

# Introduction

## Young and Creative

### Creativity in Everyday Practices

The 21st century saw the rise of digital media technologies which have influenced nearly every aspect of our lives. Digital media is part of the everyday life of many children and young people, as they use digital technologies to communicate, consume, learn, interact, and to create. This book, *Young and Creative – Digital Technologies Empowering Children in Everyday Life*, aims to identify a variety of examples where children and youths have been active and creative by using their own initiative, and by being driven by intrinsic motivation, personal interests, and peer relations. How to theorise, display, and initiate creativity is also included in the book.

We want to examine the opportunities of digital technologies for the creative processes of children and young people. Access to digital technology and its growing convergence (Jenkins, 2006a; Jenkins et al., 2009) has allowed young people to experience active roles as cultural producers. Participation becomes a keyword when “consumers take media into their own hands” (Jenkins, 2006b:132).

Since in *participation culture* people are seen both as consumers and producers, *Young and Creative* presents cases of children and young people being actively involved when creating, sharing, and responding to media. But what are they doing when they engage with media as DIY (Do-It-Yourself) creators and producers? A diversity of content-creating platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, DeviantArt, Fanfiction.net, Tumblr, Figment, Wordpress, and Scratch can be seen as “affinity spaces” (Lammers, Curwood & Magnifico, 2012), which are digital and informal spheres where there is a passion for creating and sharing.

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In order to explore young people's affinity spaces and new literacies or transmedia literacies and creativity, (see the interview with Carlos Scolari in this book), *Young and Creative* primarily, but not exclusively, focuses on what children and young people are doing in out-of-school or out-of-institutional spaces, showing how they are engaging in participatory and collaborative social contexts. The reader will also find examples of creative experiences in the classroom, from daycare to elementary school and international projects and festivals.

### The tone and sections of the book

The 18 articles in *Young and Creative* are divided into five sections. The first section, *On creativity*, opens with an article written by Shakuntala Banaji and offers a conceptualisation of creativity. Her rhetorical approach navigates questions such as “does creativity reside in everyday aspects of human life or is it something special?”, inviting the reader to analyse youth practices with digital media through historical and theoretical lenses. Danah Henriksen and Megan Hoelting's article focuses on the creative aspects of YouTube and the impulses of the learner that YouTube as a channel allows. The interview with Sonia Livingstone touches upon issues that are important to reflect on: YouTube's popularity does not imply homogeneity in meaning or use. In her research project ‘The Class’ carried out with Julian Sefton-Green, they observed that among 28 teens in a class in the UK, 28 different patterns of use were found, and only six were used to upload contents.

However, YouTube is the favourite online destination for many children around the world. The second section of *Young and Creative* is titled *The Creative YouTubers* and Margaret Holland's article further investigates common factors shared by YouTube celebrities, describing the behind the scenes of the phenomenon of user-generated content. Two other texts consider Brazilian children as actors. Lidia Marôpo, Inês Vitorino Sampaio, and Nut Pereira de Miranda focus on colours to analyse the success of young female YouTubers in the country. Paulo Guimarães and Maria Inês de C. Delorme further contribute by shedding light on the details of Rachel, a 14 year old YouTuber, who talks about her practices, fears, and dreams.

In the section *Expressions of creativity among children and youth*, we present Kyoungwha Yonnie Kim's research on the possibility of writing

novels on mobile phones. The genre of *keitai* novels is also presented in this book. Literature also appears in another title of *Young and Creative* where Alejandra Ravettino Destefani's article informs us that young people are using the YouTube platform to create videos, and share their passion about fictional books, incentivising new readers to get involved with stories.

We believe that it is fundamental to be curious and aware of the stories that children and young people are sharing on social media. Seok-Kyeong Hong and Sojeong Park's article on the *mukbang* phenomenon, in South Korea, can serve perhaps as an unusual example. The interview with Carlos Scolari centres around the concepts of transmedia storytelling and its place within informal learning spaces such as YouTube, social media and blogs, which bring forwards what he calls a narrative expansion.

Carmilla Floyd, a journalist with experience in interviewing children around the globe, was challenged to have an open online dialogue with young Instagram users from Sweden, China, South Africa, USA, and Vietnam. The photos that these young people took and shared while reading their motivations and aspirations are published here.

*Collecting and sharing creativity* is a section that focuses on different platforms facilitating creative communication, the sharing of knowledge and giving opportunity to exercise freedom of expression. It includes peer-teaching and learning among two five-year olds. In order to shed light on new possibilities for teaching and learning, local examples using e-portfolios (see Anna Keune, Naomi Thompson, Kylie Pepler & Stephanie Chang's article); DIY media platforms (Deborah A. Fields & Sara M. Grimes' article); and Minecraft (Sara Sintonen, Maj-Britt Kentz & Lasse Liponen's article), give us some innovative ideas. The interview with Margret Albers highlights the main scenes from a German Children's Media Festival, where children have been producing films (and more recently television programmes) for competition since 1996.

Children and young people are immersed in digital spaces, experiencing their creativity online, feeling driven to learn and share more of their ideas, but what can schools learn from their stories, YouTube videos, and e-artefacts? In the final section, *Training teachers to spark young people's creativity*, readers can find information about how the

European project AMORES (Geoff Walton, Mark Childs, Janet Hetherington & Gordana Jugo's article) suggests ways to fill in the gaps between children's media use and school. It is an international aim invested in teacher training and joint initiatives to increase involvement with reading literacies. Play, toy hacking, and filmmaking in early literacy is explored in Jill Scott and Karen Wohlwend's article, where stages of character development, storyboarding and filming, video editing and sharing, are included in a five-year study on literacy play. An interview with Kirsten Drotner closes the book with a strong appeal: how may we guide children's freedom to express themselves online? "We need to turn the tables", she says.

### Some final words

The articles and examples in this book indicate an interesting fact: even though digital technologies have a global appeal, the creative activities of children and young people are deeply rooted in their social and cultural environment and show cultural specialties.

*Young and Creative* is a mix of research articles, interviews, and case studies with contributions from Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. The target audience of this book is students, professionals, and researchers working in the field of education, communication, children and youth studies, new literacy studies and media and information literacy.

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