‘Borrowed access’ – the struggle of older persons for digital participation

Linda Reneland-Forsman


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ABSTRACT
This study investigates older persons engagement with digital interfaces as one important way to social inclusion. Digital exclusion and social exclusion are intricately intertwined, which put older persons at risk for exclusion. To construct meaningful educational practices for inclusion, more insight is needed to understand consequences of low digital competence. Eighteen men and women (retired) have been interviewed about their everyday encounters with digital interfaces. Results show how older persons ‘borrow’ knowledge from social networks or from contacts at previous workplace, to access technology and digital practices. Data also show a common acceptance of exclusion and changes in lifestyle. These fragile chains, put together to access digital practices jeopardise social inclusion understood as autonomy and participation in society. Informants did not mention community arrangements as resources for access and knowledge, which indicate that hard work is required to promote inclusion of this group. A possible way could be using the power of informally framed learning scenarios. Society cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that groups of citizens are hindered from developing capabilities to maintain a social life, to access the health sector, to enjoy integrity and independence and cultural recreation – to live a capable life.

KEYWORDS
Digital inclusion; internet access; older persons; participation; social exclusion

Introduction
Many countries have started a process of dismantling analogue ways of interacting in social, cultural, political and commercial contexts (Choudrie, Ghinea, & Songonuga, 2013; Dickinson, Newell, Smith, & Hill, 2005; Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014). This is also the case in Sweden with its relatively high internet access. To provide digital access to many of society’s important institutions and communities, alone is not enough to promote participation for groups with a high representation of non-digital users. Older persons represent such a group (Eynon & Helsper, 2011; Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014). Internet statistics show a digital divide across age groups – far from closing (Friemel, 2016). Low educational level, being a widow/widower and a low household income, all have a negative impact on internet use in Sweden. Of older persons who have lost a partner, 49% do not use the internet (Findahl, 2017).

Conditions for participating in society are not as simple as internet access however. Digital exclusion and social exclusion are intricately intertwined which put older persons at higher risk for exclusion. Means for changing this scenario are still not within reach. There is, for example, a
lack of reflexive and successful accounts of practices destined at empowering the digitally excluded (Seale & Dutton, 2012).

We need more knowledge of older persons obstacles and struggles with everyday digital interfaces. That would help us to design educational practices for older persons to develop a digital competence (EU, 2006), get regular access to digital technology and actively participate in social, commercial and democratic practices. Transferred to the context of older persons and a growing digital society, it is important to ask us what is actually possible for older people to achieve and become in terms of being an active participant in society (Bozinis, 2007).

This study presents stories of older persons’ everyday encounters with various digital media, collected to get better insight to the consequences of significant lower use of digital devices and internet among older persons for their participation (c.f. Friemel, 2016). Questions guiding the study are:

- How does a group of retired people (+65) describe and understand the impact of everyday digital practices in their lives?
- What consequences emerge from older persons’ everyday struggles with digital practices?

**The third age**

The notion of ageing as a possible period of independence commonly underlines digital policies. Niehaves and Plattfaut (2014), for example, claim that information technology allows members of a growing older population to remain independent longer. The growing older population is often described with a potential of economic independence, a prolonged quality of life and full participation in society. New technology allows for staying in touch with friends and families despite having difficulties to get around and can also prove convenient for accessing goods and services.

The concept of a ‘third age’ enhances differences and possibilities with new conditions following retirement and older age today in comparison with previous generations (Thelin, 2011). The third age is defined as a social stage in life that starts with old-age retirement and ends with dependency on others in order to manage everyday life (Laslett, 1981). Although a relative low representation of internet use among seniors, internet use in this group has increased since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Findahl, 2017; Hallows, 2013; Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014). Sweden is mentioned as a country of high internet adoption among older persons (61%), compared to the other end of the scale with Greece and Bulgaria with only 4%. Hallows (2013) explains increased use as possibly connected to insights into favourable conditions for life as a strong motivator. Niehaves and Plattfaut (2014) refer to an insight among older persons that personal performance and quality of life will improve using technology and that expected performance has a higher explanatory factor among the oldest in the age span than the younger.

**Aspects of engagement**

Sweden has one of the world’s highest rates of internet access. About 91% of people in Sweden have broadband internet access at home and 93% have a computer at home (Davidsson & Thoresson, 2018). Although technology becomes more and more pervasive, an age-related under-utilisation is observed among older persons (Findahl, 2017; Friemel, 2016). Older persons cannot be considered a homogenous group in terms of internet adoption (Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Reasons for non-engagement with digital technology are multifaceted. According to Helser and Reisdorf (2013), reasons for non-use did not vary greatly between men and women in a study of 2057 informants. Of all reasons mentioned, the only significant difference between men and women was found for skills, where women were more likely than men to indicate lack of skills as a reason for disengagement. The majority of today’s non-users in Sweden are found among the low-skilled and those living with disabilities (Findahl, 2012).
Non-engagement is related to issues of involuntary exclusion in terms of lack of knowledge and non-access to technology (Eynon & Helsper, 2011; Eynon & Malmberg, 2011; Friemel, 2016; Livingstone, Van Couvering, & Thumin, 2009; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006). While access is unconditional, participation is more complex and interrelated within the individual and a response to environmental variations (Ineland, Molin, & Sauer, 2009). Relevance is related to choice. Failing to see the relevance of internet, feeling too old, a lack of internet experience or internet skills, insufficient time and high connection costs are common expressions of non-use (Helsper & Reisdorf, 2013; Selwyn, 2006). Jargon associated with new technology is identified as a strong barrier to use (Dickinson et al., 2005; Richardson, Weaver, & Zorn, 2005) whereas communication with friends and families is a strong initiative for acquiring skills (Dickinson et al., 2005). In the Helsper and Reisdorf study (2013), loneliness was frequently mentioned as a reason for non-engagement.

Underutilisation in homes where there is internet access has been explored by van Deursen and Helsper (2015) who found that 43% of non-users actually had internet access at home. People who have internet access in their home, but do not use it, are arguably more likely not to use the internet based on what is usually referred to as an informed ‘choice’; that is, a decision not based on socioeconomic disadvantage but on personal preferences and needs (Eynon & Helsper, 2011). And according to Selwyn (2006), there are significant numbers of individuals who regard or state that technology is largely irrelevant to their daily lives. Choice is a difficult concept however, to separate from issues of digital and social inclusion, as ‘choice’ is clearly embedded within a social context and expectations that will shape what is often referred to as ‘choices’ (Blank & Dutton, 2012; Bozinis, 2007; Loges & Jung, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011; Seale & Dutton, 2012).

Access to digital technology is a necessary aspect of participating in a digitised society but also an inadequate aspect. It is necessary to combine what society provides in terms of conditions for human actions in a digitised society as well as personal capabilities of the individual (Nussbaum, 2011). A pragmatic consequence is that fundamental human rights cannot be violated regardless what measures a society or community has taken to change life conditions for its citizens.

Conditions for inclusion and learning

Overall socio-demographics as age and in some cases gender, education and household composition are strong factors for engaging in internet among the older persons (Helsper & Reisdorf, 2013; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Together with income and educational level they can explain 84% of the variations in internet use (if older persons will adopt to internet and to what extend; Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014). These framing conditions could further be connected to variables in self-esteem, exposure to technology and own experience of handling digital technology as well as lifestyle choices. The digital divide seems to have its narrowest gap in informal learning environments rather than staged community activities. A study by Slegers, van Boxtel, and Jolles (2007) investigated into the phenomenon of skill transfer and found that exposure to computer training for older adults did not affect their skills and involvement in other technological activities. The authors suggest that general technological skills might not do the trick.

In van Deursen and Helsper (2015), 39% of older persons with internet access at home indicated that they had used their social network to help them with online issues. But men and individuals over 75 were less likely to use their social network for help (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). van Deursen and Helsper also tested for traditional literacy skills. However, literary skills did not seem to affect reasons for non-use of the internet.

Many research communities and national digital strategies equalise access to internet with digital participation strategies (Yu, 2006). Swedish digital agendas are no exception. Bridging what is considered the digital divide in a Swedish context has previously resulted in campaigns characterised by discourses of adaptation and access to internet, trying to enhance the
number of connected citizens (e.g. The Digidel-campaign, http://digidel.se/other-languages/).
A recent agenda for sustainable digital transformation in Sweden (Ministry of Enterprise and
Innovation, 2017) introduces a shift in rhetoric from ‘access’ to citizens’ skilful ‘use’ of digital
resources.
We can, however, conclude that participation in adult and lifelong learning contexts seem to be
deply entrenched in trajectories based on class, gender, generation, ethnicity and geography
established at an early age (Selwyn, 2009; Tuckett & Aldridge, 2009) and thereby needs careful
consideration on how to approach the problem of non-participation.

Methodology
The concepts of meaning and learning are intrinsically linked to the experience of the individual
shaping the encounter of a new phenomenon influencing actions taken and choices made (Dewey,
1916/2004; Wenger, 1998). Meaning plays an important role to understand explicit choices about
engaging or non-engaging in digital media by the older population and discusses actions as
consequences from a social justice perspective. Lave and Wenger (1991) take an interest in the
actions of individuals as indicating participation at the intersection of community, social practice,
meaning and identity. In Wenger’s elaboration of a community of practice (1998), he describes
participation in the practice of a community as a move from peripherality and marginality
towards or away from a community membership as full participant – an insider (Wenger, 1998).
Wenger argues that our actions are guided by what we know of who we are and where
we belong based on what is familiar, what could be within reach and what we are not participating
in – out of our reach. Concepts with spatial references (central, peripheral, marginal, together with
‘in and out of reach’; Wenger, 1998) are useful for understanding older persons’ encounters with
digital interfaces in everyday life as movements and achievements associated with participation
and are here used as analytical concepts.

Data collection and analysis
In this study, 18 informants (+65) were approached outside their homes, at a mall in a
middle sized Swedish town reliant upon old industries. The education level in the commu-
nity is lower than Sweden in general. Potential informants were asked if they were interested
to participate in a study on how they experienced digital interfaces in their everyday life.
The informants were all retired and agreed to a conversation there and then. The content of
talks seemed to be engaging and the approached persons all agreed with one exception to sit
down and talk. Some conversations were followed up by lengthy interviews in the inform-
ant’s home or by phone at a time agreed upon after the interviews at the mall. A coffee
house, cash-machines, supermarkets, pharmacists and the Swedish Systembolaget who holds
the monopoly for selling alcohol are all found at this mall. Many older persons are seen to
meet there or spend time just observing others. The author was the sole interviewer and was
for two days placed on a bench outside the supermarket cashiers or in the coffee shop in the
close vicinity. Notes were taken at the mall and recordings were made when the interviews
took place in the home of the informant (4). The interviewing situation was designed with
the Swedish ethics acts in mind and the whole study is informed by ‘Ethics Education in
Science’ respecting the informants integrity and rules of good practice for publishing,
quoting and evaluating research (Academics, 2013). Out of the 18 informants, three had a
post-graduate education (social services, engineering and teaching).
A content analysis of older persons’ engagements with digital interfaces was done using concepts associated with identity and participation as:

(Wenger, 1998, p. 164)

This initial analysis was then placed in categories of participation based on the context of the excerpts and the wider narrative that they were drawn from. Outside, marginalised, peripheral and participator were used for describing actions taken by informants in different practices. Guiding the categorisation is the importance of distinguishing between peripherality and marginality (Wenger, 1998, p. 164) where peripherality here includes actions and illustrates a movement but marginality only talk about and no traces of actions.

**Findings**

The findings are here presented using themes emerging from data, i.e. engagement, strategies and obstacles, which are then further discussed in relation to the research questions as conditions for participating.

Variations of participation emerge from the material although marginalised and peripheral participation dominate.

Early on the recollections of the informants showed notions of despair and marginalisation.

You’re excluded…you know that for a fact. There are so many things you cannot take part in. You are socially excluded from a lot. We laugh at that. I told Hans (husband) if I need to go to Malmö. I cannot travel by train or bus. I cannot even take the bus down town since I don’t own a bank card. We laugh about that. Imagine not even being able to take the bus down town. Imagine being so left out. I have worked at movie theatres all my life and cannot go and see a film. I don’t know how to buy tickets…we are to blame actually…we think that we can cope without it…all these fancy new things. But that’s really stupid. You’re still left out and I believe that we do not appreciated older persons in Sweden.

(woman 70 – previous sports athlete)

In a group of 18 informants, two could be regarded as active participators based on expressing belonging in orientations in talk and actions as what is known and accessible connecting participation to achieved benefits and perceived well-beings. They were both men with previous executive careers. One of them described their advantages in relation to friends as:

What you have never had, you can never understand. When discussing with others we get stuck talking about the artefact and not the problem we are trying to solve.

(men aged 70, previous educational sector)

Both these informants gave account of pre-retirement engagement with technology and both owned a smartphone. Out of the remaining 16 persons, only one woman had a smartphone.

Remaining informants remained in periphery or marginalisation but well aware of what was not within their reach. Older informants (+75) tended to have given up which was often disguised in terms of ‘not interested’ or ‘I’m too old’. Feelings of insecurity were often triggered by a language associated with technology and what informants experienced frequently used in media with a taken for granted approach.

**Areas of engagement**

Personal economy was the area referred to by all informants as forcing them online. This is the area where most initiatives were taken. Several of the informants used direct debit payments and described that as convenient and accessible for them with some help through social networks or
support functions. This is the area where also the active participators gave examples of keeping track of electricity consumption and fuel costs using mobile apps and cash cards. The opportunity for better control over personal economy seemed to have worked as a trigger for activity and a means for facing obstacles associated with a better control using digital media.

Three areas stood out as low engagement areas. Health was only mentioned in connection with not accepting cash payment. No one referred to web-based or mobile apps for administrating health contacts. No one referred to communication with friends and families as an area of interest. Just one man mentioned activities training digital competence.

I signed up with friends at my previous workplace for a computer course but when my colleagues gave it up—so did I. (man 69, previous warehouse worker)

This particular informant returned to this missed opportunity several times during the interview. He realised that he was now dependent on his daughter’s skills. His daughter had tried to set up his laptop once but encountered difficulties and the fact that she too struggled, made him forget about setting it up. His computer was still unpacked in a box at home. There were examples in data of people using family and acquaintances that formed chains of up to as much as three individuals to access internet knowledge and skills. One informant (93 years) was dependent of her son (72). He owned a computer but lacked knowledge to use it and was himself dependent of help from a former colleague at work to set up contact with banks and the landlord for his mother.

To choose non-participation becomes expensive according to the informants. Several described themselves as being ‘losers’ and felt that it did not matter whatever measures they took. They were often charged with what they perceived as ‘punishing fees’, represented by extra charges or higher prices when services were conducted offline. Informants felt they had to choose between higher costs when using non-digital solutions or substantial cost for installing technology for going online.

Most informants used self-scan technology when shopping which seemed to provide a sense of control, which they expressed they otherwise lacked from digital technologies in general. On-demand listening to radio (podcasts) or play services for television was an area where a few informants had gained access and frequently used the service. Others mentioned on demand radio as being on the wish list but that required involving others to help them and they had not yet overcome that obstacle. One informant had sent back her digital television box since the struggle to install it successfully was out of her reach.

Results worth drawing attention to are the frequent mentioning of the importance of a former workplace – both in terms of social contacts but also as a place to visit and get access to internet or knowledge. Informants did not mention the library or other community arrangements as a resource for accessing knowledge or technology. Having to rely on the good will of their former workplace for communicating with institutions and banks was common among informants and was associated with feelings of insecurity.

Changes in lifestyle and habits

Several informants gave account of giving up on things that they had previously been engaged in but that were now out of their reach.

I can no longer participate in my daily paper’s cross-word competition since I need a special telephone (smartphone) and something called WyWallet which I don’t know what it is…

(woman 73, of academic background)
Informants refrained from cultural activities and programmes. They also gave account of not getting ‘out and about’ or changing their means for transportation due to changes related to digitisation.

It is an unfair system. Those who understand the digital system can more easily get hold of tickets to concerts and things...

(woman 73, of academic background)

Me and my husband have long talked about taking a trip by train but I don’t understand the fare system and how to obtain tickets so we have stayed at home. Now he is dependant of a zimmer-frame. I guess we will never go...

(woman 71, previous service sector employee)

Although having a sound economy and a wish to get around, individuals had given up on travelling due to computerised and ‘difficult’ systems for getting information and buying tickets. Access and initiatives were blocked for many of them since they are based on the use of smartphones and prepaid travel-card systems or bank-cards. Interviews also revealed misconceptions.

You are charged an extra 30% when using your cash card on the bus.

(Man 69, previous warehouse worker)

Some informants had changed their travelling habits and redirected to other forms of transportation. For longer trips several informants mentioned changing from train to coach services. Informants also stayed home rather than take a local bus since they lacked information on fares and ticket purchasing.

Here in the outskirts there are so few stations to refill or buy travel passes that we never take the bus (no cash allowed on board)

(woman 70, previous sports athlete).

One informant who had worked all her professional life at a movie theatre confided that she never goes to see a film because she did not know how to buy tickets. There were even recollections of having to travel to another town to buy tickets offline which made the whole prospect of travelling too gigantic for the informant.

**Obstacles**

The use of digital technology represented different types of obstacles in terms of lack of experience and knowledge, the cost to obtain technology and difficulties to access technology and support through a chain of different hard- and software solutions. Approaches to digital technology also seemed closely related to self-esteem and a difficult jargon associated with use.

It’s a completely new language which makes you unsure and gives you bad confidence

(woman aged 73 of academic background)

The 2-yr old grandchild is smarter than me (woman retired from the service sector)

I have a degree in Social Sciences but new technology makes me feel uneducated and stupid (woman age 71)

All this English – that makes it difficult for me (woman aged 93)

A constant reference to internet for information caused frustration.
Media is taking so much for granted, they refer to other digital technologies if you want to know more or participate

(*man 69, previous industrial worker*)

Some informants mentioned often being stuck in very long telephone cues for errands that could not be avoided. The ‘constant’ reference to internet for more information here creates a catch 22 situation. Several infrastructure changes had recently been carried out in the community and information about consequences and expectations on households were only communicated online. This had resulted in a private initiative where younger community members walked the area to inform the older persons. One informant remembered a problematic situation and a taken for granted attitude from the town council when there was a serious water leak in the town centre. Large parts of the community were cut off water for 2 days. It was announced on the radio that water tanks were posted around town. To know where these were located individuals were told to access internet.

‘I had to call my friends with computers to know where to go…’

Summarising results, the following areas of consequences for social inclusion stand out:

- the importance of a previous workplace for getting access to technology and knowledge
- changes in lifestyle and choices within reach
- a common acceptance of exclusion
- the importance of accessing others’ competence and skills.

**Understanding low engagement with digital interfaces**

A digital divide muddles the notion of a third age as an age of transformation of experiences, good health and economy for self-realisation and independence. The common use of digital interfaces for interacting in social, cultural, political and commercial contexts introduces new obstacles to independence among older persons.

The object of analysis here is older persons’ stories of coping or struggling to participate in a digitalised society. It became clear early during interviews that this was in many cases a battle already lost or never fought. Only two informants gave a more non-complicated account of their encounter with digital technology, not touching upon anything unreachable, placing them towards the centre of a community – as participators with a centred orientation. Several of the informants had enough knowledge to reflect upon what might be ‘good usage’ of internet and technology but was far from getting there for several reasons. There is, however, a difference between not participating and borrowing knowledge from others in an ambition to access digital practices. Using others for access means that something in the promises of access is regarded relevant enough to try to get someone’s help with (c.f. Hallows, 2013; Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014). In this study, promises of economic benefits were more often mentioned as a trigger for use than getting in touch with friends and families. Why keeping in touch with friends and relatives, as important areas of engagement with digital technologies, is not represented here, could have several explanations. In a smaller town with an industrial background and a general lower educational level in population, social networks might be quite stable and local, and the telephone and visits still being a frequent and smooth mean for communication. There were also a very low number of immigrants among the informants and a very low frequency of smartphone ownership in this group (3 out of 18).

A marginalised or ‘borrowed’ participation could be said to dominate the group of informants. Actions, if taken, were directed through others. The respondents were more likely to take help from friends and relatives to handle necessary contacts through digital interfaces than trying to master these contacts themselves.
Some informants refrained from certain situations affecting quality-of-life assessment (c.f. Nussbaum, 2011). The reflections made upon restrictions in lifestyle, often had the air of accepted exclusion and self-blaming. There was a surprising lack of anger or frustration – rather a resignation. Consequences of the dismantling of analogue interfaces are here illustrated as creating vulnerable chains of access through extended and gradually weakened social networks where loneliness adds obvious risks of exclusion (c.f. Helsper & Reisdorf, 2013). These results align with Friemel (2016) suggesting social capital as an independent variable explaining the use of internet and digital media rather than social capital being influenced by internet use. The digital divide still seems less narrow in informal social networks building the bridge between what is within reach and negotiable and a position as active participant (c.f. Helsper & Reisdorf, 2013; Selwyn, Gorard, Furlong, & Madden, 2003). Access to technology and traditional training here seems insufficient for increasing the engagement with digital technology by the +65 (c.f. Slegers et al., 2007).

The object of knowledge for this interview study has been insight into conditions affecting the degree of engagement with digital interfaces among older persons. Access to technology is obviously not enough when non-users fail to see the need for or benefit from digital solutions and those still not included are at risk of being further behind. This is a small study with no particular ambition to focus on gender issues. However, as established in previous research, gender is ruled out as significant for home internet access but there are studies that relate gender to fewer access points, slower engagements and generally lower levels of confidence with some stages of life of more importance to look into (c.f. Friemel, 2016). In van Deursen and Helsper (2015), women dominate among senior non-users although an internet connection at home. There are no findings in this study to suggest otherwise. Marginalised here come to mean a placement in marginality, not as mere choice but configurations of self as having given up not believing in your own capability of accessing knowledge or having no ambition to advance for different reasons (Wenger, 1998, p. 168). What further characterises the marginalised participation is the vulnerability it represents. Many of these informants technically fell under the categorisation of the third age. This group is in theory the target for many policy documents and actions taken by representatives from communities, health care and commercial actors. Third age policies and activities, however, address the idealised participants or the peripheral participant in a digitised society rather than the marginalised.

Results here establish up to three human links between an older person and access to internet. Social networks play an important role but so do previous careers and workplace in this data (c.f. Selwyn, 2006). A now growing number of people outside the labour market and a proposed scenario for the future of fewer persons supporting larger groups outside the labourmarket suggest that this divide of direct access and knowledge of internet and digital media is at risk of growing. Additionally, there are all the older persons who are cared for on a daily basis. A report presented to Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare shows that lack of digital skills makes professionals in health and social care refrain from using existing assistive technology, which could improve everyday life for socially disadvantaged groups (Modig, 2012). Taken together this strengthens us in a departure that links digital participation to lifelong learning and the individual’s right to develop and use their capabilities to maintain a social life, to access the health sector, to enjoy integrity and independence, cultural recreation and a sense of belonging (Nussbaum, 2011). The right to live a capable life is threatened.

Ageing in a digitised society seriously challenges the notion of old age or the third age as a normative and individualised ideal, constructing ageing as the product of lifestyle choices. The concept of ‘dependant’ needs to be problematised here. There is no institution in society in Sweden to turn to for help in handling everyday digital interfaces when interacting in and with society and nothing equivalent to a Seniornet is asked for or mentioned by informants. Being non-digitally competent is not considered being dependent, however, although individuals’ ability to be an active participating citizen making free lifestyle choice is restricted. The digitisation of
society therefore calls for different criteria and definition of the third age as a capability to act in one’s personal and civic interests to be a fully participant member of society.

We cannot oversee this aspect of exclusion based on age. That takes a serious and huge effort from society rather than waiting the ‘old’ generation out. Regarding the use of digital technology in everyday life as a question of knowledge rather than access, calls for multidisciplinary studies on considerations and explanations of technology acceptance among older persons (Eyton & Helsper, 2015; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015) and its consequences for social exclusion.

Early on data revealed that older persons’ use of digital resources were seldom autonomous or self-reliant although providing some access, which resulted in the use here of the concept of ‘borrowed access’ as a means for getting a placement as partly or a periphery participant but with a dimension of non-autonomy. Wenger uses the concept of ‘brokers’ as ‘connections provided by people who can introduce elements of one practice into another’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). The concept of brokering adds a dimensions to a framework of participation but also with reference to data in this study, offers means for tackling the problem of formal learning scenarios dedicated training for a digital competence. Brokers have a complex task which involves processes of translation and alignment of interests, and requires the legitimacy to introduce offers of meaning to the individual. The connections that could be provided by ‘brokers’, both as real persons or as functions, could if well orchestrated, represent more informal educational practices and closer connect to the individual narratives and incitements for not engaging in digital practices.

We are facing a gigantic pedagogic task in making connected to internet or having access to internet to mean actively participating in society.

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Notes on contributor
Linda Reneland-Forsman is an associate professor in Pedagogy at the Linnaeus University. Her work focuses technology mediated educational practices. She has studied the influence of academic disciplinary discourses for integrating digital media into higher education and is continuing her research on student meaning making and active knowledge building as didactical models for course design in higher education.

ORCID
Linda Reneland-Forsman http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6555-2998

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