Inclusive Media Literacies: Interlacing Media Studies and Education Studies

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Abstract

In this article we discuss why media literacies are being acknowledged as a key competence across a range of life functions and policy domains, and we propose that, in order to understand and help develop these literacies, researchers from media studies and education studies need to identify common theoretical and empirical grounds and systematically harness synergies where they may be found. As an inroad to such a process of identification, the article explores key trajectories within the two fields since the 1980s by considering the intensified interest in the people who are at the core of the activities under study (learners, audiences), their practices of meaning-making, and the scientific approaches employed. We argue that the trajectories toward studying meaning-making across contexts that have developed largely without interaction between the two fields of study now need to be acknowledged and aligned in order to strengthen the research base from which media literacies may be advanced. We present recent studies on connected learning, by which we mean learning studied from the learners' perspective and across different contexts and temporal trajectories, with a focus on the European context.

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Introduction

In this article we specify why media literacies are being acknowledged as a key competence across a range of life functions and policy domains, and we propose that, in order to understand and help develop these literacies, researchers from media studies and education studies need to identify common theoretical and empirical grounds and systematically harness synergies where they may be found. As an inroad to such a process of identification, the article explores key trajectories within the two fields since the 1980s by considering the intensified interest in the people who are at the core of the activities under study (learners, audiences), their practices of meaning-making, and the scientific approaches employed (multi-method holistic research designs). These trajectories toward studying meaning-making across contexts have developed largely without interaction between the two fields of study and now need to be acknowledged and aligned in order to strengthen the research base from which media literacies may be advanced.

With a focus on the European context, we draw on theoretical positions and research projects with which we have been involved and which illuminate common interests around key concepts such as mediatization, mediation, and media literacy. By way of conclusion, we identify key themes for future-directed interdisciplinary research on connected learning and media literacies, and we specify some of the key institutional and scientific obstacles to be tackled in order to advance such research.

Contested Transformations

The history of media development and the formal education system during the last century shows that these areas of social development have been in a constant battle, often defined through mutual distrust. In several of his books Buckingham (2003, 2007) has written about the opposition of education as a system and media as a force for cultural and social transformation. This opposition is apparent in the way the education system has traditionally emphasized certain competences within the curriculum, certain subject priorities within schools and teacher education, and certain teaching practices in classrooms.

Latour's (2005) concept of "controversy" offers a helpful tool to explore this opposition. The term is not defined as a simple opposition of views but, in line with actor-network theory, as interconnections between groups (actors/actants) and actions, or as dynamics of social positions, objects, and the nature of facts (Latour 2005). In his European project "Mapping Controversies on Science for Politics" (see http://www.mappingcontroversies.net/), he develops methods to map, analyze, and understand controversies within different scientific fields. The aim is to illuminate contentious interactions of networks within and across scientific fields over time and to equip citizens with tools to explore and visualize the complexities of scientific and technical debates, implying a need for media literacies.

Controversies are also ways of reorientation that harness potentials for breakthroughs, innovation, and development. In our view, media literacies represent a potential breakthrough between education and media studies because they focus on key societal processes. Such inclusive research both enables and demands combined studies of learning, educational contexts, and different media and modalities.

The fields of education studies and media studies offer key areas in which to study such controversies. Both fields are attentive to contextualized meaning-making practices such as young people's media literacies; yet they traditionally approach these practices from different knowledge perspectives. Here, we highlight just a few of the issues that define key controversies between these two fields.

1. The cultural values embedded in education as opposed to those in media culture. This has often been referred to as an opposition between high and low culture, an opposition that is associated with the Frankfurt School of interwar Germany but which resonated widely with cultural theorists throughout the 20th century. Prominent theorists during the 1980s and 1990s such as Neil Postman and E. D. Hirsch Jr. argued against certain aspects of media culture, especially against what they saw as an increased entertainment-oriented culture. Postman (1982, 1995) received a lot of international attention for his books about childhood and about education in relation to media culture. These binary debates are marked by often unacknowledged slides between normative assessments of culture and of people, so that adherents to high culture are also imperceptibly deemed to be better, more civilized people.

2. Moral panics (Krinsky 2008) or media panics (Drotner 1999). Often these are expressions of a

normative social response to technological developments, including new media. These panics are often expressed as a manifestation of concern—on the part of adults, social agencies, and institutions such as schools—with the influence of new media on the younger generation. Specific concerns include how much time young people spend on media and the moral challenges that the content of new media is thought to represent. Both forms of panic can be traced to the spread of mass literature in the 19th century in Europe and North America, where communities often established norms of "proper" schooling as a remedy.

3. The roles played by technologies within education. Over the last 100 years, from roughly the time when film became a mass medium, numerous people have predicted that new technologies, such as radio, television, video, and compact discs, would revolutionize educational practices. However, as Cuban (1986) shows, these technologies never had much impact on educational practices, which have been oriented toward the book, a technology that has rarely been defined as a mass medium. Instead, the book is often seen as a transparent conduit of content (Drotner 2010). Other media technologies are rendered supplementary and marginal.

4. The understanding of communication within education. Interpersonal communication between teachers and students is the oldest form of communication. But its primary valence has remained unchallenged in education, practiced along shifting gradations of teacher monologue, dialogue between teacher and students, and student recitations. Technologically mediated forms of communication, such as instructional films, the appropriation of tape recorders for language proficiency, and distance learning using written teaching resources, remained marginal to education until the advent of digital forms of e-learning.

Given the current transformations that connected media facilitate in contexts and contents of learning, we need to acknowledge the controversies between the knowledge domains of media studies and education studies, because these controversies are instrumental in shaping research interests and outcomes. Spelling out the operation of the two main traditions is important because doing so will help us when we try to analyze and understand the key actors—namely, learners/students in education studies and audiences in media studies—since these actors are at the core of both theoretical and empirical transformations within the respective fields.

Interlacing Media Studies and Education Studies

Education Studies toward Connected Learning

Developments

Two major discourses and controversies have dominated education studies over the last three decades. One is concerned with testing and student performance, conceiving the learner as primarily reproducing predefined content for certification at different levels of education. The other discourse addresses a potential future orientation of education concerned with 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and problem solving. The latter discourse offers a framework for interlacing education studies and media studies; it builds on insight from school practices of project work and problem-based learning. On a methodological level, project work and problem-based learning address the agency and engagement of learners, implementing ideas developed first by John Dewey and later by writers and practitioners as diverse as Paolo Freire, Seymour Papert, and Carl Bereiter. However, these methods have never managed to secure a stronghold within the education system. The dominant methods in most schools are still variations of teacher-initiated activities for students.

The field of education studies has become a priority for many research councils, as well as for international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement that play a major role in international studies on educational performance that are of huge importance for policymakers and for the impact of the testing and measuring industry. At the same time, developments within learning sciences since the 1990s document how learning processes are more complex and interrelational than what these international tests manage to cover or measure (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 2000; Sawyer 2006).

Learning sciences research has led to an increased understanding of the learner and of different aspects of learning, both of which are of great importance for the field of education studies. However, policymakers

still tend to rely on educational research studies that refer to tests or outcomes in ways that simplify learning in contradiction to the complexity revealed by learning sciences research. Several issues of the *Review of Research in Education* raise key questions in this area. For example, Green and Luke (2006) target the issue of "what counts as learning and what learning counts," showing different empirical studies that challenge preconceptions about learning; Luke, Green, and Kelly (2010) ask questions about "what counts as evidence" in educational settings; and Wortham (2011) investigates ways of addressing youth cultures and education through different approaches and empirical studies.

All in all these developments imply a series of opposing positions around key issues and controversies within the field of education studies. The developments center on:

Content and activities: The content of learning and the activities involved in learning are typically teacher- and assessment-centered, with curricula carefully broken into multiple measurable entities. The alternative is a student-centered environment in which open-ended activities allow students to engage in problem solving and pursue content interests on their own terms.

Assessment: A fundamental opposition exists between assessment that approaches learning as summative and assessment that approaches it as formative. This opposition is often described as assessment *of* learning versus assessment *for* learning. The dominance of the view that learning is summative has led to teachers teaching to the test and is one of the primary reasons why the possibilities for fundamental educational change are limited. Some international initiatives have addressed this opposition (Griffin, McGaw, and Care 2012) and developed new conceptual frameworks for assessing 21st-century skills by emphasizing formative ways of assessment (Binkley et al. 2012).

Learners and agency: One paradigm for understanding learners, the cognitive approach, privileges *intra*psychological processes in explaining how individuals learn. A second paradigm, the sociocultural approach, relies on *inter*psychological processes (Cole 1996). An opposition also exists between learners in school, where limited agency is often related to lack of motivation, and learners in settings that afford them more agency and

are thus of greater interest to them, resulting in greater learner motivation (Gee 2003; Ito et al. 2010).

Context: This is an opposition between studying learning within classrooms and other formal contexts defined by institutional norms and regulations, and studying learning across and between different contexts and settings. Some use the phrase "classroom as container" to describe the first view and "learning as intersection" to describe the second (Leander, Phillips, and Taylor 2010).

Learning resources: Within the field of education studies, resources for learning are understood in two fundamentally opposite ways. Such resources have mainly been defined with the book as a frame of reference and are seen as a neutral and stable source for information access. A more recent position defines learning resources as cultural resources that change over time. This position also acknowledges that as new resources (e.g., digital media) are introduced, learning activities may also change (Wertsch 1998).

Within this landscape connected learning evolves as an important perspective within education studies and as a crossover with/to media studies. The main reasons for this are that technological developments open up possibilities for positioning the learner as the analytic core and the fact that digital media challenge the institutional contexts of learning in school, with learning potentially happening anywhere and anytime.

Discourses on Media and Education

A major new dimension in education studies during the last two decades has been the discourse on the impact of new digital media. The impact has been major and has created both high hopes for change and moral skepticism about the role of technology in education. A critical issue today is to understand the implications of these developments and to examine critically the key issues and debates within this field of research (Selwyn 2011).

During the last three decades, two parallel discourses on education and technology have surfaced. The first puts technology at the center of attention, seeing it as a catalyst for change, with implications for how the use of digital media within educational

practices is studied and what impact these technologies might have on institutional transformations. These developments go back to the 1980s, when several visionary educationalists created scenarios of fundamental change based on the impact of computers in schools (Papert 1984). With the introduction of the Internet, similar cybermanifestos with implications for education were presented (Haraway 1991). These were important in addressing the fundamental impact of the digital revolution on our societies. Many of these scholars came from the research fields of informatics and information systems. During the 1980s the focus was on learning different programming languages. Until recently this perspective has focused on technology-enhanced learning, understood as ways of measuring the impact of digital technologies on learning activities in schools. This perspective is also apparent in ways of defining and understanding what are termed "digital literacies" (Gilster 1997) and "21st-century skills initiatives" (Griffin, McGaw, and Care 2012). The main focus of such research is how well students are using and operating technology.

The second discourse to have emerged in recent decades involves understanding how technology is embedded in people's social practices in different contexts, including school settings. This discourse within education studies can be traced to the literacy turn that occurred during the 1980s, when literacy initiatives and research shifted from a focus on reading and writing as a set of predefined skills that are consistent across cultures to studying literacy as a set of social practices with specific, context-determined impacts and implications. The term *multiliteracies* (Cope and Kalantzis 2000) emerged to signal the different ways people use systems of representation in social practices. The consequence was an expansion of the concept of literacy to include interaction with different text forms and thus the need to study them in different social practices (Barton 1994/2007). Similar influences can be traced to studies of how children and youth use different media (Drotner and Livingstone 2008). Another frame of reference for this discourse is the cultural studies emphasis on the social semiotics of different subcultures (Hebdige 1979/1985), including their ways of using different media. This can be seen as a more open-ended approach to studying how young people take up and use different media in their everyday lives (Ito et al. 2010). To a large extent this approach engaged teachers from the humanities, focusing on analyses of texts and on understanding

media literacy through critical analysis of young people's uses of different media in out-of-school contexts. Understanding of media literacies was influenced by the take-up of the Internet as interconnections between online and offline spaces and activities became more apparent.

Within education studies, the most important consequence of the digital turn has been a new focus on content creation, multimodal production processes, and sharing within communities of practice. The new focus is important because it changes, in a fundamental way, the agency of learners and challenges the institutional conditions for learning and education (Drotner 2007). No longer does the textbook or the teacher define the content of the learning process. Learners themselves now produce content of relevance to their own learning processes and learning identities, often within contexts outside of the formal education system. Education studies are moving toward an understanding of learning as life-deep, life-wide, and lifelong.

The field of education studies has shifted from holding relatively clearly defined positions and perspectives to viewing education as much more open-ended and complex. However, the priorities of educational policymakers are still fundamentally separate from the realities of the learning lives of young people. This disconnect has only grown wider as the gap between offline/physical space and online/virtual space has become more apparent, in the process exacerbating the perceived gap between in-school and out-of-school worlds. This gap is where we need to define a new ground for connecting learning experiences that address knowledge-building (Scardamalia and Bereiter 2006) more from the position of the learner than the system.

Media Studies toward Connected Learning

Developments

The upsurge in social networking sites and the accompanying popular discourse that paints media users as empowered global networkers may lead one to surmise that media users and media uses are recent objects of interest in media studies. That is not the case, however. Since the 1980s, media studies have been characterized by an increasing focus on the ways in which media are taken up, understood, and negotiated by users. The interest in "user perspective" reflects recent theoretical and empirical exchanges and

controversies between the dominant social science approaches to media studies and the more marginalized humanities approaches. These exchanges and controversies were accelerated by wider academic and societal shifts.

In theoretical terms, these exchanges and controversies have served to advance more complex understandings of media both as organizations structuring political and economic power and as meaning-making processes through which particular groups negotiate particular issues and wider worldviews (Carey 1989). In empirical terms, the exchange between the social sciences and the humanities for many years meant an unchanging interest in television as a domestic phenomenon, even as important humanities scholarship concerned itself with, for example, film and serial fiction. A likely reason for these empirical priorities is that Anglo-American frameworks of media organization, wherein television is taken as a primary medium, have remained paradigmatic models for media studies. For example, from the 1980s on, German social theorist Jürgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere have had an impact on media theorizing, not least because they resonate well with Anglo-American frameworks of organization and policymaking. In contrast, the key role radio plays as a semipublic medium in, for example, Latin America and India has barely challenged the supremacy in empirical research of television as a domestic medium.

With these caveats in mind, the increasing exchanges and controversies since the 1980s between social science and humanities approaches have brought about three key shifts of interest within media studies—namely, toward people, practices, and processes—shifts that have since been identified with the birth of a new field: audience studies. First, and perhaps most important, media users as engaged meaning-making groups of *people* have come to the fore. Initially, this focus formed part of the wider sociocultural critiques of power illuminating (some would say idealizing) ordinary people's sense-making and their modes of resilience and resistance. British cultural theorist Stuart Hall's model of encoding and decoding media messages (Hall 1980) is emblematic of theoretical transformations that brought attention to media users and to media uses as meaning-making activities positioned along structural power gradations that could be studied by applying qualitative methods, mainly in-depth interviews. This focus departed markedly from the established uses-and-gratifications approach to media users, an approach more concerned with individual preferences and value judgments and employing large-scale survey methods (see overview in Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 1974).

The increasing attention being paid to media users and uses is thus not merely a shift of interest away from organizational power structures. More important, it is a shift toward empirically documenting how such structures play out as mundane meaning-making *practices* in everyday life. What semiotic and social resources do people activate when appropriating media? How do different modes of selection, edition, and presentation facilitate specific meaning-making practices? In answering such questions, the field of audience studies has attempted to define media uses as both social and semiotic practices—contextualized and situated, yet defined by their mediated nature.

This dual approach to audience practices privileges the processual aspects of meaning-making; that is, media uses are seen as shifting *processes* of "audiencing." Thereby, the analytical lens is easily widened to encompass ways in which media operate as enablers and constraints in forming different interpretive communities that link to wider societal engagements. A key question here is documenting the specific role played by processes of audiencing in shaping and negotiating societal participation, and here audience scholars have emphasized the active audience (Fiske 1987), drawing on microsociology and interaction studies (Goffman 1959; Schütz and Luckmann 1973; de Certeau 1984).

The focus in audience studies on people, practices, and processes has served to advance more-complex and nuanced understandings of what goes on in people's interactions with media, just as audience studies have catalyzed important analytical links between social-science and humanities approaches to the media. Still, the priorities pursued in audience studies raise key issues about the proper definition of media contexts, content, and critique.

When audience scholars focus on media users, they ask questions about the definition of context for media uses and the roles played by the different contexts within which media are taken up and appropriated. When media users are studied, is the context defined by the medium or by the user? Does the researcher focus on situations in which a particular medium is taken up and then study how this plays out with particular groups of people? Or does the researcher focus on a particular group of people and

then study how group members appropriate various media in different situations (Schrøder et al. 2003)? From the outset, audience studies attempted to answer the former question. Some now-classic studies were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s on television viewing in the home (Morley 1986; Gillespie 1995). Other researchers opted to answer the latter question and followed particular groups of media users across various settings (Fornäs, Lindberg, and Sernhede 1988/1995; Berkaak 1989; Drotner 1989; Fuglesang 1994). However, these studies were conducted within scientific domains outside media studies and have rarely been defined as audience studies. In wider terms, the definition of contexts has been questioned by audience studies scholars beyond the Western Hemisphere when documenting, for example, different conceptions and negotiations of public-private boundaries (Fuglesang 1994; Tufte 2000).

Audience studies defines media uses as situated meaning-making practices. This definition immediately raises issues having to do with understanding what meaning-making entails. Following Hall (1980), most audience scholars agree that meaning-making entails articulation and interpersonal negotiation of the semiotic resources of media content (text, live and still images, sound). But published studies vary widely in how they analyze and understand meaning-making. Since most such studies have come out of a social-science tradition, many are more attuned to investigating the richness of context than to articulations and interpretations of content. American literary scholar Radway goes so far as to say that, in actual analytical terms, one aspect serves to occlude the other (Radway 1988). On a broader canvas, the aspect of meaning-making serves to raise fundamental questions about the sociocultural implications of people's divergent handling of semiotic resources through the media. Within audience studies, answers have been provided by investigations of the relations between media uses, social engagement, and political participation (Dahlgren 2010) and, in part, by investigations of inequities in access to and use of media (Warschauer 2003; Hargittai and Walejko 2008; Drotner, forthcoming).

Particularly from a political-economy perspective, audience studies are critiqued for paying too much attention to audiences as being active and engaged and paying too little attention to structural constraints; and for paying too much attention to audience practices in everyday life and too little

attention to the wider sociopolitical outcomes and implications of these practices (Corner 1991). These interventions must be understood within analytical paradigms contrasting domestic (television) audiencing and public debate dominated by political and economic discourses. As such, they are part of the organizational and analytical paradigms of the countries of the Global North.

Audience Studies Goes Digital

The advent of commercial satellite television and the growth of the Internet in tandem with digital media such as the personal computer and mobile phones catalyzed new theoretical and empirical alignments within media studies, alignments that serve as both enablers and constraints on audience studies. First, and perhaps most important, digital media have served to de-Westernize media studies (Curran and Park 2000) by leading to the acknowledgment of the importance of globalization and transnationalism not merely in empirical but also theoretical terms. For audience studies, this has meant a helpful questioning of binary understandings of audiencing as domestic or private (television) viewing practices that can easily be set against formations of public opinion (Livingstone 2005). The use of mobile media and social networking sites as catalysts of social engagement and mobilization beyond the countries of the Global North has made crystal clear that media uses cannot be neatly defined as either public or private.

Second, media audiences are increasingly also media producers. While in predigital times readers of print media were sometimes also writers, television viewers were sometimes also amateur photographers, and radio listeners were sometimes also tape editors, digitization has dramatically lowered the technological and economic barriers to mundane media creation and participation. Grabbing and editing images from the Internet is now an unremarkable affair for millions of people, as is the shaping and sharing of mobile photos and video clips via social networking sites. While only a minority of receivers of media content are also producers of media content made from scratch, mashup and remix cultures abound (Erstad 2010; Sonvilla-Weiss 2010).

The growing interlacing of mundane media reception, production, and distribution is a challenge to audience studies founded on a definition of media as mass media and audiences as the more or less

active receivers of such media. This challenge plays out within a global media culture that is characterized by tensions between a narrowing number of global media players and a widening number of cross-media users, between top-down, corporate business models and bottom-up, do-it-yourself cultures of interaction and participation.

We perceive that media studies will increasingly focus on people, practices, and processes and on the affordances represented by digital media for engaging audiences in productive practices of content creation and sharing. The mediatization of society impacts on the role that media play in different contexts and settings, opening up possibilities for interlacing media studies with other fields of research, such as education studies.

A Common Ground

Education studies and media studies have moved toward a common interest in media literacies and in how these literacies impact the ways in which people can act in contemporary society. Digital media have led to a reorientation toward studying learners and audiences as two terms with their own traditions within education studies and media studies. These developments have implications for the ways in which learners are defined within education settings, for seeing knowledge practices as interconnections between contexts and settings, and for redefining the focus of audience research away from mass communication and toward media users as producers as well as consumers of media culture.

Connecting Mediation and Mediatization

Two core concepts, mediation and mediatization, have the potential, despite their different traditions and orientations, to combine the fields of media studies and education studies. Mediatization is often used to analyze the impact of media on our societies and on cultural development (Lundby 2009). Within media studies this concept has been used to express ways of understanding the implications of media developments for society at large, as well as for social institutions such as education and schools. The term *mediatization* has even come to denote how increasingly global and technically convergent media catalyze transformations of organizations, systems, and cultures (Krotz 2009). The concept of mediation has a stronger link within learning theory, with a tradition

building on Vygotsky, who emphasized how different cultural tools interact with human conditions to create meaning—and how this changes over time (Wertsch 1998). However, mediation theories lack a theoretical framing for the semiotic properties characterizing media (see Drotner 2008), while mediatization theories lack a fundamental understanding of the meaning-making processes between people and media in specific settings.

How these concepts interrelate is unclear. In addition, mapping this interrelation is becoming more complex because developments in media, particularly the growth of mobile and social media in the last decade, have led to an increased mixing of modalities. Hepp, a media studies researcher, makes an interesting attempt to align the two terms. He starts out by asking a fundamental question: "How can we find a practical approach to mediatization research when the times we live in are shaped by the 'mediation of everything'?" (Hepp 2013, p. 615). Traditionally within media studies these two concepts have represented different perspectives: "'mediation' is a concept to theorize the process of communication in total; 'mediatization,' in contrast, is a more specific term to theorize media-related change" (Hepp 2013, p. 616). Hepp argues for combining different traditions in order to understand "mediatization transmedially" and on different levels, from everyday communication practices to social and institutional media structures. He proposes the term *molding forces* as a possible linking of the two concepts and as a way "to capture the specificity of a medium in the process of communication" (Hepp 2013, p. 619). Linking this to studies of media literacies is interesting because it indicates that "we cannot presume a general or context-free 'effect' of a certain media" (Hepp 2013, p. 619). Different media shape communication and media literacies in different ways. This is further linked to "mediatized worlds," which are the level at which mediatization becomes concrete and can be analyzed empirically (Hepp 2013, p. 621). "Mediatized worlds" are activities or "social worlds" (Strauss 1978) that "in their present form rely constitutionally on an articulation through media communication" (Hepp 2013, p. 621) and the communicative networks of individuals ("figuration") using different media. By approaching mediatization and mediation in such a combined way, looking at different analytic levels, Hepp's work is also relevant for sociocultural learning theories exploring ways of understanding how we use a number of different

media ("cultural tools") for meaning-making in specific contexts and institutional framings and how this changes over time. As such, media literacies, including the key communicative practices we use in our societies today, are ways of relating to and understanding the "mediatized worlds" in which we live.

A Palette of Concepts

Media literacy has become a key concept connecting media studies and education studies. We see media literacy as being broader than digital literacy or information and communications technology (ICT) literacy. The term *media literacy* implies how we communicate and make meaning through a broad set of media, analog and digital. The term has also been used in a more focused way to mean other literacies, such as

- *information literacy*, which has been used by librarians to describe ways of handling information and sources in books and other predigital texts;
- *visual literacy*, which has been used, especially by Messaris (1994), to discuss ways of interpreting visual representations;
- *multimodal literacy*, which has been used, especially by Kress (2003) and Jewitt (2005), to signify the use of different modalities to achieve more complex representations;
- *computer literacy/ICT literacy*, which focuses more on the skills used in dealing with computers; and
- *media and information literacy*, which UNESCO (n.d.) has used as an inclusive term focusing on practical, pedagogical initiatives.

Livingstone elaborates on the palette of different concepts within this field: "The diversifying array of forms of mediated representation, and the ever more thorough mediation of all spheres of society, is positioning media and digital literacies as an increasingly important step on the path towards emancipation" (Livingstone 2010, p. 35).

Digital literacy thus becomes a core concept. Other writers argue for conceptions that are more encompassing, pointing to the fact that "digital literacy" is far from the only literacy. Some of the proposed metaconceptual terms include "multiple media literacies" (Meyrowitz 1998), "multiliteracies" (Cope and Kalantzis 2000), and "metamedia literacies" (Lemke 1998). We believe that *media literacy* already encompasses many of the concepts these other terms attempt to cover. However, we prefer the plural—media

literacies—and its emphasis on both multiple media and multiple literacies.

Media Literacy as Inclusive

What is needed in order to be a literate person in the 21st century? And how do cultural practices such as "reading" and "writing" change with increased use of digital media? Traditionally, media literacy—which is often defined within the broader concepts of mediatization, globalization, and commercialization and linked to developments in the information and knowledge society—has been closely linked to education and to concerns about how children and young people relate to media content. However, in recent years, the term *media literacy* has broadened in scope and approach to include other traditions and perspectives within media and communications research (Rubin 1998). This broadening is connected both to the media developments of the last couple of decades and to the cultural and social implications of those developments.

In a critical comment on European Union terminology and policy initiatives, Buckingham identifies two traditions related to "media literacy" and "digital literacy":

> Media literacy, it seems, is a skill or a form of competency; but it is also about critical thinking, and about cultural dispositions or tastes. It is about old media and new media, about books and mobile phones. It is for young and old, for teachers and parents, for people who work in the media industries and for NGOs. It happens in schools and in homes, and indeed in the media themselves. It is an initiative coming from the top down, but also from the bottom up. In these kinds of texts, media literacy is also often aligned with other contemporary "buzzwords" in educational and social policy. It is about creativity, citizenship, empowerment, inclusion, personalisation, innovation, critical thinking . . . and the list goes on. . . . But therein lies the problem. . . . It is a form of policy marketing-speak: it is about selling media literacy on the back of a whole series of other desirable commodities. . . . If media literacy is essentially a regulatory initiative, digital literacy is primarily about inclusion. In the documents, digital literacy is frequently defined as a "life skill"—a form of

individual technological competence that is a prerequisite for full participation in society. If you lack the skills, you are by definition disadvantaged. (Buckingham 2009, pp. 13–17)

"Media" and "digital" literacies have evolved from different traditions, with the first more closely linked to media studies and the second more closely linked to informatics and technology developments. Still, despite allegedly describing European developments, Buckingham fails to address the situatedness of his description—the United Kingdom cannot be taken as a denominator for general policy trends. Nonetheless, the issues raised by the terms *media literacy* and *digital literacy* have more in common than they do dividing them. The discursive associations of the terms merit sober study not normative dismissal, because they illuminate wider developments in media, especially technological convergences, and in societal demands on learning. When developing joint discourses, both media studies and education studies need to situate these discourses in relation to, for example, different national trajectories and controversies.

Living in Media Culture

In the German-language discourse, the term *media competence* receives far more attention than *media literacy* (Baacke 1996). A similar emphasis can be found in the Nordic countries (Lankshear and Knobel 2008). The word *Medienkompetenz* has spread since its introduction in Germany in the late 1980s. Baacke connects the term *communicative competence* to critical media theories of mass communication, especially those of Habermas (Baacke 1973). According to Baacke, media competence is the ability to include multiple media in one's repertoire for communicating and acting in order to actively appropriate the world. Baacke identifies four dimensions, each comprising further subdimensions: media criticism (analytical, reflexive, and ethical), media knowledge (with an informational and an instrumental-qualificatory subdimension), media use (use through reception, often interactivity), and media creation/design (innovative, creative, and aesthetic).

In Europe, although the term *media literacy* is used by some scholars and in some country-level policy initiatives, the more commonly used term is *digital competence*, which gets deployed in much the same way as *media literacy*. One example is the working group on "key competences" of the European Commission's "Education and Training 2010" program. This program identifies *digital competence* as one of eight domains of key competences, defining it as "the confident and critical use of Information Society Technologies (IST) for work, leisure and communication" (European Union 2006, pp. 15–16).

Digital competence covers a broad set of life skills in contemporary media cultures. As such, it builds on traditions within both education studies and media studies highlighting the role of different media in peoples' growth and development in cultural contexts and the agency of responsible citizens in a media-saturated society.

Interlacing for the Future

In this article we have tried to map key points of overlap in how literacy and competence can be theorized and researched across the fields of education studies and media studies. We have shown how developments during the last three decades within both fields point toward a common ground of shared interests around people, practices, and processes in using digital media in different contexts and for different purposes. Increasingly, education studies has been influenced by media developments in our societies that have created new agentive selves for learners (Hull and Katz 2006), as well as new affordances for learning in and out of schools. And media studies have increasingly moved toward ways of understanding meaning-making among audiences who use different media as part of social engagement. Media literacy is in this sense a concept that combines and interlaces these developments and interests.

Both authors of this article have been involved in a European Science Foundation "future look" initiative. As part of the initiative, researchers were invited to define and shape key arguments for core developments in their field for the next ten years. We were involved in the media studies initiative, which defined the core issue as "media literacy: new media—new literacies." As an argument in favor of "inclusive media literacies," bringing together different perspectives under the term *media literacies*, it is an example of developments we have been arguing for in this article. We conclude by proposing several themes for interdisciplinary research on connected learning and media literacies:

- *The engagement of learners*. Education studies researchers are becoming increasingly aware of

the basic challenge of engaging learners, both as an objective in itself and in order to decrease drop-out rates, improve motivation, and address the lack of perceived authenticity among students concerning what and how they learn in school (Claxton 2008). Within media studies, researchers have shown a similar interest in exploring whether audience competence with digital media affects political and public engagement.

- *Risks, opportunities, and critical stance*. The growth of social media has advanced young people's participation in networks and communicative practices. This trend implies new risks and opportunities that should be of concern for both media studies and education studies. A key issue for education studies researchers, one framed by media literacy perspectives, is how media users reflect critically on their media use.

- *Emphasizing co-construction of knowledge*. Several recent initiatives have targeted collective processes of knowledge creation among students (Scardamalia and Bereiter 2006). In the 21st century, as people strive to innovate and build knowledge, they will increasingly do so collaboratively, within communities of practice.

- *Content creation and literacy practices*. Changes in the media practices of young people have revolutionized the ways content is created, modified, and shared in our societies. These developments, wherein users themselves create content by employing multiple modalities to remix existing content, challenge the very idea of educational content as being book-prescribed and teacher-taught. Another challenge is raised by the growth of new creative industries. Such growth can lead to demands on education to graduate students who possess the competences necessary to ensure further development of this economic sector.

- *Institutions in transition*. Both educational institutions and media organizations are being challenged by contemporary media developments, making this a key theme for further research, one that crosses the boundaries of both education studies and media studies.

As Latour (2005) suggests, an important topic of study is how controversies, understood as conflicting processes involving people, objects, actions, and networks, constantly define and redefine scientific fields. We look toward potential breakthroughs and developments that can connect education studies and media studies, with the concept and practices of media literacies as a catalyst for transformation and a possible common ground. A number of initiatives show promise for developing ways of connecting learning and combining literacy practices.

However, several key institutional and scientific obstacles must be tackled if we are to optimize further development of such common ground. The focus of our own research has been on identifying how media transformations challenge institutions such as schools and museums, documenting how these institutions tackle those challenges. In schools, one core obstacle is the assessment system, which emphasizes summative ways of knowledge acquisition that structure the learning process and school practices in specific ways. In museums, a core obstacle is a lack of learning transfer to the "formal" educational system so that students experience a coherence of understanding. In order to develop increased understanding of media literacy as a key area for 21st-century competencies, we need to challenge the institutional framings of social practices—for example, in schools and museums—so as to nurture connections between learning experiences across domains of learning, not merely within institutions of teaching.

Finally, digital media are today instrumental in the formation, exchange, and retrieval of knowledge. Digital media are not merely "neutral" conduits of information transfer. Hence, multi-method, multi-sited, and multidimensional research approaches would do well to follow anthropologists Mertz and Parmentier (1985), who advocate a joint perspective on the material and the immaterial, or semiotic, aspects of (learning) tools. Similarly, they would do well to heed the advocacy of Swedish education researcher Säljö (2000), who stresses the importance of discursive tools. Such insights offer important common ground for creating the conceptual and methodological developments needed to grasp the complexity of the current learning landscape.

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