Ulla Carlsson (Ed.) (2019). *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age: A Question of Democracy.* Gothenburg: Department of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMG), University of Gothenburg, 266 pp., ISBN: 978-91-88212-89-4.

As with many previous scholarly accounts of media and information literacy (MIL), the ideas proposed in the volume edited by Ulla Carlsson, *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age: A question of democracy*, rest on a great variation of insights brought by diverse stakeholders (academics, policy makers, global thinkers, learning instructors, and media developers) critically reflecting on their experiences of living in the times of media expansion, uncertainty, and distrust. In recent years alone, references to MIL have become a common and routine practice evident not only in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities, but also in the analyses related to science disciplines and high-tech applications. Nevertheless, this volume offers a number of significant contributions to the understanding of media literacy that none of the earlier publications on MIL have contributed so eloquently.

First, there is strong theoretical grounding. Many of the available accounts of MIL focus predominantly on declarations clarifying how to deal with concrete cases of media use for specific (education or learning) purposes, or how to react to the outcomes of media misuse, for example, in the event of disinformation and confrontations with hate speech or social exclusions.

This book, in contrast to other publications, from the first section is written in an intriguing and academically enriching manner, offering an inspiring adventure into conceptual explorations of the idea of "literacy". Here, the expedition begins with a bold invitation for a sounder appreciation of MIL, which needs to be treated not just as a concept applied predominantly in education and learning-related situations. On the contrary, it is explored as an authentic analysis instrument (we may call it a "litmus test") that assists in witnessing dramatic shifts and qualitative social transformations in contemporary societies worldwide.

Elegant guidance and careful supervision by professor Carlson through the scholarly generalisations and hands-on applications of MIL in selected contexts of analysis is more than evident in the chapters of this anthology. As such, it becomes one of those rather rare readings where the lead editor persuasively touches upon all uncertainties and anxieties that appear as crucially significant for contemporary media-encountered societal alterations. Amongst those are such topics as the rise of inequalities and social exclusions; the amplification of risks resulting from media abundance; and the consolidation of half-truths and fakes in mediated discourses. In addition to these affairs, an urgent dispute is needed about the decline of public

trust in social institutions that were bound to act as solid building blocks of high-modern (i.e., 20th century) societies. In other words, the selected chapters indirectly suggest that, if we wish to recreate the functioning of "daily democracy" in the 21st century, we need to reassess the societal role and functions of classical public arenas (i.e., the epistemic commons) which earlier were so well preserved by professional journalists and editors, educators and learning instructors, and artists.

Second, what appears as unique freshness in this book is the proposed path of analysis that goes through those many challenges in relation to MIL with chronological depth, required precision, and intriguing academic elegancy, yet avoiding excessive scholarly descriptions and policy-related jargon. All this in combination makes the reading extremely welcoming, accessible, and, most importantly, "dialogic". In fact, it is precisely this openness and dialogical nature that are those normative qualities that MIL appears to be destined for. Hence, as proposed here, MIL needs to be regarded as both a new right and a new qualitative attribute of contemporary democracies.

Third, "democratic emancipation" is a theme that indirectly ties together diverse stories in this anothology. As each chapter suggests, MIL is not just a matter of one-sided and clearly observable (i.e., direct) experience. Instead, media literacy is discussed here as a conceptually rich phenomenon that does not comply with structurally solid and tangible boundaries. As experience with literacy is highly varied, its conceptual definitions are also diverse; hence, it is difficult to squeeze this idea into a predefined and firmly ordered system. In this way, "media literacy" in the book arises as yet another intriguing metaphor that is so "elastic" that it can accommodate almost every inquiry about the daily (democratic) engagement and (democratic) media performance. Such conceptual "plasticity" of MIL is indeed appealing because it helps to reveal the great variety of (democratic) media uses in today's societies.

Inclusive and offering theoretically rich and varied experience, many of the offered explorations focus on concrete, contextually (socio-politically and thus ideologically) shaped (i.e., "situational") analyses. Two broad lines of interpretation can be identified here. On the one hand, Sweden — a country that appears as a central geographic and socio-political landscape in this book — bravely faces the challenges of the not-so-distant future. All stories told and experiential cases provided in one way or another talk about the specificities of mediated life in an inclusive welfare state. In Sweden, MIL is an inherent conceptual element in every area of societal transformation (education and play, news production, meeting daily needs of people, etc.). On the other hand, in the Baltic countries, at present, MIL policies are mainly framed through such queries as how to combat disinformation and hate speech, and how to confront cyber security-related difficulties. Hence, MIL issues are approached on two fronts simultaneously in the Baltic countries — that of creating a viable national media system (harmonising freedom and competition policies), and that of ensuring a safe, inclusive, and truly pluralist information environment.

All in all, MIL is not an entirely young study field. In fact, it is as old as the field of education and learning technologies. Though being a discipline grounded on such classical areas of study as literary or rhetoric readings, the contemporary encounters with information production and knowledge exchanges generate a completely new array of experiences that also require rethinking classical principles of democracy.

As observed, in contemporary societies, all common issues — everyday subjects in politics, education, religion, or culture — should be studied as phenomena of communication. Indeed, we are bound to communicate. But do we have the needed know-how? Do we have the competencies required for mediated democratic encounters? These are the critical issues that this book aims to answer. As commonly referred to, media literacy is synonymous with responsible and profound thinking. Still, one might suggest that thinking by itself cannot be uncritical as it requires proficiency in providing reflections, comparisons, generalisations, evaluations, and the ability to sense and recognise what is true and just. These are conventional principles that every democratic society is built on.

To sum up, *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age: A question of democracy*, edited by Ulla Carlsson, reminds us that contemporary democracy, first of all, needs to be viewed as "relational" (i.e., a "communication" phenomenon). Democracies need attuned people; a happy society is built by trusting citizens. And this is the central message of the book: MIL should not be treated in isolation from human (cognitive and emotional) empowerment. For that purpose, it promotes a "situational" perspective for learning about MIL, which is presented as a qualitative indicator of contextualised societal changes. It also advocates understanding MIL as a "public right".

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David Buckingham (2019). *The Media Education Manifesto*. **Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 128 pp., ISBN: 978-1-509-53587-3.**

As the title suggests, *The Media Education Manifesto* by David Buckingham provides us with a broad overview of the situation in the field of media literacy education, calling western societies to action. David Buckingham, Emeritus Professor at Loughborough University in the UK, has been engaged with media literacy issues