

Space, place and circulation:

Three conceptual lenses into the spatialities of media production practices

Helen Morgan Parmett

University of Vermont

Scott Rodgers

Birkbeck, University of London

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Introduction

Where is the locus of contemporary media production? We can no longer simply direct our attention towards once reliable places, such as newsrooms, studios, film sets or editing suites. While these locations still matter, their naturalization as *the* sites of media production cannot today be taken for granted. Such locales rely on closely associating specific production practices and discrete mediums, when media convergence has brought technological transformations weakening medium specificity. And, such locales also tend to involve seeing the ‘products’ of media narrowly, as specific types of content. As Lash and Lury (2007) point out, in recent decades cultural production has increasingly been extended into the mediation of material commodities themselves (e.g. via branding), beyond their representation. Even for more ‘traditional’ forms of media, production is increasingly layered and dispersed. Through transformations similar to what Deleuze (1995) called emergent ‘societies of control’, media production has become notably de-institutionalized: television productions involve various

constellations of project teams; films frequently entail an international division of labor; work in the creative industries is characterized by promiscuity and precarity in employment, rather than stable careers; and virtually all content producers, from journalists to musicians, must navigate and distribute their work through the commercial network spaces of Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon and others.

What counts as media production, and its attendant geographies, has therefore become less certain and identifiable. There is not only a far blurrier distinction between production and consumption, but between what is or is not a media product. One of the more prominent tropes in this context is that almost everyone can be a media producer, resulting in new participatory media cultures (e.g. Bruns, 2006; Jenkins, 2006), and new spaces of media production. However, media production has not simply dissolved into a flattened landscape where everyone is a contributor with equal power. Media environments instead retain marked power asymmetries, not just in content production, but in the design, operation and ownership of new media forms, commodities, devices, data, platforms and infrastructures. There remain meaningful distinctions between, for example, a Facebook engineer designing a facial recognition tool and users relying on such functionalities. Facebook users, dispersed across an enormous range of localized situations and performing a range of media practices (e.g. editing, organizing and sharing images), are in at least some sense its producers because their actions add to its content. Yet the engineer produces Facebook differently, and via contrasting environments. She might work from Facebook's expansive campus headquarters in Menlo Park, California, built on a triangular peninsula jutting into drying marshlands on San Francisco Bay. At and through this particular locale, she does more than just add to Facebook's content; she helps establish the technical and cultural conditions of possibility for that content production taking place elsewhere. This example suggests that we are not quite witnessing the disappearance of what was once called 'the media', and the concomitant rise of 'us' (Couldry, 2009; 2015). Rather, we are witnessing a

complex reshaping of how media-related professions, organizations and technical platforms attune with, speak to, and act on behalf of others. In turn, it suggests that we not only still need to attend to media production in what might be seen as a more traditional sense – i.e. the work of professionals and industries ordinarily understood to be pivotal in making different media possible – but we need to attend to their changing geographies. In this chapter, we want to rethink how we approach the spatialities of media production, empirically, conceptually and politically. Precisely because of their apparent multiplicities, amorphousness and dispersal, there is a need to better research and specify distinct geographies of production, and differential expressions, configurations or hierarchies of media power.

We situate our contribution both in the nascent field of geomedia studies as well as the field of media production studies. The conjunctive term geomedia, the focus of this volume, for us indicates the arrival of a broadly shared *environmental* view of media. That is, a view in which media are seen not as extrinsic representations of or technological influences on spatiality, but rather as intrinsically geographical. Media always already emerge through environments of action; and spatiality is always already mediated. Media production studies (e.g. Banks et al., 2015; Mayer et al., 2009) is a parallel field that brings together political economy and cultural studies approaches towards understanding ‘how media producers make culture, and, in the process, make themselves into particular kinds of workers in modern, mediated societies’ (Mayer et al., 2009: 2). Many of the contributions to *Production Studies* (Mayer et al, 2009) – an influential edited collection primarily focused on the film and television industries – are also concerned with spatialities of media production, from the liminal spaces between production and consumption to the complex dispersal of production through transnationalizing media industries. In important respects, ‘production studies’ is a reaction to the tendency in cultural studies to focus on practices of consumption, assuming ‘that the crucial cultural processes are those that transpire within acts of reception’ (Straw, 2010: 210), while abandoning the study of production to

political economists. Cultural industries researchers such as Pratt (2004) have suggested that this not only fails to adequately account for media and cultural production, but also media production's specific spatialities. That is, the intrinsic relationships between institutionalized cultural-economic activity and their situated material geographies.

Although we build on these existing approaches, our aim is to dedicate more explicit attention to media production spatialities than is usually offered in production studies. While our examples still focus on media understood relatively conventionally, we contend that contemporary media spatialities demand an approach to production that is more open empirically to emergence and transformation, and more open conceptually to which domains might count as media 'production'. In order to do so, we turn, alongside other media scholars, to so-called practice theory (e.g. Schatzki et al., 2000). Thinking of media in terms of practices decenters the longstanding trifecta of media scholarship – industry, text, and audience – in that it takes a more open-ended, and broadly ethnographic, approach to the ways in which 'media' come to matter for what actors do and say (see Bräuchler and Postill 2010; Couldry, 2004). More importantly for our present purposes, the practice turn in media studies invites a spatialized reorientation, de-emphasizing media as discrete 'things' and putting a priority on how media emerge through situated environments of action. This is a crucial reorientation in a context where both media production and consumption unfold through weakened medium specificity and increasingly de-institutionalized media. It enjoins us to study media production beyond the places in which we expect it to occur (i.e. outside the studio, the newsroom, and so forth) and in so doing question where the work of production begins and ends.

The notion of 'practice' has a long history, particularly in anthropology and sociology, yet it has entered media studies relatively recently, arguably gaining prominence after an influential paper by Nick Couldry (2004) was published in *Social Semiotics*, outlining the disciplinary trajectory

towards the study of what he terms ‘media related practices’. This led to a culmination of sorts in *Theorising Media and Practice* (Bräuchler and Postill, 2010), an anthology that includes a reprint of and responses to Couldry’s 2004 essay. Couldry’s intervention has been influential, we would suggest, since it crystallizes a longer horizon of work in audience studies that has begun to question what is now often called ‘media-centrism’ (see Moores, 2012; Morley, 2009): the taken-for-granted analysis of media as discrete symbolic texts or forms, rather than as phenomena embedded into material environments of action. For Couldry (2004: 121), thinking of media in terms of practice radically inverts the media-centric emphasis of media studies, suggesting a focus not on media *per se*, but on ‘what types of things do people do in relation to media? And what types of things do people say in relation to media?’ Bräuchler and Postill’s (2010) anthology includes a series of empirical responses and challenges to Couldry’s essay, including some chapters (e.g. Andrevol et. al., 2010; Greenhalgh, 2010) that address certain aspects of production practices. Yet, however helpful, these considerations of media production practices remain too scattered – and often too anchored back onto theorizations of media audiences, use or consumption – to lead us towards a practice-oriented understanding of media production spatialities.

Like cultural studies more generally, then, there is also a consumptionist bias in the application of practice theory in media studies. Even as the everyday practices of media audiences (or users) have proven a fruitful ground for thinking about media practices, production has often been treated as ‘generally a rationalized work practice’ (Couldry, 2004: 126), more suited to political economy perspectives. What we offer here is a response to this apparent blind spot, which we unfold through three progressively-linked conceptual lenses. These suggest we think of media production spatialities as: (1) specific cultures of practice within *circulatory* processes, rather than unidirectional points of origin; (2) radically contextualized habitus which both makes and inhabits *place*; and (3) practices which are positioned and orientated towards dispersed field *spaces*

of production, which are both social and technical. In proposing these three lenses, we seek neither to offer a grand practice theory of media production, nor to posit absolute geographical categories. We are not implying, for instance, a stark distinction between place and space. Instead, following writers like Massey (e.g. 1994) and Appadurai (e.g. 1995), as well as the editors of this volume, we are proposing *relational* ontologies and epistemologies towards understanding the changing spatialities of media production practices.

Unfolding three lenses into media production spatialities

1. Media production as cultures of circulation

It is for understandable reasons that Stuart Hall's (1980) well-known encoding/decoding model has come to be primarily seen as an assertion regarding the agency of media audiences or users. Its emphasis on linguistic theory offered a potent response to the dominance of media effects approaches, opening the way for empirical 'audience studies' – notably Morley's (1980) research on the *Nationwide* television audience – and eventually, the 'ethnographic turn' in audience research (see Moores, 1993). But it is also worth recalling that Hall's larger critique was linear models of communication, those modelled on unidirectional travel of a message between sender and receiver. Inspired by Marx's thinking on commodity production, Hall suggested it was more useful to think about media as forms moving through connected yet relatively autonomous practices, which together form a 'complex structure of dominance' (1980: 117). Such 'moments' in the circulation of media forms are not part of a closed loop, but are instead situated into differentiated worlds. So, just as audiences do not decode media content in isolation, rather based on prior knowledge, the conditions of their situated milieus, and so on, media producers do their 'encoding' work in ways that fundamentally respond and attune to the complexities of the discursive, social, cultural and political worlds they inhabit.

This kind of open-ended analysis of how media are encountered, used and produced is now well-developed in cultural studies of media consumption. Lisa Gitelman (2006: 62-64), for example, offers a rich historical account of how women and other users were in many respects responsible for ‘making’ the early phonograph. They encouraged its eventual development into the ‘first nonprint mass medium’ (Gitelman, 2006: 59) – read-only devices dedicated to domestic amusement – even though entrepreneurial inventors like Thomas Edison proposed them as read-write tools for business communications. Recognizing that ‘making’ plays with terminology normally associated with production, Gitelman proposes the more neutral term of ‘define’ across contexts of production and consumption. This is not so much to reject distinctions made between such contexts, but to avoid seeing the former as active and the latter reactive. There are examples in production studies which mirror Gitelman’s work, notably Caldwell (2008), to whom we will return later. What is important to note at this point, however, is that cultural studies of media consumption not only trade in more flexible distinctions between production and consumption; they also suggest a different image of the spatial trajectories or mobilities of media forms. If, broadly following Hall (1980), we understand media as moving through interconnected yet situationally autonomous practices, which both ‘produce’ and ‘receive’, then an implicitly one-way sender-message-receiver model is unsustainable for notional production and consumption alike. Instead, media forms move through different milieus with varying degrees of multi-directionality, concentration, and dispersal.

This alternative lens for thinking about the spatial trajectories of media has been recently named by Will Straw (2009) as the ‘circulatory turn’. The idea of a circulatory turn draws inspiration from Lee and LiPuma’s (2002) influential essay on ‘cultures of circulation’. For Lee and LiPuma, cultural anthropologies of globalization too often rely on a transmission view of circulation, in which commodities, artefacts, ideas and bodies are imagined as travelling from one geographical point to another. Yet the spatialities of circulation, for Lee and LiPuma, are better understood in

performative terms, as involving distributed communities of practice through which forms are mobilised, reproduced, abstracted and evaluated. They suggest that any circulating form – media-related examples could be a magazine, anime franchise or social networking service – presupposes differentiated communities of practice, and conversely, these communities variably enact the form. This would suggest, borrowing Michael Warner's (2002: 67) description of publicness, that media forms be characterized by varying degrees of 'chicken-and-egg circularity'. Media forms are best seen as circulating through, and being reciprocally implicated in, the uneven reproduction of social and cultural life, rather than being created by producers and then transmitted to consumers (see also Bødker, 2016).

Thinking about media in terms of circulation depends on what Straw (2009: 23) calls an anti-interpretive view of media. Instead of interpreting the social from within a media form's content, an emphasis is placed on how media forms occupy and move through different social settings, including those associated with 'production'. This first of all invites a somewhat different analysis of media power. Media production, in this view, is not primarily analysed or evaluated as an originary process transducing, for example, broader discourses into specific media forms, which are then sent out into the world. Rather, media production is seen as expressing power in how, as a specific community of practice, it attunes to, and inherits, the complex prior circulation of a media form, to which it should be seen as partly subjugated (see also Rodgers, 2014: 80-81). On this view, media production practices can still be understood as influentially mediating individual media objects within a 'circular, tightly bound' form of circulation (e.g. producing a television series for a cult fan base); however, our attention is drawn as well to how communities of production practices, in particular, also involve more reflexive understandings of their media as a form scattered and dispersed over time and space (Barnett, 2007, cited in Straw, 2009: 27).

As may be clear, there are clear overlaps between the circulatory turn and the turn to theorising media as practice, particularly in its emphasis on how circulating forms are recursively performed into existence. Practice theories offer a similar anti-interpretative intervention to the circulatory turn, though in this case vis-à-vis societal norms and rules. Rather than being posited as a priori or transcendental, practice theories see social norms and rules as recursively produced through action, or through what people and things do (for an overview, see Schatzki et al., 2000). Often grounded in ethnographic methodologies, practice theories examine the dynamic relationships of social structure and individual agency, and how these relationships both unfold through the body – as a disciplined, disciplining, and resistant agential subject – and through shared languages and tacit knowledge (Rouse, 2006). Approaching media production through practice theory means treating media production not as an a priori domain, but a recursive practical accomplishment (Ross, 2014). Understanding the spatialities of media production, in turn, should start by positioning such sites as participating in the complex circulation of a media form – participation which may express power, but should not be seen a point of origin. Having situated production practices within the circulation of media forms, we now further flesh out how such cultures become contextualised as specific media-related habitus in place.

2. Media production in place

Media and communication technologies have long been associated with the eradication of place and space: the ‘annihilation of space by time’ (e.g. Harvey, 1989); the rise of ‘despatialized simultaneity’ (Thompson, 1995); and the proliferation of ‘non-places’ (Augé, 1995). The practice turn in media studies, however, invites a concomitant respatialization of media. In moving away from thinking of media as discrete ‘things’, the practice turn conceives of media as aspects within ensembles of action. For writers such as Moores (2012), such a ‘non-media centric’ orientation not only involves new attention to space, but specifically to the concept of place.

The conceptualization of 'place' has a complex intellectual history. It is associated with phenomenological perspectives – close kin to theories of practice – which see inhabiting place as inherent to all practical action. Place, frequently described in terms of individual perception and emotional attachment, is often assumed to be the subjective experience of objective physical space. The priority phenomenological perspectives put on place, however, is more accurately an attempt to sidestep a subject-object dualism. It affirms the existence of spaces beyond immediate perception, yet focuses on how such spaces emerge in-place, or through action (Tuan, 1977; Malpas, 2012). Massey's (1994) well-known 'relational' conceptualization of place builds on these perspectives, while offering a more politically-attuned response to phenomenological tendencies to romanticize place as 'rooted', often with dangerous and reactionary consequences (illustrated by Martin Heidegger's Nazism). For Massey, places are reflexive, constantly-changing assemblages of interwoven, translocal forces. Moores' (2012) brings these perspectives together in one of the more detailed considerations of media and place, albeit one primarily focused on practices of use. He argues against an extrinsic view of media affecting place (e.g. producing 'placelessness', cf. Relph, 1976), instead arguing that media are inherent to how we inhabit and make our place in the world.

How, then, do practices of media production inhabit and make place? Addressing this question is not only conceptually important; it is a growing empirical imperative. Media and cultural production are increasingly described through rhetoric valorizing the significance of place. For example, creative industries are often explained through their ties to particular neighborhoods and spatialized lifestyles (Pratt, 2004); quality television is associated with the 'authenticity' of place produced by on-location filming (Morgan Parment, 2016); and emergent 'hyperlocal' media are identified as the antidote to the placelessness of the mainstream (Hess and Waller, 2015). A problem with political economy or industrial perspectives is not just that they overemphasize the rationalized and standardized aspects of media production practices, but that their contact with

place is resultantly highly instrumental, figured, often, as the imposition of formulas that leave marks on particular places. As Landman (2009) argues, however, even large-scale globalized media industries, such as those based in the US, have to negotiate with and account for the localized settings they encounter, where creative collaboration results in more than simply 'offshored' US productions controlled at a distance. In this case and in others, there is a clear need to more radically contextualize media production in place.

An important first step to do so is to consider the embodiment of different production practices in place. Here we turn to Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) theory of practice, and particularly the concept of habitus, which has received significant attention in media and cultural studies (e.g. Born, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Jansson, 2013). For Bourdieu (1990: 53), habitus refers to:

... systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them...they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.

Without ruling out the possibility of conscious or strategic action, Bourdieu emphasizes a deeper foundation of tacit, embodied, nonrepresentational knowledge. His aim is not merely to provide a way to describe commonsensical activities but to argue that power primarily emerges through the practicing body. Habitus attends to how all practical action is at once structured by learned, accumulated, and internalized dispositions, and is structuring in its enactment. It is a key concept for theorizing place (e.g. Casey, 2001), inspired in particular by Bourdieu's (1990: 271-283) discussion of ethnographic fieldwork on the Kabyle people of northern Algeria. Kabyle homes, for Bourdieu, differentially order and situate bodily compartments, expressing and structuring the social values and practices of Kabyle culture (see Cresswell, 2002). The concept of habitus suggests practices of media production are more than collections of shared routines; such practices are the expression of relatively durable dispositions to the world. In this way, media

production habitus are structured by and structure place: they express immanent relationships between learned dispositions and the arrangement and perception of specific environments (cf. Casey, 2001).

While the situatedness of media production practices in place are not identical to that of Kabyle culture in the home, a common feature is the production of particular kinds of localities. For Appadurai (1995), localities are sites that make social action and space itself socially meaningful. Media production practices are both a product of localized conditions, and at the same time, partake in producing the meaning and spatiality of the locality. At the same time, localities are defined through bounding; they are made meaningful through *not* being another locality. This is particularly important for understanding media production places, which tend to operate through a tacit understanding that they are distinct from non-production sites (they are ‘special’ – see Couldry, 2000). This is most clearly recognizable, of course, in durable places of media production, those ‘specific domains of action and value’ (Rose, 1996: 143) set apart for the cultivation of specific kinds of media conduct. A film shoot on a street, for example, constructs a boundary around the shoot, demarcating what is in the shot and part of the production from what is not. This kind of boundary making is constitutive of places of film production, enjoining bodies to comport themselves in accordance with the expectations, knowledges and cultures of filmmaking. Or consider, for example, ‘the newsroom’ - a place so apparently permanent that it is as often used to refer to journalistic culture in general as any locale of news production in particular. Newsrooms emerge as powerful places of media production through the recursive performances of bodies, objects and technologies associated with the organized practice of editing (Rodgers 2014). While the newsroom is a place fundamentally oriented to an externalized world beyond, it involves folding in or collating that world into the taking-place of production work and its habitus.

However, if the spatialities of media production are increasingly layered and dispersed, their attendant forms of place-making are likely to be ever more fissive, momentary, mobile and contested; perhaps requiring constant ritual maintenance, the invention of new rituals, or new forms of routinization that help to render such places meaningful and distinct. The rising ubiquity of on-location filming is one example. It may be tempting to see such developments as rendering places into mere Hollywood film backlots. On-location filming practices can involve a relatively invasive introduction of distinctly filmic dispositions, not to mention material heft (e.g. large trucks, abundant personnel, and technical equipment), to a wide range of settings. Yet on-location filming practices also involve a negotiation of location. Not only contending with the navigation of a particular city's streets, but also its accumulated histories and material textures. Since such new mobilities of filming are, in part, predicated on the search for cheaper places to film, they also demand more flexible practical attunements and adaptability to different locales. Such attunements take on even more novel shape when localities are mobilized more directly into a production culture. In recent US television series such as *The Wire*, *Treme* and *Portlandia*, for example, specific localities in Baltimore, New Orleans, and Portland are invited to partly 'play themselves' (see Morgan Parmett, 2014). These approaches not only indicate the shifting ways certain genres of media production inhabit and make place; they also appear to be encouraging localities at various scales to pursue such media productions, and anticipate their practicalities, as part of post-industrial economic development, business, and branding strategies.

Media production practices also make place through the inhabitation of settings beyond those in which a particular form is directly enacted. In the more dispersed digital media industries, for example, writers such as Ross (2003) and Neff (2005) note the importance of parties, drinking, and socializing – embodied forms of place-making which, we suggest, can be vital to the recursive formation of a particular media-worker habitus. As Neff (2005: 150) argues, in New York's Silicon Alley, parties 'make industries from otherwise disparate actors ... [who hear] the

‘noise’ of the industry at these events’. In a similar vein, Turner (2009) suggests the week-long Burning Man festival in Nevada’s Black Rock Desert constitutes an important ‘infrastructural’ support for (what we would term) the habitus of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Through this exceptional, geographically isolated occasion, participants are invited to temporarily act out ‘a utopian world driven by the pursuit of self-realization, project engineering and communication’ (p. 91). These examples remind us that media production practices make place not just via the direct production of their forms, but also through reflexive awareness of their more scattered and dispersed manifestations (cf. Barnett, 2007). To expand on this reflexivity, we now turn from the places of media production towards its spaces.

3. Media production in space

Central to John Caldwell’s seminal *Production Culture* (Caldwell, 2008) – a book based on a decade of field research on LA-based film and video workers – is the contention that, if we want to understand how media production workers come to understand their own worlds of work, we should attend to their ‘industrial reflexivity’, or the workplace stories and narratives they tell each other and the broader world. While Caldwell was also interested in production’s physical locations, his main concern was how such places involve inhabiting the broader ‘space’ of a production culture. Such reflexive spaces can be found in workplace narratives, but they are not mere subjective constructions: they are the traced realities of a shared world of media production practice, held in common, yet geographically dispersed, and stretched across time. Caldwell’s analysis of industrial reflexivity in media production cultures reminds us of the importance of attending to what Schatzki (2002: 242-243) calls integrative practices. While all manner of dispersed, embodied actions – for example walking, listening or driving – are specific situated practices, understanding an organized field of media production means attending to how such dispersed actions are integrated and made intelligible by more abstract, normative and commonly shared ends, orientations, and emotions. Such shared practical worlds are the basis on which

different types of media might become what Wenger (1998) termed communities of practice, which often exceed localized or physicalized spatialities.

With the notion of habitus, we conceptualized media production as relatively durable embodied practices, radically contextualized in place. Caldwell's (2008) account reminds us however that media production cultures not only inhabit and make place, but also endure and cohere across space. Here we can turn to another of the main concepts in Bourdieu's (1990) theory of practice: that of 'fields', a concept which, like habitus, has been important to media studies. For Bourdieu, fields are not just shared spaces of self-reflexive orientation; they are the conditions of possibility for embodied, improvised practices (i.e. habitus). The field position of any given actor, for Bourdieu, is constituted by their accumulation of various forms of capital – social, cultural, economic – and the value these are accorded in a given field. So the stakes related to a field of media production are played like a game, though it is important to emphasize that having a tacit feel for such field games emerges through embodied practice, or habitus. The concept of field draws attention in particular to what Bourdieu (1984) calls classificatory practices. In relation to media production, the analysis of such practices has perhaps been best developed in journalism studies (e.g. Benson & Neveu, 2005; Markham, 2011). Through a wide range of embodied dispositions – for example, intuition, seriousness, humor or misanthropy – journalists distinguish themselves from those in other fields, including other fields of media production. And at the same time, they tacitly mark out their positions against others within the journalistic field; classifying others and in the process classifying themselves (cf. Bourdieu, 1984: 466).

As might already be evident, fields are not physical but *social* spaces, which might at first seem problematic for our interest in spatiality. In empirical work, fields are often plotted into the same 'two-dimensional conceptual arrangement of people, objects, tastes and dispositions' (Cresswell, 2002: 380) seen as X-Y axes throughout *Distinction*, probably Bourdieu's best-known book

(Bourdieu, 1984). For some, the apparently anaemic geographies of the field concept underscore a broader problem: Bourdieu's reductive view of spatiality. Entrikin (2001: 695), for example, suggests that the concept of habitus seems to eliminate place, rendering it into a mere 'material cipher of the social', the embodiment of field spaces. These limitations are often connected to a latent structuralism. For Born (2010), Bourdieu's coupling of habitus and field presents a model of cultural production overly focused on durable structure and structuring, and unable to account for transformation. So despite Bourdieu's avowed intention of surpassing the subject-object or practice-structure divides, many argue he simply repeats those dualisms (e.g. Berard, 2005;).

Yet there remain clear merits to field thinking, particularly if the concept is extricated from an inflexible bond with Bourdieu's full-blown 'field theory' and deployed, as Postill (2015) suggests, in a slightly more open-ended way. The notion of field provides a way of thinking about space as experienced through practical action, not only materially but also figuratively and symbolically (Malpas, 2012: 232). Hage (2011) evocatively describes fields as embodying a 'social physics'. They are akin to force fields, exerting a kind of social gravity that both acts on agents, and at the same time, is experienced and earnestly acted upon as the 'objective' world that an agent inhabits. This acknowledges geographical space but simultaneously speaks about temporal space. As Judith Butler (1999) suggests, fields appear through a set of presuppositions and predispositions reproduced over time through 'performative interpellations'. Media production practices, in other words, not only inhabit and make place, but at the same time, are positioned in and orient toward a symbolic and material space of possibility.

In certain respects, Caldwell's (2008) notion of 'industrial reflexivity' already captures some of the specifically *social* dimensions of media production fields, sensitizing us to think about how production workers develop understandings of their own field, and their position in it. Less well

understood are how media production practices involve positioning in and orientation toward increasingly complex material, and specifically *technical*, spaces. As Sterne (2003) suggests, technologies are crystallizations of particular forms of organized practice; they are not so much things, but as Heidegger (1977) argues, an ‘enframing’ of action. Sterne’s argument in this context is that scholars should accordingly resist the conceptualization of technology types prior to studying their practical enactment. We would agree, but add that it is nevertheless important to account for the proliferation of technical agency around a wide range of media production activities. Contemporary media production practices – certainly in advanced capitalist economies, but to varying degrees globally – involve inhabiting a computational world. That is, encountering field spaces of technical devices, applications, tools, platforms, standards and infrastructures. These are spaces filled with automation, the ‘secondary agency’ of software and computational systems (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011; Mackenzie, 2006) – agency which is only partly perceived or authorized via media production practices situated in place (Rodgers, 2015). Yet at the same time, such digital and networked spaces are also the subject of growing reflexive awareness, knowledge and political problematization, for media producers and users alike (see Beer, 2017; Couldry et al., 2016).

These emergent computational field spaces of media production practices both add new layers of ‘productive’ agency, and also erode some of the autonomy that previously existed between different fields. For example, we might think about the growing importance of software applications for virtually all media work. As Manovich (2013) argues, even though computers are not new technologies, what is relatively new is the widespread use of software applications for authoring or consuming creative content. Through software, computers have become ‘remediation machines’ simulating once-non-computational media practices such as typewriting, editing or image manipulation. A media practice such as postproduction, for example, was once highly specialized and largely internalized within the fields of film or television. Now, however,

postproduction makes use of the same software applications used in many other creative fields, such as video game development or interior design. These applications, moreover, share properties, functionalities and tools with many other unrelated software applications, such as cut and paste, file storage or view control (see Manovich, 2013). The use of standardized software applications, in other words, invites new forms of translocal convergence amongst different fields of media production.

Another instance of such emergent and convergent computational field spaces are what José van Dijck (2013) describes as ‘connective media’. Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon are not merely big commercial media companies, van Dijck argues, but inter-operable platform spaces increasingly taking on the shape of ‘walled gardens’. They are very difficult, if not impossible, for media producers to work around, whether amateur or professional. If the occupants of media production fields can be labelled cultural intermediaries (cf. Bourdieu, 1984), their work has been fundamentally complicated by the arrival of cultural *infomediaries* (Morris, 2015), which automatically gather and interpret data of user preferences and behavior. Performing professionalized media production practices, then, increasingly involves working within and orienting toward technical field spaces that demand and impose new regimes governing the visibility or appearance of their media forms, content, brands and organizations.

Conclusion

We have proposed space, place and circulation as different ways of seeing the ‘where’ of media production. These lenses are not intended as absolute geographical categories, but rather relational ontologies and epistemologies for exploring, investigating and critiquing the spatialities of media production practices. Media production, we suggest, should be seen as cultures of *circulation*. We must avoid an implicit image of production as originary sites for the unidirectional transmission of media content or forms. Such situated cultures of circulation can thus be

understood as durable forms of practical habitus, which inherently entail particular forms of *place*, or place-making. At the same time, such localized activities in place also belong to, and endure as, more dispersed field *spaces* of media production. Spaces which include social rules, resources and narratives, but also technical ecologies of applications, tools, platforms, standards and infrastructures.

We are at a moment when what counts as media production is elusive. Where media products begin or end is increasingly ambiguous, as are distinctions between producers and consumers. In the face of this, we have to some extent insisted on enduring attention towards relatively conventional or ordinary understandings of media production. This is because, as our relatively extensive use of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice underscores, we have devoted particular attention to a critique of media production as a form of power. Yet our use of Bourdieu has been qualified. In particular, we have sought to counter his deterministic tendencies, emphasizing instead the emergence, transformation, contingency and uncertainty of all media practices, including those seen as production-related. We have suggested that we 'find' the power of media production practices within circulatory trajectories that are multidirectional, concentrated and dispersed – rather than assuming they reside at the beginning of a unidirectional process. While production practices can powerfully define localities, their place-making is always bound up with, for example, the institutions, cultures and material textures that compose a specific milieu. And while production practices do crystallize relatively powerful media fields, this is best understood by closely examining situated enactments of orientation and positioning as they relate to a wide range of interwoven social and technical field spaces.

Our analysis in these respects has not just hinged on contemporary developments. The fixity typically accorded to familiar production places (e.g. newsrooms, studios, film sets, editing suites, etc.) has perhaps always been a kind of illusion. On a conceptual level, the apparent

amorphousness of production may not be so new, or quite the break often suggested. Thinking of media as a recursive practical accomplishment (Ross, 2014) invites us to attend to production as always-already involved in the performance of media forms, the making and remaking of particular places and localities, and the constituting and reconstituting of industrial and technical field spaces. We hope the practice-centred lenses outlined here provide new ways of approaching the increasingly layered, fissive, and dispersed spatialities of contemporary media production. But we hope too that it offers the potential to revisit media production histories, with new ways into their circulatory processes, places and spaces.

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