Book Review: Citizen Media and Practice: Currents, Connections, Challenges

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In *Citizen Media and Practice: Currents, Connections, Challenges*, editors Hilde C. Stephansen and Emiliano Treré (2020) bring together contributors to explore ways to further our thinking about media practices with a specific focus on citizen and activist media. The book is intended to stimulate dialogue among scholars in different fields and promote discussion and debate over media practice approaches between Anglophone and Latin American scholars.

In his foreword, media scholar Nick Couldry (2020) welcomes this exciting collection for reconnecting recent research on media practice approaches in North America and Europe with its Latin American roots, while focusing on citizen media and developing a wide range of implications of the 'media as practice' paradigm.

The 'practice' turn (Couldry 2004, 2012) in media studies has inspired social movements and media scholars to develop more research on citizen and activist media in recent years. Stephansen and Treré (2020) open this collection by introducing 'media practice'

comprehensively. They provide an overview of current research on media practices, review the antecedents of the media practice approach in different theoretical directions and identify the possible converging points between them (the connections in the book's subtitle). Furthermore, the editors look at how the concept of 'media practice' has been used in recent literature and identify the pros and cons of doing so, from the perspective of practice-focused research on citizen and activist media (currents). They also propose future research directions related to citizen media and practice, and the challenges faced by this expanding interdisciplinary field (challenges).

Stimulating dialogue between Anglophone and Latin American scholars who are interested in media practice is one of the most important contributions of this collection. To introduce the Latin American tradition to Anglophone scholars, the editors present the rich history of media practice within Latin American communication theory, which "pre-dates the current 'turn' to practice in Europe and North American media scholarship by at least a couple of decades" (Stephansen and Treré 2020, p. 2).

This volume is divided into five parts, which comprehensively introduce the concerns and applications of the media practice approach across a diverse range of contexts and experiences related to activist and citizen media. There is an introductory chapter for each section which emphasizes the relationship between the research and the media practice approach.

Part 1 consists of four chapters, giving a comprehensive introduction to the roots of the media practice approach in Latin American communication theory. Clemencia Rodríguez (2020, p. 37) writes in the introduction: "Latin America [scholars] did not have to wait until the 2004 publication of Couldry's article […] to begin thinking about a shift to practice, the shift happened 40 years earlier [in Latin America]".

Rodríguez (2020) emphasizes the importance of the media practice approach in Latin America and the similarities and differences between the approach and the 'practice turn' in the North. At the same time, Rodríguez (2020) clearly defines that the lack of communication between scholars in the South and North is the reason why the history of media practice in Latin America was not recognized by the Global North scholars. In Chapter 2, Omar Rincón and Amparo Marroquín (2020) further demonstrate how Latin American scholars turn to practice in communication studies. The work of six key Latin American scholars who are recognized as pioneers of media practice – Paulo Freire, Jesús Martín-Barbero, Carlos Monsiváis, Néstor García Canclini, Rossana Reguillo and Bolívar Echeverría – is presented. In Chapter 3, Alejandro Barranquero (2020) traces the Latin American concept of 'praxis' back

to the 20th century. By dissecting this concept from the perspective of historical development, Barranquero highlights the interdisciplinary nature of the origin of the practice concept: "[It emerged] from different fields such as alternative media, educommunication, reception studies, and communication for development, [...] practice-based media approaches also owe much to anthropology" (Barranquero 2020, p. 67). The author also points out the extensive influence of the 'praxis' concept on the subfield of communication and cultural studies, such as educommunication, community and citizen media, and the notion of mediations. Ángel Barbas (2020) contributes to the research field of activist media practices from the educommunication paradigm in the last chapter of part one. By studying contemporary social movements and their use of media as educational practices, Barbas (2020, p. 84) argues that educommunication provides us with a conceptual link to "expand our capacity to understand the complex repertoire of media practices developed within social movements" and "allows us to build another bridge between 'media practices' and 'media learning processes'".

In the introduction to Part 2, Donatella della Porta (2020) shows that the media practice approach allows us to move beyond traditional approaches to both mass media and digital media, and capture the richness and complexity of communicative practices in and around social movements. This second part has two chapters besides the introduction, which clearly present the complex interplay between activist agency and the technological affordances of media technologies from the perspective of the media practice approach. In Chapter 5, Bart Cammaerts (2020) develops a detailed genealogy of the various ways in which activists have used traditional media, telecommunications and digital media to achieve their social movement goals – from print and postal services to telecommunication, radio broadcasting and the internet. Cammaerts (2020) argues that each media and communication technology has provided activists with various mediation practices that meet their needs, and we should not forget the capabilities of the old technology because of the emergence of new ones, as "the Empire always strikes back" (p. 110). In Chapter 6, by bringing media practice and media archaeology together, Anne Kaun's combined approach (2020) allows us to "excavate how media technologies function in the context of political participation and mobilization" (p. 124).

Part 3 of the book is composed of three chapters, focusing on the richness, benefits and challenges of practice approaches to video activism. In the introduction, Dorothy Kidd (2020) recounts her own experience of video activism in Bogotá and presents its early roots. Inspired by Downing (2013), Kidd (2020, p. 131) also suggests we should "combine analyses of social movement practice and political economy" when we study social movement video based on social media platforms. In Chapter 7, Tina Askanius (2020) critically summarizes

existing scholarship on historical and contemporary forms of video activism and identifies three distinct foci within it – "video as technology, text and testimony" (p. 137). Askanius (2020) also shows how a practice-based approach can allow us to see video activism as technology, text and testimony at once. In Chapter 8, Alice Mattoni and Elena Pavan (2020) demonstrate the usefulness of the media practice approach for studying alternative media and digital traces through a strong case study of the use of YouTube in the Italian *Se non ora, quando?* movement.

Part 4 consists of three chapters, exploring the implication of expanding the media practice approach to 'acting on media' (Kubitschko 2018). In the introduction to this part, Andreas Hepp (2020) argues that the phrase 'acting on media' expands our understanding of media practice – "it is not only about practices of communication and the use of media, but also about practices of shaping the media infrastructure and technologies" (p. 171). Meanwhile, in Chapter 9, Sigrid Kannengießer (2020) uses the concept of 'consumption-critical media practices' to explain practices involving 'acting on media' to achieve sustainability and media practices that use media to critique unsustainable consumption. In Chapter 10, Hilde C. Stephansen (2020) argues that 'knowledge practices' should be conceptualized as an integral part of media practices, which is essential for expanding our understanding of agency in the context of citizen media.

The last part of the edited collection, Part 5, consists of four chapters illustrating the value of the media practice approach in understanding the datafication process and its consequences. In the introduction, Helen Kennedy (2020) explains why the media practice framework can offer a productive approach for scholars in the field of data studies to explore people's experiences of datafication and different new data practices. In Chapter 11, Stefania Milan (2020) uses the 'acting on media' framework to explore contemporary forms of data activism, such as open data activism, data-based advocacy, encryption and obfuscation, insisting that the implication of (citizen) media practice needs to be broadened by shifting our focus to software and the ontologies of information. In Chapter 12, Aristea Fotopoulou (2020) contributes to this part by exploring how practice theory is relevant to citizens' data practices from a feminist perspective. In Chapter 13, Lina Dencik (2020) points out the value of the practice framework for researching how citizens are controlled by data systems through a case study of the use of social media intelligence in predictive policing in the UK.

This collection opens a dialogue between Latin American and Anglophone scholars who are interested in the media practice approach. The collection of Stephansen and Treré (2020) inspires us to explore more of the voices of scholars from other parts of the world, such as Asia, in terms of the media practice concept. Overall, this collection provides an informative

and timely account of the concerns and applications of the media practice framework across various backgrounds today, which will also be helpful to readers with an interest in the practice-oriented research on citizen and activist media.

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