

...literacy changes things in people's lives and also to help to design projects with more specific change objectives in mind.

Access

Functioning civic societies require a diverse and pluralist media ecosystem and citizens being literate enough to make informed choices about what to access within the ecosystem, through digital connectivity, technological access and the skills to use the media and digital technology available to us.

Access involves who, when, where and how we have access to media content, information and digital technology, and having the knowledge and awareness needed to use it in everyday life and for citizenship, education, work and health.

Capabilities

This is where we use our media literacy more actively for particular purposes in our lives, rather than as passive consumers of information and content.



On a larger scale, media literacy helps us to understand how the media environment we are engaging with is constructed, for example in terms of how diverse it is, who owns or controls different media sources and how digital and social media is governed, designed and manipulated.

Media literacy also involves critical awareness about the role of data and algorithms in everyday life and with regard to citizenship, education, work and health.

Consequences

Media literacy can contribute to significant change if we take media literacy actions that can make a constructive and positive impact on the media ecosystem in our lives and on the lives of others in a functioning civic society.

Consequences may include challenging misinformation, producing media content and / or online information, sharing trustworthy content on social media, trying to increase the representation of people who are marginalised in the media, data activism or more critical and mindful non-action (e.g. sharing misinformation, changing data settings).

Media literacy interventions should focus on how

Media Literacy for Social Cohesion A Theory of Change for a Healthier Future

Click on the map to see media literacy interventions from a country which have made a difference to people's lives.

To see all the interventions which have made a difference to people's media access, media awareness, media capabilities or have created positive consequences in the communication ecosystem, choose the project theme in the menu on the right.

An explanation of how each project is mapped to the theory of change elements is provided in [the book](#) which this resource accompanies.

Themes

- Access
- Awareness
- Capabilities
- Consequences

Countries

- Active
- Inactive

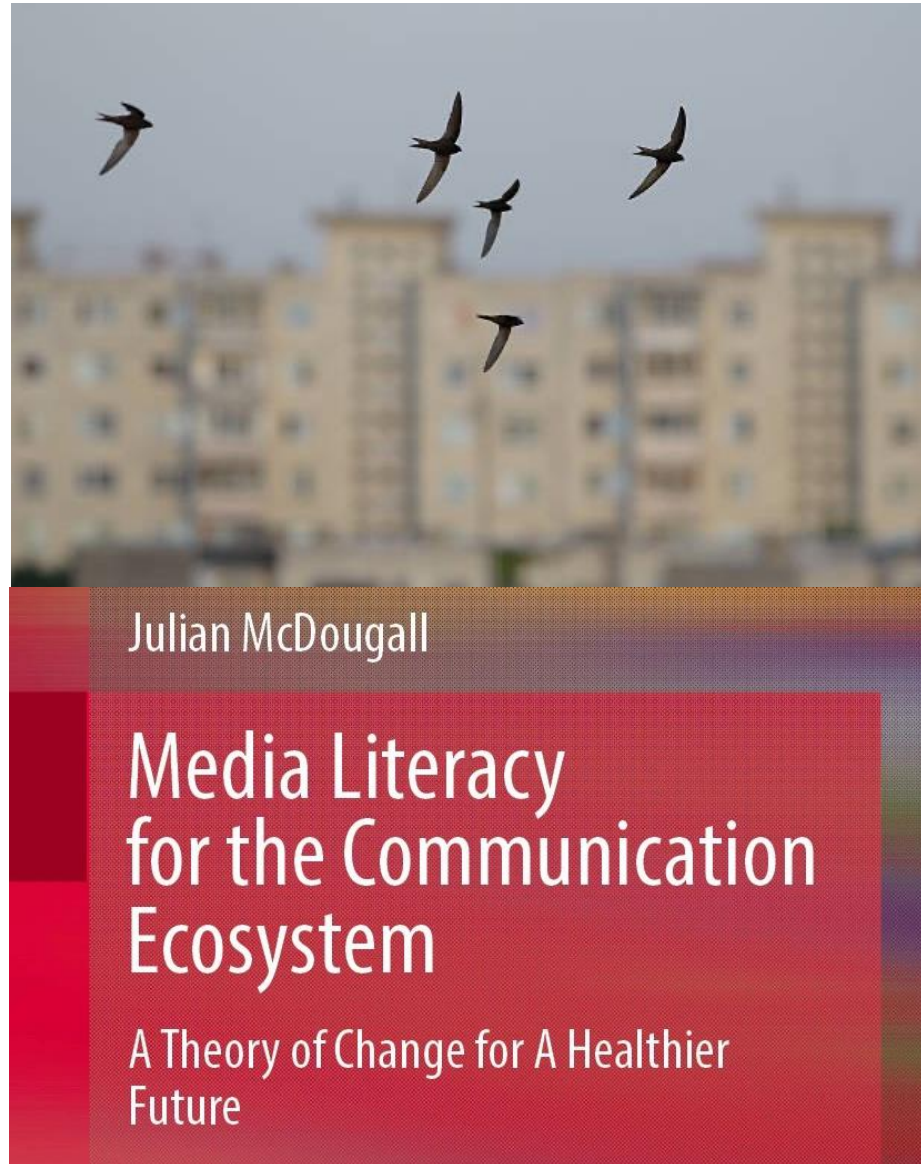
Refine by theme

Search projects





A healthier future ... if we claim less to change more



Where we are Now

The Research

A Theory of Change

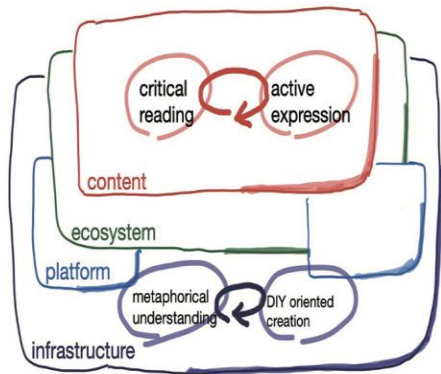
A Healthier Future

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Ecosystem	UNSDG	Media Literacy for the Ecosystem	Policy: UK Ofcom
<p>The communication ecosystem is rich, diverse, generative, eco-centric & rights-protecting environment.</p> <p>We demand equal and diverse communication ecosystems and safe online and data environments.</p>	<p>Well-being for all at all ages.</p> <p>Promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity</p>	<p>People engage more with trustworthy and diverse media and improve the health of the media, information and data ecosystem through these access changes.</p>	<p>Critical thinking about content: Actively questioning and challenging online information.</p> <p>Online safety, privacy and protection from harm: Managing risk, safeguarding privacy and spotting and avoiding harms.</p>
<p>Communication actors, platforms and technology designers operate for social goals and in the public interest.</p>	<p>Universal & affordable access to information and communications technology and Internet.</p> <p>Public access to information to protect fundamental freedoms.</p>	<p>People expect to have access to media which acts in the public interest and an online and data environment which is safe and protects digital rights.</p> <p>Media practitioners, policy makers and institutions’ obligations to more resilient and media literate publics reduce negative media impacts over time.</p>	<p>Engaging Platforms: Platforms and broadcasters will provide better media literacy support for their users.</p>
<p>Everybody has the means to be fully included in the communication ecosystem and to engage with media, information, technology and data as fully functioning, critically aware citizens.</p> <p>Publics are motivated to “interrogate how the technology works, even when we are trying to accommodate it into our everyday lives.” (Natale, 2021: 132).</p>	<p>Equal access to basic services + appropriate new technology.</p> <p>All youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy.</p> <p>People everywhere have relevant information and awareness.</p>	<p>People have the critical means to evaluate the credibility, fairness and diversity of their access to media and information.</p> <p>People are exercised by the unhealthy consequences of unverified content and information and data exploitation and motivated to encourage others to be more mindful.</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Communication actors and publics believe that it is important for different groups in society (including the marginalised and seldom heard) to be fairly represented in media, information and communications.</p>	<p>Enhance the use of enabling information and communications technology to promote the empowerment of women.</p>	<p>People engage with and advocate for more diverse media representations and this generates dialogue between groups and reduces polarisation of discourse.</p>	<p>Critical thinking about content. Actively questioning and challenging online information</p>
<p>People think of themselves as media makers / information providers.</p> <p>We see the connection between communication and health, civic society, educational and economic opportunities.</p>	<p>Enhanced representation and voice. Effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships</p>	<p>Diverse publics represent themselves, taking opportunities provided by media literacy projects and programmes which include them.</p>	<p>Access, use and content creation. Accessing media and getting online, using technology and creating content</p> <p>Digital citizenship and media engagement. Making the most of online opportunities and media to be a citizen in the world</p>

Resilience | Agency

.. *the Healthy Ecosystem*



[Figure 1.1] Sketch of the new literacy for media infrastructure (Mizukoshi, 2020)

Supports/ requires a cohesive society of:

- people co-existing with trust built on mutual understanding;
- people respecting differences and diversity with the capacity to agree-to-disagree;

Fosters communication between people who

- have the capability to use media literacy actively in their lives
- adopt values which motivate them to use their media literacy for positive contributions to the ecosystem.

Publics are motivated to “interrogate how the technology works, even when we are trying to accommodate it into our everyday lives.” (Natale, 2021: 132).

The Research

This theory of change is the culmination of over a decade of research..

Project	Funder
Media Literacy in Teacher Training	Ofcom
Hit Pause UK Pilot	YouTube / Poynter
Theory of Change: Media Literacy for Resilience to Misinformation	British Council
Evaluating Media Literacy with a Theory of Change	UK Government
The Third Space School Library: Fostering Digital Capability for Young People's Mental Health	e-nurture
Kano Accelerated Learning (KAL) monitoring and evaluation	British Council
Wikimedia Foundation Skills4Success: Evaluation of Pilot Programme in Ghana	British Council
Digital Media Arts for an inclusive Public Sphere: Youth-led Alternative Platform	British Council
Digital Media Literacy Theory of Change	BBC Media Action
Digital Arts for Refugee Engagement	AHRC
Dual Netizenship	British Council
Online Safety – Media Literacy Strategy – Mapping Exercise and Literature Review	UK Government
Creative Network Plus: Baseline Research and Development Project (BREDEP)	AHRC
Connect2Aspire: Cultural engagements and young people's professional aspirations	AHRC
Media Literacy versus Fake News: Critical Thinking, Resilience and Civic Engagement	US Embassy
Teaching media literacy in the age of disinformation: effective policies and practices in school education	European Commission
Telling Tales of Engagement: Digital Literacy to Community Capability	EPSRC
From Digital Learning to Capability	Samsung

STATIC

Literacy by itself

Meaning is fixed

(Digital / Media / Data /
Visual / AI Literacies =
“other”



Monsak Chaiveeradech (2022)

DYNAMIC

Ideological and contested

Meaning is contingent

Texts and media and
technology are in social
practices in which people
engage to make meaning.

Taking account of the *dynamics* of an inclusive and agentive literacy is the condition of possibility.

A Theory of Change

Theory of Change for Media Literacy

Theory of Change: 4 inter-related elements. These categories of change can be used to evaluate more specifically how media literacy changes things in people's lives and also to help to design projects with more specific change objectives in mind.

Access

Functioning civic societies require a diverse and pluralist media ecosystem and citizens being literate enough to make informed choices about what to access within the ecosystem, through digital connectivity, technological access and the skills to use the media and digital technology available to us.

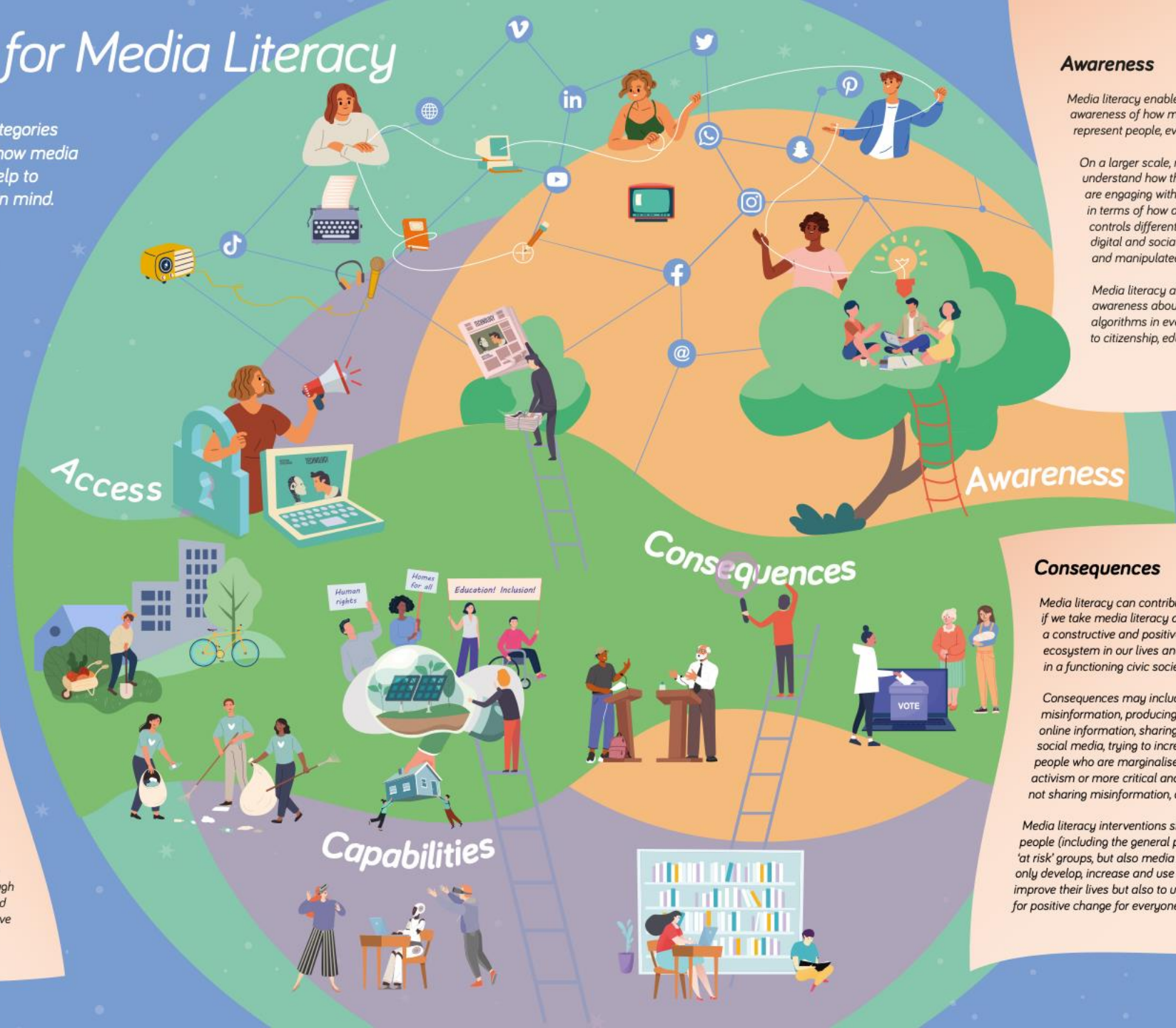
Access involves who, when, where and how we have access to media content, information and digital technology, and having the knowledge and awareness needed to use it in everyday life and for citizenship, education, work and health.

Capabilities

This is where we use our media literacy more actively for particular purposes in our lives, rather than as passive consumers of information and content.

Media literacy capabilities range from access changes, the application of more critical or mindful decision making when receiving information, the use of fact-checking of information or sources, more informed attitudes to sharing content and information, or getting directly involved in the media ecosystem as creators of media content.

Increases in media literacy can also lead to new capabilities for civic engagement through digital media and technology and increased employability through the gaining of creative and/or digital skills.



Awareness

Media literacy enables people to have a critical awareness of how media and information represent people, events, issues and places.

On a larger scale, media literacy helps us to understand how the media environment we are engaging with is constructed, for example in terms of how diverse it is, who owns or controls different media sources and how digital and social media is governed, designed and manipulated.

Media literacy also involves critical awareness about the role of data and algorithms in everyday life and with regard to citizenship, education, work and health.

Consequences

Media literacy can contribute to significant change if we take media literacy actions that can make a constructive and positive impact on the media ecosystem in our lives and on the lives of others in a functioning civic society.

Consequences may include challenging misinformation, producing media content and / or online information, sharing trustworthy content on social media, trying to increase the representation of people who are marginalised in the media, data activism or more critical and mindful non-action (e.g. not sharing misinformation, changing data settings).

Media literacy interventions should focus on how people (including the general population, children and 'at risk' groups, but also media practitioners) can not only develop, increase and use their media literacy to improve their lives but also to use their media literacy for positive change for everyone in the ecosystem.

The adoption of a theory of change approach enables creative practice researchers to evidence aspirations or intentions just as well as concrete outcomes... and provides a language to narrate their stories and articulate value in terms they understand." (Boulil and Hanney, 2022, p.127)

Theory of Change Framework

Name of project: _____

1 Define the 'problem'	2 What are you doing about the problem and with whom?	3 What differences will your intervention make?	4 How could these differences contribute to wider societal change?
<i>Insert your Theory of Change sentences here</i>	<i>Insert your Theory of Change sentences here</i>	<i>Insert your Theory of Change sentences here</i>	<i>Insert your Theory of Change sentences here</i>

Evidence of the problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Immediate outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term impact

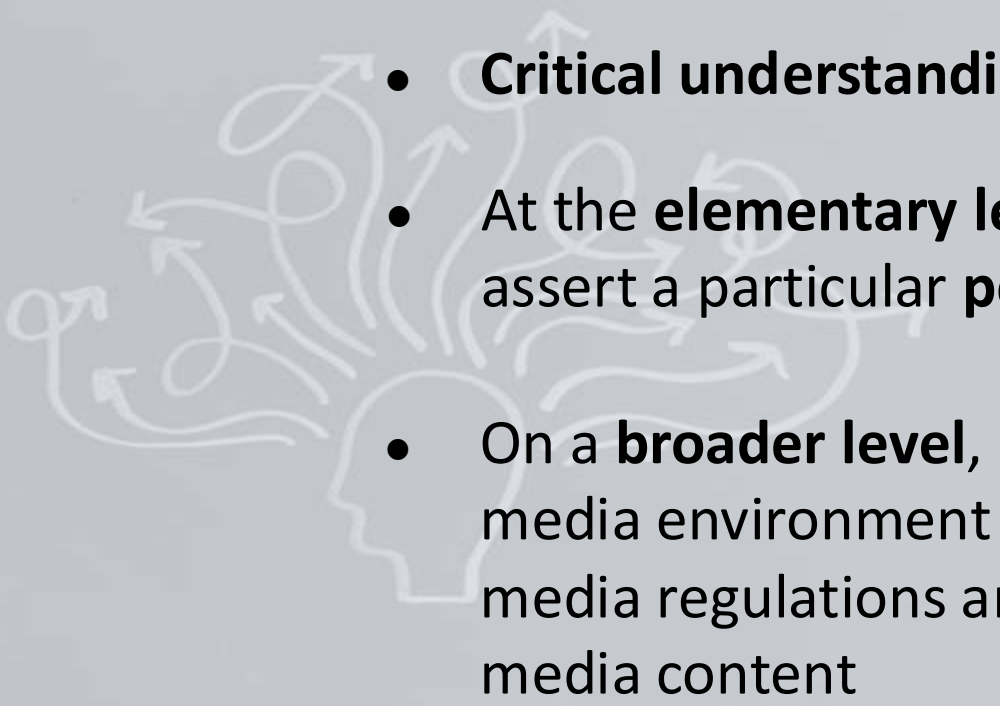
Working through the complexity of social change.

Participatory, outcomes- focussed, critical design, transformative.

Access

- **Inclusion** to the full media, digital and information ecosystem through technological access and skills → **How, when** and **how often** people can access information, media content and digital technology
- Existing **knowledge** and **awareness** to use media as intended in, for example, everyday life
- **People restrict** their access to parts of the ecosystem (barrier to access)
- Literate citizens making **informed choices** for functioning civic societies

Awareness

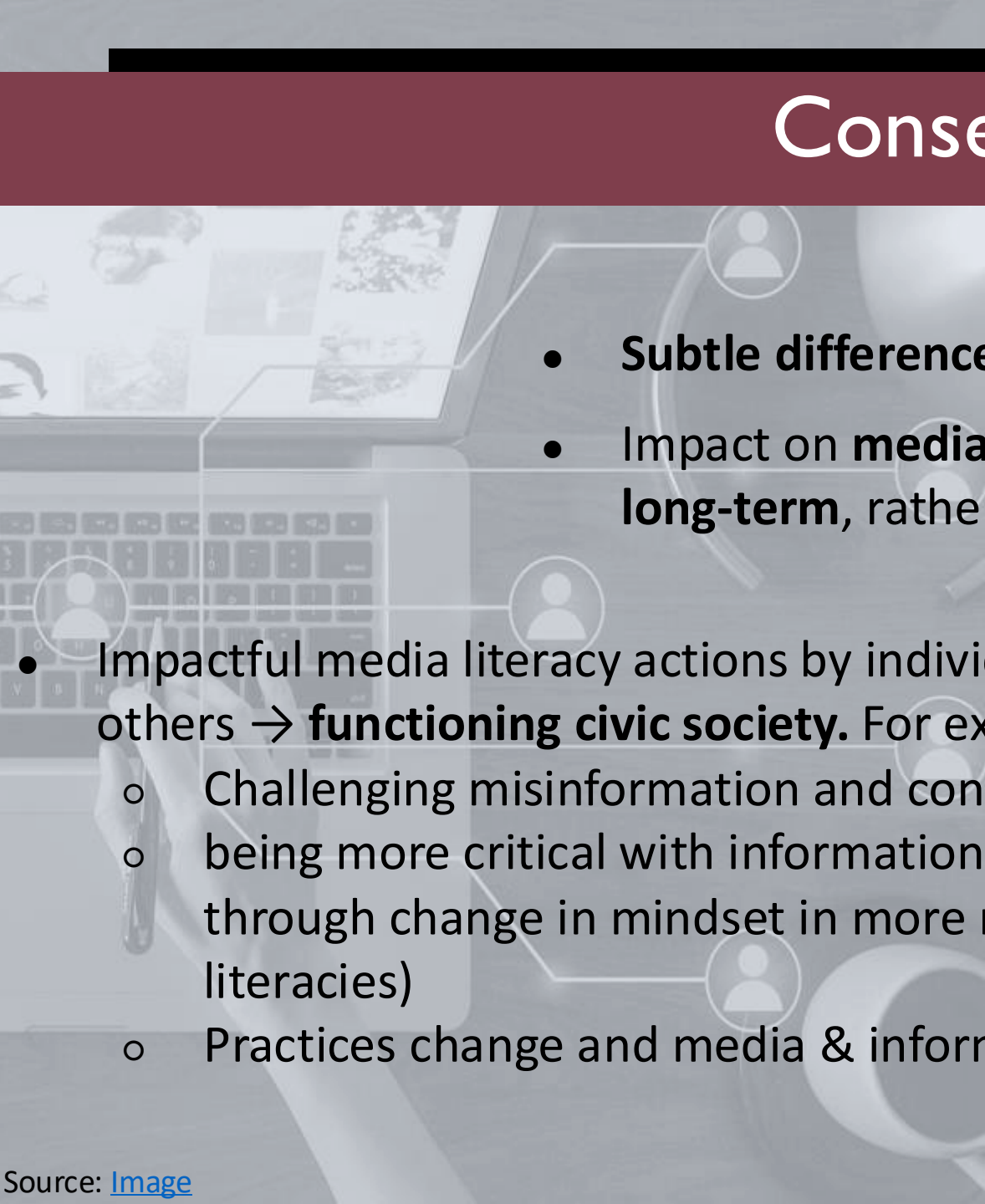
- 
- **Critical understanding** of media representations
 - At the **elementary level**, it involves the awareness of how the **media** assert a particular **perspective** to represent people, events and issues
 - On a **broader level**, it encompasses the understanding of **how** their media environment is constructed, as well as awareness about social media regulations and data literacy and **who** is in charge of controlling media content
 - **Trust** in media and information content/sources is **evaluated** and **challenged** through critical awareness

Capability

- **Active use** of media & information literacy to **improve individuals' lives and wellbeing**, for example through:
 - Changes in access,
 - Resilience to online risks and harms,
 - fact checking,
 - content sharing through informed attitudes
 - Creating media content → activism (e.g., political or social)
- **Note:** Increased media & information literacy and capability does not inherently lead to a positive use of it

New Skills

Consequences

- 
- **Subtle difference** between capability and consequences
 - Impact on **media & information ecosystem and society in the long-term**, rather than on the individual level
 - Impactful media literacy actions by individuals for **positive change** on the wider level and for others → **functioning civic society**. For example:
 - Challenging misinformation and consequently reducing negative health consequences
 - being more critical with information and media content → online harms reduction through change in mindset in more resilient users (including science, health & data literacies)
 - Practices change and media & information ecosystems become healthier

Theory of Change in Action: BOUBLI in TUNISIA Youth-Led Media Literacy, Civic Engagement



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xlec-m_l-bw

Using the Theory of Change to Set Research Questions

Access	how does Boubli impact on young Tunisians' access to media as content creators and audiences?
Awareness	how do digital media engagements generated by Boubli raise reflexive awareness of the health of the media ecosystem in Tunisia?
Capability	how does Boubli develop capability through non-formal education?
Consequences	how can the capabilities generated by Boubli (for creators and audiences) impact positively on the media ecosystem in the longer term?





Findings - Access

‘Engagement pathway’ to media literacy for civic intentionality.

Distinctive convergence of content and community = interplay of environment and belonging, non-hierarchical third space values and the textual field itself.

BOUBLI youtube channel:
Is it true we will be quarantined again?

Findings - Awareness


Highest levels of experiential 'meta' reflexivity about the Tunisian media ecosystem.

Consensus that the Tunisian media ecosystem is unhealthy

Disagreement over the purpose of treating it, as opposed to operating in resistance to it in the margins or as an alternative environment.

Boubli's convergence of content and community 'bakes in' media literacy awareness to its media practices - constant reciprocal dialogue forms the bridge to capability.





Findings - Capability

Experiential learning in Boubli's third space environment provides creative and technical opportunities in a digital incubation hub for those excluded from media practice in conventional environments

This is combined with an ethos of peer-learning and learning to learn.

People engaging with Boubli across audience and community groups reported a 'mindset shift' with regard to tolerance, understanding of conflicting perspectives and respect for diversity.

Capability to Consequences

Boubli's impact has been strategically manifested more in providing an alternative media platform, so the criteria in our theory of change for improving the health of *the* media ecosystem is more difficult to assess.

However, the 'third space' social infrastructure which Boubli has developed provides compelling evidence of the progression to positive consequences:

.. the integration of agentive media literacy, community and critical thinking about divergent views.



<https://www.instagram.com/p/CRAEX16nag0/>

Transferable Strategic Practices

Third Space Intercultural Knowledge Exchange

Nuanced for local contexts

<https://dualnetizenshiptransferableprinciples.wordpress.com/>



Space | Change Mapping

Our theory of change situates media literacy as a form of **context-bound capability development** as opposed to a set of neutral, universal competences.

In mapping this theory of change to third spaces, we understand in new ways the **culturally situated design** of the partnerships and configuration of the spaces in which media literacy interventions come into being.

... glocalising media literacy in cultural contexts and creating communities for building connections = towards democratic resilience

	Multicultural London Disadvantaged youth in Tunis Royhinga refugees in Cox's Bazar Syrian refugees in Turkey In-country journalists, audiences and communities	Boubli FFP Gate of Sun BBC Media Action and in-country local media	Boubli, FFP, BU, BC Boubli, Million Youth Media, Sorti, Bird by Bird Projects, No Ordinary Experience, Arab Media Lab, Intric8 Gate of Sun, BU, University of Chittagong, Maltepe University Local media, audiences and communities
KNOWLEDGE			
CAPABILITY			
CONSEQUENCES			



Healthier Future

Julian McDougall

Media Literacy for the Communication Ecosystem

A Theory of Change for A Healthier
Future

 Springer

To achieve positive change, media literacy interventions and educational encounters should adopt imagined future equity as a first principle

Media literacy work should be designed, implemented and evaluated with a clear pathway to positive change for the participants involved and their onwards contributions to a healthier communication ecosystem. We understand this to be an environment which enables practices which nurture equality, diversity, respect, empathy and the redistribution of power in the service of social cohesion.

Media literacy work should avoid over-claiming by being precise and rigorous about the nature of change it wants to create, and with a focus on viability and evidence at the latent potential to manifest change threshold, to change *more of less*, with productive humility.

To generate more evidence of manifestly positive change, as opposed to the strong potential for such, we need longitudinal interventions and / or use control groups to compare outcomes.

Third space and co-creation intervention design are clearly the most effective approaches to media literacy work for meaningful change. The field should adopt these design principles as default pedagogic and methodological approaches from this evidence of what works.

It is clear from this evidence that to try to 'do media literacy' as a neutral set of skills and competences or to restrict our work to risk reduction and resilience, traps us in a binary mindset. Such a mindset ignores the iterative media dance we all perform (Rowsell, 2025).

Proceeding without an overt intent for media literacy to increase equity, shift epistemic dynamics and further social justice, is counter-productive to our collective cause.



Julian McDougall

Media Literacy for the Communication Ecosystem

A Theory of Change for A Healthier
Future

*A healthier future ...
if we claim less
..to change more*

Media literacy is about “the consequences of the digital, for diversity & the challenges of living together, ‘after’ the digital.” (Pasta & Zoletti, 2023)

This literacy is not a solution, but a *process*.

A process of change.

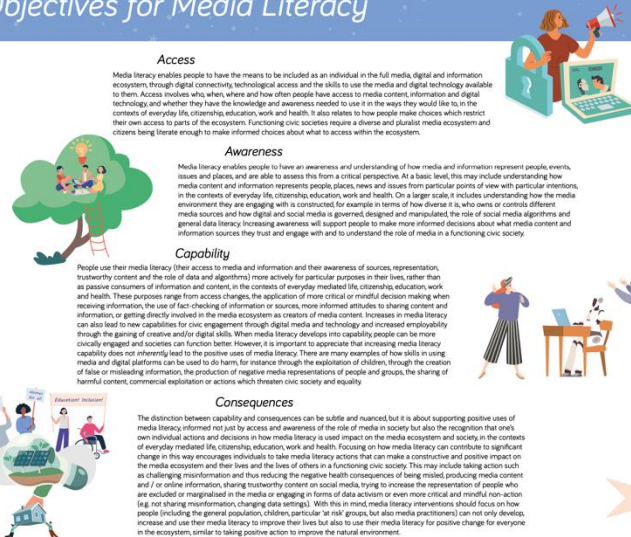
“After is not less. To come after is to change what remains in store for the future.”

(Wendy Hui Kyong Chun 2022,).



Change Objectives for Media Literacy

To apply the inter-related change elements to media literacy projects, interventions and activities, we need to identify the difference media literacy makes to people's **knowledge** about media and information; the media literacy **skills and competences** people develop or increase; how being media literate enables people to be involved in dialogue about media, information and the online environment; how media literacy impacts on people's **attitudes and societal norms** and then, ultimately, how media literacy leads to changes in people's **behaviour** with regard to media and information and how this changes the media ecosystem for everyone.



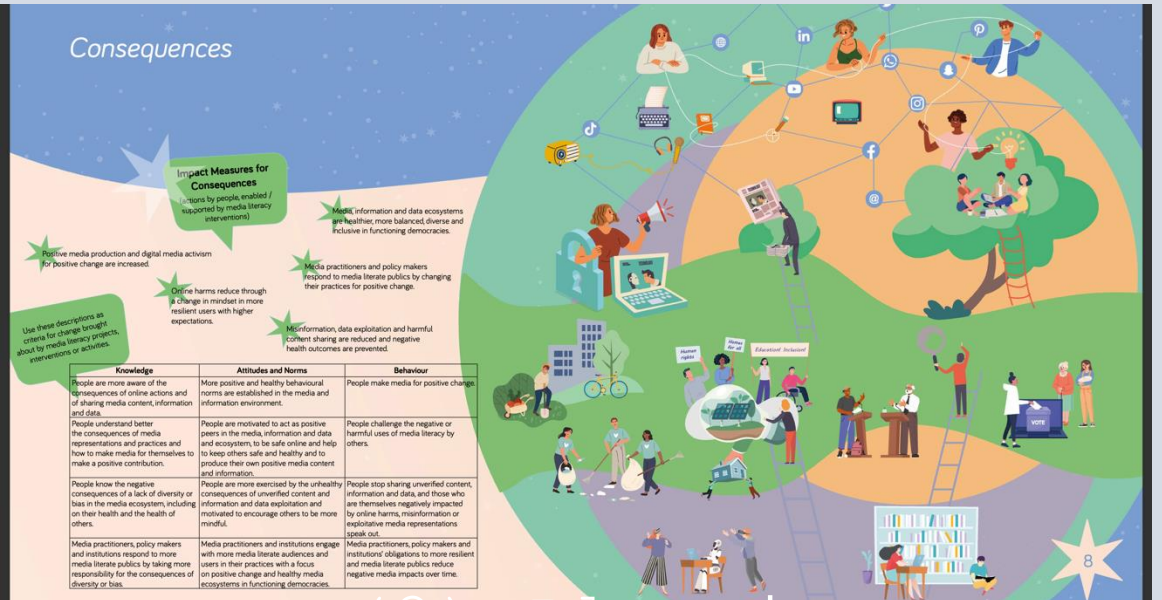
(1) Identify change objectives

Evaluation Template

Title of Project:			
	Evidence of ML leading to change	Potential for ML leading to change	Nature of evidence of change or potential for change (latent or manifest)
Access			
Awareness			
Capability			
Consequences			

(3) Use the template

Consequences



(2) Plan impact measures

[ToC User Guide](#)

[Video walkthrough explainer :](#)

Media literacy for a healthier

ml-eco.net

Search

Star

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Profile

Click on the map to see media literacy interventions from a country which have made a difference to people's lives.

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Search projects

Use ml-eco.net to:

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