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Media as Practice

‘What media are needs to be interrogated, not presumed.’

Brian Larkin¹

The uncertainties reviewed in chapter 1 about media’s relation to society might seem daunting. To move forward, we need a simple point of departure and, as Ludwig Wittgenstein once noted, friction.² The concept of ‘practice’ provides both. By looking at media as practice, as ‘something human beings do . . . a form of action’,³ we find both a vast array of things to explore and a useful source of tension with the instinct to theorize about media in the abstract. Before I look at the background to the recent ‘practice’ paradigm in sociology and media research, let me explain four basic advantages of looking at media as practice.

First of all, practice is concerned with *regularity*, that is, regularity of *action*.⁴ Sociology itself is interested in regularities, not chance or incidental occurrences. Media sociology is concerned with the specific regularities in our actions related to media and the regularities of context and resource that make certain types of media-related actions possible or impossible, likely or unlikely. We cannot act in the world except on the basis of many levels of regularity and order. Indeed, our sense of living *in* a ‘world’ is built *on* such background order. The articulation of our media-related practices with other practices into larger combinations (our daily ‘routine’, ‘schedule’, ‘lifestyle’) is part of whatever order we find and rely upon in the world.

Second, practice is *social*. Behind the recent turn to ‘practice’ in social theory lies an interest in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language. This involved a key move to understanding language as

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action in the world, by contrast with an older view of language as the expression of meanings that must somehow ‘correspond’ to the world. Wittgenstein thus sought to challenge any overarching theory of language ‘as a whole’ and replace it with a view of language as toolkit: ‘think of the tools in a tool box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws – the functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects.’ Note the implicit social context in which Wittgenstein formulates his new action-based approach to language: Wittgenstein’s term for that inherent social dimension was ‘form of life’. Forms of life point to things that humans regularly do, without any need to codify or legislate for them: as Wittgenstein puts it, ‘[where] human beings agree in the language they use . . . that is no agreement in opinions but in forms of life.’⁵ On this view, language is an open-ended set of practices embedded in convention. Many have seen in this a jumping-off point for thinking about other types of practice. A difficulty in Wittgenstein’s own formulations is uncertainty over whether ‘forms of life’ are limited to universal human practices or encompass more contingent, culturally shaped practices that acquire the force of convention.⁶ Wittgenstein’s social emphasis – the interlocking interdependencies that enable a toolkit – is clear, and converges for example with Weber’s founding of sociology in the study of social action, that is, action oriented to others.⁷ Practices are not bundles of individual idiosyncrasies; they are social constructions that carry with them a whole world of capacities, constraints and power.

Third, practice points to things that we do because they relate to human *needs*. That does not imply a fixed set of human needs defined by reference to a universal human nature: even if, for example, we see human life as always requiring coordination of some sort, the nature of coordinating activities depends, as we consider later, on the background of interdependencies that in particular times and places characterize social life more generally, including those underpinned by media. In this chapter, we explore how practices related to media are shaped by basic needs for coordination, interaction, community, trust and freedom. Needless to say, there is no simple mapping of ‘needs’ onto practices, but, in what follows, you should keep in mind the needs that shape the variety we uncover.

Fourth, practice’s link to action provides a distinctive and important basis for thinking *normatively* about media via the question of how we should live with media. From Aristotle onwards, a long tradition of ethics has understood value by reference not merely to abstract thought but to action, actual or potential: as Aristotle puts it, ‘the good for man is an *activity* of the soul in accordance with

virtue.⁸ So the best starting point for an inquiry into how we should live with media is to think about media as practice: we build on this in chapter 8.

In all these ways, a practice approach to media frames its questions by reference, not to media considered as objects, texts, apparatuses of perception or production processes, but to what people are doing in relation to media in the contexts in which they act. Such a media sociology is interested in actions that are *directly oriented* to media, actions that *involve* media without necessarily having media as their aim or object; and actions whose possibility is *conditioned by* the prior existence, presence or functioning of media. We can combine those interests into a single, apparently naive question that will be our reference point for the rest of this book: *what are people doing that is related to media?*

This requires a wide definition of ‘media’ (see chapter 1), encompassing not just traditional media (television, radio, press, film) but all the other media platforms, mobile or fixed, through which content of any sort – both institutionally and individually produced – is now accessible or transmissible. The ‘systemness’ of media that shapes action can, as Friedrich Krotz notes, take many forms.⁹

Our questions about media-related practice should not be limited by the immediate concerns of media industries or media history. Indeed, some interesting questions about media may be inspired by very different histories. Take the development of memory and mnemonics.¹⁰ In the pre-modern era, the scarcity of information storage and flows put a premium on the arts of memory and retrieval, but does today’s over-abundance of information put a premium on new arts of *selection* and *combination*? Media hype about the universality of change in media, captured in crude notions of ‘the net generation’ or loose distinctions between young ‘digital natives’ and older generations of digital immigrants, is unhelpful.¹¹ As Susan Herring points out, the ‘net generation’ is an *adult* construct which obscures our grasp of how communication needs, and their solutions, are (or are *not*) changing, and if changing, how fast and against what resistance.¹² That is not to deny important shifts are going on: for younger people in many countries, computers are now part of the social infrastructure.¹³ Equally, no one could deny that cultural production and dissemination have been radically transformed in the past fifteen years, yet there are significant numbers even in countries such as the UK and USA for whom even basic access to the online world is still not guaranteed. If those who create online content, even in the USA, are stratified by gender and class, then the heralded transition from a ‘read-only culture’ to a ‘read/write culture’ is not assured.¹⁴ In this

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controversial terrain, an approach open to the *varieties* of practice is useful.

The background in media research

A great deal of media studies has focused on analysing media texts. But a practice approach to media *decentres* the media text for a reason: to sidestep insoluble problems over how to prove ‘media effects’: how can we ever know that a particular media text changed the behaviour of audiences in particular ways? Hidden assumptions about ‘media effects’ still abound in media analysis and in everyday talk about media. Indeed, they are hard to avoid if we start our analysis from the consumption of media texts themselves. Outside literary approaches which regard the text as of value in itself, why treat a media text as your primary research focus unless you know its details make a difference to wider social processes? But it is exactly this that is normally difficult to show.¹⁵

A popular alternative has been to start from the institutional structures that produce media, as in the political economy and (more recently) cultural economy traditions.¹⁶ The analysis of industrial and market structures in the media and cultural sectors is important in its own right and vital to understanding the pressures which limit participation in those sectors and constrain the outputs they produce. But media production cannot be the exclusive starting point for media *sociology* or *socially* related media theory, even though that is where media products start their life. Why? Because the structures of media production, and particularly the dynamics of concentration and conglomeration, do not of themselves tell us anything about the *uses* to which media products are put in social life generally.

The problem of media ‘effects’ – which in political economy is displaced but not resolved – is a challenge for many approaches to media: whether Marxist theories of ‘dominant ideology’,¹⁷ or recent and much less sophisticated popular accounts of the difference that celebrity narratives make in everyday life.¹⁸ ‘Medium theory’ faces distinctive problems when it makes claims about media’s social effects. An example is Matt Fuller’s attempt to develop a materialist account of media ‘systems’ and media ‘objects’ via the concept of ‘media ecologies’. Fuller’s term ‘media ecology’ is designed ‘to indicate the massive and dynamic interrelation of processes and objects, beings and things, patterns and matter’.¹⁹ Clearly, there is scope for looking in this way at the ‘systemness’ of media’s contribution to

daily life; indeed, as discussed in chapter 4, there are long-term consequences of the ‘representations’ built into software interfaces and search engines; we can take this even deeper to the criterion of programmability on which such interfaces ultimately depend, as Lev Manovich pointed out a decade ago.²⁰ But we still need to know how differences at the level of ‘programmability’ generate important differences at the level of everyday practice. Similarly Fuller’s definition of ‘ecology’ allows no account of patterns of use or interpretation. So Fuller ends up assuming, at a system level, the very social ‘effects’ that the connective concept of ecology is designed to address. The problem with this approach to digital media – and other approaches that privilege software – is they bypass the role that representations play in explicit practices of social ordering.

The philosophical route beyond this impasse is through an account of everyday life *as practice*, as the interweaving of multiple ‘forms of life’, including practices *of* representation, interpretation and reflection. For Wittgenstein, representation and intersubjectivity are practically constituted, and as such are irreducible components of human life.²¹ No less radical than Deleuze’s move beyond Kantian philosophy,²² this Wittgensteinian move involves much less violence to everyday language and understanding.

A practice approach starts not with media texts or media institutions but from media-related practice in all its looseness and openness. It asks quite simply: *what are people* (individuals, groups, institutions) *doing in relation to media* across a whole range of situations and contexts?²³ How is people’s media-related practice related, in turn, to their wider agency? The outcome, potentially, is a new paradigm for media research.²⁴

The basic question (‘what [do] people do with media?’) was originally asked by Elihu Katz in the 1950s,²⁵ but the Uses and Gratifications approach that followed focused on *individual usage* of bounded objects called ‘media’. The practice approach to media discussed here differs in its social emphasis and in its emphasis on relations not limited to use, but was itself foreshadowed in media research of the 1980s and 1990s. Early audience research emphasized that consumption is itself a ‘determinate moment’ in the production of meaning through media texts. From this developed important research on the whole range of domestic practices in which television viewing was inserted, overlapping with early work on computer-mediated communication.²⁶ In time, researchers started to move beyond the specific contexts of media consumption. Ien Ang asked: ‘what [does] it mean . . . to live in a media-saturated world?’²⁷ My own research considered ‘what it means to live in a society dominated by

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large-scale media institutions'.²⁸ Meanwhile a so-called 'third generation' of audience research aimed to 'get a grasp on our contemporary "media culture"', looking, for example, at the open-ended processes of identity construction linked to media.²⁹ Whether this research still needed the concept of an 'audience' for a specific text was by now less clear. A little later, in film and screen studies, a welcome shift towards studying audiences emphasized 'film consumption as an activity', organized in space and time.³⁰ Other media researchers searched for a broader term to capture our wider engagement with texts in circulation, whether 'mediation' or 'mediatization': we return to those terms in chapter 6.

By now, audience research was becoming difficult to distinguish from the interest in media emerging within *anthropology*. In the early 1980s, anthropologist Eric Michaels in his PhD thesis on 'TV Tribes' recalled his own 1979 study of Protestants in Amarillo, Texas which had uncovered huge variation in people's assessments of media.³¹ A decade later, Faye Ginsburg defined a distinctively anthropological approach to 'mass media' in terms that read like a prediction of where the whole field of media research was heading: 'Our work is marked by the centrality of people and their social relations – as opposed to media texts or technology – to the empirical and theoretical questions being posed in the analysis of media as a social form.'³²

A decade further on, an anthropologist specializing in media, Liz Bird, wrote that 'we cannot really isolate the role of media in culture, because the media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways ... The "audience" is everywhere and nowhere.' Note this is different from bland statements that we live in a 'media-saturated' culture, since Bird insists that '*as individuals* we are not [media-saturated], or at least not in any predictable, uniform way.'³³ A further debate emerged from research on how religious families regulate their media consumption, including their practices of *avoiding or selecting out* certain media inputs.³⁴ Already, then, we see how an approach focused on practice can complicate general understandings about contemporary media culture.

By the mid-2000s, media research had started to shake itself loose from the constraining origin of the text and to focus on the diversity of practice related to media. Meanwhile, as discussed in chapter 1, the whole landscape of media practice began to expand and transform rapidly. By happy coincidence, a way of making sense of these changes in both media research and everyday media was emerging within broader social theory: this was practice theory.

Practice in social theory

There have in fact been two turns to ‘practice’ within social theory: the earlier work of Pierre Bourdieu and the broader movement associated particularly with Theodor Schatzki. Both were inspired, in large part, by Ludwig Wittgenstein’s brilliant reflections on the failure of philosophy to grasp the dynamics of everyday thinking and acting, even in (precisely in) the attempt to ‘interpret’ it from the perspective of theory.³⁵ Yet, in the implications they draw from ‘practice’ to wider social thought, those turns were sharply opposed.

Bourdieu used the notion of ‘practice’, in part polemically, to identify those features of everyday life which, he argued, structuralist anthropology (particularly Claude Lévi-Strauss) systematically misrepresents: the duration of everyday actions in time, and their particularity, which prevent them being reduced to an abstract ‘totality’ or the performance of abstract functions. Most importantly, while everyday actions had for Bourdieu a ‘logic’, that logic was not the ‘system’ that could be *read off* their outcomes (the sort of system Lévi-Strauss found in myth) but the much less obvious ‘system of principles of production’ that *generates the conditions under which the practice itself is possible*.³⁶ Bourdieu rejected a method of ‘reading’ the social world as if it were ready for interpretation and replaced it with an investigation into the preconditions of action (the preconditions of the practice being analysed *and* the practice of the analyst herself). This insight remains radical today. Bourdieu’s account of how practices are determined through pre-existing conditions (particular the notion of ‘habitus’) is, however, more controversial.³⁷ For Bourdieu, bodily practice is learned, and from there reproduced, ‘below the level of consciousness’.³⁸ As we shall see in chapter 4, this account still has something to teach us about contemporary media culture, but it cannot capture media-related practice in general, much of which is intentional.

The more recent work on practice by Theodor Schatzki, Andreas Reckwitz and others is of wider relevance,³⁹ even though as social explanation it has limitations which will drive us back to Bourdieu on some points. For Schatzki, like Bourdieu, the term ‘practice’ achieves a theoretical, not simply descriptive, purpose, enabling a decisive move beyond old dilemmas in social theory (individual versus society, agency versus structure), dilemmas which Bourdieu also addressed. For Schatzki, practice *itself* is the site of a distinctive type of order, ‘the site where understanding is structured and intelligibility articulated’;⁴⁰ it is from the *organizing* properties of distinct practices (such as swimming or card-playing) that a wider ‘social

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order' is made up. Indeed, for Schatzki, the acts of organization by which practices become distinct from each other are 'recursively' present in the organization of practice. Andreas Reckwitz's review of this approach is helpful: 'A "practice" (*Praktik*) . . . is a routinised type of behaviour which consist of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.'⁴¹

Schatzki distinguishes among the organizing work that interpretations do within a practice between (1) 'understandings', (2) 'explicit rules' and (3) 'ends, projects, beliefs'.⁴² These elements contribute to the reproduction of a practice through the capacities they enact and the contexts for action they provide. Not every practice has each of these features: indeed, it is only what Schatzki calls 'integrative practices' (such as swimming, farming, cooking) that do so in their micro-rules for organizing different sub-practices. A looser type of practice that Schatzki calls 'dispersed' (such as describing, ordering) is linked only on level (1), that is, by understandings that it involves a collection of instances of the same thing. We might question what exactly are the rules of swimming anyway, and even if they are clear, how important are they to the practice as a whole, but leaving that aside, what is most important is Schatzki's point that it is the *socially* achieved patterning of practice that enables the flux of everyday activity to be *intelligible* between actors. This approach, as Ann Swidler explains,⁴³ dispenses with the need to explain patterns of action through some mentalist notion of 'culture' (as internal 'ideas' or 'meanings') in favour of a practically achieved coordination, what Schatzki calls the 'context-constituting hanging-together of lives'.⁴⁴

Practice theory is therefore helpful in translating hype about a digital revolution into more concrete questions: what types of things do people *do* in relation to media? And what types of things do people *say* (think, believe) in relation to media? We wouldn't expect the organization of a media-saturated world to correspond to the organization in a 'pre-saturation' world (when audience activity could be assumed to be discrete from the rest of everyday life). But – and this is what practice theory makes clear – in order to establish what *are* the new principles by which practices related to media are demarcated, we cannot be guided simply by our instinct as media or social researchers. We must look closely at what people are doing, saying and thinking in relation to media. For an application of this, see Box 2.1 on Twitter and practice theory.

Box 2.1 Twitter and Practice Theory

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform founded in 2006. The same platform attracts and supports a number of different practices which, as forms of life, need to be distinguished. Twitter is therefore a good illustration of the value of practice theory. The success of Twitter has stimulated international imitators, for example the Sina Weibo micro-blogging platform in China.

Twitter allows blogs of no more than 140 characters; these however can easily incorporate links to other text, sound or video. It emerged first as a blogging platform with multiple advantages: for senders, because of the basic shared format and enforced brevity, tweets could be sent easily while on the move, for example, from people's mobile phones; for receivers, the brevity and sense of instantaneous thought were also benefits. This basic use of Twitter comes into its own in evolving disaster situations such as the Japan tsunami and US Hurricane Irene in 2011. The practice of re-tweeting intensifies this process of message circulation.

Prima facie, the Twitter platform could lead to a cacophony of jumbled, decontextualized messages, but from this basic starting point a number of divergent practices have developed, each linked to a particular way of defining the readership for particular Twitter accounts. First, individuals with high positions or profiles, or otherwise able to secure a regular, even if small, audience, can use Twitter as a means of *unauthorized commentary*. The consequences for institutional structures and authority are destabilizing. In fields of competition where high media attention is likely (see further chapter 6), powerful individuals with previously limited voice can start to influence events by tweeting, for example footballers tweeting of the arrival of a new player ahead of the official club announcement (Manchester United manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, has in response called tweets 'a waste of time': *Guardian*, 20 May 2011).

Second, individuals with high media status (such as celebrities) can use Twitter to maintain a constant online *presence*, whose informality and intimacy is geared to building a fan base (the English comedian Stephen Fry was an early pioneer of this, but it is now routine).

Third, groups can cohere around a particular Twitter address or hashtag, to which *commentary* (or other information) can be sent: if successful, this becomes a form of *presencing* for groups without previous identity or symbolic capital. The use of hashtags to form

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groups and coordinate high-speed action in the Arab Spring and many other demonstrations has become celebrated or notorious, depending on your point of view.

A practice approach not only helps us keep these various Twitter uses distinct: it also stops us assuming we know what Twitter is 'for' without careful examination of the evidence. In the English summer riots of August 2011, the assumption was quickly made by government and others that the main use of Twitter (and Facebook) was to incite riotous action, leading to calls for it to be banned at times of instability. But the *Guardian's* survey indicated that *reacting to the riots* was a much more common usage of Twitter, echoing debates about the Arab Spring where assumptions that Twitter was crucial to the mobilization in, for example, Egypt proved exaggerated (Lewis, Ball and Halliday 2011; Beaumont 2011).

Schatzki writes of the 'tissue of sociality'⁴⁵ that lies just beneath the surface of daily life. Schatzki, however, differs fundamentally from Bourdieu in his denial of any type of social order except that which emerges from the *local* contexts that individual practices comprise, insisting that the only site of social order lies in the explicit understandings, rules and ends of particular practices. Schatzki rules out the macro-shaping role of large institutions such as media (discussed in chapters 3 and 4) because of his insistence on limiting social order to the understandings that allow each practice locally to 'hang together'. Here surely Schatzki goes too far. What about the articulations *between* practices which enable complex practices to emerge, for example, in domains such as Facebook or YouTube? These may take a recognizable form without requiring much explicit description because of the way that our everyday practices are recursively organized through their basis in routine.⁴⁶ Similarly, what are widely known as technologies' *affordances* shape users' shared understandings. Actor-Network Theory, too, may provide a useful supplement here because it is interested in how heterogeneous acts, objects and agents get articulated together in stable forms across large scales; as Tristan Thielmann has recently pointed out, 'ANT . . . does not predetermine where media are to be found in a chain of action.'⁴⁷ This helps us grasp both how large-scale 'digital formations', such as financial markets, generate new social forms and how our everyday practices of 'holding things together' are recursively organized.⁴⁸

There is, as sociologist Elizabeth Shove notes, a level of social ordering that we often miss because it is hidden in the apparently banal need for convenience, control and comfort.⁴⁹ Shove encourages

us to look at ‘complexes of practices’, the order created by the *fit* of one practice with another. Phone ‘apps’ are a perfect example. ‘Apps’ and other phone functions offer an important and as yet little analysed engine of change, naturalizing a wholly new type of media/data interface. A phone ‘app’ with an option ‘next train home’ personalizes your phone in a quite powerful way; so too do the prayer time alert and Mecca-indicating compass built into the ‘Qiblah phone’ marketed to Muslims by a South Korean company.⁵⁰ ‘Apps’ which allow you to scan clothes in a shop changing room (to compare prices and check what your friend thinks)⁵¹ are articulations of practice that enable new forms of convenience and social embedding. It is in such details that practice theory hits the ground.

The varieties of media-related practice

The value of practice theory is to ask open questions about what people are doing in relation to media. To illustrate the potential complexity, take a game of televised football. Watching a football game on television might for one person be best analysed as part of their emotional practice as a team fan; for another, perhaps that person’s partner or child, it may be an obligation or pleasure of their relationship together to share the first person’s passion; for another person, perhaps within the same family, this media act may matter not so much for its detailed content, but as a sign which marks one use of domestic space off from another, depending on the time of day; for someone watching in a public space, it may be part of a group solidarity; for another, it may be something done to fill in time, instantly ‘putdownable’ as soon as a friend rings the doorbell or the person gets the energy to go back to a task. I am not, of course, the first to point out such ‘indeterminacy’.⁵²

We cannot grasp what people are doing with media simply by starting out from the ‘text’ of, say, a televised game and the various ways people read that text (media studies’ original starting point). Only in the case of the football fan is *the way s/he reads* the game’s text likely to be of research interest, since it is only here that the watching of the game is a central, non-substitutable part of a wider practice. Political economy approaches are important background in all these cases but probably only important foreground in the case of the football fan, where economic pressures shape the places where televised games can be watched and even the structure of the game itself. When we turn to wider issues of coordination, people involved in a huge range of practices (from fandom to family interaction to group solidarity at a community centre or pub to just waiting for

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something else to do) can all be doing roughly the same thing – watching television – at the same time, but *how* the text is read is only central to understanding such forms of coordination for texts whose contents are of unusual shared importance (major sporting and political events, the climax of a soap opera or large drama serial).

In the era of digital convergence, the openness of the practice approach becomes especially important: indeed, the other media in the ‘media manifold’ (tweets, SMS messages, Facebook links) lead us quickly away from the original boundaries of a text, such as a televised game.

By moving media research’s centre of gravity away from texts (and their production or direct reception) and towards the broader set of *practices* related to media, we get a better grip on the distinctive types of *social process* enacted *through* media-related practices,⁵³ practices involving not just producer and performers but also interactive audiences, audience members who would like to become performers, and non-viewing members of the public who become affected by that wider process. Such an approach has already transformed our understanding of the talk show: a huge labour process goes into constructing the encounters selected for actual broadcast, with the resulting text only one facet of that practice.⁵⁴ A similar approach is useful in grasping reality media and celebrity culture (see chapters 3 and 4). A practice approach allows us to follow practices that are related to media, but not related to any specific set of texts: for example, practices of using media sources in education; individuals’ uses of media references in telling stories about themselves; the uses of media in the political, medical or legal systems, indeed in work practices everywhere (see chapter 6). A practice approach also brings into view the wider articulations of practice in systems of power. Here it is compatible with other approaches to new media, for example, Lievrouw and Livingstone’s definition of new media as ‘material artifacts’, ‘practices’ and ‘larger social arrangements and organization forms’.⁵⁵ There is no question here of forgetting the representational power of media: in chapters 3 and 4 we will cover different aspects of that process too.

To sum up, ‘media’ are best understood as a vast domain of practice that, like all practices (in Schatzki’s view), are social at a basic level through the very acts that stabilize them as practices and distinguish specific practices from each other. We need to map this domain. This requires some initial, if crude, signposts. In that spirit, I want now to explore some new types of media-related practice that an older descriptive language might miss. I will start with single media-related practices and move later to more complex practices.

Searching and search-enabling

Since the internet is an unbounded informational reserve, almost any use of it, however simple, requires a search. As Matthew Hindman puts it: ‘on their own, users have only two ways to find previously unknown content. First, content can be discovered by surfing away from previously known sites; and second, it can be found through online search tools.’⁵⁶

Our dependence on search engines such as Google is no more reversible than the telephone system’s early move from human operators towards automated telephone-switching devices.⁵⁷ Search is performed by crawlers which scan a certain portion of the actual internet in accordance with fixed protocols. We will discuss the impacts of search engines on the world as it appears to us in more detail in chapter 4, but for now recall Introna and Nissenbaum’s aphorism: ‘to exist is to be indexed by a search-engine.’⁵⁸ Search and its conditions affect social ontology.

Search is not just the operation of abstract tools; it is embedded in our practices. Even our ‘favourite’ default sites are the result of our earlier ‘searches’. Searching extends the range of interpretative acts that belonging to an audience involves:⁵⁹ this process is open-ended, since, as Jay Bolter noted, ‘web pages function as ordinary text, but they also function as places along a path.’⁶⁰ Search pathways are increasingly integrated into *how* we act: we leave the house, perhaps, for a meeting (or even leave the country on a trip) without a map, let alone details of local facilities, intending to rely on our smartphones’ search capacity while we are on the move. But this new way of acting – configuring knowledge acquisition and knowledge use differently in time and space – brings with it new forms of differentiation. The vaster the internet becomes, the more salient will be the differences between peoples’ search strategies and skills: here socio-economic status and education provide big advantages even if over time they can be overcome by experience.⁶¹ In addition, many new models of news democratization depend on potential news audiences finding dispersed sources or having aggregators help them do so. If we think of the internet as an infinite informational reserve, then searching is a key practice through which people shape their distinctive conditions of action.

From searching, other practices quickly develop: practices of exchanging information by forwarding weblinks to family, friends or work colleagues, warehousing sites that collect recommendations from users so other users can narrow down their search practice (Digg, etc.), and tools for pre-ordered searches (RSS feeds and other

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alerts). These various *search-enabling* practices are increasingly prominent in everyday life as people seek to optimize their access to the vastly expanded flow of potentially relevant information. Their dispersed agency (*anyone* can forward a link or signal that they ‘like’ a post) contrasts with earlier centuries’ ways of disseminating interesting material: for example, the ancient and medieval world’s *florilegia* produced by groups of scholars, often in monasteries, who collected interesting quotes from otherwise obscure books into new volumes.⁶² Now not only do individuals (from their computers or phones, wherever they are) make the recommendations, but system interfaces, such as Digg and reddit, enable them to recommend cumulatively. Some commentators hope that ‘collaborative filtering’ and other collective forms of information sorting can challenge the dominance of Google and even create new forms of social bond.⁶³

Certainly search-enabling practices complicate any simple idea of individual dependence on search engines like Google. But, as Alexander Halavais points out, celebrations of ‘folksonomics’ and the ‘social web’ ignore three crucial factors. First, search-enabling practices still depend, ultimately, on ‘the idea of search’ and work to enhance search functionality. The underlying constraints built into search engines’ workings do not disappear: indeed, they require our full sociological imagination to uncover their implications.⁶⁴ Second, the so-called social web is already inhabited by institutional predators, who know very well the potential of peer-to-peer recommendation to enhance their marketing goals. Amazon builds on quasi-social clues to push our consumption (‘other readers who bought this also bought ...’). Quasi-social prompting reaches new sophistication with the ‘sparkle link’ where embedded Amazon staff dedicated to specific products make adjustments so that, if you search for a related product, you are asked: ‘were you actually looking for this?’, that is, the product that is being pushed. In political marketing, peer-to-peer exchange of political information is certainly enhanced by search-enabling practices, particularly at times of political mobilization, but what if peer-to-peer exchange (our preferences via Digg, Delicious and so on) is itself increasingly shaped by underlying pressures from larger political and commercial actors?⁶⁵ Third, our reliance on search is increasingly serviced *in advance* by software which pushes information of potential relevance at us wherever we are, through the GPS functionality of our phones (for example, the Foursquare or MyTown applications). The prospects for such search-*bypassing* capacities are uncertain, since they bring a heavy cost: the cost of continually revealing where we are to providers and, unless we opt out, to other users. This leads us to other key practices.

Showing and being shown

If searching is about finding what's 'out there', increasingly prominent also in everyday life is a set of practices I want to call *showing*. There is no closed list of features which characterize every act of 'showing', at most what Wittgenstein calls a 'family resemblance'⁶⁶ whereby each act of showing has enough similarities to at least one other act of showing for it to belong to the extended 'family' of acts of showing. The term 'showing' helps us grasp the mass of media-related acts that make something publicly available: many of those acts were unknown in a pre-digital age.⁶⁷

In late May 2010 when I was starting this chapter, I gathered examples of online acts of showing. One was a continuation of an old tabloid practice, the exposé of illegitimate acts by a public figure: in this case, the UK tabloid newspaper *News of the World's* posting on its website of an undercover video of the Duchess of York (universally known as 'Fergie') apparently asking for and receiving money in return for a promise of access to her ex-husband, Prince Andrew, Queen Elizabeth's son.⁶⁸ What is striking here is, first, that, compared with earlier exposés, we *see* the act of receiving money, rather than just reading about it and, second, we see it *in a form* such that (by sending the link) we can effortlessly draw it to *others'* attention. Any online act of showing therefore entails a whole chain of re-showings.

Another example was oil giant BP's live feed from its attempt to control a disastrous leak in the Gulf of Mexico – Operation Top Kill.⁶⁹ What was I expected to learn from this 'live' footage from somewhere on the sea bed? What was I seeing? *Was* it indeed 'live' footage? These unanswered questions point to what's interesting about this act of showing: that part of BP's corporate response to the crisis was to put its own live 'stream' into the public domain, as mainstream press/TV coverage spiralled out of its control. If BP's act of showing was defensive, positive campaigns of 'showing' are frequent too, as when a year later the New York-based Human Rights Watch inspected sites in Libya for evidence of cluster ammunition used by government forces and, after their mission, showed those very weapon fragments on their website.⁷⁰

YouTube (owned since 2006 by Google) provides a vast new space of showing where heterogeneous actors can post and discuss video material. Much of YouTube's material is itself placed there by institutional actors as a cheap and unregulated alternative to broadcasting: such acts are continuous with the production/promotion strategies of those institutions. Still other material on YouTube

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comprises acts of search-enabling (see above) aimed at a general, not specific audience, as when people post favourite TV clips. Most interesting are acts of showing by individuals and groups in acts of public display that previously had no practicable form. Consider these posts thrown up by my search on 27 May 2010:

- A witness video of members of the Harry Potter film cast apparently passing through the concourse of London's Kings Cross (over 136,000 views by end June 2011)
- A performance by librarian staff at University of Washington's Information School doing a cover version of a Lady Gaga song (over 800,000 views by end June 2011)
- A video of 'Lurcher' dogs with their handlers posted by Dogs Trust Salisbury, inviting new owners to adopt them (2,163 views by end of June 2011).⁷¹

YouTube's availability as a vast visual reserve has transformed a simple dog advertisement, an account of a celebrity sighting and a piece of office fun into acts that *coexist* in the same public space of interconnection. Whether 'doing something for YouTube' is becoming sufficiently recognizable by agents to be a 'dispersed practice' in Schatzki's term, let alone rule-bound enough to be an 'integrative practice', is an open question.

Interesting also are the diverse social contexts in which these particular acts of showing take place. *Being shown* (being put into wider circulation) is a latent dimension of almost every act today beyond the home, and often within the home. Whatever you are doing, there is usually someone around with a recording device that can be connected now or later to the internet. The work of Goffman on how situations can be 'keyed' in various ways⁷² finds new relevance here: it helps us describe how the (spatial, temporal, thematic) possibilities of everyday interaction are being transformed by media devices. We often face a basic ambiguity to *where* we may be shown. Many contemporary media are characterized by this ambiguity between broadcast and closed communication.⁷³

Some contexts for showing and being shown are happy ones: the now almost automatic placing of photos onto a website (Facebook, Flickr, Snapfish and countless others) after a shared holiday or party, indeed any event whatsoever. The assumption that what we do together will quickly be converted not just into images in a photo album but into an image-flow online is now integral to the management of our private and public personas: the routine act of posting

photos of a shared event on Facebook links ‘showing’ to ‘commentary’ (see below).⁷⁴ Other contexts are neutral but normatively driven: the practice, built into the social networking interface, of showing our social networks via our Facebook and so on.⁷⁵ Still other acts of *showing* may have an aggressive motive: to humiliate others or triumph oneself through the act of showing, as in the exultant videos by school shooters. In past eras (and sometimes still today) heads of war victims were placed on stakes for all to see. Now perhaps there is no need: a video of an attack within minutes can be posted online or circulated by mobile phone amongst friends. In the UK, this goes by the chilling name of ‘happy slapping’.⁷⁶ It is unhelpful to dismiss the media-component of ‘happy slapping’ as aberrant, revolting though its outputs are. For acts of ‘happy slapping’ are an example of how pervasive the general practice of showing has become, and how interwoven it is with continuing conflicts over territoriality, resource and identity.⁷⁷

There are also defensive forms of showing, for example the improvised surveillance practice of pensioners in a Leicestershire neighbourhood, using cameras, a website and YouTube, that reported local drug dealing to police. I say ‘defensive’ since that is no doubt how those people would describe it, but such group surveillance is continuous with the overextended process of state surveillance in Britain that would be seen by many as aggressive.⁷⁸

These multiple forms of ‘showing’ illustrate how social and public space is being rekeyed via media-related practices. The space of human action is now available not just to imaginative reconstruction, or occasional memory-traces, but to permanent visual tracking. Remember the Google user quoted in chapter 1 who tracked down a fugitive. Showing on a large scale regularizes mediated co-veillance in everyday life, transforming everyday action and performance into spectacle and audiencing. Showing is just one of a wider set of ways in which once-private life is being projected beyond its normal boundaries: blogging and the standard reporting on Facebook of private/public events, such as relationship break-up, are other examples.⁷⁹

Let’s move now to some originally complex (that is, multi-component) practices related to media now so routine that they can justifiably be treated as simple practices. *Presencing* is my term of convenience for individuals’ and groups’ acts of managing through media a continuous presence-to-others across space; *archiving*, analogously, refers to people’s attempt to manage their presence (and presence-to-others) over time.

Presencing

Whether or not you are a user, it is almost impossible to be unfamiliar with the space of social networking sites. We already know a lot about how particular groups conceive such SNS: the types of narratives they want to tell there, some of the narrative constraints they impose because of fears over privacy. ‘Going on [Facebook, Renren, etc.]’ is a recognizable practice and its norms will depend very much on the wider culture in which it is carried out and that culture’s wider framework of permission. Different platforms may have different associations, as Toshie Takahashi’s recent work on Japanese users of Mixi and MySpace brings out, with MySpace associated with distant ‘friends’ and external networks, in part because of its late introduction into Japan from the USA.⁸⁰ But let’s use the openness of the practice approach to ask a slightly different question: what is the larger family of practices of which ‘going on Facebook’, for example, might be a part?

That family, I suggest, is ‘presencing’, by which I mean a whole set of media-enhanced ways in which individuals, groups and institutions put into circulation information about, and representations of, themselves for the wider purpose of *sustaining a public presence*. The term ‘public’ is no doubt too simple: as Daniel Miller neatly puts it, Facebook’s ‘public’ dimension results from ‘an aggregate of private spheres’.⁸¹ Presencing is not the same as calling up a few friends to tell them some news; nor, although the audience is unspecific, is it like putting up something on a noticeboard. That is because presencing is oriented to a permanent site in public space that is distinctively marked by the producer for displaying *that* producer’s self. Whatever its basis in particular platforms (of course, people change platforms or work across multiple platforms), the act of presencing goes wider. It responds to an emerging requirement in everyday life to *have* a public presence beyond one’s bodily presence, to construct an objectification of oneself.⁸² Media platforms, media skills and media use form the necessary preconditions of this practice, and may be intensely reflected upon, but presencing is not primarily a practice ‘about’ media. It is a project of the self: an increasingly automatic part of growing up through adolescence and, as danah boyd eloquently argues for the USA, a way for young people to have some public agency when they suffer restrictions on their ability to participate in face-to-face public space. Alternatively, in Japan it is a way for adults to moderate their relationship with distant parents towards a greater fluency and informality. In South Korea where, like Japan, internet-enabled mobile phones came early, the ‘minihompy’ (or

mobile-device-enabled personal homepage) has become a crucial means for individuals to be 'present' to each other: 85 per cent of South Koreans use the internet for this purpose.⁸³ Are changing norms and expectations of presencing generating new types of political repertoire?⁸⁴ Let's hold that question until chapter 5.

Presencing may be simple self-promotion. But amongst young people not free to move as they please or in families which are dispersed (voluntarily or otherwise), presencing becomes a necessity, not a choice: a basic threshold for 'keeping in touch' or just 'hanging out', with implications for wider practices of friendship and parenting.⁸⁵ Presencing create new problems of interdependency: someone has to read what you post, you have to trust them to know where (and where not) to circulate that material, and so on. This takes us into the territory of another classic sociologist, Norbert Elias, and his work on the emergence of norms of interdependency. How do individuals establish what for them and their peers is an appropriate level of effort in sustaining their mediated presence? What shared narratives make sense of the new obligation to have a presence? What are the acceptable limits to presencing, in terms of scope, continuity and intensity, when we can never be sure who will see what we do?⁸⁶

It remains uncertain how fundamentally new are today's practices of presencing. The scale of connection is certainly new, but remember it was once obligatory among the small elite of European societies, such as France and the UK, to be visible in 'society'. This meant attending certain dances and parties, and staging 'at homes' where others could leave their calling cards at the door to register their presence in relation to the host, enabling the host in return to record their recognition to the caller without necessarily meeting them. Proust's great novel, *In Search of Lost Time*, records, in part, the decline of that mid-nineteenth century world in favour of a mass-mediated public world with different standards.⁸⁷ Are we now seeing through social networking sites and Web-presencing the revival of something like 'society' but on a completely different scale, style, pace and rhythm? What related practices are emerging? What implications does the habit of *evaluating* each other's performances online have for power and social norms?⁸⁸

Archiving

Archiving is presencing's equivalent in time. While the effort of presencing is directed at the difficulties of maintaining a presence in public *space* (being visible to others across social space), 'archiving'

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(as I use the term) is the individual's practice of managing *in time* the whole mass of informational and image traces s/he continually produces, so that, *over time*, they add up to something acceptable and perhaps even graspable as a history. Many writers note that the embedding of internet access into everyday life (both personal and institutional) has completely changed information flows and their role in social order. Giddens's insights into the role of information storage in the formation of state power remain valuable, but they were developed for an age (the 1970s) when information was stored physically, behind the literally closed doors of particular powerful institutions.⁸⁹ But now, as Bruce Bimber notes, all sorts of information persists into the present as open archive: news bulletins and newspaper content, campaign information, political communications, basic discussion. 'The past', as he puts it, 'becomes more accessible to the present', that is, for anyone with Web access.⁹⁰ Domains that were once separate – mass media and interpersonal communication – become linked by these new archiving functions: YouTube is now a cultural archive where you can search and track down a blurry extract from an old TV show you once loved and directly pass on the link to friends.⁹¹ We come to the implications of archiving for political actors (especially groups and institutions) in chapter 6.

For now let's focus on individual practices. The desire to leave a story of one's life is universal.⁹² The hyperproduction of media materials by the contemporary social actor poses new problems of archiving: who has the time or energy to manage their accumulating history of online 'presence' so that it will come in future to seem to others more than a random jumble? There are wider ethical issues here (see chapter 8); meanwhile, new types of practice may offer solutions, or at least quasi-solutions. Think of the increasingly reported act of 'life-caching', the controlled management of one's life-archive, and Facebook's recently announced Timeline feature which Mark Zuckerberg claimed will 'help you tell the story of your life'. Once, the dominant forms of archiving were the diary or the photo album, each having a particular religious or leisure context. Trans-individual contexts are emerging online for sharing archive material: photo-sharing sites from Flickr to Snapfish and countless others.⁹³

As archiving photos online becomes widespread, photography, as Christensen and Røpke note,⁹⁴ becomes itself an 'integrative practice' in Schatzki's sense, a socially evolved way of combining personal memory, collective bonding and communal history production, which is increasingly tied to the spatially directed practice of presencing.

Complex media-related practices

Practices need not be, but often are, habits: habitual repetition is one way actions get stabilized as practices. Our habits are not isolated but fit together in the much larger weave of habits which make up our daily lives: pull one habit from that texture and you may disrupt the whole. That is why media habits, such as watching television, often considered in isolation (see chapter 1), change more slowly than media hype claims: they are woven into a wider set of habits. Some media-related practices are, not surprisingly, best understood as *complex articulations of many media-related practices* and sometimes of non-media-related practices too. These complex practices may either involve ‘action sequences’⁹⁵ or the mutual conditioning of multiple actions. Let’s consider some examples, more and less speculative.

Keeping up with the news The idea that ‘keeping up with the news’ might be a practice worth studying was first pursued by the Norwegian researcher Ingunn Hagen.⁹⁶ The Scandinavian sense of news consumption as a duty – with its roots in the Protestant sense of a ‘duty to read’ – is perhaps distinctive.⁹⁷

At a more general level, the complex practice of keeping up with the news is of international interest and contributes to even more complex practices of narrating one’s life through news or orienting oneself to a public world *through* news consumption.⁹⁸ Today’s proliferating news interfaces mean that keeping up with the news is likely to be an articulation of many smaller practices: not just watching a prime-time TV news bulletin or listening to radio news at fixed times, but snatching a look at the news headlines on your home webpage during lunch at work, receiving an SMS update on one’s phone, following up a story link in a friend’s email or a blog you regularly read, picking up a free newspaper on the way home from work or college.⁹⁹ How much time we spend on each practice, how far we extend it or link it with further background news exploration will vary, possibly quite drastically. The correlation between particular news tracking practices and sociodemographic variables is a key area for new research.

The media industries’ economic models and working practices are adjusting to the changing space–time distribution pattern of keeping up with the news. As dramatically illustrated by consumption of immediate news coverage of the 9/11 attacks,¹⁰⁰ online news consumption, often from work via office desktop computer, is now a regular part of many people’s days. In Argentina, for example, recognition of this has influenced the organization of news websites, as

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Pablo Boczkowski's pioneering study shows. While, *prima facie*, this should lead to an extension and enrichment of people's keeping up with the news, the intense distractions of the work environment may shift news consumption in the opposite direction towards a superficial if continuous awareness of basic headlines and not much more.¹⁰¹ As internet-enabled phones with built-in news 'apps' become common, the changing space-time configuration of keeping up with the news may continue to change radically, but for reasons rooted in the organization of everyday practice, not civic duty in the abstract.

Commentary Worthy of separate analysis is a complex practice I call 'commentary'. Some literary cultures have been distinguished by the richness of their practices of commentary: the Jewish tradition of cabbala is frequently cited, but the ancient world's general scarcity of textual objects meant that written manuscripts often reached people with the commentary of previous readers' (so-called 'scholists') embedded within them, a tradition which reaches us now via the comments written in medieval versions of Greek texts.¹⁰² Now we are entering an age of commentary for the opposite reason: because of the almost infinite proliferation of things to read and look at, we need to send signals to help each other *select* from the flux. At the same time, and for related reasons, our ability to send comments and signals has been massively extended by digital media: we take it for granted that by emailing or uploading a link we can *point at* something interesting we have just read and so alert someone on the other side of the world. The scope of commentary as a practice has been massively enlarged.

This transforms what since the 1960s has been called 'inter-textuality', as Keren Tenenboim-Weinblatt notes in a brilliant recent article. Inter-textuality is not now something latent in texts that it requires a scholar to extract; it is something we make happen every day through the practice of commentary in our work and leisure lives.¹⁰³

Commentary is a factor of increasing importance in media economics, as organizations try to monetize the downstream hits onto other sites that their readers generate, and major industries are increasingly dependent on upstream linking from people on social networking sites.¹⁰⁴ But commentary is also a practice of great interest to a broader sociology of media as an *infrastructure* of commentary emerges. A practice approach that draws specifically on ANT will help us track this. Previously most people's commentary on media was lost in the ether – a shout at the television, a scrawl in a book, a remark to a friend. Now our commentary is automatically archived

and made visible online. Yet such commentary takes place over multiple sites and across many particular practices. How is this complex practice of commentary being organized? How is its new organization changing how people understand the *purposes* of commentary, and its implications for their status as members of a broader media culture?

This takes us to how we are shaping our overall relations to the media manifold. Two complex practices are interesting here.

Keeping all channels open A dominant narrative of modernity was that, even as our ability to move and transmit across space increased, the material infrastructure of our lives required us to spend more and more time confined in relatively private spaces: what Anthony Giddens called the ‘sequestration of experience’.¹⁰⁵ And yet, as modern media have increasingly enabled *continuous* media inputs wherever we are, something different becomes possible: ‘connected presence’.¹⁰⁶

We can now, if we wish, be permanently open (and potentially responsive) to content from all directions.¹⁰⁷ Many writers see the practice (or even compulsion) of continuous connectivity as characteristic of the ‘digital native’ generation.¹⁰⁸ Being open on all channels in this way is part of the marketing promise of new portable interfaces such as the iPhone. While it is literally impossible to be open to everything, the demand to ‘be available’ shapes an emerging practice, recognizably different from earlier modes of media consumption based on intermittent communication and a clear distinction between mass media and interpersonal media. Keeping all channels open means permanently orienting oneself to the world beyond one’s private space and the media that are circulated within it.¹⁰⁹

In earlier periods of history – times of media scarcity – being more ‘open to the world’ required precisely the opposite configuration. In medieval Europe, it meant isolating oneself for much of the day, as in a monastery, so as to be more open to the message of God.¹¹⁰ Now perhaps, within a supersaturated media landscape, a different way of opening ourselves to the world is evolving, the reverse of sequestration: a voluntary opening of as many channels of communication as possible with known others and the wider world.

Screening out Keeping all channels open creates severe problems.¹¹¹ Such responsiveness is only possible on the basis of a considerable amount of background selection. In the pre-modern age, news of distant places was a ‘luxury commodity’ or at best something that reached you through chance encounters.¹¹² Modernity has involved

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an ever-increasing stream of regular news from afar, but it is only in the past two decades that the flow has become an issue to be managed in everyday life. Media studies, influenced by literary models of textual analysis, has until recently put little emphasis on what people *don't* watch/listen to/read, although there are some exceptions, for example Stewart Hoover and colleagues' study of US families' active limiting of the media their children are allowed to see.¹¹³ Selecting out is close to a survival skill in today's media environment.

The necessity of selecting out derives not only from the volume of information and communications reaching us, but also from contradictions between the *types* of different information flow that reach us at the same time, contradictions that require extra time to resolve. As Robert Hassan notes,¹¹⁴ everyday life is overridden by the instantaneity of 'network time', and yet it still takes finite amounts of our *everyday* time to open an email, click on a link, respond to an SMS text. Selecting out is increasingly (if not always intentionally) delegated to technological interfaces such as the iPhone which offer gateways to media that are the result of intense prior selection: behind these lie major commercial negotiation (it is a big deal when, say, the *Guardian* gets its content pre-selected as a phone 'app'). By choosing from a vast range of 'apps', people screen out much of the infinite media environment to create a 'chosen' interface – a customized media manifold, if you like – that is both manageable and seemingly personal.

Selecting out has considerable personal implications too. The time-tabling of availability in space has always been used to provide people with periods of 'inaccessibility'. In the 1970s, it seemed as if professional circles were reducing the scope of their availability.¹¹⁵ But in the early twenty-first century, as Sherry Turkle's vivid new research brings out, the pressure is in the other direction. 'Hiding out' (being online while trying to disguise this from others), or more simply avoiding using the phone for speaking, is increasingly common. Turkle quotes a 21-year-old college student: 'I don't use my phone for calls any more. I don't have the time to just go on and on.' The openness of face-to-face interaction is what gets cut: a 16-year-old school pupil tells Turkle she prefers texts to calls 'because in a call "there is a lot less boundness to the person,"' although "later in life" she concedes "I'm going to need to talk to people on the phone."¹¹⁶

Here selecting out links to wider questions of how social coordination now depends upon, but is also vulnerable to, the *systemic* overload linked with media technologies. Is the result something like a new 'crisis of control', in James Beniger's term, but deriving, not as it once did, from too little information, but from too much information?¹¹⁷ If so,

can we expect, as Beniger found for the nineteenth century, major *new practices* of adaptation which, as yet, are only embryonic?

Conclusion

A practice-based approach has opened up broad questions about the sorts of things people are regularly doing with media amid the proliferating complexity of the digital media era. At the start of this chapter, we distinguished between acts aimed specifically at media, acts performed through media and acts whose preconditions are media. In what followed, I have concentrated on the second and third, so as to shift our focus away from the most standard topics of media studies: reading a text, watching a programme, looking at an image. But actions, especially when repeated, become the background for other actions, so it is difficult in practice to keep these three action types separate.

Deep dynamics of practice have started to emerge: the need to keep constantly ‘in touch’ and in reach of information and other people, the need to maintain a public presence, the need for selection and screening out, the resulting reliance on the selective attention and inattention of others. Such webs of interdependent action, because they depend on achieved coordination, are one of our best routes to grasping how social change is occurring in and around media; they are the stuff of which, as Norbert Elias showed for early modernity, new cultural ‘figurations’ are made.¹¹⁸ For Elias, key figurations were dances, fashion, ways of behaving at table; new figurations are emerging around us, but it may be some time before their shape is clear. We can expect, as in earlier eras of technology, more than one type of sociability to be superimposed upon another.¹¹⁹ At the same time, the wider reference points and norms of social space are, in crucial respects, ‘under-patterned’.¹²⁰

A practice-based approach to media must stay close to political economy. In the digital media age, intense corporate interest in online spaces of display will be crucial to shaping how the stuff of everyday life is reconfigured. Now, for example, we perform identity and develop public or quasi-public profiles within the constraints of platforms such as Facebook: as a result, we risk a deep penetration by market logics into the very lineaments of self-reflection and self-expression, a process Sarah Banet-Weiser has called ‘the branding of authenticity’.¹²¹ This process is reinforced when images intended for limited circulation are routinely picked up in mass media stories: mainstream press routinely uses Facebook images of people taken at

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parties as character evidence for murder victims or alleged criminals. More deeply, the model of sociality built into networking platforms (and increasingly our networking practice) involves automatic exclusions based around certain types of nodes (and personal connection) which divert us from seeing what lies to one side of those nodes.¹²²

Our understanding of media's social consequences cannot therefore stop short at the fine detail of media-related practice, in spite of Schatzki's arguments to the contrary. The Facebook example exposes once again the systemic pressures that arise from the cumulative saturation of everyday practice by media, noted earlier in relation to selecting out. I return to such systemic pressures in chapters 5 and 6. It is also important, supplementing political economy, to exploring the wider forms of social power involved in media's everyday representational practices. That is the subject of the next chapter.

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- 148 Anthropologist Henrietta Moore (1986: 116) comments that space is not a text – ‘the organization of space is not a direct reflection of cultural codes and meanings; it is, above all, a context developed through practice.’
- 149 Fischer (1992: 17, 85).
- 150 I focus here on the materiality of how representations take effect, once received. Another important issue is the materiality, and uneven distribution, of the processes whereby media representations get made and distributed: Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998); Parks (2005).
- 151 Williams (1961: 123).
- 152 Couldry (2003a, 2006).
- 153 Boltanski (2011: 9, 34, xi) and in French translation (2009: 26, 61, 13); for p. 61, I give my slightly adjusted translation.
- 154 Hepp (2010: 42–3), and see earlier Martin-Barbero (1993), Couldry (2006: 13–15), Morley (2007: 200), Curran (2002: 53).
- 155 Thrift (2008: 183–4, 242, 250). Compare Parikka (2010).
- 156 Thrift (2008: 2). Other writers influenced by Gilles Deleuze go even further and dissolve all process and all subjects into pure ‘immanence’ (Parikka 2010: 234 n. 31), a move Thrift rightly rejects (2008: 13, 17). Parikka offers an account of how media constitute ‘worlds’ that is entirely non-representational, relying on an account of ‘affects’ that, for all its precision of language, says nothing about how media contents matter in the world. See also Clough (2009) on Deleuze’s ‘transcendental empiricism’.
- 157 Couldry (2008b) criticizing Latour (2005); Knoblauch (2011). For an exception, see Andrew Barry’s reflections on the role of technology in politics which acknowledges the regulatory and constitutive role of technical ‘information’, although not that of broader representations of the social world (Barry 2001: ch. 7).
- 158 Lash (2009: 178). Compare Savage (2009: 157, 163–4). And see special issue of *European Journal of Social Theory* 12(1) in 2009.
- 159 Lash (2002: 18, 16).
- 160 For the long-established problems of functionalism in sociological explanation, see Lukes (1975). On the role of sociological explanation in everyday social order, see Boltanski (2009: 44).
- 161 For the philosophical basis of my approach to representation in critical realism, see Couldry (2008b): compare Downey (2008). For a powerful critique of the social constructivism about facts to which critical realism is opposed, see Boghossian (2007).
- 162 Barry (2001), Latour (2005).
- 163 The best reflections on this complexity remain Lefebvre (1971).

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- 1 Larkin (2008: 3).
- 2 Wittgenstein (1978 [1953]: 46).

- 3 Pitkin (1972: 3).
- 4 This primary concern with action also fits with the basic emphasis of communication theory with communications as action (Jensen 2010: 5).
- 5 Wittgenstein (1978 [1953]: 11, 6, 88).
- 6 Pitkin (1972:293). A further difficulty for my argument, and any account of media practice that follows critical realism (see ch. 1, n. 161), would follow if Wittgenstein's insights into practice *depended* on the social constructivism about facts with which Wittgenstein's work has often been associated. There is, however, no such dependence, although differing views on constructivism inform the contrast developed later in the chapter between my approach to practice and Theodor Schatzki's.
- 7 Knoblauch (2011).
- 8 Aristotle (1976: 76).
- 9 Krotz (2009: 22).
- 10 Yates (1992 [1966]).
- 11 Tapscott (1998); Prensky (2006).
- 12 Herring (2008: 72, 78, 87); Buckingham (2008: 10).
- 13 Hillis (2009: 25).
- 14 Lessig (2008), discussed by Bolin (2011: ch. 7), and compare the statement of O'Reilly (2005) that 'everyone' is now 'a content producer'; on stratification of online production, see Hargittai and Walejko (2008).
- 15 Lewis (1991: 49).
- 16 Garnham (1990); Hesmondhalgh (2007).
- 17 Classically challenged by Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1981).
- 18 Cashmore (2006).
- 19 Fuller (2005: 2).
- 20 Manovich (2001, especially 16, 47–8).
- 21 Lopez Cuenca (2007/8).
- 22 See Parikka (2010: 61) on Deleuze's move beyond Kant's view of the world emerging from the subject.
- 23 Thrift interprets a practice approach differently, arguing that practices 'are not . . . the practices of actors but of the practices themselves' (2008: 8). But, while the social dimension of practice is fundamental, this need not rule out individual agency, intentionality and reflexive adjustment.
- 24 See Couldry (2004). Others are more cautious about such a paradigm shift (Bird 2010: 99). On agency, see Thévenot (2007b: 410).
- 25 Katz (1959), quoted Jensen (2010: 78).
- 26 On audience research, see Hall (1980); on domestic practice, see Morley (1986), Silverstone (1994), Silverstone and Hirsch (1992); for pioneering work on computer-mediated communication, see Turkle (1996).
- 27 Ang (1996: 70, 72).
- 28 Couldry (2000a: 6).
- 29 Alasuutari (1999: 6); Hermes (1999).
- 30 Jancovich and Faire (2003: 3).

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- 31 Michaels (1982). Thanks to Gareth Stanton for alerting me to this important source.
- 32 Ginsburg (1994: 13). Compare Mark Allen Peterson on the need to shift in studying media ‘from word to worlds’ (2003: 22).
- 33 Bird (2003: 2–3, added emphasis).
- 34 Hoover, Schofield Clark and Alters (2004).
- 35 Wittgenstein (1978 [1953]).
- 36 Bourdieu (1977: 109–10; 1990: 83).
- 37 As Warde notes (Warde 2005), in his later work Bourdieu gave much less emphasis to the concept of practice, preferring the concept of field.
- 38 Bourdieu (1990: 73).
- 39 Schatzki (1999); Reckwitz (2002); Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina and von Savigny (2001); Warde (2005).
- 40 Schatzki (1999: 12).
- 41 Reckwitz (2002: 249).
- 42 Schatzki (1999: 89).
- 43 Swidler (2001).
- 44 Schatzki (1999: 15). For Schatzki’s own critical discussion of Bourdieu, see Schatzki (1999: 136–44).
- 45 Schatzki (1999: 202).
- 46 Moores (2005: 9), discussing Giddens (1984). Compare Swidler (2001: 78).
- 47 On ‘affordances’, see Gibson (1979); on ANT, Thielmann (2010).
- 48 On ‘digital formations’, see Latham and Sassen (2005: 10); for ‘holding things together’, Christensen and Røpke (2010: 246–7), and compare Tomlinson (2007: ch. 5), Shove (2007: ch. 2).
- 49 Shove (2007: 170).
- 50 Campbell (2010: 129).
- 51 See for example *Guardian*, 11 December 2010.
- 52 See Bausinger (1984), Morley (1992); for an early precedent for using televised sport as a way into the sheer diversity of practice related to media, see Nightingale, Bockardt, Ellis and Warwick (1992). For media use to mark off space, see Bengtsson (2006); for the ‘putdownable’ text’, see Hermes (1995).
- 53 Peterson (2010a: 172).
- 54 See Gamson (1998); Grindstaff (2002); Illouz (2003).
- 55 Lievrouw (2011: 7), drawing on Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002).
- 56 Hindman (2009: 42).
- 57 Halavais (2009a: 56–7).
- 58 Inrona and Nissenbaum (2000: 170).
- 59 Livingstone (2004).
- 60 Bolter (2001: 28).
- 61 Howard and Massanari (2007).
- 62 Hamesse (1999: 107ff).
- 63 See generally Miller and Shepherd (2008: 8); specifically on Digg, see Bennett (2011: 168–9); the phrase ‘collaborative filtering’ is from Papacharissi (2010: 152–7). See also Palfrey and Gasser (2008: 200), Levy (1997: 10), Halavais (2009a: ch. 8).

- 64 Halavais (2009a: 9, 117, 162–8).
- 65 Clark and van Slyke (2010), Jenkins (2006); for a pessimistic view, see Bennett and Manheim (2006), discussing Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955).
- 66 Wittgenstein (1978 [1953]: 32). My term ‘showing’ is inspired, in part, by Daniel Dayan’s (2009) concept of ‘monstration’, but its usage is more general.
- 67 A longer history would include the early days of weblogs and webcams: Couldry (2003a: ch. 7); Senft (2008); Hillis (2009: ch. 5).
- 68 www.newsoftheworld.co.uk
- 69 www.bp.com/liveassets/bp_internet/globalbp/globalbp_uk_english/homepage/STAGING/local_assets/bp_homepage/html/rov_stream.html, also recycled for example on PBS Newshour’s YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/pbsnewshour, last accessed 25 June 2011.
- 70 www.hrw.org, 15 April 2011, last accessed 25 June 2011.
- 71 Respectively, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsi9HFWlA2c, www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_uzUh1VT98, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMQDDB0SFqw, all last accessed 25 June 2011.
- 72 Goffman (1974: 43–4).
- 73 Compare Marwick and boyd (2010: 123) on social networking sites.
- 74 Miller (2011: 94–5) for an example from Trinidad.
- 75 boyd and Ellison (2008).
- 76 For ‘happy slapping’, see e.g. *Guardian* news reports on 15 December 2005 and 27 July 2010. For school shooters videos, see Sumiala (forthcoming).
- 77 Rowena Davis (2008), drawing on Kintrea et al. (2008).
- 78 Leicester pensioners reported *Metro* 7 July 2010; on Britain’s surveillance state, see House of Lords (2009).
- 79 On co-veillance, see Andrejevic (2008a); on everyday spectacle, see Longhurst (2005: 5), Wood and Skeggs (2008); on breaking up online, see Gershon (2010) and Ito (2010: 132–8).
- 80 For Japan, see Takahashi (2010b: 459–60); for cultural differences generally, see Miller (2011: 186–7); on privacy concerns and practice, see Livingstone (2008), boyd (2008), Marwick and boyd (2010).
- 81 Miller (2011: 175).
- 82 Miller (2011: 179). For something like ‘presencing’ in relation to organizations, see Cooren, Brummans and Charrieras (2008).
- 83 boyd (2008: 134–7); Takahashi (2010a: 135); Yoo (2009: 218).
- 84 Taylor (2007: 143–4).
- 85 Tomlinson (2007: 111); boyd (2008: 126). On parenting, see Madianou and Miller (2011).
- 86 boyd (2008: 126).
- 87 See especially *The Guermantes Way* and *Cities of the Plain* (Proust 1983).
- 88 Zittrain (2008: 219–20); Enli and Thumim (2009), discussing Beer (2008). See more generally the perspectives of Elias (1994).
- 89 Giddens (1974).

222 **Notes to pp. 52–56**

- 90 Bimber (2003: 91); compare Lev Manovich (2008: 38): ‘what before was ephemeral, transient, unmappable and invisible becomes [with the web] permanent, mappable, and viewable.’
- 91 Burgess and Green (2009: 87).
- 92 Ricoeur (1992), Cavarero (2000).
- 93 Lury (1998) and Flichy (1994: 73ff) on photos; on today’s forms of online presence, see Palfrey and Gasser (2008: 35). On life-caching, see Carter (2004); Mark Zuckerberg quoted *Guardian*, 23 September 2011.
- 94 Christensen and Røpke (2010: 251).
- 95 Wuthnow (1989: 7).
- 96 Hagen (1994).
- 97 Gilmont (1999: 237).
- 98 Peterson (2010b: 133); Couldry, Livingstone and Markham (2010: 65–6).
- 99 Compare Schrøder and Kobbenaegel (2010) for Danish study.
- 100 Allan (2006).
- 101 Boczkowski (2010: ch. 2).
- 102 N. Wilson (2007).
- 103 Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2009), which uses the series *24* as an example. See Sands (2008: 72, 88, 296) for evidence that *24* worked as an ‘inter-text’ within the US military and judiciary during a controversial period of US politics (the height of Guantanamo Bay operations). For interesting reflections on the impact of web-searchability on criteria of literary scholarship, see Kirch (2010).
- 104 According to market researcher Experian Hitwise (2010: 12), entertainment industries receive 16.7% and news and media receive 10.6% of their hits this way.
- 105 Giddens (1991) on the sequestration of experience; compare Williams (1992) on mobile privatization.
- 106 Licoppe (2004).
- 107 Winocur (2009: 179).
- 108 Turkle (2011: xii); Palfrey and Gasser (2008: 5).
- 109 See Licoppe (2004: 147) on ‘the fantasy of continuous connection’.
- 110 Webb (2009).
- 111 Here I have learnt a great deal from the ongoing research of my doctoral student Kenzie Burchell.
- 112 Braudel (1975: 365); Bloch (1962: 65).
- 113 Hoover, Schofield Clark and Alters (2004). Compare for early comments on selecting out, Morley (1986) on local news, Jennings Bryant (1993: 155), Couldry (2000b: 81). As Mansell points out (2010: 7), we cannot assume that everyone avails themselves of the most technologically sophisticated ways of managing information.
- 114 Hassan (2003: 41, 44).
- 115 Zerubavel (1981: ch. 5, esp. 141–2, 153).
- 116 On ‘hiding out’, see Turkle (2011: 146); quotes taken from Turkle (2011: 15 and 190).

- 117 Ling and Donner (2009: 142), discussing Beniger (1986).
- 118 Elias (1994: 445 on interdependence, 214–15 on figurations).
- 119 Flichy (1994: 168).
- 120 Bauman (1992: 65).
- 121 Banet-Weiser (forthcoming); compare Lanier (2011: Part 1).
- 122 Mejias (2010).

Chapter 3 Media as Ritual and Social Form

- 1 Calhoun (2005: 375), quoted Coleman and Ross (2010: 118).
- 2 Lamont and Molnar (2002: 168).
- 3 Lefebvre (1971: 71).
- 4 Baudrillard (1981: 169, original emphasis).
- 5 Baudrillard (1981: 169).
- 6 Thévenot (2007b: 409).
- 7 Thévenot (2007b: 410).
- 8 See Boltanski (2011: ch. 2).
- 9 Wagner (2008: 245–6).
- 10 Thévenot (2007b: 410).
- 11 Thévenot (2007b: 411 and 421 n. 3).
- 12 On world/monde, see Boltanski (2011: 57) and in French (2009: 93); on ‘tests’, see Boltanski (2011: 103–10).
- 13 Boltanski (2011: 34).
- 14 Couldry (2003a).
- 15 Lash and Lury (2007).
- 16 Bowker and Star (2000: 9–10; cf. 325).
- 17 See respectively for these perspectives, Peterson (2003: 195), Braman (2009: 25–6), Sewell (1996), drawing on Giddens (1984).
- 18 Wrong (1994).
- 19 As indicated in ch. 1, my approach diverges sharply here from non-representational theory (Thrift 2008).
- 20 Berger and Luckmann (1967: 33, added emphasis).
- 21 Compare also Hobart (2010).
- 22 Boltanski (2011: 54–5, 59–60, 90).
- 23 Carey (1989: 87); Curran (1982), reprinted in Curran (2002: especially 61, 58).
- 24 Compare Bourdieu on the ‘permanent political struggle for the universalization of the means of access to the universal’ (1998: 94).
- 25 Vattimo (1992: 7), quoted Kraidy (2009: viii).
- 26 Bloch (1989: 45).
- 27 Couldry (2000a); Couldry (2003a).
- 28 Bourdieu (1991: 166). Here, quite directly, Bourdieu strives to merge a Marxist and a Durkheimian perspective. For an interesting, but ultimately unconvincing, argument that this merger is impossible, see Garnham (1994).