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Fluidity and Education

Abstract: *This article shows why and how fluidity educates and is therefore of educational relevance for student teachers. If education sees the developmental process of the whole person, with regard to his or her "humanity", as a life-long learning process, in which the individual expands his or her intellectual, cultural, creative and practical abilities and skills, then fluidity offers new perspectives for pedagogy. Education is then related to the subject's exploration of inner and outer fluid realities, as processes of learning or socialization in an increasingly fluid postmodern society.*
Keywords*: education, fluidity, postmodern society, migration, identity*

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摘要 *(Manfred Oberlechner: 流动性与教育): 文章讲述了流动性为何以及是如何形成的，并对师范专业的学生是具有教育相关性的。如果教育通过提高人的精神，文化，创造力，实践技能和能力，从"人性"的角度将"整个人"的发展过程视为一个终生学习的过程的话，那么流动性就为教育提供了全新的视角：教育即是指在一个不断流动的后现代社会中，不同主题之间把内在和外在流动的生命体验作为学习的过程而进行的一种相互探讨。*
关键词*: 教育，流动性，后现代，迁移，身份*

摘要 *(Manfred Oberlechner: 流動性與教育): 文章講述了流動性為何以及是如何形成的，並對師範專業的學生是具有教育相關性的。如果教育通過提高人的精神，文化，創造力，實踐技能和能力，從"人性"的角度將"整個人"的發展過程視為一個終生學習的過程的話，那麼流動性就為教育提供了全新的視角：教育即是指在一個不斷流動的後現代社會中，不同主題之間把內在和外在流動的生命體驗作為學習的過程而進行的一種相互探討。*
關鍵詞*: 教育，流動性，後現代，遷移，身份*

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Zusammenfassung *(Manfred Oberlechner: Fluidität und Bildung): Der Artikel zeigt, warum und wie Fluidität bildet und für Lehramtsstudierende daher bildungsrelevant ist. Wenn Bildung den Entwicklungsprozess des "gesamten Menschen" im Hinblick auf sein "Menschsein" als lebenslangen Lernprozess begreift, indem er seine geistigen, kulturellen, kreativen und praktischen Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen erweitert, dann bietet Fluidität für die Pädagogik neue Perspektiven: Bildung bezieht sich dann auf die Auseinandersetzung des Subjekts mit inneren wie äußeren fluiden Lebenswirklichkeiten als Lernprozesse in einer zunehmend fluiden postmodernen Gesellschaft.*
Schlüsselwörter*: Bildung, Fluidität, Postmoderne, Migration, Identität*

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Аннотация *(Манфред Оберлехнер: Флюидность и образование): В статье речь идет о том, почему и как флюидность реализуется в образовательном дискурсе и какое «образовательное» значение данный феномен имеет для тех, кто собирается работать преподавателем. Если в образовании процесс развития всей личности с проекцией на ее бытие рассматривается как процесс обучения в течение всей жизни, при котором расширяются духовные, культурные, креативные и практические способности и компетенции личности, то флюидность открывает для педагогики новые перспективы: образование в этом случае ориентировано на субъекта, который «разбирается» в своих внутренних и внешних флюидных реальностях, формирующих образовательные процессы в современном обществе, все более охваченном флюидностью.*
Ключевые слова*: образование, флюидность, постмодерн, миграция, идентичность*

1. Experiences of migration in the fluid modern age[i]

Georg Simmel, when evoking the stranger or foreigner (*der Fremde*), does not visualize the migrant in the modern sense, but the Jewish trader in medieval societies: the foreigner is characterized by his peculiar in-between position. On the one hand, he joins a group which differs from his group of origin. But, on the other hand, he observes the new group more from the outside, while at the same time belonging to it. Nor does he carry on wandering, but the idea that he could do so makes him a little more independent:

> The stranger is thus being discussed here, not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes to-day and stays tomorrow, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. (Simmel, 1950, p. 402)

Refugees in particular remind us that the cocoon of our safe, familiar Western lifestyle remains unstable, and the elements which construct the "imagined communities" (Anderson, 2006) of the West are fundamentally fluid: "Inasmuch as the refugee, an apparently marginal figure, unhinges the old trinity of state-nation-territory, it deserves instead to be regarded as the central figure of our political history" (Agamben, 2000, p. 22). Annette Treibel also writes: "Refugee migration is by nature a 'transient' phenomenon, since refugees are more difficult to access on their routes, in refugee camps, and because of their often illegal and insecure status" (Treibel, 2008, p. 296, own translation). In terms of migration and fluidity, Robert E. Park's concept of the "marginal man" can also be read as a foreign marginal personality, in transition between life-worlds and in a constant cultural conflict. Park's prototype is the cosmopolitan Jew as a "cultural hybrid" with an uncertain status and undetermined group affiliation: he, too, embodies the foreign, which has something fluid about it (Park, 1928, p. 891).

Migration processes in themselves can be experienced as a radical uprooting into the unknown, and can thus also cause existential experiences of fluidity (Eisenstadt, 1953, p. 167). The subsequent reintegration into the new society – a complex and difficult process fraught with psychological strains – is therefore described by John W. Berry as acculturation stress, which can end in psycho-social fluidity (Berry, 2006, p. 287). In contrast, earlier migration theories in the US (the Chicago school) see fluid processes only as transitional phases on the ladder of assimilation, as "rites de passage" (Van Gennep, 1960) from one stage to the next. Fluidity as the final outcome of the migration process is disregarded, however, as it is undesirable in a conceptual world which is based on the assumption of fixed amalgamations (Milton Gordon, Gordon, 1964) or final dispersions in white US core society. This is in line with the cultural ideology of Anglo-conformity: at the end of the images of acculturation, assimilation or multiculturalism, there are always rigid ethnic cultural containers: "melting pots" or "salad bowls". Here the pressure to dissolve the original ethnicity is matched by the compulsion to commit to the new one; immigrants swim, as it were, from the container of origin to the target container, since the call for unilateral loyalty is contrary to fluidity (Han, 2018, p. 32).

Migration can trigger desocialization, which causes fluidity, if the familiar system of societal obligations becomes blurred. To counteract this, migration as a process of integration can be determined by processes of absorption, in the form of fixed institutionalizations (Talcott Parsons) of role expectations and behaviours in the target society. These fixative re-socializations mainly occur as learning processes regarding language, norms and values, serving to assimilate migrants to the demands of the receiving society. From this perspective, individual disorders of psychological fluidity can only be caused by "failures" in the unilateral adaptation owed to the "host country", when "errors" occur as immigrants are entering the institutional spheres of, for example, education or employment. In other words, when the pressure to merge while pushing forward into these institutions

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leads to experiences of loss of individual and collective identity (which is, however, a crucial pre-requisite for complete structural integration).

Processes of defining or determinative social integration and socially fluid disintegration should therefore be thought of as synchronous: they are processes that run parallel and are tangential to each other, which can become opposite movements. It is an illusion of fluid postmodernity to assume that the target countries of various migratory flows are themselves fixed, integrated containers: the Western industrial societies of the present, as Axel Honneth observed as early as 1994, are "in a situation for which 'disintegration' is the most apposite term, if we only take the current degree of privatization, the dissolution of the family, and the economic immiseration seriously enough" (Honneth, 1994, p. 10, own translation). The problem with the idea that integration determines social position is that the target societies themselves as a firmly homogeneous whole are an illusory construct, given the fluidity with which people suffer from prosperity into hardship, in the sense of slipping or sliding down. Linked to this is the ever-present threat of losing familiar milieus or social spaces, sociocultural capital, individual and social recognition, and thus self-esteem – accompanied by deep inner feelings of guilt: personal integrity is in danger of disintegration. These are signs of the fluid transformation processes which Western societies are exposed to today, and which have, first and foremost, a political dimension: "The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5). This is also the starting point for considering what hybrid identity could mean today, or transcultural identity: an identity that makes each individual unmistakeable, and which must be continually reinvented on the basis of difference from others (Strasser, 2006, p. 281). Experiences of migration can cause crises here, if it is not clear from the beginning how these processes will turn out for individual identity or for the identities of communities or societies. Because, on the one hand, migration can be the norm in everyday global reality, but at the same time it can be an incident or accident complete with crises and upheavals, which threatens the everyday life of individuals and societies. Sometimes migration is understood more as an opportunity, which brings forth new concepts of individual and social identity; sometimes it is seen more as an individual and collective loss of homeland, identity, and all that is one's own, which are in danger of being lost to the fluid. Migration is experienced as a destabilizing process if it threatens to dissolve the individual, or the community or society; in this case, individual consciousness is confronted with the fear of disintegration; the consequences of such radically perceived migration-induced changes can be existential, identity orientation disorders, or a transitory absence of structure in one's life.[ii] Salman Akhtar uses the term "third individuation" – as an extrapolation of Margaret S. Mahler's concept of separation-individuation in childhood, or Peter Blos's concept of the second individuation process of adolescence – to refer to the redefinition of individual identity after the transitory, fluid process of grieving and liberation associated with migration (Akhtar, 2014, p. 180). Migration should therefore never be understood solely as a change in location but is often accompanied by processes that combine grieving and liberation, or individual and collective changes in identity. Migration thus refers to constructions, deconstructions and reconstructions of ever-new streams of identity on an individual-personal and collective-structural level – processes that should be conceived of as fluid (Oberlechner, 2017). This perspective also gives a clearer view of inner realms of the personality, which are in constant motion and turmoil, and thus of the related Narcissistic illusion of mastery over the transient or fleeting self (*das flüchtige Selbst*).[iii]

The fluid self can then be expressed as a fear of the melting away or leaking of the inner personality or of the space-body or the "skin-ego" (Anzieu, 2016) – or more concretely as, for example, the fear of dissolving like sugar cubes in liquid (Tustin, 1986, p. 199).[iv] Here fluidity forms post-autistic qualities which are meant to help avoid fear (ibid.). For the inner, mental habitat encompasses various areas of the geography of the imagination (Donald Meltzer), including its dynamism in the time

dimension. This inner world should be thought of as multi-layered, fluid, and subject to distortions, which impede orientation: the inner and outer world can dissolve, merge together, and create psychotic fantasies. The intrusion of sensory impressions is then primarily perceived as destructive (Mätzler, 2012, p. 5; Tustin, 1990).[v] Thus the foreign can also be perceived as a stimulus and a threat in fluid postmodernity, as Zygmunt Bauman explains: "These sensations are then solidified into the figure of the stranger – as contradictory and ambiguous as the sensations themselves. Mixophilia and mixophobia vie with each other, locked in a competition neither can win" (Bauman, 1995, p. 138). The modern human, according to Bauman, is therefore the successor of the pilgrim, who wanders through the world as a desert, and is fragmented into four models: firstly, the stroller (*flâneur*), who merely imitates what the pilgrim did in all seriousness, but who is not only a man of leisure but a master of simulation. Secondly, the vagabond, once a nuisance to the settled order, now the prototype of a world that makes flexibility the condition for survival. Thirdly, the tourist, who, unlike the vagabond, cherishes his home as part of the safety package. And lastly, the player, for whom there is neither inevitability nor accident, neither laws nor lawlessness, neither order nor chaos (Bauman, 1995, pp. 92–98).

2. Migrant fluidity as the "superfluous"

The postmodern changes in the space-time regime have an impact on forms of social and individual self-relations, on the prevailing personality types or mentality patterns. "Forms of selfhood are set aflow because relations to things and other actors change along with the space-time regime as a result of the way the 'relation to the self' and the 'relation to the world' that subjects have are ineradicably interwoven" (Rosa, 2015, p. 224). In the postmodern age this difference between here and there blurs into a perpetual "buzzing around" (*Herumschwirren*) (Han, 2014, p. 35). Constant migrations between places and time zones create a drifter's life, caused by constant elasticity or flexibility (Richard Sennett, 1998) in conditions of increasingly global acceleration (Hartmut Rosa, 2015). Migration has thus become a process of ongoing, flexible adaptation, a temporal drifting. The always flexible and fluid human capital corresponds perfectly to the ever-accelerating mobility and flexibility of postmodern economic activity: people function according to tight time regimes; but their temporal self-certainty congeals, giving way to a general temporal unstructuredness, in conditions of "polar inertia" (Virilio, 2000). Virtual online realities further liquefy this feeling of space and time within the risky society of the new type of capitalism, which seeks to deregulate time and space ever further (Sennett, 1998, p. 84).[vi]

In this process, refugees are particularly prone to "liminal drift": they drift helplessly and unstoppably in a "negative flow" in an in-between zone, and do not know, cannot know, whether this state is transitory or permanent. The inner and outer loss of control over time intensifies the melting of their inner certainties: "They will never be free from a gnawing sense of the transience, indefiniteness and provisional nature of any settlement" (Bauman, 2007, p. 38). If refugees are also seen as the epitome of superfluity, because they no longer provide any benefit; if refugees are regarded as a superfluous stream of refugees, a flood, a faceless mass stealing Western identity, then the association with litter or waste contains a threat: it puts an end to all individuality, all differences and specificities. "Fluid waste" requires no fine distinctions and subtle nuances.

The condition of the refugee – thrown naked into the flow of life, without the anchor of a social role – is at the same time a general aspect of *our* life in liquid postmodernity (Bauman, 2007, p. 47), a long-term temporary form of life for all of us. Like the economic power elites, refugees – and to an increasing extent all of us – are no longer tied to any fixed places, like them, we are unstable and unpredictable. We ourselves are becoming the epitome of unfathomable space, in which the current precarity of human existence has its roots: "Seeking other, more adequate outlets in vain, fears and anxieties slide off targets close to hand and re-emerge as popular resentment and fear of the 'aliens

nearby'" (ibid., p. 48). Europe, the union of fortress states, paints a picture of an impoverished "flood of refugees", in order to erect barriers, gates, floodgates, which act as unilaterally permeable membranes: fluid only for the included, the privileged, sealed against poor immigrants. This flood of refugees, these "impoverished, superfluous" people, are viewed as messengers of doom, *memento mori*, heralds of the *vanitas* and fluid transience of the West's once rigid regimes of power and domination (Agier, 2008).

3. The fluidity and pedagogy of seeing

> *I am learning to see. I don't know why it is, but everything enters me more deeply and doesn't stop where it once used to. I have an interior that I never knew of. Everything passes into it now. I don't know what happens there. (Rilke, 1990, p. 5)*

> *Thinking requires silence. It is an expedition into silence. (Han, 2013, p. 63, own translation)*

Precisely because fluid transitions in the sense of educational transformation processes and educational transitions have a dangerous element, we need containers as rites in learning and teaching processes, to ward off the danger of disintegration. Like migration, education processes involve leaving behind safe, familiar echo chambers, and repeatedly entering foreign terrain in teaching and learning transformation processes – with fluid phases of bewilderment and alienation. Seen in this light, phases of learning are moments of unpredictability, intractability and uncontrollability. The "intractability of the learning process is of crucial importance because resonance can only be created in a freely vibrating medium" (Beljan, 2017, p. 397, own translation). Rites are the means by which teaching and learning groups periodically reaffirm themselves (Durkheim, 2001, p. 287) – and their educational functions relate to both form and content. In processes of educational transfer, there is always a danger that knowledge previously considered to be secure may be dissolved; the same threat hangs over identities of knowledge and personal and social identities of consciousness that have developed up to that point (Van Gennep, 1960). At the same time, these threshold passages are to some extent liminal states, in which learners are in limbo. Only beforehand and afterwards are they part of a structure of knowledge; in between, their knowledge is confronted with the fear that it might dissolve in the transient, chaotic indeterminacy of not-yet-knowing. Educational "passengers" are therefore, like liminal entities, neither here nor there. They are neither one thing nor the other. They are situated in the watery no-man's-land between positions (Turner, 2017, p. 95; see also Turner, 1977). There are fluid moments of education in between and within and outside of time, which are therefore also characteristic of educational processes: it is these that contain phases of fluid transformations.

Education is therefore not a linear, accumulative process of educational growth for the securely stored knowledge of a capitalist and meritocratic knowledge society. Rather, knowledge itself involves knowing that one knows nothing, that learning is always in part embedded in a process of fluidity, of transience and forgetting. "Yet the capacity for contemplation need not be bound to imperishable Being. Especially whatever is floating, inconspicuous, or fleeting reveals itself only to deep, contemplative attention" (Han, 2015, p. 14).[vii] The gift for quietly listening to (or listening in on) fluid processes is therefore based on the capacity for contemplative, deeply relaxed attention, which is inaccessible to a hyperactive ego.[viii] "The general time pressure destroys the circuitous and the indirect. As a result, the world becomes poor in forms. Every form, every figure is a *detour*. Only naked formlessness is direct" (Han, 2014, p. 107, own translation). In contrast, a pedagogy of lin-

gering and pausing makes it possible to perceive and express fluid phenomena. "The floating, the inconspicuous or the fleeting are only revealed to a deep, contemplative attention", springing from that profound and creative boredom which the hyperactive capitalist world, intent on optimizing education, threatens to eradicate (ibid., 28, own translation; Stiegler, 2008, p. 113).

"Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence. Why shouldn't these equivalences in turn give rise to some tracing rendered visible again, in which the eyes of others could find an underlying motif to sustain their inspection of the world?" (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, p. 126). Pedagogical seeing as the perception of fluid elements in learning and teaching contexts could therefore correspond to the eye of the artist, since

> We, forgetting the viscous, equivocal appearances, go through them straight to the things they present. The painter recaptures and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things (ibid., p. 68).

This places demands on educators: it turns out to be only on the surface that the foreign is the extra-ordinary, the thing that cannot be said, experienced, imagined or thought within an order, or which has no place within an order. The hard-to-express, fluid and ephemeral elements of education processes become clear to them when they apply ways of seeing that are capable of responding to distinctive features, individualities, peculiarities, discontinuities, contrasts and singularities in all their vitality. A pedagogical view of humanity which chooses the idea of the human machine (Bauer, 2018, p. 87)[ix] as its model in the educational context, for a mechanistic conception of the body and education, restricts their way of thinking about education to feasibility, control, power (over oneself and others), and the accumulation of knowledge. This concept of education leaves no room for fluidity; it stands for a mechanistic way of thinking about the world, which only acknowledges what can be unambiguously grasped and empirically documented: these educators will never flush out the antiform, or navigate through "the hollows of intervals" (Virilio, 2005, p. 31).

It is also the transitory, fluid movements of concepts and the fluid intervals between concepts that have to be discovered. What is needed here is a calm and contemplative approach on the part of educators. This does not call for fast-moving educational entertainment, or the constant agitation of PowerPoint presentations, which correspond to signal-and-response sequences in highly accelerated, media-saturated, capitalist mass societies. They would hover like *flâneurs* of education above the anonymous mass of the learning public, without being involved with their personality; their preferred environments would be the passages and corridors of universities, where they would be confronted with an oversupply of educational commodities, and the illusion of being able to pick and choose between them. And yet: "Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with exchange value itself. The flâneur is the virtuoso of this empathy. He takes the concept of marketability itself for a stroll. Just as his final ambit is the department store, his last incarnation is the sandwich-man" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 448).

Thus, fluidity can be experienced contemplatively by educators. For this they need to cultivate pedagogical seeing. They can then, in a constant process of reinterpretation and changing of perspective, immerse themselves and their understanding in the nature of fluidity. "Learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is called in unphilosophical language 'strong will-power': the essence of it is precisely *not* to 'will', the *ability* to defer decision" (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 76), or, in other terms, the fluid, the flowing, the floating, the liquidness or the fluid effect or aura of an object or a person[x] in the learning and teaching context. Where is the boundary between a positively viewed dissolving of unilinear identities, and irrevocable obliteration, in the sense of the disintegration and disappearance of the subject? Is it possible to lose something that one no longer has or needs? For French post-structuralists of the 1960s and 1970s,[xi] this means that there are no longer any subjects, only accumulations of identities of various affiliations. What shifts have taken place since

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then, in society as a whole? The return of the subject or its continued dissolution? And what implications does this have for pedagogical reflection?

The concern of pedagogical thinking can initially be not to think only in strictly formal terms, but to develop a dynamic openness in relation to content, making it possible to understand contradictions as existential components of a fluid pedagogical space which is always in motion. To understand that a contemplative attitude based on pausing and silently listening is the pedagogical prerequisite for perceiving fluidity in the educational context, and also for detecting one's own fear of the loss of self – which basically constitutes a loss of control in the teaching and learning context. To escape this loss of self, educators repress the uncontrollable, the unmanageable, the limitless and mysterious; they repress imponderables and fluidities or the forgetfulness of time – and thus the opportunity to experience what fluidity could mean in educational contexts. Without having to be constantly fixated on rational-instrumental self-preservation, educators would have much to gain if they could – as fluid border-crossers – temporarily suspend these arduous efforts to maintain boundaries and alienate the self. If rational pedagogical self-preservation is played off against irrational loss of self, then rationality as an ability of educators turns against itself and suppresses – for the sake of self-preservation – their natural experience of fluidity. Educators then unquestioningly subject themselves and learners only to dominant norms of rational, calculating pedagogical thought, because they are otherwise seen as confused, directionless, inconsistent, and ultimately irrational or insane if they actually cross fluid boundaries in the in-between (Lyotard, 1991).

The image of the liquid personality, living in in-between worlds and suffering from not being anchored, frightens us. This image could be expanded: whether educators or learners really suffer depends on how, as they undertake educational passages in teaching and learning situations, they jointly shape times of transition, "where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2), and learn to see the always existing becoming-fluid and being-fluid of our universe: "The waters symbolize the universal sum of virtualities; they are fons et origo, 'spring and origin', the reservoir of all the possibilities of existence; they precede every form and support every creation" (Eliade, 1959, p. 130).[xii] The cultural anthropologist Mircea Eliade evokes this fluid force, which educators can share if, in moments of extreme meditative attentiveness, they can temporarily lose their self-control and surrender to self-forgetfulness. Precisely because they see in a non-intentional manner in these moments, they see more – and *more deeply*. A positive flow develops in the teaching and learning context, which can inspire teachers and learners in a special way, empowering them to perform feats of creativity. Sometimes it is enough to slightly change one's position: these small border-crossings are the condition for exploring the fluid, and "those who perceive transparence know well that nothing is immobile, that everything is always moving" (Virilio, 2005, p. 26).

In *Du nomadisme: Vagabondages initiatiques*, Michel Maffesoli characterizes neotribalism as fleeting and fluid, scattered, temporary and sporadic in its associations, showing ambiguity and fragility in constantly changing configurations. Here too, fear and fascination are associated with the foreign, and serve to constitute an ambivalent relationship with this figure. It is *our* simultaneous curiosity and rejection which define it. Educators as subjects who recognize and understand their own contradictions can be the basis for recognizing their inner stranger, their ambivalent fluid identities. Because in reality, identity is neither something unbroken nor something coherent. Robert Hettlage, for example, speaks of an "ongoing self-projection [*Sich-Entwerfen*] into the world" (Hettlage, 1989, p. 415), and Vilém Flusser conceptualizes nomadic forms of society on the basis of digital media: humans are thrown into the world, not placed in it; it is in motion that they find themselves; in order to start moving they must "unsettle" themselves (*sich entsetzen*), be beside themselves (*außer sich sein*), and get up or stand up (*aus dem Sitz kommen*). This 'unsettling' as amazement and philosophizing is an ongoing intellectual movement (Flusser, 2003, pp. 26–27).[xiii]

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Today the fluid, which Simmel associated with the foreign, stands for the increasingly fluid and confused, rapidly-moving constitution of *our* plural sociality, shaped by the constant compulsion to travel faster and faster (Maffesoli, 1997, p. 42). Increasingly, the nomadizing life in the global urban bustle affects us all: globally, we are being pushed into fluid capitalism (Maffesoli, 1992, p. 223; Flusser, 2003). Since these experiences of fluid communitization or fragmentation are relevant to education, it is essential to impart, in the context of teacher training, procedures of sensitive comprehension focused on the fluid experience and perception of education. Educators – *ad fontes*! Fluidity educates. If the contemporary diagnoses of fluid postmodernity are accurate, this has consequences for teaching and learning situations in educational institutions and/or for the relationships of those who work together there. It influences which personal experiences and modes of perception teachers and learners empathize with when they want to understand each other, and where the limits of the experienceable lie for the educational interactants. Empathy and fluidity are closely connected.

Today the increasingly fluid self is not only associated with the foreign, but to an ever-greater extent with everyone. Education (*Bildung*), understood as self-becoming and self-discovery, draws on this developmental process, when the self is formed (*bildet sich*) in interaction with fluid foreignness: fluidity as a component of fluid postmodernity and of the fluid self is a fundamental element of today's education. For the self that is forming or educating itself (*das Selbst, das sich bildet*) is unstable and impermanent. It is fluid and malleable and is forever appearing in new forms in the educational context. The insight of Heraclitus is still valid: "We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not" (Heraclitus, 1987, p. 35). Constantly immersing ourselves in the perpetual stream of education, bearing in mind the aphorism of Heraclitus, allows us to imagine the fluidity of the self in a postmodern knowledge society which has become fluid. If "fluid intelligence" ("general fluid ability") is linked to the ability to solve new problems without acquired knowledge (Rost, 2013, p. 413),[xiv] then the foreign, which has something fluid about it, can be an appropriate stimulus for training abstract, deductive thinking and intellectual flexibility. Furthermore, a tolerance for ambiguity towards fluid foreignness also entails fluidity in oscillating, and in tolerating our own positional indeterminacy and thus our temporary or occasional lack of contours. Empathy towards the foreign includes fluidity in the liminal phase between that which is our own and that which is foreign. These contact zones of the "in-between" are new places of non-fixed changes of identity, between fluidity and crystallization: the two processes are in an interdependent relationship, like knowledge acquisition and knowledge loss, processes of remembering, forgetting and reforming. Lethality should therefore always remind us – the mediators of knowledge – of the waters of the Lethe: those who drink them lose their memory in order to be reborn.[xv]

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Endnotes

i Postmodernity finds itself without orientation or stability in a field of vagueness and borderlessness: Bauman, 2000. Note that the original title of Bauman's book, *Liquid Modernity*, has been inadequately translated as *Flüchtige Moderne* for the German edition. "fluid" means liquid, flowing/fluent, modifiable, mobile, mutable, variable, variant, watery etc., while "flüchtig" means fugitive, hasty, quick, transient, ephemeral, volatile, etc., see *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*.

ii Populist movements can be interpreted as reactions to the fear of the dissolution of fixed societal structures.

iii Debord, 1994, p. 15: "The spectacle is essentially tautological, for the simple reason that its means and ends are identical. It is the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire globe, basking in the permanent warmth of its own glory."

iv See also Tustin, 1986, p. 205: "[O]n his arduous journey back to his home base of Ithaca [...] Odysseus was often buffeted by storms and waves. Homer describes how as Odysseus lay exhausted on some forlorn island shore, his limbs were 'loosened' and his body 'ran like water'. He was threatened with dissolution and extinction."

v This important insight consists in the differentiation between pure autism and what is known as "post-autistic" characteristics, which manifest in various ways in both child and adult pathologies, and can lead to a more or less severe inhibition or stagnation in psychological development.

vi Bauman describes the changed relationship between time and space as the outstanding feature of fluid modernity (Bauman. 2000, p. 8).

vii See also, in Han, 2014, p. 84, the term "tiefe Langeweile" ("profound boredom") for recognizing the fluid as, for example the "duftende Länge der Zeit" ("fragrant length of time").

viii For the "art of deceleration" see Brüderlein, 2011.

ix See also La Mettrie, who presents his views on religion, morality and law, and on the position and function of humans, in his work *L'Homme machine* (first published anonymously in 1747, post-dated 1748): "I am not mistaken; the human body is a clock but so huge and cleverly constructed that if the cog which tells the seconds happens to stop, the one which tells the minutes goes on turning, in the same way as the cog for the quarters continues to move, and so do the others, when the first ones are rusty or out of order for some reason and stop working" (La Mettrie, 1996, p. 34).

x See "gender fluidity" as the constant renegotiation of one's sexuality, in order to renounce gender-specific orientations. In contrast to transgender people, no definitive transformation into the other sex is sought: the blurring/flowing aspect is often expressed in an androgynous look, which has both masculine and feminine characteristics; Bradley & Page, 2017, p. 583.

xi See the idea of the subject as an illusion in Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; Deleuze, 1995.

xii See ibid., p. 131: "The waters cannot pass beyond the condition of the virtual, of germs and latencies. Everything that is form manifests itself above the waters, by detaching itself from the water."

xiii Noteworthy in connection with fluidity is Flusser's image of virtuality. He evokes the following image for the concept of virtual space: "Imagine the ocean of possibilities. [...] This ocean of possibilities creates foaming waves, which reach up somewhere. The waves are trying, if you like, to become real; the possibilities are trying to be realized, they lean powerfully towards reality. The waves that come closest to this goal may be called 'virtual'" (Flusser, 1993, p. 65, own translation).

xiv "Fluid intelligence" is characterized as follows: recognizing complex relationships; identifying sameness and difference between elements, relations, systems; drawing conclusions; logical problem-solving.

xv The content of this article is based on the following text: "Fluidität und Bildung oder über das Fremde, dem etwas Fluides anhängt", in: Oberlechner, M. & Schneider-Reisinger, R. (Eds.). Fluidität bildet: "Pädagogisches Fluid" – Fluidität in Bildungsprozessen. Baden-Baden: Nomos (in press).

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