

“What does this have to do with everything else?” An Ecological Reading of the Impact of the 1918–19 Influenza Pandemic on Education¹

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Abstract

The question “What does this have to do with everything else?” refers to ecological thinking. In this article, we use an ecological approach to explore the interrelationships between the incidence of the influenza pandemic of 1918–19, its trajectories and impacts on education. Our emphasis on children and their environment, as specific ecological arrangement, allows the mapping of associated social, institutional, cultural and material contexts and relations, alongside axes of experiences, behaviours, and choices during a life-threatening crisis. To achieve this we apply the multiple perspectives that an ecological approach demands and use four different sources of evidence, one from each of Sweden, Portugal, England and Spain: a teacher obituary, a magazine article, a school Log Book and an artist’s drawing. Each piece of evidence helps to identify lines of articulation and strands of entanglements projected in time and space. Their joint ecological reading enables the grasping of *glocal* connections, uncovering

¹ ¹ “This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published in Paedagogica Historica on 2022, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2022.2053555>

a few *tesserae* of a much larger mosaic, and pointing to the inherent potential of an educational-ecological approach to the study of past pandemics.

Keywords: ecology, at risk, pandemic, 1918–19 influenza, Spanish flu

“The basic tension is one between the parts and the whole. The emphasis on the parts has been called mechanistic, reductionist or atomistic; the emphasis on the whole holistic, organismic or *ecological*.”²

Introduction

Environment, ecology, disease, humanity – nothing is inherently separate from anything else, everything is “entangled”.³ To pose the question: “What does this have to do with everything else?” is to think ecologically; and to think ecologically is to conceptualize any phenomena and its interconnectedness.⁴ Since “pandemics are a window into broader social features of a society not normally visible,” in this article we use an ecological approach to explore the interrelationships between the incidence of the influenza pandemic of 1918–19,⁵ its trajectory and its impact on education.⁶ The 1918–19 pandemic was “one of the most devastating outbreaks of disease in history.”⁷ It spread around the globe in three waves

² Own emphasis. Fritjof Capra (1996) *The Web of Life* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 17.

³ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, N: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁴ John Holden, *The Ecology of Culture* (London: AHRC, 2015).

⁵ The pandemic could be described as the first “modern” pandemic and is “an important analogue for Covid-19 not only because of its similar virulence but also because many of the [non-pharmaceutical interventions, e.g. quarantine, and travel restrictions] that were applied then are being used to mitigate Covid-19.” See Stefan Gössling, Daniel Scott, and C. Michael Hall, “Pandemics, Tourism and Global Change: A Rapid Assessment of COVID-19,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 29, no. 1 (2021), 1–20 (here: 5). Although it did not originate in Spain, it is usually referred to as the “Spanish flu.” In contrast to many belligerent countries, Spain did not censor the news and therefore it was the first country in which the influenza outbreak was widely reported in the media. See Sverren-Erik Mamelund, “Influenza, Historical,” in *International Encyclopedia of Public Health*, eds. Kris Heggenhougen and Stella Quah (San Diego: Academic Press, 2008), 597–609 (here: 602).

⁶ Linda Chisholm in Tony Honorato and Ana Clara Bortoleto Nery, “History of Education and Covid-19: The Crisis of the School according to African (Akanbi, Chisholm), American (Boto, Ceredo, Cunha, Kinne, Rocha, Romano, Rousmaniere, Southwell, Souza, Taborda, Veiga, Vidal) and European (Depaepe, Escolano, Magalhães, Nóvoa) Researchers,” *Acta Scientiarum: Education* 42 (2020), 1–21 (here: 6). See Howard Phillips, “*Black October*”: *The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa* (Cape Town: Government Printer Archives Yearbook of South African History, 1990); *In a Time of Plague: Memories of the “Spanish” Flu Epidemic of 1918 in South Africa* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society for the Publication of Southern African Historical Documents, 2018).

⁷ Sverren-Erik Mamelund, “Influenza, Historical,” in *International Encyclopedia of Public Health*, eds. Kris Heggenhougen and Stella Quah (San Diego: Academic Press, 2008), 597–609 (here: 601).

and nearly a third of the then world population was infected. In less than a year, a rough estimate of 50 to 100 million died from the disease, young adults suffering proportionately more than other age groups.⁸

What do we mean by an ecological approach? Since it is not our aim to present a detailed theoretical account here, we will stick to a simple, general definition that goes back to the German biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) who first coined the term in 1866. Ecology, then, is “a science primarily concerned with the non-human world and, more specifically, with the complex relations between organisms and their environment.”⁹ This definition, however, found multiple adaptations in which concepts of biological ecology have been employed to analyse and understand the complexity of *human* environments. In our approach, emphasis is on children and their environment, which is one specific ecological arrangement – call it an educational ecology – that *might* have been *transformed* by a life-threatening crisis experience such like the 1918–19 influenza. Notice the emphasis on the verb “transform,” which is crucial here. Whether we call the child’s environment a “network,” a “rhizome,” a “meshwork,” a “system,” a “metabolism,” or a “map,”¹⁰ following Latour we consider education within this ecological arrangement as a “mediator” that “transforms” (“translates,” “distorts,” “modifies,” etc.) the meaning or the elements it is supposed to carry in society’s attempt to cope with an influenza pandemic.¹¹ We do not consider education as a mere “intermediary.”¹²

It is, then, our task to see the “entanglement of things” or the “interwoven lines of growth and movement” (or “flow”) that “trail into” the child’s environment.¹³ Education is a complicated

⁸ Alice Reid, “The Effects of the 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic on Infant and Child Health in Derbyshire,” *Medical History* 49 (2005), 29–54.

⁹ Scott Prudham, “Ecology,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. Derek Gregory et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 175–77 (here: 175).

¹⁰ Respectively referring to: Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 128–129; Bruno Latour, “Factures/Fractures: From the Concept of Network to the Concept of Attachment,” *RES* 36 (1999), 20–31 (here: 31); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. and Foreword by Brian Massumi (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Rhizome,” *Ideology & consciousness* 8 (1981), 49–71; Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi, *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Heike Weber, “Material Flows and Circular Thinking,” in *Concepts of Urban-Environmental History*, eds. Sebastian Haumann, Martin Knoll and Detlev Mares (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020), 125–144; Michel Serres, *Atlas* (Paris: Éditions Julliard, 1994).

¹¹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 257–58.

¹² *Ibid.*, 40. Which would transport meaning or force *without* transformation, as it is usually adopted in a social-engineering logic.

¹³ Tim Ingold, *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials. Working Paper #15* (ESRC National Centre for Research Methods–NCRM Working Paper Series 05/10, 2010), 3, 11–12; see also Tim Ingold, “When ANT meets SPIDER: Social Theory for Arthropods,” in *Material Agency: Towards a Non-*

assemblage of structures, processes, and social and material relations, and as such exists within a broader political, economic, social and cultural framework with both proximate and remote connections. So, what might an ecological analysis look like when a system and set of relations, namely education, is faced with an external crisis? Ecological analysis is about identifying an ongoing moment, in this case the crisis of an influenza epidemic, and mapping its associated social, institutional, cultural and material contexts and relations, alongside axes of experiences, behaviours and choices. The aim being to produce understanding rather than only knowledge.¹⁴ Like the German writer W.G. Sebald we are driven by a “ruminant curiosity,” which as Patrick Joyce has described is “a striving to find the connections leading from one thing, a real thing, to others – not looking for what we know already before we begin, but recognizing conjunctions as they arise, glimpsing many paths as we walk down only a few, seeing in snatches the strangeness of the world.”¹⁵ In that regard our approach is a “risky account,” a “fragile intervention,” and “the delicate question is to decide what sort of *collection* and what sort of *composition* is needed.”¹⁶

In order to achieve this, we decided to use a collection of four different sources of evidence that are part of an educational ecological arrangement and that connect with the 1918–19 influenza pandemic: a teacher obituary (a professional source), a magazine article (a newspaper source), a school Log Book (an institutional source) and an artist’s drawing (a domestic source). They are selected from four European countries (Sweden, Portugal, England and Spain, respectively) and have been selected on the basis of typology and content – the data that each source carries and the strands of entanglements

anthropocentric Approach, eds. Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris (New York: Springer, 2008), 209–215 (here: 210–11).

¹⁴ Diane Nijs, *Advanced Imagineering: Designing Innovation as Collective Creation* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 44–45. In that regard, we decided against a theoretical model such as Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1917–2005) ecological theory. See, e.g., Urie Bronfenbrenner, “The Social Role of the Child in Ecological Perspective,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 7, no. 1 (1978), 4–20. While “clearly appealing as a conceptual tool for guiding interventions” it is less suitable for our *explorative* historical account. See Malin Eriksson, Mehdi Ghazinour and Anne Hammarström, “Different Uses of Bronfenbrenner’s Theory in Public Mental Health Research: What is their Value for Guiding Public Mental Health Policy and Practice?,” *Social Theory & Health* 16 (2018), 414–433 (here: 418).

¹⁵ Patrick Joyce, *Going to My Father’s House: A History of My Times* (London: Verso, 2021), 318. See also Jed Rasula, *Genre and Extravagance in the Novel: Lower Frequencies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 160–180.

¹⁶ Own emphasis. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 256–57.

projected in time and space.¹⁷ Each piece of evidence is connected to a particular space and has been used to identify lines of articulation or rhizome filaments, which can help to construct the ecology of an influenza outbreak as well as to get an impression of its impact on education. In the process we will remain alert to the fact that, wherever the outbreak, “the local (...) the national (...) the regional (...) and the global (...) are all folded into one another” and to the tendency, as with any disciplinary gaze, to “rip (...) objects from their contexts.”¹⁸ In the discussion section, we will look across time and address the potential inherent in our educational-ecological approach to the study of pandemics.

Opening up Evidence: Four Sources

Source 1. A teacher obituary

Our first source is an obituary dedicated to the memory of a deceased teacher (Figure 1). It was published in 1918 in the Swedish schoolteacher journal *Svensk Läraretidning* during the influenza pandemic. Similar to many other countries, the pandemic struck Sweden in recurrent waves in the years 1918 to 1920, causing the death of 35,000 to 40,000 individuals on a population of just less than 6 million. The flu primarily affected individuals within the age span of 20 to 40 years, causing pneumonia with rapid and critical processes of development.¹⁹ It can be noted that Swedish schools by the time of the pandemic already for decades had been subjected to wide-ranging efforts to improve poor health conditions. This covered new architecture and new ways of engineering school environments, teaching about health and hygiene related issues to schoolchildren, and statistical monitoring of illnesses among pupils by school doctors.²⁰ This development, in turn, related to a much broader societal tide aiming to get to terms with

¹⁷ The potential of our collection of selected sources was tested in a series of workshops attended by colleagues, doctoral and undergraduate students at the universities of Vic, Umeå and Landau respectively.

¹⁸ John Clarke, “Finding a Place in the Conjuncture: A Dialogue with Doreen,” in *Doreen Massey: Critical Dialogues*, Marion Werner, Jamie Peck, Rebecca Lave and Brett Christophers, eds. (London: Agenda Publishing), 201–213 (here: 205); see also Lawrence Grossberg, “Cultural Studies in Search of a Method, or Looking for Conjunctural Analysis,” *New Formations* 96–97 (2019), 38–68 (here: 60).

¹⁹ Margareta Åman, *Spanska sjukan: Den svenska epidemin 1918–1920 och dess internationella bakgrund* [Spanish Flu: The Swedish epidemic 1918–1920 and its international background] (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1990); Jonas Holtenius and Anna Gillman, “The Spanish flu in Uppsala: Clinical and Epidemiological Impact of the Influenza Pandemic 1918–1919 on a Swedish County”, *Infection Ecology and Epidemiology* 4, no. 1 (2014), 21528; *Nationalencyklopedin*, <https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/spanska-sjukan> (all links accessed on 30 September 2021).

²⁰ Cf. Carl Wilhelm Herlitz, *Skolhygienens historia: En översikt främst av utvecklingen i Sverige* [The history of school hygiene: An overview of primarily its development in Sweden] (Stockholm: Bergvall, 1961); Kjell. Lindeberg and Olov Trovik, *Läroverket som arkitektuppgift under 1800-talet* [The state grammar school as an architect commission during the nineteenth century] (Stockholm: Konsthögsk:s arkitekturskola, 1987); Lena Hammarberg, *En sund själ i en sund kropp: Hälsopolitik i Stockholms folkskolor 1880–1930* [A sound soul in a sound body: Health politics in Stockholm folk schools 1880–1930] (Stockholm: HLS förl., 2001); Lena Hammarberg, *Skolhälsovården i backspegeln* [School health in the rearview mirror] (Stockholm: Skolverket, 2014); Anna Larsson, Björn Norlin, and Maria Rönnlund, *Den svenska skolgårdens historia: Skolans utemiljö som*

various unsound life conditions that stretched from urban planning – including the handling of drinking water and human waste in order to prevent physical diseases – to a moral renewal of humans.²¹

As been highlighted in previous studies,²² the 1918–19 pandemic nevertheless had the power to cause temporal, spatial and social alterations of school life. This included nationwide school closures, a reconfiguration of school facilities to meet civic needs related to the pandemic and an introduction of new teaching content – all together creating ruptures in the everyday rhythms of schooling. It also led to a more dynamic infrastructure for school governance, for instance a closer collaboration between national school boards, medical professions and local communities. An illustrative example of how a local community could respond to the pandemic by means of its school is given in the town of Kristinehamn, a town hit hard by the flu already in 1918. There, one of the school's pavilions was converted into a makeshift hospital, the school kitchen made available to provide cooking facilities and food for the sick and the craft workshop – designed for teaching the school subject sloyd (handicraft) – transformed to a “coffin workshop.” In addition to this, members of school staff put themselves at the disposal of the local healthcare service.²³

Insert Figure 1 here.

Obituaries for teachers that had perished in the influenza – a recurrent feature in *Svensk Lärartidning* [Swedish teacher journal] during the pandemic years 1918 to 1920.

The journal *Svensk Lärartidning* was founded in the 1880s and soon became a compulsory national publication for schoolteachers. Its appearance relates to the expanding compulsory school system in Sweden (*folkskolan*) at the time and to the professionalisation of its growing corpus of teachers. In the journal one can find all sorts of data connected to national school legislation and reforms, new pedagogical theories and teaching methods, various messages from local schools and a myriad of other

pedagogiskt och socialt rum [The history of the Swedish schoolyard: The outdoor school area as an educational and social space] (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2017), 61–64, 85–87, 95–97.

²¹ Karin Johannisson, “Folkhälsa – det moderna projektet från 1900 till 2:a världskriget [Public health: The modern project from 1900 to the 2nd world war],” *Lychnos* (1991), 139–195; Sören Edvinsson, *Den osunda staden: Sociala skillnader i dödlighet i 1800-talets Sundsvall* [The unhealthy town: Social inequality regarding mortality in 19th century Sundsvall] (Umeå: Umeå University, 1992); Sören Edvinsson and John Rogers, “Hälsa och hälsoreformer i svenska städer kring sekelskiftet 1900 [Health and health reforms in Swedish towns at the turn of the century 1900],” *Historisk tidskrift* 4 (2001), 541–564.

²² Björn Norlin, “Pandemin och skolan: Spanska sjukan i lärarpress och skolors årsredogörelser [The pandemic and the school: The Spanish flu in teacher journals and school yearbooks],” *Vägval i skolans historia: Tidskrift från Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria* 4 (2020), <https://undervisningshistoria.se/pandemin-och-skolan-spanska-sjukan-i-lararpress-och-skolors-arsredogorelser/>.

²³ Norlin, “Pandemin och skolan.” The example from the school in Kristinehamn can be found in *Svensk Lärartidning* 43 (1918), 688.

issues connected to the administration of everyday school life. During the pandemic, medical and health concerns connected to schooling obviously became more emphasised.²⁴

The journal also gives evidence of how the pandemic caused critical and sometimes fatal harm to students and teachers. In fact, during the pandemic years the journal occasionally got packed with obituaries of young teachers who had died through pneumonia after short periods of infection. The obituaries often mention the process of illness, the deceased's age of death, where they had lived and practiced their trade, by whom they were missed, and so on. What appears as a novel genre of knowledge transmission was thus taking shape in these journal pages, e.g. professional life stories of people that had barely lived to experience the possible adversity and privileges of being a schoolteacher. As obituaries they naturally focus on what was seen as the good sides of a person and even if occupied with death they are in essence more about celebrating fragments of lives.

One of these obituaries belonged to Elis Bergwall, teacher at Katarina northern folk school in Stockholm. According to the obituary, he stood out amongst the increasing number of young dead teachers as being 40 years of age when he died – a person in his “full life power.” The obituary began by describing the sudden process of his illness and how Bergwall just a week before his death had conducted his work in an everyday manner. He had started to feel sick on a Saturday afternoon, but no serious symptoms had occurred and he received a good prognosis for recovery when visited by his doctor. Nevertheless, on the Tuesday the following week he had developed a pneumonia that in just a couple of days broke him down completely. He died on the coming Saturday at lunchtime, less than a week after his first symptoms had appeared.²⁵

After describing his illness and death, the obituary pronounced his qualities as a teacher. With the passing of Bergwall the profession had lost a dedicated, loyal, thorough and truthful “teacher personality,” a teacher who, affirmed by everyone that had worked with him, had shown great talent and success in his trade. He belonged to those educators who in a calm and respectful manner could manage and steer his pupils, the obituary explained. Bergwall, like his teaching as a whole, was characterised by order and clarity and by the ability to support pupils in fostering self-activity. In addition to this, the obituary briefly described his short career at two schools, first in a small town and later in the capital. The obituary ended with giving an account for the closest grieving “at his bier.” These included his wife (also a teacher), his four-year old son, his mother, siblings and some other close relatives along with a large number of friends.²⁶

Source 2. A magazine article

The scarce news about the influenza pandemic in Portugal, contrasting with the media's thorough report of what was happening during the First World War, could have made the devastating reality of the pandemic go unnoticed to those who did not witness it. Moreover, due to the delicate political, social

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Svensk Läraretidning* 44 (1918), 707.

²⁶ Ibid.

and economic situation of the country at the time, the State censured the media, and the vast majority of the news was about Europe's geopolitics. Yet, one news item, published in a weekly magazine of national circulation, brought to light the "war" that was being experienced and fought close to home while most focused on the conflict across borders (Figure 2). In this sense, not only is the existence of such a piece exceptional, it is also what it can tell us about the role played by youth during this particular calamity.

Insert Figure 2 here.

"O Escotismo e a epidemia" [Scouting and the epidemic] published on Dec. 23, 1918. Reproduced with the permission of BLX-Hemeroteca Municipal de Lisboa.

The piece was published in *Ilustração Portuguesa*, a supplement of *O Século*, one of the most relevant daily newspapers in Portugal between 1880 and 1977. One of the distinctive features of the magazine was the regular use of drawings and photographs to show and serve as a repository of "all the aspects of contemporary Portuguese life."²⁷ Published on 23 December 1918, the piece consists of a short text and three photographs, offered to the magazine by the scoutmaster Diniz Curson, and intends to show the action of one group of Boy Scouts in Lisbon sometime in the autumn that year. The action took place at the Liceu Camões, a secondary school converted into a campaign hospital in October 1918, at the peak of the second wave of the pandemic, the deadliest of three waves spanning from May 1918 to May 1919. Although the reported mortality of the overall pandemic is low, recent estimates show that over 100,000 young lives were lost in Portugal, more than half of which between 15 and 39 years old.²⁸ The "risky" action of these Boy Scouts, aged 10 to 17, immortalized in this piece was also briefly praised in a previous issue of the magazine announcing the upcoming publishing of the photographs. These were then to serve as documents of a period of grieving and sacrifice and as testimonies of the "strength of the boys' hearts."²⁹

In the first photograph, we see one Boy Scout rushing to the interior of the school building carrying something while another one waits for men to unload a wagon. In the second, a scout is moving a wheelbarrow towards a fellow scout who leans forward as if to dig. And, in the third, a man is sitting outside a campaign tent, next to the scouts' flag, looking straight at the photographer while two scouts exchange words by a bicycle. The photographs' captions further let us know that the first boy is "transporting mattresses to an infirmary," that the ones in the second photograph were "engaged in

²⁷ "Uma Nova Ilustração Portuguesa [A New Portuguese Illustration]," *Ilustração Portuguesa*, no. 118 (5 February 1906), 93: http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/IlustracaoPort/1906/N118/N118_item1/P12.html.

²⁸ Álvaro Sequeira, "A Pneumónica [The Pneumonic]," *Medicina Interna* 8, no.1 (2001), 49–55; See also José Manuel Sobral and Maria Luísa Lima, "A epidemia da pneumónica no seu tempo histórico", *Ler História* [online] 73 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.4000/lerhistoria.4036>.

²⁹ "Escoteiros [Boy Scouts]," *Ilustração Portuguesa*, no. 668 (9 December 1918), 461, http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/IlustracaoPort/1918/N668/N668_item1/P3.html.

cleaning services,” that the campaign tent was an “awning set up by the scouts to shelter the guard of the improvised hospital on the first days of its installation,” and that the cyclist is “receiving documents to take them to the Hospital of S. José quickly.” Finally, the captions also tell us that the boy carrying the wheelbarrow “was infected by the epidemic while carrying out his duty”.³⁰ Although it is not clear whether *this* boy survived, the report made evident that, among the “fearless boys,” some became “casualties of the treacherous disease in the course of [their] humanitarian and civic duties.”³¹

“Duty. Yes, that’s the thing. Efficiency is all very well, but inside there must be something more, there must be courage and pluck and the determination to do your duty no matter what risk or danger it means to yourself.”³²

The “duty of service” was always well present at the heart of the scout movement, founded earlier that century. Its similarity with the growing New Education ideas promoting physical health, and moral and civic sense through the youth’s self-government as means to improve oneself and serve the country, began gaining pace in Portugal in the early 1910s when scout groups started being established at the country’s secondary schools.³³ However, such duty of service was often used by politicians in Portugal as a means to make up for the lack of first aid infrastructure in the country. Indeed, previous research points out that scouts’ social action functioned as “relief corps” working on governmental requisition and was “often carried out in life threatening conditions” which made the period between 1914 and 1918 known in the country as the scouting “heroic time.”³⁴

Such heroism was materialised during the pandemic by different sectors of society who were then mobilised to fight the spread of the disease,³⁵ among which this group of Boy Scouts were ready to help people, save lives and do public service.³⁶ Nowhere in this magazine was the ethics of the civic duty of these youngsters addressed. Instead, the piece presented them as “honourable representatives of [their] race which fortunately seems to revive in its vast traditional virtues.”³⁷ While the piece preserves their active role in public life in times of crisis for future memory, it also functions as a clear mirror of a society that placed – even if temporarily – this group of young people within a particular rationale of virtue where their vulnerability is excluded and the boundaries between childhood and adulthood diluted. As if the deep-rooted idea of children as being the future had been reconfigured by the

³⁰ “O escotismo e a epidemia [Scouting and the epidemic],” *Ilustração Portuguesa*, no. 670 (23 December 1918), 515, http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/IlustracaoPort/1918/N670/N670_item1/P17.html.

³¹ “O escotismo e a epidemia.”

³² Robert Baden-Powell, *Padle your own canoe* (n.p.: Read Books, 2013, orig. 1939), 130.

³³ Ana Cláudia S. D. Vicente, “A Introdução do Escutismo em Portugal [The Introduction of Scouting in Portugal],” *Lusitana Sacra*, 2ª série, no. 16 (2004), 203–245.

³⁴ Vicente, “A Introdução do Escutismo em Portugal,” 222.

³⁵ Sequeira, “A Pneumónica.”

³⁶ Baden-Powell, *Padle your own canoe*, 127.

³⁷ “O escotismo e a epidemia.”

convergence of several extraordinary circumstances that required young people to be placed in danger in order to help save the future they were to be the core of. As if Boy Scouts weren't just that: boys.

Source 3. A School Log Book

Our third source is the Log Book of Prince Albert School, Girl's Department, Aston, Birmingham (Figure 3). School Log Books were introduced into the English Education system in 1862 to promote efficiency and accountability in schools. It was one of a "complex assemblage of forces (...), techniques [and] devices" that was introduced into education (and other spheres of activity managed by the state) to achieve effective governance.³⁸ Headteachers were required to weekly record pupil and teacher attendance; regularly test and then record pupil attainment against fixed subject standards; and report details of any external visitors and extra-curricular school activities. The Headteacher's role was to produce facts that were "useful and reliable" according to agreed standards of evidence and which could be acted upon. In some Log Books, Headteachers made comments about individual children and teachers where appropriate and included details of local communal events, national events, and celebrations. When School Inspectors visited schools, the Log Book was checked to ensure it was properly maintained.

Insert Figure 3 here.

"School Days: the ordinary and the extraordinary," Prince Albert School Log Book. Reproduced courtesy of Prince Albert Junior and Infant School.

So, what factual evidence is there about the 1918–19 pandemic in the Prince Albert School Log Book? The first reference to influenza was on 5 July 2018 when one of the teachers, Miss Chambers, was reported as absent due to influenza. Previous months had seen five different teachers being reported as being absent due to a cold or an unspecified illness, and pupil attendance in late February was recorded as "not good" due to "general sickness." Nevertheless, the first six months or so of 1918 saw the school operating normally with pupils being assessed according to standards and girls being prepared for entrance examinations. Three days after Miss Chambers was reported sick, pupil attendance was recorded as low "owing to an Epidemic of Influenza," and the school closed for a week. When it reopened, school examinations were completed before closure for the Midsummer holidays. The first month of the new academic year saw trainee student teachers and their tutors in school for teaching practice and the visit of a School Inspector. October saw three further incidents of teacher illness, and by early November pupil attendance was very low (77%) due to a second wave of influenza infections. Despite these numbers, on 12 November the school assembled in the morning and the girls were "dismissed to celebrate the signing of the armistice." Three days later, two more teachers were ill and

³⁸ Nikolas Rose, "Governing 'advanced' liberal societies," in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, eds. Thomas Osborne, Andrew Barry and Nikolas Rose (London: UCL Press, 1996), 41–42.

school attendance was “very low” owing to “influenza and the festivities celebrating the cessation of hostilities.” On 18 November the school closed for a week “by order of the MoH.”³⁹ Attendance remained low (61%) and the school closed early for Christmas. It reopened in January with all staff present and 343 girls out of 395 present. February was characterised by staff illness and poor attendance due to “illness and bad weather.” Nevertheless, normal school routines were maintained. Staff absences declined and there is no reference to influenza again until January 1922 where attendance was “very poor owing to influenza and general illness.” Influenza outbreaks were recorded in March 1925, and again in February 1929, with the latter entry reporting that “attendance is much affected by the absence of girls suffering from influenza.”

There is no data in the Log Book about the local diagnosis of influenza rather than the common cold or flu. In part this is a reflection that in 1918 no one was sure what it was they were dealing with. Similarly, there is no direct evidence of advice from either the local education authority or the local board of health. Clearly, the periods of school closure required authorization, which points to a level of dialogue between the school and the local administration.⁴⁰ What knowledge was brought into the school setting and when, and at the same time what knowledge was shared and with which social and political agents and networks is not recorded? Further, to what extent did the facts about the pandemic recorded in the Log Book become part of an integrated cluster of knowledge elements that coalesced within “a local disciplinary ‘thought collective’” that made sense to those working within the education community and related agencies?⁴¹ Certainly, by late December 1918, local authorities were being informed of the availability of a fifteen-minute film, *Dr. Wise on Influenza* and in early 1919 the Local Government Board⁴² published a *Memorandum on Prevention of Influenza* which advocated and detailed a number of preventative measures.⁴³

The pattern of the influenza outbreaks reported in the Log Book reflects the national picture in 1918 and 1919. For subsequent years there is also evidence in newspapers reporting smaller outbreaks for another two years and localised outbreaks continued to be reported into the mid-1920s all which mirrors Prince Albert’s profile.⁴⁴ The entry for 1929 needs further archival research but suggests the significance of place in determining the trajectory of the infection. Two things stand out in the Log entries. First is

³⁹ The MoH was the local Medical Officer of Health.

⁴⁰ The issue of school closures was left to local authorities on the basis it was largely dependable on local circumstances, see Niall Johnson, *Britain and the 1918–19 Influenza Pandemic: A Dark Epilogue* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 130.

⁴¹ Mary S. Morgan, “Travelling Facts,” in *How well do Facts travel? The Dissemination of Reliable Knowledge*, eds. Peter Howlett and Mary S. Morgan (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 3–39 (here: 14).

⁴² The Local Government Board was a supervisory body overseeing public health and local government responsibilities in England and Wales. The Ministry of Health Act of 1919 abolished the Local Board. The film is available online: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-dr-wise-on-influenza-1919-online>.

⁴³ Johnson, *Influenza Pandemic*, 132.

⁴⁴ See Katharine M. Millar, Yuna Han, Martin Bayly, Katharina Kuhn, and Irene Morlino, *Confronting the Covid-19 Pandemic: Grief, Loss and Social Order* (London: LSE, 2021).

the silence in the text regarding the children. They appear predominantly as statistics. The second is the regular incidence of the ill or recovering body of named individual teachers and their periods of absence, which means we can track their cycle of illness unlike for children. There is no evidence in the Log Book about where the children caught the disease – at home, at school or somewhere in between – although there is an entry in June 1922 where a School Inspector’s report⁴⁵ draws attention to problems of space, which could imply a link between overcrowding, an unhealthy environment and transmission:

“The working conditions are difficult: four classes have 56 or more children on roll; there are always two classes in the main-room; last year, the average attendance exceeded the accommodation during 17 weeks and the number on roll exceeded the accommodation throughout the year.”

This may in part also help to explain the high incidence of teacher illness – that the general conditions of the school environment acted a ‘petri dish’ for infection. Several teachers who caught influenza experienced continuing ill health, whether this was the result of the original influenza infection, or an indication of pre-existing underlying health conditions is difficult to determine. A further consideration is that financial security for single women was dependent on being in work and returning to school too soon could have perpetuated poor health. Certainly, there is evidence in the Log Books of infected teachers being absent for less than a week. A concern with the poor quality of the school environment might also account for two entries relating to the school being “cleaned and re-decorated.” We know the facts of disease incidence, but much of the above is speculative. It would make sense to track back in time and document pupil attendance and teacher absenteeism in the years before the influenza outbreak. Consideration should also be given to conditions outside the school. Aston was an area of dense housing and the extent of local overcrowding, forms of transport and levels of industrial pollution all would have impacted the health of the school population. That said, there were green spaces within walking distance of Prince Albert.

Source 4. An Artist’s Drawing

The selected drawing is part of the notebooks belonging to Joaquim Renart (1879–1961). Renart – draftsman, painter and outstanding collector – was a multifaceted artist. His preserved work includes several notebooks in which he drew, almost on a daily basis, domestic scenes and some events of Barcelona society of the time, such as plays and concerts or even political and social conflicts. In his notebooks, Renart also collected related photographs, tickets and paper handouts. Besides these visual diaries, he also wrote a personal journal.⁴⁶ The drawing shows Renart’s eldest daughter Valentina

⁴⁵ It was common practice in schools for inspection reports to be physically attached to pages in the Log Books.

⁴⁶ Joaquim Renart, *1918. Diari. 1961* (I-VI Vols) [1918. Diary. 1961] (Barcelona: Proa, 2002). All this material and other objects and letters of interest remain at the *Biblioteca de Catalunya*: <https://www.bnc.cat/Fons-i-col·leccions/Cerca-Fons-i-col·leccions/Renart-Joaquim>.

playing the violin, while on the right, her grandmother is napping (Figure 4). The drawings of the previous and following days tell us that Valentina was sick and, a few days later, her younger sister Nuri also fell ill. From Renart's personal journal, we know that the girls' mother had been suffering from lung disease for some weeks.

Insert Figure 4 here.

Image Fr. 29. of the *Quadern de dibuix de Joaquim Renart. 19, Realitzat entre el 12 de desembre de 1919 i el 12 de febrer de 1920* [Joaquim Renart's Drawing Notebook, 19. Done between December 12 of 1919 and February, 12 of 1920]. Reproduced with the permission of the *Biblioteca de Catalunya*, <https://mdc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/materialsBC/id/2738/rec/330>.

The drawing takes us back to a privileged home environment where family and medical care converged, and where proper environmental health and the required resources allowed them to cope with the disease and continue learning from home, comfortably and safely. The idea that the family was guarantor of life, learning and the future stands out in the drawing. On the other hand, ample evidence of the precarious situation in Catalan and Spanish schools until well into the 20th century is so notorious that no historical research can avoid mentioning it. Precariousness in the availability of education was clearly linked to a lack of services for the protection of people at risk, as evidenced by social history studies. The lack of resource provision for those who were excluded from the system was striking, in spite of the call for the reform of charities that had already taken root by the end of the 19th century. Such charities often became a stepping stone to closed institutions for the poor, children or adults, as stipulated by law.⁴⁷ In this context, and regardless of the political controversies of the time, the army became a way out of poverty. Partly by its inherent tasks but also by its living conditions, the army was one of the groups liable to transmit and spread the flu in Spain, which was called during the first wave “the Soldier's flu.”⁴⁸ Medical care, whether in hospitals, protection or surveillance institutions, or in homes,

⁴⁷ Ministerio de la Gobernación, *Ley relativa á la mendicidad de menores* [Law linked at the children's begging] (2 August 1903). Law, BOE-A-1903-4713, 1747: <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE//1903/214/A01747-01747.pdf>; Ministerio de Estado, *Convenio para reglamentar la tutela de menores* [Agreement to act as a children's guardian] (1 May 1905). Agreement, BOE-A-1905-2768, 437–438, <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE//1905/121/A00437-00438.pdf>; Ministerio de Gracia y Justicia, *Ley disponiendo que los menores de quince años contra quienes se dicte auto de procesamiento no sufran prisión preventiva* [Law establishing that children under 15 years old cannot be in preventive jail] (1 January 1909). Law, BOE-A-1909-2, 1–2, <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE//1909/001/A00001-00002.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Laura Almudéver, *La epidemia de gripe de 1918 y los profesionales de Enfermería Análisis a través de la prensa española* [The flu epidemic in 1918 and the nursery professionals: Analysis using the Spanish newspapers] (Valencia: Ediciones CECOVA, 2016), 117.

was clearly inadequate.⁴⁹ In fact, hospitals were to be avoided, as they were overcrowded and overwhelmed.

This meant that, for many, self-care was the only alternative. A self-care option was to look for spaces in the countryside or in small villages, away from densely populated cities, as Renart stated in his journal. Nevertheless, such an option was neither available to everyone nor was it a solution that could be implemented for as long as the flu lasted. Meanwhile, some city councils including Barcelona's decided to keep the few existing public schools open throughout the whole pandemic. The *Escola del Bosc*, for instance, closed only from 13 March until 9 April 1919, according to the lunches served.⁵⁰ The school had thus become a space for assistance, an added task to providing education and protecting children from street life. The idea of the school as a space for assistance, provision and protection was reinforced by means of the school regulations enacted by the city councils, particularly those regarding primary education. In fact, the 1857 law, which was still in force on primary education,⁵¹ stipulated that in educational matters the state was subsidiary to private schools, including the religious schools that Renart's daughters attended, while city councils were responsible for public primary schools.

Different news stories about schools evidenced wrong attitudes in decision-making and, more importantly, a refusal to follow the established regulations and recommendations, not on the grounds of hygiene but for power-related reasons.⁵² Actually, one of the most astonishing issues found in the consulted sources was that mass gatherings of a religious nature (collective communion, processions to invoke saints, religious festivals, etc.) continued to be held even in the direst moments. Other festivities including those rooted in culture and tradition, however, did decrease. Moreover, if we add the incidence of religious boarding schools at the time, with the student mobility they entailed, we can well imagine the impact that decisions had throughout the territory affected by the flu. At any rate, for some young

⁴⁹ Ferran Sabaté, "La sanitat pública a Catalunya entre 1885 i 1939 [The health service in Catalonia between 1885 and 1939]," *Catalan Historical Review* 10 (2017), 161–174.

⁵⁰ Through the Barcelona council minutes, we can see how many meals every day were served at the *Escola del Bosc* [Forest school] and look at the incidence of child influenza. In 1920, for instance, when people thought that "the flu" was over, one can see the persistence of the disease on the population.

⁵¹ Ministerio de Fomento, *Ley de Instrucción pública autorizada por el Gobierno para que rija desde su publicación en la Península e Islas adyacentes, lo que se cita* [Educational Public Law, authorized by the government to regulate, from its publication, in the whole Peninsula and islands (10 September 1857). Law, BOE-A-1857-9551, 1–3, <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1857/1710/A00001-00003.pdf>.

⁵² Looking at the City Council archives of one small city nearby Barcelona, Vic, which was in a rural zone where some citizens from Barcelona sought refuge to escape from the epidemic, one can trace through letters the discussions between the public administration and the Catholic institutions. The religious schools in Vic, the Seminar and Boys school *Col·legi de Sant Josep* sent letters to the Council, informing that they were not to follow the instruction of closing the school, because they had to obey the Bishop. See Arxiu Ajuntament de Vic, *Correspondència* (12 October 1918). Opposed to those letters, there were other from public schools that accepted without any doubt the regulation.

students, the beginning of the academic semesters shifted, hence leading to the consolidation of the idle student: one who was eager for amusement instead of studying, as portrayed in the cartoons of the day.

In this systemic framework, schooling could be considered a supplement for those girls who already had access to quality education, whether in reputable public schools such as the *Escola del Bosc*, considered a progressive outdoor school, in elitist schools belonging to religious groups or in foreign schools in the city, particularly the French. For these children, being able to learn from home had always been an option that heightened when the spread of the flu was at its worst or during periods of recovery from the disease. As shown in the drawing, the learning experiences to which these children had access were related to the development of aesthetic sensitivity by means of artistic practice: from mending in charity homes for girls, they learned embroidery; from choir singing with mime touching on moral issues, they learned about playing a musical instrument; from drawing they moved on to painting; from reading, they learned poetry; and from household economy, games. These were all learning experiences they had at school and academies but which they could continue practicing at home. In this context, it is worth highlighting that although anarchist and communist political groups wanted these learning experiences for everyone,⁵³ in practice, it had not materialized. Right after the influenza pandemic and with the arrival of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, this was further quashed. Very few pieces of news, documents and writings talk about the consequences of the losses in the lives of children.

The Ecology of a Past Pandemic: Discussion

In the *Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault wrote, that the “analysis of an epidemic does not involve the recognition of the general form of the disease (...) but the rediscovery (...) of the particular process (...) peculiar to this moment in time and this place in space” and that as “an epidemic has a sort of historical individuality,” there is a need to “employ a complex method of observation when dealing with it. Being a collective phenomenon, it requires a multiple gaze; a unique process, it must be described in terms of its special, accidental and unexpected qualities.”⁵⁴ Whether intentionally or not, what Foucault was calling for was an ecological approach to understanding disease. Hence, did our collection of sources enable us to grasp the pandemic’s “special, accidental and unexpected qualities”? Whatever the case, each of our sources has demanded that we pose particular questions, given that the historical specificity of the moment is embedded in each source. In what follows we try and tease out what collectively and individually our sources allow us to present in terms of an ecological approach to the past and we use our definition of ecology as a backdrop against which to discuss our data.

Any “moment” is always in a state of process and the moment we are currently choosing to scrutinise is inextricably linked with the Covid-19 crisis. As we are indeed living in “historic times,” as Andrea Bennett-Kinne and Kate Rousmaniere recently emphasised, and knowing that this is “a powerfully

⁵³ Ian Grosvenor and Gyöngyvér Pataki, “Learning through Culture: Seeking “Critical Case Studies of Possibilities” in the History of Education, *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 3 (2017), 246–267.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic: An archaeology of medical perception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), 27–28.

educative time period for each,” we as historians of education “may be able to provide some context.”⁵⁵ It inevitably forces us to connect past, present and future and to deal with a history-of-the-present perspective. Experiencing the present pandemic, we as historians look at past experiences by drawing on our own understanding of history making in the present, by following the stories and research findings that are a daily occurrence in newspapers, journals and social media and by turning them into questions. Yet, looking at debates and policies related to the current crisis from an ecological point of view, we notice that emphasis is often on a *political* ecology, which combines “the concerns of ecology” and “a broadly defined political economy.” The latter is understood as “a concern with effects on people, as well as on their productive activities, of on-going changes within society at local and global levels.”⁵⁶ The often-heard embrace of change, not constancy, as the “new normal,” links explicitly with the label of “new ecology.”⁵⁷

We cannot ignore that as a research group we follow a certain trend with adopting an ecological perspective.⁵⁸ In fact, ecology is even considered one of the 21st century’s key sciences.⁵⁹ The biological concept of ecology has been applied to many research fields, which resulted in the polyvalence of the term and a far from coherent theory.⁶⁰ Despite that, or better because of that, it holds a potential of multiperspectivalism and multidisciplinary research.⁶¹ As a science, ecology is both “holistic” and “synthetic,”⁶² it embraces “complexity” or, depending of the timeframe under scrutiny, “hyper-complexity,”⁶³ and it appreciates “interconnected geographical scales in ecological relationships.”⁶⁴ A notion such as “community ecology” stresses the local,⁶⁵ and it is assumed that place-based

⁵⁵ Quoted in Tony Honorato and Ana Clara Bortoleto Nery, “History of Education and Covid-19: The Crisis of the School according to African (Akanbi, Chisholm), American (Boto, Cerecedo, Cunha, Kinne, Rocha, Romano, Rousmaniere, Southwell, Souza, Taborda, Veiga, Vidal) and European (Depaepe, Escolano, Magalhães, Nóvoa) Researchers,” *Acta Scientiarum: Education* 42 (2020), 1–21 (here: 9).

⁵⁶ Michael J. Watts, “Political Ecology,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 545–47 (here: 546).

⁵⁷ Prudham, “Ecology,” 177.

⁵⁸ Because we want to make the ecological approach the core of our research, we have established an international research group on History of Educational Ecologies (HEC). In future publications, we will further develop this research agenda.

⁵⁹ Steward T.A. Pickett, Jurek Kolasa and Clive G. Jones, *Ecological Understanding: The Nature of Theory and the Theory of Nature*. Second Edition (Burlington MA: Academic Press, 2007).

⁶⁰ Scott Prudham, “Human Ecology,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 348–359. Which is visible in the range of existing ecologies, as is highlighted by the accompanying adjectives such as “new,” “cultural,” “human,” “political,” “urban,” “social,” “industrial,” “community,” “media,” and “education.”

⁶¹ See also Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 257–58.

⁶² Prudham, “Ecology,” 175.

⁶³ John Urry, “Complexity,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2–3 (2006), 111–117 (here: 111).

⁶⁴ Prudham, “Ecology,” 177.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Mark Vellend, “Conceptual Synthesis in Community Ecology,” *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 85, no. 2 (2010), 183–206; John H. Lawton, “Are there general laws in ecology?,” *Oikos* 84, no. 2 (1999), 177–192.

characteristics, or the conjunction of people with place, matter greatly.⁶⁶ Conversely, ecology can designate a process of “globalization”; it is “multiscalar,” at once local and global. Thus, the local and the global are an essential feature of an ecological approach⁶⁷ as is readily apparent in the case of the Boy Scouts in Lisbon. The exploration of the political mobilisation of that international youth movement’s educational ideals of duty and service into responding to a public health crisis gives us a glimpse of how mobilisation was implemented locally, in its action and consequences; and how it was nationally presented. Not only does it enable us to grasp *glocal* connections, it also instigates the disentangling of different threads – political, social and educational – to understand how they came together in the role played by a particular group of children in their selfless commitment to their community and country during a pandemic. Furthermore, what this demonstrates is that we need to understand the influenza outbreak in terms of the local dimension. It is only by doing this that we are able to challenge the dominant narrative of 1918–19, which is based on the high degree of morbidity, a narrative which masks the fact that the influenza outbreak continued well into the 1920s because there were local outbreaks.

Another element that emerges from our sources is that the “moment” under scrutiny was one of “disenchantment,” brought about by a “life-threatening crisis experience.”⁶⁸ This was obviously rooted in the destructiveness of the First World War, which according to Walter Benjamin, was “a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of ‘human material,’ the claims to which society has denied its natural material.”⁶⁹ To Susan Sontag,⁷⁰ the “machine” and “technology” related to an embrace of abstraction, which played an important role within modernity.⁷¹ This notion of modernity, an essential temporal division, is linked to other concepts such as nation-state, democracy, urbanization, industrialization, capitalism, mobility, literacy, medicalization, and educationalization. Modernity through these areas of life seeks rationally to understand the world we live in “by finding order within

⁶⁶ Ann Markusen, Anne Gadwa, Elisa Barbour and William Beyers (2011). *California’s Arts and Cultural Ecology* (s.l.: James Irvine Foundation, 2011), 5.

⁶⁷ Ulf Strohmayer, “Modernity,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 471–474 (here: 471); Chris Otter, “Technosphere,” in *Concepts of Urban-Environmental History*, 21–32 (here: 23); often referred to as “glocalization,” see e.g. Victor Roudometof, *Glocalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁸ Strohmayer, “Modernity,” 472.

⁶⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 242. It is no coincidence that we quote Benjamin, since he, especially based on this 1936 essay, has been described as having “definite media ecological tendencies.” See Lance Strate, “Media Ecology 101: An Introductory Reading List–Revised 2019,” <https://www.media-ecology.org/Media-Ecology-101>.

⁷⁰ One of those other early media ecologists according to Strate, “Media Ecology 101.”

⁷¹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1979; orig. 1973), 91; see also Ian Grosvenor and Angelo Van Gorp, “At School with the Avant-Garde: European Architects and the Modernist Project in England,” *History of Education* 47, no. 4 (2018), 544–563 (here: 545).

and achieving domination over nature.”⁷² Although modernity is “thoroughly urban,”⁷³ urban-environmental history contends that “city and nature are inseparably intertwined” and challenge the “Nature-Culture dichotomy” that make the notion of modernity a notoriously ambivalent and highly contested concept under the sway of the “complexity turn.”⁷⁴ The *normal* state of nature is *not* “one of balance and repose.”⁷⁵ For that reason, however, by considering modernity as a “broad semantic field that is marked by tensions, contradictions and possible dialectical energies, rather than streamlining them into an organic totality,”⁷⁶ it becomes an extremely useful notion in our ecological approach to the 1918–19 influenza epidemic.

A first important element related to modernity, is “urban fragility.” Cities are “volatile environments” that not only created “new opportunities” but also generated “new risks” or “environmental hazards” such as fast-spreading epidemics.⁷⁷ The urban “riskscape,” however, also has proven to be “extraordinarily resilient,” as becomes visible in our sources. Risk can be considered as a “fundamental feature of modernity” and a prerequisite for reducing uncertainty and promoting modern innovation.⁷⁸ As the evidence presented here demonstrates, short-term measures like school closures and reconfigurations, hygiene measures, architectural innovations, curricular changes as well as ruptures in school governance and daily routine accompanied long-term developments within and beyond schools that since the end of the 19th century had been given an impetus by social questions, war circumstances but also by this pandemic to develop further with a focus on both individual and public health.

This brings us to a second important element related to modernity: the modern “risk” society was also a “technological” society.⁷⁹ Not only have epidemics “threaded different places into new conjunctions,” but also materiality and media.⁸⁰ Our sources reveal that through media ecologies conjunctions become visible between educational and disease ecologies, among others. At the time of the 1918–19 pandemic, on the threshold of a breakthrough of radio and cinema, newspapers were the most successful media.⁸¹ This comes to the fore in all four sources. Here it is useful, however, to examine

⁷² Strohmayer, “Modernity,” 471.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 472.

⁷⁴ Sebastian Haumann, Martin Knoll and Detlev Mares, “Urban-Environmental History as a Field of Research,” in *Concepts of Urban-Environmental History*, 9–20 (here: 9); Strohmayer, “Modernity,” 471; Urry, “Complexity,” 115; see also Capra, *The Web of Life*; Capra, 2001; Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

⁷⁵ Urry, “Complexity,” 112.

⁷⁶ Strohmayer, “Modernity,” 471.

⁷⁷ Dominik Collet, “Risk and Resilience,” in *Concepts of Urban-Environmental History*, 79–94 (here: 79–80); see also Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 258.

⁷⁸ Collet, “Risk and Resilience,” 80, 82.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 80–82.

⁸⁰ Strohmayer, “Modernity,” 472.

⁸¹ Mass-market newspapers as well as telegraphic communications could spread news of an epidemic ahead of its arrival. See Mark Honigsbaum, “The Art of Medicine: Revisiting the 1957 and 1968 Influenza Pandemics,” *The Lancet* 395 (2020), 1824–1826 (here: 1825).

the evolution of media ecologies in relation to subsequent pandemics. After the 1918–19 pandemic, influenza “went back to its usual pattern of regional epidemics of lesser virulence in the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s.”⁸² In 1957, however, another influenza pandemic “began its race around the world,” marked by a high incidence but low mortality.⁸³ On the brink of a television breakthrough, radio had successfully challenged newspapers for several decades. During the 1957–58 influenza pandemic, public service broadcasting, with its “public service values” and “regulatory obligations” dominated the media ecology.⁸⁴ People were mainly informed on preventive measures and the consequences of the pandemic for economy and public life, including a high absence of children from school, through analogue broadcast media, which were an “expression of the unilateral broadcast process” and reflected an “engineering model of communication as its linear, teleological model.”⁸⁵

During the current Covid-19 crisis, however, we observe a different type of media ecology, for a digital revolution has taken us into a *post*-broadcast era: “The increasing capacities of personal computers, the popular takeoff of networked computing, the digitalization of the major media forms, and the commercial success of personal, connected, digital devices transformed broadcasting.”⁸⁶ It determines to a large extent how people respond in very different ways to the Covid-19 pandemic. From this, it is obvious that a structural “materialist” map, one which would capture the complex relations between education and other institutions within and across the wider political, economic, social, and cultural landscape, could interact with an “affective” map, which would capture the specificity of place, experiences, behaviours, and emotions.⁸⁷

Obituaries like Elias Bergwall’s can be read as describing and fixating professional ideals during those specific years, or perhaps more precise, how the deceased person’s commitment to the profession resonated with time bound ideals for the profession. But, obituaries also place the focus on the human core substance of the social ecology of schooling during epidemic crises, making a set of social relations surface and intertwine. This includes the subtle conjunctions between the public and private spheres and

⁸² Edwin D. Kilbourne, “Influenza Pandemics of the 20th Century,” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12, no. 1 (2006), 9–14 (here: 10).

⁸³ The 1957–58 influenza pandemic is usually referred to as the “Asian flu.” *BMJ*, “Death from Asian Influenza,” *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 5093 (1958), 434–435 (here: 434). The 20th century saw three outbreaks of influenza pandemics, in 1918, 1957, and the “Hong Kong flu” in 1968.

⁸⁴ Stephen Cushion and Bob Franklin, “Public Service Broadcasting: Markets and ‘Vulnerable Values’ in Broadcast and Print Journalism,” in *Can the Media serve Democracy? Essays in Honour of Jay G. Blumler*, eds. Stephen Coleman, Giles Moss and Katy Parry (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 65–75.

⁸⁵ William Merrin, *Media Studies 2.0* (London: Routledge, 2014), 43. As illustrated by a radio report that the German regional (southwestern) public-service broadcaster *Südwestrundfunk* broadcasted on 16 October 1957: <https://www.swr.de/swr2/wissen/archivradio/asiatische-grippe-in-deutschland-1957-100.html>.

⁸⁶ William Merrin, “Still Fighting ‘The Beast’: Guerrilla Television and the Limits of Youtube,” *Cultural Politics* 8, no. 1 (2012), 97–119 (here: 98).

⁸⁷ See Lawrence Grossberg, “Cultural Studies in Search of a Method, or Looking for Conjunctural Analysis,” *New Formations* 96–97 (2019), 38–68 for the idea of connecting the structural-materialist with an affective map.

between the roles of being a teacher, colleague, partner, father and friend. The example of the Boy Scouts shows how an ecological perspective enables us to think further, not only about how extraordinary circumstances impacted children but also about how they acted upon the extraordinary, thus triggering a reflection about how conceptions of childhood are enacted in times of crisis and in the name of the future. The Prince Albert School Log Book offers us not only facts about the pandemic in one school. As a record of events there is a concern to present the normal in abnormal times, to evidence the routines of schooling that would give teachers and pupils a rhythm that was knowable and meaningful in its temporal regularity. In its smallness and beauty, Renart's drawing, is testimony to how people confronted with the 1918–19 pandemic showed resilience in their collective coping with illness, pain and loss. All four sources indirectly point to filaments that radiate out from a specific educational arrangement as lines of inquiry and connection.

Conclusion

Whether our historical account enabled us to tell “better stories,” as Grossberg phrased it, where *better* is measured by “both the willingness to grapple with empirical complexities,” and “the ability to open up possible ways of moving forward,” we leave open for discussion.⁸⁸ Our choice for an ecological approach has nevertheless proved self-evident, as is perhaps most obvious in Gilles Deleuze's simplest definition of an assemblage: “It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them (...). Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a ‘sympathy.’ It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, *epidemics*, the wind.”⁸⁹ The notion of “conjunctures” can easily replace that of “contagions” to give substance to the “complex relations” in our ecological definition. With Michel Serres we might say, that we wandered and followed relations, “led by fluctuations.” Although we are “accustomed to abstraction via concepts (...) as though it were always a matter of constructing (or tearing down) a very solid edifice, whose peak or foundation would organize all stability,” our ecological approach shows that it is possible “to compose outside of solidity – in fuzziness and fluctuation.”⁹⁰ We are aware though that our collection of sources only uncovered a few *tesserae* of what can be imagined in a much larger mosaic. Our approach points to silences that we cannot at present document without expanding the evidence base. As “turbulences keep moving; the flames keep dancing,”⁹¹ and in our present and future we will “calmly and adventurously go traveling,” as Benjamin expressed it,⁹² and continue exploring educational ecologies.

⁸⁸ Grossberg, “Cultural Studies in Search of a Method,” 59.

⁸⁹ Own emphasis. See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 69. See also Manuel Delanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 1.

⁹⁰ Michel Serres (in conversation with) Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), 102, 111–112.

⁹¹ Serres (in conversation with) Latour, *Conversations*, 112.

⁹² Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 236.