

Participation in Broadband Society

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Experiencing Broadband Society

Volume 2



PETER LANG Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften

Introduction: The Broadband Society and its Citizens

In the broadband society an increasing, albeit limited, number of people are taking advantage of the new technological possibilities of generating, obtaining and communicating information. Their purpose and hope is to expand and enhance their interpersonal relationships and their agency as social beings in general. In this context, the term “broadband society” is used to characterise a society in which not only information has become the primary economic commodity, which is the key characteristic of the information society or knowledge society, as these terms were defined by Machlup (1962) and Bell (1973), but where people’s access to information potentially anytime and everywhere is becoming a common and – to a certain extent, in certain contexts – indispensable feature of their everyday lives (Baron 2008). Although it should be kept in mind that there are many people without access to, or use for, broadband technologies. Nonetheless, new forms of social ties and cooperation have been emerging in recent years, such as online communities (Wellman 1999; Rheingold 2000), social network sites (Boyd & Ellison 2007) and other Web 2.0 applications (O’Reilly 2007), involving many new users who, every day, add new modalities and styles of mediated social relations to their lives. Moreover, new content and forms of narrative have been developed within this framework, creating a large corpus of stories (Lesser et al. 2000). Although these and other related phenomena certainly imply significant changes in social processes in contemporary societies, the aim of this book is not to establish a conclusive and unequivocal definition of what the broadband society really is. Instead, this collection of papers seeks to convey in a manageable form, recent thinking and research on the social and cultural aspects of broadband technologies. The aim of this book and its contributions is to demonstrate, by example, the importance of investigating, collecting, recording and reflecting upon the social experiences and practices of using information and communication technologies (ICT) in the emerging contexts of the broadband society.

Why now a book on the many different ways in which people experience old and new media in the broadband society? There are several reasons, not least because after almost two decades of both thinking about and discussing theories the editors of this volume perceived the need to capture the attitudes and behaviours expressed by everyday users in this new socio-technical landscape that broadband technology is supporting. This includes discourse on conceptual frameworks, so-

cial regularities and formal models (e.g. Hackett et al. 2007; Lievrouw & Livingstone 2006), as well as conducting research projects focused on quantitatively and qualitatively assessing the uses of ICTs (Jenkins 2006; Bakardjieva 2005; Silverstone & Hirsch 1992; Glotz et al. 2005; Ito et al. 2006; Katz & Aakhus 2002). As Bourdieu (1977) pointed out, there is no better way to achieve this goal than to reconstruct the practices of use of technologies in order to understand the transformation of their social meaning and functions as well as the transformation that occurs in the everyday lives of individuals. The editors of this collection of scientific papers are part of a European network that was among the first to investigate these practices in the beginning of the 1990s (Haddon 1998).

In particular, inquiries into how people experience ICTs in the broadband society are becoming more urgent. This is important now that these technologies also convey meanings, symbols, values and vivid emotions (Vincent & Fortunati 2009; Lasen 2005) to an unprecedented extent, and in an ever more refined fashion that transcends the scope of formal theories of information, of usage surveys, of domestication and usability studies, or of media case studies and ethnographies. Thus, a more integrated approach appears to be required. In fact, the issue of everyday life experiences of ICTs is attracting increasing attention from the scientific community within and between multiple disciplines (Höflich & Hartmann 2006, Wellman & Haythornthwaite 2002; Gebhardt 2008). The purpose of this book is to identify and address current research questions directed at this issue, examining various multi-disciplinary approaches towards the common goal of understanding the various social practices of ICT use. However, this book does not put its main focus on fashionable topics such as social networks that are now attracting a lot of research and debate but that will sooner or later be on the downside of the hype cycle (Nyiri 2008). Instead, this book addresses and provides evidence of a variety of apparently mundane practices and experiences of ICT use that nonetheless are shaping people's lifeworlds. It does so by bringing together the work of international researchers who gathered in Moscow for the conference "The Good, the Bad, and the Unexpected. The User and the Future of Information and Communication Technologies", organised by the European network COST 298 in May 2007. In this volume, a selection of the outcomes of the discourse among the scholars participating in this event is presented in the form of original material on their respective research topics. This conference was distinctive not only to the extent to which it was an international and interdisciplinary event focusing on ICT use and participation in the broadband society, but also in the ways in which it aimed to produce a true conceptual integration of different approaches and disciplines on this broad, but highly relevant theme.

The ICT world comprises personal and social relationships, devices, signs and communication and information practices and users. These issues were

explored by scholars from various disciplines, including social sciences, computer science, engineering, arts and design. The papers that are presented and discussed here cover a variety of topics, including current theoretical frameworks and contemporary research projects concerning the way in which users are affected by, and respond to, the manner in which broadband technology is being employed. This also takes account of issues related to evolving societal forms and environments in the information society, such as on-line communities and ways of analyzing people's emotional experience of ICTs and their social implications. The current aim is to build upon the dialogue and networks that emerged from this conference, crossing and integrating many different scientific and research approaches, as well as conceptual perspectives, with the goal of developing new ontological and epistemological positions on the experiences and practices of ICT use.

Overview of Book

The purpose of this book is to investigate the role of broadband ICTs from an anthropocentric point of view. What social and personal problems in communication have people tried to overcome by using and interacting with broadband technology? What new problems may arise in the course of acting and interacting with ICTs? What are the social structures and processes that are involved in and affected by this use? In this book the authors examine new technologies, albeit in a similar way to that suggested at the beginning of the last century by Sombart (1911)., He discussed how technologies in various societies presented different and peculiar opportunities to 'rationalise' the organisation of daily life, to resolve practical problems, to provide solutions for reducing fatigue, the amount of time spent and the costs that people encounter in their everyday life. Therefore, the chapters in this volume cut across a broad variety of social issues and geographical domains. They highlight the attitudes and actions of both users and non-users, they inquire both into mundane and into innovative uses, and they probe for political and operational consequences. The chapters' foci range from individual to collective issues, and from (post-) industrialised to developing societies. The themes also cut across psychological, sociological, cultural, and environmental levels of analysis. At their heart, though, is the common theme of how broadband ICTs have contributed – in both intrusive and subtle ways – to the reshaping of people's experience of everyday life.

Central Themes

The volume covers four main themes and empirical areas of research. The themes can be named as follows: Firstly uses and practices of new media, with particular focus on underprivileged groups; secondly new media and the social differentiation of their use; thirdly ICT use and sustainable development and fourthly new technologies, new challenges.

The first of these themes introduced in this book debates the possibilities that social software may open for the less powerful or even deprived groups in society, such as children or rural communities in less developed countries respectively, but it also concerns the possible contributions from those social groups to the further development of social software applications.

The second area presented in this book refers to and discusses the situation of e-actors with regards to the specific difficulties of their using the Internet and other ICTs. The term “e-actors” does not only refer to people as users of ICTs, but to the manifold roles and situations that people experiment with in their relationships with these technologies, including the roles of citizen, customer, consumer, co-designer, stakeholder, and others. Unlike in much of current scholarly literature on ICTs and society, here it is not the proactive and innovative user who takes centre stage, but the one who has to cope with a technology that has not been designed with his or her needs in mind. For example, different age cohorts are confronted with different impediments to ICT use. E-actors live in specific relationships to the new media, according to their social alignments (for a more in-depth discussion of the notion of e-actors, see Fortunati et al. 2009, which comprises more contributions from the same conference). It is thus important to identify the issues relevant to different generations of e-actors in order to shed new light on the co-construction of socio-technical systems based on computerisation and on the social and cultural differentiations these systems produce (Scott & Marshall 2005).

The third area concerns the often overlooked relation between ICT use and sustainability issues, that is, possible environmental and health risks, which is mediated by perceptions, attitudes and practices of e-actors. Since ICTs are increasingly subject to the “throw away ethic” and strategies of obsolescence in contemporary consumer societies which are producing large amounts of e-waste (Slade 2006), the reflections on this problem presented in this book can be interpreted as a response to a perceived lack of public concern.

Finally, the fourth area addresses questions of the possible new relationships between users and advanced mobile communication functionalities, such as the features of, and affective responses to, communication-wear, that open up entire new fields of activity and interaction to e-actors. Having identified these four

areas, we have arranged the contributions in four sections, a more detailed explanation of which follows.

Theme 1: Uses and practices of new media

In this section, authors discuss recent research on online communities, presenting selected case studies from two rather different countries and cultures, namely pre-adolescent youths in Belgium and marginalised urban and rural communities in Argentina. The research projects introduced here offer powerful examples of how the same technologies with which people may arrange their activities and resolve vital problems in their everyday life in different cultural contexts are in reality shaping socio-technical systems with specific meanings and functions. These studies also tackle the issue of methodology for collecting and analyzing the data in such different settings. Although significant developments in the Internet world such as Web 2.0 have emerged in the last few years, they have only recently received attention in terms of sustained investigation by the social sciences. Thus the papers we present in this section give a valuable contribution to a deeper understanding of this growing area. They both deal with the evolution of the Internet culture, as it is being revitalised by the social software phenomenon.

The section is opened by the chapter of *Tim Van Lier and Jo Pierson, Identification of community practices and co-creation by pre-adolescents: the case of Ketnet Kick*. The authors provide a critical and nuanced image of online communities and their potential social implications for youngsters and vice versa, reflecting the specific way in which children become members of online communities, and contributing to the recent focus among many scholars on the practices of children in using and developing new ICTs. To this end, Van Lier and Pierson first investigate what the concept 'community' means to children in an environment which rapidly changes day by day. Second, they take an interdisciplinary perspective to discuss theories on pre-adolescent communities, in order to better understand the socio-psychological dynamics that characterise teenagers' behaviour. Third, they investigate the determinants of (online and offline) communities and try to identify what children may find important in a community. Van Lier and Pierson seek to identify precisely where and how children experience the sense of a mediated community. Are children after all, engaging as e-actors in the community landscape and if so, how are they dealing with these electronic communities? After outlining their theoretical background, these authors present and discuss findings from their own case study 'Ketnet Kick'. 'Ketnet Kick' is a successful collaborative game developed by the Flemish public broadcasting

company VRT (Flanders, Belgium) and games developer Larian. In terms of methodology, the instruments applied in this research are numerous. In a first stage, diaries and questionnaires were used to identify the media profiles of children involved in the research. Then, six focus group interviews and ten in-depth dual-interviews were carried out. In total 71 children living in Flanders were studied. Van Lier's and Pierson's research shows how children interpret the notions of online community and Web 2.0. The children's everyday life context is a key factor in determining their media practices and needs. In this context, it appeared that, in applications designed for pre-adolescents – i.e. children between the ages of eight and ten –, a sense of community is enabled through collaboration and co-creation of content. On the other hand, the act of communicating online is not the ultimate goal for these children. Rather, they strive for common experiences and are cooperating for common purposes.

Van Lier's and Pierson's perspective is complemented by a chapter written by *Beatriz Galán, Maidana Andrés Legal, D.I. Pedro Senar, Design and communication for local development: technological decisions in collaborative scenarios*. This chapter is focused on the role of ICTs as tools for spreading innovative social practices promoted by organisations of the civil society, and as media for overcoming territorial isolation, social exclusion and environmental degradation through low scale investment solutions, within a framework of community co-construction. The use of ICTs and particularly of Web 2.0 constitutes an important component of the knowledge transfer to communities that had been developed by the authors' research group at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. Coming from a Technology and Society research background, the authors describe how they developed what they call an “animation device”, based on Web 2.0, in order to connect the needs and resources of a specific local community with other social networks and thus to overcome its isolation. This device is seen as an agent of development, and its designers as social animators. Since applications that combine resources of a self-managed data base with weblog interfaces and processes of technology are rare, this team has innovatively contributed the first step towards the appropriation of ICTs by emerging community organisations, supporting them to the point at which they reach autonomy in content management. The purpose of these authors is to empower the innovating activity of non-governmental organisations on a low scale, utilizing the increasing diffusion of ICTs, and in particular the resources provided by fibre optic lines as the technological infrastructure necessary to autonomously carry out content management. At the end of their chapter, the authors offer some results of their efforts, represented by the institutional strengthening of the community involved in the project through the appropriation of Web 2.0.

Theme 2: New media and the social differentiation of their use

Three different approaches to exploring the relationship between computers/internet and social networking are presented here. They form a kind of mosaic that depicts different facets of users, according to their different social and demographic characteristics. At the same time the chapters below capture specific experiences of being e-actors and using new technologies in different Eastern and Western European countries, namely in Russia, Belgium and UK.

The section starts with the chapter *Social Sciences Information User Behaviour and Searching Strategies in Multifarious Environment* by *Marina Borovik and Ludmilla Shemberko*. It is an investigation into users' searching strategies in social science databases in Russia, and into the way in which users change their behaviour to improve their interaction with retrieval systems. The authors present a multidimensional approach to the analysis of information users in the field of social sciences, outlining the situated cultural practices of e-science and of the social construction of knowledge. The authors provide an interesting picture of the involvement of internet users in the creation of the broadband society in Russia, with special attention to their needs and searching behaviours in the electronic repositories of information and knowledge. The results of a survey involving 3,500 e-users are delivered, showing that in the field of social sciences even frequent users are not always able to utilise the potential offered by new information technologies for searching databases and digital repositories. Even here, among experts, the common phenomenon of under-utilisation of available technological resources is observable. In order to differentiate the picture, the search strategies of different categories of users are described and a number of observations of users' searching behaviour on the Web and in various social science databases are offered for discussion.

The second chapter, *Teenagers on the Net: Generational Divide, Autonomy, Liberty and Responsibility*, by *Sarah Gallez, Anne-Claire Orban, Céline Schöller and Claire Lobet-Maris* takes us to Belgium and depicts a totally different group of e-actors: teenagers. In this chapter, youngsters' attitudes and practices in the internet sphere are examined, and some common sense assumptions about this so-called "digital generation" are challenged. In fact, according to the authors, youngsters in Belgium do not at all form a single, homogeneous generation, but are characterised by social and cultural diversity both with regard to their internet usage practices and to the social meanings they give to their practices. The authors proceed to demonstrate the highly variant and diverging investments into the Internet, such as into blogs, chats and games, along the lines of gender, age and socio-cultural status. Another commonly held view that is challenged by the authors is the presumed globalisation of the digital generation that instead seems to navigate and interact on a predominantly local scale, where youngsters shape the net as an explorative

social dimension between the public and private sphere, set apart from the adult world. The paper is based on a recent qualitative study conducted within the framework of the research project TIRO – Teens and ICT, Risks and Opportunities –, sponsored by the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO). The main topic of this research is the rules and regulations shaped and used by teenagers (12 to 18 years) to guide them in their practices and attitudes in the Internet sphere. In the first part of their chapter, the authors question the generational divide that shapes teenagers' ICT practices and its influence on youth's socialisation and regulation. Based on these sociological and cultural observations, the authors, in the second part of the chapter, analyse the traditional legal framework that is meant to regulate the teenagers' digital sphere, and question its current appropriateness. Again, a problem of under-utilization is detected among the very group that is generally considered to comprise the most advanced e-actors. However, the main profile of the broadband user does not include teenagers, but rather more mature youngsters.

The section is concluded by the chapter *Non-Users in the Information Society. Learning from the older generation*, written by *Maria Sourbati*. Here, the opposite age group is addressed, by investigating into the social construction of the elderly, and by analysing the current rhetoric of the emerging public discourse about them. In the post-modern society, the elderly have become subject to a radical reversal of their social representation and image. Once being considered the repositories of wisdom, their role has become redrawn as that of individuals unable to cope with the changes and the possibilities offered by the new technological artefacts available in their society. Sourbati critically discusses political perspectives on the 'non users' of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), showing a lack of an anthropocentric approach to the relation between new media and the elderly. She examines how older non-users of today's new media are represented in the policy discourses about the Information Society. Elderly people's relationship with new media technologies is commonly framed in terms of age-based understandings, of static and binary notions of media access, and of an individualistic perspective on the non-users (Ling 2008). Older adults are deemed unable to obtain the literacy required to access and use new media technologies and services mainly because of their age, while, at the same time, they are considered as potentially major beneficiaries of access to online services. This kind of prevalent conceptualisations can be seen to define non-users as a homogenous group of isolated individuals, media use as a solitary activity, and the nature and benefits of access as a matter of absolutes. Drawing on broadly interactionist perspectives, this paper suggests that non-users are better understood as interacting individuals who relate to the media in various ways, including forms of engagement with them that are mediated by other people. The paper concludes by considering what bearing these understandings have on policy formation.

Theme 3: ICT use and sustainable development

The third section explores the future agenda of the broadband society and the environmental risks that it is, and will be, confronted with. Even if the oft-repeated diagnosis that labour becomes immaterial and social interactions virtual is true, all that labour and interactions have to rely on is material infrastructures, whose production, presence and maintenance produce more or less directly tangible material effects: energy consumption, waste, and, arguably, also electromagnetic field emissions. Two studies, one from Denmark and one from Germany, are included in this section.

This section is opened by the chapter *Households' ICT use in an energy perspective*, authored by *Inge Røpke, Kirsten Gram-Hanssen and Jesper Ole Jensen*, which deals with the issue of sustainability of the broadband society model in terms of the increasing energy consumption concomitant with the growing number of ICT appliances and the intensification of ICT use. The chapter's starting point is the perceived lack of connection between two of the prominent social agendas of our time: the development of the information society and the question of how to prevent human-made climate change. The chapter is intended as a contribution to integrate these two agendas. As this issue has not received much attention in previous research, the paper has more of an explorative character. Firstly, some of the available studies on the relationship between ICT use and energy are reviewed, introducing a consumption perspective. Secondly, the integration of ICTs in everyday practices and the dynamics behind these changes are outlined, adopting a historical perspective. Thirdly, a figure of the relationships between the changes in everyday practices and the related energy impacts is presented, followed by descriptions of direct energy consumption related to household ICTs, of indirect energy consumption outside households, and of derived impacts both within and outside households. The paper concludes with some remarks on political implications and questions for further research.

The second paper, *Attitudes towards mobile phone communication technology*, by *Kerstin Wüstner*, presents an empirical study conducted by the author in Germany that analyses the polarisation that occurs between citizens' attitudes towards potentially harmful effects of mobile phones. The author takes a closer look at the negative side of the perception of mobile phones, that is, at underlying concerns and fears that citizens might have towards this technology. Although the vast majority of people possess and use mobile phones, and although mobile phones are a mostly taken-for-granted part of everyday life, a rising number of people, even among mobile users, share critical attitudes and expresses fear of possibly harmful effects, mainly produced by mobile antennas and masts. While this group is convinced of negative health effects of the electromagnetic fields (EMFs) emit-

ted by these devices, others appear to be more indifferent, or even are convinced that the limit values that have been set up by the authorities are safe. In the discussion about possible effects, people's attitudes are often in conflict. Precisely what concerns do people express? Are there gender differences between the concerned and the not so concerned groups? Do the attitudes of users and non-users of mobile technologies diverge consistently? These questions are empirically addressed within the theoretical framework of social representations of technology (Fortunati & Contarello, 2005; Contarello et al. 2008).

Theme 4: New technologies, new challenges

The last section addresses contemporary developments in new ICTs, among them the merging of fashion cultures and mobile technologies, shared attitudes on communication wear and the new visual, aural and haptic economies emerging from mobile media convergence. In these contexts, very immediate issues of users' taste, self-image and even sensory perception take centre stage as challenges for design and the provision of new services.

This last section is opened by *Sharon Baurley, Erik Geelhoed, Philippa Brock and Andrew Moore*, who present the chapter *Communication wear: User feedback as part of a co-design process*, showing an interesting line of research that proposes the merging of fashion cultures and the mobile technology sphere. In the Communication-Wear project, a clothing concept is developed that augments the mobile phone by enabling expressive messages to be exchanged remotely, by conveying a sense of touch and presence. It proposes to synthesize conventions and cultures of fashion with those of mobile communications, where there are shared attributes in terms of communication and expression. This research project locates young people as the target of the development of fashion/clothing prototypes by engaging them as co-developers and evaluators. Using garment prototypes as research probes as part of an on-going iterative co-design process, the authors endeavoured to mobilise participants' tacit knowledge in order to gauge user perceptions on touch communication in a lab-based trial. The aim of this study is to determine whether established sensory associations people have with the tactile qualities of textiles could be used as signs and metaphors for experiences, moods, social interactions and gestures, related to interpersonal touch. In this way the study presented here provides a new comprehensive way of looking at the multiple and convergent facets of e-actors.

In the last chapter of this book, *Larissa Hjorth's Beyond the frame: The place of mobile and immobile media*, the development of the electronic self and the electronic portrait of what it is to be human is explored, through analysis of the artistic

and filmic organisations for which the brevity of digital media formats affords exciting new opportunities. Hjorth's paper explores the social reasons for this tendency towards brevity, arguing that these reasons should be individuated in the multiplicity of the media that people use on a daily basis. Until a few decades ago, people had at their disposal electronic media such as landline telephone, television and radio. With the new digitalisation and mobilisation of broadband technology, the spectrum broadens towards a variety of other modes of electronically mediated communication. This multiplicity of ICT uses, Hjorth argues, fosters a new brevity of the products that the individual media offer, and even new modes of perception. The rise of mobile media afforded everyday users with the ability to document and edit their stories. However, mobile media promise more than that – the portal to new arising forms of distribution such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld mini-hompy, YouTube etc. These new modes of sharing and context give rise to new modes of mobility. However, in the excitement to document Web 2.0 convergence, some dimensions of mobile media – most notably their oscillation between forms of mobility and immobility, delay and immediacy – are being overlooked. According to Hjorth, mobile media challenge the ocular-centricism of 20th century screen cultures in favour of other effectual economies such as the haptic.

Conclusions

The contributions to this volume, while hailing from a broad variety of disciplines, as well as addressing a multitude of topics, all converge towards one focal point: What it is for different people, under different circumstances and modalities of action, to live in a society that has become essentially reliant on the use of ICTs – even if the modes of using them, and even the possibility of accessing them in the first place, are not evenly distributed. It is precisely this broad variety of experiences of living in this society which is addressed in this book. If the notion of the broadband society, as it emerged from the context of the ICT industries and telecommunications providers, is to have any meaning and practical use as a conceptual tool in social science inquiry, and if a certain technology can be truly said to shape a society to an extent that warrants naming it after that technology, then these uses have to be justified by examples. We consider this book an important step into this direction, starting not from a policy or macro-sociological point of view, but from inquiries into people's experience. In essence, the book's central purpose is to look at the everyday uses of broadband ICTs by everyday people, and to figure out whether there are any remarkably consistent changes in personal routines and social organisation as a result of putting broadband technology resources into the hands of people.

What we can conclude from our collection of examples of different individual and collective experiences with and around ICTs is, firstly, that there are many levels of experience, and that there are many varieties and modes of experience on each of those levels: The use of ICTs may enable a marginalised group to achieve and express a sense of community that has not been accessible to them before, and it may do so in different ways for pre-adolescents and for economically deprived communities in a country's geographical periphery. ICTs may also offer new modes of accessing information, but it remains to be seen whether these new modes truly fit users' cognitive patterns. However, the use of ICTs may even reshape users' ways of perceiving their life-world and of expressing and communicating their emotions.

Secondly, some of the chapters in this volume provide evidence that even non-users of ICTs contribute to shaping the socio-technical framework in which ICTs operate, and are used. Whether these people have simply been left out or whether they consciously decided to refuse ICT use is not completely clear. For some it is about fearing negative health effects although these can hardly be proved or disproved given the short history of broadband ICTs. For others it is about perceiving themselves not to be the target group of the ICT industry's sales strategies. Some find themselves overwhelmed by technological developments whose sheer rapidity even seasoned users find hard to keep up with: non-users' actions do matter, at least in a society in which the principles of equity and participation are valued (Oudshoorn & Pinch 2008).

Thirdly, the shape of the environment in which the citizens of a highly technologised society live is significantly influenced by the presence of ICTs and of the ways in which they are used (Yearly 2008). This fact easily escapes many users' and policymakers' attention, as ICTs are frequently imagined as essentially clean technologies, for being considered immaterial, or for being designed as smart means of controlling emissions. The concerns arising in some corners of contemporary society in the post-industrial world are documented here, and should be taken as serious contributions to environmental debates, if not as an invitation to people to consume their broadband gadgets more responsibly, as well as a call to regulatory authorities to rethink and revise their environmental policies.

Each of these conclusions may serve to indicate directions for further research, on at least two levels. Moving from the descriptive approach outlined in this volume, one can move towards macro-sociological and policy perspectives and ask, among other questions: How can different actors' perspectives be integrated into current and upcoming policy debates? How can the differential agency of actors – including all sorts of non-users of ICTs – be addressed in terms of equity and participation? But one can also remain on a more descriptive level and seek to add more empirical pieces to the mosaic, rendering the image of the broadband so-

ciety more complete. A true explanation of social practices and situations can only come from the detailed and accurate description of the complex articulation of the different elements and actors involved. This endeavour could prove rewarding in itself: in a manner not unlike that of the 18th century natural historians, the attempt to collect and file the manifold specimen encountered in the field may serve as the starting point for well-founded systematic theories to ultimately explain the complex order encountered out there in the broadband society.

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