Introduction
Media and Information
Literacy as a Public Good

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The theme of the 2021 edition of the Global Media and Information Literacy Week was "media and information literacy for the public good" (UNESCO, 2021b). The Republic of South Africa hosted the theme week to uphold the vision of information as a public good in the context of a new post-COVID normality (UNESCO, 2021a). In times of multiple crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation and information warfare, and in an era where the free flow of information is increasingly controlled and constrained, it is essential to discuss how good efforts of the humankind, such as democracy, freedom of speech, and MIL, can be saved as a public good, for the common good.

The concern about MIL as a public good is dependent on appropriate structures for viable media that can sustain quality content, as well as accountability and public trust, and on citizens who can assess, nurture, and appreciate these (UNESCO, 2022). The Windhoek 30+ Declaration on Information as a Public Good (UNESCO, 2021d), which was announced at the World Press Freedom Day 2021 conference in Namibia, identified several factors as prerequisites for guaranteeing information as a public good that would "serve as a shared resource for the whole of humanity" (ibid., 4), including press freedom, media independence, plurality and viability, transparency of digital platforms, and citizens empowered by media and information literacy (MIL).

Recognizing MIL as a public good emphasizes the importance of collaboration among governments, educators, and civil society to strengthen this critical skill set, ultimately improving societal well-being. According to the concept notes for Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2021 (UNESCO, 2021a, p.2), the complex information environment in post-covid societies necessitates capacity building for MIL:

> In the current ecosystem of complex and sometimes contradictory messages and meanings, it is hard to conceive of the public good being advanced if the public is disempowered in the face of opportunities and threats. Capacity building is needed of our competencies in order for each individual to understand the stakes and for the public to contribute to and benefit from information and communication opportunities. Specific knowledge and skills are needed, and UNESCO aggregates these under the banner of media and information literacy.

Aspirations to keep MIL in the public eye primarily prioritize the goal of preventing the knowledge, methods, and institutional structures that contribute to MIL, and the outcome of media education, from falling into the hands of a few, while instead ensuring that both the structures, processes, and their outcomes remain available to the public. Investments in MIL should remain in the public domain to ensure maximum accessibility and long-term development, based on a large base of actors organized in multistakeholder networks. The current media landscape presents significant challenges, including the dominance of a few transnational media companies, the centralization of media structures, platformization, and the blurring of profit and non-profit communication boundaries, which Eisenstein (2016) describes as a condition of "content confusion" where the genre boundaries of communication and marketing merge in increasingly commercialized promotional media cultures (Davies, 2013). Political negotiations about what is and is not public occur in debates about copyright protection, children's rights, and vulnerable and marginalized groups, among other topics. The public and open character of resources and processes does not always necessarily equal to the public or common benefit, even if publicness and openness are fundamentally important democratic principles.

Public Benefit

Within the academic context of political philosophy and ethics, the term "common good" refers to a normative and often abstract idea encompassing the collective well-being and welfare of a community, society, or the general public. Aristotle used the term common good (*to konei sympheron* in Greek) to describe constitutions that prioritize shared community interests over rulers' interests. It posits that certain fundamental values, goods, or principles should be pursued for the betterment of all community members, regardless of individual or specific interests. Similarly, John Locke (1698) used the term "common good" to refer to interests shared by all political community members. Members of a political community form social bonds with one another. Moreover, citizens in a mediatized society are increasingly taking on public roles, and the community's political morality requires them to think and act differently than they would if they were acting as private individuals. In other words, political morality encourages individuals to think and act following a shared concern for common interests (Hussain, 2018).

The common benefit encompasses a variety of elements, including social justice, equal access to resources, security, public health, sustainability, and the overall promotion of shared prosperity. The pursuit of the common good should be a foundational ethical principle for evaluating MIL policies, institutions, and actions in the context of governance and public decision-making, with the goal of improving the collective's overall welfare and flourishing, while also acknowledging the importance of balancing individual rights and freedoms with broader societal interests.

As a form of "a public good", MIL can be defined as a social or collective product, commodity, or service made available to all members of society. The marketplace creates private goods but is dependent on goods it cannot provide, such as property rights, peace, and education, particularly in the transversal competency of MIL. These must be created with the assistance of non-profit or modified market mechanisms. According to Kaul and colleagues (1999), public goods have two key characteristics: they are both non-rivalrous and non-excludable. Non-rivalrous means that many people can consume the good repeatedly without becoming depleted, whereas non-excludable refers to a situation in which no one is excluded from consumption. Individuals' increase in MIL competence is supported

by public goods regimes, also known as welfare infrastructures, such as public schools, libraries, museums, and archives, as well as civil society and market structures. The more people develop media literacy, the greater the benefits for each individual, as valid information accumulates and is elaborated in the networked cultures of the information society. Simultaneously, MIL cannot be purchased; rather, it must be acquired through iterative practice that lasts a person's entire life.

How MIL constitutes "a public good" should be examined more closely. In this context, MIL can be viewed as the result of the creation of public goods such as education, texts, and free circulation of ideas. Is it the concept itself that can be identified and consciously developed, as a symbolic idea that can be translated into strategies and actions, as well as the indirect result of promotional activities that manifest as competencies among population groups? The various levels and forms of "public good" are deeply intertwined: MIL awareness is a prerequisite for governments and intergovernmental bodies to recognize the importance of developing infrastructures to support MIL and taking action to promote it.

UNESCO has spent decades working across all continents to establish a global vision for the importance of MIL. After defining and demarcating the concept as an umbrella term to denote people's "ability to access, analyse and create information in a variety of media" (Wilson et al., 2011), UNESCO has outlined guidelines for the development and implementation of policies that would make societies more media-literate (Grizzle et al., 2013, 2021). Creating media-saturated societies that are accessible to all and facilitating the development of competences among the population has been designated as a political priority. MIL, as an ecology of competences that result from both formal education and informal learning, enabled by appropriate infrastructures and informed governance, can thus be viewed as a public good for the public good.

If the public interest requires making MIL and related products and infrastructures available to all, what are the barriers to learning being accessible and affordable to all? Making texts as products a public good does not imply making knowledge a public good, even if removing barriers to text accessibility has implications for knowledge-sharing (Suber, 2009). The commitment to open education and the creation of open educational resources, as reflected in UNESCO's (2021c) recent recommendations on open science, represents a global effort to create information as a public

good. The availability of learning resources, such as massive open online courses, lectures, and other teaching events made public via recordings and streaming, contributes to MIL processes as a public good. Virtual platforms and tools enable academics to share their insights and connect with stakeholders in various ways.

To learn more about MIL as a public good, systematic data on its manifestation across population groups should be collected. One of the central challenges, however, has been the difficulty in measuring MIL in a valid and, in particular, comparable manner (e.g., Bulger, 2012). It is difficult to draw a line between what is "enough"– that is, what is the preferable minimum level of mastering MIL– and how MIL is enacted in everyday situations rather than simply tracing MIL awareness. Even if a political decision could be made about the optimal times – everyone should be exposed to news for at least four hours per week – we would still be unable to fully capture the transformative process of learning. MIL achievement and enactment are context-dependent and not reducible to the timing or frequency of media use or a specific type of media. It cannot be viewed as a skill in using technology, such as completing certain tasks at a certain time. Nevertheless, in public debates, the ability to apply MIL is frequently reduced to people's ability to identify fake content or perform specific information search tasks, as if the choice was always between "yes" or "no"/"fake" or "not fake". In a similar and simplified manner, MIL is frequently envisioned as "vaccine" or "syringe" against disinformation and malinformation.

Despite the difficulties in providing specific evidence in terms of quantity or versatility, MIL can be viewed as a way to combat inequalities and increase population groups' resilience to disinformation and propaganda. Instead of being given a simple "yes" or "no" choice, media users and content creators should be taught long-term critical thinking skills. The long-term strategy work is a continuous bass line of transforming information into public benefit.

MIL-washing and -wishing

Recently, new actors, such as digital communication and public relations companies, often partnered with individuals acting as social influencers, and the media, both legacy and new media, are showing an increasing interest in advancing the MIL agenda. The UNESCO initiative "Letting the sun shine in" advocates for increased transparency between companies, such as in the collection and use of personal data, in order to hold companies more accountable for their operations (Puddephatt, 2021). Digital content creators classified as social influencers, which range from independent citizens to professionalized users collaborating with influencer networks, should adhere to a common code of conduct that emphasizes the public good (Martin, 2009). Furthermore, the actions of media and scientific publishers that restrict content behind paywalls may be considered detrimental to MIL and the public good. If publishers regard information as a democratic common good, they should actively pursue transparency (UNESCO, 2021c).

Therefore, in digital commercial spaces, we should remain vigilant about instrumental uses: MIL has the potential to be exploited as a means of gaining reputation as part of for-profit activities, similar to using the concepts of sustainability and green transformation as greenwashing, or deliberate efforts to make something appear more favorable in terms of environmental issues (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020), or greenwishing, wishful thinking with unattainable goals (Austin, 2019). In the same way, "MIL-washing" or "MIL-wishing" are actions that use MIL strategically for the benefit of an organization or a specific interest group. Companies may give the impression that they are engaged in non-profit MIL promotion while selling products, converting MIL promotion into covert marketing. Popular public events, such as book fairs, frequently strive to be perceived as institutions with democratic goals, even if their operations are based on profit-seeking principles; exhibitors and visitors pay to attend the event, and anyone who pays may become a content producer. Especially if commercial actors are willing to include any paying customer, regardless of content, in the "public" arena, the common benefits may not be realized. Therefore, the public good should be actively defined in public debate and not sacrificed for financial gain or revenue, or viewed as an all-encompassing umbrella of "freedom of speech". It can be difficult to see the true intentions and consequences of MIL actions at times, because for-profit organizations' self-interests can overlap with public benefits and interests.

All media can be used for both "good" and "bad" purposes, because "good" and "bad" are defined in terms of the communal perspective of the "common good." Even though the perspective of "good media" has become especially prevalent in the development of artificial intelligence, where concepts such as "good AI" and "friendly AI" have emerged to denote beneficial uses (see, e.g., Jaakkola, 2023), the dual-use potential should be recognized when discussing any technology, media, or MIL. Even MIL skills and capacities can be used for both good and bad purposes (McDougall, 2017).

Structure and Outline of the Book

The MILID Yearbook, published annually by Nordicom from 2013 to 2018 and biennially by UNIMINUTO University since 2021, results from academic collaboration and network activities spanning continents. Its goal is to bring together MIL academics and practitioners from around the world to address global issues related to the overarching theme of UNESCO's Global Media and Information Literacy Week. Drawing on the experiences of the global Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue University Network (UNESCO/United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) MILID Network), the yearbooks help to promote research, higher education, and MIL participation. The network initiative, launched by UNESCO and the UNAOC at the First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy in Fez, Morocco, in June 2011, emphasizes the importance of MIL in today's interconnected world.

The MILID Yearbook's value lies in providing a crossroads for discussion of MIL across cultures and continents. This anthology is a global public good effort with 15 chapters written by 34 authors from 13 countries. Each of the book's three sections contains academic and professional contributions. The academic contributions are studies conducted according to the conventional scientific standards, while professional essays provide MIL educators and practitioners with opportunities for reflection, elaboration and sharing of the ideas they have experienced in their work. All chapters, invited through an open call for papers (Jaakkola et al., 2022), have undergone a double-blind peer review.

The book emphasizes the evolving nature of MIL and its significance as a public good. Alton Grizzle's introductory essay, "9 Aptitudes and 7

Excellences of Media and Information Literacy for the Public Good: A Purpose-Driven and Critical Reflection," elaborates on this idea, advocating for MIL's recognition as a critical component of societal well-being. Grizzle explains the multifaceted dimensions of MIL using the concept of aptitudes and excellences, emphasizing their collective role in cultivating an informed, engaged, and empowered citizenry. By defining MIL as a framework for critical thinking and civic participation rather than a set of skills, the chapter emphasizes the importance of global collaboration and collective action in enhancing MIL initiatives. Thus, this section serves as a foundation for future research into MIL's transformative potential in shaping modern societies and advancing the public good.

The first section focuses on the public good in the face of disinformation and the post-truth era. In an era characterized by the widespread dissemination of fake news and misinformation, MIL have emerged as critical tools for protecting democratic societies. Auksė Balčytienė and Kristina Juraitė, in their chapter "Media and Information Literacy as a Strategic Guideline towards Civic Resilience: Baltic-Nordic Lessons," emphasize the importance of MIL-driven guidance in fostering resilience in the aftermath of "inforuptions" and media-related digital communication disorders. They argue that MIL plays an important role in improving civic resilience and democratic sustainability, particularly in the Nordic and Baltic regions. They emphasize the importance of integrating MIL into larger resilience structures, such as media freedom, viability, and accessibility, by advocating for a comprehensive approach that considers the changing information landscape. Furthermore, they provide information on the challenges faced in the Baltic-Nordic region and recommend effectively incorporating MIL into educational and policy frameworks to improve social resilience.

Erasmo Moises dos Santos Silva and Agnaldo Arroio explore the critical role of science education and MIL in combating misinformation, particularly about science and scientists, as observed in movements against COVID-19 health protocols. Their chapter, "Science Literacy in the Age of Disinformation: Building Bridges to Address the Complexity of the Challenge," criticizes simplistic approaches to misinformation and calls for a more nuanced understanding of the problem. They emphasize the importance of scientific literacy and MIL in preserving democracy, science, and the common good, particularly in Brazil. The authors focus on specific issues to demonstrate the complexities of scientific

misinformation and its implications for public health and social trust in scientific institutions. Furthermore, they propose practical strategies for incorporating MIL into science education curricula, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing scientific disinformation challenges.

In a study titled "Combating Fake News: How Increased Media Competences Can Curb the Disinformation Trends in Nigeria," Desmond Onyemechi Okocha, Samuel Akpe, Idonor Emmanuella Rukevwe, and Ben Ita Odeba examine the phenomenon of fake news in Nigeria and the role of media literacy in combating it. Conducting qualitative interviews with journalists, the study examines how media competences can mitigate the spread of fake news, emphasizing the responsibility of journalists to validate information for credibility. This chapter explores the sociopolitical context of Nigeria and its implications for media literacy initiatives, highlighting the challenges faced in combating fake news in a diverse and rapidly evolving media landscape. Additionally, the authors propose actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and media professionals to enhance media literacy efforts and promote critical thinking skills among the populace.

Finally, the chapter "Do Fake News Catch Our Attention? A Study of Visual Attention Applied to the Consumption of Fake News About COVID-19 in Brazil" by Diogo Rógora Kawano and Tiago Nunes Severino examines the visual attention patterns of individuals when consuming fake news related to COVID-19 in Brazil and compares them to authentic news. Despite efforts to combat fake news, it remains unclear how people discern false information. The study uses eye tracking technology in 23 participants to analyze their ocular behavior while reading real and fake news. The results indicate differences and similarities in the attention given to various elements, such as headlines, main text, images, and news sources. The findings underscore the importance of using eye tracking technology to combat disinformation and highlight the need for more research in this area.

The second section explores post-pandemic literacy, focusing on MIL in the COVID-19 pandemic context. The section is introduced by Maarit Jaakkola's chapter "Capturing the Contours of the Field of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Research: A Systematic Literature Review of Studies Conducted at Swedish Universities in 2021" examines MIL within

the Swedish context and provides valuable insights into the landscape of MIL research. The chapter highlights the prevalence of MIL-related student theses and contrasts the approaches taken by student-led initiatives versus those driven by professional researchers and university faculty. It distinguishes MIL as both a standalone topic and an integral component of various academic disciplines, shedding light on the qualitative nature of original research in this field.

In a chapter titled "Transforming University Students into Library Users: Influence of User-Education Programmes on the Information and Study Skills of First-Year Students in South Africa," Katlego Petrus Chiya and Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha examine the impact of user education programs on first-year students' information and study skills at North-West University's Vaal Triangle campus in South Africa. They surveyed 1,885 first-year students from two faculties, selecting 320 through systematic sampling, using a quantitative approach and case study method. The results show that many students had no library training before university, but after participating in user education programs, they became independent library users, enhancing their lifelong learning. Most agreed that information literacy training improved their abilities, particularly in finding relevant study information. However, the study emphasizes integrating and evaluating these programs within the university curriculum to ensure their long-term relevance and effectiveness.

In his chapter, Michele Filippo Fontefrancesco's chapter, "Opportunistic Media and Information Literacy: A Case Study of the Implementation of E-Commerce in the Food Retail Sector in Italy," examines how small-scale food retailers in Italy used digital tools during the nation-wide lockdown. Although the pandemic increased familiarity with digital resources, the study reveals a transient, opportunistic approach to MIL with limited long-term impact. Yolanda Berdasco's professional contribution, "Post-Pandemic Financial Literacy in Social Media: How Microblog Posts Reflect Citizens' Opinions about Taxes," deals with the public discourse on pandemic-related spending and taxation through the social network of X, known during the pandemic as Twitter. By looking at tweets addressing tax-paying and -rising in Spain, she explores the challenges and shortcomings of a microblog to address complex societal questions.

The third section of the book explores the dynamic (re)evolution of textbooks, other educational resources, and instructional formats to promote MIL

as a public good. It examines innovative approaches like gamification and co-production of media content with young users to enhance MIL initiatives. By adapting educational resources to address contemporary media landscapes, the section gives examples of empowering individuals as informed digital citizens. Through collaborative content creation and evolving pedagogical practices, it underscores the importance of engaging formats in promoting critical literacy skills among learners. In their chapter titled "Media Literacy in Moroccan Secondary Education: An Analysis of Student Awareness, Teacher Understandings and Textbook Content," Mohamed Mliless and Fouad Boulaid analyze Arabic-language textbooks. They investigate the influence of media and communication technologies on contemporary society, highlighting the impact of the substantial influx of media content on daily routines. Using a multimethod approach, including student questionnaires, teacher interviews, and textbook content analysis, they assess the state of media literacy in Morocco. Their findings reveal students' lack of awareness of media literacy, while teachers recognize its importance. Both groups advocate for its classroom integration through appropriate materials and teacher training.

Meanwhile, in the chapter titled "New Instructional Formats for Media Literacy Education: A Retrospective Analysis of Projects Based on Gamification, Exploration, and Multiformats," the authors Santiago Tejedor, Laura Cervi, Samy Tayie, Cristina Pulido, and Sally Tayie reflect upon six innovative MIL projects conducted at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Their professional reflection sheds light on the effectiveness of these projects in engaging young people in the consumption of critical media. The success of these initiatives, which incorporate elements such as escape rooms, educational video games, project-based learning, exploration, and storytelling, underscores the necessity of continuously evolving and unconventional educational proposals tailored to contemporary media and platforms. The researchers emphasize the importance of collaborative research efforts between academia, media, and industry stakeholders to further develop these pioneering approaches in MIL education.

The US media educator Sherri Hope Culver documents and reflects on her own activity as a producer of a child-led podcast in her professional-type of chapter "Exploring Children's Ability to Employ Media and Information Literacy Assessments: Insights from the Podcast Kids Talk Media," giving a voice to children as media-literate consumers. Her autoethnographic approach outlines the essentials for working with under-aged media users

and collects advice for co-producing media content with young media users. Culver remarks that a podcast is a good medium for discussing media use with children, as it enables presenters to talk in an unobtrusive environment where they are not seen like in video recordings.

The fourth and final section focuses on curriculum development in relation to fostering conditions for MIL and recognizing it as a key enabler for individual and group learning and thus as a public good. In their chapter titled "'Controlling Borders – not Vaccination Status': Teaching about 'Fake News' and Human Rights across the Curriculum," Helena Dedecek Gertz, Franziska Gerwers, and Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer explore the pedagogical advantages of incorporating "fake news" related to COVID-19 and migrants into classroom instruction. By scrutinizing the discursive and multimodal strategies employed in such misinformation, they aim to foster MIL on various subjects. The chapter advocates for educational practices centered on analyzing content, discourse, and multimedia elements of "fake news" to enhance MIL skills among students. Furthermore, the authors highlight the importance of critical discourse and multimodal analysis in cultivating comprehensive perspectives, moving beyond mere identification and linguistic deconstruction of misinformation.

Tomás Durán-Becerra, Luisa Payán, Gerardo Machuca, and Cristian Castillo Rodríguez's chapter titled "Media and Information Literacy in Colombian Teacher's Education: Insights from Implementing the UNESCO MIL Curriculum," shed light on the potential progress in MIL within Colombia's educational landscape. By highlighting the initial steps taken to pilot the UNESCO MIL Curriculum, they describe how various projects developed by UNIMINUTO and other national actors are paving the way for the formulation of a comprehensive MIL policy, a critical step in improving educational equity and preparing students for the challenges of the digital era. While Colombia has made significant progress in developing technological infrastructure, the educational system suffers from quality inconsistencies across regions and sectors. Academic achievement disparities persist among secondary school students in urban and rural areas and between formal and informal education sectors.

Last but not least, Jociene Carla Bianchini Ferreira Pedrini, Cristóvão Domingos de Almeida, and Igor Aparecido Dallaqua Pedrini contribute with a professional reflection that examines the flipped classroom method within academic journalism education in Brazil. Their chapter "Graphic

Design and Visual Creation: The Flipped Classroom in Remote Learning in Academic Journalism Education" focuses on using the Canva app for visual creation in remote learning. They presented a case study on their experience with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at the UFMT Campus Araguaia in the second semester of 2021. The study discusses the difficulties of teaching practical subjects remotely, emphasizing the importance of specific software programs without jeopardizing the teaching-learning process. The findings highlight the Canva app's successful adoption as an innovative pedagogical approach, resulting in high-quality advertising and journalistic pieces, and both professors and students are pleased with the new teaching model.

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