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Entextualization and resemiotization as resources

for identification in social media

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INTRODUCTION

Drawing on insights provided by linguistic anthropology, the study of

multisemioticity and research in computer-mediated discourse (CMD), this

chapter discusses how entextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Silverstein &

Urban, 1996; Blommaert, 2005, pp. 46-48) and resemiotization (Iedema, 2003;

Scollon & Scollon, 2004, pp. 101-103; Scollon, 2008) are key resources for

identity work in social media. Three key arguments inspire and give direction to

our discussion, each of them laying down touchstones for language scholars who

wish to investigate identity in social media. First, for many individuals and social

or cultural groups, social media are increasingly significant grassroots arenas for

interaction and cultural activities (Androutsopoulos, 2011; Kytölä, 2012a, 2012b;

Leppänen, 2012; Peuronen, 2011) which overlap, complement and intertwine in

different ways with their offline activities. Importantly, social media encompass a

range of diverse formats for social action, interaction and performance; thus they

can also be 'social' in quite different ways (cf. Baym, 2011, pp. 6-12) and offer

various kinds of affordances for and constraints on identity performance.

Second, from an ontological and terminological perspective, we shift the focus from 'identity' to acts and processes of *identification* and *disidentification*. We argue that in social media, identities are seldom assumed or transparent (or remain so); rather, they are performed in chains and skeins of activities and interactions. Identities are constructed in active processes of identification and self-understanding, seeking or eschewing commonality, connectedness and groupness (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou, 2003; Blommaert, 2005, pp. 203-214; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008).

Third, we suggest that crucial resources for the performance of identity in social media are the closely related processes of *resemiotization* and *entextualization*. Communication in social media involves not only resources provided by language(s), but also other semiotic resources – textual forms and patterns, still and moving images, sounds and cultural discourses – as well as the mobilization of these in processes of decontextualization and recontextualization. The language of social media is thus woven from multiple and intertwined semiotic materials (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 1-43; Jacquemet, 2005; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) which are socially significant and culturally valuable to the immediate participants and groups involved.

As an illustration of the relevance and implications of these theoretical premises, we investigate four social media settings which provide different affordances for the performance of (dis)identification, and show how the participants in each of

them draw in different ways and by different semiotic means on entextualization and resemiotization for specific social and cultural ends. First, however, we introduce and define the key concepts and orientations deployed for the purposes of our argument.

KEY CONCEPTS AND ANALYTIC ORIENTATIONS

We define social media broadly as online environments which enable social interaction (Baym, 2011; Fornäs et al., 2002) between participants either synchronously, with an ephemeral output (e.g. chat channels, 'shoutboxes'), or asynchronously, often with more long-lasting 'end-products' (e.g. blogs, web discussion forums; see e.g. Kytölä 2012a, 2012b). Thus in our orientation, social media include, besides social network sites, other digital environments in which interaction between the participants constitutes an important part of their activities. Another key characteristic of social media is that they may constitute only one of the settings in which the participants or groups engage in shared activities – online activities may intertwine with their activities in offline contexts. The degree to which the interaction between the participants is organized can also vary. In some cases, the participants can, over time, organize themselves as relatively stable communities of practice (see e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Gee 2004). Alternatively, their activities can take place within more short-lived 'affinity spaces', stemming from shared interests, causes, lifestyles, activities and cultural products with short life spans or passing popularity (Gee

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2004). Both long-lived communities of practice and more ephemeral affinity spaces can, however, offer their participants deeply meaningful arenas for shared social practice as part of a participatory, active 'prosumer' (producer + consumer) culture (Burgess & Green, 2009; Leppänen & Häkkinen, 2012).

The sociality of social media environments also shows in how their social and normative structures are jointly negotiated and enforced by the participants themselves (Leppänen, 2009; Kytölä, 2012b). In this sense, they exemplify what could be called 'post-Panopticon' sociality (e.g. Haggerty, 2006; Arnaut, forthcoming; Leppänen & Piirainen-Marsh, 2009), manifest in their lack of centralised mechanisms of control by 'those in power' and in a shift to forms of grassroots, 'bottom-up' and peer surveillance. These are often polycentric in that participants can orient to and shift between several competing and complementary orders of normativity (Blommaert, 2010, pp. 37-39).

As in any social environment, participants in social media need to reflexively conceptualize and performatively construct themselves and navigate as particular kinds of personae in relation to their surroundings. Identity is thus both actively 'done' and contractually 'achieved'. Following Brubaker and Cooper (2000, pp. 14-21), we argue that such complex (dis)identification work is best conceptualized as a dynamic and multi-faceted process involving affinity, alignment, emotional attachment and ideological notions of togetherness. First, it entails self-characterization of oneself *vis-à-vis* others and external characterization of oneself by others. This characterization can be either relational

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(with respect to the relationship to others) or categorical (as a member of a particular category). Second, identification includes a psycho-dynamic dimension in that individuals align emotionally with another person, category or collectivity. Third, identity also involves self-understanding, a practical perception of who one is and what one's role is in the social environment. Fourth, in identity performance, individuals seek - or eschew - commonality (what they share with others) and connectedness (ties linking them to others). Finally, commonality, and to a lesser extent connectedness, are also prerequisites for groupness, a sense of belonging to a group. Groupness requires that a particular social constellation believes that they actually share something (e.g. a sense of belonging to the same nation). In social media activities, it is the semiotic constructions and processes of indexing or eluding commonality, connectedness and groupness which are available for investigation. These processes will be central in our discussion in this chapter.

Another key argument here is that, in social media, entextualization and resemiotization are vital semiotic resources for identity performance, and useful analytical notions in understanding complex social media practices. These two concepts stem from different research traditions: entextualization originates in the nexus of anthropology and discourse studies (e.g. performance studies; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Silverstein & Urban, 1996), while resemiotization was introduced within the research field of social semiotics (e.g. studies of multimodality; Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, Iedema, 2003). For our exploration of social media activities, these research traditions and concepts offer a complementary analytic purchase. This is because both of them make it possible to trace the ways in which

social media activities frequently and crucially build on the active recirculation and appropriation of complex multi-semiotic material.

More specifically, what the notion of entextualization offers the analyst is the identification and analysis of the trajectories and re-uses of language and textual material as resources in meaning making (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, 73; Blommaert, 2005, pp. 46-48; Silverstein & Urban, 1996). Entextualization highlights how such recycling involves two related processes: decontextualization – taking discourse material out of its context – and recontextualization – integrating and modifying this material so that it fits in a new context. With entextualization in our analytical toolkit, it becomes possible to investigate how social media participants, through extracting 'instances of culture' (language forms, textual or other semiotic material) and relocating these in *their* discourses and repertoires, perform identity at the grassroots level of social media activities.

In these activities they are, following the original argument by Bauman and Briggs (1990, p. 76), active agents for whom entextualization is 'an act of control' through which they can claim a degree of social power. This power manifests in various ways: it shows in their access to the activity of entextualization, in the legitimacy of their claims to reuse the texts, in their competence in such reuse, and in the differential values attached to various types of texts. For the analysis of social media activities, these four issues of discursive power are of particular relevance): they imply that the investigation of entextualization is about discovering 'empirically what means are available in a given social setting, to

whom they may be available, under what circumstances, for making discourse

into text' (Bauman and Briggs 1990, p. 74).

The affordances of social media for the performance of identity through

entextualization is aptly described by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 34) as 'the

new realities of the semiotic landscape'. By this, they point to processes of change

taking place at different levels (the nation-state, technology, and economy) that

not only have an impact on political and cultural boundaries but also on *semiotic*

boundaries. Therefore, the second concept that we wish to introduce here for the

study of (dis)identification in social media is resemiotization, the process of

semiotic change in the circulation and flow of discourses across social and

cultural boundaries.

While entextualization offers the analyst a tool for explaining how in social media

activities discourse material originating elsewhere gets lifted out of its original

context and is repositioned and remodified as a meaningful element in a new

context, resemiotization focuses on the examination of the unfolding and

rearticulation of meaning across modes and modalities, and from some groups of

people to others (cf. Iedema, 2003, p. 41; Scollon & Scollon, 2004; Scollon, 2008).

Further, whereas entextualization foregrounds the issue of social access, control

and competence in textual 'work', resemiotization emphasizes the need for 'socio-

historical exploration and understanding of the complex processes which

constitute and surround' meaning-makings (Iedema, 2003, p. 48). Nevertheless, as

in entextualization, so too in resemiotization there is a dialectical and dynamic

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tension between the patterns (cf. Iedema's 'schemes' (2003, pp. 43-44) or Bourdieu's 'homology' (1984, 1990)) carried over from earlier contexts, experiences or manifestations and the new forms and meanings that resemiotization gives rise to.

Although the concepts of entextualization and resemiotization are closely related, both are useful for the analysis of identity performance in social media, highlighting different aspects of the processual and multisemiotic nature of meaning-making in social media activities. The examples from social media discussed in this chapter all include, alongside linguistic and textual forms and patterns of language(s), other semiotic means, and carry traces of socio-cultural action and complex discourse trajectories (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2004; Scollon, 2008). Seen from this perspective, our data samples are thus best seen as particular points, 'snapshots', in the cycle and process of entextualization and resemiotization.

ENTEXTUALIZATION AND RESEMIOTIZATION AND (DIS)IDENTIFICATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXTS

The four cases we discuss in this chapter all illustrate ways in which entextualization and resemiotization function as key resources for (dis)identification in different social media environments. We show how entextualization and resemiotization can involve a range of semiotic materials: linguistic, visual, textual and multi-modal. More specifically, with our first example we look at the ways in which a close and delimited community of practice defined by shared and fairly stable activities and interactions construct their identities on *Facebook*, and how these online activities are contemporaneous and entwined with their simultaneous offline activities, with the online participants drawing on and making use of the community members' offline language uses. With the help of our second case, we move on to describe the ways in which identity work and cultural negotiation take place via the modification of mobile cultural emblems in a (sub)cultural online discussion in which the participants have shared cultural knowledge and interests (Christian heavy metal). Despite the prevalence of multimodality in many social media formats and sites, our third case – collectively maintained and monitored fan fiction discourses – shows how entextualization and resemiotization of textual material, too, are crucial in (dis)identification in social media. Finally, we look at a multimodal *YouTube* video and discuss how identifications of both performers and audiences in videos of this kind involve the multi-modal modification of text, sound and moving image.

'Soaking in God's presence' – linguistic entextualization and identification in a *Facebook* group

Our first example illustrates how social relations, activities and identities are performed on a *Facebook* page of a youth cultural group. The page belongs to a group of young Finnish Christians who share an interest in extreme sports. They form a proximal community whose members regularly participate in and organize events associated with extreme sports, and teaching and studying the Bible. Although a shared physical space is essential for the community members for engagement in their sports activities, they also disseminate their experiences through digital communication channels (see Peuronen, 2011).

For this group, *Facebook* serves as a medium for sharing information on upcoming or on-going events and provides a space for sending messages, for instance, regarding one's participation. Hence, through *Facebook,* a wider group of people can be familiarized with the community's activities. The status updates in the example below illustrate messages posted during an *Extreme Summer Camp* organized in 2011. Prior to these updates, the wall of this event had been filled with messages anticipating the camp, the first ones appearing four months before the actual event. In the following, we first present the original *Facebook* posts (ENDNOTE 1), followed by their translations into English (by SP).

1. *Having a blast here also at night. Sauna + moonlight swim = brilliant case and extreme enjoyment. Enthusiastic about tomorrow's [moto]cross:)*

2. *Soaking in God's presence :)*

3. *Yes, 50 people here already. We've started wakeboarding and wind surfing, the sauna is warm and there's real joy in the air :D*

This example shows how heterogeneous linguistic resources are entextualized on the *Facebook* page in order to perform the community's offline camp activities online. Hence, the Christian extreme sports enthusiasts render their discourse extractable by 'lift[ing] it to a degree from its interactional setting and open[ing] it to scrutiny by an audience' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 73). By representing their material, lived reality online, the community members characterize themselves as members of young Christians, showing what they share and how they are connected with the group. Their membership in this particular community thus gives them access to and socializes them into the use of linguistic resources and their intended meanings, histories and ideologies (cf. Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 76).

Since the community combines two different socio-cultural frameworks – Christianity and extreme sports – which represent very different traditions, practices and values, the members necessarily draw on diverse linguistic and

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discursive resources that together form a heteroglossic repertoire (cf. Bailey,

2012). By making use of the meaning potential that the specific resources have,

they manage to navigate within and between two different discursive realms. They

actively engage in the social management of decontextualizing and

recontextualizing linguistic and discursive elements (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p.

74). This is possible through their knowledge of the appropriate contextual uses of

these elements.

In this example, the participants circulate linguistic and discursive constructs from

one communicative space to another. Through this practice, they maintain

'simultaneous presence in a multiplicity of sites' (Jacquemet 2005: 266). The use

of different spaces of communication (offline and online) affects what is said,

why something is said and how the message is understood. For example, the key

phrase 'Soaking in God's presence' (line 2) refers to one of the camp's morning

activities: when 'soaking', the participants gather together to pray silently by

themselves, to contemplate God or simply to relax while listening to gentle songs

of worship. The phrase has travelled with the community members to Finland

from North America, where some of them have attended a Bible school and

brought new concepts and practices with them. The concept of soaking has been

adopted as part of the community's local activities and the members' habitual

language use, and, eventually, it is used in their online communication as well.

Therefore, the process of entextualization in this case includes the geographical,

cultural, linguistic and discursive circulation of a specific communicative item. It

has preserved its original English form, even though Finnishized derivatives, such as 'soukkaus', are also used by the community members.

The *Facebook* update was posted at 10:13 am, simultaneously as the soaking activity took place (every morning from 10 to 11 am). However, when posted on *Facebook*, the specific meaning of this notion is most likely not shared by every reader of the page. Hence, although referring to a specific activity, the phrase could also be interpreted locally in the context of the *Facebook* page alone: there, it may function as an act of self-characterization that even 'outsiders' could recognize as denoting the group's commonality and its members' shared activity culture and faith in God (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 20-21).

Similar identification practices are illustrated by the two other messages in this example. In both of them, the participants perform camp activities by entextualizing them into the online context with heterogeneous linguistic and discursive resources. The two posters use resources available for them in different lexical registers (of youth cultures, religion and extreme sports). Since their extreme sports vocabulary does not contain standardized forms, varied uses of Finnish and English occur: they use terms such as *wakeboarding*, *purjelautailu* for wind surfing, and *crosseihin* for motocross. In addition, they report on their feelings about being involved in the community's activities with very positive and vivid expressions, such as *aitoa iloa ilmoilla* (real joy in the air), *innolla huomisiin crosseihin* (enthusiastic about tomorrow's motocross) and *Saunat + kuutamouinti = loistokeissi ja extremenautinto* (Sauna + moonlight swim =

brilliant case and extreme enjoyment). The use of emoticons also emphasises the positive tone of the messages. These updates aim to convey the posters' offline experiences and practices by transforming them into a different mode, that of online writing. By means of decontextualising and recontextualising the linguistic and discursive elements, the community members thus move from their immediate experience to mediated performance of their activities and identities on this particular social media site.

From pentagram to *re*pentagram – **visual emblems and renaming in cultural identification**

As with our first case, two different socio-cultural frameworks or lifestyles are brought together in our second example. Here we explore how a visual cultural emblem related to Christian metal music on *YouTube*, a website built around uploads of videos, is appropriated and made sense of by members of the cultural group in question. Although *YouTube* is not a site explicitly aimed at enabling social networking, it is a social medium: on *YouTube*, participants not only share and watch videos, but also actively engage in reviewing the contents of videos and in discussing the issues emerging in and around them. In this case, however, the participants do not typically constitute a community of practice; rather, *YouTube* enables the emergence of an interest-based affinity space (Gee, 2004; Gee & Hayes, 2011) for participants interested in particular video genres and the cultural phenomena depicted in them. The structure of any *YouTube* subpage is another

indication of its social nature: the video frame is immediately followed by audience comments on the same page.

The example in focus here is a video entitled *Great Christian metal bands*, compiled by a user named *pinoyoctopusgo* (<mark>ENDNOTE</mark> 2). The video, made by editing audioclips and pictures and merging them together, presents its maker's favourite Christian metal artists. In this way, it is an example of resemiotization: visual material (band logos and photographs of band members) and audio material (extracts from Christian metal and rock songs) as well as text (band names, album names, and biblical extracts) are modified and fused together into a personalised representation of Christian bands. The video also exemplifies entextualization in that it is an outcome of a process involving the extraction of materials from elsewhere (e.g. band websites, CDs, mp3s, the Bible) and their recontextualization as part of the video maker's own audio-visual contribution. Importantly, these operations are not simply idiosyncratic and random acts: this is suggested by the fact that the video is presented as belonging to an evolving genre of 'My favourite bands' on *YouTube*.

The visual cultural emblem that is of particular interest in this video is a Christian metal band logo, a resemiotized object with a particular trajectory. The logo belongs to a Christian heavy metal band *Impending Doom* (Fig. 1) and is shown in the video at the beginning of the 20-second time slot dedicated to the band (starting at 0:21).
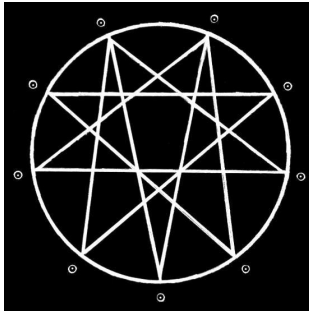
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Fig. 1. The repentagram. © Impending Doom. Reproduced with the band's permission

Fig. 2. A pentagram.

In the video, the logo stands alone without any explanatory text or background graphics. While one aspect of its resemiotization is its trajectory from a pictorial logo to an element in an audio-visual video, another, and more complex, aspect of resemiotization in play here is the way in which the logo makes use of a visual form that refers to and evokes certain (sub)cultural contexts. Indeed, the logo is very similar to many other heavy metal band logos in that it uses dark colours and lines that cross each other to form a diagram (cf. Jousmäki 2012; Karjalainen et al., 2009). In this case, the diagram resembles the notorious pentagram (Fig. 2) which, in the context of rock music, is associated with non-Christian, 'black' metal music genre in general, and in particular with the anti-Christian or Satanic worldview of its adherents. The video, however, offers the audience no explicit cues on how the pentagram-like diagram of the Christian band *Impending Doom* should be interpreted. As a result, it gives rise to a great deal of puzzlement in the discussion thread on the site. For example, one discussant, *DieToFleshNotSpirit*, initiates a long thread with the question 'what with the satanic star in the beginning aren't this bands christian?', thereby constructing Satanism and Christianity

as incompatible with each other. To this s/he receives 18 replies, expressing

reactions to the logo and offering various suggestions for its interpretation,

including the following:

> @DieToFleshNotSpirit It's the Repentagram. Impending Doom took the pentagram and
> made it into the Repentagram, a Christian symbol. REDMAX777
> @REDMAX777 and... What does it mean?? franco802
> @franco802 It combines the words "repent" and "pentagram". It's basically a play on
> words that tells people the way to be saved: "repent" of your sins. REDMAX777

Another participant, *REDMAX777*, thus explains how *Impending Doom*

transformed the pentagram into 'a Christian symbol' - and explicitly points to the

central role of entextualization and resemiotization as means of self-identification

for a Christian band seeking to build a bridge between their Christian values and

the metal music community (Jousmäki 2012). The ideological transformation of

the symbol from non-Christian to Christian involved the addition of four sides to

the original five sides of the pentagram as well as the renaming of the symbol

with the lexical prefix 're-'. The choice of the word '*repent*agram', in turn,

suggests that the band prioritizes repentance as the key to salvation (see Jousmäki,

forthcoming). Thus, *Impending Doom* is finally interpreted by the discussants as

having modified the pentagram for Christian purposes and for the purposes of

Christian *metal* in particular, in order to characterize itself as a Christian metal

band.

However, the outcome of these meaning-making operations is not simple or

straightforward. This is clearly evinced by the prolonged discussion that ensues

over what counts as 'Christian' and what does not, demonstrating that the 'participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 69). This discussion foregrounds the fact that the entextualization and resemiotization of an originally Satanic emblem as a Christian symbol is not unproblematic. One issue seems to be that some elements of the original non-Christian *scheme* may, nevertheless, have been transferred (Iedema, 2003, p. 43-44) to the new Christian context, and hence many discussants remain uncertain whether the remodified emblem is a relevant and appropriate resource for identification or not.

'RANMA NO BAKA' – rewriting and genre modification as identity work on fan fiction sites

Our third example focuses on fan fiction sites as a particular social medium enabling interaction and shared cultural production (rewritings of, for example, the characters, plot and themes of popular films, TV series or novels) by fans. Although the crux of fan fiction is rewriting cult texts, fan fiction sites are also fundamentally social media environments, as they can only exist and thrive if these texts are read, commented on and discussed by readers. In this way, fan fiction sites crucially build on interaction between the participants. Within the cultural and normative framework of fan culture, based on the fans' adoring attachment to cult objects, fan fiction sites thus evolve as and constitute social niches for particular, collectively created and monitored participatory cultures (Burgess & Green, 2009; Leppänen, 2009).

As in each case investigated in this chapter, in the fan fiction culture, active entextualization and resemiotization of semiotic resources are crucial for creating and maintaining a shared socio-cultural reality for individuals (Leppänen, 2012). What, however, distinguishes fan fiction from, for example, *Facebook* or *YouTube* discussions, is the amount of effort it often requires: many writers invest a great deal in their writing and painstakingly craft it in ways appreciated by members of these fan communities.

Fan fiction is essentially about the entextualization and resemiotization of textual resources of different kinds. Recognizable elements of the source text are decontextualized, modified and embedded within a new textual context. In this way, the new text can still appear to readers as a recognisable version of the original text. At the same time, these entextualized aspects of the source text, when integrated within the new text, make the fan fiction text a novel construction. Very often, entextualization and resemiotization are thus geared towards the creation of new imaginative interpretations of the source texts which are simultaneously appreciative of some of their aspects and critical or subversive about their other features (Leppänen, 2008).

In fan fiction, writers strive to create texts that constitute a bricolage in which objects are reordered and recontextualized 'to communicate fresh meanings' (Clarke, 1976, p. 177). In practice, bricolage can be achieved through a number of semiotic means. First, it can be created by fan writers when they draw on and mix

resources provided by different languages and styles (e.g. English dialogue resembling the kind of talk typical of a particular TV series along with everyday, vernacular Finnish; see Leppänen, 2012). Second, bricolage can also be created through generic diversity. For example, the genre features of the source text can be modified, mixed and combined with features of other genres. Third, aspects of the contents and narrative of the source text – characters, settings and plot, for example – can be manipulated in various ways. A very common bricolage of this kind is one in which characters that originally populate different texts are brought together within fan fiction, often for the purpose of creating new romantic liaisons between them (Leppänen, 2008).

Here, the cross-over, combinatory and transformative aesthetics of fan fiction are briefly illustrated with a text submitted by a young Finnish woman (ENDNOTE 3). The text entextualizes and resemiotizes linguistic and textual elements from several popular cultural discourses, including (at least) the Finnish *Moomin* stories and Japanese *Ranma ½* manga, and the television genres of cooking competitions and sports commentary. The left-hand column contains the original Finnish text and the column on the right its English translation (by SL):

Kamala kokkisota	The horrible cooking competition
Erotuomari aloitti lähtölaskennan: "Paikoillenne, valmiit, kokatkaa!" "Noniin, kilpailijat saivat luvan aloittaa! He alkoivat availla kaappeja mielipuolisella	The referee started the count-down: "Ready, steady, cook!" "Right, the competitors have permission to begin! They began to open cupboard doors with

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raivolla!	insane frenzy.
Minä olen teidän selostajanne, Ryouga Hibiki, ja selostan teille yksityiskohtaisesti jännittävän kokkisodan Akane Tendon (ah, Akane) ja Pikku Myyn välillä uskollisen asiantuntijatiimini avustuksella. […]	I'm your commentator, Ryouga Hibiki, and will report to you in detail on the exciting cooking competition between Akane Tendo (ah, Akane) and Little My with the help of my faithful team of experts. […]
”Shampoo, mitäs sanot Akanen maustamistekniikasta? Liikaa vai liian vähän?"	"Shampoo, what do you say about Akane's spicing technique? Too much or too little?”
"Typerä tyttö liikaa pippuria laittaa. Ranman suu palaa!" […]	"The stupid girl too much pepper puts. Ranma's mouth will burn!" […]
Akane tunki lusikan Ranman suuhun. Syntyi syvä hiljaisuus. Kaikki, kilpailijat mukaan lukien, tuijottivat tuota naamaa, joka sanoi:	Akane stuffed the spoon into Ranma's mouth. A deep silence followed. Everyone, including the competitors, stared at that face, which said:
"Yääääääääkk! Kamalaa! HYI HYI HYI! Pahinta mitä olen koskaan maistanut!"	"Aaaaaargh! Horrible! OH OH OH! This is the worst thing I have ever tasted!"
"RANMA NO BAKA" mätks	"Ranma is stupid [Japanese]" smash
Kaikki (paitsi Akane):	Everyone (except Akane):
Macho macho man, I gotta be a macho man…	Macho macho man, I gotta be a macho man...
Tuli Pikku myyn vuoro. Täsmälleen sama toistui. (Nodokan kommentti: "Kyllä he varmasti ovat sisaruksia!") […]	Then came Little My's turn. Exactly the same happened again. (Comment by Nodokan: "They must be sisters!" […]

The main characters here are Akane and Little My. Akane is the female protagonist of the Japanese manga series *Ranma ½*. Little My, in turn, is a tiny female character in the *Moomin stories*. The two characters resemble each other a great deal and this similarity has most likely been the stimulus for the writer to create the story. This is also noted by one of the characters here ('They must be sisters!').

The text depicts a scene in which the two cartoon characters are set against each other in a cooking competition, the performance-like quality of which is further accentuated by the fact that there is also a commentator who reports on the events

as well as an audience - consisting of other *Ranma ½* characters who chip in with their own comments. As is typical of fan fiction on the whole, this text is linguistically and stylistically heterogeneous. It is mainly written in standard Finnish, but also includes one utterance in Japanese (RANMA NO BAKA ('Ranma is stupid')) and another in English ('Macho macho man, I gotta be a macho man'). In the same vein, the text displays stylistic heterogeneity: the announcements by the sports commentator (e.g. 'Right, the competitors got permission to begin! They began to open cupboard doors with insane frenzy') simulate the register and style of live sports commentary. In addition, one of the character's comments ('Stupid girl too much pepper uses') resembles, in its syntactic distinctiveness, the idiosyncratic speech style of another famous fantasy character, Yoda from *Star Wars*. Likewise, the contextualization of the snippet from the famous song by Village People *(*'Macho macho man') adds yet another dimension of meaning to the text: *Ranma*, the main protagonist of the manga, who at times transforms into a woman, is urged here to be a man, and forget his other girly, non-macho persona.

What seems to have motivated this particular mélange of semiotic features is, first, that both its writer and audience are no doubt very familiar with the genres and particular discourses in question. Their lives are saturated by mediated popular culture − *Moomin* cartoons and films, Japanese manga and anime, and televised cooking competitions, as well as their languages, registers and styles. They recognise and enjoy the enmeshing of these in fan fiction and appreciate the craft of such art and can read between the lines, catching the (implied) meanings

in sometimes quite subtle ways. They inhabit a cross-discourse, cross-media, cross-language discourse universe in which the creation and reception of media products is not a unidirectional act whereby the singular message/s of one particular media discourse is encoded by the sender and de-coded and contemplated in the reader's or spectator's mind, but an active, interventional and heteroglossic activity (Leppänen, 2012). In this sense, fan fiction sites are social in a way that goes beyond the interactive dynamics of their participants' activities, one that involves a shared set of formal preferences, productive and interpretive conventions and of norms regulating how far and in what ways they can create and interpret their discourse.

Fan fiction is about claiming, gaining and being accepted as a member of a fan culture, about participation in communities created and maintained through shared practices, and about identification as a particular kind of person with particular kinds of alignments and values who strives to signal commonality and connectedness with a group of like-minded fans. What this means is that the entextualizations and resemiotizations fan writers make are also highly indexical and presuppose a certain social context with a shared normative order. Within such a context the choices made by the author in our previous example can become interpreted as playfully and respectfully interventional - and not, for instance, as dismissive about the cult texts they draw on.

This kind of affiliation with a shared indexical order is also frequently foregrounded in the discussion that fan fiction generates. For example, one of the

discussants of the fan fiction text discussed above spells out his/her evaluation of the writer's choices as follows:

> I'm positively surprised that I could distinguish between My's and Akane's lines. I haven't followed Moomin for many years, and Ranma manga I have practically fast forwarded (many fanfics are in my opinion much more meaningful than the original work... as weird as that may sound). (Translated from Finnish by SL)

Acting as a 'post-Panopticon' grassroots gatekeeper, this commentator invokes here an authority position and makes it very clear that s/he is fully in the know about what makes good fan fiction. Commentary like this also shows that in fan fiction, writing in an appropriate way is considered a means for claiming and acquiring social capital and prestige in fan cultures.

Although at first glance it may seem that, in fan fiction, there are limitless possibilities for entextualization and resemiotization, it is also policed by quite specific norms (Leppänen 2009). Thus, fan fiction is not merely free play, but, in the same way as all other human social spaces, it is regulated (Blommaert, 2005, 2010) by its own orders of normativity and mechanisms of control which constrain the discursive and identity options fans may utilise in them.

'*Mammat riivaa*' – video and music as resources for entextualization and resemiotization in viral *YouTube* videos

Our fourth and last example deals with (the) entextualization and resemiotization of multimodal resources in a music video on *YouTube*. This video was created in

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the summer of 2011, when a Finnish rap artist, Ruudolf and his colleague, Karri Koira, transformed *Danza Kuduro*, the previous summer's tropical hit single (ENDNOTE 4) into a Finnishized version entitled *Mammat Riivaa* ('The chicks are harassing us' ENDNOTES 5 & 6). Such *YouTube* videos are an increasingly popular genre; their popularity stems largely from the playful ways, typical of rap music on the whole, in which they adopt and modify music samples or the entire musical background of an existing cultural product. At the same time, thanks to the way in which this particular video plays with the cinematic and linguistic resources of the original music video, it is also quite a novel phenomenon (for a discussion of the typical features of Finnish hip hop, see e.g. Westinen, 2010).

The video *Mammat Riivaa*, now with almost 1.4 million views on *YouTube* (November 27, 2012), is a complex multi-semiotic product and a remodification of the original song consisting of music, moving images, dance and lyrics. While the background music and the composition are exactly the same as in the original, every other aspect of the original video has been transformed. Firstly, its setting has been relocated from the Caribbean Sea to Finland, specifically to a Helsinki seaside suburb, Aurinkolahti ('Sunbay'). At the same time, this new setting remains ambivalent in that some of its semiotic features also link it with the original geographical context, the United States. These include, for example, the rapper Ruudolf's shirt, which bears an image of the US flag, and his cowboy-like straw hat. The connections between the two videos are further accentuated by the fact - known to his fans - that Ruudolf has Mexican-American roots and has studied in a Bible College in California. These facts, along with his explicit

references to the United States (e.g. titles such as *Born in the U.S.A.* and *Florida Funk*) thus convey an image that his identity as a rapper is one that aligns with both Finland and the US.

FIGURE 3: A screenshot of the official *Mammat riivaa* dance video (ENDNOTE 7)

In addition to the re-localization of the song, the dance performance in the original video has been transformed in the Finnish video. While *Danza Kuduro* features half-naked women dancing around the male singers, in *Mammat Riivaa* it is the two male rappers who do the dancing. Their choreography also differs a great deal

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from the original: in comparison to the professional gyrations in *Danza Kuduro*, the young Finnish men's dance looks quite amateurish. In another scene, the two dancing rappers are joined by a group of ordinary-looking young Finnish men. Amongst them, however, are some local hip hop and sports celebrities. This 'face-dropping' practice further emphasizes the local Finnish nature of the video.

Other levels of entextualization and resemiotization in *Mammat Riivaa* include the linguistic and the musical. *Danza Kuduro* is a bilingual Spanish-Portuguese song by Don Omar, a Puerto Rican reggaeton singer-rapper, and Lucenzo, a France-based artist of Portuguese origin. *Mammat Riivaa*, in turn, is a rap adaptation of this Latino song, and its lyrics are in spoken vernacular Finnish with some elements of English, as in the following example:

> *rapin suomen mestari in the place to be*
> ('the Finnish rap champion in the place to be')

The idea behind the new lyrics, particularly the chorus, is what the Spanish (and Portuguese) words and sentences could sound like in the rap artists' own language, Finnish (see table below). The artists thus take advantage of a popular *YouTube* meme – the so-called 'mondegreen' technique – and create new 'misheard' lyrics on the basis of their near-homophony with the original lyrics (see e.g. Leppänen & Häkkinen, 2012). However, *Mammat Riivaa* also differs in an important way from mondegreen videos. Unlike mondegreen videos that typically transform a commercial product into a personal, non-commercial fan product, in *Mammat Riivaa* the original music video is a commercial product transformed into *another*

commercial video. The interventional practices of post-Panopticon social media are thus adopted here for commercial purposes.

The lyrics for the chorus of each song and their translations are presented in the following table (Finnish to English translations by EW):

SPANISH	its English translation	FINNISH	its English translation
La mano arriba	Put your hands up	mammat riivaa	the chicks are harassing
cintura sola	Moving only the hips	asfalttisoturii	the asphalt warrior
Da media vuelta	Turn half around	ne ottaa paidast kii	they grab my shirt
danza kuduro	Dance to Kuduro	tuu mun kanssa ruudolf	come with me ruudolf
No te canses ahora	Don't lose your breath now	ei anna taukoo	they don't allow a break
que esto solo empieza	Because this has just started	ne koiraa kauhoo	they doggy-paddle
Mueve la cabeza	Move your head	nyt poika saunoo	now the boy goes to sauna
danza kuduro	Dance to Kuduro	mun kanssa tuu jo	come with me

The original party song gives explicit instructions on how to dance this tropical megahit. The Finnish version, in contrast, describes how the two Finnish rappers are constantly harassed and flirted with by girls wherever they go. In doing this, the new Finnish lyrics twist parts of the original lyrics, in the mondegreen fashion, for the rappers' own purposes. The clearest example of homophonic matching is with 'mano arriba' and 'mammat riivaa' – with the Spanish [-'ri:ba] sounding close to ['ri:va:] to the Finnish listener, since in Spanish, /b/ and /v/ are pronounced alike.

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Homophonic 'translation' is one means by which lyrics can be localized and indexically grounded (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 76) as meaningful to Finnish speakers – in other words, as something they can identify with as fans of Finnish rap. The same effect is also created by the artists' self-presentation and self-naming, and by cultural references which link the video content to Finland. One of these references is 'the boy goes to sauna' which is, among other things, a quotation from a well-known contemporary Finnish sports song in which 'the boy' denotes an ice hockey championship trophy which the winning team takes to the post-match sauna when celebrating their victory. The cultural reference here is quite transparent to Finnish audiences, who are also likely to be able to appreciate the way in which it has been resemiotized in the context of this song to refer to the young men ('the boy(s)') who, even in a waterfront sauna, are harassed by young women swimming close by. Hence, this line is another illustration of complex meaning-making operations involving decontextualization, whereby a textual snippet has been lifted from a particular social event (the trophy in the sauna), its recontextualization in a new discursive context (a sports song) and finally its further recontextualization as an ingredient of an another song (*Mammat Riivaa*), itself a multi-layered resemiotized cultural object.

The multiple levels of meaning of the Finnish video also shows in the comments made by the video's *YouTube* audience who engage in a reflexive examination of its discourse (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 69): among other things, they wonder whether *Mammat Riivaa* is meant for real or as pure parody. For example, the best-'liked' Finnish-language comment on the video (on October 3, 2012)

includes the following statement: 'I heard that some Don Omar had made a parody of this', thus suggesting humorously that the original song is *Mammat Riivaa* and not *Danza Kuduro*. Ruudolf himself, however, claims that the song is no joke, but a serious interpretation of a piece which he likes (Sasioglu, 2012), the lyrics describing his life in which he is constantly pursued by young girls.

As has been shown above, in the video *Mammat Riivaa*, Ruudolf identifies both with Finland and the US. The video is thus characterized by translocality – it simultaneously aligns with the local and the global as meaningful co-ordinates (Leppänen et al., 2009). As a cultural product, it also creates affordances for audience identifications which are equally translocal: as revealed, for example, by the commentary on the video, the audience orients to the song both as a product of a global music culture as well as of a localized music scene. In contrast, what Ruudolf himself dis-identifies with remains somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, the lack of scantily dressed women on his video – a stereotypical characteristic of hip hop videos and a prominent feature of Don Omar's video – could be read as an act of dis-identification with the mainstream American hip hop videos and their apparent sexism. On the other hand, the Finnish lyrics tell a different story of rappers being constantly surrounded and admired by women, no doubt with the additional implication of bragging, an essential part of hip hop culture on the whole. In these ways, the entextualization and resemiotization processes to which the original video is subjected, imply that the identifications of its audiences remain divided and polycentric.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we approached social media as environments which enable social activities, interaction, and the emergence and sharing of an active, 'prosumptive' participatory culture, regulated by 'post-Panopticon' grassroots normativities. Our focus was on (dis)identification, and we argued that processes and practices of entextualization and resemiotization play a key role in it. As an illustration of both the convergent and divergent ways in which identity performances take place in social media, we looked at four different types of remodifications of social media discourses: of linguistic material on *Facebook*, visual material on *YouTube* and its discussion threads, textual interventions on fan fiction sites, and multimodal resources in *YouTube* rap videos.

In our analyses of these cases, we aimed at demonstrating the kinds of semiotic means that are available in each social media setting, to whom they are available, how they are mobilized by participants in identity performance, and with what kinds of meanings and effects. Considering that the semiotic landscape of social media is essentially multimodal, we paid attention not only to uses of language(s) but also to multiple other semiotic means which carry traces of socio-cultural action and complex discourse trajectories, by drawing on, making use of, reinterpreting and resemiotizing features, text and discourses which originate and have travelled from elsewhere.

Importantly, we demonstrated how it is specifically these semiotic resources that are crucial in (dis)identification and meaning-making performances and in orientation to or evasion of commonality, connectedness and groupness. In all of the social media environments examined here, mobilization of these resources helped identify the participants as legitimate members of the particular group or community. For example, such identity performances were achieved by the participants in each social media setting by their self-selection as legitimate participants in the social media activities in question, and by demonstrating competence in responding to or crafting the discourse in appropriate ways. This was further enhanced by the reactions and responses of other participants, guided by the normative and socio-cultural set-up of the particular environment.

More specifically, in a closely-knit youth group, unified by their Christian faith and interest in extreme sports, the members' *Facebook* updates recorded lived reality online. Through this means, they were able to characterize themselves as members of a young Christians' community, showing what they share and how they are connected with the group. Their membership in this particular community of practice gives them access to and socializes them into a particular usage of linguistic resources and their intended meanings, histories and ideologies. In this process, the decontextualization and recontextualization of particular language uses was shown to be a significant social resource for the participants.

In the *YouTube* discussions centring on cultural emblems that followed, similar processes of self- and other-identification, connectedness, commonality and

groupness were identified. On the one hand, the transidiomatic (Jacquemet, 2005) mobilization of cultural symbols and the comment and discussion on them clearly functioned as a means for the participants in these social media activities (Christian metallers) to identify both themselves and others as members of this specific cultural group. Within the communal context afforded by the *YouTube* discussion threads, they can share with one another their interest in particular cultural practices, ways of language use and discursive resources. On the other hand, these social media activities also foregrounded disidentification and ambiguity. The case of the entextualization and resemiotization of a non-Christian symbol as a new kind of a Christian band logo which would link the band not only with Christianity but also with metal music was shown to be only partly successful. The participants in this social media group had trouble shedding the original non-Christian aspect of the symbol. Hence, the identification potential of the processes of entextualization and resemiotization was not realized fully, as the commentators could not take on board all the meanings conveyed by the appropriated symbol.

The entextualization and resemiotization of globally available popular cultural material were also argued to be crucial resources for creating and maintaining a shared socio-cultural reality on online fan fiction sites. Self- and other-identification, connectedness, commonality and groupness were shown to be dependent on a consensually established and monitored discourse practice, in which the recontextualization of other texts and textual material as well as playful (but normatively regulated and policed) appropriations of linguistic, stylistic,

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generic and contents features of source texts are means for claiming membership and mutual respect in fan cultures.

In our final example, we discussed an interventional Finnish rap video, based on another music video of trans-Atlantic origin, which sought a balance between the non-commercial *YouTube* meme culture and commercial popular music culture. In this case, it was shown how entextualization and resemiotization were used by the rap artists to create a cultural object which oriented both towards the global genre of rap music culture and the local music scene and setting, as well as the very local concerns of the young rappers themselves. These semiotic meaning-making operations were shown to provide affordances for the artists and their audiences to identify themselves as members of a translocal and polycentric music culture in which appreciation of the source product and its localization are important parameters for connectedness, commonality and togetherness.

In conclusion, we wish to argue that the kind of semiotic resources that are available to participants in social media activities can be empowering as well as delimiting: they can both provide new opportunities for identification, agency and social action, in which the capacity to use a range of semiotic resources can play a key role, and also impose new divisions, hierarchies and exclusions. In addition, our analyses in this chapter highlight the ways in which micro-level discourse practices are linked and contribute to global social and cultural processes of change, and have considerable relevance to new kinds of identifications and communality which do not always have a national, ethnic or local basis. In this

way, this chapter provides insights into processes of sociolinguistic, discursive and semiotic diversity as aspects of participatory sociocultural practices in social media that are manifest in all corners of the globe where people have access to and interest in engaging with others through these media.

NOTES

1. Reprinted with permission by these participants.

2. The link to the video is http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcWuO9MmJn4 (accessed 23 November, 2012).

3. The link to the fan fiction text is http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3420979/1/Akane_vs_Pikku_myy_eli_kamala_kokkis ota (accessed 23 November, 2012).

4. The link to the video *Danza Kuduro* is http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUFgacK8sZ0 (accessed 23 November, 2012).

5. A translation which would precisely capture the meaning of the Finnish concepts 'mammat' and 'riivaa' is difficult to form. 'Mammat' referred earlier to middle-aged women, often in a derogatory way. Nowadays, the word can refer neutrally to young women, young mamas (but not necessarily to 'mothers' in any way). 'Riivaa' has the literal meaning 'be possessed' in English, but here it has to do with young women harassing, bugging, pursuing and being obsessed by these young male rappers.

6. The link to the video *Mammat riivaa* is

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO_hPCYhVX8 (accessed 23 November,

2012).

7. Reprinted with permission by Ruudolf.

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