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## UBIQUITOUS COMPUTING, DIGITAL FAILURE AND CITIZENSHIP LEARNING IN SWEDISH POPULAR EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

How do adult students enact citizenship, and what discursive and material conditions make certain enactments more or less possible? This paper draws on 37 interviews with adult students at Swedish Folk High Schools and focuses on the everyday material-discursive enactments of interactive media in adult students' statements about citizenship. Drawing on a post-constructional perspective, the analysis illustrates how students' statements about citizenship are made possible by ever-present media technologies and the associated practices of 'living in media'. Students' statements continuously reiterate how notions of citizenship are entangled with the Internet (and other new media). However, while new media are deeply embedded in the everyday lives of citizens and enables important citizenship enactments they are also a source of discomfort, giving rise to ambiguous statements. These double-edged statements refer on the one hand to negative implications on physical health, distraction from important tasks and an over-reliance on the Internet as an everyday need, and on the other hand to improved access to information, convivial communities and empowered citizenship.

**Keywords:** Citizenship, Citizenship Education, Adult Learning, New Media, Folk High Schools, Popular Education.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper reports on the results from a study that examined how adult students enrolled in a Folk High School in Sweden discursively and materially enact citizenship. The students are registered at courses providing the equivalent of a degree from upper secondary school/and or provide eligibility to enter higher education. The school itself is supported through government funding and does thereby not require tuition fees. In order to receive government funding the schools must comply with certain general guidelines for such funding. These guidelines contain, for example, to strengthen and develop democracy; to provide support for a greater diversity of people to gain control over their life situation, and to participate in community development; to contribute to the equalizing of educational disparities; and to increase the participation and education in society in general (The Government Bill 2005/06:192). The phrasing of such purposes, general as they may be, clearly show how Folk High School education has an overall ambition to foster democratic citizens (Fejes 2012; Larsson 2013).

However, citizenship is generally not taught as a specific topic in the Swedish educational system, but is envisioned as something that should permeate the education as a whole, both in form and content. As mentioned, a primary educational task for Folk High Schools is therefore the somewhat vague undertaking to create a better society based on democratic and participatory principles. Such view is supported by studies that show how social alienation is connected to low participation in democratic processes, which in turn has resulted in the explicit assignment for the Swedish education system to tackle this societal problem (Nicoll et al. 2013). Citizenship education has thus emerged as a general response to declining civic engagement and the potential breakdown of important social ties. Citizenship education can therefore be regarded as a necessary counter-measure that will allow for students to become ‘proper’ citizens. This means that students are citizens in the making

(Marshall 1950). However, this stance also positions students as not-yet-citizens (G. Biesta, Lawy and Kelly 2009; Nicoll et al. 2013), suggesting that individuals are lacking (what is described as) the proper values and skills to be regarded and treated as full citizens.

Much of the research on citizenship education focus either on how students can develop the skills necessary to become active citizens (Arnot and Dillabough 2000; Björk 1999; R Smith, Middleton and L 2003; Öhrn, Lundahl and Beach 2011) or it theoretically and philosophically problematizes the ‘appropriate configuration of citizenship’ (cf. Aspin 2007; G. Biesta J. J 2011; Gutmann 1987; Olson 2008; Roth and Burbules 2007; Westheimer and Kahne 2004). Rarely does research ask students themselves about their view and experience of citizenship education (cf. Olson et al. 2014). Similarly in the context of the classroom, student’s experiences are often downplayed, seen as irrelevant or even ignored (Brookfield 1986; Grannäs 2011; Lundahl and Olson 2013; Öhrn et al. 2011). In addition, research on citizenship tends to pre-define the concept of citizenship, which may obscure and confine diverse enactments of citizenship both in education as well as in everyday practices.

More recently the concerns about low levels of political participation and engagement, have met with much hope being invested in social media sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) as places for increased political interest and greater democratic agency. New media is often described as enabling new forms of citizenship enactments and democratic activities, as well as including a greater variety of social groups usually excluded from political contexts. Popular examples of how activism can be fuelled by social media is the ‘Occupy movement’, the ‘Indignados’ in Spain and the ‘Arab Spring’ (e.g. Khondke 2011). However, research on the political uses of social media is also diverse and show, for example that enactments of citizenship are increasingly personalized and dependent on the affordances of social media functionality in itself (Bennet 1998, 2012) and can be described as networked individualism (Ratto and Boler 2014) rather than democratic participation. Other studies show that the

political uses of digital media are in fact less prevalent than the widespread use of social media might suggest (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, H, and Verba 2012; Thorson 2014) suggesting that neologisms such as ‘clicktivism’ and ‘slacktivism’ are better terms to describe counterproductive forms of engagement mobilized in order to numb the bad conscience of the middle class rather than produce change (Fuchs 2014). On the perhaps even more pessimistic side, research also show how hopes of increased democratic possibilities are often weakened by social ambiguities in relation to (imagined) audiences and reception (Thorson 2014) or even crushed by state and corporate power (Deibert 2014). As such, very little work actually considers how the mundane and everyday making of citizenship in increasingly computerized societies is a question of entanglement between new media and adult education.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse how citizenship is enacted in students’ own lives, within as well as outside of education. In doing so, the starting point for this paper is that students are already, in some capacity, citizens. Thus, our aim is to answer the question: how do adult students describe their own enactment of citizenship and what discursive and material conditions make these enactments more or less possible? To further precise the focus of this paper, we will examine how, what we may call ubiquitous computing (i.e. ever-present media technologies), works as a material-discursive precondition through which the citizen is made. This article thus contributed with a critical discussion of the material-discursive prerequisites that makes citizenship-enactments more or less possible in everyday practices as well as in adult education.

## **FROM CENTRAL CONCEPTS TO ANALYTIC DIMENSIONS**

In order to elicit adult students’ citizenship enactments, including both the material and the discursive conditions that make these enactments more or less possible, a post-constructural theoretical framework is mobilized. This framework combines the toolbox of Foucault (Fejes

and Nicoll 2008; Foucault 1972, 1980), with central concepts from new materialist theorizing (Barad 1998; Coole and Frost 2010; Lykke 2010). In a world increasingly made up of hybrid phenomena (Latour 1993) and imploded objects (Haraway 1992) timely research calls for an approach that take both discourse and material objects seriously. According to Foucault discourses are defined by a clustering of statements: “the term discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Foucault 1972: 107). Within the frames of this paper, this means that a statement about citizenship is what is identifiable as citizenship inside a particular discourse (i.e. conforming to the rules that makes a certain statement possible). However, discourses and material realities also co-construct each other. That is, the material world—objects, technologies, machines, gadgets and so on, take part in the formation of discourses and discourses take part in the enactments of the material world (Barad, 1998 2003; Fenwick and Edwards 2013; Foucault 1972; Hardy 2011; Matthewman 2014). Therefore, and unlike many other approaches focusing solely on discourse, this paper pays special attention to material conditions as they unfold in students’ statements. This may seem counterintuitive, but acknowledging how students describe the material underpinnings of citizenship is a first step towards a richer socio-material analysis. This is perhaps especially important when studying digital media use, where a certain distribution of agency is evident. That is, the increasing capacities of digital media to channel everyday enactments also put an increasing amount of agential power in the technological design itself. As such, the words of Karen Barad seems particularly poignant: “The point is not merely that there are important material factors in addition to discursive ones; rather, the issue is the conjoined material-discursive nature of constraints, conditions, and practices” (Barad 2003: 823).

## **Unlocking the Notion of Citizenship**

Citizenship is often described as the rights and obligations that come with living as a full/adequate member of society in a state (Marshall 1950). While this definition is general, this study will not subscribe to any pre-defined definition of citizenship but instead aim to open up this concept by examining how students themselves speak about what they do as citizens. That is, to explore how they, in the general flow of everyday life (Thorson 2012), describe their performance/enactment of citizenship. The underpinning rationale for this is to avoid any potential foreclosing of what can be included in the notion of citizenship, theoretically allowing for different discourses to emerge.

## **Life in Media**

Seeing how this paper is concerned with the entanglement of citizenship education and new media, a more media-theoretical complement to the general socio-material approach of this paper is needed. As such, we also use certain conceptualizations of media as expressed by Deuze, van Doorn and Baym (Baym 2009; Deuze 2012; Doorn 2011). In Deuze's conceptualization media includes (physical) machines, information and information technologies. From this follows that practices in digital spaces can today not be easily separated from practices in physical spaces. Deuze therefore argues that media is both a necessary and inevitable part of our lives—we are not living *with* media, but *in* media. As such, Deuze wants to circumvent the dualist idea that machines are either controlling people or being controlled by people. A non-dualist view instead makes it possible to explore performances and processes as a question of what can be done rather than simple outcome- or effect-analyses. Van Doorn (2011) goes on to theorize digital space as a convergence of the virtual and the material. The virtual (e.g. our memories, feelings and desires) is actualized as digital objects, which can in turn be seen as located in-between the virtual and the material.

As such, the virtual is not the opposite of the real, but an integrated part of it. The separation between online and offline, virtual and material, real and unreal therefore becomes untenable in many ways (Baym 2009; Deuze 2012). Media is consequently not an isolated aspect of modern life — and accordingly everyday enactments of citizenship are also interwoven with media (Baym 2009). In conclusion, we stress that enactments of citizenship cannot be reduced to discourses or media technologies alone, but rather a discursive-material relationship that can be described as a continuous process of co-construction. By beginning to pull on one thread of this entanglement, namely student statements about everyday citizenship, this paper will provide important clues into how this co-construction takes place.

## **METHODS**

In order to collect statements about citizenship a field study and continuous interviews with student were conducted. The setting was a Swedish Folk High School, which had been selected on the requirements that it was large enough to accommodate several different courses and that we, had the opportunity to present the project at a tutoring session for all the school's teachers and thereby get them 'on board'. This was identified as an important precondition in order to get a smoother access to the students. As 'citizens' and 'citizenship' are words that, in Swedish, are not that common in everyday language and because the project had an ambition to open up these concept (i.e., reach beyond the immediate and formal descriptions of citizenship such as for example 'voting') the process of getting access to the studied field was important. During four months, one of the authors continuously visited the school and observed the teaching taking place within five different educational programs. Initial contact was taken with students asking them if they were willing to participate in the study and if they were willing to document (photograph, film or record sound) citizenship



enactments in their lives (both in and out of the school context). No prior definition of citizenship was presented to the students. Instead they were asked to document their citizenship enactments according to *their own* definition of the term. After about a week of documentation, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. The overarching purpose of the interviews was to collect statements around the documentation, where students were asked what they had documented (and not documented) and why they documented what they did. In total 37 interviews were performed, and all interviews were transcribed in verbatim.

The transcripts were analysed with a focus on identifying regularities of statements about citizenship, and more specifically on its discursive and material conditions (Barad 1998; Nicoll et al. 2013). The elicited descriptions were not measured against any pre-defined notion of citizenship. Rather, the analysis followed an abductive approach, enabling an alteration between the dataset and relevant theories (including the potential to introduce new theory in the analysis to better and interpret and meaningful explain important dimensions). Statements about the Internet and pervasive computing emerged early on as one of the most central categories across the data material. In the rest of this paper we will elaborate on how such statements are construed, including central enactments and their material and discursive conditions.

## **FINDINGS**

Notably, and serving as a starting point for this paper, the interviews did not contain direct questions about digital media. Rather we asked them: tell us what you do as a citizen within the school as well as in your everyday life, and they told us about—digital media. Consequently, the main finding discussed in this article is that citizenship is described as most often being enacted through ever-present media-technologies. Statements of citizenship in

media are referred to in two ways—explicitly or implicitly. That is, descriptions would circle explicitly around how media was enmeshed with citizenship, or descriptions would not be directly about media, but the students would nevertheless exemplify their statements by referring to media technologies. Three central sub-themes emerged: 1) citizenship actualized through ubiquitous computing; 2) citizenship and digital failure; and 3) citizenship, community and anonymity. These themes were visible constructed in relation to life within as well as outside of education.

### **Citizenship Actualized Through Ubiquitous Computing**

This theme relates to the general observation of how media technologies in themselves are repeatedly discussed and depicted in students' statements of citizenship. This is done both explicitly and implicitly. Implicit statements about media refer to ways in which media lurk in the background of statements, but are not emphasized in itself. For example, students would take pictures of a television set, talking about natural catastrophes and how you, as a citizen, have an obligation to help. Students also took pictures of their computer screens showing what they store on their hard drives. It was also common to take pictures of computers or tablets and describe them as enactments of citizenship in education. However, often the device itself was not discussed, rather it was referred to as a prerequisite for education and thus for enactments of citizenship education. This also indicates the importance of information in relation to citizenship. Being informed, but also being able to produce, store and share information is construed as an important part of being a citizen. Further, it was common to take pictures of the web pages of public authorities. This relates more clearly to a notion of citizenship as being able to easily and quickly find public information and reach authorities around the clock. However, it may also indicate how access to public authorities is immediately linked to access to the Internet, and how 'Internet-presence' is the main way

public authorities are manifested. The examples above display how media is, in a way, hidden in everyday life i.e. perceived as a taken-for-granted (and thereby also ubiquitous) precondition for enactments of citizenship.

As such, some of the respondents also explicitly discuss how media is ever-present in their everyday activities. For example some students took pictures of their partners by the computer, illustrating how spending time by the computer is a common part of life. An informant, who took pictures of his computer keyboard, and commented, "That's where most of us live nowadays" further illuminates the mundane importance of media technologies. These examples repeatedly show how technologies, such as computers, become domesticized, embedded and ineluctable in everyday life. Citizenship enactments in everyday practices, as they are told to us, are to a great extent situated in media. At the same time, the statements may indicate how we have stopped thinking about media critically (and instead accepted its power position and taken it for granted). That is, students presume its omnipresence. Media technologies have become an extremely established feature of our everyday lives and they also come to shape its different enactments. They are described as part of a taken-for-granted standard of life. By way of reasoning, this means that media determines when and how you are enabled to enact (or become prevented from enacting) citizenship. As such, several interviewees not only tell of how their everyday life is permeated and made possible by media, but also of how it remains in the background *until it crashes or fails*, which leads us to the next enactment of citizenship in media as it is displayed in the interviews.

### **Citizenship and Digital Failure**

As previously argued, media technologies are now ubiquitous to the degree that they only reveal themselves once they fail. When a computer crashes; when you fail your courses due to too much World of Warcraft gaming; when authorities survey and limit your Internet use; or

when services, such as Facebook, do not deliver on their promises of improved personal relations. In all these situations media disrupts what is seen as citizenship enactments. Putting it promptly, media reveals itself to us through failure. By not functioning as expected, media technologies expose their power over our daily lives. As a consequence the making of citizenship also falters without media. In other words, access to the Internet is a fundamental condition that enables citizenship, but also one which only becomes visible to citizens once it fails:

#### Fragment 1

Tell me about the picture you've taken

This is a picture of a time when my Internet [connection] was down

What?

Well, it is like this, now, when the Internet doesn't work, my screen shows a picture of a dinosaur

Ok, so what are your thoughts on that?

I think that citizenship means having access to the Internet. Here's what I thought: citizenship, it is about rights and obligations, that's what you have as a citizen. And, in fact, each and every citizen in a country doesn't have access to the Internet and the knowledge we have. So, it is pretty cool to have that access, so I thought it wouldn't be very nice to not have that access.

What does the Internet mean to you? When do you use it?

Oh! All the time! Every time I fiddle with my phone I am online – even if you only play a game you need access. And we work a lot with Google Drive and then you need to be online all the time. So when I study I am online all the time, same thing at the university. I mean, you could write in Word I guess, but I still need to be connected to LISAM [the university course management system] because I take distance courses... so I don't have any lectures. Instead I have to search for information, books, papers and so on. So...all the time! I mean, what would happen if I didn't have access to the Internet at home? Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Whenever you want to do something, go to a movie say. I don't check the paper for what movies are showing, I go to the cinema homepage and check. If we decide to eat out I'll go on the net to check for good restaurants. You use Google all the time. You don't even think about how much you use the

Internet and what an amazing resource it actually is – you take it for granted.

This quote, which reappears in similar forms across several interviews, shows how our everyday life is made possible by media, and how it permeates life, remaining in the background until it crashes or fails. In fact, it seems plausible that we have stopped thinking about media critically – it is just there, all the time. We presume its omnipresence and as such its power is obscured until failure occurs. Building on both Deuze (2012) and the student statements, we consequently propose that media technologies are becoming increasingly powerful in the shaping of citizenship and must therefore be analyzed as an integral part of citizenship education.

Much like citizenship is limited and hindered without the Internet, one of the respondents describes how he felt his citizenship ended once Sweden signed The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)<sup>1</sup>:

#### Fragment 2

I think that when the Swedish government decides to, or when the European Parliament decides to enforce ACTA without a public vote, I am totally not a citizen. It is like when a big company with lots of money or much influence on the European Parliament adds a rule just like that. It is so wrong! [...] I think file sharing is a good thing. It leads to good knowledge. It is simple and useful to be able to share anything and everything. As of now, we live in a very complicated IT-society. People read a lot on the Internet, watch movies, documentaries, learn languages and everything.

While this statement illuminates how being overrun by governmental powers is described as creating a feeling of eradicated citizenship, it also shines a light on a parallel description where the Internet is given a key role in being and becoming a citizen.

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<sup>1</sup> Sweden has signed the agreement, but it does not mean that Sweden can implement the law. As the EU Parliament has voted against the agreement, Sweden can not ratify it

Interestingly, the public discourse around ACTA (and how it makes the tracing of online activities necessary) often intertwines with the discourse around personal integrity and the importance of online anonymity. This interlacing of public discourses is also visible in the interview material, why citizenship and anonymity also becomes a pertinent dimension.

### **Digital Citizenship, Community and Anonymity**

Technological systems, such as computers are also social systems. As Lewis et al indicates: “[A]n ironic revelation of the television-computer age is that what people want from machines is humanity: stories, contact and interaction” (Lewis, Amini, & Lannon 2001: 198). As such, statements about citizenship in media are also statements about interconnections and fellowship with others. Interestingly, several of the informants provide statements about the game World of Warcraft (WoW) when asked about everyday citizenship. A number of the interviewees have had WoW gaming as their main occupation for many years. One of the respondents even claims that it was the most central aspect of her life for more than five years. All of the WoW-gamers in the study have significantly reduced their gaming or, indeed, quit entirely. WoW is also provided as the main reason for failing to complete upper secondary school and thereby also the reason for studying at a folk high school. Interestingly, one aspect that is reported to make WoW so tantalizing for students is that it enables strong feelings of community, which are also linked to citizenship by providing a social and communicative arena. However, it also sustains its opposite—failing school and failing to participating in ‘real’ enactments of citizenship. Still, and perhaps most noteworthy, when we asked respondents about differences between online and offline communities, all of the WoW-playing respondents describe how *anonymity* makes online communities *more real and*

*more genuine* than offline communities, and how this genuine community is described as a pre-condition for being a citizen.

### Fragment 3

I mean, it is people that I have never met, but with whom I am very close. Meanwhile there are people I meet in school everyday that I wouldn't approach with the same topics and be as open with. Because you are quite anonymous, at least before Facebook and stuff. Or maybe it was the same, but at least everyone wasn't Facebook-friends with all that personal information and that.

Thus, anonymity is positioned as a condition of truly genuine fellowship with others. Anonymity is described as an important requirement for community and Facebook is described as the opposite of anonymity. At the same time Facebook is also one of the more common subjects illustrating everyday citizenship enactments. One informant, who took pictures of the Facebook login page, explains that the application is ubiquitous in everyday practices but also how "It's so very narcissistic and attention seeking, it's all about how many likes your status update will get. And that is just so horrible to me". The student further explains that he is trying to counter what he describes as fake content on Facebook by posting funny jokes, which are then described as enactments of citizenship by spreading joy and thus change society for the better. Community is not only concrete it is also virtual. The virtual becomes a basic condition for certain citizenship statements, i.e. the statements of citizenship as *feelings* of community. Facebook is described as part of everyday citizenship enactments but also as meaningless and fake, which in turn is described as the opposite of being a citizen. Similarly, WoW-gaming is often described in very positive terms albeit in hindsight, where it may have completely disrupted studying.

It is also common to describe the communal experience from a learning perspective. For example, language skill improvements and leadership abilities are mentioned as benefits from gaming together with others. Despite this, all respondents who talk about WoW have stopped

playing. The reasons they give is failing school and gaining bodily weight from just sitting all the time.

#### Fragment 6

I played it and I learned a lot from it. It is so great, the whole of WoW. It is like a circle of friends that I have never met. It is awesome! I played, over a period of about a year or so, more than 10 hours every day. [...] You wake up, put the computer on a log in. Every day. Unfortunately this also happened every school day. So my first year was downhill. [...] I mean, you go to a school where Internet is free and you get a computer. That's it. And then your class is maybe not the most disciplined. So you idolize better gamers instead of people who do well in school. [...] Gaming was my life then. I spoke to Finns, Brits...on Skype – they were my friends. It was my life, but then I realized that it's not gonna work. I gained weight, lagged behind in school and that. So one summer I just decided to quit.

In a way, these statements of others tell us, not only about human-to-human interaction, but also about human/non-human assemblages (Barad 2003) and mediated life where performative practices that constitute a particular social network is only possible because of the technology that enhances the material aspects of sustainable enactments (Doorn, 2011). WoW is depicted in the quotation above as a node where enactments of citizenship actualizes for example, cosmopolitical community, friendship and knowledge, but at the same time citizenship is enhanced by the specific affordances of the technology. This is further displayed in the fragment below where the informant is asked about enactments of being a citizen in his life:

#### Fragment 7

Maybe being with friends, maybe my computers screen. It is a community as well, like when I used to play much more than I do now, I was in a guild, like, and we were maybe 80 people from around the world, like, and when we all of us talked to each other it was like a huge conversation, and you felt [...] like communal, it is a strong community.

Thus, technological systems co-evolve with social systems and are enacted and experienced as communities, which in turn are co-creating citizenship. Much as Mark Deuze says: “We



emotionally invest ourselves into media as much as our media become an affective part of us” (Deuze 2012: xi). Life in media turns us into both consumers and producers of information and surely much of the information we share online is not created by authorities or companies, but by ourselves. This essentially means that we provide value-generating labour for corporations and businesses that collect, record, extract, exchange or sell data about us (Deuze 2012). The informant in the quotation displayed above sees community as a performance of citizenship in his life. Community can thereby be seen as agential intra-action between humans and designed technology. Software and hardware are effectively intermeshed with our daily performances. As a consequence mediated society is both individual and interconnected, but like it is also both embodied and virtual (Doorn 2011).

Recent studies show that our online identities often are identical with our offline identities. Despite the possibility that it is easy to play around with gender, ethnicity or age in an online forum people rarely take advantage of such possibilities. (Davis 2011; Kennedy 2006). Students’ statements also display an intertwining of online and offline identities - so much, in fact, that the absence of Internet disables life as a full citizen. The intertwining between offline and online is opposed only in statements about WoW, that outlines opportunities for anonymity, which makes it possible to be yourself which in turn even enhances friendship and cooperation. Digital games scholars have shown how corporeality is actualized in digital environments such as WoW, where race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality reproduces asymmetric power relations in which whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality are enacted as hegemonic, but also how online community can create resistance that mobilizes change against racism, homophobia or sexism (Doorn 2011; Nakamura 2009, 2013). The fact that none of the informants in this study talk about intersectional inequalities in WoW could be interpreted as saying more about the selection of interviewed students than about WoW and that we expressly did not ask interviewees in depth about what they do as citizens in the

game, but instead focused on what they want to talk about what they do as citizens in their everyday lives.

Nevertheless, citizenship is also displayed as fitting in the network of society i.e. for example, coping with school and being healthy. For those who do not fit in the network and thus in the intermingling with technology, a material-discursive misfit occurs. Of course, no networks are stable and standardized for everyone, and there will always be concurrent processes of (mis)fitting in technology-saturated everyday life (Star 1991). Thus citizenship is described as heterogeneous, as multiple memberships. The analysis of anonymity, community and digital citizenship display a mix of benefits and drawbacks depending on who is currently the stakeholder in focus. What can be said with certainty though is that the Internet is an arena—by many respondents construed as indispensable—where citizenship is enacted.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has identified three pertinent dimensions in relation to the use of digital media and the enactment of citizenship. Student's statements of citizenship have led us to firmly acknowledge the intermeshing of media in notions of citizenship enactments. That is, statements of citizenship are also statements of ubiquitous computing which enables citizenship. Media is ever-present, but at the same time also invisible. The only time we notice media is when it does not work. When its functionality breaks down we come to notice the gadget (or software) in itself (Deuze 2012). And when failure occurs, when we must redo exams, when we gain weight, when our hard drive crash, media becomes a visible issue anew. Citizenship as it is narrated in this study is a form of becoming-with-media and (mis)fitting-with-technology. That is, when media technology fails us a material-discursive misfit occurs. This misfit or failure comes with a cost; it has material effects on the body and on the feasibility of being a citizen (i.e. to fit in society). Failure is situated in an intersection where

technology, discourses and individuals meet. For example, the statements about WoW and Facebook are double-edged. Anonymous gaming enables citizenship but also holds risks of failing in other important enactments—such as education, health and social relationships. Citizenship is consequently displayed in a heterogeneous manner. Failing to be a citizen is life without media as well as within. Thus, citizenship highlights multiple memberships, disruptions and contradictions.

Internet can be seen as one of the most central infrastructures of modern society. However, the Internet is much more than apps on your smartphone, your electronic gadgets, or how you consume news and music. Every time you use your credit card, the Internet mediates your transactions. When you ‘beep’ your travel card, the information is synchronized with an online database. New archives of digital media enable (or restrict) new access to information and memories. Within the OECD, Sweden is ranked as the country with the highest ratings in computer literacy, i.e. proficiency in problem solving in technology-rich environments (OECD 2013). Being offline is an anomaly in Sweden and it is arguably impossible to avoid the Internet (Lundin 2012; Snickars 2014). As seen from the interviews, these preconditions effect enactments of citizenship at a fundamental level.

In what ways then, could we say that citizenship and ever-present media is connected? Is this too wide a question to ask? Maybe. Perhaps there is also a risk of moralizing over new technologies in the same ways that earlier debates argued that video games make us violent, that cassette tapes kill the music industry or that we will become Satanists if we listen to heavy metal albums in reverse. By saying that 1) we live our lives in media and 2) citizenship is co-constructed by media are we not repeating the same mistake? From the viewpoint of the analysis put forth here the answer must be—No. The fact that we live with omnipresent media technologies, in fact demand us to research and understand how this co-construction takes place, beyond the traditional question of distribution and access. This intermingling of

humans and media technologies, which we have argued is such an important part of enabling citizenship in adult students lives, enables exclusion and empowerment hand-in-hand. So, by remaining critical we are able to debunk overly techno-centric rhetoric and question how new media potentially supports neo-liberal individualism as well as enable community.

The relation between media, society and everyday life is of course complex (using your VISA-card is not the same as playing WoW for five years, which is not the same as visiting the web page of the Employment Agency). This article could hence be seen as an explorative study of how citizenship and media are intermeshed and what that entanglement might do to us and to citizenship education.

In conclusion, analysing the statements of young adult students will enable us to highlight the importance of perceiving citizenship as situated inside mediated lives. It will also account for material-discursive pre-conditions for citizenship as well as problematizing the diverse setting in which citizenship is enacted with technology. Media is such an important part of being and becoming a citizen that it arises as a dimension of citizenship enactments without specifically asking about it.

Media is embedded in the everyday lives of citizens, but it is also stated as something that bothers and worries people. On closer inspection, this entanglement consists of tensions between the omnipresence of new media in citizenship statements and the double feelings that are described as arising from it. The double feelings in turn, consist of statements about physical health, information access/overload, failure and community. As such, there seems to be an interesting and meaningful tension there, subject to further study.

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