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Article

Beyond Solutionism: Differently Motivating Media Literacy

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Abstract
This article discusses three research projects conducted in partnerships in diverse societies. We assess the implications of each project for media literacy's motivations and intentionality through a theory of change. For the first project, BBC Media Action, we developed the theory of change which frames this article and a media literacy training programme for in-country practitioners to strengthen media ecosystems and support resilience to information disorder. Our second project was Dual Netizenship, a youth-led, intercultural partnership between Tunisia and the UK at the intersection of media literacy, civic agency, and decolonisation. Thirdly, Digital Arts—Refugee Engagement (DA-RE) brought together refugee youth in Bangladesh and Turkey to combine media literacy and digital artivism with civic capability development. The status of media literacy as a conduit for positive change (rather than a solution in itself) was different in each partnership—from the production of counter-script youth-led media to capacity-building for refugee participants in host communities to the situating of "mainstream media" itself as the agent of positive intervention in the ecosystem. Our theory of change situates media literacy as a form of context-bound capability development as opposed to a set of neutral, universal competences. The research that we share here was conducted with "third space" media literacy design principles. In addressing both the positive change initiated by these projects and the tensions and challenges in play in the motivating imperatives of partnerships, the article speaks to the complexity of media literacy in diverse societies.

Keywords
capability; change; civic engagement; media ecosystems; media literacy; third space

Issue
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1. Introduction

This article compares media literacy interventions facilitated through differently motivated partnerships in fragile contexts, working with participants in the Global South. It uses a theory of change for the role of media literacy in the health of media ecosystems in diverse societies. Media ecosystems are "the dynamic systems of relationships between various actors, processes and structures that influence how media content is generated, shared, consumed and used" (BBC Media Action, 2021, p. 2). They can be national or broader in scale. Change occurs as media literacy develops in people from access to awareness to capability to consequences, potentially disrupting media ecosystems in positive ways as this develops among and between citizens as a collective media literacy.

In this article, we compare three media literacy partnerships to assess how their configuration makes a difference to the motivating imperatives of media literacy work in diverse societies and fragile contexts. Our methodology for understanding this is to analyse how the kind of space each project generates relates to the four elements of our theory of change for media literacy (access, awareness, capability, and consequences). The purpose of the study is to generate new knowledge about the role of media literacy in positive ecosystem change and the importance of "third space" in the design of the partnerships that seek to bring about such change.

Media literacy is dynamic, living, and unsettling (Lee et al., 2022; Pahl & Rowsell, 2020; Potter & McDougall, 2017). It develops as such through "third space" partnerships involving education, training, subcultural and community activity, activism, and media "artivism" (Medrado & Rega, 2022). We see media literacy as deeply situated in cultural, geo-political and media ecosystem contexts and therefore our approach attempts to avoid universal, "neutral" solutionism as manifested in competence models which assume positive outcomes from the development of media literacy in itself. We think this assumption is not only problematic but also counter-productive when the evidence clearly demonstrates that the negative, harmful uses of media literacy (Bennett et al., 2020) far outweigh the positives.

We worked with BBC Media Action (2021–2022) to develop the theory of change, which we then brought to the other projects and informed a media literacy toolkit and training programme for in-country practitioners to strengthen media ecosystems and resilience to information disorder.

Dual Netizenship (2021) was a youth-led partnership at the intersection of inter-cultural media literacy, civic agency, and decolonisation. Funded by the British Council, this third space project brought two youth media organisations, Fully Focused (UK) and Boubli (Tunisia) together to create youth-led alternative media artivism.

Digital Arts—Refugee Engagement (DA-RE, 2021–2022), funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund, brought together Rohingya and Syrian refugee youth groups with academics and practitioners in Bangladesh and Turkey to combine media literacy and arts-based research with refugee capability development.

The problem this research addresses is the need for media literacy to be a conduit for positive change as opposed to a "neutral" end in itself. The context for this was different in each partnership—from the locating of "mainstream media" itself as the agent of positive intervention (BBC Media Action) to the production of counter-script media and inter-cultural co-creation (Dual Netizenship) to the use of existing media literacy in combination with newly motivated activities for capacity building for marginalised communities (DA-RE).

In this article, we assess what these projects share, by way of the change agency we are seeking to elicit, and also the tensions and challenges in play in the motivating imperatives of such partnerships. We argue that this duality speaks to the complexity of media literacy in diverse societies. Our over-arching research questions are linked to the theory of change elements:

> RQ1: How do media literacy partnerships in third spaces make a difference in the ways in which people access media?
>
> RQ2: How do media engagements generated by media literacy partnerships in third spaces develop more reflexive awareness of the relative health of the media ecosystem?
>
> RQ3: How do media literacy partnerships in third spaces convert access and awareness into capability through their function as non-formal education?
>
> RQ4: How can the capabilities generated by media literacy partnerships in third spaces impact media ecosystems with positive consequences?

2. Beyond Solutionism to a Theory of Change

Media literacy is prominent in both political and media rhetoric when solutions to misinformation and polarised discourse are sought. Whilst this is currently amplified, this is a perennial "fix," as Buckingham (2017) observes:

> Media literacy is often invoked in a spirit of "solutionism." When media regulation seems impossible, media literacy is often seen as the acceptable answer—and indeed a magical panacea—for all media-related social and psychological ills….This argument clearly frames media literacy as a protectionist enterprise, a kind of prophylactic. It oversimplifies the problem it purports to address, overstates the influence of media on young people and underestimates the complexity of media education.

The more agentive uses of media literacy for positive change are generally elusive to the oxymoronic neutrality endemic to this solutionism because this requires more longitudinal evidence of media literacy in society beyond education, and also with a commitment to good consequences, as opposed to the gaining of competences which can be—and often are—used to create the problem. In other words, they bear witness to the paradox that unhealthy media ecosystems are not caused by a lack of media literacies so much as the toxic uses of them. Our research seeks to address the problem by moving beyond skills and competences alone to focus on these uses, a first step is to work with Sen's (2008) capability approach to emphasise the significance of active media behaviours and decision-making (functioning) and be more attuned to variations and local contexts (resources).

Change occurs as media literacy develops in people from access to awareness to capability to consequences. Access is enabled as people first gain the means to be included as an individual in the full media ecosystem and then increase and/or change their access through changing media behaviours. Awareness develops as people come to understand, at the micro level, how media re-presents the world from particular points of view with particular intentions and, at the macro level, the relative health of their media environment. The Capability stage involves people using their media literacy for particular purposes in their lives. This can include civic engagement,

employability, or community actions. However, there is no reason why this capability will lead to the positive uses of media literacy unless this is combined with consequences in particular ways, through the conversion of media literacy capability into positive change, requiring an active desire for our media to promote equality and social justice. Far from being the inevitable outcome of media literacy, the evidence suggests the opposite. Polarising discourse, "othering" media representations, misinformation, and conspiracy narratives are produced *by* the media literate.

3. The Third Space

Moving beyond solutionism, to work instead with media partners, civil society, and citizens in local contexts—for the "how" of media literacy—requires the design and sustainable operationalising of a conducive "third space,'' which:

> Involves a simultaneous coming and going in a borderland zone between different modes of action….The third space is thus a place of invention and transformational encounters, a dynamic in-between space that is imbued with the traces, relays, ambivalences, ambiguities and contradictions, with the feelings and practices of both sites, to fashion something different, unexpected. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 406)

Third spaces for media literacy work involve the reciprocal exchange of aspects of the "first space" of everyday living media literacy practices with the "second spaces" of formalised research, with the ultimate goal being to make the research encounter itself the third space. We have previously researched the affordances of media literacy for third spaces (Potter & McDougall, 2017) and, in the projects we share in this article, we observed the ways in which the configuration of first spaces of participants and the second spaces of the partner organisations we were working with made a difference to the social and civic practices of media literacy for positive change in diverse societies.

4. Media Action

In this project, we produced the theory of change which frames this article in order to help Media Action (the BBC's international development charity) to progress their activities to ecosystem consequences through integrating a more strategic media literacy approach into their existing work. Media Action works in 20 of the world's poorest, most diverse, and most fragile countries, supporting independent media, and providing training and outreach work on media literacy for journalists and publics in audience and community contexts. Our research identified four clusters of activity where media literacy is developed through the projects the organization facilitates. Here we describe three clusters and offer more detail and examples for the fourth.

As the four elements in the theory of change do not happen through linear progression, from one to the next, our research into Media Action's existing practices and potential for media literacy development identifies clusters of activity where the elements of the theory of change are evident, often partially.

In Cluster 1, media literacy is baked in to activities, rather than explicit. Interventions which directly support and bolster media ecosystems through working with public service and independent media organisations improve Access in the short term but the sustainability of the publics evaluating this access for themselves (Awareness) and the sustainable Capability for audiences to be active in the ecosystem are longer term, expected, but indirect outcomes. For example, strengthening the media ecosystem in Zambia through a mixed methods approach to supporting local radio was informed by a deep diagnosis of potential impacts through this medium and addressing barriers. The combination of community outreach and co-production enabled a third space for journalists to work with BBC Media Action, but this was partial as it was more of an exchange between two second spaces and did not engage the public's first space media literacies. In Cluster 2, interventions partially address media literacy, as media content and audience separation are maintained throughout projects. Access is the core objective, Capability is evident. For example, Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap in Sierra Leone uses storytelling and advocacy (#ChooseToChallenge) for change for women and girls through radio co-presenting. This is a form of "changing the story" with Access and Capability at the core of the intervention. Awareness (of how "the story" needs to be changed) and Consequences (of accepting "the story") are more long-term aims. In Cluster 3, media literacy is the *what* but not the *how*. Such work operates at the level of Access by sharing impactful practice to address barriers and inequalities, in some cases leveraging peer and community support, moving towards "third space" (between Media Action and this peer and community activism). However, progression to the Capability stage is limited because working to change the conditions required for media literacy to develop at the *access* stage was not within the scope of interventions. For example, Increasing Women's Digital Literacy in India works at the level of Access and sharing impactful practice to address barriers and inequalities, for example, handset cost, social norms in rural settings, and gendered perception barriers to digital investment. Leveraging women's empowerment collectives involved peer and community support, moving towards "third space." However, a lack of impact on the external normative environment impeded progression to the Capability stage because working to change the conditions required for media literacy to develop further at the Access stage was not within the scope of the activity. This project speaks compellingly to the complexity of media literacy

in diverse societies and the need for the "glocal" adaptation of approaches.

Cluster 4 is the body of work where there is rich potential to fully integrate media literacy. For example, Tea Cup Diaries (a radio show set in a busy tea shop on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar) shares many characteristics with media literacy projects in educational contexts, raising awareness of source and healthy scepticism about the trustworthiness of material, acknowledging young people's emotive engagement with media and information rather than only imposing the "false binary" of true or false. The potential for this approach to address media literacy "head on" is capturing the more critical or mindful engagement with information on social media that participants reported: How did playful questioning translate into sustainable media literacy practices, post-project? How can this be replicated for peers, to progress from short-term, reactive treatment to more developmental inoculation, in a third space between this "mainstream media" content and the community? Capability and Consequences are evident; Awareness is partially demonstrated. The Climate Change Asia report on Cambodia disseminates findings from a mass survey of citizens' experiences and perceptions to inform the creation of communications that motivate people to act. The "journey" framework for media intervention, integrating media audience segmentation, is agile, developmental, and dynamic and offers perhaps the closest "fit" to the capability framework: "When a media intervention begins, people in Cambodia may find themselves at any stage on the communications ladder. The goal is to help them move up the ladder, towards the adapting rung" (Southall et al., 2019, p. 69). This development but segmented "ladder" approach is well aligned with our theory of change, where audiences and beneficiaries of Media Action work might be at the Access stage, or they might demonstrate high levels of media literacy but have no means for Capability. Or they might be using their media literacies for negative Consequences and need to be reached for educational work on Awareness.

With regard in particular to Global South contexts (see Rega & Medrado, 2021), it was clear that this potential to develop media literacy activity as a more overt and measurable component of Media Action's work needed to be fully informed by the challenge presented by the hardest groups to reach with media literacy being at opposite ends of the spectrum. At the one end are those without safe Access to media literacy, for either economic, technological, educational, or political reasons. On the other are those with Access and Awareness who are already demonstrating Capability and are aware of Consequences but for whatever reason are not concerned for them. Media literacy work in diverse societies is complex and beyond solutionism, it takes place between these poles.

From this field analysis, the strategy we developed for Media Action builds on these clusters of partial activity and potential for development to facilitate outreach work to enable dialogue between media and people/communities to integrate media literacy practices into new forms of third space opportunities to learn new skills from each other, discuss the role of media and information in their lives and the problem of information disorder from their lived experiences, and enable them to get involved by suggesting new content, upskilling to co-create it, and/or generating community media maker-spaces. This work involves collaborations with NGOs and community-based organisations and with civil society to amplify the programming and promote media literacy among communities, support journalists, and local media organisations to partner and build coalitions with local, regional, and global media literacy networks. These ways of working focus on the kinds of "glocal" capacity cited above as essential, through connecting the international media literacy community with in-country work and in reaching the more vulnerable, who tend to have the least access to mass media and also to be (unintentionally) excluded from media literacy projects.

5. Dual Netizenship

We worked as embedded researchers (for the British Council) with Boubli, a youth-led alternative media platform in Tunisia. We conducted an ethnography of Dual Netizenship, their inter-cultural partnership with Fully Focused Productions, a youth media organisation in the UK, and, more closely, a case study of Boubli's methodology for civic intentionality from media literacy. For this, we used content analysis, audience analytics, a focus group within Boubli's online Discord platform, and interviews with community and team members.

The third space was complex for the inter-cultural media literacy project as the source project spaces were more dynamic and differentiated configurations than just home (first) and second (project) since youth-led media is in itself a third space endeavour. Explicit distrust of mainstream media was more pronounced among the Boubli participants, who were seeking an alternative, outside of the ecosystem, and were also very concerned with inter-generational tensions, whilst Fully Focused participants were sceptics about mainstream media more than direct resisters and seemed also to have the capability to access to a greater variety of media. This presents an interesting challenge for intercultural youth-led media projects, as the existing media literacies of participants may be culturally specific with regard to critical reading and dynamic engagements with media as opposed to distrust and resistance. The starting point and cultural motivations for media literacy may, then, be very different. We also observed how Dual Netizenship was a struggle to facilitate as "youth-led" whilst maintaining the integrity of objectives due to the number of adults involved and a sense of "flipping" the hierarchy to a different way of working from what people were

used to, which was perceived to be intimidating for youth participants at the start. Tunisian respondents reminded us that inherent to this kind of project is the imbalance between countries; therefore, it might be harder to avoid the colonising framing.

Our findings formed a set of transferable principles for this kind of partnership (Rega & McDougall, 2021). These include: negotiating media literacy objectives, nuanced for local contexts, which enable a tripartite capability approach, to combine (a) third space intercultural knowledge exchange, (b) counter-script media representation, and (c) media training and development; working with values for capacity and resilience—sharing across cultures, negotiating, refining, agreeing, and reviewing—neither imposing nor evading, as this is the core of the "uses of media literacy for positive change"; addressing gender and power in the moment through strategic design to bear witness to youth itself as another "problem space" and respecting difference as a first principle; transforming the frameworks for media production so that changing media or positive change through media—to make the world more equal, diverse, and inclusive—is privileged over "the media" in all contexts and between them and looking out for both intercultural nuance and textual moments that "change the story" for each partner and going with them. In this case, inter-generational concerns were more prominent than "youth vs. media" in Tunisia and also the fusion of aesthetics and poetry with social realism was formative on the UK side, but each media literacy partnership will have equivalent "sparks." Using our theory of change, our findings were as follows.

5.1. Access

Boubli uses entertainment with high production values and connections to existing subcultures and influential media agents as an "engagement pathway" to media literacy for civic intentionality. This is achieved through a distinctive convergence of content and community, with the impact on youth achieved through an interplay of environment and belonging, non-hierarchical third space values, and the textual field itself. In the spaces generated by Dual Netizenship, access was extended to intercultural peer support with shared values.

5.2. Awareness

The Boubli community demonstrate the highest levels of experiential "meta" reflexivity with regard to their understanding of the Tunisian media ecosystem. Whilst there was consensus that the Tunisian media ecosystem is unhealthy, there was less agreement 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 of its media practices, in the sense that producers and audiences are in constant reciprocal dialogue and content is produced with sensitivity to the audience's very high expectations and sophisticated interpretation of both content and values. This dialogue also forms the bridge to Capability. In Dual Netizenship, this "meta-awareness" of the relative health of participants' own media ecosystems was clearly enhanced by the comparative dimension being played out experientially, as the youth-led production navigated these differences and tensions.

5.3. 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, combined with an ethos of peer-learning and learning to learn. People engaging with Boubli across audience and community groups reported an interest in researching further into issues, topics, and debates, instead of forming first impressions or taking information and perspectives at face value. This, in turn, boosts resilience to misinformation and has the potential to reduce polarization. Respondents reported a "mindset shift" with regard to tolerance, understanding of conflicting perspectives, and respect for diversity. In Dual Netizenship, the Fully Focused participants' relationships with their "second space" and the new inter-cultural third space seemed more straightforward, adding another layer to the more comfortable duality of using media for change whilst training to work in "the media." This is due to the ecosystem differences between the two contexts.

5.4. Consequences

Boubli has impacted the Tunisian media ecosystem in positive ways. On the one hand, since this impact has been strategically manifested more in providing an alternative media platform, the criteria in our theory of change for improving the health of *the* media ecosystem are more difficult to assess in this more complex situation.

But on the other hand, the "third space" social infrastructure which Boubli has developed, and our respondents valued so highly, does provide compelling evidence of the progression to positive consequences in the integration of agentive media literacy, community, and critical thinking about divergent views. In Dual Netizenship the counter-script aspect of media literacy work provided an unintended consequence, as the potential of the inter-cultural project to develop the capacity to act for positive change brought to the surface the more complex dynamics between the Tunisian "source project," mainstream media, and youth-led agency as a more complex problem space than the environment their UK counterparts were working in.

Across the visibility threshold (Rega & Medrado, 2021) of capability into consequences, we expect Boubli

to represent a media literacy intervention which will continue, sustainably, to impact the Tunisian media ecosystem, youth efficacy, and civic intentionality. However, our findings raise questions about the risk of hegemonic colonisation of "the voice" for young people, especially since responses to our questions about the future of Boubli as an alternative platform were the site of the least consensus. Nonetheless, it is clear from our research that the interplay of media literacy, audience and community which Boubli embeds as a values-driven approach and operationalises in and across all of its social practices is, subject to geo-cultural specificity, transferable as a model of both agentive media literacy for social justice in diverse societies *and* the productive unsettling of media literacy itself in the new spaces it brings into being (Lee et al., 2022).

6. Digital Arts: Refugee Engagement

DA-RE was an exploratory research partnership between refugee youth, academics, educational practitioners, and community activists working with refugee research assistants using arts-based activities in combination with existing media literacy for developing the capabilities of refugee youth in Turkey and Bangladesh.

DA-RE's participants co-created digital arts and connected with one another in a virtual space to share narratives from their situated perspectives and lived experiences. In these ways, they developed skills of engagement and agency in a digital "third space." This digital "third space" is embodied in the virtual exhibition in which young Syrian and Rohingya refugee artists and activists displayed their digital arts to offer a counter-narrative to "othering" discourses at work in their host communities (see Bademci & Karadayi, 2013; Uddin, 2021) and in the UK (accessible online, see Bournemouth University, 2022) and this became live in the reciprocal exchanges between the refugee youth in the two settings in real-time, during a live-streamed virtual event across the UK, Turkey, and Bangladesh. During the virtual event, the creative outcomes were screened to an international audience and the participants and research team reflected on the project, and this enabled funds of knowledge and media literacies to move across and between borders. At the same time, as with the "source projects" for Dual Netizenship, we observed that Gate of Sun, the project partner in Turkey, is in itself a third space endeavour as an alternative media platform for young refugees.

Eighteen digital art texts/portfolios were produced for DA-RE. The project generated three uploaded paintings, four collections of poetry with photographs, five films, two educational/informative videos for YouTube, one music video, one collection of videography, and two photojournalism pieces. Our analysis of this textual data located the connecting points between the media literacies our participants brought to DA-RE and the digital arts contexts the project's third space provided and identified moments of conversion in these connecting points of literacy into capability. We understand these as liminal spaces, visibility thresholds (Rega & Medrado, 2021) with consequences. Neag and Sefton-Green (2021, p. 17) observe how "forging a new life means not only finding a place to stay but, today, also making a presence visible across the migrant's difficult platforms," whilst Marino (2021, p. 8) observes the complex tension between the technological processing of refugee identities into "data subjects" and technology for social good: "an alternative, techno-mediated framework where the possibility of a counter-hegemonic project around a new idea for social justice for refugees can be imagined."

The artwork produced, displayed in the virtual exhibition and commented on and shared in a virtual international event can be categorised into four "meta-representational'' critical positionings, providing different but thematically connected motivations for the attention our participants wish for and from their audiences: (a) counter-representational storying of life in the camps included accounts of non-formal education, inter-generational digital networking, and participative development, including advocacy for cultural preservation; (b) narratives of crisis and trauma, aesthetically rich as well as deeply reflective; (c) gender equality as a focus of all media in the exhibition; and (d) a fourth theme fusing elements of the other three and converging in hopeful but complex digital arts.

The intention to convert existing media literacies into capability through art-based activities to facilitate positive consequences in terms of social justice and social good was at the foreground of the project, and, in terms of the theory of change, the project leveraged high levels of Access and developed reflective Awareness among its participants and also moved towards the more agentive levels of Capability and Consequences.

6.1. Access

We could see that our participants had, despite their circumstances, high levels of Access (the means to be included as an individual in the full media and information ecosystem, through technology access and the skills to use the technology).

6.2. Awareness

Through the work they developed and the reflections they shared, we also discern high levels of Awareness (of how media content and online information represent people, places, news, and issues from particular points of view with particular intentions and how the media environment we are engaging with is created and constructed, including who has a voice).

6.3. Capability

The artistic activities were used to channel experiences into messages, and the media literacy skills were utilised

in the process and developed further by the partners, but there was, as expected, no sense in which media literacy itself constituted the Capability needed for these forms of reflection and expression. Instead, in this relation, the application of such literacies into artistic acts, or modes of artivism, was the significant threshold. It is important to highlight that participants referred to themselves and one another as refugees but primarily presented themselves as artists, musicians, filmmakers, animators, writers, poets, and motivational speakers. So, whilst the themes of their media work related to identity negotiation, digital storytelling, and counter-representing lived experience as refugee youth, this was at most equal in importance and in many cases less important than the sharing of their work as creatives. Participants expressed a variety of motivations to produce their work, from the importance of articulating their lived experience in the camps and in the host community, to broader social justice objectives such as gender equality or early marriage, to the need to expose injustice and criminal activity but also messages of hope and resilience for one another and to others in similar situations—"Nothing is impossible"; "everybody wins by their own means."

6.4. Consequences

In DA-RE the use of existing media literacies combined with artistic practices was, from the outset, intentionally driven by the desire to contribute to social good and social justice. The way in which the project tried to contribute to social good was to enable a space for ethical listening to the stories that were shared by our participants in this convergence of their literacy repertoires and the possibilities DA-RE presented, to connect and to tell those stories to fellow artists experiencing a refugee life and to an international audience. This was very much in line with the motivations described, on behalf of the participants, by the peer research assistants involved in the project, for the work produced focussed almost always on being heard across the world; for example, "voices are bound by state and margin, art becomes the voice to the world." Their artistic outputs, digitally circulated, have the potential to "change the story," generate self-efficacy, and engage virtual and media audiences in an alternative discourse than the one of the refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers as passive and silenced, or dangerous and "other," as was also reflected in the virtual panel held at the end of the project. Nevertheless, the sustainable longitudinal impact (Consequences) of such an endeavour depends on "a dynamic conception of voice in which listening is clearly foregrounded" (Dreher, 2012, p. 157), and it is, therefore, the responsibility of both host communities and diverse audiences for such research, in the West/Global North especially, to differently engage in these spaces where media literacy can enable "seldom heard voices" to be articulated. We acknowledge, however, the inherent contradiction in locating power and agency in the act of listening. Even if "under erasure," there can be no evasion of the paradox of stating such intentions without bearing witness to, in Spivak's (1988, p. 83) phrasing, "the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme," in implying that positive consequences of this kind of work in the first spaces of the "seldom heard" can only be realised through benevolent listening on our part.

7. Conclusions

The contribution this thematic issue makes is indicative of the compelling objective for the international media literacy field to acknowledge how the kinds of work we share in this article can address the complex challenge of "(g)locally" adapting or moving away from:

> A view of media literacy that is rooted in structures and production of knowledge that assume a universality of socio-cultural and educational experiences in the Global North. Critical reflection is needed, however, to understand if and how these conceptualizations can be relevant to other societies for which "the West speaks" or indeed to racialized and otherwise marginalized groups living in Western countries. (Neag et al., 2021, p. 1)

In this article, we have been primarily concerned with locating the nexus of each partnership and assessing how the configuration of partnerships makes a difference to the motivating imperatives of media literacy work in diverse societies and fragile contexts. Our methodology for understanding this has been to think through how the kind of space each project generated relates to the four elements of our theory of change for media literacy.

These partnerships are between various "stakeholders," participants, youth-led media organisations, NGOs, a charity, journalists, and academics. Whilst everybody involved in these projects brings funds of knowledge from their first spaces, we are concerned here primarily with the coming together of these first space experiences with second space media literacy development for the participants in the projects—those for whom the theory of change is designed to evaluate progress in and between the four elements.

In this "matrix" (Table 1), we locate the three projects we have assessed in this article, each intending to develop media literacy for social justice in diverse Global South societies, through a visual mapping of partnerships, spaces, and change.

The matrix, in representing where our analysis intersects spaces with our theory of change, indicates the following four key findings, which directly answer our four research questions (see Section 1).

In RQ1, the three projects all either enabled, improved, or built on high levels of first space media access, consisting of digital skills, technological resources, informed media engagement, and a diverse media environment. In two of the three projects (Dual

Table 1. A matrix mapping the intersection between spaces and the theory of change.

	First Space: Everyday Life	Second Space: Organisations	Third Space: Partnerships
	Multicultural London, disadvantaged youth in Tunisia	Boubli, Fully Focused Production	Boubli, Fully Focused Production, Bournemouth University, British Council, Million Youth Media, 5orti, Bird by Bird projects, No Ordinary Experience, Arab Media Lab, Intric 8
	Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Syrian refugees in Turkey	Gate of Sun	Gate of Sun, BU, University of Chittagong, Malpete University
	In-country journalists, audiences, and communities	BBC Media Action and in-country local media	Local media, audiences, and communities
ACCESS			
AWARENESS			
CAPABILITY			
CONSEQUENCES			

Note: Dual Netizenship in orange, DA-RE in green, and BBC Media Action in blue.

Netizenship and Media Action), there was also evidence of access improvements for second space organisations.

In RQ2, awareness of media representation at the micro level and media ecosystem health at the macro level was developed in the first space for participants working with Media Action and the refugee youth involved in DA-RE. For Dual Netizenship, both groups had high levels of awareness, cultivated in the partnership's second spaces, the "source projects." In addition, the inter-cultural dialogue increased the reflective meta-awareness of the relative health and nuanced contexts, comparatively, of the participants' media ecosystems, so we observe this a change enacted in and by the third space.

As for RQ3, the conversion of media literacy into capability was evident for all of the second space organisations we worked with in these partnerships, as they all developed new ways of working and new ways of using media literacies to further their objectives. In both Dual Netizenship and DA-RE, we could also see this capability conversion taking place in the media literacy third spaces: in the inter-cultural exchanges and film production (Dual Netizenship); and in the exhibition of digital arts and the attendant opportunities to grow as creative artivists (DA-RE). For Media Action, we saw potential, as yet partly realized, for the capability to be fostered in third spaces between mainstream media, community, and audiences.

Finally, in regard to RQ4, at the level of observable positive change, it must be acknowledged that the projects discussed here were all developed with the explicit intention of using media literacy for good consequences in terms of social justice and voice, so we would expect to move towards this element of the theory of change. However, the configuration of the partnerships meant that these consequences were differently motivated. The Boubli community are clearly agents of change in their first spaces, and this can clearly be linked to their enhanced media literacies. The DA-RE participants and Media Action's in-country communities are at earlier stages of ecosystem change, but our findings show the trajectory to this, hence the "dotted line" mapping. Media Action has tangible, positive impacts on second spaces, the local media it supports through the

media literacy development it provides for journalists. For Boubli, the visibility threshold we identified presents a challenge in terms of how the organization develops, as there is an argument that its impact on the ecosystem might require a step back in the future, hence another dotted line. For DA-RE, we could see most clearly how the third space partnership itself, in terms of the ethical listening it required by partners and the audience reached with the digital arts, created good consequences from media literacy work. This was the only case where consequences could be observed more clearly within the third space, as opposed to the third space being a catalyst for impacts in the first spaces of participants or consistent with new directions of travel for second spaces.

The limitations of this study are to do with the short-term potential for positive change we have been able to assess, without the scope for longitudinal follow-up to see evidence of ecosystem health improvements and also the way we had to work remotely, due to covid, not only as researchers engaging with participants through screens, but also in the ways that the partnerships themselves were reliant on virtual third spaces by necessity rather than design.

Our theory of change assesses media literacy in diverse societies as an aspect of broader capability and goes further to focus on the *uses* of these media literacies for positive change. In both these shifts of emphasis, the implications of this work for the field of media literacy oblige researchers and practitioners to see media literacy as context-bound and differently motivated, case by case, as opposed to neutral and in itself a solution to complex ecosystem problems. In also mapping this theory of change to third spaces, we have been able to understand in new ways how these motivations are both framed by but also inform the design of the partnerships through which media literacy interventions come into being and are evaluated for impact.

In diverse societies, where we work in partnerships in and with the Global South, it is crucial to understand this interplay of space and intentionality, towards an ethics of difference for a dynamic, unsettling of media literacy. In this way, we are not only thinking about media literacy *for* diversity but also striving for a more *diverse* media literacy.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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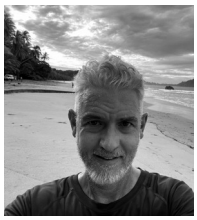

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