and weakening the local community as a collective social unit (Kvalsund, 2009). The block-grant system has made possible the cultural deconstruction of the educational idea of small rural schools and communities and made local actors to accept it as inevitable point of the agenda—an example of the concept of governmentality as introduced by Foucault (1991).

Migration and Changes in Child Settlement

An additional indicator of the process of the cultural deconstruction of rural schools and communities can be found in the new patterns of out-migration. In Norway, the long-lasting change from rural to urban living continues: Since 1995, the country’s six largest cities have expanded and increased their population by 32%, compared with only 8% for the rest of the country. Centralization and urbanization seem to form a highway of change—but a highway that is leading in the wrong direction, judged against national goals of settlement in all parts of the country. Explanations of the Norwegian patterns of centralization and out-migration have changed over time: From unsubstantiated fear of irreversible *depopulation* of rural and sparsely populated areas in the years before 1980, the understanding has changed to the more nuanced concept of *thinning out communities*, describing effects of long-lasting population decline on social cooperation and services offered to the community members (Aasbrenn, 1989; Sørli, 2016)—schools included. Since 1990, a main challenge has been the increasingly *selective out-migration* to the cities by girls, who are not returning to their native rural communities to bear their children or raise

⁵ St. Meld. means a report to the *Storting* (the Norwegian national assembly).

their own families, as they used to do. This change is characterized as the *increasing centralization of child settlement* (Sørli, 2016), which researchers have explained with a normative urban trend implying better material living conditions and noneconomic factors related to culture, consumption, and quality of life in urban areas—in other words, preferences that might change in the short-run if living costs were to undergo a sudden and marked increase (Wessel & Barstad, 2016). The resultant decline in the number of children forces rural municipalities to consider closing small rural schools. However, the later tendency in Norway is that larger schools are being closed as well.

Judging factors in the present situation, this wave of centralization in Norway is clearly normative and ideological—as demonstrated by the fact that reorganizing schools into larger units lacks solid grounding in research-based knowledge and is happening not only with small rural schools: The Norwegian government has recently initiated a parallel situation in the service fields of the welfare state, such as policing, health services and hospitals, courts, municipalities and counties (as well as in the primary production of small-scale fishery and farming). These fields all seem to be in a process of structural and cultural change towards the creation of larger units and concomitant impoverishing of rural institutions and communities, threatening their significance as sources of cultural identity. Smaller units are forced into larger ones framed with different and crossing borders in each field. Bigger is better.

This cloud of reforms makes the present situation very unclear and chances for democratic involvement extremely difficult for ordinary people as well as for researchers, including in reforms of school localization. Reforms are supposed to be innovations representing qualities of something new. However, qualities are difficult to measure because they are grounded in the unique. Therefore, real innovations can be measured only later. And later, after becoming measurable, the new is no longer an innovation. Looked at from a distance, considering the many indicators of a reinforced process of cultural de- and reconstruction of what rural schools are supposed to be, researchers studying rural schools as single and multiple cases, should focus on individual and collective experiences over time as seen from below and within a life-world perspective.

A Picture of the Present Research on Rural Schools and Their Communities: Themes and Research Questions

A central question is what research themes were preferred during the transition from the expansive to the contractive phase of the Norwegian welfare state. An overview is given in Table 10.1. During the entire period after World War II, the Norwegian school system has been characterized by centralization through specific education acts and national curriculum plans, although with an opening for the development of local curriculum content and local regional decisions on school

Table 10.1 Research on rural schools in Norway, 1960–2016: Some historical main lines

		Phase of welfare state development in education and schooling—a turning point				
		1960–1990 Expansive phase		1990–2016 Contractive phase		
		Earlier	Later	Earlier	Later	
		<i>School system tradition—strongly regulated at national level</i>				
		<i>Acceleration of closing small rural schools after the late 1980ies</i>				
Re- search themes	Factors within the school and classrooms	<i>Inward oriented and separate didactic educational research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smaller integrated research projects - Internal as well as contextual factors studied - Case study orientation 		<p>1. Program research, Norwegian Research Council. Focusing on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching of school subjects - Achievement testing - School management and accountability 	
	Factors in the school context, communities and regions		<p>Signal concepts of the time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupil and parent rights - Devolution of power - Local democracy and empowerment - Community conscious schooling - Cultural identity of pupils, schools and local communities-variation - Local curriculum development tuned to seasonal changes in production <p>- Projects failed in leading to initiative of policy change at national level</p>		<p>Research projects on rural schools and their communities:</p> <p>1. School-localization; economic, sociological and educational aspects, 1989–1997 (Volda University College). Data from 19 smaller and larger schools in four counties and municipalities.</p> <p>2. School and childhood in sparsely populated districts, 2004–2009 (Nesna University College). Data from 142 SPA^a municipalities with 527 schools.</p>	<p>Conflicting signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St.Meld^b 21, 2005–2006: 'A heart for the whole country' <p style="text-align: center;">↑↓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reform 2007, 'The knowledge lift' (Main-focus on school subject learning)
			<i>Outward oriented and separate sociological research</i>			<p>2. Research project: Learning Regions, Sogndal University College (Attempts at explaining high PISA achievement scores among pupils in Sogn og Fjordane county). Data from 4 regions.</p>

Source: Design by author

^aSPA means Sparsely Populated Areas, in other words, communities in which less than 30% of the population live in places/villages having more than 200 inhabitants

^bSt.Meld. means report to the Storting (the Norwegian national assembly)

structure made at a municipal level. Kvalsund (2004b, 2009) and Kvalsund and Lauglo (1994) observe that prior to the mid-1970s, research on schools and their local community was separated into two branches: On the one hand, sociological and other social scientist researchers were outward oriented and excluded themselves from what was going on in schools and classrooms; instead, they focused on communities and society ignoring socialization, teaching, and learning. On the other hand, educational researchers were mainly inward oriented and locked themselves up in classrooms, with a narrow didactic perspective on educational research. This division seems to have lasted for several years.

However, the later part of the expansive phase of the welfare state up to the 1990s features a period of research clearly tuned to decentralization in research and development work, with researchers studying the context of schooling as well as internal school aspects. This is the situation before the turning point of centralized decentralization and the block-grant model of school cost in the municipalities. Local democracy, devolution of power, developing the cultural identity of pupils, schools, and communities, as well as place-conscious schooling are signal concepts of the time. Smaller research projects dominated. Examples of variables studied are school size and the degree of centralization related to pupil well-being, ability to attract qualified staff, discipline during classes, and social contact between pupils. Researchers were motivated by the desire to discover the factors that made for a better, higher quality school. Case studies of schools and communities involved in ongoing school centralization processes are part of the research picture—comparative research on schools with state-mandated and local school content analyzing pupil learning as well as recruitment and maintenance of the local community. Researchers analyzed local curriculum projects reflecting season variations, for example in local small-scale fisheries, as well as projects reflecting new ways of organizing schools and kindergartens into local cultural centers for intergenerational interaction and learning for children.

A subcategory of this research is formed by studies of social history exploring the schooling and consequences of rather brutal and disqualifying *Norwegianization* attempts to weaponize schooling to destroy the language, culture, and childhood of national minorities such as Sami, Coast Sami, and Romany people. Local democracy, devolution of power, and developing the cultural identity of pupils played no role here (Brandal, Døving, & Plesner, 2017; Kvalsund, 2009, pp. 5–7).

The next step and effect is that of decentralized centralization, meaning that local politicians distribute lack of money between small rural communities at the local municipality level—a consequence of which is the closure of small rural schools (Kvalsund, 2009)—a process that has accelerated for many years: Since 1986, 1391 small schools have been closed without any discussion by the *Storting* and the Government (Ertesvåg & Hegvik, 2017). This is about half of the number of primary schools still in existence. Solstad and Solstad (2015) have also documented that the number of primary schools in the 140 most sparsely populated municipalities in Norway have fallen from 500 in 1990 to just 300 today.

For years, researchers have wondered what knowledge grounded in relevant research explains why small rural school should be closed in conflict with children's

legal right to acquire an education at schools located in their local environment. Is this a result of research-based knowledge about the low quality of learning in small rural schools? What consequences do local communities experience when their voice is not heard by the central government and politicians at the national level in a question as central as whether their children have a school to attend in their local community, as expressed in the Norwegian Education Act? Research on what happens with the small rural schools and their communities has been funded to a very little extent. My best option is therefore to present three research projects that have been funded since 1989 to research localization and learning qualities in rural schools.

In 1980, during the transition period to the contractive period starting in the late 1980s, a national research project—"School Localization: Economic, Sociological and Educational Aspects"—started at Volda University College, financed by the Associations of Norwegian Municipalities and the Norwegian Research Council (NRC). The research project was not associated with any specific central reform and was funded by the open NRC Program for Educational Research. It was an open research study on the educational, sociological and economic aspects of comparing formal and informal educational processes in smaller and larger rural school—school localization. Its researchers asked whether place matters. Working with complementary theory, they made a comparative analysis of multiple cases of smaller and bigger rural schools and their communities. They discovered that vacant capacity rather than need for investment in new buildings, transportation costs, and smallness, *per se*, explained cases of small rural schools' high costs. The study included analysis of school closure and both immediate and long term out-migration. The researchers analyzed teacher settlement by studying a combination of human resources and resources of place. Other themes of comparative research were formal and informal parental contact and cooperation with the school; the informal social learning and social networks of the pupil in the three learning arenas lessons, recesses, and spare time; and transitions between the primary and lower secondary level (Kvalsund, 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Kvalsund, Løvik, & Myklebust, 1992; Myklebust, Kvalsund, Løvik, & Hagen, 1992). The research results are clearly in favor of small rural schools and communities (Kvalsund, 2009, pp. 8–9)—yet had no impact at the national level. The closure of small rural schools continued and later accelerated considerably. The main reason seems to be the new block grant system of financing schools at the municipal level, just as prior local warnings had predicted (Solstad, 2009, pp. 31–35).

The goals of a second research project referred to in Table 10.1, "Schooling and Growing Up in Sparsely Populated Districts," by Professor Karl Jan Solstad (2009), were funded by the NRC. This research project was independent of regulations from a national reform and analyzed schooling close to where children live as a democratic welfare good in 142 municipalities with sparsely populated districts and data on 527 schools. How has decentralization affected school equitability in the process of decentralized centralization? How can schools located 30 km away serve as a resource for the local community? How is social learning affected when the school and its teachers are using place-based learning resources located very

remotely? What are characteristics of threatened and closed schools? Who are the stakeholders behind the process and what characterizes local resistance and mobilization?

Solstad (2009) compared small schools and kindergartens as learning arenas as well as the development of social competence and peer socialization in sparsely populated districts with small schools. The study's variables were the context of childhood, the type of settlement, the industrial and production base, the school location and school transport, the level of teacher qualification, stability and turn over, teaching resources, and local content, availability, and systematics. This national study includes 142 municipalities with 433 of 527 (82%) schools responding. The average number of people in the municipalities is 2750. One research study of this project is a PhD thesis titled "Care or Strategy? Rationality and Dilemmas in Multi-Graded schools," by Anita Berg-Olsen (2008). Central research questions of this doctoral thesis are "What characterizes variations in education and learning activities in multi-graded schools? What are the concepts of teaching and learning behind educational measures and action in multi-graded schools? What learning contexts are developed by the way educational practice is understood and realized in multigraded schools?" (Berg-Olsen, 2008, p. 19) The project's research results, coming 10 years after the school localization project, support the study of aspects of school localization—in favor of the small rural schools. The project's details are documented in Solstad (2009).

This comparative educational research has been peer-reviewed and published nationally as well internationally in well-respected research journals. If one searches online for the researchers of these two projects, a pattern emerges: The central government does not refer to the research,⁶ but a huge number of references are made by parents and local politicians mobilizing resistance and counter-forces against the closure of rural schools. One can even find related local comments to a governmental hearing on school legislation. It is therefore evident that the research-based knowledge from the two projects fulfills a democratic function in giving voice to life-world actors and interests in the regions and local communities.

Actors at the governmental level have turned down researchers' applications for funding this project as a monitoring, longitudinal data-base for what is happening to schools in the sparsely populated areas of Norway. The process of closing small and larger rural schools continues. Research on important dimensions—such as long-term consequences for children, parents, and the local community—is neglected. Focusing on the selected three projects therefore gives one a fairly comprehensive picture of research on rural schools over the last 30 years. The NRC-project researchers studying schools under the 2006 knowledge reform had data on small as well as larger schools, urban as well as rural. However, no research project produced a comparative analysis of small and large rural schools (Kvalsund, 2009).

⁶Melheim (2015) points to the fact that without understandable reasons the research project "Learning Regions" does not refer to research (not even a doctoral thesis) published either by the "School Localization" project at Volda University College nor the research project "Schooling and Growing Up in Sparsely Populated Districts," at Nesna University College and Norland Research.

However, actors at the central level granted a research project funding in accordance with the logic of “Reform 2007: ‘The Knowledge Lift,’” with its main focus on school subject learning and achievement testing: The research was titled “Sogn og Fjordane county (SF)—A paradox?” and was related to the question of why rural SF has since 2006 been receiving the best results on national tests in reading, mathematics, and Norwegian language, at same level as schools in the capital city of Oslo. Researchers compare achievement results on standardized tests in selected abstract school subjects at schools in SF with the test results of schools in three low-performing counties with similar population structures and socioeconomic prerequisites, such as parental education, occupational background, and employment. The research project “Learning Regions” is funded by the NRC Program for Research and Innovation in the Education Sector, FINNUT and was directed by Professor Göran Söderlund, Sogndal University College. The research study was organized in 12 research groups. Each group has reported their results in the book “School Quality is Created Locally” (Langfeldt, 2015). The researchers’ method is to treat the county as a general independent variable and results on the subject achievement tests as a dependent variable. The 12 different research groups then specify the general independent variable in several factors as potential explanatory factors of differences in achievement tests (presented on the home pages of NRC, my translation): (1) The regional historical tradition of school support; (2) Historical teacher authority; (3) A cultural two-language advantage (*Bokmål* related to Danish and *Ny-norsk* based on Norwegian dialects by Ivar Aasen); (4) Practicing management by objectives at the municipal level; (5) School as an agent of change—parent roles; (6) A learning educational system at the regional level; (7) The external culture of school, social integration, or conflict at the local community level; (8) Teacher competence level; (9) Self-efficacy beliefs and gender; (10) Teacher-pupil communication pattern; (11) Educational thinking, practice, and management; and (12) The importance of the learning environment. Of these 12 factors, two (3, 10) contribute to the correlation between the characteristics of schools and community in SF as a county and its students’ high scores on achievement tests; two factors (9, 12) make partial and therefore minor contributions to the correlation.

The researchers of this project did not undertake a comparative analysis of potential effects of differences in characteristics of smaller and larger rural schools, such as school size, even if the data material would have invited such an analysis. Experienced teachers and researchers in SF heavily criticized this deficit (Fagerheim, 2015), a criticism answered by the research project by Söderlund, Vangsnes, and Tønnesen (2015) and discussed by Melheim (2015). Söderlund et al. (2015) state that researchers are uninterested in small schools as an explanation of good results on achievement tests because they comprise only a minor part (2.8%) of the pupils in SF county: To explain that small rural schools have the best results on achievement tests because they are small would be to generalize from subjective experiences. Rather, they contend, it is an effect of “the tyranny of small numbers,” meaning that a small number of very high or very low scores might change the average score significantly. The authors refer to the Wainer and Zverling (2006) article “Evidence that Smaller Schools Do Not Improve Student Achievement,” whose authors found

no correlation between small size and strong test results. However, Melheim (2015) points out that the Learning Region project has a misleading definition of small schools, because only schools with less than 30 pupils are categorized as small, although the Norwegian criterion is 90 pupils. It is also documented that Wainer and Zwerling used schools with 360 pupils as examples of what is meant by an American small school, making their arguments irrelevant for the Norwegian context. The teachers' and researchers' criticism that a comparative study of school size is still missing therefore prevails.

The most obvious characteristic of the research situation is that the massive closure of small rural schools is still ongoing—without updated research-based knowledge about consequences of school size at any level. The consequences for the local communities are described as county politics, not as educational and social science research with local educational relevance. The presented picture of research on rural schools indicates that researchers can only obtain funding by focusing their research on explaining characteristics of achievement results in selected school subjects. In this way, a lack of research contributes to the deconstruction of the concept of rural schools and communities.

Two social scientists have suggested concepts that can be used to give an overview—Habermas (1983, 1985, 1989) and Foucault (1984a, 1984b, 1991). Habermas suggests two concepts: *the system* and *the life world perspectives*.⁷ The system perspective invites us to analyze the practice of the central government, the state bureaucracy, and the capitalist economic interests, to understand the school as a production and knowledge enterprise for qualifying young people as the nation's work force in the international competitive economy.

The system perspective is external to the local community, its actors directing it top-down with an interest in implementing what is decided at the central level as reform measures. In many cases, this top-down implementation produces resistance and conflict (Solstad, 2009).⁸ The funding of research on knowledge learning in abstract, decontextualized, or placeless globalized school subjects, monitored and controlled by systematic achievement testing, demonstrates that the system perspective frames the practice of Norwegian research and school development described in this article.

So far, indicators illustrate how rural schools and communities are in a process of being culturally deconstructed, showing that the system world perspective is

⁷Habermas's concepts are *system* and *life world* in English translation. The concept of the life world points to the experienced actor meaning of every-day life. However, the system of arrangements has interacting agents as well—a system world. In the paragraphs to follow, I will therefore use *system* and *system world* as synonymous expressions.

⁸The author of the present article and a critical friend of the research project has suggested the establishment of a national database monitoring the development in schools and communities of sparsely populated areas in Norway. This could be done by continuing the data collection of the research project "Schooling and Growing Up in Sparsely Populated Districts" at intervals of 3–5 years as a cooperative project between Volda University College and Nesna University College. Possibilities for funding the operation, maintenance, and further development of the database were also explored at the governmental level without producing any conclusive results.

hegemonic, as demonstrated by the series of school reforms from the 1990s up to 2007. Researchers have paid little attention to the interests of actors in the local life world. Foucault (1991) has introduced the corresponding concept of *governmentality*, referring to the way in which the state exercises control over the bodies of the population (here the local school actors), trying to persuade them, rather than convincing them by argument to accept the control system by which they also indirectly learn to govern themselves and their fellow countrymen—for example through school management (not leadership), accountability, and achievement testing, or the closure of small rural schools. The process of centralized decentralization—grounded in block-grant funding of schools at the community level as described earlier in this text—is an example of governmentality: learnt control of themselves by accepting to close “deficit” small rural schools in reference solely to economic reasons, as a normal and accepted political procedure. The narrow block grant or money decides.

Moreover, the best and brightest pupils are not only learning to leave the local community for urban arenas of life course adaptations, but also to accept this as the normal path. This contributes to the development of thinning out communities within the meaning framework of Norway’s large and silent school reform—the closure small rural schools without the issue appearing on either a local, regional or a national research agenda. The community consequences of closing rural schools are neglected both at the formulation and realization level, as seen from the system perspective.

In Fig. 10.1, the second Habermas concept, the life world, is complementary to the system world concept and is directed from the bottom up. The system’s stakeholders are the more powerful agents and will in most cases invade the life world. The school as an institution of learning by participation in local and regional nature, culture, and production is challenged, as is residents’ ability to live meaningful local rural lives with an intrinsic value. The legitimation of learning in school is also to ensure recruitment to the local community by practicing place-based and place-conscious education. Parents and teachers in rural schools and communities are faced with the challenge of communicating the qualities of rural schooling as equitable. The quality of schooling seen from the local perspective is clearly not given priority as a dependent variable in research projects such as the “Learning regions” project. County effects on rather narrow achievement test results in abstract school subjects seems to be something that cannot be appreciated highly enough by central government and the leaders of suggesting research projects in NRC.

To settle conflicts on the differences of meaning between system and life world perspectives, Habermas has utilized a universalistic theory of discourse to develop the democratic procedure of negotiating consensus, applying his discourse ethics based on what he describes as “the better argument at the formulation level,” referring to the political intentions of the reforms. This is the first position of the second dimension of Fig. 10.1, the *formulation level*, in which educational policy, reforms, research and their value base are described, legitimized and decided. At the other end of this dimension lie concrete operationalization and attempts at realization

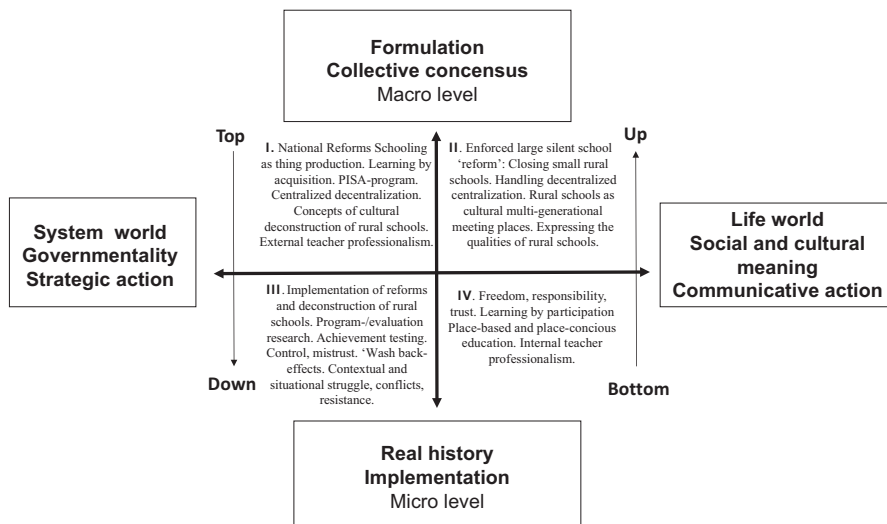


Fig. 10.1 Researching small rural schools in Norway: A meaning-table of research themes. Source: Designed by author

at the local level seen from system perspective. It might also refer to a competing or conflicting conception of schooling established as a pattern of learning by local teachers, parents, and pupils.

However, a profound problem has emerged in this analysis of the Norwegian practice of closing small rural schools: What can be done when the better argument is based on values pointing in opposite directions and that are not accepted at the local level? Foucault points to the phenomenon of governmentality and the *real every-day situations* where actual power relations are situated in concrete contexts: Communication presumes power. Conflicts can be resolved only by pursuing practical wisdom, common sense to the best of one’s judgement in these concrete situations. Foucault considers handling concrete resistance, conflict, and struggle (compared with the Habermas’s discourse-ethical negotiation of consensus) the better way of establishing freedom and democratic decisions. This is relevant for an increasingly marginalized rural population resisting the situation of the cultural deconstruction of rural communities and schools.

Researching school learning from a local life-world perspective focusing on identity development and comparing categories of local communities would be an important counter-position for research on rural schools. Some relevant subthemes of research would be studying teacher professionalism from within schools—a teacher life world perspective—compared with the externally directed teacher professionalism associated with the dominating national reforms. Multi-grade teaching compared with the socially restricted learning of single-grade teaching could be studied as a preventative measure against the “peer-society” and ageism (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005), pointing to the risk that the profound age segregation

of schooling of today disqualifies pupils from communicating with older and younger cohorts in the future.

Judging the Norwegian research situation against this background (cf., Fig. 10.1), the need arises for a research process grounded in a rural life-world perspective as seen from below, starting with a power analysis of school political documents at the national level, identifying potentially conflicting points with the local and regional interests (e.g., Engebretsen & Heggen, 2012). The main theme of research should be the cultural deconstruction of rural communities and schools.

On Research Design and Methods

A research design has several main functions. The first is to describe the packages of research activities that comprise the research study within an overall strategy that includes describing details about the methods of data collection and data analysis. The second is to justify the choice of research strategy grounded in the project's purpose, research theme, and research questions. The analysis of the research situation on rural schools and communities above is an example of such a justification. A third function is to explain the logical sequence of the phases of the research process and how it is connected to the philosophical presumptions of the research study, which I earlier referred to as theory of science and reflections about the actor-structure balance. The theory of science is based on presumptions, urging the researcher to remember that we cannot know for sure, keeping the researcher doubt about scientific knowledge alive.

Research design has several aspects: (1) use of theory; (2) time frame, whether the study is cross-sectional or longitudinal, and the time perspective prospective or retrospective; (3) case- /variable-number relationship—an intensive or in-depth study (small case number/high variable-number) or extensive or broad study (small variable number/large case number); (4) a controlled (experimental; comparative studies) or natural (case studies, historical studies) research context; (5) quantitative (numbers) or qualitative (words and images) data. Another important aspect is the single, idiosyncratic, worthwhile-in-itself case on the one side and the many, general, and instrumental cases on the other. This difference is what Stake (2005) meant when in his analysis of case studies he described some as intrinsic others as instrumental, extracting knowledge from the cases to compare, understand and explain a common aspect. Again, the three research projects will illustrate choices about design aspects of Norwegian research on small rural schools.

Under pressure at the national level to evaluate formal learning in central school subjects, the researchers of the School Localization project decided to examine the informal learning processes to complement the knowledge field on learning in multi-graded schools.⁹ The idea was that informal learning processes might be even

⁹The leader of the project at the central level came to Volda and very much wanted us to develop knowledge tests and compare test results for pupils at smaller and larger rural schools. The project

more important than the formal learning processes, either by compensating for or reinforcing what happened in periods of formal learning at school. As this implied researching children's play and cultural activities, it called for a design that could ensure room for new voices—not least the voices of children. Tiller (1989) discussed the meaning of the concept of children and pointed to a bias in child research. The tendency in Norwegian social science research on children's life situation up to the late 1980s had been give voice to adults, those working with children, rather than children themselves and what they had to say about being children, for example in schools. The children's voices are central in trying to analyze the rural school situation by tracing meaning patterns from below and from a life world perspective.

The educational aspect of the research project meant that we had to chart the pattern of social relations between pupils and know about their relational pattern in three different arenas—school classes, the recesses between classes, and the spare-time arena after the end of the school day. This gave us an overview of the whole day. Researchers have shown that a child will be able to give reliable and valid answers to questions about who they usually worked and played with. Asking about specific points of time has not proven to be a reliable method (Kvalsund, 1994). We also needed a reliable picture of the inner structure of relationships among children, reflecting such processes as exclusion, inclusion, and isolation related to the age and gender of the pupils. We also needed to know the cultural meaning of these structural patterns to understand the informal learning of the children's life world. The idea was that informal learning processes might be even more important than the formal learning processes, either by compensating for or reinforcing what happened in periods of formal learning at school.

The project members chose to collect complete network data from all children except the 6-year-olds and then to conduct intensive research interviews of the historians among the pupils, the sixth graders who knew the traditions and changes over time. In this way, we could base our analysis on quantitative as well as qualitative data, including data from field observations. The details of the analysis included reconstructing categories and developing typologies to catch the qualities of inner life and informal learning.

Combining the two dimensions, points in space (one versus several) with points in time (one versus several), we create a meaning table or a typology (Fig. 10.2) with several fields of design and methods. Doing a comparative analysis, the School Localization project studied informal learning in multiple cases of schools and local communities (Design Category II: multiple cases, variations, cross-sectional, extensive, synchronous; quantitative survey and qualitative interviews).

members insisted on conducting a research review of formal knowledge learning and preferred to put research efforts into studying informal learning based on a broader aim of moral education. A couple of years later, when Kvalsund (1994a) defended his PhD on informal learning, the same leader thanked us for not having listened to him, because we had come up with new knowledge on multi-graded teaching and learning through comparative research.

Points in space – the cultural variation of space and places	Points in time		
		one	several
	one	I. Single unique cases and places. Mixed methodology: Intensive observational studies. Qualitative intensive studies Quantitative network analysis	III. Longitudinal, single case studies, case histories. Comparative, dia-chronous analysis. Individual prospective and retrospective studies of transition and life course changes
	several	II. Multiple cases variations Cross-sectional, extensive synchronous; Quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. Sampling logic; Logic of replication.	IV. Longitudinal. Multiple cases, logic of replication vs sample logic. Repeated cross-sectional studies. Transitions and life courses. Case histories. Time series

Fig. 10.2 Dimensions of design and methods. Adapted from Kvalsund and Hargreaves, 2009, *International Review of Educational Research*, 48(2), p. 145. Adapted with permission)

We selected four municipalities in four different counties: the fjord municipality, the valley municipality, and the northern and western coastal municipalities to avoid the effects of local educational fashion trends. Economic reasons were decisive—these four municipalities also contained the whole range of different school sizes and community locations. We also wanted to compare the relational patterns before and after the transition to lower secondary school. The School Localization project’s design for researching informal learning was a longitudinal multiple case study of 19 schools, [six single-graded and 13 multi-graded schools (11 bipartite, two tripartite)] although the time of transitions to lower secondary school was only 1–2 years later.

We chose our case studies out of an interest in understanding schools and local communities as comprehensive social units and contexts for informal learning.

Single case studies concentrating on rich descriptions of distinctive qualities of single cases—what Stake (2005) characterizes as intrinsic case studies, worthwhile in themselves—would not be sufficient. Our interest in comparing smaller and larger schools led us to finally research several points in space, with a multiple or instrumental case study meaning that we would also be focusing on some selected qualities, here informal learning.

We chose to study embedded cases in each school, in groups of interacting pupils in lessons, recesses, and spare time. We identified a total of 1321 groups in single-graded schools, distributed across the three arenas as follows: 487, 311 and 523. In multi-grade schools, the corresponding number of groups were 459 in total, distributed across lessons, (87), recesses (221), and spare time (151). We identified these groups with network data in the program UCINET and manually categorized them according to a typology divided up by age and gender (*integrated groups*: both genders, several age levels; *segregated groups*: one age level, one gender; *age-segregated*, *gender-integrated groups*; and *gender-segregated*, *age-integrated groups*). We used this typology to describe a profile of social learning for each arena complemented by interview data from 120 interviews with 5th and 6th graders and 80 interviews with the same persons 1 year later.

Our interest lay in trying to explain and understand similarities and differences in informal learning pointed to a specific logic on which the design was based. We followed a replication logic for multiple case studies suggested by Yin (2009): We made series of replications, here of social integration/segregation in multi-graded and single-graded schools, then compared the identified patterns of social interaction among pupils in the three arenas (classes, recesses, and spare time) in one multi-graded school with the patterns of social interaction we obtained by analyzing data for the next school of the same category. This is an attempt at refuting the results from the first school following the research logic of Popper (1989). Finding the same results in the second school is considered a *literal replication* that strengthens the results. From the replications in 11 bipartite and two tripartite multi-grade schools, we established two patterns as nonrefuted. For reasons of comparison, we completed a series of literal replications for the six single-graded schools identifying the same relational main pattern. Comparing the multi-grade and the single-grade results reveals a common difference that can be explained by formulating reasons expressed as an explanatory theory with described conditions of validity (balance of mechanisms of similarity and mechanisms of difference). This is what Yin (2009) describes as *theoretical replications*. Based on the research logic of the multiple case study, we generalize to the empirically generated *balance theory* of mechanisms of similarity and mechanisms of difference, not to a sample of schools and accordingly refer to replication logic and not sampling logic. In principle, this resembles the way we think in doing experiments, though under more naturalistic conditions.

We also did replications 1–1.5 years later to study the longitudinal pattern reflecting the transitions from primary to lower secondary school. Transitions are important to study from a life-course perspective (George, 1993; Giele & Elder, 1998) because they reveal new expectations and anticipations of what will happen as to

social integration or segregation. We based our follow-up research in other municipalities 5 years later, on this design and found no refutations of the same patterns, strengthening the validity of the results even further. Further details of typologies, analysis, and results can be found in Kvalsund (2017).

For our second research project, “School in Sparsely Populated Districts,” we also chose case-study research as our design perspective to study social learning and is because of data collection from many cases at only one point in time to be in Design Category II. In one of the intensive studies, two schools located on two islands and one school located on the main land in a forest region. This design is closer to intrinsic case studies and thick descriptions reflecting the fact that cultural meaning of teaching and learning is situated. This is the point of departure when meaning is abstracted or condensed from the data material and in this way throws light on the qualities of multi-grade teaching and informal learning (Berg-Olsen, 2008). Johansen (2009, pp. 85–107) selected 44 pupils of both genders from seven small remote rural schools (less than 60 pupils), teachers working with these pupils and parents. This is an instrumental case study associated partly with the logic of replication in selecting informants and analyzing social learning and competence development.

As a backdrop for these intensive research studies, an extensive survey of the schools and the sparsely populated communities was undertaken. A picture is developed of the relationship between equitable schools and centralization by analyzing changes in historical and expected school structure in the next 5 years as an expression of the risk of insecurity and school closure. Researchers have also analyzed the relationship between conditions of learning and teaching (economy, low number of pupils, educational quality of teaching) when schools are threatened by closure and local resistance is active (Solstad, 2009, pp. 72–170). This combination of survey and case studies is a meaningful and responsive design giving a relevant situational backdrop for intensive research on social learning and multi-grade teaching.

The design of the “Learning Regions” project is very complicated, as it involves the researchers of 12 different and separate projects trying to establish a correlation between the single separate county characteristic factor (independent variable) and high scores on national achievement tests (the dependent variable). This is why I restrict the present design evaluation to this overall presentation of the study rather than analyzing the design of each separate research project of the bundle. Presenting these factors as simultaneously operating explanatory variables or factors, as a design for a kind of multivariate analysis, is rather misleading. Judging some of the listed factors, content overlap is a problem. For other factors of the collection, the correlation might be spurious. Differences in research methods as well as lack of knowledge about what factor operated first mean that there is no analysis and control of causal direction and the relative and controlled explanatory power of the factors, as would be provided with a logistic regression analysis of longitudinal data. The context of independent variables is the county and the research projects are organized as a collection of separate projects.

The conclusion so far is that over the last 10 years, a period with accelerated closures of small rural schools, no research project can be identified working with research designs for analyzing local people’s life-world experiences with changing

rural schools as seen from below. The system perspective with central formulation and local implementation of reforms is hegemonic. The dominating design is cross-sectional. The implication is that the cultural deconstruction of rural schools and communities continues.

On Theory and Concepts

In this part of the chapter, I will clarify what is meant by theory and then describe main points of the theories chosen by the leaders of the three research projects referred to in Table 10.1. Theory is about how we can understand, interpret, and explain research results and answer the question of *why*. Social and educational science speak of “regular patterns” representing typical or expected “ways of action” over time within a broad specter of individual variation. Theory is more closely related to how and which persons act rather than to what statically is. The purpose of social science research and educational research is to uncover the meaning underlying various patterns of action. Therefore, theory can be thought of as “the glasses” or a tool by which researchers analyze the actual research field when they interpret and explain research data. Theory explains the relationship between two or more variables (phenomena, concepts, characteristics of humans).

From this point of departure, some logical consequences can be drawn as to what theory means: Theory referring to knowledge about the relationship between variables implies an explanatory structure of the knowledge. Theory understood as “looking glasses” or categories of understanding and explanation is a reminder that the use of theory bears the potential for subjective bias, because in most cases it is easier to collect confirming rather than refuting data. In the relationship between the social world and how it is understood, theory or concepts consequently do no more than chart aspects of the empirical world. Propositions about the empirical world are not identical with the world. Theory is not pictures of the world. This is the epistemological aspect of theory. Theories as a conjecture about relationships between variables also implies that theory is composed of selected concepts judged as most relevant for the understanding of some social phenomenon. The implication is that theory is abstracted knowledge (i.e., the map-terrain aspect of theory, mirroring the fact that no one can benefit from or use a map with the scale 1:1). A consequence of the abstract quality of theory is that it must be testable against reality and therefore is continuously open for refutation and revision—an abstraction with empirical grounding.

However, many empirical studies are only weakly related to theory and give an atheoretical impression with a main emphasis on comments to for example frequency tables and they might hardly be considered as research. The authors of other studies refer to specific perspectives of theory to expose concepts without applying them in analysis. Another category of research studies presuppose that categories, concepts, and theory should be developed from below, being grounded in the life-world of the informants and therefore sensitive in interpreting and understanding the data collected (Charmaz, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Theory devel-

oped in this way is often complemented by externally formulated theory enabling the researcher to interpret his or her data in ways *the natives*¹⁰ have not thought of in the first place. Theory can also be used to guide the study in an explanatory way as in multiple case studies (Yin, 2009).

Aakvaag (2008) presents a categorization of modern sociological theory. Theory can be categorized by level of abstraction: concepts with empirical grounding as a base, then explanatory theory of the middle range, offering explanations restricted by specific conditions to be judged as valid. An example is a theory which includes the temporal perspective and treats lives as units of analysis. Giele and Elder (1998) and Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe (2004) speak of “life-course theoretical concepts” and principles such as time and place, social relations, and linked lives, timing and transitions adding up to life course trajectories grounded in prospective rather than retrospective data.

The next level is general sociological theory, or what is described as *diagnosis of contemporary society*, presented for example by Giddens (1984, 1991), Beck (2000), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), and Bauman (1997, 1998, 2001). Bauman presents a profound critique of postmodern strategic benefit calculating individualization—“What is in it for me?”—as a core characteristic of postmodern society. Madsen (2014) has formulated a similar critique, identifying a diagnosis of contemporary society—the *therapeutic turn*—leading to an individualizing reductionist understanding of society with psychological grounding. Proponents of these general theoretical models attempt to mediate an overall understanding of society—with good intentions but weak empirical grounding.

Theory at the most abstract level is metatheory or the *theory of science* (ontology, epistemology and methodology) and important in all research, reminding us about what we do not know, the assumptions of social science, and keeping important doubt alive. The external world exists and ontological questions are relevant. However, reality has no voice or language of its own. Empirical social science therefore must accept the blurred division between the world out there (social ontology), how we can have knowledge about it (theory of knowledge), and the strategy of research methods and the underlying philosophical assumptions (methodology). In a specific research study, the founding assumptions are implicitly or explicitly part of a theoretical framework. This wider concept of theory refers to an integrated cluster of concepts, a conceptual frame of reference closer to a “world view” directing our attention to more general underlying assumptions—in other words, general theory including theory of science.¹¹ The underlying presumptions would underpin the perspective that is adopted on the research topic, the questions asked, shape the nature of the investigation, its methods and what would count as

¹⁰The concept of native is from anthropological science pointing to the researchers’ risk of “going native” rather than balancing the emic position (internal and native) and the etic position (external) when researching life-world phenomena.

¹¹Layder (1993) and Sayer (2010) discuss different categorizations of theory in social science. Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, and Karlsson (2002, pp. 115–149) discuss different types of theory in presenting critical realism as an epistemological position.

worthwhile data and point to the limits of what conclusions that can be drawn (Denscombe, 2010).

The researchers of the “School Localization” project at Volda University College adopted a pragmatic view on the theory of science, combining different theories and methods mirroring the phenomena under study to fuse a realist with a reconstructivist perspective into what is now presented as a theory of critical realism, as presented by researchers such Bhaskar and Danermark (2006). I will here use it as a tool to judge the consequences of ontological presumptions in the theory of science. The social world is very complex and must be understood as equivocal with probable rather than solid and secure research-based knowledge. Critical realism represents a nonreductionist schema of understanding social behavior and practice, a system that refers essentiality to several different levels of reality (Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006, p. 280). This is what Bhaskar (1975) describes as the real layer of reality—the deep dimension of reality where we find the generative mechanisms extending beyond the directly observable in producing observable events. Social reality exists independently of any individual’s knowledge of it. However, reality is not always observable: Proponents of critical realism have a wider and deeper view of reality, meaning that conductors of social scientific research utilize relationship analysis to point out the difference between what we experience (*the empirical layer*), what happens without our being able to observe it, such as routinized social interaction and events (*actual layer*), and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events (*real layer*). In the perspective of positivism, these three layers are collapsed into a single, empirical layer—in other words, a very restricted concept of reality: The reality is out there, objective facts about a knowable world, organized in a multitude of scientific disciplines; the researcher finds them and formulates relevant concepts, the relationships between central variables, mechanisms and counter-mechanisms.

The layered reality makes scientific practitioners within critical realism presuppose that there is a reality independent of our concepts and theories of it, outside our mind. Therefore, the external reality and its causal mechanisms are not always accessible to immediate observation, in other words, reality is not necessarily transparent. The mechanisms can be experienced indirectly through their causing events—being “the something else behind” what happens in the world. With critical realists viewing reality as independent from the human mind, researchers cannot avoid producing interpretations—concepts and theory—of reality, interpretations which by necessity are fallible and provisional. It is this interpretative dimension of our theories, explanations, and related critiques that Bhaskar (1998) and Danermark et al. (2002, pp. 22–24) refer to as the transitive or changing dimension of social science knowledge. The role of theory is therefore deeply embedded in the understanding of social reality. Research methods—quantitative as well as qualitative—are “theory laden” and would hardly be considered as neutral tools. Theory and methods are closely connected.

The intransitive dimension of social science knowledge, concepts, and theory refers to those causal mechanisms by which social science seeks to discover and which exist in themselves regardless of our concepts constructed in language.

However, compared with the objects of natural science, which are socially defined but naturally produced (and therefore exist intransitively independently of our language and concepts), the objects of social science are both socially defined and socially produced (cf., *double hermeneutics*, the social reality that both actors and researchers conceptually interpret). Yet the objects of social science remain real and continue to intransitively exist relationally, structurally, and materially related as generative, enabling, or counter-active, constraining mechanisms behind the events. They are operating independently of intentional actors here and now. The distinction between the transitive and intransitive realms of reality clarifies the mistake of constructivism and hermeneutics: Reality is equated with its interpretation, primarily expressed as texts. What we can know about reality (language) is interchanged with the way reality exists (being) (Bhaskar, 1975).

Critical realism has room for both actors (transitive practices) and structures (intransitive generative and counter-mechanisms behind events). Combining actor and structure as pairs of “causal” and “effectual” concepts make up a typology

		'Causal' concepts	
		Actor	Structure
Effectual concepts	Actor	<p>I. Psychological and social psychological theory. Theory of self-identity (Mead, 1998). Social self-conception (Harter) (Kvalsund, 1995)</p>	<p>IIb. Theory on the structuring of actions. Theory of the middle range. Specific explanatory theory. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Life course theory (Giele & Elder, 1998). Network Theory (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1991, Scoti, 2017). Theory of frame conditions (Dahlöf, 1971). Sense-making systems (Weick, 1994)</p>
	Structure	<p>IIa. Theory on how action and interaction develops structures. Theory of the middle range. Specific explanatory theory. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Life course theory (Giele & Elder, 1998). Theory of frame conditions (Dahlöf, 1971)</p>	<p>III. Macro-level theory. System theory. Theory of demography and migration (Sørli, 2016). Socio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Theory of social justice, equality and equity (Coleman, 1968; Hernes, 1974; Lidensjø & Lundgren, 2000). Theory of governance (Meyer & Benavot, 2013). Theory of community (Cohen, 1992). Theory of place (Massey, 1991, 1994, 2005)</p>

Fig. 10.3 Typology of “causal” (The quotation marks indicate that strict causal relations hardly exist in social science and differ from causations in natural science) and effectual concepts. Examples from three research projects doing comparative analysis of counties or small rural schools. Adapted from Kvalsund and Hargreaves, 2009, *International Review of Educational Research*, 48(2), p. 143. Adapted with permission

(Fig. 10.3)¹² that can be used to analyze and compare the theoretical profile of research projects. Causal means both explanation and understanding.¹³ I will here compare central concepts and theories from three Norwegian research projects into small rural schools during a period of nearly 30 years. The actor-structure duality invites judgement of the constructivist-realist balance of theory combinations in these projects. The typology also invites one to discuss the concept of being place-conscious, by comparing being based in the local community and being place-based by referring to Massey, who Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartley, and Fuller (2002) have called attention to because of her new thinking on the concept of place.¹⁴ To close the discussion of applying theory in research on small rural schools, I will compare three central research projects during the last 30 years, described earlier in this text: All three projects are grounded in some level of space. Their researchers analyze social units at different levels, as expressed in their project titles—"The School Localization" project (school in local community), "School in Sparsely Populated Districts" (school in municipalities), and "Learning Regions" (processes in selected counties with educational relevance)." I will focus on the concepts and theories of the School Localization project alongside selected comparisons with the two others research projects.

In Category III of the typology, structures at the macro level cause other structures to develop at other levels. The implicit Fig. 10.3 overall theory of the Learning Regions project is a theory of governance within a system world perspective in searching for factors that can explain why counties like SF have the highest achievement results on national standardized knowledge tests. The theoretical perspective lies at the macro level and is both global and structural: In his book "The Global Testing Culture, shaping education policy, perceptions and practice" (2016, pp. 7–23), Smith describes the system of achievement testing and refers to *world culture theory*, focusing not on the power of the actors but on the governmentality power of the culture itself; similar structures and policies develop in educational systems across the globe. According to Smith (2016, pp. 12–13), global cultural theorists formulate core assumptions about values and individual behavior: These assumptions are *instrumental positivism* and *individualism*. Instrumental positivism means developing hypotheses that can be empirically evaluated through quantitative statistical techniques to form law-like statements. Individualism is understood as the belief that when individuals are given freedom to choose, they will act in their own self-interest. Global cultural theorists highly value the academic subjects of mathematics and science, and view standardized testing measures as educational

¹²The typology was developed in a special issue of *International Review of Educational Research* 2009 with Kvalsund and Hargreaves as guest editors and authors.

¹³A basic difference between Giddens's theory of structuration and critical realism is that Giddens does not accept intransitive causal mechanisms—structures—as existing out there. Structures exist only when the actors have them in mind (cf., Giddens, 1984).

¹⁴I do not intend to provide a more comprehensive discussion of relevant theories of place here. It is sufficient to refer to the book "Spatial Theories of Education: Policy and Geography Matters," edited by Gulson and Symes (2007) to understand this.

qualities equivalent across heterogeneous communities. They do not question instrumental positivism and individualism as epistemological positions and values. Very complex questions at the structural level are given very simple answers at an individual level. This seems to fit into the research logic and theory of the Learning Regions projects.

Researchers also apply a theory of structures when they analyze the consequences of deconstructing rural schools and communities, such as the demographic structures produced by selective out-migration of rural girls to urban centers that over time result in “thinning out communities.” This gradually alters the age structure of pupils in school, the grade structure, and the school structure of the municipality (Sørli, 2016). Another example is the reference to two theoretical concepts, *decentralization* and *equity*.

Decentralization is a structural or rather basic cultural idea to ensure wider representation of legitimate local democratic interests in the field of schooling. Local curriculum and season adapted methods of teaching and learning, for example following the rhythm of the coastal fisheries, would reflect the principle of decentralization of power. Decentralization might also be a measure when a government office experience falling legitimacy as with the phenomenon centralized decentralization.

Decentralization has consequences for how people think about school and education, not least the principle of *educational equality*. Researchers of empirical studies have documented that school reproduces social inequalities, and they have introduced and discussed the concept of *equal opportunities of schooling* (Coleman, 1968; Hernes, 1974; Lidensjø & Lundgren, 2000; Solstad, 2009).

However, the equality concept made urban school a model for rural schools (Solstad, 1978). A possible alternative is the concept of equity or the equitable school, meaning a school that is equally worthwhile for all. Equity has the consequence that school must meet pupils, parents, and communities differently and give space for learning content grounded in the local community. This is theory of cultural meaning of schooling for actors inside the local communities, but also a structural theory about the school pattern seen from the outside; these were founding concepts and ideas of the research project “School in Sparsely Populated Districts” as well as the “School Localization” project more than 15 years earlier. Kvalsund (1991) and Kvalsund and Lauglo (1994) discusses the concept of local community and concludes with an empirical, analytical rather than a normative concept judging local communities as separate cases.

Massey (1995, p. 61) describes her concept of place as “the locus of intersecting social relations or activity spaces.” She seems to understand places as points in a structural network. Places are not static, they have process qualities and no dividing boundaries to frame a simple enclosure from the outside world. According to Massey, places are open and have relations to the outside world. They are filled with internal conflicts and have no single identity. The specificity of places is formed by social interaction and constantly reproduced at all geographical levels. Places form

a network of power in which all individuals and groups are positioned in the network according to their power. Place is more like geometrical points or faceless spaces in a power-structured network map. Massey's picture of place is observed from the outside rather than participated from within, giving a representation of the world that differs from living in the world. What questions can be formulated and what perspective can be used is restricted. Massey's structural concept of place seems to impart no understanding of places as a context for human and cultural interaction, learning, and identity. The actor's life is missing from this model (Massey, 1991, 1994, 1995, 2005). The inner life of local places seems to be wiped out. This concept of place is clearly relational and structural, with place conceived of as simultaneously local and global. Massey's concept of place has the characteristics of a faceless global space. The human cultural dimension is lacking. However, globalization is impossible without concrete activities in local communities with a potential of being transformed when local and external impulses meet. An important question is what values form the basis for the actual changes. The problem is the presumption that all persons in the community must act as *consumers*, an expectation grounded in the growing commodification, disembedding, and out-lifting of local culture and knowledge and the practice of production (cf., Giddens, 1984, 1991).

As I have elaborated, Habermas complements the concept of system world with the life world of everyday life in a community. Places can be seen from within even if they maybe invaded by the system. The typology in Fig. 10.3 has three other fields. Field I, refers to specific theory and concepts about human self-identity and how they are developed. Mead's (1998) theory of reading the other's intentions or "role-taking" develops the "looking-glass" self and is combined with Susan Harter's (1985) measurement instruments of the pupil's social self-conception in the school localization project (cf., Kvalsund, 1994). The analysis of play as informal social learning during the school day based on children's voices is also analyzed from this theoretical perspective of symbolic interaction (Kvalsund, 1994; Manis & Meltzer 1972). This theoretical discussion and clarification of how to understand the children—the primary actors of the community when it comes to school and education—is presented by specific culture psychological concepts in the research project "School in Sparsely Populated Districts" as well (Berg-Olsen, 2008, pp. 263–283; Johansen, 2009, pp. 31–85). Qualitative research interviews with parents and teachers documents that communities and their schools as places include human actors within culturally structured social units.

Fields IIa and IIb reflect theories of the middle range relevant for the duality of actors and structures (Giddens, 1984), actors developing structures giving possibilities of action and at the same time restricting what persons can do in school and the local community. The school localization project is based on Dahllöf's (1971) frame-factor theory pointing to the fact that social science is historical in principle, that what researchers study has already happened, and that frame condition never influence results directly, but always through processes. Researchers must therefore reconstruct what has happened in their quest to understand by starting with some result or outcome, then asking what frame-conditions have worked

through what interaction processes to produce such results. This implies detailed or thick descriptions and complementary interpretations by means of theoretical concepts such as those suggested by Dahllöf (1971) and Giddens' concepts of *rules of structuration* (norms and frames of interpretation) and *resources of structuration* (allocative/physical and authoritative).¹⁵ In the "School localization" project, researchers apply concepts by analyzing informal learning through play and conditions of informal interaction in classrooms as well as play in the school yard and activities during spare time after school. Researchers captured the structural pattern of actions and activities by applying social network analysis (Scott, 2017; Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988) of who usually cooperated during lessons, played in recesses at school and during spare time, resulting in a typology of social segregation, integration and in the identification of the balance between two mechanisms—the *mechanism of similarities* and the *mechanism of differences*—producing events. In small systems, actors interacted despite of differences in individual characteristics, interests and frame conditions. In the larger system, actors interacted because of similarities. This is illustrated by the differences in how teams and groups were selected and composed and how rules were practiced in ball games such as soccer during recesses. These mechanisms continuously produce events and explain important aspects of the inside, the culture, of schools and communities as to informal and social learning, and help researchers to compare and understand everyday life in smaller (multi-graded) and larger (single-graded) rural schools (Kvalsund, 2017). They illustrate the concept of generative mechanism in critical realism as well.

I analyzed social self-conception by using a typology combining the educational regime (a classroom oriented, individualizing approach compared with a community-oriented, relational one) and larger single-grade versus small multi-grade schools, referring to the segregation-integration (age and gender) profile for each single school (lessons, recesses, and spare time) in the four categories of the typology. In small rural schools with a community-focused, relational orientation, pupils developed a positive social self-conception. The differences were significant and not the result of chance.

I also studied the pupil's life course transitions from primary to lower secondary school. Applying Massey's concept of place in these research projects would have produced large blind spots in important fields of understanding the cultural and human aspects of schooling and community life/life world dimensions. Thus, the concept of local community is clearly more valid than the concept of place.

¹⁵Giddens (1984) conceives structure out there as virtual, though real only when activated in the actor's mind, describing the process as structuration that is possible also routinized. This differs from the position of critical realism (cf., Danermark et al., 2002), which is based on a concept that the world out there is layered with mechanisms and counter-mechanisms at different levels producing events. Structural forces exist out there independent of the researcher's mind, concepts, and theories. One could think of these forces as parallels to gravitation—a kind of social gravitational forces. Meeting this complexity, we can only speak of probable explanation of events developed by research.

However, researchers are faced with the general challenge of applying theory in their research projects. Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2014) have shown how a mass-society perspective derived from Giddens' (1984, 1991) contemporary social theory (diagnosis of contemporary society) ultimately disembods or deconstructs rural social life and consequently devalues and deconstructs rural life in schools and communities and thus places the researcher in opposition to the rural people and practices under investigation. How researchers conceptualize and construct rural places and schools within these research paradigms can narrow and skew how they then understand rural schools and communities. Thereby, the researchers unknowingly or unintentionally continue to marginalize and disempower rural places, practices, and voices. Critical evaluations, discussions, and reflections on the dominant theories and perspectives in the field need to be judged in relation to their application to research on rural communities and education. Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2014) suggest and discuss the empirically grounded life-course theoretical concepts as an alternative social science theory in leaving footprints of research.

Combining explanatory theory and concepts about actor-structure relations from all four categories of the typology in Fig. 10.3, it becomes clear that the process of deconstructing rural schools and communities must change. The theory and concepts must capture the cultural meaning of inner life of schools and communities.

Closing Remarks

During the early expansive phase of the welfare state, the Norwegian novelist Mykle described decentralization and rural values as a quiet “osmotic coup”—the nation state had made itself porous for decentralization, rural values, and practices. However, the relationship between center and periphery has changed direction during the many years after the late 1980s. The nation state seems porous in new ways—now for urban values and solutions, not least in the field of schooling. Silently and imperceptibly, the changes and school closures trickle in to the local communities as an osmotic counter-coup behind a shelter of specific national reforms. Although researchers have observed both weaker and stronger reactions from parents and local stakeholders (Ertesvåg & Hegvik, 2017; Solstad, 2009), in many cases these responses soon quiet down and the social osmotic stream of closing small rural school continues. I have chosen to describe this stream as “the large, quiet, Norwegian school reform.” However, it is not accepted as a reform by other actors in the field, nor by most researchers, bureaucrats, politicians, or political parties. It can be observed as a long series of single cases, a pattern of silent changes outside the political and governmental agenda. This is so even if it is a basic change: a cultural deconstruction of rural schools and communities, implemented with incomplete research-based knowledge. Governmentality within a system perspective has left footprints in the field.

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Chapter 11

A Multilevel View of Small Schools: Changing Systems in Baden-Württemberg and Vorarlberg



Caroline Kramer

Introduction

Small schools have recently been of particular interest for education-geographical studies for at least two reasons. First, this school type is typical in rural and peripheral regions and tends to differ from more urban regions in respect to demographics as well as economical and social conditions and developments. In times of shrinking populations, these areas are usually more affected by contraction processes. Second, *mixed-graded teaching* is and has been a form of teaching often turned to in small schools. Mixed-graded teaching groups pupils of more than one age group in one classroom and involves teaching methods including group work, mixed-age teaching or cross-age learning, and progressive educational approaches (e.g., *Montessori schools*, see Chap. 12 by Raggl, in this volume).¹

The debate on whether or not a decentralized school location network with small schools is “better” than a centralized network with larger schools is to this day strongly influenced by education policy paradigms, which are quick to prompt ideological debates. In finding answers to these questions, I will turn to results discussed in the international literature as well as to results from my own research. My starting point is a reflection on small schools in their respective contexts and a discussion of relevant aspects of “making school.”

The theoretical basis for this paper is Giddens’ structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), according to which structure and action are mutually dependent dualities.

¹ It is not possible to go into more detail in regard to the different pedagogical teaching concepts in mixed-age classes in this article. Deeper insights can be found in Raggl (2018), Raggl, Smit, and Kerle (2015), Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015), Sigsworth and Solstadt (2001, 2005), and Høgmø and Solstadt (1978).

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Accordingly, the structure of the education system and the nature of the school location network render possible or impossible actors' access to and participation in education. Conversely, various actors create the aforementioned structures of the system via school planning, traffic planning, assignment of teachers, organizing school routines, and so forth. On the one hand, structures are thus the result of prior actions; on the other, they form the basis for current and future actions. Space and spatial structures must therefore be understood as produced and/or constructed.

However, agents' actions are not determined by subjective components alone; their decision autonomy is also shaped by the temporal, spatial, and social contexts in which they find themselves.² Hägerstrand takes this position with his constraint approach (Hägerstrand, 1975), albeit lending more importance to macro-structures than Giddens does. Hägerstrand argues that constraints are (re-)produced by everyday actions and frame the context in which actions take place, not in a deterministic sense but in a probabilistic one. The following remarks on "school-making"—taking up and making reference to Werlen's (1997) concept of "geography-making"—are made with those definitions in mind.

With the following (Section "[Changes in small school location networks in rural areas from an educational research perspective](#)"), I would like to outline the German and international discussion concerning small schools and mixed-graded teaching. My temporal focus is on the recent past, beginning after World War II; my spatial focus is on European countries, in particular on Germany. Unlike countries of the global north, in countries of the global south mixed-graded teaching is a common phenomenon due to an infrastructure that is less dense and in which longer school commutes are the norm (Sigsworth & Solstad, 2001). Because the conditions and contexts of those countries differ significantly from the European ones, I will not address their situation here. They must be analyzed in a separate study.

In section "[School paradigms and their arguments](#)," I will introduce the two opposing schooling paradigms, decentralized versus centralized school location networks, and these will serve as poles between which the discussion will be held and empirical findings will be sorted. At one end lies the concept of small mixed-graded teaching in a decentralized school location network; on the other end are large schools with single-graded classes in a centralized school location network. Because (educational) policy paradigms serve as reference points when evaluating empirical developments and scientific findings, I will pay special attention to them here. Despite the fact that they are rarely found in a "pristine" form when it comes to planning, they are well suited to be used in a heuristic sense in order to help to structure the discussion (cf., Smit, Hry-Belhammer, & Raggl, 2015, p. 98).

In section "[A multilevel view on small schools](#)," I adopt a multilevel perspective and correlate the subject areas and arguments brought forward in section "[School paradigms and their arguments](#)." This novel approach allows me to identify the connections between the different subject areas and the different scale levels and to

²This frame setting is not to be understood in a deterministic sense, but as possibility through which a wide range of activities become possible without, however, being independent from the respective contexts.

reveal the manifold institutional and spatial networks that small schools are embedded in. The constellations and networks small schools find themselves in are decisive when it comes to deciding on whether they have a future or not.

This approach allows me to address a number of different factors that influence the making of school, including societal processes, structures, and systems as well as groups of actors and individuals, by presenting the layers one by one. I will then relate my own empirical studies to each layer (Section “[Positioning the empirical findings in this multilevel view](#)”) and offer exemplary connections between the layers (Section “[Zooming in on the interconnectedness of the regional levels: A case study](#)”). Finally, I hope to demonstrate how the new perceptions gained through this geographical multilevel approach can contribute to a comprehensive view on the making of small schools (conclusions in section “[Conclusion: the multilevel view and the making of small schools](#)”).

Changes in Small School Location Networks in Rural Areas from an Educational Research Perspective

Historically, small schools and mixed-graded teaching have been the characteristic schooling form in rural areas. In the early twentieth century, however, proponents of progressive educational movements questioned the same-age class principal, which led to pedagogical and school policy controversies in numerous countries, including Germany, England and Switzerland (Fickermann, Weishaupt, & Zedler, 1998b, pp. 9–16). Small schools in rural areas have attracted the interest of the academic world ever since World War II, leading to studies with school policy, organizational, economical, sociological or nation-state focuses. In European countries, these studies seem to follow a certain cycle, as they are typically commissioned when there are plans for small schools and/or schools in rural areas to either be closed or reopened. The following section is dedicated to the different German scientific discussions, after which I will connect the different phases to international studies.

Immediately after World War II, there was a debate in West Germany on what is known as *Landschulen* or country schools. This debate lasted until the late 1940s, with most participants arguing in favor of individual village schools and against any kind of centralization (Diederich, 1967, p. 129). The debate shifted in the early 1950s, and more and more contributors to pedagogical magazines began to support the concept of centralization. What is striking in this debate, which is still ongoing today, is that an author’s educational policy and/or ideological mindset would lead him or her to see basically all features that characterize small schools as either a clear advantage or disadvantage. I will further elaborate on the arguments brought forward in section “[School paradigms and their arguments.](#)” The country school debate culminated in the late 1950s when West Germany’s *Deutscher Ausschuss für das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen* (German Committee for Education) strongly advocated that classes in secondary schools should be grouped according to age

levels, whereas classes in primary schools could cover more than one age level (Fickermann et al., 1998b, pp. 10–11). The majority of the very small schools in rural areas were parochial or denominational schools whose church sponsors defended them vehemently. In the late 1960s, most West-German states (*Länder*) had decreed that Christian *Gemeinschaftsschulen* were regular schools, resulting in the merger of many very small schools in a community. During the first phase, however, only very few villages were left without any primary school at all. In the wake of a strong centralization push in West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, the situation in most *Länder* changed and the number of primary schools plummeted to 50–60% of the original number. In Baden-Württemberg, for instance, the number of schools lay at 4079 in 1965; this number had dropped to 2350 by 1982 (Kramer, 1993, p. 115). The decisions to centralize school location networks are made in the *Länder* capitals, where decision-makers typically tend to neglect regional and local interests as well as language and ethnic minorities (cf., Meusburger, 2016).

The expansion of road networks in rural areas improved the commute with school busses to central schools located in villages, C level centers (*Kleinzentren*) and towns or B level centers (*Mittelzentren*). The centralization process made mixed-graded teaching virtually obsolete in West-German regular schools (for more detailed information, see Fickermann et al., 1998b, pp. 8–14). The reasons for this centralization wave are for the most part either economical or pedagogical. The former line of argument includes aspects such as the higher efficiency of larger schools, the too high costs, the upkeep of small schools imposes upon communities, and the more effective employment of teaching staff; the latter line of argument includes aspects such as the possibility of a better educated teaching staff and the chance to teach children more effectively in forms. In section “[School paradigms and their arguments](#),” I will elaborate on these arguments in more detail.

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the country school debate was similar and yet different. The arguments brought forward were the same as in West Germany but augmented by the sociopolitical aspects that dominated the debate. In 1947, for instance, an article in *Die Neue Schule* (the new school) argued that single-form village schools with their homeland notions were not fit for a modern society. The authors pointed out how the Nazi regime had exploited the notion of *Heimat* (homeland) in its fascist interpretation as “blood and soil” in small schools to further their “cause” (Dräger, 1947, p. 119). The magazine’s editors went on to demand a German democratic *Einheitsschule* (a one-tier school system instead of the three-tier school system typical of West Germany) in place of village schools catering mainly to agricultural needs, which would help to overcome the “tear between cities and rural areas” (editors of the magazine *Die Neue Schule*, 1947, p. 121, translated by the author).

The centralization measures put in place in the Soviet-occupied zone led to a two-third reduction of single-form primary schools by the late 1940s. Due to these developments, later generations in both German states would find mixed-age classes a strange thought. After unification, the reintroduction of mixed-age classes in small schools in the eastern part of Germany proved rather difficult due the stigmatization of small schools in the GDR (Fickermann et al., 1998b, pp. 13–14). What is

remarkable about the waves of centralization and school closure in the 1960s and 1970s is that the number of pupils continuously rose in those decades. It thus seems more than plausible to conclude that a range of reasons other than demographic developments are the driving forces behind concentrating school location networks. I will go into more detail when discussing the two paradigms in section “[School paradigms and their arguments.](#)”

Starting in the mid 1970s, but even more so in the 1980s, the large centralization waves in both Germanys were followed by arguments in favor of small schools and mixed-graded teaching. The debate, which led to small schools regaining social acceptance, drew for one on pedagogical reasons, for example, the advantages of learning in small groups and pedagogical aspects (cf., Hopf, 1993; Luksch, 1986), and for another on reasons of educational planning, such as securing the location of schools with declining numbers of pupils (cf., Meusbürger, 1978; Weishaupt, 1981a). A sound indicator of the turned tides in West-Germany’s school development policies can be seen in the program introduced by Baden-Württemberg’s Ministry for Culture and Sports in 1986, characterized as “re-establishing close-to-home primary schools” (Ministerium für Kultus und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 1986, p. 1). Over the course of the country school reforms in the 1970s, 851 Baden-Württemberg communities had closed primary schools; by 1986, the Ministry had identified 119 locations with the potential to be included in the reopening program, as they had at least 40 primary-school-aged children who could be taught in two mixed-graded groups. Once again, I must point out that the reestablishment program was initiated during a time when a population growth was not be expected, therefore excluding demographic developments as a cause for concentration and/or expansion phases; an observation that applies to more than Baden-Württemberg (Kramer, 1993).

The public and scientific discussions on small schools first started again in West Germany and picked up in East Germany after unification. In the 1990s, those in charge of schools on the territory of the former GDR, or the new *Länder* as they were called after reunification, were especially keen to reintroduce mixed-graded classes as a means of saving the schools from closure due to the dramatic decline in birth rates (Fickermann, Weishaupt, & Zedler, 1997; Fickermann et al. 1998b; Sandfuchs, Stange, & Kost, 1997). The debate has been generating more political interest in the western part of Germany since the consequences of demographic changes have also reached this region.

In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on the developments of school location networks in a number of different European countries with a particular focus on rural areas as well as on relevant scientific discussions. In Nordic countries, the tradition of small schools reaches far back in history, owing to the low population densities in the peripheral regions. That notwithstanding, recent decades have seen phases of school closings there too. The Finnish developments will serve as a reference, as they are typical and well documented, when analyzing the situation in other countries.

By the late 1960s, Finland had already experienced a first wave of primary school closings, which coincided with demographic processes (the end of the baby boomers starting school) and infrastructure improvements, but also with paradigm changes

that led to favoring large schools and disfavoring teaching in mixed-graded classes. The latter argument today is no longer reflected in academic debates. This Finnish centralization process is comparable to the ones in both German states in the 1960s and in other Nordic countries (for Norway: Kvalsund, 2009; Sigsworth & Solstad, 2005; for Sweden: Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009). Similar processes can be made out for a number of East European countries as well, motivated by reasons similar to the ones brought forward in the GDR, such as Hungary (Forray & Kozma, 1998; see Chap. 6 by Gyuris) or the Czech Republic (see Chap. 7 by Kučerová et al.). Section “[School paradigms and their arguments](#)” is dedicated to those driving forces in more detail.

In an attempt to offer equal educational opportunities for everyone in Finland, the school system was reformed in the late 1970s (Autti & Hyry-Beihammer, 2014, p. 4). The school location network remained fairly stable until the early 1990s, when a wave of school closures began in 1992. These closures were closely connected to the economic crisis that set in after the collapse of the Soviet Union and rooted in economic constraints resulting thereof. The Finnish national government began decentralizing decision-making powers and withdrew from funding small schools. The communities were often either not in a position or unwilling to take over the funding responsibilities, thus leading to the wave of closures (Autti & Hyry-Beihammer, 2014, p. 4).

Similar developments in the 1990s characterize the Swedish process of decentralization and the shift of decision-making powers from the national to the local level. Despite the fact that the Swedish welfare state went through a crisis in the 1990s, funding for schools in rural areas was ensured through the national budget (Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009, p. 102).

Scientific literature has focused on different aspects of these developments. In the 1990s, Niemi and Piri (1998, p. 81) cautioned against the ramifications of closing schools for economic reasons and warned against longer school commutes, which in Northern Finland already amount to an average 70 km one way. Eleven years later, Kalaoja and Pietarinen (2009) stressed the risk that children might become estranged from their life worlds by commuting to central school locations (p. 111). They also emphasized the importance of schools as meeting points and centers for social and cultural activities—an argument that also grew in importance in German literature in the 1980s and 1990s (Kramer, 1993; Meusburger, 1989; Schorb, 1981; Weishaupt, 1981a, 1981b).³ A lively debate on small schools was being waged in German-speaking countries in this period because—as mentioned above—small schools were being re-opened in Baden-Württemberg small schools (Kramer, 1993), while many were being closed in eastern Germany. In 1998, Fickermann, Weishaupt, and Zedler (1998a) published a reader that took stock of small school literature in Europe and discussed the different phases of expansion and concentration.

In 2009, the *International Journal of Education Research* published a special issue on small schools. Its contributors focused on how and with which questions,

³In the late 1970s and early 1980s, other countries also began stressing the advantages of small schools, for example, Switzerland (Poglia & Strittmatter, 1983), the Netherlands (Lem & Veenmann, 1984) or the USA (Sher, 1981; Sher & Dunne, 1977).

theories and methods educational science had been analyzing the meaning of schools for communities, villages or village districts in Nordic countries, England and Scotland. During this phase, special attention was given to three areas of interest. The researchers of the first area investigate the relationship between schools and the places they are located in (e.g., Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009); those of the second dedicate themselves to the metalevel and the perspectives from which small schools are studied and which theoretical concepts and which methods are employed (Hargreaves, Kvalsund, & Galton, 2009; see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund; Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009); those of the third ask what an agenda on studies on the relationship between schools and the places they are located in could look like.⁴

Newer studies on small schools in Finland center on the meaning small schools have for local residents and how local communities handle their closure, especially after the centralization waves mentioned above. In their 2014 study, Autti and Hyry-Beihammer conclude that although schools in rural regions of Finland are valued as social capital, they often are taken for granted. Their true value often only begins to become obvious when the threat of closure looms, which is often too late, because the decision to close the school has already been reached and all efforts to fight for keeping it open are thus in vain (Autti & Hyry-Beihammer, 2014, p. 12). For the first time since the country school debates, the authors of newer studies are increasingly shifting their perspectives to questions of educational science and pedagogy. An explicit focus is now being laid on how teaching in mixed-graded teaching settings is practiced, what differences can be made out in curricula, how student groups are formed, how subjects are organized, and how peer tutoring and differentiating take place (e.g., Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015; Raggl, 2011, 2015, see Chap. 12 by Raggl).

Research projects such as the international project on “Schools in the Alpine Region” (Müller, Keller, Kerle, Raggl, & Steiner, 2011; Raggl et al., 2015) make it clear that although demographic changes often trigger scientific studies on small schools and mixed-graded teaching, this schooling type is more than a mere work-around in times of declining pupil numbers. Instead, their pedagogical concepts can serve as a role model for modernizing lessons in large schools. An example is a large Rheintal primary school in Vorarlberg where mixed-graded teaching is currently being tested.

In this contribution, I will develop a multilevel view on small schools in order to highlight that on certain scale levels, such as the *Länder* level, proponents often bring forward demographical and economical reasons to favorably support a paradigm. At the same time, however, when turning to the local level, different aspects need to be taken into account, such as those relevant to the community or village districts. When studying the spatial scale levels, it is therefore of great importance to keep these arguments and intentions in mind, as this will assist in understanding how the relevant actors operated during the different phases of closure and (re)opening and to develop strategies for future planning phases.

⁴When referring to Kvalsund and Hargreaves' (2009, p. 143) theoretical bases of research on small rural schools and their communities, the theoretical approach used here falls into the category of middle-range theories (Categories IIa und IIb).

School Paradigms and Their Arguments

As mentioned before, the discussions on small schools in rural areas typically follow one of two paradigms. The first paradigm is centered around large central schools that teach same-age forms and that serves as a basis for centralizing school location networks. The other paradigm is centered around small schools close to home whose staff teaches in mixed-graded classes and that serve as a basis for decentralizing school location networks. The arguments turned to in both cases mainly focus on the same topics but differ in how they are represented and assessed (cf., Kramer, 1993, pp. 8–16). In section “[A multilevel view on small schools](#),” I will present the respective arguments according to their spatial scale in order to uncover the underlying spatial interconnectedness of the discussion.

For the most part, the arguments brought for and against small schools teaching mixed-aged classes in European countries mirror those in Germany. What should be kept in mind, however, is that the arguments used in the early phases of the rural school debate differed between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

The 1950s and 1960s brought societal and structural changes to both Germanies, such as the industrialization and modernization after World War II. The inhabitants experienced the effects on many different levels, most strongly in the rural areas that were then characteristic for both Germanies, but also in the regions surrounding cities. Immediately after the war, both agricultural sectors declined significantly in size and importance and the migration from rural to urban areas grew substantially. In the 1960s and 1970s, mass motorization and suburbanization led to massive changes in West Germany’s settlement patterns in the municipal hinterlands. One of the consequences was that originally rural communities grew into being large residential communities, and a demand for what then was considered to be modern schools—in other words, schools that offered a large range of subjects, specialized teachers, and so forth—arose. Next to these general “modernization arguments,” the GDR also invoked sociopolitical arguments against small country schools that resulted from socialistic education ideals and pedagogical mandates (cf., section “[School paradigms and their arguments](#)”). According to the Soviet Mjenikow education system as a form or form schedule system (Forray & Kozma, 1998, p. 313), peasant children can only develop into young workers when taught in large, central schools, which is why they were pulled out of their parental environment (cf., Forray & Kozma, 1998, p. 310). In Socialist states, school planning is an explicit and integral part of the state’s sociopolitical reorganization, for example, in Hungary (Forray & Kozma, 1998; see Chap. 6 by Gyuris) or the Czech Republic (see Chap. 7 by Kučerová et al.).

During that period, most European countries interpreted the structural and societal changes in rural areas as “progress” that finally reached “backward” villages. Progress was understood as rural areas realigning themselves to urban standards and lifestyles and, among other things, freeing the population from rural limitedness and control. Especially in Western Europe, control often referred to the control churches held over the population; up until the 1960s, parochial or denominational

schools were still the norm in some places and ensured that children were taught in either Protestant or Catholic schools.⁵ During those times, these types of school were organized as single-form schools and for many, especially those against small schools, were the epitome of backwardness. In 1970, Geissler argued for same-age forms as he saw them as an expression of urban middle-class society. He was furthermore of the opinion that this organizational type better allows for meritocratic principles to be asserted than in single-form schools, which he assigned conserving power. This was a time in which there was overall consensus amongst experts and in the public discussion that upward mobility for children from educationally alienated backgrounds could only be made possible by teaching them in same-age forms.

When in April of 1985 Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder, then Baden-Württemberg's Minister of Cultural Affairs and a member of the Christian Democrats, established the initiative to re-institute elementary schools close to home, the overall sentiment had shifted back to stressing the many advantages of small schools, among them pedagogical ones but also in relation to the infrastructural role they play for the local communities.

The discussion between advocates and adversaries of small schools and their respective assessments of the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages continues to be intense. I would now like to take a closer look at the different lines of arguments.

The rural school discussion carried out in the 1950s and 1960s demanded that a rural pedagogic must exist in its own right (Diederich, 1967, p. 129), in which a holistic approach to teaching children should take preference over a mere schooling approach and in which the curriculum should take the children's rural lifeworld into account. The assumption is that this goal can best be reached in small schools with mixed-graded classes (to a degree mirroring family life), holistic lessons, and the teaching principle of form. On the other hand, small-school adversaries deem this position as conservative or even reactionary and instead favor urban, large, "modern" schools whose teachers adopt a scientific approach to the various disciplines and where pupils are taught by specialist subject teachers. These adversaries have argued that aligning rural schools with modern urban standards would enhance educational justice and provide "better" schools.

Mixed-graded teaching is a typical feature of small schools⁶ with a number of advantages that I have already mentioned in earlier discussions. One such advantage is what is known as the "helper system," in which children help each other and add to their own learning experiences. This in turn makes the children more self-sufficient and puts them in a more family-style teaching atmosphere, reducing the times they need to change class rooms, fewer repetitions as well as them recognizing heterogeneity (Raggl, 2011, p. 261). In the last few years, these advantages have

⁵In the German states of Lower Saxony and Northrhine-Westphalia confessional schools exist to this day.

⁶The different teaching methods in mixed-graded classes, for example, each grade level is taught separately, project oriented workclasses, mixed-graded learning, and so forth, cannot be elaborated on here. For more information, see Raggl et al. (2015).

been combined with specific profiles, for example, Montessori pedagogy (see Chap. 12 by Raggl), and thus the potentials of mixed-graded learning are being exploited in new ways and on deeper levels. Studies show that children attending small schools appreciate going to school more often than children visiting schools in which they are taught in same-age forms (Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009, p. 5; see Chap. 12 by Raggl).

Small school adversaries, however, doubt that children in mixed-graded forms are truly able to help each other. Instead, they worry that good pupils will be underchallenged, weaker pupils will be overchallenged, and the level of knowledge dissemination remain lower than necessary. They go on to point out that there are only few pupils that can help other pupils, that the children meet fewer other children, and that they have no other choice but to get along with their one teacher and with a small number of other children—in other words, that they are “at the mercy” of those individuals. Although such adverse situations undoubtedly may occur, very few studies have so far reported such incidences. Mixed-graded teaching poses its own challenges for teachers and in most cases during the early phases of teaching mixed-graded forms preparation times can be very intense and require teachers to prepare themselves for this type of teaching during their own university education.

A key aspect when discussing the pros and cons of small schools is the question of academic achievement, typically measured against national standards—that is, the standards developed for urban schools. A key indicator for an elementary school’s “success” are performance tests and the number of children advancing to secondary schools, especially to grammar schools (Freytag, Jahnke, & Kramer, 2015, p. 50). In the 1960s, the advancement rates of small school pupils from mixed-graded forms in rural areas to grammar schools were low in comparison to those in urban schools with same-age forms. This circumstance was often blamed on the organizational school structures. Fippinger (1967) and Aurin (1968) showed that pupils from small schools with mixed-graded classes performed significantly less well than pupils from same-age forms. What is neglected most in this debate is that the parents’ social structures, the support they can give, their aspiration levels, and work environment are not comparable to the situations found in cities. What weighs even more is the role spatial environments play when it comes to visiting grammar schools. In 1967, Peisert summarized the different dimensions of educational disadvantages in the artificial character of the “Catholic working-class girl from the country side,” who could typically be found in regions with lower educational levels, for example, with a high share of people working in the agricultural sector and poor traffic connections. This could mean that children needed to help on the family farm, the school commute was too difficult, the schools were underfinanced and understaffed, and so forth. Conversely, Meusburger (1974) could convincingly show that children from remote regions and very small schools advanced to grammar schools when their parents supported them. However, concerns that children attending small schools with mixed-graded forms are less well prepared for grammar school persist to this day. This can especially be found in parents who themselves only attended same-age forms or whose local schools so far have been offering same-age form teaching (Kramer, 1993, p. 200). Pedagogical arguments of alleg-

edly poorer performing small schools are often brought forward when school closings are initialized; their true motivation, however, being economical in nature. The current debate in Baden-Württemberg is a case in point (cf., section “[A multilevel view on small schools](#)”). The authors of recent studies from a number of different European countries found no systematic correlations between small schools and poor performances (Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009; Galton & Patrick, 1993; Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015; Oeuvrard, 1990; Sigsworth & Solstadt, 2001; Veenmann, 1995).

Another line of arguments are the demographic developments, especially the numbers of pupils and teachers. One might expect that these developments would be considered “hard facts” and should not be discussed in the section of paradigms. The way they are assessed and treated, however, strongly depends on the paradigms under which small versus large schools are discussed. Those responsible in the school system can adjust the operating numbers (minimum and maximum numbers of forms and schools, number of pupils per form, minimum and maximum teaching loads, additional assignments and pay for head teachers, etc.). In Vorarlberg during the last few decades the benchmarks for small and smallest schools were repeatedly adjusted in the School Organization Act to omit closures of this type of school (Müller, 2011, pp. 190–192). The clear commitment of Vorarlberg’s state government to “saving small schools for the sake of avoiding long school commutes and for strengthening rural structures in close cooperation with local communities” (Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung, 2005, p. 73, translated by the author) demonstrates the influence of paradigms on how demographic developments are perceived. The developments in Baden-Württemberg, on the other hand, point in another direction: Phases during which small schools are closed correspond to phases with growing numbers of pupils, and phases during which small schools are reopened correspond to phases with stagnating or decreasing numbers of pupils (Kramer, 1993, p. 116).

Analysis of the development of numbers of teachers reveals distinct cycles that lead to either a shortage or surplus of teachers. These developments are connected, for example, to how many people take up pedagogical studies, high or low birth rates, and so forth. In most European countries, small schools in rural areas suffer from a shortage of teachers (Kalaoja & Pietarinen, 2009, p. 114; Lind & Stjernström, 2015, p. 11). There are a number of different options for dealing with these supply and demand fluctuations, including granting financial incentive schemes such as additional pay for head teacher tasks or pointing out attractive housing options in rural areas. Educational authorities can allow teachers to apply to specific schools instead of delegating them to schools that are not their choice, and they can allow schools to pick the teachers they would like to see in their teaching staff instead of having them transferred to their school. These means of teacher allocation leads to a higher degree of satisfaction and commitment to the schools the teachers teach in.

Another means for making rural schools more attractive for teachers and for counteracting teacher shortages in rural areas is to include teaching mixed-graded forms into teachers’ study curricula as well as to point out that teachers have more leeway when teaching in small schools, that they can count on good support sys-

tems, and that they can expect to be sent to many advanced trainings courses. In cases in which personnel policies are handled on the national level, such as under austerity measures, regional conditions are often not met appropriately and can produce counterproductive results. A case in point is the situation in Vorarlberg, which borders Switzerland and competes with the higher wages paid in that country.

These two cases show how handling demographic developments, in other words, the development of numbers of pupils and teachers, are influenced and shaped by the different paradigms and that actors in the school system have plenty of manoeuvring room in how they react to these developments.

The difficulties of recruiting teaching staff and head teachers for small schools in rural areas is not limited to phases of teacher shortages, but results consistently from the special demands that need to be met by teachers. Younger teachers are especially reluctant to apply to small rural schools. Those who are in favor of small rural schools point out the liberties teachers have in how they teach, the immediateness between teacher and pupils and their families, an atmosphere of familiarity in small schools, and often also a degree of nearness to the community at large. However, rural head teachers need to expect to be more involved in administrative jobs, and parents and the rural population in general expect strong involvement in the social and cultural life of the community the small school is part of. Both advocates for and adversaries of small schools point out that “rural idylls” are rare. Quite a number of teachers complain that preparing for classes is very time consuming, that they suffer from a feeling of isolation, and that they have difficulty finding the right balance between closeness and distance to the local population (Raggl, 2010, p. 5; 2018).

An answer to those problems can be seen in the increasing professionalization of teaching and creating a spatial distance between workplace and home. More and more teachers no longer live in the community they teach in, and they consequently are less engaged in activities outside school, which also means that their function as local cultural contributors has become limited (cf., Engeli, 2015, pp. 36, 43–47; Poglia & Strittmatter, 1983; Raggl & Smit, 2015, p. 19). An important factor in small schools is the networks teachers find themselves in, for example, *ARGE Kleinschulen*, a network of small schools in Vorarlberg, where teachers meet on a regular basis to share their experiences and to develop new teaching materials (see Chap. 12 by Raggl).

Another important aspect when discussing the pros and cons of small schools is the importance a school has for the community it is in and the regional identity of both the children and the parents. I already pointed out that schools play an important role in sustaining vibrant communities while discussing the school closures of the 1950s and 1960s. For one, a school serves as a first institution in which children are socialized and is a meeting place for children, parents, and other village residents; for another, the structure itself serves as a place where social and cultural activities find a “home.” This function is heavily dependent on relevant actors contributing to communal life—in other words, on teaching staff, pupils, parents, and people in general carrying communal responsibility. This argument for maintaining a small school was often weakened by the transfer of teaching staff that had been assigned to a small school against their will and that consequently did not contribute

to communal life. The contributions necessary from the village side include the upkeep and equipment of the building for it to actually be a central communal meeting point. Well-kept and functional spaces, such as a kindergarten, school, public library, gymnasium, and meeting rooms for local clubs all under one roof, provide for a vivid meeting place and leads residents of all ages to identify with “their” school in “their village.” This interlacing effect has been documented for a number of different regions, such as the Alps (Kramer, 1993; Steiner et al., 2011, pp. 104–105), Sweden (Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009, p. 105), and Nordic countries as a whole (Lind & Stjernström, 2015), as well as for Australia (Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk, & Prescott, 2002). Interviewed villagers typically express that “the school ... is experienced as the village’s centre” and that it is “a stronghold of cultural life” (Steiner et al., 2011, p. 104, quotes translated by the author). Children who visit schools in other districts often find it difficult to meet with classmates after school or to go to the same clubs. This in turn leads to weaker connections to their home town, because their afterschool activities take place somewhere else and they also need to spend more time commuting, either on public transportation or by being ferried back and forth in “Mama’s taxi.” Consequently, these students are unable to experience their way to school as a learning opportunity holding manifold lessons.

Steiner et al. (2011, p. 80) point out the importance of widening the scope of adolescents’ life worlds and including the different types of places where they learn and are educated: formal places (schools), nonformal places (clubs, scouts), and informal places (media, peer groups, family). It is especially before this backdrop that the living and everyday worlds and with that the residential and school community cannot be valued high enough. When viewing the social and identity-establishing capital of a village as a mixture of *bridging* and *bonding* (Putnam, 2000), bridging can lead to a strong local identity and contribute to a sense of social cohesion, in other words, a sense of *we*. Bonding within a group, however, can also foster a strong sense of *us* versus *them* and dissociate locals from newcomers and neighboring villages. Steiner et al. (2011, pp. 87, 127) found evidence for these developments in villages with small schools in the Alps.

Those opposing small schools argue that these environments are too tightly knit, not differentiated enough, and sometimes even exuding constriction. Too narrow scopes for developments, downscaled offers, poor local infrastructure—taken together, these could all turn into unfavorable circumstances for residents of small villages and small school pupils.

Although this list of themes and arguments used by the different camps is by no means complete, it does convey how many different aspects are brought forward and need to be considered when assessing small schools. When reviewing the list, it becomes clear that both arguments for and against are typically two sides of the same coin. Which side is presented is to a degree dependent on local circumstances, yet the main determining factors seem to be the paradigm or ideology favored by those bringing forward the argument.

The following section is dedicated to the spatial scale levels on which the paradigms and subsequent arguments are employed.

A Multilevel View on Small Schools

To identify the factors influencing decisions on the network of school locations, it is necessary to point out a few processes on the macrolevel, because they also exert an influence on small schools. One of these processes is the far-reaching economical, societal, and cultural changes owed to globalization (Fig. 11.1, Level I). Modern information and communication technologies quickly spread globalization to the farthest corners of the world, and urbanization or metropolitan processes not only lead to ever more people living in (large) cities, but also to considering urban life as the norm and thus the normative standard situation. However, numerous studies on the development of schools have shown that this type of normative reference to urban school situations and the educational standards do not do justice to the diversity of the living and school conditions in other regions (Corbett, 2007; see Chap. 10 by Kvalsund; Kvalsund & Heargraves, 2009; Sigsworth & Solstadt, 2005).

The next level, the society level (Fig. 11.1, Level II), picks up on the consequences of those findings and poses the following questions: Which societal values are seen as goals for a “good” education? How far does the pendulum swing between the extremes of (a) an integral education embedded into a local lifeworld and (b) an orientation towards knowledge in special, professional fields aiming at providing the best possible education and fit for an (international) labor market? Which roles do family and role models play, for example, single or double income households, and what kinds of demands and requirements result thereof in respect to schools,

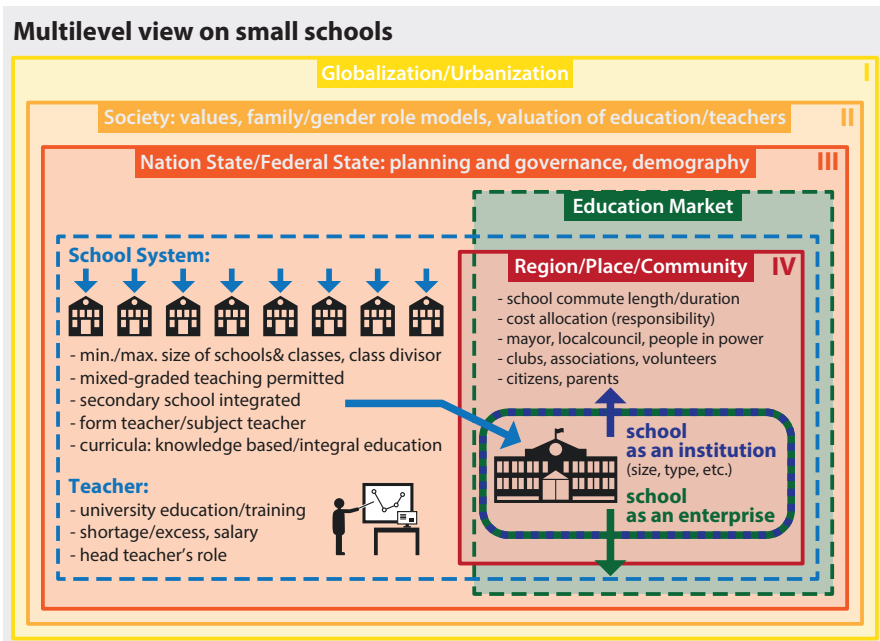


Fig. 11.1 Multilevel view on small schools. Source: Design by author

preschools, and all-day care for children? How dominant is the nuclear family concept with stay-at-home moms when it comes to accepting certain types of school programs? In which esteem are teachers generally held? What is their social status in society? Are they perceived as partners when it comes to educating?

In Germany, the next smaller scale level on which the education system is governed is the federal state level (Fig. 11.1, Level III). It is there that central goals are decided on and set, for example, guidelines for regional developments such as sustainability and equal living conditions as well as social structures. Education goals set for Baden-Württemberg in 2002 included, for instance, that “the different education facilities are to be further developed and adapted in such a way that all regions provide a comprehensive range of secondary and further education and that these facilities are within an acceptable distance” (Wirtschaftsministerium Baden-Württemberg, 2002, p. 35). The guidelines’ authors also stressed that the development of rural areas must take “reasonable proximity” of educational and general supply infrastructure to places of residence into account (Wirtschaftsministerium Baden-Württemberg, 2002, p. 19). Descriptions such as “acceptable distance” and “reasonable proximity” indicate that there is plenty of leeway when planning school locations.

On this level and on the regional level—not delineated here—demographic factors play a large role. Especially when it comes to enlarging or keeping up primary schools, demographics are of importance when economic factors such as profitability and resource allocation per pupil are considered. These purely bureaucratic and economically motivated questions concerning efficiency reduce education facilities to producing maximum output, in other words, graduation degrees, with the least possible effort and costs. However, if education facilities are expected to contribute to the development of rural (and urban) areas, to furthering spatial identity and to ensuring that rural areas maintain a long-term appeal as attractive places to live and work in, limiting the way education facilities are viewed to a mere economic efficiency perspective is inept.

Still, the 2018 school development plans for Baden-Württemberg are shaped primarily by efficiency principles. The preamble of Baden-Württemberg’s CDU Education Secretary on regional school development plans puts efficiency arguments first and only delineates the advantages of large schools. Then and now, policy-makers have turned to efficiency arguments when centralization phases have been/are rung in and in order to implement political and ideological paradigms (Fig. 11.2).

It is worth mentioning, however, that the assessment of these allegedly “hard” facts leaves far more leeway for political decisions than publicly admitted. The school developments in the study areas of Baden-Württemberg and Vorarlberg show this very clearly. The demographic and school location networks seldom developed congruently. Instead, other factors have been much more decisive, such as planning policy, ideological reasons, or austerity programs (Kramer, 1993, pp. 230–232). The holistic approach taken in Vorarlberg is a good example to show that the importance of small schools extends far beyond reducing them to mere questions of economic efficiency.

The school system itself provides many levers and they can be adjusted when it comes to deciding on enlarging, maintaining or closing a school, thus impacting the

Baden-Württemberg's education infrastructure continues to face developmental challenges. One of them is the need to adapt to changing societal conditions, in particular changing demographics and changes in school choices.

Regional school developments' most important goal is to ensure that all pupils have access to schools that cater to their respective aptitudes and skills within a reasonable distance. At the same time, it is in the interest of all those concerned to ensure long-term strong performance and efficient school locations, especially in rural areas.

The goal is to establish schools that due to their size offer very good pedagogical conditions and that can be sustained long term. Larger schools can offer more diverse facultative subjects than smaller schools. Staffing shortages, for instance due to sick leaves, can be compensated for better in larger than in smaller schools.

Fig. 11.2 Baden-Württemberg's education infrastructure. Source: Ministerium für Kultur, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg 2018, translated by author

network of school locations. This is the level where decision-makers execute school-site planning, settle the minimum and maximum number of pupils per class, and decide whether mixed-graded teaching is to be introduced or secondary schools are to be integrated, where they determined how the secondary school system is to be conceived and whether the principal of the class teacher or subject teacher is the predominant model, and it is on this level that the curriculum is fixed. In Germany, this is also the level on which the education and hiring of teachers is decided on, where teacher shortages or surpluses are generated, where school management's salaries and discretionary competencies are set. When all these decisions are made on a regional instead of on a state-wide level, they tend to be a far better fit to the needs of individual communities and schools. What has not proven to be a successful path, however, is granting the local level responsibilities without also granting financial means. Finland and France are examples in point, where local communities were left without the means to implement the decisions they have made (Autti & Hyry-Beihammer, 2014, p. 4; see Chap. 5 by Giband).

School sites with their regional specifications form the local scale level (Fig. 11.1, Level IV). Typically, the first aspect to be touched on is how long the commute to school is. In most countries, policy-makers consider an hour for both ways the maximum acceptable time to reach a primary school; in peripheral Finnish regions, however, commutes may add up to 3 h (Meri, 2010, p. 79) and seasonal variations must be allowed for. This is also the level on which it is decided if and whether a municipality, as the authority responsible for schools, is willing and has the ability to provide for the expenses related to the upkeep of the building and the material and medial equipment of the outfit. In Germany, the next higher regional level (the *Landkreis* or county), is responsible for providing for the transportation of pupils, which can lead to conflicts of interest when it comes to deciding for or against a school site by those responsible on the different levels. Typically, the final decision for or against a particular school is a political one reached on the municipal level,

where mayors, local councils, and other people in powerful positions have a substantial influence on the outcome. The timing of local and mayoral elections, the assertion power of individual public and prominent figures, parental representatives, various clubs, and volunteers forming sponsor groups for a school all contribute to the making of school. In cases in which one of the actors questions a school site, saving that site is heavily dependent on the leeway the different actors have and whether they are willing to make use of it or not, as well as to what degree the school is “embedded” in the community.

The educational system, however, is not only a field in which public actors and parts of state and federal infrastructure are active; increasingly, private actors following commercial interests are joining this set of actors. This in turn means that the education market and schools are turning into enterprises that court “customers,” compete with other companies, and are subject to market-based laws. In many countries, the educational market is a quick-growing one, and in numerous places today they already must be reckoned with as serious competition and moreover leading to a selection of pupils (see Raggl, 2012, 2018).

What I would like to focus on here is the specific local setting of place and school. By far most of the small schools we are talking about here are located in peripheral rural regions, which are often sparsely populated and are confronted with a shrinking population. Very often, the communities themselves are small or they, by way of incorporation, have become local districts in larger units. That notwithstanding they can be outfitted to significantly varying degrees and can range from agricultural villages in economically less strong regions, internationally renowned winter sports locations to communities situated in attractive landscapes with a large number of secondary residences, attracting amenity migration of elderly. Consequently, the importance of school sites is not uniform to all those rural areas. To what extent schools as institutions (cf., Kilpatrick et al., 2002) influence local settings, whether they prompt economical or identity-establishing impulses, serve as a community hub or function as an arena for local politics and resource for the community’s development depends on a number of factors located on the level of the community itself and the local actors. When trying to save a school site, a very successful measure is to open the school’s facilities for other uses and to position school buildings as a delivery point for other services. This then decides which type of school (Kalaoja & Pietarinen, 2009) the school in question belongs to. In the following I will provide examples for this process and go into further detail.

In order to determine the school types, we need to take a closer look at the schools themselves (Fig. 11.3, zooming in Level IV of Fig. 11.1). Both the design and the possible uses of the school building are important factors in a school’s “action setting.” In many regions, schools are used for a multitude of purposes: During the first part of the day, they serve as schools and kindergartens; in the afternoons, they are places to help pupils with their homework; in the evenings, they are used for sports and leisure activities; and on the weekends, they serve as places for various members of various clubs to congregate. School buildings are also often home to libraries, host activities for senior citizens, and many other things. The wide range of activities school buildings are used for not only makes economical

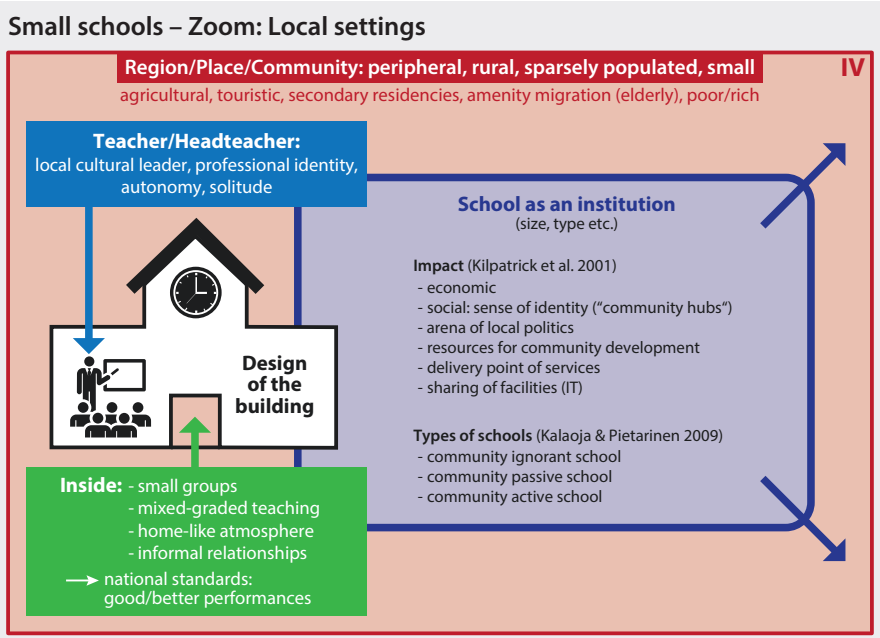


Fig. 11.3 Small schools—Zoom: Local settings. Source: Design by author

sense but also contributes to schools and their actors being integral parts of the communities they belong to.

Aside from the community level, the individuals active in the schools exercise an important influence on the role a school plays in its local context, namely the pupils, the teaching staff and head teacher, and the parents (e.g., Bechtold, 2011; Raggl, 2018).

The organizational conditions of a school also encroach on everyday school life, in other words, small mixed-graded study groups, a homelike atmosphere, and informal relationships composing positive aspects of small schools. Newer performance tests show that children schooled in such schools fare better or much better than children visiting large schools; having said that, however, the tests themselves can be questioned.

On the other hand, the framework conditions of smaller schools can also have their downsides, for example, when the local setting is poorly outfitted, the only teacher does not or cannot feel responsible for the school they teach at, or those responsible from the community side do not support the school. Small schools are particularly vulnerable to situations like these and they in turn can quickly lead to poor learning conditions. Decisive factors for the success of a small school and securing its long-term existence are the teaching staff and the head teacher. Small schools hinge on how the teachers were educated, their selection (degree of wanting to teach at a small school), autonomy, experience, dedication, and most of all the esteem in which the local community holds them. On the one hand, teaching staff is

faced with numerous challenges; on the other, many welcome the special opportunities small schools have to offer (Raggl, 2011).

The next section is dedicated to assessing how well this multilevel view is suited to describing and analyzing the development of school location networks.

Positioning the Empirical Findings in This Multilevel View

My next steps are directed at integrating my own empirical studies on small schools in Germany's south-western state of Baden-Württemberg and in Austria's western-most state of Vorarlberg into a multilevel view. What I am about to present are the findings on how the location networks of primary schools in rural areas have developed in the study areas I first observed 25 years ago. In 1991 and in connection with my PhD thesis (Kramer, 1993), I began studying small schools in Baden-Württemberg and Vorarlberg by means of quantitative questionnaires and expert interviews, and in 2016, I returned to the study areas to follow up on the developments. By means of statistical analyses and expert interviews and by taking a multilevel view, I set out to determine which factors on which scale level have had the most deciding effects. Two opposing concepts can be distinguished: (a) centralization, in other words, few large schools and (b) decentralization, in other words, numerous small schools.

Both countries have peripheral and sparsely inhabited regions in which small schools have a longstanding tradition. An important difference between both study areas is that the conditions for the routes to schools, especially during the wintertime, can be rather difficult due to the high alpine geographic location of Vorarlberg's Montafon and Arlberg regions; in comparison, the routes in the low mountain range of Baden-Württemberg are only mildly affected in the winter months. In the mid-1970s, due to the baby-boom period, the number of pupils continuously rose in both countries and in the 1960s and 1970s there was a lively discussion on what is called *Landschulen* in German, or "country schools" in English. The proponents of two general education policy concepts faced off, one group favoring "small schools close to home," the other favoring "central, large schools" (Kramer, 1993, p. 4).

Despite the fact that the number of pupils in Baden-Württemberg kept increasing in the 1960s and 1970s, many schools were closed down: Between 1965 and 1985, a total of 1739 schools were closed; at the end of this wave of centralization, only 57% of the original number of schools remained (Kramer, 1993, p. 115). Among the small schools closed were many confessional schools, their smallness mainly resulting from the fact that Catholic and Protestant children were schooled in separate schools. Soon after the wave of closures, the number of pupils began to decrease and in 1986, the then Minister of Education and Culture announced the "re-introduction of primary schools close to home" and opened 119 new (mostly formerly closed) primary schools (Kramer, 1993, p. 121). Those measures were accompanied by a huge media response. Today, and again before the backdrop of demographic changes, a new phase of concentrating primary schools by closing down schools in peripheral

regions has once again begun (Fig. 11.2). Between 1991 and 2015, the overall number of pupils in Baden-Württemberg decreased; 229 primary schools were closed and 209 were opened (Bauer, 2016, p. 118). The closed schools were mainly located in the *Land's* southwest, which has more rural and less densely populated municipalities. Often, the school branches closed had less than 64 pupils and did not offer secondary education. The newly opened primary schools are for the most part located in the densely populated Upper Rhine Rift, for example in the university cities of Freiburg and Heidelberg as well as in Stuttgart, and half of the newly opened schools are public schools (Bauer, 2016, p. 93). Because the alterations in the school location network only partly correspond with the development of pupils, the demographic developments cannot be seen as the determining factor. Instead, driving factors in Baden-Württemberg are school-policy developments that shape the school location network, such as the introduction of common schools or processes of privatization.

In Vorarlberg in the 1950s and 1960s, 24 schools were closed. The decision-makers reasoned that the street conditions had improved considerably, thus allowing for pupils to better reach schools not quite so close to home. Even though more small schools were closed during the following years, these amounted to no more than seven in a 20-year time period, reducing their number from 63 in 1966 to 56 in 1986 (Kramer, 1993, p. 76). Overall, Vorarlberg's school location network has remained rather stable, especially when compared to Baden-Württemberg's development, and has been far less subjected to significant changes. Even though one certainly must take the difficult school routes during the winter season into account, I would not attribute the different developments to that factor alone. Some schools have recently been closed in Vorarlberg, but only very few. When comparing those regions, it quickly becomes evident that the demographic developments alone cannot explain the very different developmental paths the school location networks have taken. Instead, it is worthwhile to turn to the typical bundle of processes and discourses on the various scale levels that accompany phases of centralization and decentralization. In order to reveal how the different scale levels are interconnected, I now would like to return to the multilevel view to uncover the discourse and process bundles typical for each phase.

A typical phase during which the centralization guiding principal favoring large schools and same-age school classes dominated can be found in the 1960s and 1970s in Baden-Württemberg (Fig. 11.4). The guiding principal of country schools replaced the paradigm of modern, large schools and greater specific differentiation. There was a strong determination to once and for all give up one-room schools, a type of school held responsible for keeping Catholic working-class girls from obtaining access to a higher education (Fig. 11.4, Level II). Small-school adversaries were often education politicians who came from an urban background and generally blamed small schools for the low rate of children going on to higher secondary schools, without taking regional and social factors into account. The guiding principal of large, modern schools served as the blueprint for the school-system level itself: A comparatively high minimum number of pupils per class was meant to guarantee that children were taught in same-age classes, reformers devised three types of centralized secondary schools, and the subject teacher principal took the lead, with a clear focus on a subject knowledge curriculum (Fig. 11.4, Level III). At

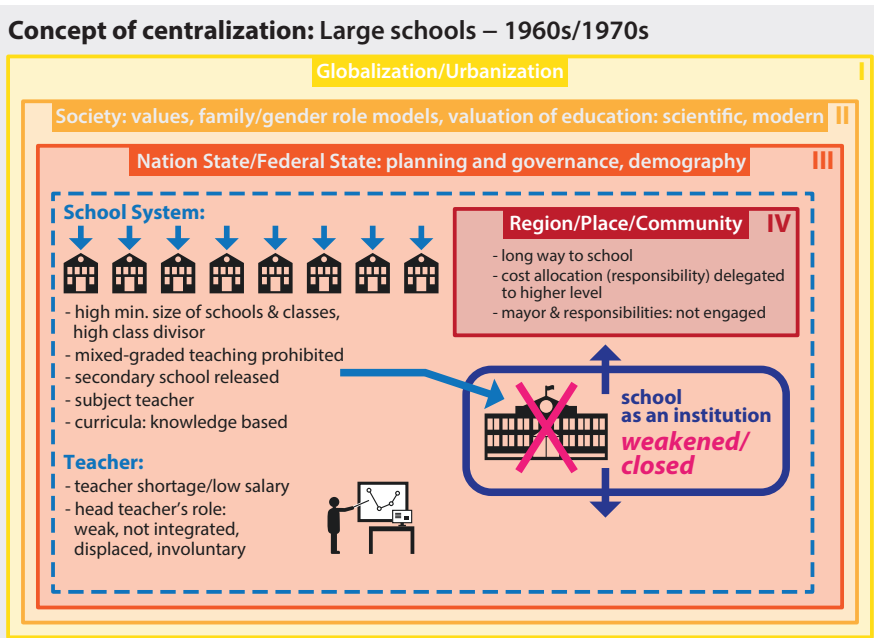


Fig. 11.4 Concept of centralization: Large schools—1960s/1970s. Source: Design by author

the same time, there was a shortage of teachers, which served as an additional argument for school closure—a development many communities are now confronted with once again. Furthermore, the salary for head teachers has been and still is rather unattractive at small schools compared to larger schools, because the administrative workload is higher in small schools. In addition, the peripheral regions often prove unattractive for fledgling teachers. In cases in which young, inexperienced teachers are placed in schools in distant regions and put to “a trial by fire” against their will, they most likely will have trouble finding their bearings. Consequently, those actors in favor of closing schools are served additional reasons for realizing their plans. Arguments along those lines can be insinuated in connection with closing schools in both study areas.

After schools are closed, pupils’ commutes to school typically become much longer and the students become dependent on using different means of transportation (Fig. 11.4, Level IV). Aside from the fact that the longer commutes to and from school mean that children are away from home longer, that they have to get up earlier, and that they are exposed to more risks on their way to school, they spend a lot of time in places other than where they are from and where they are socialized. Additionally, when participating in sports clubs and in extracurricular activities, it is not so easy for them to spend time with their schoolmates.

In Germany, the *Landkreis* takes on commuting expenses, school authorities (the municipality) are responsible for the expenses of school upkeep, and the *Land* pays for the teaching staff. Because the costs are defrayed through distribution between

different levels, it remains unclear whether centralizing schools actually leads to savings. In cases in which the local actors are not committed to their small school and favor spending their funds on other projects in the municipality, a school closure can often be considered a done deal (Fig. 11.4, Level IV). Although just-described bundle of factors need not always be present in that exhaustive melange for a school to be closed, they can be viewed as a typical scenario within the centralization process.

Typical bundles of influential factors are also evident in the phase during which a decentralization trend favored small local schools (Fig. 11.5). In the 1980s in Baden-Württemberg, this trend set in and was known under the name *Wiedereinrichtung wohnortnaher Grundschulen*, or “re-opening of primary schools close to residence” (Ministerium für Kultus und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 1986, p. 1, translated by the author). Proponents of this approach place a high value on an integral education appropriate for children (Fig. 11.5, Level II). On the planning level, authorities place top priority on providing for a school infrastructure close to home and set the specifications in the school system so as to enable decentralized school facilities: This means a minimum number of pupils for both schools and school classes as well as the opportunity to facilitate mixed-graded teaching, the teacher-principal form, and an integral, project-oriented curriculum (Fig. 11.5, Level III). The teaching staff is specifically instructed in teaching this particular type of lesson, and it is worth noting that there are plenty of interested teachers willing to take on positions as teacher or head teachers in small schools. The success of

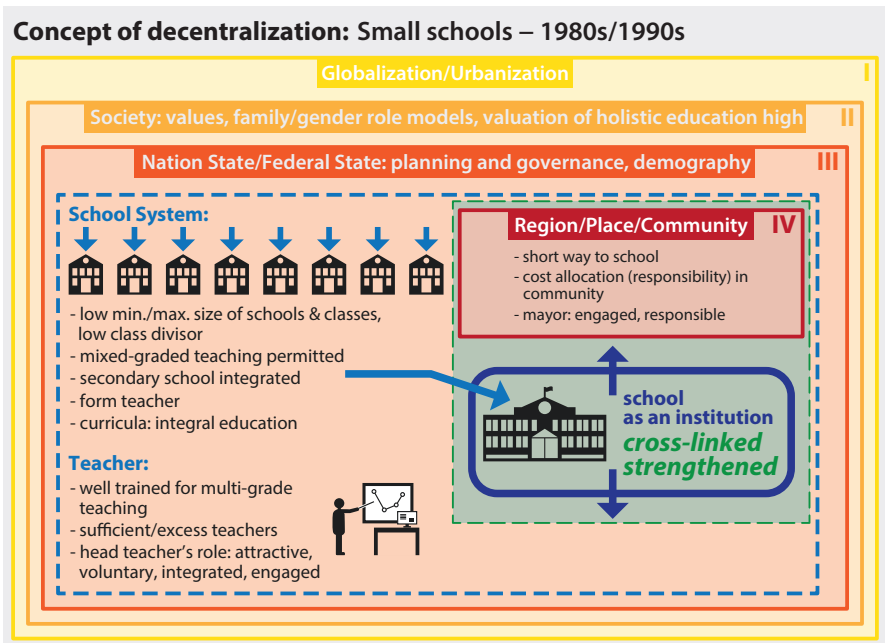


Fig. 11.5 Concept of decentralization: small schools—1980s/1990s. Source: Design by author

small schools clearly depends on the willingness and readiness of the teaching staff to shoulder more than just the usual professional obligations in small communities. Schools that are quickly reached, well anchored in the community, as well as financially and ideationally secured are sure to fulfil the above-mentioned function of a *community hub* (Fig. 11.5, Level IV).

These antagonistic guiding principals on school location networks in rural areas are the result of different assessment criteria on the different scale levels. At times, however, actors are known to combine criteria from the different sets of guiding principles. With the following case studies, I will explicate how situations of that kind present themselves and how a multilevel approach can facilitate their empirical study.

Zooming in on the Interconnectedness of the Regional Levels: A Case Study

Twenty-five years ago, I surveyed both study regions and focused on the school system as a whole and on the situation of schools in detail, covering 13 municipalities with 29 schools in Vorarlberg and seven municipalities with nine schools in Baden-Württemberg overall (Kramer, 1993). One of my goals was to identify the factors influencing decisions and developments on the different scale levels. Through expert interviews and quantitative questionnaires, I assessed the attitudes of actors on both the municipal and school level towards small schools. Those results now serve as the initial basis for this current study.

My most important result is the discovery of two distinct paradigms or “camps” of those in favor of and opposed to small schools among both the surveyed local population and teaching staff. In short, “knowing means loving,” because only those who never had any experience with small one-room schools were sceptical of this type of school. This difference explains the varying attitudes found in both study regions: Vorarlberg has a longstanding tradition of small schools, they are held in high esteem and are paired with the experience of to-the-point education. The situation in Baden-Württemberg is different: Beginning in the mid-1980s, implementers of the state-wide program “Reopening of Primary Schools Close to Home” tried to counteract the modernistic guiding principal and centralization approach by introducing a new “old” concept. Interdependencies between the different levels became especially apparent, and are still in effect today, when mutually exclusive concepts are targeted and one becomes more dominant than the other.

This can be explained with the example of Niedereschach-Kappel, a small village district school in Baden-Württemberg (Fig. 11.6). The local school there was reopened in the late 1980s under the aforementioned program. Two expert interviews with the former mayor of this municipality and the current head teacher give insights in the complex interrelationships and the different lines of argumentation.

In early 1986, the mayor (the community’s political representative) and the population (the community’s individuals) of Niedereschach-Kappel learned through a press release from the *Land* government (at the federal state or *Länder* level) that

Case study: Niedereschach-Kappel (2016)

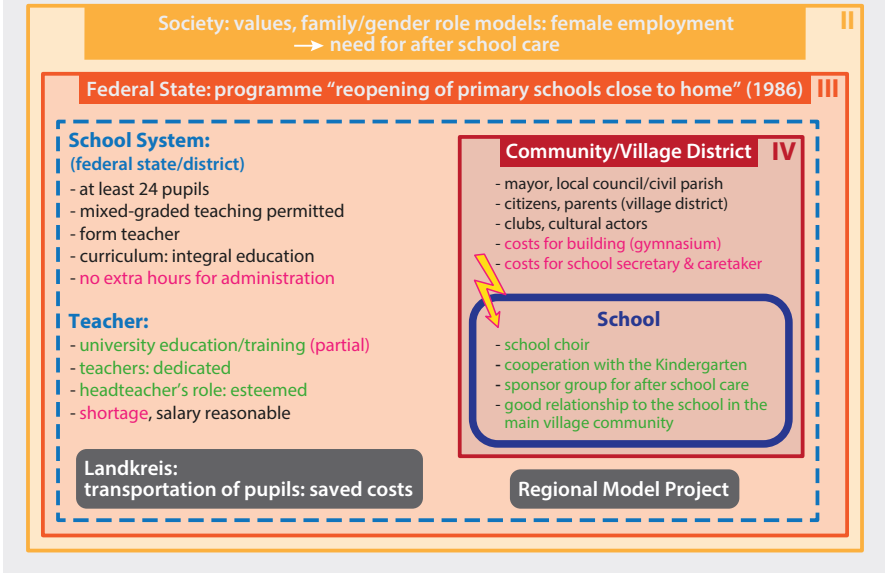


Fig. 11.6 Case Study: Niedereschach-Kappel (2016). Source: Design by author

their shuttered small district school in Kappel was scheduled to reopen in 1987. Although the parents in Kappel (the level of village district individuals) were totally smitten with the idea, the mayor saw himself confronted with numerous problems. After the school building (at the local council level) had been closed down, it had been remodelled to accommodate sport clubs (level village district cultural actors). Refitting the gymnasium to meet the new standards (i.e., separate toilets und changing rooms for each sex) would occasion costs for structural measures. Another problem that needed to be solved was finding a new location for the clubs of sorts quickly and yet another was to hire a school secretary and a caretaker. Although the change would reduce the costs of commuting, this savings would go to the *Landkreis* Schwarzwald-Baar and not to the community of Niedereschach. The assignment and hiring of a teacher fell to the *Länder* level, but at the level of the district government (or: *Regierungsbezirk*) the school's council decided not to allot additional hours to the head teacher for administrative tasks.

A good 25 years later, the school is still in operation and the head teacher and two additional teachers instruct 34 pupils in total. The very dedicated head teacher is from a neighboring community and does not live in the community the school is located in (Fig. 11.1, Level III). Two of the three teachers work fulltime, which makes lesson planning fairly simple. One of the teachers directs the school choir (school and culture, at the community level). Recruiting young teaching staff for

this region, which is done through central federal offices, is proving difficult. The two schools in the main village of Niedereschach and the village district of Kappel have a very good relationship, and care-intensive children are sent to the small school in Kappel, which is organized in a less complex manner (Fig. 11.6, Level IV). In return, the school staff in Niedereschach take in children with a stronger need for afterschool care.

Kappel's head teacher has also managed to integrate the school into a regional model project, which, among other things, provides the institution with additional teacher hours. Very important measures were the promotion of a close connection between the school and the kindergarten through a kindergarten association (*Kindergartenverein*) and the establishment of a sponsor group (*Förderverein*) for afterschool care (societal level: An increase in female employment increased the need for day-care, Fig. 11.6, Level I). The founding of the sponsor group with its volunteers and interconnectedness with local clubs (sports and music) was an especially important signal, which in turn made the municipality willing to provide additional funding for afterschool care (Fig. 11.6, Level IV). The facilities are highly utilized throughout the week by the kindergarten, the school, and various clubs. But all that notwithstanding, the school's preservation is in question because a cost-intensive renovation of the school building and the multipurpose hall, which is part of the complex, is necessary. In 2018, it is unclear whether the new mayor and local council (at the civil parish level) are prepared to invest the 3.3 million euros necessary for the facility's upkeep in the village district of Kappel, because they do not need to budget for the pupils' commute (at the *Landkreis* level).

When authorities at the *Land* level initiated the re-opening of this small district school in the 1980s (Fig. 11.6, Level III), the municipality endured the plan's implementation. Now, the preservation of the small district school is once again being discussed at the municipal level (Fig. 11.6, Level IV). The number of pupils for the next coming years is stable and all teachers are still on duty, yet as soon as the municipal level is confronted with financial problems, such as staffing problems at the state level, the school's future existence will be at risk. Most likely, the school can then only be saved if a very well-connected sponsor group manages to exude political and social pressure on the actors' level. This example makes it more than clear just how fragile small schools in rural areas are and how easily they can be caught up between all the different interests on the varying levels involved.

A school's interconnectedness as part of a community's social and cultural life can serve as an excellent ground for its preservation. The example of Niedereschach-Kappel shows how a school can constitute a "hub" to influence its preservation. The second important component is the actors in the schools, that is, the head teacher and the teaching staff whose commitment and dedication are critical in building a network. Studies on small schools, for example, in alpine regions (Raggl et al., 2015), clearly show that even though actors' roles have changed over time and they often do not live in the community where their school is located, they nonetheless act as cultural instigators and are part of the village activities.

Conclusion: The Multilevel View and the Making of Small Schools

The multilevel view offers the possibility to combine geographical approaches with educational sciences findings and to analytically untangle the different interests and conflicts of interest that encircle the pros and cons of small schools. By applying this approach it is possible to better identify the lines along which the debates on small schools run, to have build a sounder ground on which to stand that will not falter quickly. The strains on small schools are manifold: demographic changes in respect to both pupils and teaching staff, financial shortages from the authorities responsible for schools, and altered societal and school-policy guiding principals. In Baden-Württemberg, a new, ideological heated debate has set in and is forming a new guiding principal that revolves around what is known as *Gemeinschaftsschulen* (comprehensive schools).

One advantage of looking at rural small schools through a magnifying glass is that what happens in these institutions shows itself in a rather undiluted manner: Which people are active in which positions and roles, which expectations and goals come together, and how they reciprocally affect one another. It immediately becomes evident how much local communities are shaped by schools and how they too shape the communities they are located in when stepping back to look at the manifold usages of the school buildings and the numerous activities that take place, once the “action settings” that evolve there are discerned and how they in turn influence the actions of those concerned, once the ideas and concepts developed there are carried over the walls and out of the schoolyards into society and the world at large.

Researchers are also increasingly calling for rural education to put more emphasis on practicing place-consciousness and place-connected education and to include indigenous knowledge and a place-based pedagogy—in other words, to develop an education for rurality. This guiding principal serves as an alternative plan to the modernistic guiding principal, whose proponents understand rural places as backwaters and which stands in stark contrast to the dominant “successful” urban or suburban guiding principal in the school system. The alternative plan constitutes an antipole to the frequently advocated position that success is only possible in the city and that successful pupils sooner or later will (have to) leave their rural communities (Corbett, 2007, in his book “Learning to Leave,” 2013). This poses the question of how much difference between rural and suburban or urban schools is desirable, necessary, and useful, and at which point inequality turns into inequity. Without a doubt, the making of small schools is an eclectic and responsible process that, together with all relevant actors, must be a crucial part of spatial planning. One main goal should be that pupils in rural schools of the future “learn to stay.”

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Chapter 12

Small Rural Schools in Austria: Potentials and Challenges



Andrea Raggl

Introduction

Many small primary schools can be found in Austria's rural areas, due both to topological conditions and to hitherto robust political support. However, a certain divide can be observed between the western and eastern regions, partly because the west is more mountainous and its settlements structures accordingly differ, but also because western politicians on a regional level have expressed a strong commitment to small, rural schools. In this chapter, I will provide insights into small rural schools in Austria on the basis of two transnational research projects carried out by the Austrian University of Teacher Education Vorarlberg together with partners from Switzerland. Data of the participating small rural schools has shown that these institutions' small structures make them places of opportunity, but that they also face specific challenges. My focus lies on the characteristics and current situation of small rural primary schools in Austria, the working conditions for head teachers and teachers, as well as the learning context for pupils.

Small Primary Schools in Austria: The National Context

Austria has a centrally organized education system, but certain decisions—concerning issues such as the minimum number of pupils per school or school closures—fall under the jurisdiction of the nine individual provinces. The situation of small rural schools accordingly differs quite strongly from province to province. In the 1960s and 1970s, several factors led to a wave of school closures in Austria. For example, the extension of road infrastructure resulted in many small hamlets

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gaining better access to the centre of the village, free public transport for pupils, the migration of families to the towns, and declining birth rates, as well as a harsh critique of small schools by educationalists and decision makers (Kramer, 1993). Although relatively few small schools were closed in Austria in the last 40 years, the situation has been changing over the past decade, with school closures increasing especially in the eastern part of Austria (Kroismayer, 2015).

Primary school in Austria lasts 4 years. This can be seen as one reason for the higher percentage of small schools compared to countries with 5 or 6 years of primary schooling. Researchers in the two research projects from which the data of this chapter stems—“Schools in Alpine Regions” (Müller, Keller, Kerle, Raggl, & Steiner, 2011) and “Small Schools in Rural Regions” (Raggl, Smit, & Kerle, 2015)—defined a small school as one with less than 50 pupils. An important characteristic of such small schools is that they have mixed-grade classes because of the low number of pupils enrolled. Of the 2998 primary schools that exist in Austria, 883 have fewer than 50 pupils. Over 40% of the primary schools in Tyrol and Vorarlberg are small schools according to this definition (see Table 12.1).

A West-East divide can be seen in the *Standortdichte*, or “location density,” of primary schools per square meter: in Burgenland (14.2 km²), Carinthia (10.5 km²), Lower Austria (18.5 km²), Upper Austria (12.6 km²), Salzburg (8.0 km²), Tyrol (4.0 km²), and Vorarlberg (3.5 km²) (Kroismayer, 2015). In 2000, the numbers of primary school pupils began falling in all Austrian provinces except Vienna. Since 2010, however, these numbers have remained constant or risen slightly, but with significant regional differences. Many school closures have been taking place in this period, which indicates that such closures cannot be explained through falling numbers of pupils alone (Kroismayer, 2015). Whether a small rural school is kept open or closed very much depends on political decisions. The case of the East-Austrian province of Styria exemplifies this very clearly: Implementers of a *Regionaler Bildungsplan*—a regional education plan—closed 41 small rural primary schools between 2011 and 2014. This policy was part of a larger policy for changing rural communities into bigger units. The fusion of several smaller communities resulted in the closure of the small rural primary schools involved (Kroismayer, 2015). Strong, political support of small schools exists in Western Austria. In an interview within the research project “Schools in Alpine Regions,” the regional governor for education in Vorarlberg explained as follows: “We try to prevent any school closure. There should be at least one primary school in every community.” Although a few schools have been closed in the last years in these two provinces, they were exclusively primary schools with less than five pupils.

Table 12.1 Primary schools in Austria (school year 16/17)

	Primary schools in Austria	Tyrol	Vorarlberg
In total	2998	374	161
Fewer than 50 pupils	883	166	67

Source: Design by author. Numbers from “Schulstatistik 2014/15” by Statistik Austria, 2017, Vienna: Rechnungshof Österreich

However, members of the central government are currently exerting more pressure. The authors of a recent report of the *Rechnungshof Österreich* (Austrian Court of Audit) (2018) are putting pressure on Tyrol and Vorarlberg to close more small schools and to mandate a certain minimum number of pupils per school (p. 62).

Methodology

In the two Interreg projects “Schools in Alpine Regions” (2009–2011) and “Small Schools in Rural Regions” (2012–2015), a team of researchers from the Universities of Teacher Education in Vorarlberg (Austria) and the Swiss cantons Grisons, St. Gallen, and Valais investigated the significance of small schools for the region, the work of head teachers and teachers in small rural schools, teaching and learning practices in mixed-grade classes, and students’ perspectives on learning in a small school setting (Müller et al., 2011; Raggl et al., 2015). The transnational cooperation enabled the researchers to compare the situation of small rural schools in the two countries and revealed the plurality of small rural schools.

The mixed-methods approach in both projects included a questionnaire study with head teachers and teachers as well as case studies. Case studies (Stake, 1995) involved semistructured interviews with head teachers and teachers in addition to group interviews with students, participant observations, and documentary analysis (e.g., school brochures and school homepages). In this chapter, I draw on data of the Austrian primary schools that involves 20 case studies of small schools in the province Vorarlberg. The data includes 20 interviews with head teachers, 35 interviews with teachers, and 30 group interviews with 3 students each from Years 3 and 4. Researchers asked the students what they liked and disliked about their school and their learning experiences in small schools with mixed-grade classes. They also carried out additional interviews with regional school inspectors and regional politicians. They recorded and transcribed all interviews and analyzed the content with the help of the software program MAXQDA.

Small Rural Schools: Potentials and Challenges

Small schools differ from their larger counterparts in a number of ways, including class size, the number of staff members, the use of a mixed-grade class structure, and the role of head teachers. These characteristics are a source of both educational opportunities and challenges (Raggl, 2012; Sigsworth & Solstad, 2001). At the same time, the differences between small rural schools and larger schools must be critically examined: Are small rural schools really so different? And if so, in what respect?

On their homepage, a local network of teachers in the western part of Austria presents the strengths of small schools in comparison to larger ones by pointing out

that the low numbers of pupils make individual support of each child more likely, creating a caring ethos in small primary schools. The researchers of the two projects carried out in Vorarlberg provided evidence that the low numbers of students can allow teachers at small schools to offer a different learning community: Three of the participating small schools took on children from larger schools who had been excluded from their former schools because of difficult behavior. One interviewed teacher explained that the small structure provided security and offered a 9-year-old boy a second chance:

He came to us from a big school. He did not get along at all there. And here, at the beginning it was also really difficult, but we managed somehow. Now he is in secondary school, again in a larger setting and he had really big problems there, at least at the beginning. The structure that we were able to offer him, the security he found here—you can't provide that in a big setting. That was a real chance for him. Yes, for many children like him it would be a great chance. (Teacher, V10)

The head teacher of Case Study V1 explained that his small rural school is attracting parents from urban areas who are looking for a more caring school with individual support. Two pupils are attending the school who “failed” in their former larger primary school.

The Plurality of Small Rural Schools

An important result of the research into small rural schools is that they cannot be classified as one type of school. It is necessary to reflect on each school's specific situation. How many teachers work there? How many students attend it? Where is it located? Is it threatened by school closure? A researcher must describe the contextual factors in order to identify the specific potentials and challenges of each school, instead of talking about small schools in an overly general way. The 20 Austrian small rural primary schools who have been participating in the research project can be categorized with the following typology (Raggl, [in press](#)):

1. Single-teacher schools that are very small and remote with fewer than 20 pupils (7 schools);
2. Small, 2-teacher schools, with between 20 and 30 pupils, located approximately 30 min driving time away from the next small town (11 schools);
3. Small schools with a special profile as Montessori schools, with between 20 and 35 pupils, located near urban centers (2 schools).

These three kinds of small rural schools face different challenges depending on their location and distance from the urban area. For example, there was more evidence of teacher isolation and fluctuation in very small, one-teacher schools in remote areas than in more centrally located schools.

Working and Learning Conditions for Teachers and Students in Small Schools

The researchers of the projects “Schools in Alpine Regions” and “Small Schools in Rural Regions” have shown that most of the participating Austrian head teachers and teachers enjoy working in their small rural school. In the two questionnaire studies, more than 70% stated that they are largely content with their work. With these case studies, I have discovered that many are very dedicated to their work and experience it as rewarding. Several of the interviewed head teachers and teachers described their small school as a “special” or “exciting” place, and they experienced their work as challenging though “very diverse” and “never boring” (Raggl, 2015).

In addition, group interviews with students indicate that most of the pupils like their school and speak very positively about their experiences in a small school setting. For example, students appreciate the advantages of having extra space due to the small number of pupils and explain that they enjoy the “quietness” in their school, noting that there is “no crowd on the playground” and “enough toys for all” to share. Children also mention that they like that “everyone really knows everybody” (Raggl, 2015). However, some students explain that it can be hard to find friends in a small school setting.

Every school has its positive sides. Last week, for example, I was in a secondary school for one day and I got really frightened when I came to such a big school. But there is the advantage that you can find friends there. (Peter, age 10, V4)

The limited options for friendships due to the low number of children are mentioned mainly by children of very small schools with less than 20 students.

Building Facilities: Generous Spatial Conditions

Most of the participating small schools in Vorarlberg have nice buildings and have been renovated recently or are relatively new. In the questionnaire study, head teachers and teachers expressed contentment with their spatial situation. They appreciate, for example, that they often have an extra room for group work. The generous spatial conditions are often connected to the declining numbers of pupils in the villages. Many of the schools were built for more students when most children attended the school for 8 years, up through the *Volksschuloberstufe* (upper level of primary school), which existed until the 1970s before more centrally located secondary schools were installed in rural areas. Because of this, a lot of rural primary schools often have rather generous spatial conditions with extra rooms for group work, and so forth.

Teaching Heads

Another characteristic of small rural primary schools is that they have a *teaching head* who has the dual role of serving both as class teacher and head teacher. Only schools with at least eight classes have a head teacher who is mainly responsible for management tasks and freed from teaching commitments. Several of the participating head teachers indicate in the interviews that they see themselves primarily as teachers: “I’m mainly a teacher. The head teacher role comes second to this” (Head Teacher, V4). However, some underline that the double role also provides them with the opportunity to create something: “It’s really tiring, but I also like this role because it enables you to act in a very autonomous way ... for me as a teacher of this school and for the whole staff. ... I have freedom!” (Head Teacher, V1).

The freedom includes a lot of responsibility that falls to a very small team, or even to a single person. Teachers explain that they have to be careful not to exploit themselves out of personal dedication to the school. Asking head teachers of small schools about their tasks, the list seems to be endless: administrative work, building up links to the community, being in charge of building facilities, responsibility for curriculum and school development, and so forth. A review of the existing literature reveals the minimal attention the complex role of rural teaching heads has received from researchers (Dunning, 1993; Wilson & McPake, 2000) internationally and especially in German-speaking countries. For the past decade, head teachers in Austrian primary schools have had to take an obligatory management course. Until then, former class teachers shifted into the management role after some years of teaching. In the interviews, the newly appointed head teachers of small rural schools who were just attending the management course criticized that the lessons were not pertinent to their situation in small rural schools: “Not much of the course is helpful for us” (Head Teacher, V8). A stronger acknowledgment of the specific situation of head teachers of rural schools remains a future task for both research and professional development.

Mixed-Grade Classes

An important characteristic of small schools is that they have mixed-grade classes due to the low number of pupils. On the one hand, mixed-grade classes are a structural necessity for maintaining small rural primary schools; on the other hand, they provide specific learning opportunities. The participating teachers state that pupils benefit strongly from learning alongside younger and older peers. Some criticize the strong age orientation in the education system in general and describe it as “unnatural.” “Nowhere in society are you together only with people of the same age, except in schools” (Teacher, V7). They explain that the mixed-grade class highlights children’s diversity and helps them to explore their potential, especially in the school-entry phase (Raggl, 2015). Several participating teachers deliberately

changed from larger urban schools to a small school because they wanted to work with mixed-grade classes. They are strongly convinced of the benefits of this system, although they are aware that “it gets more complex when you have four grades in one class” (Head Teacher, V1). However, some teachers who changed to a small school explained that they expected it to be easier than it actually was. They had to experience the complexity of the mixed-grade classes and the challenges of the wide range of children in terms of age and performance levels.

Professionalizing Rural Teachers’ Work: Distancing from a Total Immersion in the Village

In the literature, one can find constructions of the rural primary teacher who is portrayed as a carrier of culture (Poglia & Strittmatter, 1983) and who is responsible for everything in the school and beyond the school. The long history of the *Volksschullehrer auf dem Land* (rural primary teacher) still has a strong influence on the perception of the rural primary teacher who, until the 1960s, was often not well educated and not well paid. He (the position was most often held by a man) was very much under the control of the church and had to fulfill ecclesiastical duties such as playing the organ, organizing the festivities of the community, or engaging in sport clubs (Kramer, 1993). In an interview, an inspector talked about the “special type of mountain teachers,” indicating that “they have to be tough” and “be able to sort out everything by them” (Inspector, V1). The conditions for mountain teachers have changed a lot in the last decades: Classes are no longer filled with 50 or more students between 6 and 15 years, the teachers have the same education and pay as primary teachers in urban areas, and so forth. However, some old expectations seem to remain. One newly appointed head teacher explained that he had to be very clear with parents that he would not take on responsibilities for activities in the church like the former head teacher. His predecessor played the organ, strongly connected school activities to church festivities, and also included the weekly mass as part of the school activity.

In general, the researchers have shown with their data that head teachers and teachers feel supported by parents and the wider community. Some schools have strong links to the community and can be described as “community-active” schools (Sigsworth & Solstad, 2005) whose teachers encourage parents and other community members to come into the school and contribute their skills and knowledge. However, in the questionnaire study, 70% of the head teachers and teachers’ state that they are not engaged in village activities outside of their work in the school and 65% state that they do not personally live in the village in which they work. In the interviews, several emphasize that the spatial detachment from work and home is important for them. Teachers who are also living in the village where they work found it very challenging:

Sometimes it is really hard when everybody is seeing everything. You see them in the afternoon, in the evening. And when you go to the library you see again the same people, when you go to the pub you see the same people, and when you cycle. Sometimes it's really monotonous. So I always try to go to places where I have absolutely nothing to do with the people and the kids. (Teacher, V3)

A few make a point of saying that they prefer to live in urban areas and commute to their workplace in a rural school. Kalaoja and Pietarinen (2009) describe a similar trend for teachers in Finland, where many prefer to live in urban areas and commute to their workplace in a rural school. Unlike in earlier studies (e.g., Poglia & Strittmatter, 1983), wherein village teachers were described as “carriers of culture,” many of the participating Austrian teachers try to emphasize their professional role and distance themselves from a total immersion in village life (Raggl, 2015).

New Ways of Cooperating

The high responsibility which falls to a very small team in rural primary schools is connected with a rather isolated professional situation. This was especially the case in very small and remote one-teacher schools. However, case study analysis indicates mutual support in many small schools, in spite of the generally small team size. In addition, many maintain close contacts with other small schools nearby. In Vorarlberg, most small schools are part of the network of small schools (*ARGE Kleinschulen*) and meet for informal exchange and mutual support or developing learning materials. The interviewed teachers, especially novice teachers in small schools underline the importance of this support network (Raggl, 2015). The case studies also reveal other ways of cooperating: Several primary teachers work closely together with the kindergarten teacher. Primary schools and kindergarten often work rather separately in Austria. The close cooperation in rural institutions is enhanced because they are often the only professional educators in the village.

Current Changes: Development of Regional Clusters

Currently, the development of clusters is a new issue in the context of small rural schools in Austria. The aim is to connect several small rural primary schools in a regional network of schools with one head teacher who is responsible for one cluster. Until recently, every small and even very small primary school had its own head teacher. Policymakers see this development as a chance to combat teachers' isolated professional situation and to enable exchange and support within a larger team. Clusters can include from two to eight schools (primary and secondary schools) in a region. The head of the cluster has to take on the management tasks of the hitherto existing head teachers of each school (BMBWF, 2018). Some small schools are already connected to the next bigger primary school. This was the case

in two schools that took part in the research project. The two case studies revealed that the change was experienced very differently by the head teachers and teachers: In one small school, the staff welcomed the reorganization warmly. The head teacher spent 1 day a week in the small school and teachers of the larger school were teaching for some hours in the small school and vice versa. The enlarged team provided opportunities for collegial support and exchange of learning materials or arranging joint seminars for further professional development. In contrast, in the second case the teacher of the one-teacher school felt left alone and unassisted by the head teacher of the larger school. At the same time, the head teacher felt sorry that he lacked the time to be around more. He explained that increasing demands were pulling him in many different directions: "It's difficult, because I'm also appointed as a teacher. I teach 14 hours a week at the moment and I'm responsible for two schools now" (Head Teacher, V7). The two cases revealed the potentials and challenges of reorganizing small rural schools in Austria. Some teachers explained in the interviews that removing head teachers from small schools is mainly an attempt to save money and criticized the reduction of head teachers' autonomy that accompanied these changes.

Small Rural Schools as Places for Innovation?

Researchers have portrayed small rural schools as places providing unique educational opportunities (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987; Sigsworth & Solstad, 2001; Vulliamy & Webb, 1995). Several of the head teachers and teachers participating in the two research projects stressed the idea that the structure of a small school makes it easier to implement changes. Many of them appreciated the degree of autonomy to create their own profile of the school and explained that the small structure makes it possible to implement new ideas easily:

It's much easier to do this in a small school when you get along well with each other than in a big one. Too many people take part in the discussion there ... And here you just sit together and decide it ... It's not time-consuming in the end. I really see this as an advantage. (Head Teacher, V3)

A number of the participating head teachers and teachers deliberately transferred from a larger school to a small school because they realized they had the opportunity to put their educational ideas into practice in a smaller setting.

Small Rural Schools with a Special Profile

Two of the Austrian case studies were schools that had developed a special profile as *Montessori schools*. By labelling their schools Montessori schools, the teachers expressed their adoption of many ideas of the Italian educationalist Maria Montessori, who developed her system from working with children with special

needs in Rome at the beginning of the last century. The methods included the development of a variety of didactic material, and center on the individual development of each child (Brehony, 2000). The two Montessori schools are government-funded village schools. Hill School and Valley School (pseudonyms) had to fight against school closure in the past. The label Montessori was therefore also a strategy to avoid such closure. The two rural schools have become attractive to parents from the nearby towns and this has helped to secure their existence. Hill School has doubled its number of pupils and Valley School receives a third of its pupils from outside the village. Despite clearly regulated catchment areas in Austria, several parents have found ways to get permission to send their child to Hill School or Valley School. The head teachers and teachers have set up and defined these two schools as Montessori schools, and portray them as such on their homepages. Parents from the adjacent towns took an interest in the newly established small Montessori schools within a rural environment and the schools took on more and more children from outside the catchment area over the years. Developing a school according to their own pedagogical ideas was a dream for both head teachers. They saw better chances to realize their pedagogical ideas in a small rural school—which is why both switched from larger, more urban institutions (Raggl, *in press*). The two case studies reveal that Austrian head teachers enjoy a high level of freedom to create a school according to their own pedagogical ideas. The role endows them with considerable power and authority (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987). An important factor for fulfilling their ideas was their ability to find teachers who were trained in Montessori pedagogy and to build up a team of committed teachers in spite of the centrally organized allocation of teachers in Austria. Therefore, Hill School and Valley School are examples of schools with a remarkable autonomy despite a centralized education system. They show many similarities to private schools. The label Montessori enabled them to build up a certain profile that attracted both teachers and parents.

Securing the Existence of Rural Schools by Developing a Special Profile as Montessori Schools

Hill School and Valley School are located on the outskirts of towns. Their existence is not guaranteed; they are dependent on their town's interest in keeping several small schools in its hamlets around the city center. The schools operate in what Taylor (2002) refers to as “a local competitive arena” (p. 199). Local municipal governments question the existence of these suburban village schools critically. Showing that they are able to attract parents from outside the village and increase the number of pupils helps these schools to survive. They have to fend for themselves in a competitive climate (Harrison & Busher, 1995) and are dependent on parental support in this fight (Bushnell, 2001; Walker & Clark, 2010).

The Pull-Factor of Small Rural Montessori Schools

The two rural Montessori schools have provoked an interesting phenomenon that seems to challenge the dominant move to urban centers with a kind of countermovement: Up to half of the pupils are commuting every day by bus to these small rural schools in the hills near the urban center. The families found ways to remove their child from the designated primary school despite the prescribed catchment area in western Austria. Some of the children explain that it was very important for their parents that they are able to go to this school. Going to this small rural primary school appears to be seen as a privilege. The families agreed to the longer school journey because of the advantages the small rural school provides—the smaller classes and the more child-oriented individual support that forms a central part of the Montessori pedagogy. The small rural primary school provides a niche for well-informed urban choosers (Raggl, [in press](#)). However, the data also indicates that this move generates tensions between “villagers” and “newcomers”. The head teachers explained that some of the locals would prefer a small village school without children from outside.

Conclusion

With my research into small rural schools in western Austria, I have shown their plurality and how much they differ according to their location, their numbers of pupils and teachers, and whether or not they have to fight for their existence. Small schools are portrayed as niches where head teachers can implement pedagogical ideas more easily than in larger schools. Some of the participating head teachers and teachers have deliberately changed to a small rural school because they saw more chances to realize their educational ideas there than in a larger urban primary school. They seem to have found a niche for their pedagogical ideas and these schools appear as attractive places to work. However, the small rural mountain school can also be a challenging place. The data reveals that this very much depends on the location of the school. Very small, One-teacher schools with less than 20 pupils in remote areas are more likely to be over-demanding places. In some cases, very young and inexperienced teachers are sent to these schools and find themselves in an isolated professional situation. Although regional inspectors are very much aware of these difficulties, they cannot always prevent them because they sometimes fail to find more experienced teachers who are willing to go to more remote schools. However, the findings indicate that most teachers like to work in small rural primary schools and appreciate their freedom to create something and enjoy the challenging but never boring working situation. Teachers interpret the development of new forms of cooperation like the current reorganization of clusters of small schools very differently, but they are attempts to overcome professional isolation and foster more exchange. The data also revealed that small rural schools can be places of innovation and some of them are able to attract parents from urban centers because of their special profile.

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Chapter 13

Field and Terrain: The Micropolitics of Community Leadership in Small, Rural Schools in England



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Introduction

Our research focused upon the role of the school in two contrasting English village communities. We sought to explore the lived reality of rural spaces and places in the twenty-first century.¹ Schools are often articulated as being at the “heart” of village life and we explored the veracity of this claim. The two villages were selected strategically to maximize the opportunities for comparison and contrast—one industrial and one more traditionally agrarian. This could offer the strongest prospect for rendering visible the normal, “white noise” of everyday life. The villages were:

Greenhow²: a village with an agricultural heritage, a population of circa 600 and small village school (50 pupils) and;

Minbury: a village with a coal-mining heritage, a population of circa 2,000 and a village school (164 pupils).

We were theoretically influenced by Lefebvre (1991) and his work as applied to rural contexts (Halfacree, 2009). Rural space here is understood as a triptych of the material, imaginary, and practiced (Halfacree, 2007, p. 127). It captures that material space flows from both the tangible (material) world as well as from social constructions and action-based upon interpretations (practices and imaginary). This

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² Both village names are pseudonyms.

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forces a rethink beyond purely geographic boundaries—it is hence both a bounded and boundary-less rural space. Halfacree (2007) usefully represents this as a triangular model with three facets:

- Rural localities inscribed through relatively distinctive spatial practices, linked to production and/or consumption activities
- Formal representations of the rural such as those expressed by capitalist interests, cultural arbiters, planners, or politicians
- Everyday lives of the rural, which are inevitably subjective and diverse, and with varying levels of coherence/fracture (Adapted from Halfacree, 2007).

Each is interconnected and folds into one another and all three facets together comprise rural space—the rural totality (Halfacree, 2007, p. 127).

Our approach to community extended and followed this understanding. Rather than being a geographically bounded locale, it too is part of a blurred rural community that does not perfectly correspond to a physical place. This is in keeping with rural studies that capture that rural areas are now highly differentiated. This “differentiated countryside” resists any ready essentialism being ascribed to rural localities (Murdoch, Lowe, Ward, & Marsden, 2003).

Our methods were hence exploratory and open-ended, seeking to probe the meaning ascribed by actors in and around such locales. Our research was ethnographic and orientated towards *verstehen* and a rich, detailed understanding of each fieldwork site (Pole & Hillyard, 2016). One fieldworker undertook the data collection in each village across a calendar year. In addition to our ethnographic dataset of observation and interviews, we also drew extensively on the archives and local documents available in each locale, such as parish records, school logs, and local newsletters. We were interested in power—that is, in how particular understandings of the situation and circumstances of each village were ascribed and operationalized. Using the research practice of ethnographic immersion, we followed the principle that “One cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 271).

Our approach therefore sits within the ethnographic research tradition, which is informed by an emphasis upon agency (Atkinson, 2015). In looking at the school, we encountered key roles that were institutionalized, in the sense that they were occupied by an individual, but more than the role alone. That is, some key roles in rural areas become embedded and inescapably central through the very rural context in which they are located. For example, in one village the head teacher had once also lived in the building adjacent to the school and been a key figure in the local village organizations (such as the Parish Council). This is, in part, because other organizations and institutions have dissipated.

We hence investigated the implications—and autonomy—for the individual situated in this rural, schooling, and locational context. As other institutional roles disappeared (such as shopkeeper, publican, or local doctor), did those remaining become more important? Both of our villages had retained their schools. We were therefore concerned with exploring the following questions: Was there something distinctive and tangible about the circumstances and role of a rural head teacher? What autonomy did they enjoy in their roles, and in what ways had these been curtailed under modernity?

Rural School Leadership

The specialist literature on rural school leadership shared our interest and concern to understand the individual social actor in the context of place:

[There is] a complex socio-cultural politics to school leadership that is context specific and multi-layered ... a social practice that transcends the domain of being an individual's activity and can only be understood by getting up close to the culture of schooling and the social positioning of school leaders. (Eacott, 2010, p. 226)

In a contemporary, postindustrial economy, this is further layered into a modern bureaucracy. Often labeled neoliberalism within the contemporary literature (Greener, 2012), it situates any school leadership within the national policy framework within which they are working. This means that schools even in remote locales are impacted by external, national scrutiny. Gunter, Grimaldi, Hall, and Serpieri (2016) successfully captured the myriad layering of outside policy influences reaching into the contemporary rural school:

- Competition between schools is the new logic of educational activity.
- Ofsted³ inspects and grades schools according to school performance.
- School managers, as head teachers, are afforded responsibility for managing schools in line with performance indicators.
- National tests are established as key indicators of pupil, teacher, and school performance.
- Standards of attainment in relation to national testing are the benchmarks against which pupil, teacher, and institutional performance are judged.
- School-league tables are critical to local and national perceptions of school performance. (Adapted from Gunter et al., 2016)

A final, more specific but theoretical literature that is useful for making sense of the convergence of contemporary policy discourse upon individuals operating within that framework are a portfolio of ideas found within the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Engaging Bourdieu

Engaging Bourdieu provides an opportunity to put Halfacree's (2009) abstract use of Lefebvre into practice and to explore how rural schools converge and translate neoliberalism. It enables a move-away from a normative reading of leadership towards one that acknowledges its temporal, complex, and situated nature—very much in keeping with Halfacree's (2007) triptych. It is vital here to see the individual actor in the local context, whilst appreciating the simultaneous interplay of both micro- and macrolevel forces in shaping practice.

Bourdieu's (1998) model serves to facilitate this. To draw upon Bourdieu's own terminology, school leaders engage in *practices* in a given *field*. More specifically,

³Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

they draw on two interrelated resources—their *habitus* and forms of *capital*. This can be, and often is, represented in the following equation:

$$(\textit{habitus} \times \textit{capital}) + \textit{field} = \textit{practice}$$

Adapted from Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101.

Bourdieu (1998) offered a rich array of theoretical concepts that positioned him as one of the leading scholars of his generation. Each concept is useful here:

Field: a structured system of social relations at the micro- and macrolevel, in which positions are defined relationally;

Habitus: a durable but transposable set of dispositions, representing the physical and mental embodiment of the social

A person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of;

Capital: (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) resource used to inform the habitus.

Critically for our interest here in specifically rural schooling contexts, he did not equate field with a physical locale. Rather, the field described a relationship, such as either centrifugal or repelling. Following Bourdieu's own advice to put concepts into empirical practice, we applied these concepts as a means to unlock our empirical data. We found the concepts of habitus and the reading of the field to be critical. That is, they mapped onto the understanding and articulations of the totalizing role that a modern school leader fulfills:

One minute you have a child who has fallen over in the playground and crying, at the same time as the phone rings and the local authority want to know about admissions and a parent in the corridor wanting to speak about her son's performance ... and decisions need to be made and documents signed, letters to go out, and this is all happening at once. (head teacher, Minbury Village)

There is a distinct kind of intensity to the rural head teachers' position. It folds many roles into one another, including their own delivery of teaching, the pastoral needs of the child and parent, and the logistical demands of neoliberal bureaucracy—"everybody wears 27 hats" (head teacher, Greenhow School). So, whilst everyone working in a rural school faces intensity, the head teacher is exposed to external pressures at the forefront of their leadership role: "We have Ofsted, we have league tables, we have parents being able to choose their school, which means school competition, and in rural areas numbers are small and you are always conscious of the threat of closure" (head teacher, Minbury).

Similarly, within the second case study village, the very experienced Acting County head teacher did not view the question of closure optimistically in the long-term:

I don't think it will survive otherwise because I think you'll keep creaming off the top, all the time. And standards this year are dreadful. The SATS⁴ results that [the senior teacher] brought in—they're a particularly poor year going through but, increasingly, we are getting

⁴Key stage tests, commonly referred to as SATS.

the bottom end of the market and that's going to make life really hard for [the incoming head teacher] and the teachers. (Head teacher, Greenhow village)

Here, space held a concentrating, intensifying effect. This applies not only to their own personal role (teacher/leader/administrator), but how the lack of population density means that the imposition of school choice is doubly felt here. Whilst parents may have only a limited choice (such as between two schools, whereas a more urban context may offer four), it holds definitive consequences. That is, for the school: success or closure. This is regardless of whether a school intake year—which may consist of only a handful of students—is exceptional or otherwise. The system becomes too blunt to capture such nuances.

After Bourdieu, we were keen to explore agency and the habitus and/or relative autonomy of head teachers within their locales. Our data began to reveal how head teachers' maneuvered, interpreted, and responded to such circumstances. It also offered scope for us to gain an insight into the individual agency they did and did not enjoy in the configuration of such spaces:

I consider myself to have a strong understanding of what needs to be done in order for this school to survive. Yes, number one, I want it to be part of the community and for families to feel welcome and see this as their local school, but of course I think that in trying to create that I hope it will mean them wanting to choose this school for their children. (Head teacher, Minbury Village)

Here, interests and concerns fold into one another. The head teacher is effectively playing her hand to the best advantage—that what could be seen as a threat (small size, small local pool of competition) could be reinvented to her benefit. So, the possibility of fostering a sense of community that a rural locale enables (perhaps more so than an inner-city environment) can be packaged and sold to the school's advantage—the community-feel of a small, rural school.

Distinctive to this head teacher was that she was then leading two primary schools through a shared headship across two schools—a federated approach. The federated strategy was not new, but that the schools both fell within the same geographic locale (i.e., village) was coincidentally highly beneficial for both the village and the head teacher:

I was aware that the authority was not keen to close schools and so a federated approach with me running both schools seemed like a sensible compromise. I see it as an opportunity, to try and work with a wider community, maybe even bring those communities together. I also didn't want the school to close or merge as I think it is important for the parents who live in Minbury Hill to keep their local school. The issues and problems are still the same, I guess Minbury Hill has greater social problems and issues but they are still deprived working class communities ... which is why I didn't want it to lose the school. (Head teacher, Minbury)

The geographic and class-based differences within Minbury (The Hill and the center of the village reflecting different social class occupancy) were echoed in the second village case study we introduce below. There are similarities in the closure of many other amenities (such as hostelrys), but the economic decline was distinctive to Minbury.

As our pseudonyms suggest, Minbury was a former coal-mining “pit” village. Closed in the 1960s, its urban proximity enabled it to become a commuting village and also retain a population of generational, long-term residents. This re-balancing was in transition during the fieldwork and a reflection of the differentiation countryside that Murdoch et al. (2003) described as postproductivist. Like our second village, Minbury was not the subject of the intensive gentrification experienced by villages such as those within the centrifugal pull of London (where second-home ownership has risen over 80%). It was therefore at something of a crossroads, which was again intensified and doubly felt within the school. Namely, that in the absence of other constancy, what remained stable became all the more important:

The community has seen a lot of things close, you only need to drive through the village to see shops closed, houses boarded up, there is no work, there are very few places for the kids to go or do ... many end up unemployed or simply hanging around on the streets ... the school is one of the few constants ... and it was important for me to help keep it and try and use it in a way that was bigger than simply about reading and writing and numbers. (Head teacher, Minbury Village)

Minbury School provided examples that confirmed the models and concepts that both Halfacree (2009) and Bourdieu (1998) provide. The school was deeply embedded and affected by its past economic legacy, but also by (and increasingly so in the modern era) new manifestations of bureaucracy. Halfacree’s triptych captures that representations of such spaces by those external to them hold increasing sway. Using Bourdieu, we were able to explicate how the head teacher was a key placement within the nexus or field. There was hence some capacity for their proactive interpretation and mediation of external pressures (such as school choice) to her advantage and own interpretation of the school’s situation. This required drive:

To be a Head in a small school ... you’ve got to know when it’s your moment, when it’s your time. Because the demands on your time are massive. Because you haven’t got somebody else who will be your senior teacher who will take assembly x times a week. Or, you’re probably going to be in charge of special needs and literacy and the budget and risk, health and safety. Whereas, if you’re in a big school, you’ve got two secretaries and a finance officer and a site manager. People in small schools, they get paid the lowest wage as a Head and they certainly earn their money. You might only be responding for 58 children and not 558, but I think you work harder probably than the Head of a big school. (Head teacher, Greenhow Village)

In the following part of this chapter, we will now turn to further explore points of similarity and contrast.

Greenhow: Livestock, Success, and Pavements

The second village was not a pit village and agrarian interests were the key economic influence—although farming was less dominant than coal had been for Minbury (e.g., many parents worked outside agriculture). It was this—“modest”

gentrifying—process that we found to be critical for its school and head teacher. That is, there emerged a challenge to recruit and retain a local school leader.

The comparison of Greenhow's situation with Minbury confirmed the value of a strategy of revealing insight through the striking differences generated across each village. A single study would not have offered such distinctions. Minbury was a former industrial village, whereas Greenhow was agrarian and continued to be primarily shaped and owned by farming families resident inside or nearby to the village. Greenhow was an old village, with a Saxon church and early available records indicating that it had remained at a consistent size (a population of circa 200) for centuries. However, there was a notable breach here, in that the village had expanded rapidly (more specifically, tripled in size) in the postwar period. It had been identified as capable of expansion in policy terms and the housing built during this period was highly varied, from social and council housing to large, detached executive homes. Building was furthermore ongoing during the period of fieldwork and further planning applications were under consideration.

In mining villages, local elites were rarely resident in the village itself. That is, the large Norfolk landowners of the era are often geographically distant. In Greenhow, there was no historic Lords of the Manor in the postwar period, as they had sold their landholdings. (They still owned the family's large estate house, a few villages away). In their absence, the continuity had been provided by the local, farming families. These were traceable through old Norfolk archives and directories, such as White's and Kelly's Trade Directories, which showed that four or so families had owned land in and around Greenhow for three to four generations. The present-day village was therefore an amalgam of both old and new residents, and the new residents further represented a diversity of household income reflected in very different patterns of residential occupancy—from homeowners to those in social housing who had not actively elected to live in the village:

Peculiar to here, is a very strange social arrangement in the village—the re-housing of people from ... from I suppose difficult circumstances, and all placed together in one place, there is a lot of unrest ... families who are here who are warring, I suppose, with a small 'w.'
(Head teacher, Greenhow Village)

As in Minbury, the school was a remaining constant. In the late twentieth century, one of the village's two public houses (pubs) had closed, the village store had closed, but one opened on the periphery of the village nearer the access road. The village bakers and blacksmiths had closed up shop and the vicar was shared across other local churches. In sum, the postwar changes in Greenhow reflected those found in many English villages at the time, the end of what Newby (1977) termed the occupational community when agriculture provided the main source of local employment. Whilst not entirely removed, the farming families and those working in agriculture had been joined not just by new villagers, but by highly varied villagers and a type Greenhow would never have seen before—retired professionals from the South. Greenhow was an amalgam of newcomers, middle-class retired professionals buying off-plan, Norfolk locals able to afford the new housing coming onto the market, established farming families, and those in more temporary

accommodation, who had not necessarily elected to live in the village, such as those assigned social housing in Greenhow by the council.

The Resilience of the School

The school was a constant—sustained and made possible by the new influx of village residents. Prewar, Greenhow’s sister village had possessed the larger school, but was now increasingly eclipsed and gentrified, to the extent that its school had been amalgamated with Greenhow’s primary school in the 1980s. This was reflected in a shifting school population (Table 13.1):

The school’s own archives provided this level of information and detail to complement the ethnographic research. The head teacher’s reflections—both in diaries and interviews—showed the changing status of the school leader, their position in the village, and their concerns. These can be summarized as: Space, infrastructure, and staff.

In the 1950–1980s, frequently cited concerns were pupil health (the provision of extra nourishment to some pupils and outbreaks of head lice) and the very built infrastructure of the school building itself. Built in the Victorian era, the school over the years acquired electricity, a telephone line, and (ironically for a rural school) eventually a playing field. New classrooms were as much a concern for the head teacher of the 1990s as of the 1940s.

In retrospect and in comparison to Minbury, the scale on which the head teacher had come to drive such initiatives, or intervene on their behalf, was remarkable. The school playing field was secured through the gift of a local landowner and initially only on loan. The new classrooms—replacing postwar “temporary” rooms—were only secured via an external grant competition. In this sense, they required an entrepreneurial head teacher:

It often depends on the Head about what that—what’s that little bit of oofle dust, that little bit of sprinkle that makes your school different from somebody else’s. And I think this school will get an identity with the new Head. (County head teacher, Greenhow Village)

The present day potentially posed the most challenging period the school had ever faced. The threat of closure, felt at Minbury, had been alleviated after the securing of the grant that significantly expanded and refreshed the school site. Following such work, the immediate threat of closure was removed. However, the records and contemporary fieldwork revealed very high patterns of staff turnover in the core teaching team. That is, whereas Minbury had a federated head, this was increasingly where matters were headed at Greenhow:

Table 13.1 Changing numbers on the school roll in Greenhow Village

Year	1912	1946	1949	1954	2011
No. on school roll	66	31	100	136	58

Source: Design and data collection by author

To be a Head in a small school you have to be completely ... well, you can't be selfish, you've got to be about other people. But equally you've got to know when it's your moment, when it's your time. Because the demands on your time are massive. Because you haven't got somebody else who will be your senior teacher who will take assembly x times a week. Or, you're probably going to be in charge of special needs and literacy and the budget and risk, health and safety. Whereas, if you're in a big school, you've got two secretaries and a finance officer and a site manager. People in small schools, they get paid the lowest wage as a Head and they certainly earn their money. You might only be responding for 58 children and not 558, but I think you work harder probably than the Head of a big school. I think it's more intense, because there's no-one to shield you from it. But, small school Heads do it differently. (County head teacher, Greenhow Village)

The sheer intensity of the role of the head teacher echoed the Minbury head's reflections. At Greenhow, this intensity was joined by a high turnover in staff, which included the head teachers themselves. Hence, during the fieldwork period alone, the temporary head teacher (who left to lead their own primary school) was replaced by an acting County Head (a head teacher shared by other school on a temporary basis, often associated with a school being placed in special measures). The turnover in teachers and how this had changed can also be further demonstrated. School records, such as press clipping retained from the local press in the school logs, show long-service awards for retiring staff (28 and 43 years, e.g.). Greenhow School had possessed a total of 22 heads, 11 of which had been acting. The last long-serving (10 years plus) head teacher had been appointed in 1991. This change was not immediately obvious without the point of contrast with Minbury and historical comparison. The pattern whereby the head stayed for over a decade and resided next door in School House (now a second-home) had effectively ended decades ago.

Bourdieuian ideas offer up an understanding of an actor within their cultural moment. In our case study schools, we identified an intensification in their role and the emergence of a correspondingly more entrepreneurial style of leadership. This cannot be explained entirely through the individual characteristics of the head teacher alone, but belongs to the Bourdieusian field, that is, the influential forces brought to bear by the wider society. As noted above, this includes modernity and neoliberalism. This can also be demonstrated by small, but subtle shifts or changes in language. In Greenhow, for example, the school managers became the governors (1980), the mothers and toddlers playgroup (est. 1985) turned into the pre-school group, and the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) (est. 1952) became the Friends of the School (in 1981). In addition, outside actors imposed new regimes of metrics and evaluation.

In the UK system, these new metrics included the aforementioned Ofsted school inspections and national league tables. Greenhow School had, in living memory, excelled, securing national recognition as an example of excellence in the 1990s and this foregrounded the new building grant. However, this led to something of a trough after this peak. The new building was completed in the 2000s, but the governors and FoTS disbanded after large-scale resignations following a disappointing Ofsted, where the support and engagement of the Governors was criticized. The school logs capture the palpable disappointment of the then head-teacher. There was also a lack of "buy-in" from the present parent body. Collectively, this was something of a

conflation and folding into one another of these shifts within the Bourdieusian field, but felt by the individual actors located there:

There has been too much change, so they can't trust anything any more. What am I? I'm the third Head in four terms, so next term [incoming new head teacher] will be the fourth Head in just over a year. And we all come in and we're all doing the same job, but we all do it differently. We all have different ways we want to do it and different ways that probably we engage with the parents and, like children, they just find it confusing. So, they're not particularly in tune with the school at the moment. (Head teacher, Greenhow Village)

The ethnographic data provided this wider insight into Greenhow School's own archives. They showed how two flows of impact affected the school. These were the ebbs and flows of the wider village as well as the cultural moment or policy disposition. Both were important. For example, the rural head teacher's autonomy from the community had shifted. What had been so successful in the 1990s, what respondents described as a somewhat insular school run as a "tight ship," had ended because it was no longer in keeping with the wider field:

All the other governors have had a few years of sitting back because she [long-term chair of the School Governors] has taken the reins and gone with it. But she's just resigned because she realizes that actually she has been doing too much ... [outgoing Chair of School Governors] did a really good job and she got a lot of things off the ground. I think she did it at personal cost to herself because she didn't delegate, or nobody was interested. I also think it possibly was at cost to a better working group. (Head teacher, Greenhow Village)

Indeed, the somewhat closed shop of the school had become inverted, as schools in the modern age were expected to become more interconnected with their local communities. Furthermore, the demographic shift within the village, which now included those coming into the village at the point of retirement, meant the school needed to look beyond its immediate vicinity for its catchment. Hence, at the time of the fieldwork, half of the school roll was from outside the village. Furthermore, the local competition faced by the school for its pupils placed it in competition with neighboring schools within what the England-Wales schooling system calls the local cluster (8–9 other schools in the vicinity). Collectively, the internal style of leadership in the 1990s had an isolating or insulating impact and the external shifts have meant that villagers lack a ready association with the school, despite the school becoming one of the few remaining amenities within the village. This was exacerbated by the village layout sitting within three general zones—and the lack of pavements and footpaths connecting them. Collectively, something of the community cohesion had been lost. The acting County head teacher expressed her view that some of the parents negative memories of their own schooling: "I think a lot of them have had really poor experiences. So, get them in, show them ... actually what we do is quite good and it's jolly hard work" (Head teacher, Greenhow Village). Some parents thus felt disquiet even at the school gates.

The situation was further complicated by the factional or zoned layout and class differential found within the village as a whole mentioned above. This was tangible in Greenhow Village and the sense of collective support found in other villages was, in the eyes of Greenhow's acting head, absent here:

[Elsewhere] they would look out for each other somehow, the parents. I mean these are real silly examples, but if there's a child whose mum hadn't quite arrived at the end of the day, you knew that whilst you had to make sure that it was alright for all the children to go with that parent and all that, but actually it wouldn't be a problem. There'd be a mum who'd be sitting on the playground with her own children and the child who'd been left playing a game with them while they were waiting for somebody to come. Whereas, here, they had a sort of oh so-and-so hasn't collected her child again—she's probably gone to bed or, you know, probably drunk or ... they're closed. It [the other village] felt very open. This is very closed. This has got a can't do mentality, so the village fete was cancelled, because it's run really by two or three mums, they're friends. The school fete, sorry, not the village, the school fete. Because they couldn't get any help from anybody. ... Whereas, in Yorkshire, and other community schools I can think of, you knew that you'd only got to say to somebody, right, I'm a bit short of people for the cake stall or cakes, come one! And they'd go, oh yes, you told me three weeks ago, obviously I'll do it. But it always starts with a can't do here. Just a bit of negativity. (Head teacher, Greenhow Village)

Village cohesion could therefore not be explained by changes in the lack of amenities alone, nor by an expanding population. The notion of the field and its ability to capture this complexity will now be discussed and evaluated.

Analysis: Engaging Bourdieu

Becoming a school principal according to Bourdieu is then a slow and lengthy process of acquiring not only the symbolic and cultural capitals necessary for participation in the field, but also the processes of investing in the game, accepting its doxa and its ways of being, learning the strategies of participation, and acquiring the habitus, that embodied sense of being an administrator. (Thompson, 1999, p. 24)

Our results concur with the presence of a critical agency to be found within small school leadership. Particularly, that such agency is not always externally mediated:

Agency on behalf [of] head teachers should not necessarily be assumed to be 'individualistic and competitive'. On the contrary 'choices have to be made about the kind of identity and agency that players in the system want to aspire' as they strive to make strategic decisions within a specific local context. There is struggle and conflict, as well as collaboration and concord, as local terrains are shaped by myriad strategic and tactical decisions. (Woods & Simkins, 2014, pp. 336–337)

However, Greenhow Village revealed a particularly clear recruitment gap that showed that the sheer scale of the rural head's role had not been reflected in the present pay scales. Their cluster also comprised new head teachers who had only been in their posts for 2–3 years. The intensifying effect of being the head of a small, rural school thus put these teachers at the risk of burnout and contributed to a short period of leadership in their school. It constrained the kind of familiarization period with the local character and terrain that the Minbury head possessed and which informed her thinking. If habitus is acquired and adopted over time, this brevity has curtailed the scope or room for maneuvering the modern-day school leader enjoys.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the role and centrality of the school within two contrasting English rural villages. By studying two villages and their schools, we have begun to reveal the importance of each village's recent social histories for its school. That is, the school's resilience and sustainability—and even its very importance—were informed by historical change. Seeing the school relative to other village-based service provision and economic change enabled us to better understand the special intensity that some small schools face. Namely, in the absence of other institutions, they acquire greater significance and also the pressures of scale a small teaching team face logistically.

We have applied several theoretical ideas and concepts in this chapter that have enabled us to focus on and further explore the key actor of the small, rural school head teacher. We placed the head teacher within a Bourdieusian field that included (for our analysis) the terrain of a locale and its social history. Using the examples of two English rural villages, we discussed the head teacher as an actor in his or her context, and identified instances of both freedom and constraint. A key conclusion then is that the head teacher fulfills a mediating role. Theirs is, like that of midrange actors in other educational institutions such as universities (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007), critical. However, rather than the rock-and-a-hard place situation that Deem et al. (2007) identified Heads of Department to occupy (between academics and senior management), head teachers here enjoyed greater professional autonomy. With this came intensity and pressure. Furthermore, the intensity of their workload was not recognized by present-day pay scales for small school leaders.

The question of the impact of the terrain was complex and multilevel. It advanced a Bourdieusian understanding of the field. Our empirical results based on ethnographic work in the two English villages allowed key differences to emerge. These were not merely between their economic legacy and history, but were strongly felt and influenced by present-day configurations. For both villages, this included strong class diversity amongst the village populations. Cultural heritages and individual leadership styles imprinted upon one another in both locales. The importance of a central school for Minbury in its postindustrial context and, in Greenhow, how the lack of community engagement both reached into the present-day relations found in both schools. The chapter therefore showed a very social reading of the terrain, but one that injected space into the Bourdieusian field.

In this chapter, we have argued that the relative autonomy of the rural head teacher as a key actor in a small rural community has shifted, as has the relationship between the school and village social cohesion. The backdrop of the cultural heritage of both locales proved vital, because they were mutually informing. This confirmed Halfacree's (2007) model using the ideas of Lefebvre—space/people and representations are a triptych and fold into one another—and offers a more sophisticated understanding of contemporary rural contexts.

A key finding of the chapter is therefore that the individuals—such as head teachers—and the small rural schools within which they function are within a field,

which here serves as a centrifugal and repelling force. Our findings suggest that neoliberalism has extended the reach of this force and that the relative autonomy of a head teacher has declined. Although some individual agency or autonomy remains, it is restricted in the modern-day context by the intensity of the role, which has led to a short-termism. This curtails the small, rural school head teacher's opportunities to "ground" or familiarize themselves with the terrain and cultural heritage of their locale. The field must be understood to also include the triptych of rural spaces.

In contemporary debates about school resourcing, it seems unlikely that greater public funding will flow into small schools. The very viability of these institutions is therefore in question—will rural areas continue to see the pattern of de-development found in both case study locales examined here? Hence, the time at which a "tipping point" of no return is reached merits further investigation, which would ask after the repercussions for rural spaces when key institutions such as schools are lost, and the consequences of the de-development or unravelling of modernity in rural spaces.

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Part IV
Schools in and for Society

Chapter 14

Schools, Families, and Social Reproduction



Sarah L. Holloway and Helena Pimlott-Wilson

Education has risen up the political agenda in the Global North as the economic restructuring that began in the 1970s, along with concurrent social changes including the feminization of the workforce, has presented established welfare states with new challenges (Office for National Statistics, 2013; Pierson, 2006). Neoliberal states across the Global North have responded with policy discourses that emphasize that education's role in developing human capital is crucial to national competitiveness in global knowledge economies, and vital for social cohesion, as it enables individuals to successfully navigate these redrawn labor markets (Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2006). The political importance of this policy agenda means that "the spaces in which education and learning take place are undergoing almost continual transformation" (Brooks, Fuller, & Waters, 2012, p. 1). Researchers in geographies of education have responded to these developments by tracing the restructuring of education from the preschool field through the compulsory years of schooling provision and into higher education (Gallagher, 2018; Harrison, Smith, & Kinton, 2016; Lizotte, 2013). In schools, this restructuring centers not only on the sociospatial organization of provision (e.g., increasing diversity in school type and questions about equality of access), but also on the curriculum (for example, increased efforts to produce competitive, self-managing emotionally-competent workers for the neoliberal age) (Gagen, 2015; Hankins & Martin, 2006; Ledwith & Reilly, 2013; Malmberg, Andersson, & Bergsten, 2014; Witten, Kearns, Lewis, Coster, & McCreanor, 2003). Taken together, these research threads demonstrate that although there is indeed increasing homogeneity in neoliberal educational discourse across the Global North, the enactment of these policies in practice is sociospatially differentiated (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012; Klaf & Kwan, 2010).

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These debates about neoliberal educational restructuring serve as this chapter's point of departure, but recognizing that all existing forms of neoliberalism are contingent in nature, we focus on one form, the emergence of roll-out neoliberalism and the associated increase in state involvement in social reproduction through schools in twenty-first century England (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck & Tickell, 2002). These changes were initiated by a center-left Labour Government policy that sought to broaden the role of education and ensure that by 2010 all primary schools would include within their remit responsibility for: providing/signposting before and after school childcare for working parents from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 48 weeks a year; facilitating children's participation in extracurricular activities; and providing access to support that would better enable parents to raise their own children (Cummings, Dyson, & Todd, 2011; Cummings et al., 2007). This broadening of the purpose of primary schools is part of the retrenchment and renewal of the workfare/welfare state. On the one hand, the aim is to facilitate parents' participation in the labor market, thereby promoting labor market flexibility, reducing welfare dependency, and lowering child poverty. On the other hand, it is also to invest in children's futures through access to clubs/activities and parenting support, thus developing both a skilled labor force and increased social cohesion for the future.

The empirical research was conducted in Hortonsire, a pseudonym for a local authority in the English Midlands, which contains schools serving children from diverse class backgrounds, but which, given its shire county location, is predominantly white. The methodology included: A questionnaire survey of all primary school head teachers in authority; a questionnaire survey of 722 parents with children in Year 2 (ages 6–7) and Year 6 (ages 10–11) in 26 primary schools; 45 semistructured interviews with a sample of parents who completed the survey; and semistructured individual or small-group interviews with 73 children in Years 2 and 6.¹ In total, 93% of the parents who returned the questionnaire were women, as were all of our parental interviewees. In general, we use the term parent in this chapter to include the fathers who returned the questionnaire, but refer specifically to mothers where this is important to draw out the highly gendered nature of some of the practices we study. The results of this research have been published elsewhere; here, we draw the findings together to provide an overview of the project, but direct the reader to the original sources for details of the empirical evidence (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2018).

Our focus in the central sections of this chapter is on four facets of roll-out neoliberalism in primary schools that result in a reworking of the boundary between state and familial responsibility for social reproduction. First, we consider intensified state support for working parenthood through the facilitation of wraparound childcare in schools (e.g., breakfast and after school clubs). Second, we turn our attention to strengthened state involvement in parent-child relationships through school-led provision of parenting classes. Thirdly, we examine amplified state efforts to enroll parents in children's education through curriculum events that seek

¹ Response rates: head teacher survey 67%; parent survey >40% in schools serving all socioeconomic areas.

to guide parents' support for their children's learning in the home. Fourthly, we reflect on deepened state support for child development through schools' fostering of extracurricular activities that are deemed to enrich children's lives. Taken together, these four facets of roll-out neoliberalism progress the permeation of state influence into matters that were previously considered the purview of families. As we argue in the conclusion, these changes in the role of schooling not only have consequences for the daily and generational reproduction of neoliberal subjects, but also for the maintenance of, and breakages in, broader systems of social differentiation.

Schools' Support for Working Parents

Roll-out neoliberalism in England was shaped in early twenty-first century England by the Labour Government's *third way* approach to politics. Paid work was privileged during the party's term in power as the primary way people of working age could be integrated into society (HM Treasury, 2002; MacLeavy, 2008), and this ethos was further intensified by the subsequent right-of-center coalition government (Featherstone, Ince, Mackinnon, Strauss, & Cumbers, 2012). This swing towards a workfare state under Labour was partly driven by a common neoliberal desire to raise economic competitiveness and cut welfare payments, but the desire to reduce social exclusion was also an important motivating factor. Indeed, whilst the emphasis on paid work (theoretically) shifts responsibility for economic survival from the welfare state to the individual, it is notable that workfare approaches were matched under Labour by a progressively more interventionist child and family policy agenda that augmented, rather than cut, state involvement in social reproduction (Gillies, 2008; Lister, 2006). The result of this twin desire to promote work as the route out of poverty, whilst also supporting families in the raising of their children, was an increased responsibility placed on schools to provide wraparound care for children from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., subject to local need.

Our research published in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012) is concerned with the ways this national policy is differentially shaped through its implementation in socioeconomically varied neighborhoods. Geographers have an ongoing interest in policy mobility and the role played by elites in this process (Larner & Laurie, 2010); our interest, by contrast, lies in the ways mid-ranking public-sector workers can shape the localized emergence of policy in practice through their individual interpretation of the subject positions normalized in neoliberal policy (Larner & Elizabeth, 2009; Raco, 2009). In this instance, head teachers' attitudes to the figure of the working mother venerated in neoliberal policy (MacLeavy, 2011), as well as their understandings of ideal childhood (Katz, 2018), matter to their enactments of policy (Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010). Our findings show that head teachers dismiss the workfare ethos of this policy in working-class schools, simply suggesting that parents who do not work do not need childcare. Nevertheless, they regard school-based care

environments as beneficial for children: breakfast clubs are seen to promote learning by meeting children's nutritional needs; after school clubs are considered to provide a safe place to play away from what they judge to be the dangers of poor parenting and the street. In effect, head teachers' understanding of working-class parents as either deficient, or having insufficient resources to parent well, leads them to value the expansion of state services, which they regard as positively promoting their pupils' current and future lives. By contrast, the value placed on care by the heterosexual nuclear family (Wilkinson, 2013), and the notion that a child's place is in the home (Kallio, 2017), undermines head teachers' support for these institutionalized care environments in middle-class areas where parents are viewed as competent. Head teachers' differential support for childcare in working and middle-class areas is influential in shaping provision, but middle-class parents' greater, and working-class parents' lesser, ability to pay for care remains an important factor shaping the outcomes of services.

In a more recent paper in the same journal (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2016), we examine parents' attitudes to this childcare provision in primary schools. In contrast to head teachers, middle-class parents are overwhelmingly positive about this development, with over 90% believing that schools should provide wraparound care from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The service is valued for offering women a life beyond motherhood, allowing them the scope to pursue work if they choose to, and thus to contribute to the financial needs of their families. Indeed, the service is so popular with parents that they argue that it should also be provided at subsidized rates in working-class neighborhoods, as the high cost of childcare means that without it, women with lower earnings will be unable to afford to work (Cummings et al., 2011; Harding, Wheaton, & Butler, 2017). It is striking that this increased state involvement in social reproduction, which marks a firm break with the original role of schools as places of education rather than childcare, raises very little disquiet in middle-class areas. One or two parents are concerned that it might normalize working motherhood, but overall middle-class parents think service provision enables women to make choices about their own lives. In working-class neighborhoods, this service is also welcomed by over 90% of parents, but it is notable that this is largely seen as a service that should be in place to help other low-paid women who might want to work, whereas interviewees themselves more commonly emphasize their own commitment to parenting in the home (Corlett & Whittaker, 2014). Some parents feared—and quite legitimately so, considering the broader social context—that a service that enables employment amongst those women who want to enter the labor market might be forced upon those who would rather care for their children at home (Smith, Wainwright, Buckingham, & Marandet, 2011).

Taken together, the research reported in these two papers illustrates that middle-class parents are more likely to find themselves using schools with after-school care, and they are more likely to feel liberated by using it, as its provision matches their greater opportunities, and their demands to maximize female equality, in the workplace (James, 2011; Office for National Statistics, 2013). By contrast, working-class parents are less likely to be able to access after school care, and are more likely to be concerned that their right to care in the home is being eroded (as the state on

which they are financially reliant seeks to require them to engage in paid work) (Wainwright, Marandet, Buckingham, & Smith, 2011). National state policy is thus implemented and experienced in diverse ways in class-differentiated locations. What is unquestionable, however, is that the role of schools has expanded in England with many now being spaces of care as well as education.

School-Based Parenting Classes

Geographers have shown considerable interest in the ways the neoliberal states are seeking to shape individual citizen's learning through the restructuring of school provision (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015). Our subdisciplinary agenda also needs to be more expansive, however, as new and extended forms of teaching and learning are developing under contemporary educational reform (Jupp, 2013; Wainwright & Marandet, 2013). Notably, a range of OECD nations are not only seeking to produce appropriately skilled citizen-workers through the schooling of children, but are also trying to influence the familial context in which future citizen-workers are raised through increased attention to and expenditure on, parenting education and support (Shulruf, O'Loughlin, & Tolley, 2009). Previous feminist research has highlighted the importance of local moral geographies of mothering, and online and offline parenting cultures, in shaping parenting practices (Foy-Phillips & Lloyd-Evans, 2011; Madge & O'Connor, 2006; Visser, Bolt, & van Kempen, 2015; Witten, Kearns, McCreanor, Penney, & Faalau, 2009), but these influences in informal learning spaces are now sometimes supplemented by state-sponsored parenting education. In England, New Labour overcame previous reticence about state involvement in parenting after concluding that "parents and the home environment they create are the single most importance factor in shaping children's wellbeing, achievements and prospects" (Department for Education and Skills, 2007, p. 3). The policies they promoted redefined parenting from a family relationship to a skill that could be taught, in a process that all too often envisaged parenting as context-free skill, as the challenges facing different families went unrecognized (Gillies, 2010). This professionalization and politicization of parenthood shifts attention from inequalities in wider society and instead involves a common neoliberal focus on changing the individual (Raco, 2009; Richter & Andresen, 2012). In England, schools were encouraged to do this by hosting or signposting parenting education as part of their new broader role in local communities.

Our research in *Environment and Planning A* (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014a) explores how parents respond to the provision of parenting education through primary schools. In wealthier neighborhoods, where mothers have networked support from similar local families and the cultural capital to access expert help if required, demand for parenting classes is low. In contrast, desire for parenting classes is much higher in low-income neighborhoods. Here, the experience of living in an area where antisocial behavior is a significant problem for residents underpinned support for parenting classes both for personal use and because "other"

mothers were seen to need them (Power, 2010). This focus on “other” mothers emerges because although individual mothers articulate the importance of widespread poverty, unemployment, and a lack of services as root causes of antisocial behavior in their neighborhoods, they also identify poor parenting as an issue. In localities where mothers are not closely tied to other mothers, “othering” mothers of whom they disapproved allowed individuals to claim their own maternal respectability in a context where they were highly cognizant of the social devaluation of working-class parenting (Mannay, 2015; Vincent, Ball, & Braun, 2010). What is noteworthy in our research is that these place-based cultures of mothering play a part in shaping whether neoliberal parenting policies are embraced, tolerated, or resisted in a particular locality. Indeed, those individuals whose class does not match their locality, for example a middle-class parent in a working-class neighborhood or vice versa, tend to express attitudes reflective of other members of their local community, rather than those of their individual class grouping.

The politics of parenting education are complex in relation to the reproduction of class and gender. Policies around parenting education have been criticized for imposing certain middle-class mores around parenting on working-class communities (Gillies, 2010), and it is certainly true that blaming poor parenting, without considering the material advantage or poverty in which an individual is providing care, can divert attention from the root causes of problems. However, parenting education is not necessarily bad (Russell & Lincoln, 2017), and we must give equal weight to the fact that isolated working-class mothers argued that they, and not just others, might benefit from this service. The question then is how to ensure that this support can be given in a way that empowers parents, but does not lay individual responsibility for wider social problems at the feet of those disadvantaged under the capitalist system. Notably, this service that was popular with working-class parents has not been universally implemented, and has been subject to cuts under austerity, leaving them without access to support (Harknett & Hartnett, 2011). The role of primary schools is changing, but although wraparound childcare services in middle-class areas blossom despite tight fiscal conditions, as parents can afford to pay, other developments such as parenting education currently have a much weaker position in state schools, which are now under the control of a right-wing Conservative government bent on austerity.

Enrolling Parents in Children’s Education

The dynamism that has long been present in the education system (Meusburger, 1998) is evident today in the transformation of educational spaces (Brooks et al., 2012). In a paper published in *The Canadian Geographer* (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2013), we explore this process through a focus on the deepening interconnections that are being forged between homes and schools under twenty-first century roll-out neoliberalism in England. The politicization of parenting in England, which we introduced in the previous section, has been crucial in this respect (Richter &

Andresen, 2012). The late twentieth-century Conservative governments had cast parents as consumers of education, but in the early twenty-first century the Labour administration expanded this vision and tasked parents with “becoming their children’s educators alongside teachers” (Reay, 2008, p. 642). Their rationale that “parents are a child’s first and most enduring teachers” (Department for Education and Employment, 1998, p. 3) experienced considerable discursive continuity under the right-of-center coalition government that replaced Labour in 2010: They continued to argue that “[m]others and fathers are their children’s first and most important educatorsWhat happens in this home environment has more influence on future achievement than innate ability, material circumstances or the quality of preschool and school provision” (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2011, p. 36). This emphasis on parenting led to a blurring of the boundaries between home and school under Labour, with concerted efforts being made to increase parental involvement as, despite mixed evidence, this was presumed to increase children’s attainment in schools. This involvement can take diverse forms, from support with homework to involvement in school governance, but evidence-based policy reviews center, in a context of parental diversity, on the need to “have a clear focus on providing information, support and advice to parents and children” (Carter-Wall & Whitfield, 2012, p. 12). Our research therefore explores what parents think about state efforts to enroll them in the education of their primary-aged children and how they experience curriculum events through which schools seek to teach them how to better support their children’s school learning in the home.

The findings demonstrate considerable unanimity in support for parental involvement in schools, with only a few dissenting voices wanting to draw a firm boundary between schools as places of education and the home as a space of respite and familial love. Class differences between parents were apparent in the logics of their support, however. Middle-class parents articulated their positivity in terms of ensuring children’s success, with some noting that participation in school was also a mark of good mothering in their locality. Working-class parents, by contrast, were more likely to emphasize the need to understand children’s school lives to enhance the mother-child bond (Gillies, 2006), and to help them when they were struggling academically (cf. McNeal, 2012). Notwithstanding differences in their motivations for supporting parental involvement in schools, parents across the class spectrum believe that schools should provide curriculum events designed to explain modern teaching methods and suggest that they themselves would attend them. Middle-class mothers felt entitled to such help, arguing that schools needed to explain “curriculum speak,” and saw their own willingness to learn new methods of teaching literacy and numeracy as part of being a good mother (Landeros, 2011). Some working-class mothers felt the same, but others found curriculum events socially and intellectually challenging, leaving them with a sense that they were bad mothers when they struggled, and some who had difficulties with learning themselves (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) were too fearful to attend.

The research demonstrates that the spatiality of education is changing, witnessed here through a deepening of the connections between schools and pupils’ homes. If we pursue an inward and outward approach to education (Holloway, Hubbard,

Joens, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010; Thiem, 2009)—which considers both how policies are enacted within schools and the role education plays in the wider neoliberal state—we can see that these changing webs of connections have important consequences for social reproduction. On the one hand, a policy designed to enhance academic achievement and state competitiveness in global economies can inadvertently widen class inequalities. Middle-class children not only benefit from state education, but also increased skilled support from parents in the home; the same is not true for all working-class children, some of whom have parents who lack the cultural capital to provide this additional support (Reay, 2010). On the other hand, this bolstering of middle-class advantage in education has important gendered consequences. State efforts to enroll parents in children’s learning are articulated in gender neutral terms, but the parents in our study made clear that this most often meant a “fourth shift” being added to women’s workloads after they have already completed a first shift in paid work, a second in unpaid caring labor, and a third centered on their own workplace development (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Kramarae, 2001). Disaggregating this fourth shift of mandated parental support for children’s learning, from the more general second shift of housework (such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children), matters as it highlights the increasing burdens being placed upon women as the state deepens its involvement in family life.

Deepening Support for Child Development

One of the interesting facets of educational reform in England is that it has not simply centered on organizational change, but has also involved significant attention to the nature of the curriculum. In 1988, this included the establishment of a national curriculum that “provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens” (Department for Education, 2013, p. 6). Although state actors argue that there is time and space in schools to teach beyond this curriculum (Department for Education, 2013), there has been increasing concern under Coalition and Conservative administrations post-2010 that the school education has narrowed, focusing closely on core Maths, English and Science skills, with increased learning by rote and testing (Adams, Monahan, & Wills, 2015; Bell, 2016; Steers, 2014). An interesting facet of policy under Labour, which has slowly degraded under Coalition and Conservative austerity, is that this focus on a national curriculum was accompanied by investment in the school signposting and provision of enrichment activities, such as drama, music, and sports clubs. This policy intersects with intensive mothering cultures (Hays, 1996; Katz, 2018; Vincent & Ball, 2007), which have seen parents invest more time and money in the raising of their children. Lareau has been highly influential in arguing that this process is shaped by social class, with middle-class parents pursuing a strategy of “concerted cultivation,” whilst working-class parents opt for “natural growth” (Lareau, 2000, 2002, p. 748).

Our research in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014b) demonstrates that middle-class children are indeed more likely to be enrolled in individual extracurricular activities (e.g., musical instrument lessons), or collective cultural, leisure, or sporting clubs (e.g., choirs, Brownies/Cubs, community football), than their working-class counterparts. A total of 79% of middle-class children take part in three or more activities per week; 74% of working-class children are involved in two or fewer such activities per week. These activities are spread across school and community spaces, and whilst both favor middle-class children, their advantage is noticeably less when the activities are provided at school. However, contra Lareau (2000, 2002; see also Stefansen & Aarseth, 2011), we find that middle- and working-class parents value the activities equally, regarding them as offering children fun, friendship, and a chance to try something new whilst improving their social skills and self-esteem. Uneven levels of use do not stem from cultural differences in attitudes to parenting, but rather reflect structural inequalities in income. Many working-class families simply cannot afford these activities whilst financially reliant on the state. In this context, research published in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* illuminates middle-class children's "elective engagement" in activities, whilst the notion of an "underscheduled child" emerges from the accounts of working-class children who cannot afford to access the activities they desire (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2018).

The differential use of enrichment activities in England highlighted through this research has implications for social reproduction. Most immediately, the greater use of enrichment activities amongst middle-class families produces significant changes in the time/space geographies of these families' lives. These activities need to be paid for, but parents also need to prepare for them (buying equipment/clothing, washing kit, making food), chauffeur children to them, watch them at activities, and in some cases help run the clubs. This work has a fundamental impact on the time/space of middle-class family life, particularly for women, making daily life more frenetic and reducing adult leisure time. In the longer term, these activities are also literally enriching, as participation is not only associated with improved academic attainment but also provides children with opportunities to increase their social and cultural capital, which reproduces/facilitates their entry into the middle-classes (Bradley & Conway, 2016; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2018; Katz, 2018; Vincent & Ball, 2007). The long-term importance of these activities is why Labour—as part of their roll-out neoliberal championing of public spending which promotes economic prosperity and social inclusion—successfully increased their availability through schools. However, this development has been arrested under austerity imposed by the subsequent coalition and Conservative governments' roll-back neoliberalism (Featherstone et al., 2012).

Conclusion

There has been vigorous debate about the subdisciplinary perspective in geographies of education. Thiem (2009) critiques the field for adopting an inward-looking approach through a focus on spatial variations in education, and argues instead for an outward-looking perspective that examines education's role in wider social, economic, and political processes, and thus "how education 'makes space'" (p. 157). We regard this as a false dichotomy (Holloway et al., 2010), and in this project have combined an appreciation of education's role in neoliberal state processes with detailed analysis of how particular policies emerge in practice within individual schools and homes. For us, it is this fine-grained examination of the ways particular policies are enacted in different times and spaces that allows insights into the broader implications of education policy in unjust societies. Transcending the dualism between inward- and outward-looking geographies of education now allows us to reflect in the remainder of this conclusion on the implications of changes in the role of English primary schools for social reproduction.

In thinking about changes in the role of primary schooling, we engage with two related, but different, uses of the term social reproduction. Firstly, feminists use the term "social reproduction to refer to the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally" (Laslett & Brenner, 1989, p. 382). This includes the care work in the raising of children, which feminists have pointed out falls disproportionately on women, and which when undertaken for love, not money, subsidizes the capitalist system. It is striking that under roll-out neoliberalism the government's definition of women as paid workers leads them to facilitate the provision of childcare in primary schools, thus increasing state involvement in the messy work of social reproduction. However, this is not a complete transference of responsibilities. The state is increasingly involved in service provision, often on a subsidized or not-for-profit basis, but parents are still required to pay varying amounts for this care. Equally notable is that state actors' desire for well-educated citizen-workers is leading them to seek to educate parents so that they can better raise their children and maximize educational attainment. Neoliberal goals are thus producing greater state engagement with the work of social reproduction, engagement that supports but also seeks to shape parents as the subjects of neoliberal education policy. The outcome of the state's interventionist agenda is that parents, and not just schools, are increasingly deemed responsible for children's educational attainment.

Secondly, since Marx a diversity of writers have used the term social reproduction to think about the ways societies—and in particular unequal class relations—are reproduced, and Bourdieu (1973) has been a highly influential thinker on the ways education is implicated in these processes. This conception of social reproduction is equally important to our research, where we must consider how recent changes in the role of primary education are shaping the (re)production of unjust societies. The decision to expand the role of schooling to include childcare benefits

middle-class families: It enables women to take advantage of employment opportunities that allow them to fund middle-class lifestyles in the here and now, and to purchase services, such as homes near good state schools and extracurricular activities, that will help reproduce their children as middle-class into the next generation. They are further helped by the parental involvement agenda, which aids their efforts to enhance their children's academic attainment. In theory, the roll-out neoliberal state also sought to extend these benefits to working-class women, but their greater desire to mother in the home, combined with poorer position in the labor market, means they are less able to take advantage of childcare services, and they are sometimes less confident in supporting children's academic development. Despite some positive state intentions, the middle-classes are once again better placed to benefit from state services. This is only one part of the picture in relation to the reproduction of social difference, however, as there is also a complex gendered politics at play. Some women are liberated by the childcare policies which facilitate working parenthood, most notably those in the middle-class who have better labor market opportunities, but all women have gained additional responsibilities in terms of a "fourth shift" of work spent supporting their children's educational attainment.

In this sense, roll-out neoliberal policies which were designed both to reduce welfare dependency and to enhance social inclusion, have had complex political outcomes. In class terms, better off workers have been best placed to take advantage of policy change, but opportunities for working-class children have also increased, even if this has not been at a rate that matches their middle-class peers. In gender terms, the existing gender regime which placed responsibility for the care of children firmly in the home has been positively disrupted, but new inequalities have also emerged as that state has extended its responsibilities into the daily work of social reproduction. Education is in a state of flux—in terms of its organization, content and purpose—and geographers need to investigate the minutiae of these changes in order to reflect on their multifaceted implications for societies around the globe.

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Chapter 15

The Relationship Between School and Neighborhood: Child-Oriented Perspectives on Educational Locations



Christian Reutlinger

Introduction: Rico, Oskar, and Their Adventures: A Fictional Story

Ten-year-old Rico has ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). The boy, who describes himself as “deeply gifted,” lives alone with his mother at Dieffenbachstraße 93 in Berlin. She makes sure that Rico’s world is carefully ordered. The routes that he takes to get to school or the shop are always the same. His mother even marks the street crossings for her son with plastic bottles (Steinhöfel, 2008, p. 32). The objects in the apartment all have their designated place (and are, if necessary, labelled with Post-it notes). Even the circle of trusted people in the neighborhood is clearly defined. If Rico loses his orientation and has to think hard, his thoughts begin to jump around in his head like bingo balls. He must therefore keep his thoughts organized all the time. Writing in his diary—in the film he speaks into a recording device—helps him sort out more complicated situations or problems.

In the second children’s adventure book by Andreas Steinhöfel, entitled “Rico, Oskar und das Herzgebroche” [Rico, Oskar and the heartbreak], Rico is riding on a motorcycle outside Berlin with his teacher Mr. Wehmeyer, who wanted to do something nice for him and show him something new. For Rico this situation, so far from his familiar neighborhood, is very unsettling, even frightening. But he does not dare say anything because Mr. Wehmeyer is a teacher and (quote): “You never know with teachers. Maybe they even give you marks for riding a motorcycle” (Steinhöfel, 2013, p. 12¹).

¹Steinhöfel’s books exist only in German, so the quotations have been translated by an external translator.

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The following conversation takes place as the two, having stopped to rest, gaze out on a corn field:

“Where does this road go?” I (Rico) asked. “To the south,” said Wehmeyer, and then added, probably because he remembered that I’m not so good with directions, “If you look at a globe, ‘south’ is down below. Downwards, so to speak.”

I looked at the road and knew that this was, so to speak, nonsense. Because at some point you wind up at the South Pole. And then you can’t go any further down. All you can go is up, cause there’s no more room for south. But, of course, whoever invented the directions never thought of that, and now it was my problem.

Wehmeyer looked like he didn’t have any problems at all. He smiled and said quietly: “It’s really nice here, isn’t it?”

I nodded. Nice and terrifying. I just wanted to get out of there, I didn’t care in what direction. (Steinhöfel, 2013, p. 13)

This fictional story about the deeply gifted boy Rico contains the question that this article will focus on: How do young people learn to see and understand the world? And how can we describe the appropriation processes that accompany this from a sociogeographic perspective?²

A completed research project of the Department of Social Work at the FHS St. Gallen (University of Applied Sciences) links these two sociogeographic questions with the question of how professional social work can be structured in such a way as to support, facilitate, and enhance the potential actions and activities of individuals, groups, and communities. Social work is seen as something that should support appropriation processes and/or facilitate appropriation situations, especially for disadvantaged individuals.

Preliminary Note: Everything Depends on the Viewer’s Perspective

In the passage about Rico, we experience two manners of viewing the world. The teacher Wehmeyer sees the road as a line on a globe running from north to south. The vision of the world upon which this idea is based can be described as follows: From any single clearly identifiable point on the globe, all other points can be defined, but multiple points allow one to create a so-called topological space. This space can be described in terms of absolute distances, that is, meters and kilometers, and rendered on a map projection by means of right-angled coordinates. This sober vision of the world follows the laws of Euclidean geometry and seems to conform with the corporeality and materiality of the world of things. The idea of space as a frame or container for social content corresponds to the *absolutistic concept of space* discussed in various disciplines (e.g., Harvey, 1973, 2005; Löw, 2001), which has its origins in classical physics. In his theory of absolute space, Isaac Newton

²This article is a combination of passages from the publications Reutlinger (2017) and Fritsche, Rahn, and Reutlinger (2011).

(1642–1727) described space as a shell (container) with no material properties of its own and inside it (corporeal) objects. The following nuance is, however, important: From a scientific perspective, a point on the globe appears absolute, that is, it can be described in terms of geographic longitude and latitude, independent of the viewer. All points of the compass can be identified in reference to this point. As this bewilders Rico, the teacher Wehmeyer uses a practical approach, introducing *the perspective of the subjective viewer*. We geographers know (and fear) the terms *left, right, up, down, and downwards* as they are utilized in everyday language to refer to a subjective sense of the position of other points or locations in relation to one's own temporary standpoint.

The teacher's intention is to calm Rico and to offer a practical answer to his question regarding the direction of the road. The protagonist is described as living in an orderly world full of routine in which everything has its proper place. The idea that the road runs further and further downwards to the south, and that the south is located somewhere far below troubles Rico. The bingo balls in his head start jumping around. The writer Steinhöfel uses this metaphor to describe the chaos that ADHD unleashes in the boy's head. Rico mentally travels to the South Pole and pictures to himself that it is not possible to travel any further southwards. This confuses and unsettles him. Rico's world view, a practical conception of the world, puts us in an entirely different realm than the sober, scientific perspective embodied by the teacher Wehmeyer. Scientific researchers are faced with the challenge of describing this practical realm and the experienced or (in Rico's case) imagined reality that goes along with it in a scientifically adequate manner. A way to do this is to render the actions of individuals and the motivations and logics that lie behind these actions comprehensible and to identify the accompanying spatial implications.

In projects that means to initially focus on the everyday reality of very different individuals who come to understand the world through their embedded social situations and individual societal conditions, but also through their unique interpretations and biographical experiences. By acting, these individuals establish their position or location. In this way they bring other objects and bodies together into meaningful constructions. To do so, they not only have to comprehend the meanings of things and the contexts of their actions but must also be able to insert and assert themselves in these contexts. Social geographers are interested in how this process of positioning takes place in relation to social spaces. Or, to put it somewhat more scientifically, they are interested in how space is fabricated or (re) produced by distinct actors in their everyday actions (Kessl & Reutlinger, 2010). The concept of space should be relational in nature: a "result of and means of carrying out action-specific constitutional processes" (Werlen & Reutlinger, 2005, p. 49). This implies that space cannot be systematically defined by means of measurements but only by reconstructing a range of contexts and influences relative to a specific perspective (Reutlinger, 2007).

If one studies the everyday world of different individuals, one cannot help but become conscious of the fact that these worlds do not exist per se, like objects, but are ever being recreated by distinct actors. The term *appropriation* can be helpful to describe this process, as will be discussed in greater detail.

The Concept of Appropriation and Everyday Social Geographies

Though the term appropriation is used quite differently in various scientific discourses, what is common to all these discourses is that in essence the term describes the manner in which an individual exists in or enters the world as an operative human being (Deinet & Reutlinger, 2004, 2014; Reutlinger, 2012). Despite this common essence, the basic question of the relationship between humans and the world is answered in very distinct manners.

One way of understanding the relationship between humans and the world is as a one-sided *process of inscription*. In this case, focus always remains on the change in ownership of material or symbolic goods. Yet the dimensions of the process of appropriation and the effects of this process on the world and humans are not considered. According to this view, education is instructional or communicative, with the goal of explaining the world order and enforcing this order by means of instruction should its rules be violated, whereby instruction is above all understood as a one-way communication of societal values. Appropriation as a one-way process of inscription can, however, also be grasped in a different manner, namely as the way in which the world makes itself available to an individual. Here, appropriation has the opposite quality as the one described above: Children and youth enter a world that they have not yet appropriated and gradually embrace and internalize it as they grow older by giving it a new shape in accordance with their own ideas and needs, taking possession of it, and in this way acquiring the ability to act (Hüllemann, Reutlinger, & Deinet, 2017).

In contrast to these conceptions, however, appropriation can also be understood as a “reciprocal communicative process between humans and the world” (Graumann, 1990, p. 125). This point of view places emphasis on the dimensions of the appropriation process, through which an individual becomes part of the world, yet the world also becomes part of the individual. In this way both are changed, though the world is not created anew, as the appropriative act is influenced by what already exists: specific structures, patterns, and rules. Children and young people entering into such specific environmental settings form their own subjectivity as they struggle to comprehend this world, but they also inscribe themselves into the environment through appropriative achievements, exerting an influence on it in this way. In the reciprocal relationship between humans and the world described here, the role of education could be described as follows:

On the one hand, the goal of educational measures is to help and support children and young people engage in this appropriation process by making preexisting objectifications accessible—by means of explanations or common activities. Yet an equal share of educational measures are intended to facilitate independent encounters with preexisting structures and phenomena in order to allow children and young people to create new objectifications. This means that through the facilitation of free spaces, personal interpretations, search processes, and experimentation in general, young people are moved to inscribe themselves into

the world. This implies that the appropriation processes of other individuals who react to these objectifications are also taken into account. (Hüllemann et al., 2017)

By studying appropriative acts, researchers can achieve insight into how certain groups of children and young people fabricate spaces and comprehend the world. These processes can be described as everyday social geographies (Reutlinger, 2017; Reutlinger & Brüschweiler, 2016). In the following chapter, I will examine a specific project and define the concept of appropriation more precisely.

DoRe Research Project “School as a Social Space”

In the course of the research project entitled “School as Social Space: Reconstruction of School as a Social Space in the Context of City Neighborhood Development, With Special Focus on two Neighborhoods of a Small Swiss City,” researchers examine the relationship between school and neighborhood from a child’s perspective (Fritsche et al., 2011). DoRe, an abbreviation for “do research,” was a funding program of the Swiss National Science Foundation that ended in 2014. It focused on the specific framework conditions of Swiss universities and their financing logic. The project background was the evaluation of local social work services carried out by the Institute of Social Work of the FHS St. Gallen for the city’s Department of Social Affairs and Security. The researchers’ goal was to explore the significance of schools for local neighborhoods and their development in somewhat greater depth and thus to devise a practice-based foundational research project, a so-called DoRe project.

I will now first present the discussion of these themes within the field of sociology and the local context of the study. In the following section, I will explain the methodology, followed by the most significant results. I will conclude my remarks with an attempt to bring these results together into two theses.

The Theoretical Background and Discipline-Specific and Local Context of the Study

Context of the Study

School as a Reflection of the Local Neighborhood and Thus Part of the Problem

“Every deficit and problem to be found in a neighborhood’s social structures will be reflected in the kindergarten and school” (Gerhard & Fennekohl, 2000, p. 277). And the following statement is also true: Show me where you live and I’ll show you who you are and who you’ll be. This is why many families who have the economic means move away from problematic neighborhoods and into more well-to-do areas of a city. In the field of socioeconomics, such processes of realignment and concentration of the population are known as segregation. The result of these segregation

processes is a concentration of problem factors in local neighborhoods and schools (Baur, 2013). School is thus to be seen, on the one hand, as part of the problem.

Or: School as a Solution to Sociospatial Problems

Yet researchers also see school as playing an integrative role and consider it a key local factor in neighborhoods that demonstrate “an above-average concentration of problems in comparison to the city as a whole” (Becker, 2003, p. 72). In order to have an integrative effect, the school must open itself to the local neighborhood and work together with other institutions (such as child and youth services or neighborhood support services). Neighborhood development processes can be advanced by integrating schools in these processes.

Schools are gaining in importance as the central focus of community life in neighborhoods and districts. They leave their mark on how the district is seen as a place to live; their character and quality open up paths for district development, though blocking others. Not only the churches but also the parish halls and community centres are plummeting in their significance as places of community life and as the central focus of urban districts. (Burgdorff, 2017, pp. 103–104)

Other reasons for education’s rising status as an element of integrated urban development strategies also include municipal challenges such as demographic change, tight public finances, growing tendencies towards the segregation and polarization of society, and increasing regional competition as well as reurbanization (Coelen, Heinrich, & Million, 2017, p. 6).

From this perspective, school is to be viewed as part of the solution.

In the very much contradictory discussions on the subject, it remains unclear what aspect of school the researchers are referring to specifically. School as part of an educational system? Or school as a specific location, a building in a local context? It is equally unclear what the relationship is between school and the local neighborhood. Does the neighborhood play a positive or negative role in the children’s development? Is the connection between the residential area and the school district part of the solution or part of the problem? If one consults recent publications on city and school development, it becomes clear that little objective knowledge on this subject exists (Baur, 2013; Freytag & Jahnke, 2015; Huxel & Fürstenau, 2017; Mack, 2017; Million, Heinrich, & Coelen, 2017; Ottersbach, 2016).

For the DoRe project, researchers looked at school in terms of its sociospatial context and took the relational fabrication view of space discussed above as a point of departure. With the help of the mental figure of the St. Gallen model for the creation of social spaces (see Fig. 15.1), it is possible to develop different structural approaches (Reutlinger, 2017).

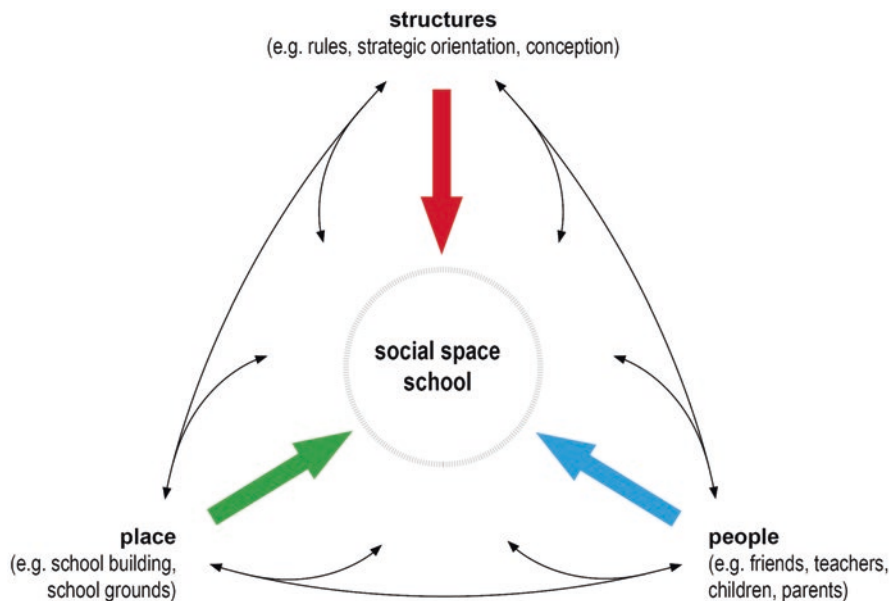


Fig. 15.1 Mental figure of the St. Gallen model (Reutlinger & Wigger, 2010) for the creation of social spaces. Reprinted from Reutlinger, 2017, p. 15. Copyright 2017 by Christian Reutlinger. Reprinted with permission

Is school to be understood as a building, that is, a place and its material properties? Or should focus be placed on the actions and basic biographical and behavioral characteristics of the actors involved? Or are such structural preconditions as laws or the institutional framework of the administrative structures of primary interest?

For this project, I utilized a child-oriented perspective to examine such fabrication processes as a starting point for the St. Gallen model for the creation of social spaces (Reutlinger, 2017) (see Fig. 15.2).

My aim was to ascertain how children form connections between *structures* (i.e., house rules, educational ideas, general principles), *locations* (i.e., concrete things in the physical, material world) and the actors involved—the human beings (Reutlinger & Wigger, 2010). What special features does school have as a social space from a child’s perspective? What does school mean as a system with its unique rules and structures? What importance does the concrete location in a specific territorial context assume and what significance do specific persons like fellow students or teaching staff have for children? And finally: How do children perceive their school and neighborhood and what relationships exist between these “two worlds?”

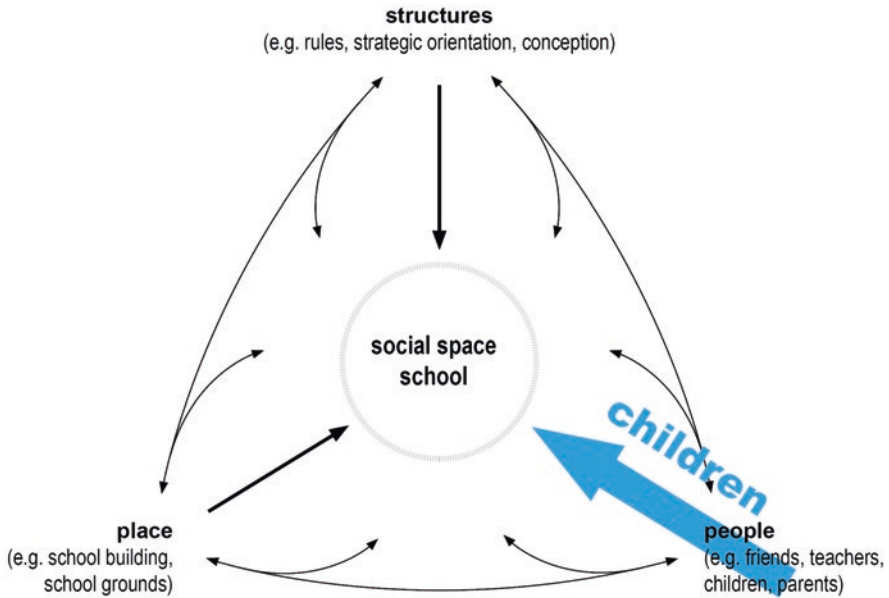


Fig. 15.2 Child-oriented perspective as a starting point for the St. Gallen model for the creation of social spaces. Source: Design by author

In the empirical implementation of the research initiative, I set out to reconstruct two primary schools located in neighborhoods (city sections) that are very distinct in both their architecture and residential population in terms of their sociospatial contexts. This reconstruction would provide initial orientation for forms of cooperation between neighborhood and school, that is, between actors from the fields of urban planning, local development, and school (such as school social workers). Using this as a basis, I will draw conclusion related to these forms of cooperation in the context of overall city development.

Context of the Study: Local Context

The Swiss city I examined has divided its municipal territory into different neighborhoods, development districts, and school districts, which are partially overlapping and vary according to the perspective of the actors and the administrative logic. In the project “School as Social Space,” two different city sections—A and B—were chosen, where completely different divisions and classifications play a role: The school district does not match with the geographical divisions used by the Parks Department, and neighborhood organizations also define their catchment areas differently (Fritsche et al., 2011). The geographical areas examined in the study follow

the logic of the classifications used by the Social Services Department, upon which local services, for example, are also based. Statistically,³ these are the city’s most populous neighborhoods (Fritsche et al., 2011). A large portion of Neighborhood B has been labelled an urban development area (see Fig. 15.3). As such, it and the school are seen as having a problematic social structure (“social hot spot”). Statistical data, however, seem to indicate that the two neighborhoods studied are relatively average in many regards, with no remarkable tendencies.

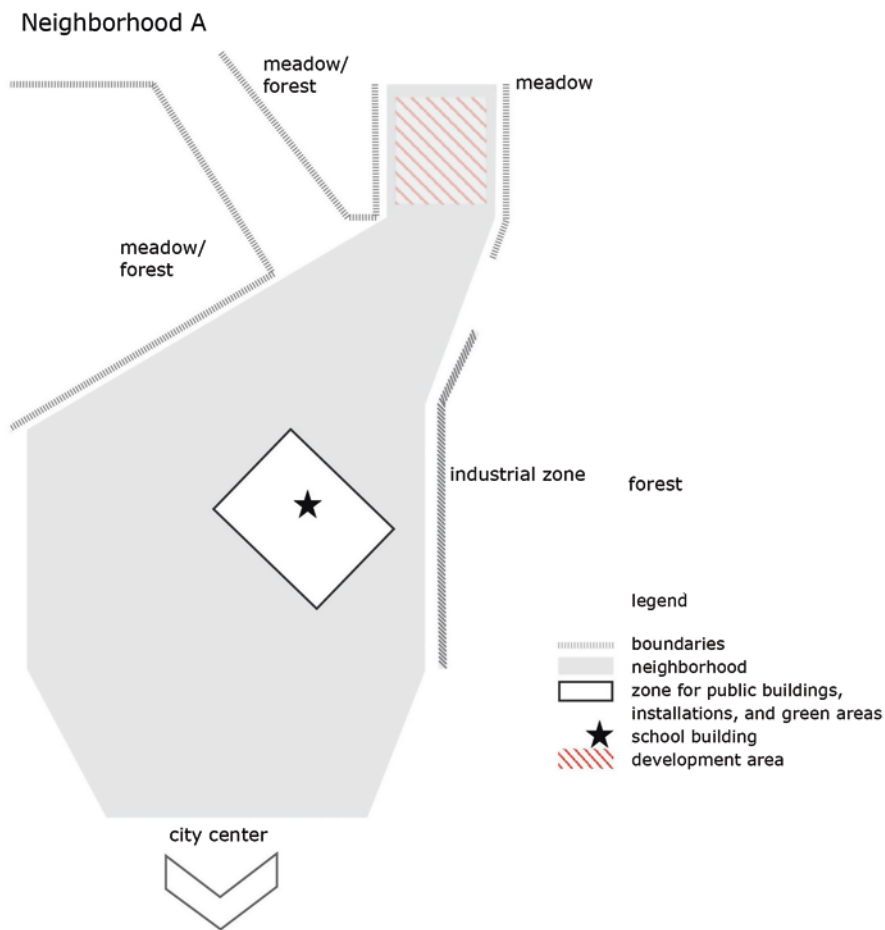


Fig. 15.3 Spatial structures of Neighborhood A and Neighborhood B. Reprinted from Fritsche et al. (2011), pp. 74–80. Copyright 2011 by Caroline Fritsche, Peter Rahn, and Christian Reutlinger. Reprinted with permission

³In order to anonymize the name of the city, I cannot publish the source of the communal statistics.

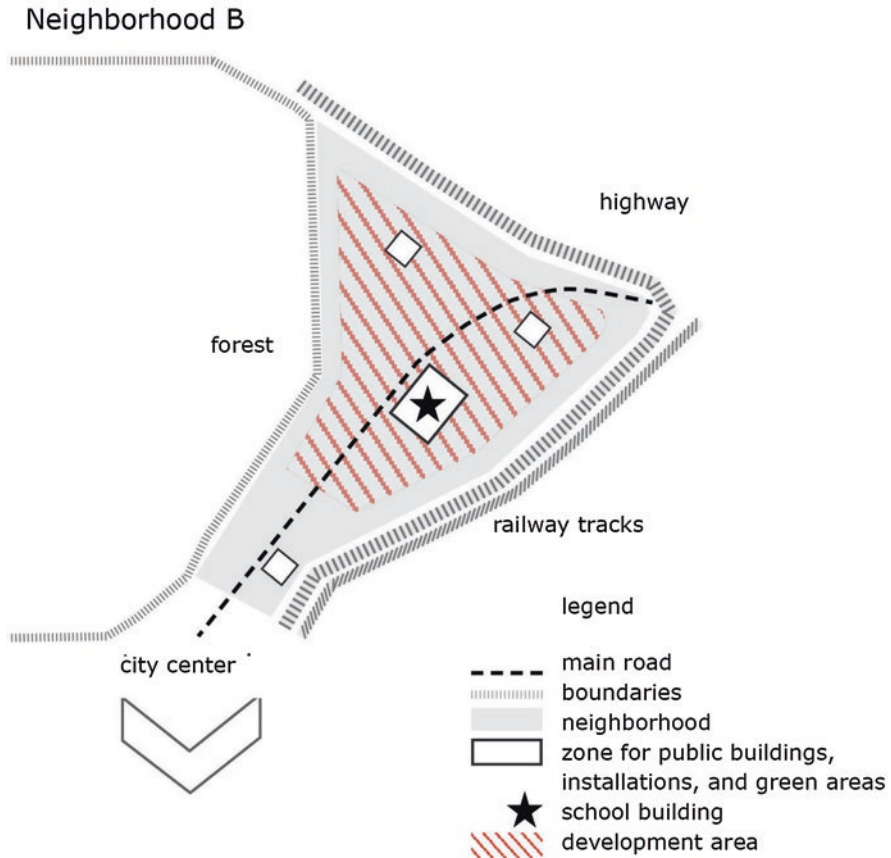


Fig. 15.3 (continued)

Methodology

For the purposes of data collection, we visited four classes in both School A and School B during the project period (2007–2010). In the course of the visits to the four classes (Grades 3 and 6 in School A and School B, that is, 9- and 12-year-old students), the children drew subjective maps (Daum, 2010; Deinet & Krisch, 2009). We asked them to draw locations where they spend time and that are important to them on a piece of paper. They were to write what they do at these locations and who they meet there. They were also to name the locations that they avoid. In addition, the children indicated their place of residence and favorite location on a large map of the neighborhood. Finally, we asked the children to write an essay on school as a location for learning and spending free time. The reconstruction of the maps was conducted by topic analysis—the topics of the maps were named and their characteristics worked out. In this manner, six topics became visible in the material:

family, free-time activities with peers, places to be avoided, organized children's culture activities, being alone, and eventually school. These topics should enable the comparison of the two schools and grade levels to elucidate both the typical differences and similarities between the groups (Fritsche et al., 2011).

Key Results: Analysis of the Subjective Maps

Theme of School

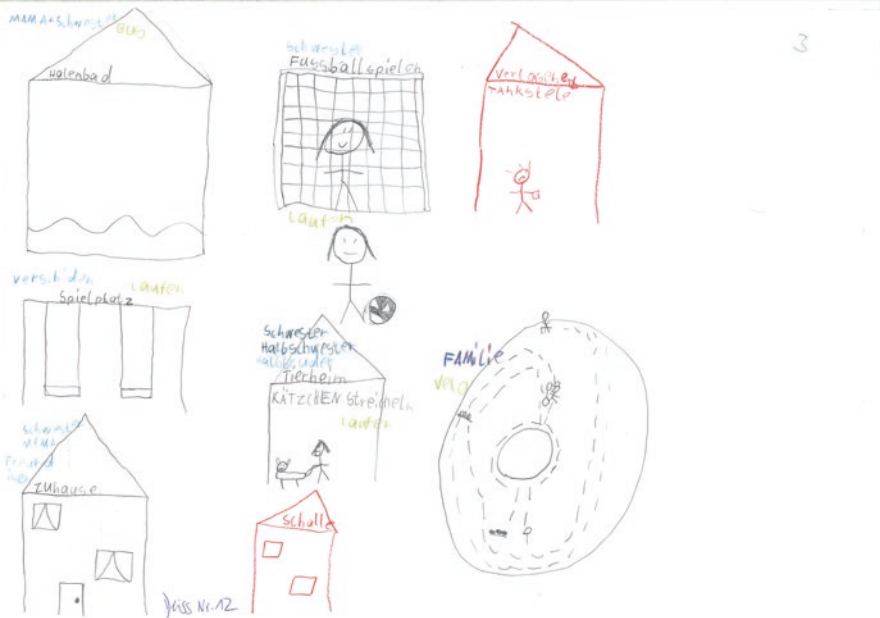
In terms of the significance of the respective primary schools in each neighborhood, the children generally did not place the building at the center of the map but instead drew it on the edge or even on the reverse side of the paper. They often marked the school in red as a place to be avoided (see Fig. 15.4).

Yet the children ascribed different characteristics to their respective school.

School A: Only 6 of the 22 older school students (Grade 6) from School A made mention of school. One girl and two boys referred to more interactive elements: They noted sport instruction in the gymnasium, "school with friends," and "school with the class." Three other girls cited playing on the school grounds as positive, though one commented that in reality this is not a school-related activity. Of the 20 younger children (Grade 3) in the same school, 10 mentioned school, here placing an emphasis on learning. Two girls and one boy emphasized interactive aspects, as they stated that in school they learn together with the rest of the class. Two boys, on the other hand, rated activities that they engage in alone at school as positive. One said that he does arithmetic alone at school, while the other stated that he reads alone in the classroom reading corner and plays alone during breaks in the schoolyard. One girl drew the school and simply wrote the word "school." Another created a connection between school and home by stating that she completes her homework alone at home. Evidently, however, the children are not in agreement on this point: Two boys classified obligatory homework as negative.

Thus, the children do not directly describe school as important. It appears to serve a functional role for the children but not to have any great significance: They learn at school and for school as well as form friendships at school, which are relevant for what they do in their free time.

School B: The students of School B view school somewhat more critically: The 19 younger students (Grade 3/4) cited it only 6 times as something positive, 11 times as something negative. The negative ascriptions remain to some extent vague: One boy referred to the school building itself, another simply wrote "School B," three girls and one boy wrote nothing but the word "school." The latter seems to refer to classroom instruction, as the boy considered it positive that at school he can meet all his classmates and a girl cited "school building with



Mir ist an der Schule der Spielplatz wichtig. Auf dem Spielplatz klettere ich an den Kleinen.
 Ich mache in der Schule,
 Das wir Sport haben und Maken,
 Das wir zweimal früh Schule haben,
 Juss Nr. 12

Fig. 15.4 School as a place to be avoided (School B). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission

friends” as positive. Five girls expressed a critical attitude towards instruction, as they listed math or arithmetic as negative, four times in connection with school itself. Two girls who view school critically also see its positive aspects: One listed “school” trips to the swimming pool as positive, the other cited school as a place to spend free time as positive. Four boys did the same. For them, the schoolyard is an attractive place to meet friends.

All 18 older school students (Grade 5/6) from School B included school in their subjective maps: Eight students labelled it as a positive location, 10 as negative. A few criticized math and learning. The necessities of getting up early and doing homework were mentioned more frequently. They cited boredom at school most frequently of all, while four students stated that they do not like members of the teaching staff. They mentioned the interactive aspects of school as positive, including the learning that takes place both in school (“school: learning”) and at home, in addition to homework assignments. Only two boys mentioned free-time activities.

The students from School B thus view school more critically, though the older students' standpoint is more nuanced than that of the younger students. They do not just tolerate school in its current form but criticize the content presented there as well as the staff and structures that do not satisfy their needs. This makes clear that their expectations of school are quite high. Overall, their criticism indicates that they feel that school possesses a central life function but that it does not fulfill this function very well.

Generally speaking, we are able to attribute the following functions to school from a subjective perspective: School has an interactive element (1). Emphasis is placed on activities engaged in with others, community is experienced both during instruction and while playing on the school grounds. School is also a place of learning (2). Learning can be experienced collectively, but also as an individual pursuit or as a nonspecific activity. School can, however, also attain significance above and beyond instruction in that the school grounds are used as a meeting place for collective free-time activities, as a living location (3). School also has effects on the children's home life—or is extended into their homes, as it is generally at home that they do their homework assignments alone (4) and study. However, school also elicits dislike or distance (5): Boredom, homework, getting up early, learning in general or—especially for girls—mathematics. Certain members of the teaching staff also instill in students a dislike of school.

Reciprocal Effects of School and Neighborhood

School/Neighborhood A: School A is located in a neighborhood that offers many opportunities for children, as is reflected in the subjective maps (see Fig. 15.5).

The students there thus pursue the majority of their free-time activities in the neighborhood itself. They meet with other children in the forest to build shelters or make fires or they go to the neighborhood swimming pool (see Fig. 15.6).

Only a few of the older children extend their activities to the city center, for example by meeting friends at McDonalds (see Fig. 15.7). The school grounds play no significant role as a location for free-time activities.

School/Neighborhood B: Striking about School B is that the children often use the sport facilities and playgrounds there in their free time (see Fig. 15.8).

One might assume that this attractiveness is due to the fact that important themes are addressed at school. This is, however, not true. The popularity of the school grounds is far more a result of the lack of opportunities for free-time activities elsewhere in Neighborhood B. As a result, students engage in free-time activities on the school grounds before and after school, playing games or doing sports. They mentioned few neighborhood locations apart from the school playground and the neighborhood streets. Furthermore, the children avoid many locations, such as an abandoned petrol station.



Fig. 15.5 Neighborhood with many opportunities for children (School A). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission



Fig. 15.6 Neighborhood swimming pool and soccer pitch (School A). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission



Fig. 15.7 Free-time activities in the city center (School A). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission

Club activities and excursions to the swimming pool generally take place outside of the neighborhood. As a result, even younger children travel to the city center with their peers (see Fig. 15.9).

Summary

Neighborhood A

- There are many opportunities in the neighborhood itself.
- The school offers no especially attractive features.
- However, the school is not a place to be avoided.
- Children take advantage of opportunities in their neighborhood.

Neighborhood B

- There are few opportunities in the neighborhood itself.
- By contrast, the school building is of interest.
- The school as an institution nevertheless elicits a negative attitude and distance.
- Children seek orientation more frequently and at an earlier age in other sections of the city, including the city center.

General Observations About Both Neighborhoods

Children in both parts of the city—though only few of the younger children in Neighborhood B—mentioned organized free-time activities for children like Scouts and sport clubs. Children in both parts of the city generally travel to these free-time activities alone (not depending on their parents to drive them) or with peers. They travel by foot, scooter, kickboard, bicycle, and bus.

The family or home has special importance above all for younger children as a place of emotional support where spatial appropriation is made possible (see Fig. 15.10).

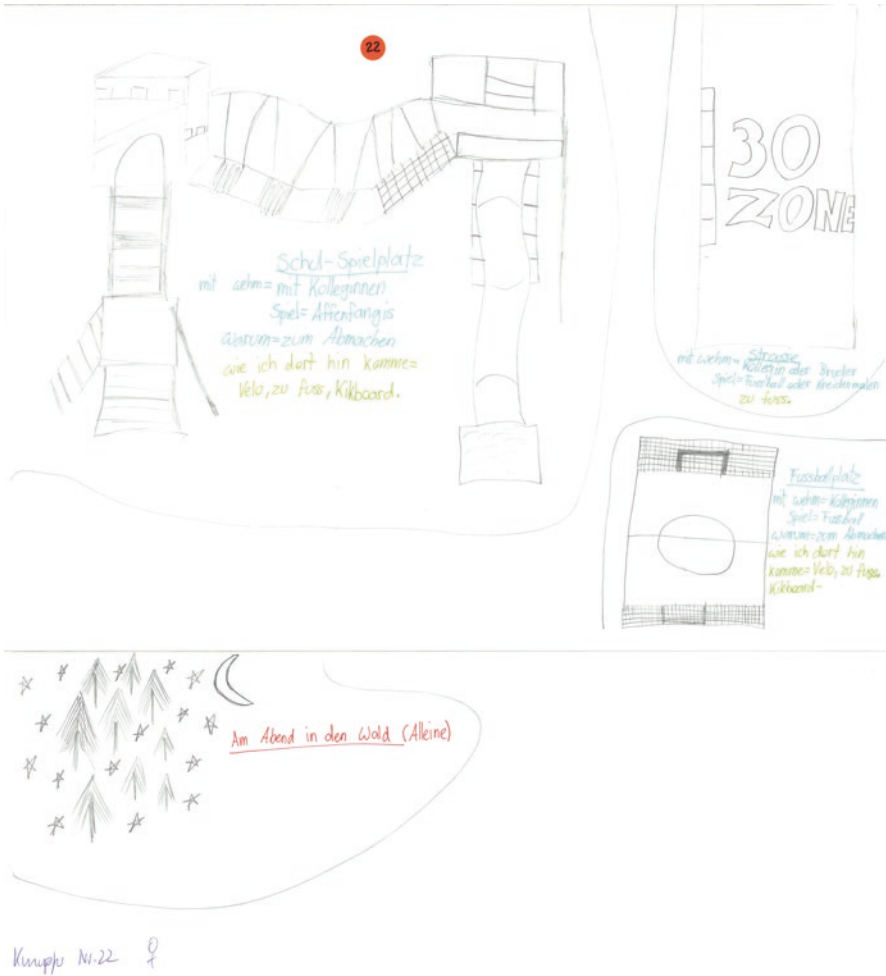


Fig. 15.8 Playground at school (School B). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission

Engaging in an activity together with peers or the family is far more appealing to children than doing something alone. The solitary activities mentioned are: Reading alone at home, playing games or doing a jigsaw puzzle, taking the dog for a walk, X-Box and computer games, watching television, playing in their rooms, and “sitting in the wardrobe and lying around with my cat or by myself,” going to the swimming pool or playground, walking in the forest, or going to church or the garden. Home is the preferred location for pursuing activities alone (see Fig. 15.11).

The first thesis can be formulated as follows: The primary effect of school on everyday life is found in the interaction between students in their classes. The quality of this interaction leads to the appropriation of space outside of school.



- Die Schule bedeutet mir Freunde kennen zu lernen.
 - Mit Freunden spielen und Mathe, Schreiben, Sport, das lerne ich da.
 Mich freut es das ich hier Freunde habe
 und das ich Handarbeit lernen kann,
 das Fach gefällt mir nämlich sehr gut
 das ist mein Lieblingsfach.
 Mir gefällt Mathe nicht gut.
 Jess Nr. 17

Fig. 15.9 Travels to the city center with peers (School B). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission

Neighborhood peer relationships are supplemented by school relationships and extend the space that children spend time in and explore in their free time.

Key Results: Analysis of the Essays

The analysis of the subjective maps would seem to suggest that if asked to freely describe their everyday existence, the children of both age groups would not say that school occupies a central role in their lives. When instructed to write an essay



Fig. 15.10 Top right corner: Emotional support from the family (School A). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space.” Reprinted with permission



Fig. 15.11 Top right corner: Activities alone (lying in the wardrobe with my cat) (School A). Copyright 2011 by the research project “School as a Social Space”. Reprinted with permission

in 20 min about school as a location of learning and playing, the children were specifically prompted to reflect on school. They were to explain what school means to them, what they do there, what they enjoy about school, what they dislike, and what could be better.

School as a Facilitative Location

The children initially give school an abstract, future-oriented meaning: They see learning as necessary in order to have success later in their careers. This motivates some children to learn even if they do not really like school. Generally, this abstract aspect does not exist in isolation, but is supplemented by a concrete emotional element: School offers a space for experiences. The aspect of interaction that the children expressed in the subjective maps is also discussed in the essays.

School as an Educational Space

The specific location offers corresponding opportunities—it is ruled by an authority that guarantees a certain structure in terms of the learning setting and the type of play that can be engaged in. This authority is personified by the member of the teaching staff, who the children see as responsible for the functioning of the school. School defines the day's structure, offers a wide variety of things to do, is a place of activity or a place where certain activities are possible, and provides a space where children can be children.

Differences in the Themes Raised by the Students of the Two Schools

School A: The children cited the positive aspects of school. School offers something, does not present limitations. For the most, the children equated school with classroom instruction and thus limited it to the physical location and to school hours. When viewed in their entirety, these students' essays give the impression that school has nothing to do with their everyday existence: "I would come here more often if there were more playing opportunities" or "I personally get all my work done in school and prefer play in the park," because "in my spare time I am undisturbed and can rest well and sleep and shop." In school, learning is most important and is supplemented by active and affective components. School is a self-contained event that takes place during the hours of instruction. The students thus accept and tolerate school without objection.

School B: For these students, school also exists for the purposes of learning, yet their expectations clash with the conditions offered by the school. The students' expectations are quite heterogeneous—this is especially true of the older students. The themes they raised indicate that they view school and free time as separate worlds. Yet they express the idea that school is a living location that serves as a

link between classroom instruction and free time. Ultimately, a pattern of critical distance can be reconstructed according to which school and instruction take up too much space and authority is criticized in different manners. The students are unanimous in their criticism that school does not fully reach its facilitative potential. The reasons for this and suggestions for improvement are quite diverse. School should, for example, provide a full-day structure; learning situations should facilitate learning more effectively; learning should be more varied, more up to date, more fun; girls and boys should not be put together in a single class. The students criticized the school rooms as sharply as the school's image, including both the school's poor physical condition and its inadequate website. Furthermore, the students are given insufficient support in their own conceptions of their identity.

The second thesis to be discussed can be summarized as follows: School A functions as a closed system, outside of which school is of no significance and inside of which everyday life is of no significance. Two worlds that are unconnected, and do not interact. In School B, the boundaries between school and everyday life and between school and the neighborhood are porous. The worlds interact and school is ascribed a function that shapes the children's present lives.

Conclusion

In the appropriation patterns evident in both neighborhoods, it is clear that children are now growing up with a range of ideas about what space means. Living in space is now associated with the experience of being able and required to constantly adapt to different places and conditions. As formulated by the sociologist Martina Löw, students experience school "not as uniform but as varied, not as continuous but as discontinuous, not as fixed in place but as fluid" (Löw, 2001, p. 266). And what consequences can be derived from the empirical results of the discussed study? I will draw my conclusions following three considerations:

First of all, it seems to be important to not only focus on the number of places and their condition when considering what potentials for appropriation neighborhoods are equipped with. In addition, the subjective approach via children shows what is paramount are the possibilities, which should be provided at certain places: Possibilities for independent activity, for confrontations with other individuals, and for educational processes.

Secondly, this means that professionals must consider carefully how we provide these possibilities or how to direct them through constructional or pedagogical measures. Constructional elements should not be too obvious and should not limit the potential for change. Rather, these elements should enable children to occupy them with their own required functions repeatedly. However, the demand for possibilities also concerns education. Children introduce various themes to their places: At home, at the playground, or at the youth center. At these places, they should be enabled to work on their themes. In this way, school is more than just a place for learning and knowledge transfer, but rather a place to cope with life themes. Education should adapt to this.

Thirdly, the results also show that children are not determined by the (constructional and social) circumstances. In fact, they are able to create their own world by converting places, overcoming boundaries, conquering places in their city independently, and thereby developing broad networks of places.

This leads me back to Rico, my protagonist from earlier. This is precisely his problem: If spaces were rigid and uniform and governed by clear rules, things would surely be easier for him. But because they are not, he depends on his Post-it notes, feels lost when something unexpected happens, and in general finds it terrifying to independently appropriate the great big world. With the help of people like his friend Oskar and the teacher Wehmeyer, however, Rico's world expands in the course of the story. Or, metaphorically speaking, these relationships enable him to break out of the container room. When Oskar is kidnapped by the so-called "Mister 2000," Rico overcomes his fear and sets off alone to distant Berlin Tempelhof to rescue his friend.

Only towards the end did it start to get tricky: from one street to the next, then more crossings, more traffic lights, and all the while the bingo balls were clattering around in my head, saying the same thing: You'll never find your way back home, you'll never find your way back home ... Well, we'll see! (Steinhöfel, 2008, p. 135)

His courage is ultimately rewarded, as he saves Oskar from the clutches of his kidnapper, the sinister "Mister 2000." Rico is even able to enjoy the motorcycle ride with his teacher Wehmeyer around the outskirts of Berlin:

The cool air blew in under my shirt, making it flutter, and Wehmeyer's old worn black leather jacket had a smell to it that seemed to say that nothing bad could ever happen in the world. I felt an urge to throw my arms up into the air and shout out with joy, but I didn't want to go flying from the bike... I pressed myself against Wehmeyer's leather jacket again, sniffed all the security inside it, and wished that I could buy a cologne that smelled like that. (Steinhöfel, 2013, pp. 21–22)

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Chapter 16

Redefining School: Educational Spaces for Adolescents' Engagement in Learning



Anne Sliwka and Britta Klopsch

Introduction

In a world that is shaped by innovation and becoming increasingly complex, it would be unreasonable to believe that the field of middle-level education could remain unaffected by ever-changing societal expectations, demands, and pressures related to the role education and educators play in preparing adolescents for life and work. Adolescent learners require an education that prepares them for a rapidly changing and, in some ways, unpredictable world (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Given the level of change they will have to deal with as adults, this education must allow them to survive and thrive but, most importantly, unleash their natural curiosity and empowers them to contribute to a world in transition (Yee, 2015).

The good news is: Adolescents' learning needs can be aligned with twenty-first-century learning environments. Educators today understand learning as deeper learning (Bellanca, 2015; Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2017). This implies that teachers must go beyond facilitating mere knowledge acquisition and encourage the development of problem-solving skills as well as the power to act (alone and in teams) in different situations based on sound knowledge (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Sliwka, 2018). But how exactly does the learning environment meet these needs? How can traditional education spaces be developed to better support the core aim of schooling: individual student learning?

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Adolescent Students' Learning

Understanding the unique developmental needs of adolescent learners provides the key to ensuring their learning success. There is ample research evidence about the stages of physical, emotional, and social development and transition occurring for these learners (George, 2009; George & Alexander, 2003; Yee, 2015). Yee (2015) has recently shown that schools attending to how these changes impact teaching and learning can become remarkable places of learning that are responsive to the unique educative needs of early adolescents.

Schools that are unaware of these particular needs and how to respond to them tend to lose these kids. Many researchers have shown that adolescent students become increasingly disengaged and disconnected from their learning (Balfanz, 2009; Hancock & Zubrick, 2015; Spork, 2014; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Wormeli, 2011), a situation which can lead to devastating consequences. Klinger, Mills, and Chapman (2011) found that only 21% of girls and 16% of boys reported “liking school a lot” (p. 52) by Grade 8. Furthermore, only 52% of girls and 54% of boys described their “teachers [as being] interested in them,” and only 72% of girls and 70% of boys believed that “most of their teachers were friendly” (p. 54). Other studies have confirmed adolescents’ lack of meaningful connection to school. The conductors of the large-scale 2010 Canadian survey “What Did You Do in School Today?” showed that 42% of adolescents are either apathetic or anxious towards their learning in mathematics, and even more, 48%, are so in languages (Willms & Friesen, 2012; Yee, 2015). There is ample evidence underscoring the importance of a closer examination of the factors that contribute to the establishment of developmentally responsive, intellectually engaging learning environments for students between the ages of 11 and 16.

Adolescent Students' Engagement in Learning

We know today that student learning strongly depends on their learning engagement (Sliwka, 2018; Yee, 2015). *Engagement* refers to students’ enthusiasm, curiosity, involvement, and excitement and must be understood as a “growth-producing activity in which the individual allocates attention in active response to the environment” (Friesen, n.d., p. 1). Engagement in this sense implies that people learn best when doing things that are challenging and of deep interest to them. Adolescents who are engaged can more easily cope with setbacks and obstacles (VCOSS, 2016, p. 4).

When they feel strongly engaged, students enter a state in which they are so focused, so intensely involved in their learning that time seems to vanish and deeper learning takes place. Csikszentmihalyi calls this state “flow” (1990); Friesen defines it as “intellectual engagement” (2007) and distinguishes it from merely playing by the rules and “doing school.” The authors of an OECD report describe this level of engagement as “the most intense pleasure the brain can experience in a learning context” (OECD, 2007, p. 73).

To challenge students and to provide them with opportunities to reach their full educational potential, teachers must engage them behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively (Ockenden, 2014, p. 6). For this kind of engagement to be stimulated, students require a learning environment with incentives to show a serious emotional and cognitive investment, use higher order learning and thinking skills, solve complex problems, and construct new knowledge. Research shows that teachers can achieve this deep learning by creating authentic learning tasks, teaching the curriculum through real-world problems that need to be tackled. The closer the connection between learning and real life, the greater the effect on student engagement in learning (Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009; OECD, 2007).

To achieve this kind of quality in learning, teachers must become designers of learning, creating complex tasks that go beyond merely teaching their students ways of knowing the subjects in the school curriculum (Sliwka, 2018). An effective way of doing so is to extend the space of schooling to encompass outside perspectives and outside expertise. *Communities of Practice* (Lave, 1991), an approach that brings together teachers and community partners to jointly design learning tasks, has been shown to be particularly effective. Taking the world outside the classroom into account when planning for effective learning experiences requires schools to transcend traditional boundaries in two ways:

- Schools should open up to their communities to the world around them.
- Schools should actively embrace the digital world that their *digitally native* students already live in.

Both dimensions radically change a school's perception of space. When a school breaks down traditional spatial barriers, learning spaces encompass authentic relationships and locations in outside communities. Cultural identity can emerge more easily, and a more holistic way of educating children is facilitated (Freytag & Jahnke, 2015, p. 83). The second dimension is of particular importance in today's globalized context: Digitization is the main driver of change in how we perceive educational spaces today. The communities of learning we are able to create and cocreate can relate to local, provincial, national, and global spaces alike. It is through the digital space that geographical spaces shrink and social, situational, and temporal contexts that support learning processes merge to create learning spaces that are unique in exciting new ways (Tenorth & Tippelt, 2007, p. 428) (Fig. 16.1).

Creating and Connecting Learning Spaces for a Holistic Education

The idea of teachers and schools working closely with the community to enhance learning for their students is not a recent pedagogical idea. Early twentieth century proponents of progressive educational concepts (*Reformpädagogik*) in particular began to align in-classroom learning with their students' outside environment. More

The Elisabeth-Rummel-School in Canmore, Canada provides an example of one way of shrinking geographical spaces and enriching the learning environment at school. Within their learning commons (Klopsch, in press), a 21st-century learning space that encourages students to answer big questions in research projects, students are able to use everything that helps them engage with “a big question” to which they are seeking answers. They can use print, online, and human resources that do not even have to be close to the school. As one teacher explains:

“[H]uman resources—sometimes you just find them. One of the girls [...] was studying ancient Egyptian medicine, because last year she had done a project on the plague in the Middle Ages and she was really interested in medicine and how each culture treated diseases and stuff. And we just happened to be searching and we found that the Metropolitan Museum of Arts in New York had done a display or thing on Ancient Egyptian medicine. So [...] we said [...] it would be neat to take her further questions and contact somebody at the museum, a curator or somebody, to see if they could answer the questions. So that is just something that happens sometimes. We [...] contact them and can also set up video conferences with them. [...] We are just finding things out as we go.”

Fig. 16.1 Using digital possibilities bring the world to the school. Source: Design by author

recently, schools have adopted these reformist ideas to create a more balanced education, with teachers trying to achieve excellence and ensure the equity and wellbeing of students at the same time (Böttcher, Maykus, Altermann, & Liesegang, 2011; Kolbe & Reh, 2009; Sliwka, 2018). This move to a more holistic education achieved through bringing real-life issues into the classroom and letting students learn in real-life contexts outside the classroom can, for example, be observed in many of the schools that have won the German school award (Der Deutsche Schulpreis, n.d.). Those running these and other German schools predominantly name two different motivations for codesigning learning in collaboration with outside partners: On the one hand, some schools collaborate to enhance their curriculum through a variety of projects the school would not be able to offer all by itself. These schools consider themselves the center of the learning process. Their collaboration can be described as “low-cost cooperation” (Dizinger, Fussangel, & Böhm-Kasper, 2011, p. 116) or the “complementary model” (Böttcher et al., 2011, p. 109). According to this model, schools and partners are collaborating in the same space, in most cases the traditional school building. This cooperation takes place in simultaneous or successive activities. Schools open their doors, but not their organization.

The following example in Fig. 16.2 shows how Evangelische Schule Berlin-Zentrum extends its space during the school year for long-term projects.

On the other hand, some schools consider themselves as just one of multiple spaces in a student’s learning process. According to this model, learning is best supported when these spaces are interconnected and collaboratively stimulate and encourage the student’s learning. These schools seek to create one holistic setting for learning together with a variety of partners (Klopsch, 2016, p. 51). This kind of collaboration is also known as “high-cost cooperation” (Dizinger et al., 2011, p. 116). Its proponents perceive schools as a space in which learning and living are profoundly interconnected. These schools open their doors and their organization, looking for the best support for student learning and development through a meaningful network of closely-linked partnerships. The real world and the school’s community of partners are an active part of a student’s daily learning process. Learning space is no longer restricted to the school itself, but rather encompasses multiple sites outside and inside the school building (Fig. 16.3).

A Lutheran school in the heart of Berlin has turned upside down what it means to be an adolescent in a German school. Fourteen-year-old Anton, for example, managed to talk Germany's railway operator Deutsche Bahn into giving a group of adolescents free tickets for a trip to the UK. The students were planning their three-week-long "challenge project." Anton and his team plan to go to Cornwall to study coastal economies as well as practice their spoken English. Another group of students decided to delve into fashion design. The girls asked one of their grandmothers, who lives in a rural area outside of Berlin, if she could teach them sewing. They intend to produce dresses in the style of Coco Chanel. The school has introduced two types of three-week projects. One is called "project responsibility," a social or ecological community service project; the other is "project challenge," a project that students perceive as personally challenging so that it will help them to learn new things and cross new thresholds on their way from childhood to adulthood. In small teams, the adolescents plan their projects themselves and present their project plan to the teachers and the parents. For the challenge, students aged 12 to 14 are given €150 and sent on a three-week adventure. Some go abroad (where they need to find hosts to keep their expenses down); some go kayaking on the many lakes north of Berlin; others produce a CD or film, or work on a farm. The core idea of the school represents a radical vision of what schooling for adolescents is about in the 21st century. The globalized and digital economy is radically transforming labor markets and the ways in which we live together and communicate with each other. The Evangelische Schule Berlin-Zentrum perceives the ability to motivate oneself for learning as the most important skill a school can pass on to its students. The ability to self-regulate helps young people to succeed in a labor market and world in which they are given endless choices but are also obliged to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to make these choices work for themselves. To enable adolescents to become self-sustaining, fulfilled, and happy adults who find their way in an increasingly open and complex reality, the school's educators have redefined the meaning of learning spaces by having students go out into the world to work on their projects.

Fig. 16.2 Changing Space: "Project Challenge" and "Project Responsibility" at Evangelische Schule Berlin-Zentrum (Yee, Sliwka, & Rautiainen, 2018, pp. 125–129). (For more information on the school see: Yee et al., 2018, pp. 125–129). Source: Design by author

When educators define learning space as existing both in and around schools, "hybrid learning environments" (Zitter & Hoeve, 2012) emerge. Schools and their partners work together to embrace traditional and nontraditional, nonformal and informal learning environments and to design learning tasks that are arranged fluently (see Fig. 16.4), depending on the students' multiple needs and aims in learning.

These complex spaces tend to move away from constructed and artificial learning assignments to more real-life learning that helps students to connect knowledge, skills, and competencies on an advanced level and allow coconstruction as well as acquisition (Zitter & Hoeve, 2012, p. 8). In these kinds of learning environments, students are enabled to use their acquired knowledge in a situated project context in order to make cognitive connections between fragmented units of knowledge by means of their practical use and application in a real-world problem. Thus, knowledge that is implicit and fragmented is to be transferred into explicit and connected knowledge. Various processes such as critical thinking, creative activities, various forms of communication, and collaborative problem-solving drive this process (OECD, 2017). A precondition for such an innovative use of spaces is to enable well-organized interactions among all partners involved, connecting teachers, partners, resources, technology, and various kinds of locations (see Fig. 16.5, right side). Its impact is not based on one specific pedagogical approach but embraces different pedagogies with the aim to unfold and support the personal development of students in a holistic fashion.

Two things are decisive here. On the one hand, students need to acquire competencies that are based not only on understandings of concepts, ideas, facts, or pro-

The Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS) is an example of an institution that was purpose-built to reflect 21st-century learning principles and represents a “hybrid learning environment,” whose educators are using space in innovative ways and involving partners in multiple areas to enhance learning. The State of South Australia established this public secondary school on the campus of Flinders University in 2003 to attract more students into STEM subjects and offer them state-of-the-art learning to prepare them for the emerging fields of science and engineering. Learning in the school is project- and inquiry-based, digitally supported, personalized and collaborative, interdisciplinary, and authentic. Students learn in projects designed by teachers in collaboration with industry and university faculty members. These “design groups” take about one to one and a half years to design a new learning project before students begin to work in the situated project context. Each project is digitally supported by means of interactive learning platforms that provide 24/7 access to the learning tasks, the knowledge base, and the communication tools. Interdisciplinary science and mathematics projects such as “Patterns of Change,” “Medical Engineering,” “Modelling Chance and Space,” “Sustainable Futures,” or “Communication Systems” combine core scientific concepts with hands-on experimentation and explorations and inquiry in the world outside the school (such as in companies and university laboratories). The school has four large ICT-rich open, flexible learning spaces, as well as smaller spaces for groups of different sizes. Educators here view learning as a social process and as supported by different social arrangements such as collaborative group work, mixed-age tutor groups, and lectures by teachers, students, or outside experts from companies or universities. Every student works with a digital individual learning plan and an electronic portfolio. A virtual learning environment facilitates collaborative work on complex tasks and various communication processes needed to complete the work, to receive formative feedback, or to present work to the outside world. Teachers work in teams to design new projects, to evaluate their work, and to develop new pedagogical processes to better scaffold and support student learning. Professional learning among teachers is frequent and ongoing, with the teachers aiming to co-construct new knowledge and share their work with practitioners from other schools. The school regularly receives visitors who either contribute to the learning by bringing in outside expertise or who want to learn from the school for their own professional development. Students and teachers frequently leave the school to explore, inquire, and work in settings and spaces beyond the school building, such as the nearby industrial innovation park, where companies like Tesla and Siemens develop new products. ASMS has developed into a fluid and hybrid learning environment in which educators facilitate learning within a space that seamlessly merges the digital and the real world both inside and outside the school building.

Fig. 16.3 Australian Science and Mathematics School/Adelaide. (For more information about the school, see OECD 2012. Innovative Learning Environments (ILE): Inventory Case Study Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS). Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceeri/49930609.pdf>). Source: Design by author

cesses and procedures. Skills like critical thinking, creative problem solving, cooperation, and collaboration are intertwined with this process (Trilling, 2015). Teachers should help students work on an academic mindset (Farrington, 2013), in other words developing personal qualities like self-efficacy and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2009), performance qualities like goal-setting or reflection, and social qualities like using collaboration and social capital for reciprocal learning and mutual support (Trilling, 2015).

On the other hand, the use of spaces for learning should always be based on the core principles of “Universal Design for Learning” (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Thus, twenty-first century learning spaces should provide multiple means of representation, meaning the input is represented in multiple ways so that everyone can “gain access to it that way they are going to benefit from it” (Rapp, 2014, p. 3) and multiple means of engagement, as in different types of learning tasks. To make student learning visible, these spaces allow for multiple means of action and expression, in other words giving students choices in how they want to show what they know and what they can do with their knowledge.

Whenever the concept of school is widened to encompass a whole range of spaces beyond the traditional classroom, students can be appreciated with all their

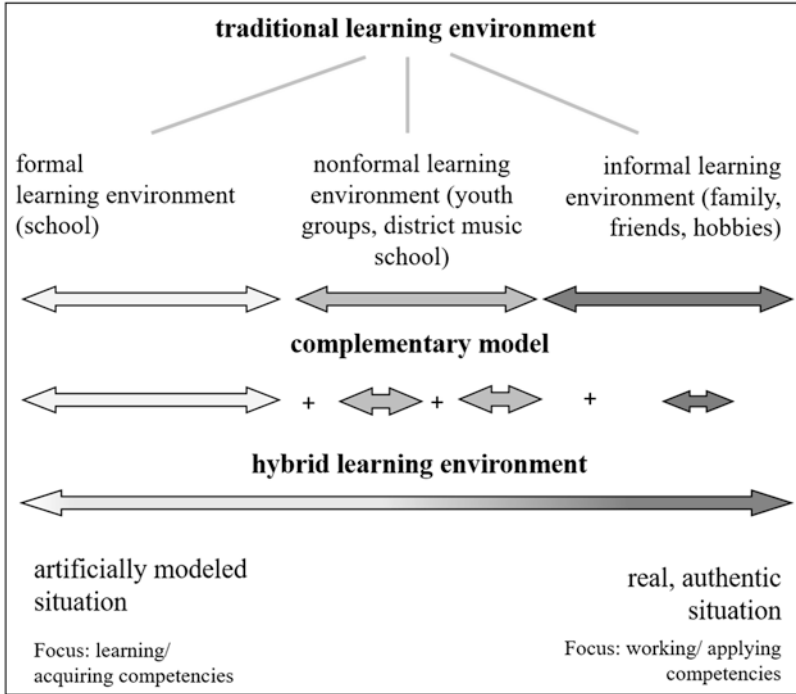


Fig. 16.4 Traditional learning environment versus hybrid learning environment. Adapted from Klopsch, 2016, p. 154. Copyright 2016 by Beltz Verlag. Adapted with permission

strengths and weaknesses and work with different approaches, assignments, and social settings (Istance & Dumont, 2010, p. 326). Learning tasks can range from tasks assigned by teachers to tasks coconstructed by teachers and students and tasks chosen and designed by individual students. All these types of situations are needed at a school whose educators view the enhancement of “learning engagement” as a key factor and a priority for adolescent development. There is room for many different formats: Although there may still be a need for a traditional lecture format that presents theoretical knowledge necessary in building a sound knowledge base, there will certainly be group assignments that are thoroughly predesigned and constructed for scaffolded learning. In this kind of setting, self-constructed and self-directed learning activities by individual students or small groups of students are also a normal part of schooling. Redefining school by a new way of looking at and using space in learning usually goes hand in hand with a shift towards more authentic learning. Adolescent students’ learning is enhanced by enabling many different experiences: Listening to a lecture by a bee keeper on the potential extinction of bees and the implications on our ecology and nutrition in the school building, taking part in a service learning project in a retirement home for elderly patients with dementia, or setting up an art exhibition showcasing the student’s own art work in a local museum (Sliwka & Klopsch, 2018).

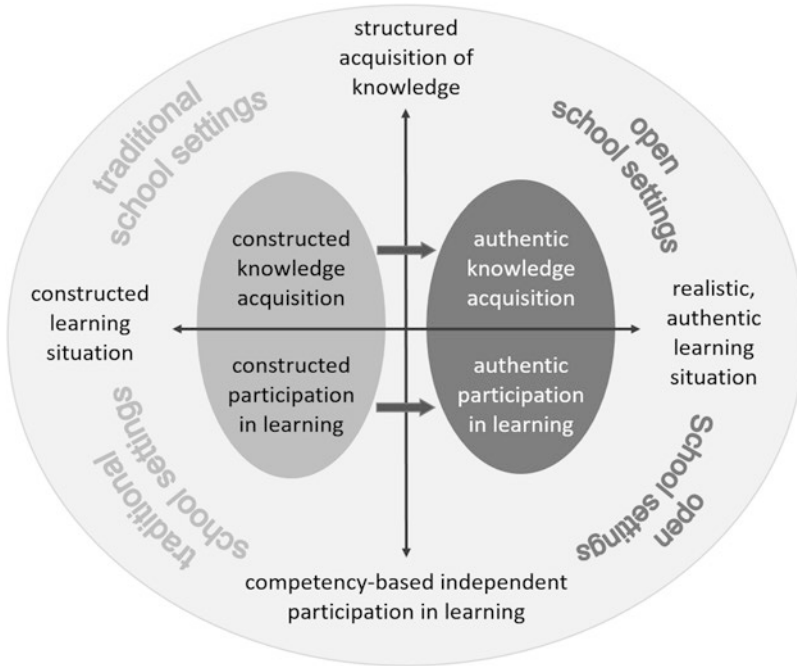


Fig. 16.5 Dimensions of a learning process. Reprinted from Klopsch, 2016, p. 156, based on Zitter and Hoeve, 2012. Copyright 2016 by Beltz Verlag. Reprinted with permission

These examples illustrate how redefining space in schooling not only impacts the way lessons are taught, but also on students' experiences beyond the classroom setting.

Redefining Schools as Multiple Hybrid Spaces for Learning

An effective way of creating new learning environments for adolescents is to build networks between schools and partners based on common learning goals. These jointly defined goals ensure that learning projects are based on the concept of symbiosis rather than coexistence. To make this work, it is important to initiate change through *bottom-up* approaches rather than *top-down* regulations by the school administration (Gräsel, Jäger, & Willke, 2006). "Symbiotic" here means acting together from different starting points: Partners, teachers, students, parents, and school administrators coconstructively develop one collective learning space involving multiple different subspaces for learning. This way, the multiple perspectives can be equally taken into account rather than imposing one teacher-centered perspective on all the other partners involved in the enterprise of redefining spaces for learning. But what should be the guiding idea for this joint venture? This

brings the argument back to the starting point—the gloomy diagnosis that many adolescents in traditional schools lose their intrinsic interest in learning between the ages of 10 and 14. Loosely-coupled, low-cost approaches to school partnerships can be an interesting addition to traditional schools but will not help to solve this fundamental problem. To enhance learning for all adolescent students, to make it interesting and relevant for them, schools must provide authentic and demanding tasks in real-life settings for learning. In this crucial phase of human development, the core developmental task young people have to work out is the question of personal identity: Who am I? What are my talents, interests, and passions? Where do I want to go, and how do I get there? (Sliwka, 2018). To open up schools, to redefine them beyond a mere “building with teachers in classrooms,” to make them hybrid and connected to the real world has never been as easy as it is now. The digital revolution has made it easier than ever before to get in touch with potential partners, to communicate on an ongoing basis, to coconstruct a conception of learning in multiple and relevant ways. All of the teenagers in our schools are digital natives. Their world and their personal lives are more connected and fluid than ever before in human history. Why not learn from them and redefine schools to encompass many spaces instead of just one? Spaces in which adolescents can discover learning as the most exciting possible journey on the way from childhood to adulthood.

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Chapter 17

Feminization of Teaching: Female Teachers at Primary and Lower Secondary Schools in Baden-Württemberg, Germany: From Its Beginnings to the Present



Jürgen Schmude and Sascha Jackisch

Object of Investigation

In this article, we chronicle and explore the feminization process of the teaching profession in public primary and lower secondary schools (*Grund- and Hauptschulen*) for general education in the Grand Duchy of Baden from 1880 to 1918, the Republic of Baden from 1918 to 1952, and the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg from 1952 to 2015. This contribution can be understood as an update of Schmude's earlier work (1988). The factors that affected the feminization process on the primary and lower secondary school level and produced regional differences in the proportion of female teachers are diverse. They have also been identified in numerous national case studies for different periods (e.g., for Hungary by Meusbürger & Schmude, 1991; for the United States by Boyle, 2004; for Belgium by Depaepe, Lauwers, & Simon, 2004; for France by Siegel, 2004; for the Netherlands by Timmerman, 2011), although their significance varies from country to country. Most of the analyzed factors are closely linked, making it extremely difficult to weigh their importance individually for the process of feminization. The analysis of the feminization of teaching must be seen in the context of women's increasing participation in the labor market, the greater number of women entering certain professions, and the process of feminization in the last 150 years. These topics have been discussed in politics as well as in the sciences for a long time. From today's perspective, the analysis of the feminisation process of the teaching profession is characterized by a shift of prioritization. Until the 1980s, researchers concentrated on understanding the long-term development of this process, taking into account the phenomena linked with it (e.g., spatial disparities). In contrast, the last 20 years of

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research have been dominated by the question of what the consequences of the feminisation process are. Some people interpret these changes as a sign of women's emancipation; others focus on gender's impact on, and consequences for, the execution of work.

As a consequence, the term *feminization* can be interpreted in at least two ways. The first refers to the timeline and the historical process by which women came to dominate the teaching profession in primary and lower secondary schools (Schmude, 1988). This numerical feminization is characterized by an increasing number of women in school education. The second deals with the loaded nature of the term feminization itself, which is often used to express that a feminized profession is slightly inferior, less serious, or less weighted (Maher, 2012). This can be interpreted as a cultural change or transformation of teaching. Researchers see feminine concerns, values, and practices as altering the culture of the educational system (Leathwood & Read, 2009).

In Germany, as well as in many other countries, the teaching profession is often described as a feminized profession. However, the process of feminization in teaching developed differently at various levels of school education and reached different levels of feminization over time. In this article, we selected primary and lower secondary schools as empirical case studies because the process of feminization first began on this level and the proportion of women here is now the highest of all teaching professions. Additionally, the example of teachers on the primary and lower secondary school level is particularly suited for analyzing the feminization process in relation to time and space because these positions were, and are, nearly ubiquitous. In studying various factors that influenced the process of feminization, we directed a main focus of our inquiry on regional disparities as well as on the causal and correlative effects on women's participation in teaching. It is often difficult to distinguish between causes, effects and coincidences (Boyle, 2004). Moreover, the long-term consequences of the process of feminization are still of some interest.

Methodology: Types of Numerical Feminization

In this article, we define the *degree of feminization* by the share (percentage) of women among the teaching staff. However, we do not base our analysis of the process of feminization purely on the development of the share of female teachers, but also on the development of the absolute number of male and female teachers.

Stressing the development of the absolute number and the percentage of male and female teachers as well as the difference between their absolute numbers, three types of effective and one type of apparent feminization can be identified (see Fig. 17.1). We define *effective feminization* as an increasing share of female teachers among the teaching staff and a decreasing difference between the absolute numbers of male and female teachers. This can be caused by:

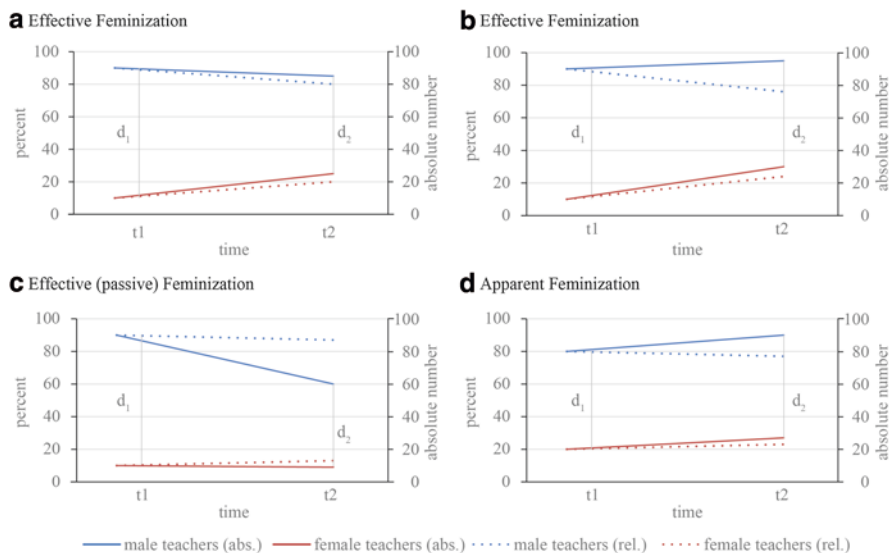


Fig. 17.1 Types of feminization. Adapted from Schmude, 1988, pp. 7–8. Copyright 1988 by Selbstverlag des Geographischen Instituts der Universität Heidelberg. Adapted with permission

- An increasing number of female teachers while the number of male teachers decreases or stagnates (Type A),
- A stronger increase of the number of female teachers compared to the number of male teachers (Type B), or
- A weaker decrease of the number of female teachers compared to the number of male teachers (Type C).

Type C can also be labelled as *passive feminization*, because the increasing share of female teachers among the teaching staff is not motivated by the substitution of male by female teachers, but rather by a sharper decline of the number of male teachers compared to the decrease of the number of female teachers.

In opposition to all three types of effective feminization, *apparent feminization* is recognized as:

- An increasing share of female teachers among the teaching staff, while the difference between the absolute number of male and female teachers is still increasing (Type D).

The process of feminization comes to an end or is interrupted as soon as the share of female teachers among the teaching staff decreases.

- Effective feminization
- Effective feminization
- Effective (passive) feminization
- Apparent feminization

Long-Term Development of the Feminization Process in Teaching at Primary and Lower Secondary Schools in Baden (1880–1952) and Baden-Württemberg (1952 Until 2015)

Teaching at primary and lower secondary schools transitioned from a male occupation to a female occupation during the twentieth century. The gender proportion in the teaching profession changed slowly, and the degree of feminization as well as its causes have differed across time.

Stressing the full-time teaching profession in primary and lower secondary schools, four phases of effective feminization can be identified (see Fig. 17.2):

- The first two phases coincide with the time spans of World War I and II. These phases were characterized by a sharp drop in the number of male teachers whereas the number of female teachers increased (i.e., Type A).
- The third and most important phase of effective feminization took place from the 1950s to 1975. The number of female teachers grew much faster than the number of male teachers (i.e., Type B), which even decreased in some years (i.e., Type C). In this period, the size of the teaching staff rose steeply. More women than men were employed as teachers and female teachers formed the majority of the teaching staff for the first time in 1966. By 1975, the percentage of female teachers had reached its temporary peak at 57%. The main reason behind the strong increase of teachers lies in the baby boom after World War II, which created the



Fig. 17.2 The process of feminization of the teaching staff (full-time teaching) at primary and lower secondary schools from 1880 to 1951 in Baden and from 1952 to 2015 in Baden-Württemberg. Source: Design by author. Data from Schmude, 1988, p. 126; Statistisches Landesamt, 2017

Table 17.1 Percentage of female teachers (full-time and part-time) by type of school in 1990, 2000, and 2015

	Primary school	Secondary school	Grammar school
1990/1991	63.2%	45.6%	34.8%
2000/2001	70.9%	53.1%	42.3%
2015/2016	81.5%	63.9%	57.6%

Source: Design by author. Data from Wolf (2009, pp. 4–5) and Statistisches Landesamt (2016, p. 32)

need for even more new teachers. The strong decrease of birth rates in the 1960s (the pill gap) caused a weaker demand for male and female teacher after 1975.

- In the fourth phase of effective feminization—which began in 1998 and continues to today—the percentage of female teachers reached its all-time peak at 69.3% in 2015. This strong percentage increase was caused by an increase in the number of female teachers while the number of male teachers decreased (from 1998 to 1996, and from 1999 to 2011; i.e., Type A).

All other periods were either eras of passive feminization (1996–1999 and 2011–2015; i.e., Type C), apparent feminization (1880–1913; i.e., Type D), or interrupted processes of feminization (1917–1936, 1946–1950, and 1975–1988). The decrease in the share of female teachers on the teaching staff was caused by recessions in the 1970s and 1980s as well as by a decline in birth rate, which led to staff cuts in public schools and the elimination of many teaching jobs.

In contrast to primary and lower secondary schools, the process of an (effective) feminization at the grammar and high school level started much later and never reached the degree of feminization of the primary and lower secondary schools, even when part-time teaching is taken into account (see section below). In 2015, the share of female teachers in Baden-Württemberg reached 81.5% on the primary school level, although the share of female teachers was only 63.9% and 57.6% in lower and upper schools (see Table 17.1). Obviously, there is still a noticeable difference between women’s opportunities in certain school types (Basten, 1997) and career levels. Beneath the hierarchy of education, the social status of teaching and the role model of teachers (see section below) has affected the feminization process as well. As a consequence, women still hold few jobs with administrative power. Historically, school directors and seminar leaders have mostly been men, and continue to be so today.

Characteristics, Causes, and Effects of the Feminization Process

At the end of the nineteenth century, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, as well as in many other countries, regional differences in the process of feminization were mainly caused by legislative impacts on the teaching license for women, by the network of school locations, by teachers’ function outside the school, and by the framework of social conditions.

Urban-Rural Disparities: Legislative Impacts of Educational Authorities and the Network of School Locations

Researchers of the social sciences and economics have long used community and/or city size as an important variable to explain the differentiation and complexity of the economy and society. This indicator not only influences the qualification and job structure of the female labor force, but also the proportion of women employed in a specific occupation. This relationship is particularly clear among ubiquitous occupations like primary and lower secondary school teaching.

In most European countries, a central-peripheral gradient on the percentage of female teachers has been evident since the first detailed statistics from the nineteenth century (Meusburger & Schmude, 1991b). This was also the case in the Grand Duchy of Baden, where the regional differences in the sex proportion of the teaching staff at public schools can be observed from the very beginning of women being allowed to teach at the end of the nineteenth century. The development of the urban-rural gradient of the feminization degree, which persisted for decades, is attributable to the phase when women were permitted to teach in public primary schools in the Grand Duchy of Baden in 1880. In other countries (e.g., Austria or France), women were admitted into the teaching profession much earlier (e.g., Klingler, 1970).

The social innovation of the female teacher took root over many decades, principally in the larger cities due to several causes, some of which were particular geographical, social, economic, and legal conditions. In the Grand Duchy of Baden, a minimum size of the teaching staff (three teachers) was a prior condition for the employment of a female teacher. Moreover, the percentage of female teachers in Baden was limited to 5% per school. In 1892, the quota was raised to 10%, and in 1900 the limitation was abolished. As 75% of the primary and lower secondary schools were small (one or two teaching positions) and were concentrated in small, rural communities in the south and north-east of Baden, a spatial gradient in the degree of feminization arose and persisted for decades. Vice versa, the urban-rural disparities were forced by the concentration of large schools in the larger cities of Baden. In 1910, about 77% of all positions for female teachers in public primary schools were installed in communities with at least 10,000 inhabitants, in contrast to only 45% of all posts for male teachers. The degree of feminization increased with the size of the communities (see Table 17.2). These urban-rural disparities can be observed in many other countries as well, such as Austria or Hungary (Meusburger & Schmude, 1991a, 1991b).

The rural exodus in the time of industrialization supported these regional differences in the process of feminization, as most new schools were set up in larger and growing cities. After World War II, there was still a close relationship between the size of the community and the degree of feminization of its teaching staff. This impact of the community size on the feminization process can also be illustrated by the size of the schools, which shows a strong correlation with the community size: the more posts at a school, the higher the percentage of female teachers (see Table 17.3).

Table 17.2 Distribution of the posts for female teachers and the degree of feminization of the teaching staff at public primary schools in Baden in 1910 compared to the size of the communities

Community size (number of inhabitants)	Distribution of posts for female teachers (%)	Degree of feminization (%)
0–500	0	0
501–1000	0	0
1001–2000	6.1	6.5
2001–5000	8.1	5.3
5001–10,000	8.1	5.4
Over 10,000	77.1	14.3
Total	100.0	8.5

Source: Design by author. Data from Schmude (1988, p. 33)

Table 17.3 Share of teaching posts for female teachers depending on school size measured by the number of teaching posts

Number of teaching posts	Share of teaching posts for female teachers (%)
1	16.57
2	29.14
3	33.33
4	35.06
5	35.74
6–10	39.05
More than 10	44.56

Source: Design by author. Data from Schmude (1988, p. 83)

This relationship became stronger over time as the proportion of female teachers grew faster in bigger cities than in rural areas until the mid-1970s. The model of regression analysis (see Fig. 17.3) contains a nearly linear relationship between the size of the communities and the degree of feminization of their teaching staff in 1911, 1951, and 1975 ($r > 0.9$). The strong centre-to-periphery decline in the proportion of female teachers grew over time to higher percentage values and remained stable for nearly 100 years. In the mid-1970s, the difference of the degree between small and big communities started to decrease. Nevertheless, even in 1984 the highest degree of feminization in the teaching staff was still to be found in the biggest communities. These spatial disparities can be observed even today—on a lower level—in Baden-Württemberg (Kühn, 2010) and in other parts of Germany as well, for example, in Bavaria (Künzel, 2014).

To summarize, the beginning of teaching in public schools by women was not only concentrated on the larger cities of Baden, but the diffusion of the innovation was almost exclusively limited to the urban milieu as well. The hypothesis “the larger the community where the school is located, the higher the proportion of female teachers in primary schools,” can be confirmed. An additional reason for these spatial disparities lies in the limited career opportunities of men in rural areas.

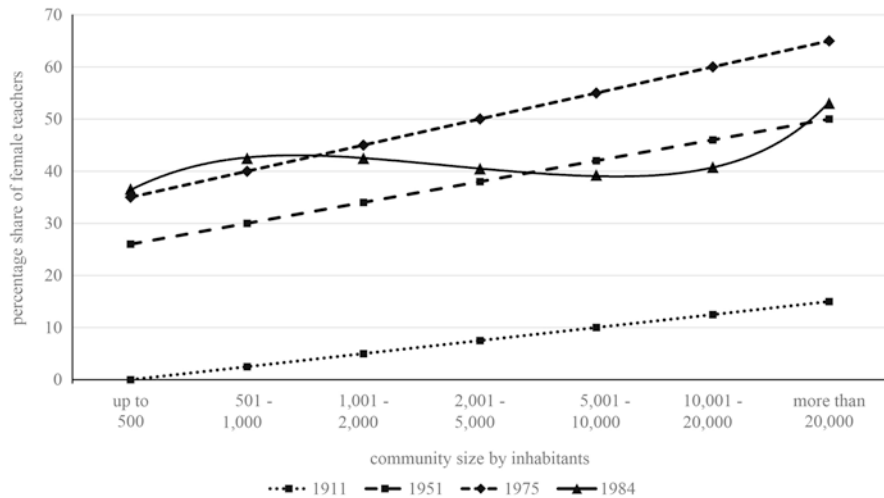


Fig. 17.3 Relationship between the degree of feminization among the teaching staff (full-time teachers) of primary and lower secondary schools and community size (inhabitants) in 1911 and 1951 (Baden), 1975 and 1984 (Baden-Württemberg). (Source: Design by author. Data from Schmude, 1988, p. 87)

As a consequence, teaching feminized more slowly in rural than in urban areas. Moreover, the feminization process was hindered by the fact that in the Grand Duchy of Baden, like in many countries, female teachers were usually forced to quit teaching once they married. In the 1930s, married women were banned from teaching by the so-called celibacy rule. As a result, there was almost no place in teaching for married women until the 1950s when the law was changed.

Teachers' Function Outside the School and Their Social Background

The divergent expectations of the urban and rural populations amplified urban-rural disparities in the degree of feminization (see previous section). Up to the second half of the twentieth century, the inhabitants of peripheral, rural areas expected teachers to take over various functions outside the school such as sexton, mayor, choir leader, or bandmaster. For almost all of these extrascholastic activities, the rural population preferred male teachers for various reasons, and women would not have been accepted in these positions (e.g., Meusburger, 1998). As a consequence of these expectations, female teachers refrained from applying for a position in rural regions. Contrastingly, in large cities these functions were taken over non-teachers. Moreover, the rural living conditions (e.g., lack of cultural facilities or the limited housing comforts), the isolation of rural areas (e.g., restricted public transport options), and the rigid social control exercised by villagers led to the assessment that rurally situated schools were not suitable for women. Taken together, these

aspects influenced the application rate of female teachers and the allocation policy of the school authorities (Meusbürger & Schmude, 1991b). After World War II, these discrepancies in living conditions began to shrink, which began to improve the attractiveness of rural teaching posts.

As the teaching profession was one of the first in which women were allowed to practice, it attracted mostly well-educated women: “Women and society saw teaching as an appropriate career for them outside the home” (Boyle, 2004). Whereas female teachers at primary schools predominantly came from the metropolitan upper-class milieu (Twellmann, 1972), male teachers were overwhelmingly recruited from the rural lower- and middle-class milieu, meaning that they came from educationally deprived classes (Bieler, 2007). These sex-specific differences in recruitment correspond to the differences in the paternal occupation of male and female teachers (Nave-Herz, 1977). At the beginning of the twentieth century, most female teachers were daughters of officials, officers, or teachers of higher education. In contrast, male teachers tended to come from lower-middle-class backgrounds: The majority of the fathers of male teachers at primary schools worked as farmers or in blue-collar jobs. Most of the male teachers at primary schools had only completed primary school and becoming teachers served as an avenue for social mobility, whereas for many women teaching was a means of status maintenance (Rury, 1989). As a result of higher social classes in large cities, primary-school teaching was seen as an appropriate career for women but not for men (Meusbürger & Schmude, 1991b).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, sex-specific recruitment patterns were supported by the location of the teachers’ training colleges: All three colleges for female teachers in the Grand Duchy were located in cities with at least 40,000 inhabitants, whereas four of the five colleges for male teachers were set up in small communities with less than 10,000 inhabitants.

In 1950, German educational authorities made secondary-school education a condition for teaching at primary schools. As a result, the traditional recruitment patterns, which were concentrated on male candidates from the rural milieu, shifted, and the number of female candidates surged. Consequently, the sociodemographic composition of the teaching staff at primary schools changed completely after World War II. One important factor was that men moved out of teaching at primary schools when better jobs were available for them, allowing more women to become teachers. This phenomenon is well known: In many cases, a profession’s low prestige or loss of prestige is tied to its increasing feminization. In contrast, the greater the prestige and/or higher the financial attraction of a profession, the more difficult it is for women to advance in it.

Labor-Market Aspects and the Demand for Teachers After World War II

The degree of female participation in the labor market in general has an impact on the teaching profession’s degree of feminization. In the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), where a higher share of women was working than in the Federal

Republic of Germany (FRG), the share of women in the teaching staff was also noticeably higher. This difference was still seen more than 10 years after the reunification in 1989 (Kramer & Schmude, 2005), even though the conditions have converged over time.

The process of feminization has been influenced not only by the aspects stated above but also by the demand for teachers. The feminization process has slowed down in times of reduced demand and sped up in times of greater demand. In times of an increasing need for teachers, such as the 1960s, recruitment campaigners targeted women, especially for primary schools. They launched several teaching-recruitment programs specific to women. In this way, women can be seen as a labor reserve or hidden reserve for the labor market. In other words, a great need for teachers always led to a greater than average proportion of female employment. In these periods, women were recruited even when they were not adequately qualified, which had a negative impact on the image of the teaching profession (Rothland & Terhart, 2007). In contrast, times of reduced demand usually led to an underrepresentation in the recruitment of female teachers (e.g., in the 1980s) that resulted in a reversal or interruption of the feminization process. As a consequence, the rate of unemployed female teachers increased to a greater extent than that of male teachers (e.g., in 1985 about 77% of unemployed teachers in Baden-Württemberg were female). Moreover, the percentage of female teachers among unemployed teachers was higher than the share of women in the teaching staff: for example, 77.4% of all unemployed teachers versus 42.5% of all employed teachers in primary and intermediate schools in 1985 (Schmude, 1988, p. 104).

Another important influencing factor on the feminization process is the fact that the teaching profession is particularly suitable for part-time work and is, therefore, said to be highly compatible with family and children (Denzler & Wolter, 2008; Wolter & Denzler, 2003). Since the 1960s, the share of part-time teachers has risen strongly. As a result, in the mid-1980s more women were employed as part-time than as full-time teachers, whereas male teachers were usually full-time employees (see Fig. 17.4). These sex-specific differences in the proportion of full-time and part-time employment were still present in 2015. Consequently, the feminization rate for the whole teaching staff (full-time and part-time) reached higher percentages than the feminization rate of the full-time-employed teaching staff (e.g., in 2015: 84.5% vs. 69.3%).

Last but not least, the course of the feminization process shows a strong linkage to women and men's chosen fields of study (see Fig. 17.5). Because the teaching profession was one of the first jobs available for women, a high percentage of women decided to study teaching (e.g., 53% of all female students in 1931). The dominance of teacher training for female students can be observed in the 1960s, and only since the 1990s has the share of teaching studies among female students decreased (1991: 14%) and levelled off. The sex-specific differences in chosen fields of study have consequently narrowed, although a gap still exists (2009: 14% of female students vs. 8% of male students chose teacher training as their field of study).

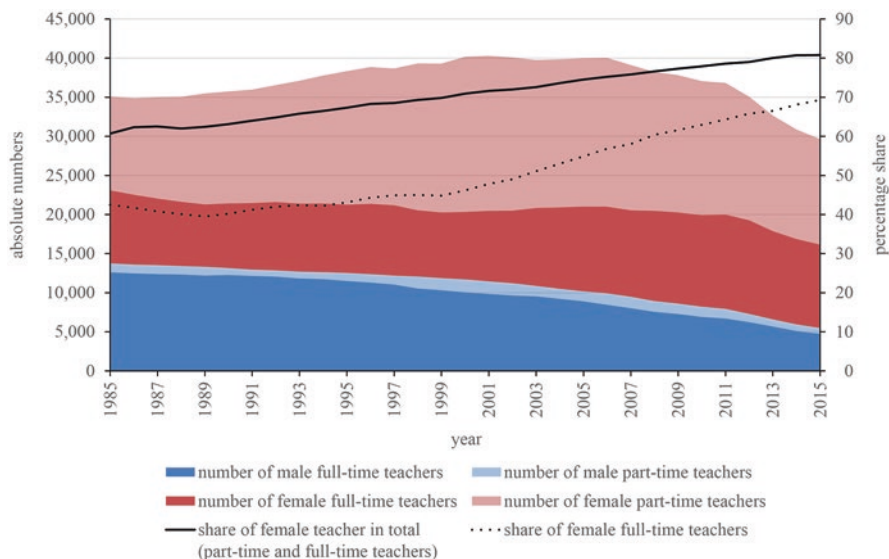


Fig. 17.4 The feminization process of the teaching staff (full-time and part-time teachers) of primary schools from 1985 to 2015 in Baden-Württemberg. Source: Design by author. Data from Schmude, 1988, p. 81, Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; Wolf, 2009, pp. 4–5

Consequences of the Numerical Feminization Process on the Teaching Profession

During the past 150 years, particularly in countries with a long tradition of female teachers such as the US and Great Britain, there has been a discussion about the supposed negative consequences of feminization for boys (Timmerman, 2011). For instance, Harvard President Charles Eliot was arguing against a too large proportion of female teachers as early as 1875 (Blair, 1979). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the feminization of teaching was seen not only as a cause for boys' problems in school, but for other educational problems and social crises as well (e.g., boys' failure to sufficiently develop a male identity).

At the end of the 1970s, the debates about the feminization process reached a new climax initiated by the publication of "Motherteacher" (Sugg Jr., 1978), whose author held feminization responsible for the failure of the US educational system. Critics claimed that the intellectual development of children suffered from anti-intellectual, feminine pedagogy that was concentrated on children's social, creative, emotional, and moral skills. In literature, this feminine pedagogy became synonymous with *soft pedagogy*. "Soft' pedagogy is contrasted to 'hard' pedagogy which is geared towards the desired levels of learning outcomes" (Dronkers, 2007, as cited in Timmerman, 2011, p. 470). Some authors asked whether feminization had gone too far.

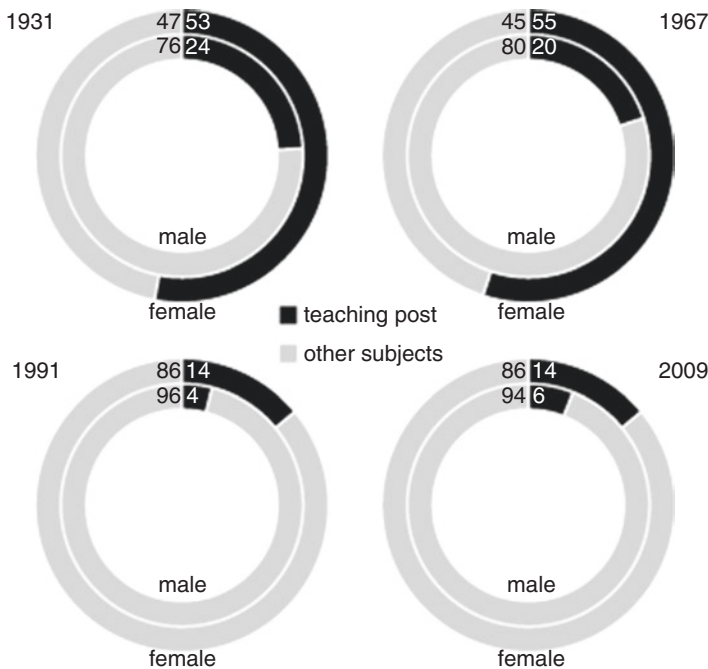


Fig. 17.5 Percentage of female and male teaching students as a share of all students in 1931, 1967, 1991, and 2009. Source: Design by author. Data from Lundgreen, 1999, p. 126; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2010, p. 198

Much research has been done to address the role of female teachers and the school performance gap between boys and girls (e.g., Holmlund & Sund, 2008). There are distinct and contrasting theoretical positions in literature discussing the gender impact on education at primary-school level (see the literature review by Skelton, 2012 or Kelleher et al., 2011). For instance, Helbig (2010) stated that girls have become increasingly more successful in German schools than boys since the 1990s. Simultaneously, the share of female teachers in the school system has gradually grown. The underlying assumption is that the feminization of the teaching profession leads to a lack of male role models that may have negative consequences for the achievement and behavior of boys (Driessen, 2007). However, it remains unclear whether the feminization of teaching is actually the cause of girls achieving better results than boys. Attempts to prove this hypothesis have led to inconsistent results. With his ELEMENT study (2010), Helbig showed that boys do indeed receive lower degrees in mathematics and are consequently recommended for the high school slightly less frequently in schools with a high share of female teachers than in schools with lower share of female teachers. Additionally, girls have higher reading competencies in schools with a high share of female teachers. Therefore, some researchers (e.g., Mulvey, 2010) recommend separating boys and girls in single-sex classrooms, whereas others argue in favor of educating them in mixed-sex classrooms because both boys and girls contribute to the classroom. Others,

such as Skelton (2002), discuss whether a “re-masculinization” of primary education is necessary. In contrast, researchers such as Driessen (2007) could not find any effect of the share of female teachers on pupils’ achievement, behavior, or attitudes. All in all, researchers conducting reviews in many countries have found little evidence of consistent advantages in either single-sex education or coeducation (Yates, 2011).

Conclusion

“Teaching at primary schools is one of the highly feminized ‘semi-professions,’ like nursery or library-keeping” (Boyle, 2004). The social status of the teaching profession at primary schools and the process of feminization have interacted as teaching’s low status has allowed feminization, and feminization has contributed to teaching’s low status (Thomas, 2012).

The analysis of the feminization process of primary schools in Baden respectively Baden-Württemberg has allowed us to identify a variety of factors responsible for central-peripheral disparities in women’s teaching. Without a profound knowledge of regional geography and local history, these disparities cannot be explained sufficiently. These spatial disparities can be found on the regional scale (as in the case study of Baden-Württemberg) as well as on the national level.

Moreover, some of the factors have lost importance (e.g., size of teaching staff) whereas the influence of other factors has become stronger (in particular part-time employment). Additional factors influence the process of feminization and support the spatial differences of the share of female teachers in the teaching staff, such as teachers’ salaries, economic frameworks, and local living conditions (e.g., Meusburger, 1998; Wolter, Denzler, & Weber, 2003).

Whereas early researchers of the feminization process focused on numeric feminization, researchers have recently shifted more and more towards gender-related consequences of the process. In summary, it is clear that the process of feminization is still of academic interest and should be examined from a multidisciplinary perspective.

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Correction to: Changing Structures and the Role of Education in the Development of the Educational System in Czechia



Silvie Rita Kučerová, Kateřina Trnková, and Petr Meyer

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This chapter was inadvertently published with incorrect affiliation of the Chapter 7 authors Silvie R. Kučerová, Kateřina Trnková, and Petr Meyer. It has now been updated as below:

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Fig. 1 Participants of the symposium “Geographies of Schooling” at the Studio Villa Bosch in Heidelberg, Germany. (© Johannes Glückler, Heidelberg)



Fig. 2 Villa Bosch, the head office of the Klaus Tschira Foundation, Heidelberg, Germany. (© Peter Meusburger, Heidelberg)

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