

# DESIGNS FOR EXPERIMENTATION AND INQUIRY

Approaching Learning and Knowing in  
Digital Transformation

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## Preface

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# PREFACE

The current volume is the result of a two-day meeting in late November 2016 that was held in a dark, remote but beautiful place in Sweden. We were bringing together international scholars and collaborators from different fields, to celebrate the success and ending of a six-year strategic research initiative on Learning, at the University of Gothenburg. As the years had passed, the University of Gothenburg Learning and Media Technology Studio (LETStudio), had more than tripled its base funding from our university with external funding, launching a range of new interdisciplinary research projects –some of which are presented in this volume along with valuable contributions from some of our international colleagues.

However, this volume is also a ‘spin-off’ from a longer history of interdisciplinary collaboration arising out of further research programmes that have run since the beginning of the millennium: The LearnIT Programme funded by the Swedish Knowledge Foundation 2000–2009, and The LinCS Programme funded by the Swedish Research Council, 2006–ending in June 2019. The new strategic research initiative, I was told, had to prove itself worthy of funding by bringing together a much broader interdisciplinary team than the already established environments, and so we did. LETStudio has led to research collaborations cutting across educational science, applied informatics, library and information science, marine- and maritime science, nursing, medicine, radiology, history of ideas, theory of science, sociology, linguistics, architecture, anthropology and ethnology.

When looking back, it is fascinating to see how old and new colleagues have composed themselves in new combinations, sharing each other’s networks and making new things happen. As researchers we have been driven by our curiosity, fascination and urge to explore *ongoing* digital transformations through designed collaborations. We have learnt that despite the streamlined and prepackaged ideas that funders promote through their calls, networks of researchers like LETStudio can often exceed expectations by finding more original and innovative paths to

tread. In our case, this has been made possible by the long-term experience of our network creating a backbone of mutual trust and expertise concerning how to collaborate across professional fields.

This volume is dedicated to Professor Roger Säljö and Mrs Doris Gustafson, who so many of us share our scholarly lives with. Roger and Doris have been there all along, and their experience in setting up and managing research collaborations across institutional, national and disciplinary boundaries have been of great importance for The LETStudio network of researchers. What we take with us is a robust vehicle into an exciting research endeavour that seems to still be situated on the edge of something that is imaginable, but not yet known:

[T]he significance of new technologies does not lie in their enhancing learning in a linear sense. Learning does not become better or more efficient. Rather, the important point about new technologies is that they, if they are powerful enough, transform basic features of how people communicate knowledge and skills in society and how information is organised. In this sense, new media may imply that learning will become different. This pattern of transformation of learning through new technologies has happened on several occasions in history, and one might argue that digital technology is another case in point.

(Säljö, 2003)

On that note, we invite the reader to share the gist of our inquiries and discussions, provided through this volume entitled *Designs for Experimentation and Inquiry: Approaching Learning and Knowing in Digital Transformation*.

Åsa Mäkitalo

Gothenburg, in late September, 2018

## References

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