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**REFLECTIONS & MAPPING OUTPUTS FROM
NAVIGATING THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND
PHENOMENOGRAPHIC TERRAIN AS A DOCTORAL
STUDENT IN A NETWORKED LEARNING CONTEXT**

Networked Learning Conference, 18-20 May 2020



Background to the paper

A collation of my doctoral student's reflections and mapping outputs when tracing phenomenology & its variants in preparation for a round-table discussion at NLC 2020 which aims to surface, in an open and pragmatic way, whether phenomenology is deemed less valuable than phenomenography, or just more difficult or confusing to administer in a networked learning research context.

As a doctoral student and newcomer to the NL community, the aim is to document and share interpretation, to link to researcher and practitioner experience, to augment understanding and invite challenge to ongoing interpretation and application of phenomenology in a NL context, for use also by other novice researchers.

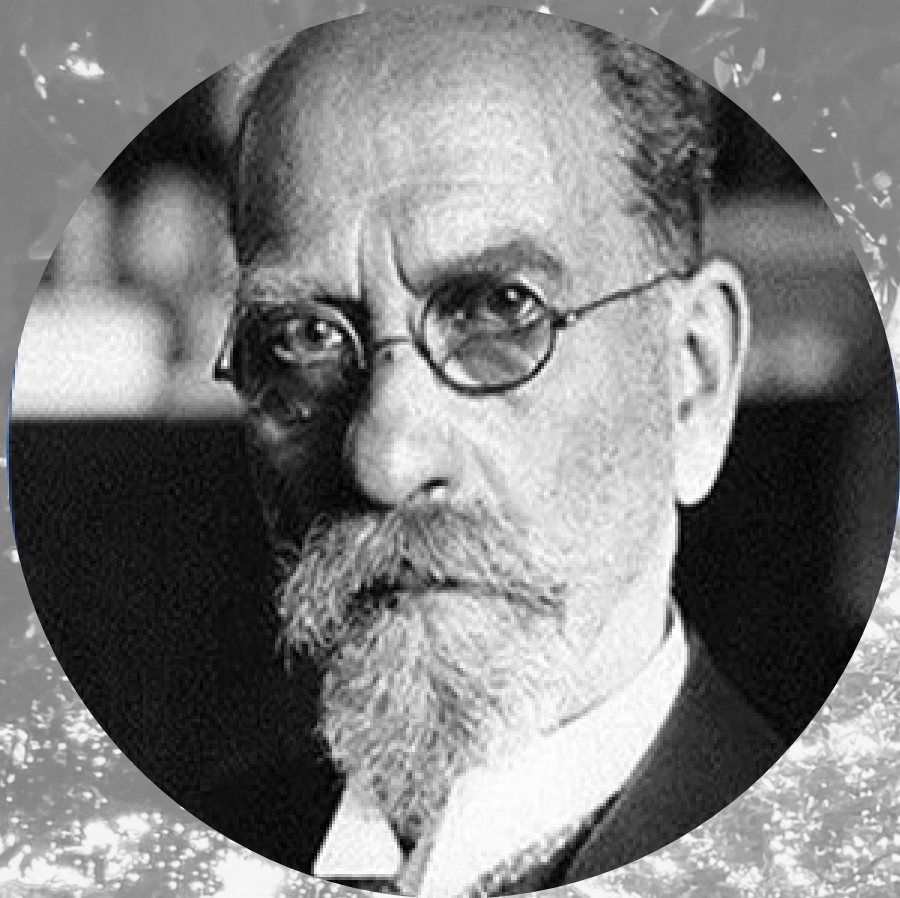
Reflections & Mapping Outputs for 'Navigating the phenomenological and phenomenographic terrain as a doctoral student in a Networked Learning context' by Felicity Healey-Benson is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

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<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/staff/felicity-healey-benson/>

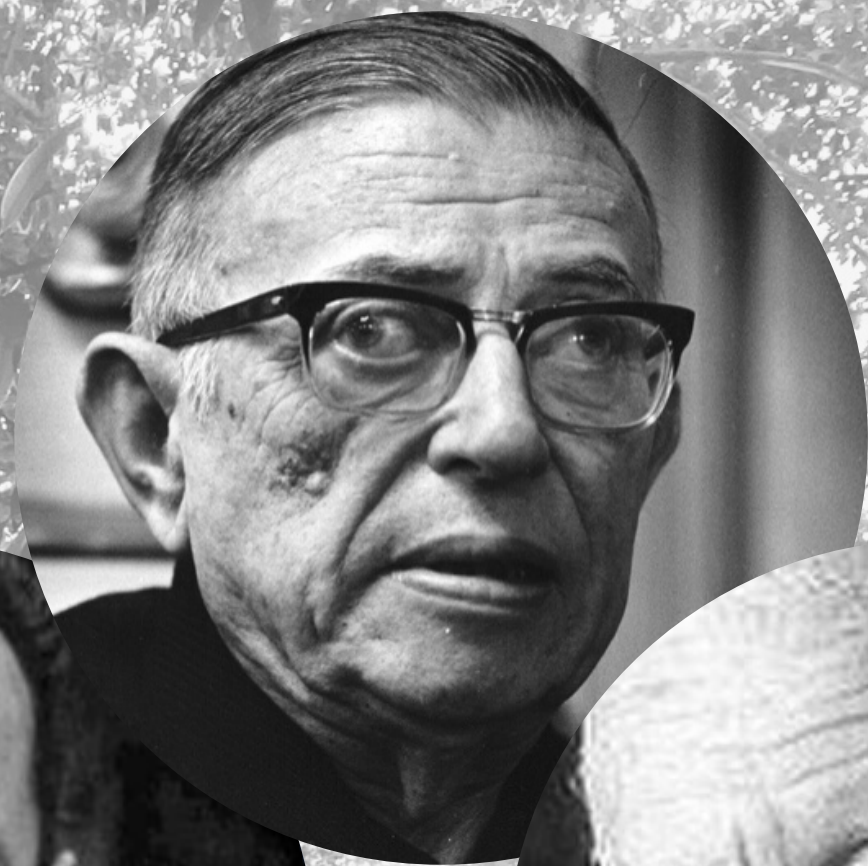
<https://emergenthinkers.com/>



Husserl 1859-1938



Heidegger 1889-1976



Sartre 1905-1980



Merleau-Ponty 1908-1961



Gadamer 1900-2002

Arendt (politics), Levinas (ethics), Derrida (semiotic analysis/deconstruction)
de Beauvoir (gender), Ricoeur (critical theory), Idhe (Post-modernity & tech)..

**Engaging in phenomenological thinking & research is
challenging (Caelli, 2001) & has evolved in many ways**

IPA

Phenomenography



Giorgi



Moustakas



Van Manen



Dahlberg



Smith



Marton

For the novice researcher it remains a tall order to clearly distinguish between different phenomenological research study designs... & follow hybrids/offshoots...

or even further complicated to identify whether a phenomenological study has been run badly or not.

- **is a philosophical discipline, strategy or attitude, not one specific methodology or research design**
- **is an encounter (Vagle, 2018)**
- *"is looking at what we usually look through"* **(Sokolowski, 2000)**
- *"Neither phenomenology nor swimming can be learnt in a purely vicarious way. 'We shall never learn what "is called" swimming ... or what it "calls for," by reading a treatise on swimming. Only the leap into the river tells us what is called swimming' (Heidegger, 1968, p. 21".* **(Quay, 2016, p486)**
- *"While it is possible for reading to support the learning of phenomenology, if this reading remains detached from actually doing phenomenology, then the phenomenological starting point is never achieved"* **(Quay, 2016, p486)**
- **phenomenologists are reluctant to prescribe techniques (Holloway, 1997)**
- **to impose a method on a phenomenon** *"...would do a great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon"* **(Hycner (1999, p. 144)**
- **is a craft;** *"a creative act that cannot be mapped out in a once-and-for-all sort of way"* **(Vagle, 2018, xiii);** *"methods "need to be discovered/invented as a response to the question at hand"* **(Van Manen, 1990, p.29)**

Yet some **guidelines** may be necessary, especially for novice researchers **(Hycner, 1999)**

My key takes on Phenomenology



ONE SLICE ON PHENOMENOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

*"To truly understand
phenomenology requires
developing an
appreciation for the
philosophies that
underpin it"*

(Neubauer et al, 2019, p91)

Felicity Healey-Benson,
DBA research, UWTSD,
NLC, 18-20 May 2020



TRANSCENDENTAL/DESCRIPTIVE

determine the essential/core/invariant
structure/features a phenomenon has (HUSSERL)



INTERPRETATIVE/ HERMENEUTIC

interpret phenomena as they are 'consciously' experienced in lived
experiences, identify experiential themes, converging patterns of
meaning or meaning structure (HEIDEGGER)



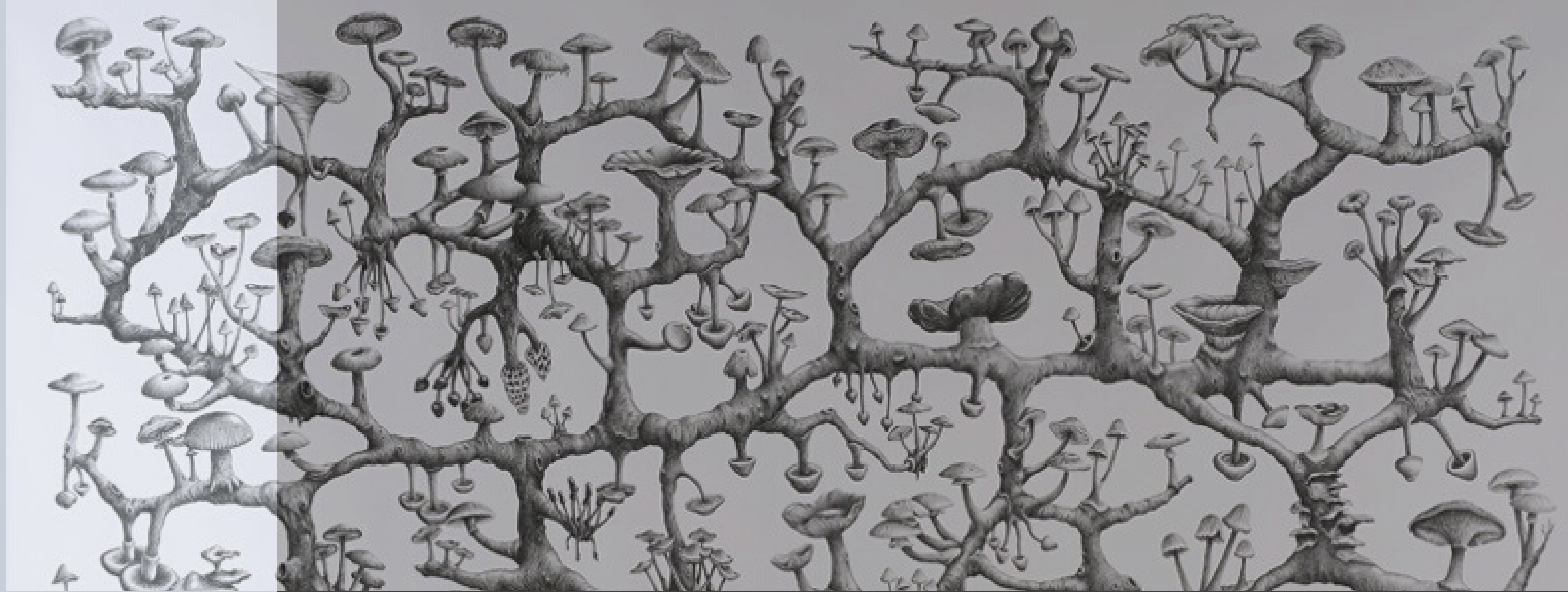
POST

to empirically analyze how particular technologies as "the things
themselves" mediate the relation between humans and their world
- *'the human experience is to be found ontologically related to an
environment or a world, but the interrelation is such that both are
transformed within this relationality'* (GADAMER)



POST-INTENTIONAL

Reconceives post-structurally using Deleuze/Guattarian ideas that
phenomenon are fluid, shape-shifting assemblages continually on the
move in interacting with the world, capture the essence of variant
structures, what it might become; values multiplicity of meaning;
focus on how things connect rather than what things are (VAGLE)



Potential for post-intentional phenomenology

is the pattern set to change, with the more recent post-intentional phenomenology offering by Vagle (2016)?

Underpinned by deleuzoguattarian thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004), the latest phenomenological evolution concentrates on the 'variant' features of a phenomenon, offering the potential to 'join the conversation about multiplicity, difference and particularity' (Vagle, 2014)

Likening learning to the roots of a plant.

Roots can spread out laterally & horizontally, consisting of a series of nodes, with no distinct centre, beginning or end, and no defined boundary – the only restrictions to growth are those that exist in the surrounding habitat.

Rhizomes resist organisational structure and chronology and instead grow and propagate in a 'nomadic' fashion.

Focuses on the inter-connectedness of ideas as well as boundless exploration across many fronts from many different starting points.

Potential for post-intentional phenomenology

Phenomenology

Transcendental

- Consider phenomena from different perspectives
- Unit of analysis is meaning giving subject
- Identify units of meaning and cluster into themes to form textural description (the what of the phenomenon).
- Use imaginative variation to create structural (the how) description.
- Combine these descriptions to form the essence **of** the phenomenon

Neubauer et al. 2019

- The researcher brackets
- Reads the data
- Reduces it to meaning units
- Re-reads reductions then engage in thematic clustering
- Compares the data
- Writes descriptions in an ongoing process of continually engaging with the data & writing reflections and summaries until the essence of the lived experience can be described

Moustakas, 1993

Hermeneutic

- Place '**being**' at the centre of the research - what it is to **be in** the world in various intentional ways
- Unit of analysis: the transaction between situation & the person
- Engage in a hermeneutic circle through iterative cycles of capturing & writing reflections towards a robust and nuanced analysis
- Consider how the data (or parts) contributed to evolving understanding of the phenomena (whole)

Neubauer et al. 2019, Vagle, 2018

- The researcher reads the data constructs a vague understanding
- Engages in reflective writing, then re-engages with the text with revised understandings
- Employs anecdotes, examples & use of the vocative

Grondin, 2012

Post-Intentional

- Bring a critical dimension to the research
- Identify a phenomenon in its multiple, partial & varied contexts
- Read & write through the data in a systematic responsive manner
- Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial & varied contexts

Vagle, 2014

- Emphasis on constant self critique by researchers
- *"whatever understanding is opened up will also move with and **through** the researcher's intentional relationships with the phenomenon... in the dynamic intentional relationships that tie participants, the researcher, the context, the broader social issues and matters, the produced text, and their positionalities together"*

Vagle, 2018, p32)

Phenomenography

- 'Conception' is the unit of description
- Take a referential aspect (what is being experienced; what it means)
- Categories of description- *each one describes one experience/conception*
- Takes a structural aspect (how the phenomenon is experienced).
- Outcome space - *shows how categories are related, including the dimensions of variation that link & separate the conceptions*

Marton & Pong, 2007; Webber & Johnson, 2015

- Researcher views bracketed
- Data are coded and analysed at the semantic and conceptual levels to find a range of categories that encompass participants' conceptualisations (expressed experience and understanding) of the research phenomenon.
- Categories are described,
- Relationships between categories determined to form an outcome space

Cossham, 2017



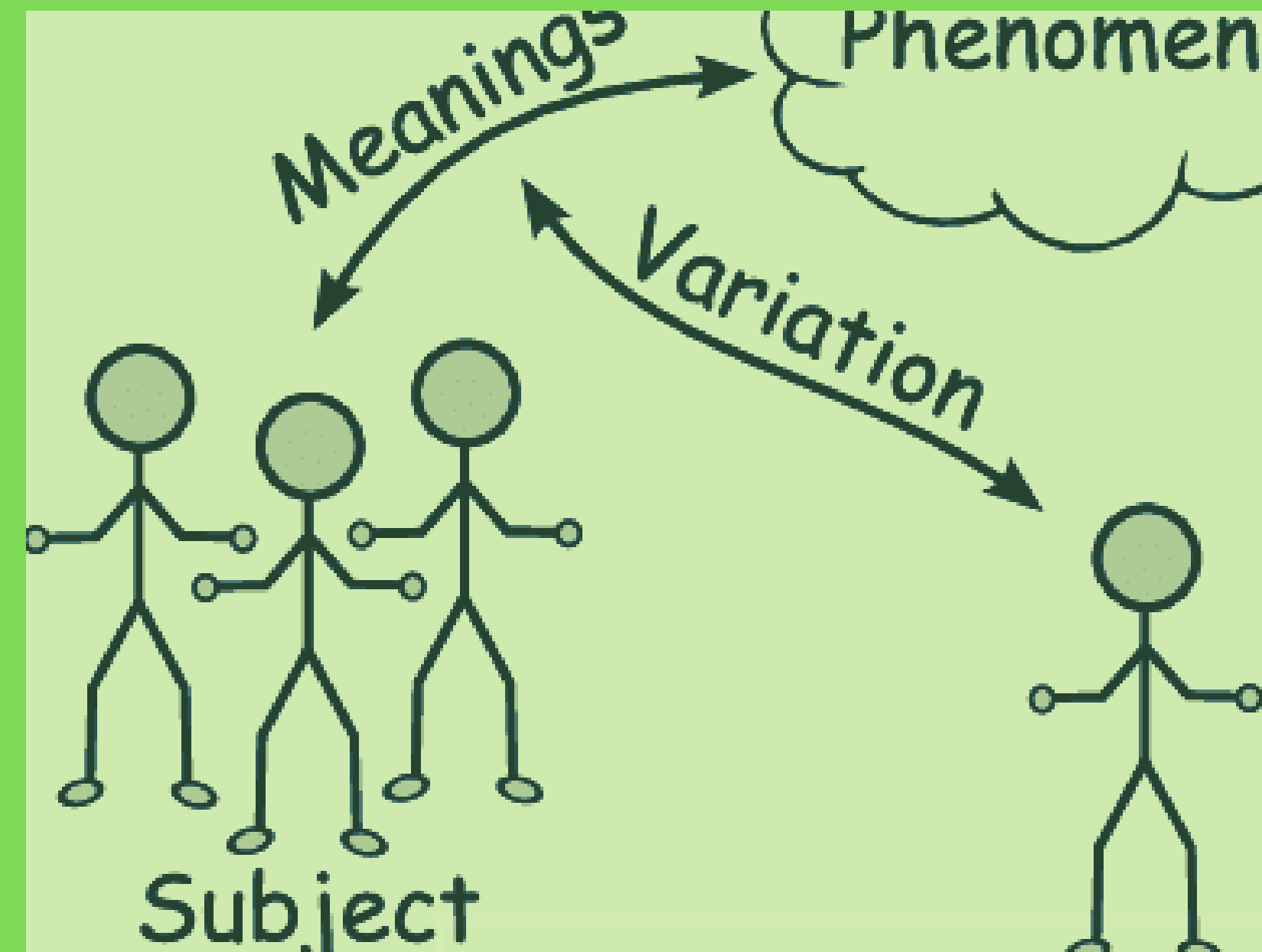
In contrast to phenomenology, pheomenography

- conception' is the unit of description, with 2 aspects: the referential aspect, the global meaning of the object conceptualized; & the structural i.e the specific combination of features that have been discerned and focused on
- is interested in the description & analysis of experience at a collective level: i.e. the group's various ways of knowing, understanding, and conceiving phenomenon in the world (Marton & Pang, 2008)
- individual voices are not heard
- has an epistemological & ontological perspective:

- ontologically that *"an individual cannot experience without something being experienced"* (Marton and Pang, 2008, p. 535)

- yet one can understand phenomena through cognitive, epistemological questioning, *what do you know, how do you know it...*

- not equivalent to, but a form of 'content analysis'



Phenomenography

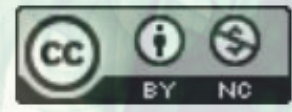
Analysis of papers to the NLC 1998-2018 (11 conferences) reveals 5 used 'phenomenological' methodology, with 1 discussion paper

1. **Dohn, N.B. (2012) 'A tacit-knowledge perspective on networked learning'**
2. **Adams, C. & Thompson, T. (2012) 'Interviewing the Digital Materialities of Posthuman Inquiry: Decoding the encoding of research practices*'**
3. **Adams, C. Lin, Y., Madriz, L. & Scott Mullen, C. (2014) 'Snapshots from the Lived World of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): A phenomenological study of learning large'**
4. **Jones, C. (2018) 'Experience and networked learning'**
5. **Johnson, M. (2018) 'Encounters with the mobilage (virtual or actual)?'**

& discussion paper: Oberg, H. & Bell, A. 2012 'Exploring phenomenology for researching lived experience in Technology Enhanced Learning'

Does part of the weaker interest in the use of phenomenology in a NL context lie in the aforementioned issues: complication of choices & difficulty in administration?

**NLC
weak interest in
phenomenology**



TRANSCENDENTAL/DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

Epistemological. No personal view/position taken (brackets researcher subjectivity); layers of onion peeled away, Focuses more on the descriptions of the participants than the interpretations of the researcher; what happened, how did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is

INTERPRETATIVE/HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Existential-ontological: Not ignore researcher's prior theories/explanations of everyday life; reflects on essential themes of participant experience with the phenomenon while simultaneously reflects on own experience; focuses on the development of 'thoughtfulness and tact' (Van Manen, 1991); presents the phenomenon through *"texts [that] speak to readers at an intuitive as well as cognitive level, creating a way of understanding is embodied"* (Henriksson & Sevi, 2009)

POST-INTENTIONAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Ontological: Attention to variants; malleable, permeable, multiple meanings in motion, Threads are constantly being constituted/deconstituted/blurred & disrupted – intentionality runs all over the place, experiential themes deemed to be significant for their ability to meaningfully contribute to pedagogic thoughtfulness, informed practical reasoning and responsive practice (Vagle, 2015)

PHENOMENOGRAPHY

Ontological assumptions are also epistemological assumptions. Group focus, attention to variants & multiplicity of meaning; researcher is distanced from making meaning out of the primary phenomenon; interested in how ways of understanding are logically & hierarchically related to each other & the perceptions of the situation in which they are experienced; examines & identifies phenomena influenced by a range of contexts and then presents different ways of experiencing that phenomena from a decontextualized perspective

Variant foci



TRANSCENDENTAL/DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

USE: learn from the experiences of others; methodology for eliciting meaning from people who had experienced it in a genuine pursuit of understanding (Bell, 2012); allow the phenomena to speak for itself and reveal itself through reflection, something that was concealed within, something that is provided in description by others but grasped by the researcher in reflection (ibid.); contribution to other's understanding in another context.

INTERPRETATIVE/HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

USE: how agents enact in a given context/space; learn from the experiences of other; useful for approaching areas considered too intangible to be measured (Black, 2007); uncovering & fostering practical insights, communicative thoughtfulness & ethical sensitivities in professional practice; suited for revealing; building pedagogically responsive insight for educators, instructional media experts & software architects who design/build/work in such environments (Adams. 2014); reveals the pedagogical differences of situations

POST-INTENTIONAL PHENOMENOLOGY

USE: informed practical reasoning and responsive practice; used to understand 'connectedness' in all types of learning networks; recognises it is not possible to isolate practice to simplistic, compound parts but that reality is socially, culturally and historical constructed; allows for analysis on not just how content or knowledge has been applied to practice, but how it was "being reflected on and in practice through ...moments" (Murphy, 2019)

PHENOMENOGRAPHY

USE: arguably we create systems/networks for users so helps meet 'user' needs: where we want to know how our end users think about information and the systems that we make available for their use; to enable and support change, or inform and influence practice; useful for communication & and education, inter-professional collaboration, The problems of interpretation and the understanding of others' intentions are fundamental to collaboration (Schwartz, 1999); a focus on how plans and actions are understood by participants

Uses in
NL
context

HOW DOES THESE IMPACT NLC KNOWLEDGE?



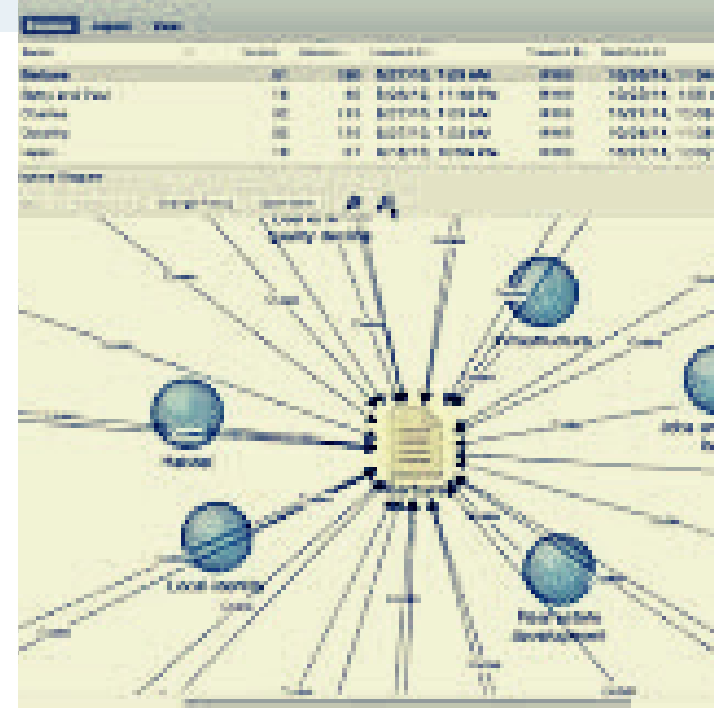
N TH ORDER PERSPECTIVE



REPLICABILITY OF RESEARCH DESIGN



RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY



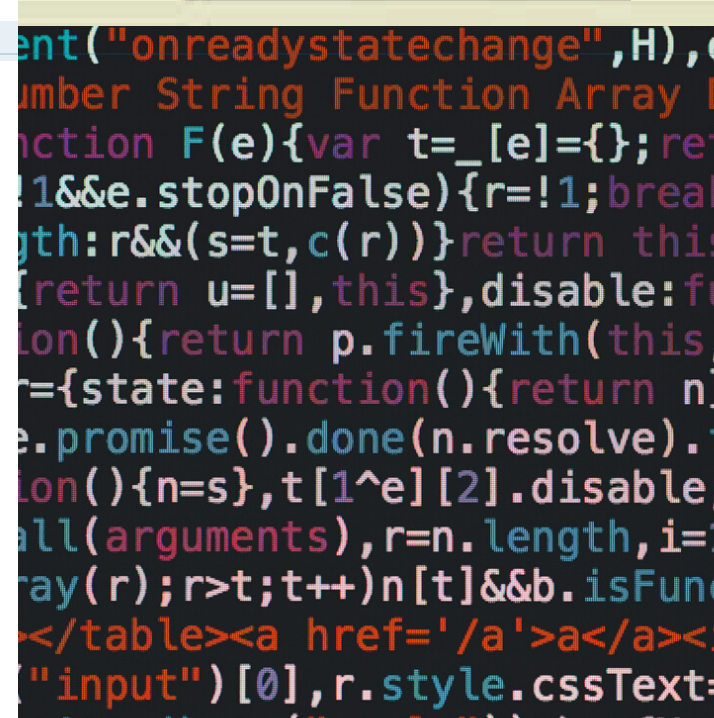
EMPLOY OF QDSA

Qualitative Data Analysis Software



THEMATIC OR CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

degree of creativity & imagination



USE OF CODING

THANK YOU

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EMERGENT THINKERS

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