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Conceptualising the role of knowledge in 'acting on media'

Hilde C. Stephansen

Introduction

The media practice approach has been widely adopted among scholars of citizen and social movement media, and has proved a productive framework for analysing the social contexts in which media are produced, consumed and circulated. According to Couldry's (2012: 35) widely adopted definition, media practices can be understood as "what people are doing in relation to media in the contexts in which they act": this might include actions that are *directly oriented* to media, actions that *involve* media, and actions whose *preconditions* are media (Couldry 2012). Highlighting the ubiquity and embeddedness of media in contemporary social life, this definition encompasses a very broad range of practices, and the ethnographic openness it generates is a key strength of the media practice approach. Thus far, however, research within the media practice literature has focused primarily on the *use* and *impact* of media; "how actors use specific tools, platforms or devices and what consequences this use has for their ability to engage with politics" (Kubitschko 2018: 631). Although this focus on what people *do with* media has generated important insights into the ways that activists use media to organise and mobilise, it does not capture the full range of practices involved in media activism. Though media activists *use* media for other substantive ends, they also mobilise *around* media, making media technologies, infrastructures and policies the explicit focus of their activism (Hackett & Carrol 2006; Milan 2013; Stein, Kidd & Rodríguez 2009; Stephansen 2017). Recognising the importance of media for social change struggles, media activists create autonomous alternatives to state and corporate media (Milan 2013), campaign to democratise existing media (Hackett & Carrol 2006), and work to raise awareness about the political nature of media technologies (Kubitschko 2015). Such media-focused activism is not new – it dates back at least to the 1970s and the NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) debates within UNESCO – but it arguably takes on increased urgency and significance in an age of 'deep mediatization' (Couldry & Hepp 2017). As activists increasingly mobilise *around* media, we need to expand the definition of media practices to include practices aimed at thematising, problematising and *politicising* media and communication.

The term 'acting on media' has been proposed (Kubitschko & Kannengiesser 2017; Kubitschko 2018) as a way to capture the wide range of practices that make media technologies and infrastructures sites of political struggle. "Acting on media denotes the efforts of a wide range of actors to take an active part in the molding of media organizations, infrastructures and technologies that are part of the fabric of everyday life" (Kannengiesser & Kubitschko 2017: 1). Kubitschko (2018: 631) cites examples ranging from citizen media to data activism (Milan and van der Velden 2016), Repair Cafés where people fix everyday media objects (Kannengiesser 2017), and hacker practices that involve modifying and deconstructing media technologies. Taking up Couldry's key question, "how is people's media-related practice related […] to their wider agency?" (2012: 37), Kubitschko (2018: 632) argues that the concept of 'acting on' media needs to be incorporated as "a central analytical dimension of media as practice research".

The conceptual reorientation offered by 'acting on media' opens up media practice research to a wider range of practices beyond those that involve doing things *with* media. In what follows, I further draw out the implications of this conceptual move by problematising the role of *knowledge* in media practices. While, arguably, many media practices are so embedded in everyday life as to be largely habitual and unreflexive, 'acting on media' involves the "articulation of viewpoints, interests, experiences and knowledge" (Kubitshcko 2018: 633). Citizen media practices (Stephansen 2016), which are our concern in this volume, involve "act[ing] in public space(s) to effect aesthetic or socio-political change" (Baker & Blaagaard 2016: 16). They are *intentional* and involve mobilising knowledge: about specific technologies, about the wider media environment, about other actors in the field, and more. If we expand the concept of 'media practices' to include practices that thematise and politicise media, we need to consider the role of knowledge in such practices.

The aim of this chapter is to critically explore how we might understand the role of knowledge in media practices – particularly those that involve 'acting on' media. As I show in the first section, knowledge has been conceptualised as integral to media practices. However, as I go on to discuss, knowledge has a contested status among practice theorists, who reject the 'mentalism' and rationalist assumptions of much modern social thought. While some see practices as governed largely by tacit 'know-how' and skill, others insist on the importance of perceptions, reasons and propositional knowledge. Siding with the latter, I argue that knowledge is a core dimension of media practices, but that activities such as theorising, reflecting and analysing should themselves be treated as social practices rather than subjective mental activities (Schmidt 2016). Thus conceived, 'knowledge practices' can be analysed as an important dimension of media practices. In the latter parts of the chapter, I draw on literature on knowledge production in social movements to develop a framework for analysing such knowledge practices, and illustrate the utility of this framework through a brief case study of the World Forum of Free Media, a global gathering of NGOs and activist groups that mobilise around media and communication.

Knowledge in the media practice literature

The literature on media practices already offers some resources for conceptualising the role of knowledge. Couldry (2004: 121) suggested that media practice research involves posing two key questions: "what types of things do people do in relation to media? And what types of things do people say in relation to media?" – adding in a footnote that this also implies "studying what people believe and think" (ibid.). Couldry's (2004: 124) core question– "what types of things do people do/say/think that are oriented to media?"– clearly, then, includes a concern with cognitive processes. Cognitive processes also figure prominently in Mattoni's definition of 'activist media practices' as "both routinized and creative social practices that […] draw on how media objects and media subjects are *perceived* and how the media environment is *understood and known*" (2012: 159, emphasis added). More specifically, Mattoni makes the point that activist media practices "rest on the production of perceptions and knowledge about the broader context in which and with which social actors interact" (2012: 66). She goes on to define 'media knowledge practices' – practices "related to the development of knowledge about the media environment" (ibid.) – as a central component of activist media practices.

Mattoni shows how activists construct ‘semantic maps’ of the media environment as they decode media texts, engage in their own media production, and interact with journalists and other media subjects. Media knowledge practices thus “play an important role in shaping interactions between social movement actors and the media environments in which they are embedded” (Mattoni 2013: 48).

McCurdy (2013) similarly argues that activists’ media practices are informed by ‘lay theories of media’: “theories or understandings, expressed and/or enacted by social movement actors, concerning the functions and motivations of news media, how news media operate, what drives them, and theories concerning how the logic of news influences the representation of reality” (2013: 62). McCurdy suggests that such lay theories of media, which are often informed by academic theories, can be situated as part of the ‘background knowledge’ (Reckwitz 2002) informing a broader practice of activism. Like Mattoni, McCurdy points out that activists’ knowledge of media is informed by their experiences both as audiences and producers of media: this knowledge “reflexively informs and translates to media-oriented practices” (2013: 69).

These perspectives resonate with research that has explored the role of political cultures and imaginaries in media activism (Barassi 2015; Barassi & Treré 2012; Fotopoulou 2017; Juris 2008; Kavada 2013; Treré, Jeppesen & Mattoni 2017; Treré 2018; Wolfson 2014). A key insight to be drawn from this literature is that activists’ media imaginaries – the ways in which they perceive and imagine digital media technologies –, together with their broader political visions and ideals, contribute to shaping political cultures, organisational structures, and media practices (Barassi 2015; Treré et al 2017; Treré 2018). As empirical research has shown, the ways in which activists imagine and perceive digital technologies have “material consequences for political practice” (Treré 2018: 144). For example, Juris (2008) and Wolfson (2014) show, from different perspectives, how ideals of horizontality and networked participation – derived from widely shared beliefs about the internet – came to constitute a powerful political ‘logic’ within the Global Justice Movement. Barassi (2015) shows how cultural variations in media imaginaries among activist groups in Spain, Italy and the UK inspired different social media practices, while Fotopoulou (2017) shows how the media practices of feminist groups are differently shaped by widely circulating social imaginaries of connectivity, participation and networked politics.

There is considerable overlap between this literature and the previously outlined approaches, which focus explicitly on the role of *knowledge* in media practices. As I discuss below, imaginaries figure among the mental activities that many practice theorists see as integral to practices, and form part of the broad understandings of ‘knowledge’ deployed by social movement scholars. Without digressing into an extended discussion of definitions, we might conceptualise ‘knowledge’ here as a broader category that includes values and imaginaries as well as analytical and reflexive knowledge, knowledge about social relations, and practical know-how. Knowledge, in other words, can be understood as the “broader cognitive praxis that informs all social activity” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 49). Together, these perspectives make clear that we cannot study what activists *do* with media without also exploring the various forms of knowledge that underpin their media practices. They show that media practices involve not just the tacit know-how required to *use*

media, but also imaginaries and analytical knowledge. The relevance of the latter forms of knowledge is accentuated by practices that make media explicit objects of struggle. These kinds of media practices clearly involve knowledge production – about 'media-related injustice' (Milan 2013), media policy, and media institutions, to name a few – and they are usually informed by broader visions of social change based on shared values and ideals.

Knowledge in practice theory

From a practice theory perspective, however, this focus on knowledge and intentionality raises complex questions regarding subjectivity, the relationship between structure and agency, and social change. While most practice theorists agree that practices involve some form of knowledge, its exact role and nature is contested. There is basic agreement that practices depend on shared skills and understanding (Schatzki 2001: 12), and definitions of practice typically include reference to practical know-how and embodied capacities. Summarising widely shared understandings, Schatzki defines practices as "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understanding" (2001: 11). Spaargaren et al (2016: n.p.), in an introductory text, define social practices as "shared, routinized, ordinary ways of doings and sayings enacted by capable human agents who – while interacting with the material elements that co-constitute the practice – know what to do next in a non-discursive, practical manner". In these definitions, the emphasis is on tacit, practical and embodied 'know-how' – the largely unreflexive forms of knowledge that enable social actors to 'go on' within any given social situation and perform routine social practices with skill.

But how might we understand the role of more reflexive forms of knowledge in social practices? Practice theorists differ on this question. While for Bourdieu, the practical understanding and embodied norms implied by the concept of habitus provide a sufficient basis for explaining social reproduction, others emphasise the importance of perceptions, goals, reasons and propositional knowledge (Schatzki 2001). Barnes (2001), who argues that practice, by itself, forms an insufficient basis for explaining social life, conceptualises such forms of knowledge as extrinsic to social practices: "It is always necessary to ask what disposes people to enact the practices they do, how and when they do; and their aims, their lived experience and their inherited knowledge will surely figure amongst the factors of interest here" (2001: 29-30). Others incorporate reflexive and motivational knowledge as part of broader definitions of practice that recognise the role of cultural meanings and socially shared bodies of knowledge. Reckwitz (2002: 249) defines practice as

> a routinized type of behaviour which consists 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.

Along similar lines, Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012: 12) develop an understanding of practices as consisting of three main elements: materials (objects, technologies, tangible physical entities), competences (skill, know-how and technique), and meanings (symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations).

The contested status of knowledge and intentionality can be linked to practice theory's rejection of rationalist traditions that explain action and social order by reference to the motivation and reasoning of individuals. Having emerged as an attempt to chart a middle ground between methodological individualism and holism, practice theory rejects the voluntarism and 'mentalism' associated with such approaches, while at the same time seeking to avoid the constrictions of structuralist models. "Whereas philosophers and social investigators once cited mental entities such as beliefs, desires, emotions, and purposes, practice theorists instead highlight embodied capacities such as know-how, skills, tacit understanding, and dispositions" (Schatzki 2001: 16). Shifting the focus away from individuals, their backgrounds and motivations, practice theory instead turns attention towards the practices they engage in (Spaargaren 2016) and conceptualises the social as "a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings" (Schatzki 2001: 12). Prioritising practices over mind, practice theory sees intelligibility, meaning and purpose as features of practices themselves rather than located in the minds of individuals (Schatzki 2001). According to Reckwitz, individuals act as 'carriers' of practices – i.e. as carriers not only of "patterns of bodily behaviour, but also of certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (2002: 250). Such 'mental' activities are therefore better understood as qualities of practices rather than of the individuals that participate in such practices (Reckwitz 2002: 250).

This emphasis on practices rather than individual mental activities implies a transformed understanding of knowledge. From a practice perspective, knowledge and truth "are no longer automatically self-transparent possessions of minds" but rather "mediated by interactions between people and by arrangements in the world" (Schatzki 2001: 20-21). Practice theory, in brief, seeks to account for knowledge by placing it decisively in the social realm, and conceptualising it as intrinsically bound up with material practices and relations. However, some (e.g. Schmidt 2016) argue that this ontological and epistemological reorientation has led to a neglect among practice theorists of the mental features (such as sense-making and reflexive, analytical knowledge) that are bound up with practice. To understand "precisely how reflexive, analytical and theoretical knowledge processes contribute to practices" (Schmidt 2016: n.p.) practice theory needs to make theoretical and analytical practices themselves the object of empirical-praxeographic research (ibid.). Activities such as analysing, reflecting and theorising should thus be treated not as subjective mental activities but rather as "empirically accessible, observable sets of organised doings and sayings (Schatzki) that are intertwined with artefacts and technologies" (Schmidt: n.p.). In other words, knowledge production should itself be treated as a social practice. Returning to the topic of citizen media practices, this means asking questions about *how* media-related knowledge is produced, *what* kinds of knowledge is produced (and by whom), and how such knowledge is mobilised to effect change. Some useful conceptual resources for asking these questions can be found in a growing literature on knowledge production in social movements.

Knowledge practices in social movements

One of the first (and theoretically most comprehensive) accounts of social movements as sites for knowledge production is Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach.* Operating with a view of knowledge

production as a fundamentally social endeavour, and emphasising the creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action, Eyerman and Jamison see social movements as privileged agents in the social production of knowledge: as breeding grounds for innovations in thought and bearers of new ideas, which are subsequently diffused in wider society. The significance of a social movement thus lies in the historical project it articulates at the level of ideas. Eyerman and Jamison advocate studying social movements as 'cognitive praxis', which means focusing on the collective processes of knowledge production through which the identity of a movement is articulated and thinking about the contribution they make in the long term to human knowledge and the civilizational paradigms that guide human action.

Such an understanding of social movements as sites for knowledge production has been taken up in more recent scholarship, which sees studying knowledge production in social movements as crucial to understanding their broader social significance and political 'effects' (Casas-Cortés et al 2008; della Porta & Pavan 2017). Social movements are conceptualised as privileged sources of knowledge because they "have long been bearers of knowledge about forms of oppression and injustice" (Chesters 2012: 153) that is not accessible from dominant viewpoints and are uniquely placed to develop critiques of – and alternatives to – the current social order to effect social change (Chesters 2012; Cox 2014).

The relevance of such approaches for theorising citizen media and practice lies in their understanding of knowledge *as practice*. Casas-Cortés et al (2008: 19) use the hyphenated term 'knowledge-practices' to emphasise the "concrete, embodied, lived, and situated" character of knowledge. Knowledge-practices refers to the "creation, modification and diverse enactments" of movement knowledges, which might take the form of "stories, ideas, narratives, and ideologies, but also theories, expertise, as well as political analyses and critical understandings of particular contexts" (Casas-Cortés et al 2008: 20). Similarly, della Porta and Pavan define the concept of 'repertoires of knowledge practices'as

> the set of practices that foster the coordination of disconnected, local, and highly personal experiences and rationalities within a shared cognitive system able to provide movements and their supporters with a common orientation for making claims and acting collectively to produce social, political, and cultural changes. (2017: 300)

A common argument within this literature is that what makes movement knowledges unique and politically important is their situated, material and place-based nature (Casas-Cortés et al 2008; Cox 2014; della Porta & Pavan 2017). Grounded in everyday experiences of inequality, oppression and struggle against the status quo, movement knowledges are often contrasted to more abstract and 'objective' forms of knowledge produced by academics and policy experts, who seek to establish categories, patterns and generalities (Esteves 2008). From a postcolonial perspective, Santos (2006) conceptualises the diversity of knowledges produced by the world's social movements as expressive of an 'epistemology of the South'. Challenging the universalism and abstraction of Western modern thought and the subalternisation of alternative knowledges wrought by histories of colonialism, the epistemology of the South asserts the validity and existence of a global 'ecology' of knowledges as well as the potential for translation and partial connection between

them. This is not to say that movements only produce situated and place-based knowledge – they *also* engage in the production of more abstract analytical knowledge including technical/scientific expertise – but that if we are to take movements seriously as knowledge producers, we need to value the situated and contextual character of their knowledge production in its own right (Chesters 2012).

To better understand the diverse forms that movement knowledge practices might take – and in turn be able to analyse the different forms of knowledge practices involved in 'acting on media' – it is useful to review different typologies of movement knowledge. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) identify three dimensions of the 'knowledge interests' of social movements. The *cosmological* dimension refers to a movement's basic assumptions or beliefs – its fundamental worldview. The *technological* dimension relates to specific topics of protest and alternative technologies, and can also incorporate new institutions created by movements (Cox 2014). The *organisational* dimension relates to a movement's organisational paradigm, i.e. knowledge about strategies and tactics, how to mobilise – in brief, how to 'do' social movements.

Adopting a slightly different angle, della Porta and Pavan (2017) propose three categories of knowledge production within social movements. The first, *knowledge about the collective self*, is concerned with the construction of a collective subject and is produced through activists' collective self-reflection, often during events such as social forums and protest camps. The second, *knowledge about the action network*, involves "the effort of creating 'strategic collectivities' by fostering the circulation of information about diverse agendas, competences, and resources, thus generating large-scale and coordinated networks of strategic action and collaboration between different movements or parts of them" (della Porta & Pavan 2017: 306). The third, *knowledge as production of (political) alternatives*, involves knowledge practices "oriented to develop critique of the status quo and substantiate alternative proposals to overcome it" (ibid.: 307).

Integrating these schemes, the following typology of knowledge produced by social movements can be constructed:[i]

1. *Worldview*. This category corresponds to Eyerman and Jamison's cosmological dimension and refers to the kinds of knowledge production involved in the creation of a movement's broad vision and worldview.
2. *Knowledge about collective identity*. This refers to practices of knowledge production involved in collective identity formation. It corresponds to della Porta and Pavan's 'knowledge about the collective self', but also incorporates elements of their second category, 'knowledge about the action network', as knowledge about the actors that form part of wider networks beyond a movement's immediate milieu is arguably also central to processes of collective identity formation (Melucci 1996).
3. *Organisational knowledge*. This incorporates Eyerman and Jamison's organisational dimension and elements of della Porta and Pavan's 'knowledge about the action network'. It refers to knowledge about mobilization and strategy, as well as the organisational structures of the movement itself.
4. *Knowledge about alternatives*. This final category incorporates Eyerman and Jamison's technological dimension and della Porta and Pavan's 'knowledge

as production of (political) alternatives'. It can take different forms, ranging from forms of knowledge production that involves expert or analytical knowledge, such as the creation of alternative technologies and policy proposals, to more embodied forms of knowledge involved in prefigurative politics.

Knowledge practices in the World Forum of Free Media

To illustrate how this typology might be used to analyse knowledge involved in 'acting on media', I draw on a case study of the World Forum of Free Media (FMML, for the Portuguese *Fórum Mundial de Mídia Livre* and its French/Spanish equivalents), a thematic forum for media activists and media advocacy organisations linked to the World Social Forum (WSF).[ii] The FMML was first held in 2009 in conjunction with the WSF in Belém, Brazil and there have since been four further global editions (Rio de Janeiro 2012, Tunis 2013 and 2015, Montréal 2016) alongside a number of regional meetings. The FMML emerged out of a longer history of media activism within the WSF, which since 2001 has provided a space for media activists from around the world to gather, exchange knowledge and experience, and produce collaborative coverage of forum events. Though activists were initially concerned primarily with the production of alternative media content, the physical co-presence afforded by the WSF also encouraged political debate. Since media 2003, media activists have organised seminars and workshops at every WSF to discuss issues such as internet governance, freedom of speech, alternative technologies and community media. The FMML has emerged out of this process, providing a thematic forum dedicated to media and technology issues. Over its five editions, it has brought together hundreds of very diverse participants – ranging from citizen media producers and tech activists to media reform groups, development NGOs and academic researchers – all of whom have in common that they seek to thematise and politicise media. The FMML is therefore a highly appropriate case study for analysing knowledge practices involved in 'acting on media'.

The typology outlined above provides a useful tool for analysing the diverse kinds of knowledge involved in FMML participants' media practices. *Knowledge about alternatives* is produced in several ways. First, the FMML provides a space for activists to experiment with and share knowledge about media technologies. At most editions, hackers and tech activists have organised hacklabs – spaces dedicated to hands-on experimentation with, and knowledge sharing about, technologies ranging from lo-fi FM radio transmitters to alternative social media. The FMML also regularly hosts seminars about alternative technologies. Second, several forum participants are engaged in media policy advocacy, and use the FMML as a space to discuss and share policy alternatives.. Third, many FMML participants work actively, on an everyday basis, to construct new institutions in the form of alternative, citizen and community media based on principles of co-operation, participation and non-hierarchical organisation.

The FMML also provides a site for the production of *organisational knowledge*. It offers a space for participants to share knowledge about strategy and mobilization, whether through informal conversations or organised activities – thus enabling participants to build knowledge about 'what works' and expand their repertoires of contention. The FMML also enables members of the organising committee to gain knowledge about how to mobilize at a global scale, ranging from awareness of the

need for cultural and linguistic translation to technical knowledge about the use of videoconferencing software for online meetings. The FMML also acts as a laboratory for experimentation with non-hierarchical ways of organising media production, giving activists concrete experience of ‘another communication’.

As a global gathering of media activists from different cultural and political backgrounds, who work in diverse contexts, the FMML has played a fundamental role in supporting the production of *knowledge about collective identity* (see Stephansen 2017 for a detailed analysis of collective identity in the FMML). Successive face-to-face gatherings have enabled participants to get to know one another and develop mutual recognition through “knowledge production about the shared characteristics, principles and aims of ‘free media’” (Stephansen 2017: 62). Alongside these more organic processes of collective identity formation, FMML organisers have also engaged in deliberate efforts to develop a shared definition of ‘free media’ – which has involved working across cultural and linguistic boundaries to arrive at a plural, inclusive definition (Stephansen 2017). One of the ways that they have done so is through the creation of the World Charter of Free Media (World Forum of Free Media, 2015), which was adopted in 2015 following a two-year consultation process via online forums and face-to-face meetings. The process of negotiating the Charter was explicitly conceived by organisers as an effort to create knowledge about collective identity: as one organiser suggested in 2013, “I think this [negotiating the Charter] is going to help us define and identify ourselves” (quoted in Stephansen 2017: 62). Accordingly, the Charter opens with a statement of who ‘we’ – free media – are, which appears as an attempt to set out a comprehensive definition:

> We are communicators, activists, journalists, hackers, community media associations and free media, social movements and popular organizations. We are bloggers, audiovisual producers, free and open technology developers, associations, networks, unions, journalism schools, research centers on information and communication, and NGOs supporting access to information and communication.

The Charter also provides insights into the *worldview* – or worldview*s* – that signatories hold, and its construction can be viewed as a process of knowledge production about the FMML’s vision. At a basic level, this worldview is succinctly expressed by the statement in one of its opening paragraphs: “democratization and the right to communicate for all are essential if we are to build a just and sustainable world”. FMML participants share a broad vision of media democratization as essential to social justice and an understanding of media and communication as *political* issues. Beyond this broad general vision, however, the Charter is also evidence of processes of knowledge production that involve efforts to consolidate different visions. As Eyerman and Jamison (1991) pointed out, the development of a movement’s cosmology always draws on the visions and knowledge of previous mobilizations, and this is also true in the case of the FMML. In a detailed analysis of the Charter (Stephansen 2017), I have shown that this document is in fact a composite of different worldviews: the Charter brings together several different ways of framing free media, with different historical and political trajectories. These include a ‘right to communicate’ frame, which draws on human rights discourse and can be traced back to previous international mobilizations such as the Communication

Rights in the Information Society campaign in the early 2000s and the NWICO debates in the 1970s and 1980s; frames that emphasise the media's role in supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, which can be linked to the WSF's ideals of horizontality and respect for epistemic plurality; and a social justice frame that locates media activism within broader struggles against colonialism, racism, sexism and other forms of oppression (Stephansen 2017). The development of the Charter has involved a process of knowledge production aimed at consolidating these different visions.

Conclusion

The value of the typology of social movement knowledge proposed here is that it offers analytical purchase on the range of knowledge practices involved in 'acting on media'. While it is not a typology of *how* knowledge is produced, but rather a typology of different forms of knowledge, it provides a lens through which a range of seemingly disparate practices – organising a seminar about media policy, working collaboratively to produce media content, negotiating a joint declaration, etc. – can be analysed as *knowledge practices*. A key argument in this chapter has been that such knowledge practices should be conceptualised as integral to media practices – especially those that involve thematising and politicising media – and that media practice researchers should make knowledge practices an explicit focus of their analysis. While much media practice research has focused on the habitual and unreflexive nature of everyday media use, citizen media practices involve intentional efforts to effect change and, arguably, a greater degree of reflexive and analytical knowledge, as well as creativity. A focus on knowledge practices is therefore important for our broader understanding of agency in the context of citizen media.

By analysing knowledge practices in this way, media practice researchers will be better placed to address questions about how citizen media practices might contribute to social change. A common criticism of practice theory is that it is better at accounting for social reproduction than it is at explaining social change (Shove et al 2012). If, as in some versions of practice theory, individuals are conceptualised as carriers of practices, and practices conceptualised as routinized forms of behaviour, how can we account for innovation? Part of the answer to this question lies in Shove et al's (2012: Ch. 7) insight that "[p]ractices change when new elements are introduced or when existing elements are combined in new ways". I would add that in order to understand how and why such instances of recombination occur, it is essential to understand the knowledge practices that underpin them. The literature on knowledge production in social movements suggests that we should look to media activists as sources of new ideas and innovation in media practices.

Taking social movements seriously as knowledge producers also involves rethinking the hierarchies of academic knowledge production, which position movement activists and their media practices as objects of knowledge to be analysed by academic researchers. If we conceptualise media activists as reflexive and knowledgeable agents, academic researchers cannot claim to occupy a privileged vantage point for analysing their media practices. Instead, we need to develop our analyses in conversation with activists, treating them not just as sources of ethnographic data but as interlocutors with a distinct contribution to make to our understanding of contemporary media practices. This involves developing an ethics of engagement and co-production of knowledge (Chesters 2012) and opening up the

canon of (Western) academic knowledge to the critical perspectives offered by movements of marginalised and oppressed groups (Cox 2014).

A focus on knowledge practices has been introduced in this chapter to rectify the relative lack of attention to cognitive processes within the media practice literature – and practice theory more generally. While the ethnographic openness that results from asking what people *do* with media has produced important insights into the ways that citizens use media to organise, campaign and gain visibility, my argument has been that it is important to also pay attention to the different forms of knowledge that underpin their media practices. As discussed above, such an understanding of knowledge as integral to agency does not necessitate a return to the mentalism and voluntarism that practice theory has sought to refute. By treating activities like theorising, analysing and reflecting about media as *practices*, rather than as subjective mental processes located in the minds of individuals, knowledge production can be situated decisively within the social realm as a material and embodied set of practices and subjected to empirical research. This is an important task for media practice scholars, working in collaboration with media activists.

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[i] The categories presented here are ideal types; different types of knowledge might overlap in practice. Nonetheless, they are useful for gaining analytical purchase on the range of knowledge practices that take place among individuals and groups that are 'acting on media'. My typology excludes the tacit knowledge that forms part of all social practice, as this is already accounted for by the notions of know-how and competence in practice theory.

[ii] See http://www.fmml.net. The empirical examples used here are drawn from a larger ethnographic study of media activism in the WSF, conducted between 2008 and 2018 (see Stephansen 2013a, 2013b, 2016, 2017). During this period, I attended numerous social forums (including the WSF 2009 in Bélem, Brazil, the WSF 2011 in Dakar, Senegal, the WSF 2013 in Tunis and the WSF 2018 in Salvador, Brazil – as well as several local, regional and thematic social forums), conducted 100 in-depth interviews, and accompanied online organising processes between forum events.