Kjetil Sandvik, Anne Mette Thorhauge, and Bjarki Valtysson (Eds.), **The Media and the Mundane: Communication Across Media in Everyday Life**, Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom, 2016, 159 pp., $19.50 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Deborah Neffa Creech
University of Southern California, USA

What characterizes cross-media communication from the perspective of the individual user in the context of everyday life? This is a central question posed by the editors of *The Media and the Mundane: Communication Across Media in Everyday Life*, a book that offers timely research for scholars seeking varying perspectives on the ways users engage with and across media in their everyday lives. It employs both theoretical and empirical approaches to answer this question and to frame media use discussions of increasing relevance in today's fast-evolving digital environment.
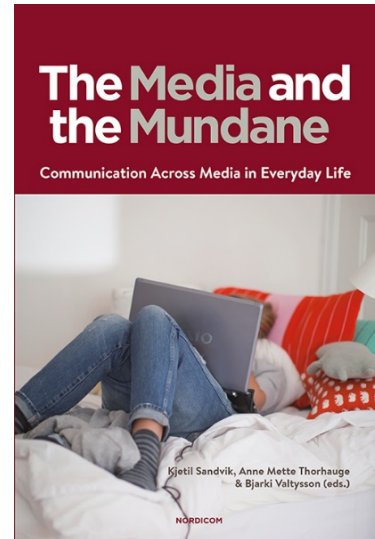
Audiences

The book includes a range of theoretical, empirical, and methodological approaches to the study of cross-media communication in everyday life. It is relevant to scholars in media, communication, and cultural studies seeking theoretical inspiration as well as practical examples for applied work. Chapter contributors draw on domestication theory and frameworks (Silverstone, 2006; Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1992), critical realism (Archer, 2012, 2013), and phenomenological sociology frameworks (Shutz & Luckmann, 1973), to name a few, as they examine daily user-centric contexts of media use. They also use multimethod quantitative and qualitative approaches for data gathering from both human subjects and media technologies (e.g., mobile applications [apps], social media websites, and online portals), such as thematic analysis of online content, app data capture, observations, focus groups, and individual interviews.

Book Structure

The Media and the Mundane emerged from a multiyear research project titled "Meaning Across Media—Cross-Media Communication and Co-creation" funded by the Danish National Council for Independent Research. It comprises three theoretical chapters and six case studies that highlight the work of contributors from academic institutions worldwide. The empirical chapters examine uses of a diverse range of media for everyday activities: smartphones and apps to manage daily routines and to track exercise; social media and online portals for political, civic, and cultural participation and illness support; and established and "occasional" media (objects that gain media status in specific situations) for bereavement. Contributors examine these in relation to three main concepts: everyday life, cross-media communication, and space of agency.

The Mundane and Everyday Life

The mundane is a term encountered throughout the book and used synchronously with the concept of everyday life. The latter is approached as a sociological and philosophical concept while *the mundane* is used as a type of label or adjective to describe everyday life and activities using a user-centric perspective. Per the editors, the study of the mundane and everyday life has increased in media studies, which has sought to examine the perspectives of recipients and users, as "the encoded meanings and affordances of media and media technologies are translated into the lived experiences of ordinary people" (p. 9). The book contributes to this literature by exploring these concepts in relation to the ways media are used in combination and as part of the everyday activities of different users (e.g., exercise, bereavement, and political participation).

Cross-Media Communication

Another main concept outlined in the book is cross-media communication, which refers to the ways media are used in combination in the context of mundane practices and everyday life. It examines the perspectives of individual users, unlike other cross-media communication studies, which the editors claim focus primarily on the production and dissemination of media content and texts. Citing Couldry (2012, p. 44), the editors describe their goal as considering "'the broader set of *practices* related to media' and as such 'the distinctive types of *social processes* enacted *through* media-related practices'" (p. 10). To this end, the empirical chapters highlight how individuals use media platforms and technologies every day, and in shifting combinations, across different social structures and situations (e.g., while engaging in physical activity, managing daily routines, seeking support and information about chronic illness, or coping with the death of loved ones).

Space of Agency

The third main concept featured in this book is space of agency, which is discussed in relation to everyday life and technologies. According to the editors, "media technologies in various combinations shape spaces of agency, but users operating different media technologies in mundane contexts also shape this space of agency" (p. 11). They define *agency* along the lines of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), where individual acts and societal structures are both intertwined and independent. Throughout the book, the contributors show how spaces of agency are formed through social structures and practices as well as complex media environments, which can open up or limit the experiences of users. They show how factors such as health, employment, and family and living conditions can affect such agency and thus uses of media in individuals' everyday lives.

Conclusion

The Media and the Mundane is a timely contribution to media, communication, and critical studies literature as scholars continue to examine the role of digital media in users' everyday lives. The three main concepts explored—everyday life, cross-media communication, and space of agency—are relevant and useful to discussions about users' varying experiences with and the affordances of media, with *the*

mundane also an integral term to include in these conversations. The range of case studies included in this book, diverse in user perspectives and methods, are integral to showcasing the many ways cross-media communication research can be approached. Such diversity is needed as users continue expanding and increasing the types and number of media platforms and technologies they integrate into their everyday lives.

References

Archer, M. (2012). *The reflexive imperative in late modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. (2013). *Social morphogenesis*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, society, world: Social theory and digital media practice*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Schutz, A., & Luckmann, T. (1973). *The structures of the life-world*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Silverstone, R. (2006). Domesticating domestication: Reflections on the life of a concept. In T. Berker, M. Hartmann, Y. Punie, & K. Ward (Eds.), *Domestication of media and technology* (pp. 229–248). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Silverstone, R., Hirsch, E., & Morley, D. (1992). Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household. In R. Silverstone & E. Hirsch (Eds.), *Consuming technologies* (pp. 15–32). London, UK: Routledge.