

Review



The Media and the Mundane: Communication Across Media in Everyday Life. Edited by Kjetil Sandvik, Anne Mette Thorhauge, & Bjarki Valtysson. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom, 2016. 159 pp. ISBN: 9789187957383.

In today's ever-expanding mediated world, a study of the mundane activities of everyday interaction with and through communication devices offers a new perspective on the devices we have become so attached to and the habits that surround them. *The Media and the Mundane: Communication Across Media in Everyday Life* seeks to address the concept of agency through cross-media communication devices with a user-centric perspective. The editors, Kjetil Sandvik, Anne Mette Thorhauge, and Bjarki Valtysson, present this book as one of the first to deal with cross-media communication from a user-perspective approach within the context of everyday life. The concept of "the mundane" depends on the context of use, distinguishing specific domains of reality and representing a particular relevance to the study of everyday life. Perspectives on the mundane, everyday life, and spaces of agency, through cross-media communication provides a common lens through which each chapter inter-relates. Case studies focus on the mundane practices in everyday life that frame the combined use of multiple media platforms by individual users. For example, Troels Fibæk Bertel's contribution, "There's Just Nowhere Else to Turn: Illness, Casework and Mundane Citizenship on Facebook," examines self-organized Facebook groups for civic participation, which are examined through an empirical study of individuals suffering from incapacitating long-term illness. Digital media provides these users suffering from illness with a means of communication that would not otherwise be possible.

The Media and the Mundane focuses on the user perspective, unlike current trends in cross-media communication studies, which focus primarily on the producer perspective, or perspectives of media systems and institutions. Focusing on the user perspective, this edited collection instead allows for the focus to shift from the producer, who is thought to create the experience for the user by controlling content and navigation, to the user perspective. The user-centric perspective allows for the mediated experience as created by the user, through use of multiple and shifting combinations of media. Sandvik, Thorhauge, and Valtysson's collection allows for consideration of the transgressive way in which users are engaging with communication technology, through using multiple combinations of communication technology to engage in more participatory modes of communication.

By focusing on the user-centric perspective, *The Media and the Mundane* provides case studies that offer a multitude of perspectives on the use of cross-media communication in everyday life. Focusing on the mundane moments in everyday life offers patterns of user-manoeuvrability as well as qualifying a "space of agency" within mo-

ments of everyday life. Instead of defining user “agency” in general terms, *The Media and the Mundane* relies on Giddens’ *structuration theory*, which intertwines both the user’s agency and societal structures (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p. 77).

Seeing media technologies and their affordance as part of the framing structure of the agency taking place, we see clearly — throughout the chapters of this book — how people in various everyday contexts adapt to the media on the one hand, and on the other hand how media are being appropriated in combination, and thus challenged as framing structures by users. (Kjetil, Thorhauge, & Valtysson, p. 11)

The common thread throughout each case study is the way media is being used as a “space of agency,” comprised of both social structures and common practices, as well as media technologies themselves.

The Media and the Mundane is an edited collection that is organized into two sections. The first section includes three theoretical chapters and the second section is comprised of six chapters, with each examining a different case study. The theoretical chapters lay the groundwork for the case studies that follow. Beginning with Leslie Haddon’s chapter, “The Domestication of Complex Media Repertoires” reconceptualizes domestication theory, which is presented within a broad context, being not only limited to the home or household, and addresses the interrelation of new and older media in a variety of ways. Rasmus Helles’ chapter, “Theorising Individual Media Use: Mobile Media in Everyday Life,” focuses on individual’s reflexivity and choices, including choices and combination of media technologies, while Maria Bakardjieva’s chapter, “Intersubjectivity across Media: The Structures of the Lifeworld Revisited,” examines the way in which the relationship between the self and the other gets reframed in a variety of ways by new communication technologies.

The case studies start with the introduction of Anne Mette Thorhauge’s flow perspective in “Balancing the Flows. Cross-Media Communication in an Everyday Life Context.” Through methods of automatic and manual logged user data and qualitative interviews, Thorhauge analyzes how smartphones are integrated into the patterns of everyday life. Self-tracking technologies, such as running apps and wrist trackers are analyzed through the concept of cross-media compositions in Stine Lomborg’s chapter, “Exercising with the Smartphone.” Troels Fibæk Bertel’s chapter, “There’s Just Nowhere Else to Turn. Illness, Casework and Mundane Citizenship on Facebook,” addresses self-organized Facebook groups for individuals suffering from incapacitating long-term illness. The chapter that I found most interesting and unique, “Grief and Everyday Life. Bereaved Parents’ Negotiations of Presence across Media” by Dorthe Refslund Christensen and Kjetil Sandvik, deals with the everyday practices of engaging with cross-media communication, both online and offline, amongst bereaved parents. Parents who have lost their children are not engaging in a process of letting go and moving on, but of keeping hold while moving on by establishing a sense of the physically absent child through the use of online and offline communicational practices. Bjarki Valtysson contributes “Restaging the Past. Constructing and Consuming Cultural Heritage Online,” a chapter on constructing and consuming cultural heritage online, through cross-media communication participation in everyday contexts.

Potential political implications of social media use through broadcasters (news reporters and writers) and networkers (bloggers and social media users) is analyzed in “Everyday Online Participation. Strategies and Practices in a Multi-Platform Media Landscape” by Sofia Larsson and Tobias Olsson.

This book constitutes a well laid out collection of case studies addressing the use of multiple media platforms by individual users. In terms of presenting a snapshot of the mundane practices of cross-media communication within the context of everyday life, the case studies presented are engaging, written in a clear and accessible way, and address previously insufficiently studied material within communication studies. Topics like bereavement and illness were unexpected, yet welcomed, shedding light on seldom addressed segments of the population, while the topic of fitness tracking is very current and topical. Those looking to investigate the relationship between producers and users within an ever-shifting and expanding network of cross-media communication will benefit from the subjects gathered within this text. Key terms linking case studies throughout consist of cross-media communication, the mundane, and everyday life, and within the text, each concept takes on a range of meaning depending on the theoretical frameworks and empirical domains of the individual contributions. Each study clearly defines how these concepts are being used and also states the methods involved within the studies. *The Media and the Mundane* contributes to a larger understanding of cross-media communication, in particular, situating media use through the individual user’s perspective, with emphasis on the mundane tasks of everyday life.

References

Giddens, Anthony, & Pierson, Christopher. (1998). *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

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