

Symbolic Spaces of Everyday Life

Work and Leisure at Home

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Abstract

This article presents an analysis of the role of the media in the symbolic construction of work and leisure at home. Dealing with individuals who represent a post-industrial and cultural labour market and who work mainly at home, the analysis focuses upon the ritual transformations of everyday life and the role of the media within it.

Leaning on social interactionist Erwin Goffman and his concepts of regions and frames, as well as a dimension of the materiality of culture, this analysis combines a perspective on media use as ritual, transformations in everyday life and the organization of material space. From this perspective, the discussion penetrates the symbolic dimension of media use in defining borders of behaviour and activities in relation to work and leisure at home.

Key Words: everyday life, home, work, ritual, media use, material culture

Introduction

Modernity has changed our preconceptions of home (Frykman & Löfgren 1987). The division of society and everyday life into public and private spheres has had consequences for the way we make use of home as well as its cultural significance (ibid.). Our traditional understanding of home, grounded in modernity, as essentially private and female can mainly be understood in terms of capitalist industrial production and its separation of home and work (cf., Campbell 1987). Today, this capitalist industrial production is not the dominant mode of production everywhere, and the cultural logic of industrial society has therefore been questioned (cf., Castells 1996). Post-industrial society and its modes of production have changed the relation between work and leisure and hence also our everyday life (Giddens 1984:131). These changes are not least important with respect to our understanding of home, especially its relation to time and labour. The core of this cultural change lies within modernity, or more specifically, its afterlife.

Media studies have traditionally regarded everyday media use primarily as a home-based activity (cf., Hagen 1994, also Morley 1986, 2004, Gray 1992, Hermes 1995, Gauntlett & Hill 1999, Larsen 2000). Media use has also been regarded as a leisure-time achievement. Despite the increasing mobility of modern media, which offer great opportunities for media to accompany several kinds of activities in many different kinds of milieus, the home is still an important place for understanding our everyday media

use (cf., Nilsson 2004:249). What ought to be reconsidered, however, is the preconception of home as leisure based, a back region and mainly private (Campbell 1987:101, du Gay 1996:76).

This article revolves around our understanding of media use at home, and more widely, its relation to the spheres of the everyday in times of shifting organization of labour. Relating to our former knowledge of media use at home (cf., Hagen 1994, also Morley 1986, 2004, Gray 1992, Hermes 1995, Gauntlett & Hill 1999, Larsen 2000), this article strives to avoid a one-eyed focus upon media use at home as a leisure activity. On the contrary, my aim is to focus upon individuals who accentuate the post-industrial organization of labour with blurred distinctions between work and leisure, individuals who lack governing superiors and a particular place at which to work. Thus, the aim of this article is to elucidate the significance of the media in post-industrial everyday life by analysing and discussing the media's role in everyday transformations between work and leisure, by focusing on three individuals who are characterized by their non-traditional and cultural occupations.

Empirical Material and Interpretation

The following discussion is based upon an analysis of three particular individuals who embody work situations that are of particular interest given the purpose of this article. The individuals have been chosen from a large empirical material (55 qualitative interviews), and the small amount of analytic items used here represent my aim to reach depth and richness in the analysis. This kind of "thick description" strives towards a multidimensional interpretation of the object under study and offers a rich and deepened understanding of a quantitatively small material (Geertz 1973:Chapter 1, see also Hermes 1995, Gullestad 1996).

The analysis is a combination of qualitative interviews and interpretations of the interviewees' homes conducted in 2003 and 2004. The interviews lasted for approximately two hours and revolved around media use and everyday structure from a broad perspective, particularly focusing upon the relation between work and leisure. The spatial analysis has focused upon the construction of the material rooms, especially the symbolic significance of the mediated milieus. Both analyses have paid particular attention to the ritual transformations of the temporal and spatial dimensions of everyday life, above all concerning the role of the media.

Everyday Rituals and Framing

This discussion takes its point of departure in the concept of region first used by social interactionist and sociologist Erwin Goffman in the late 1950s (1959). The background of this concept is an assumption that our everyday life can be regarded as a combination of different temporal ritual states – although ritual in a particular quotidian sense (in opposition to the anthropological meaning of the word ritual, which is everything but trivial, cf., Turner 1977, Rothenbuhler 1998, Couldry 2003). We shift daily between different kinds of temporal states and, depending on the character of each state, adjust our behaviour and our preconceptions to the present state. According to Goffman (1959:24), work is such a ritual state, as are play, rest, etc. A temporal ritual state is a condition in which we allow ourselves to act and perform in a particular way, where a performance should be understood as the way in which we present ourselves to others

(and at the same time to ourselves) within the frames of our everyday life. For some of us – teachers, actors or people working on TV – this shifting between different roles and the different kinds of characters we are presenting to others in different situations is supposedly a natural and familiar part of everyday life. For others, the changing kinds of performances we make in different contexts are carried out more unconsciously and therefore seem gloomier (even though most people certainly have a feeling that they act differently towards their children at home than towards their colleagues at work). When shifting between these ritual states, we also shift our attention to the surrounding environment, and in this way our own behaviour changes its character. The distinction between different kinds of ritual states in everyday life concerns how we think about ourselves in relation to our present social and material surroundings. Goffman defines a region as:

any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception. Regions vary, of course, in the degree to which they are bounded and according to the media of communication in which the barriers to perception occur. Thus thick glass panels, such as are found in broadcasting control rooms, can isolate a region aurally but not visually, while an office bounded by beaver-board partitions is closed off in the opposite way. (Goffman 1959:106)

Goffman, an anthropologist and a sociologist mostly well-known known for his interests in the play of social interaction in human life, was apparently also well aware of the material dimension of communication in everyday life. The constitution of the region, in itself a social construction, is therefore intimately connected to the material conditions of the physical room in which it is constructed. These conditions hence create space and frames, of and for human behaviour and social interaction. Consequently, the material conditions of space, or what might be regarded as the actual place within which the communicative act takes place, are important for how the human interaction (also when there is just one individual occupying the particular space) is developed. In his later work *Frame analysis* (1974), Goffman points at the social and material settings surrounding human behaviour, constructing opportunities for particular kinds of performances. He also points at the ‘keyings’ of a situation, subtle indications that a state of an act has fundamentally changed (ibid.: 40-83). A slight change in behaviour may be the key that tells the spectators that a playful wrestling game has suddenly turned into a hostile fight. This change in behaviour may be hard to articulate clearly, but obvious to all participants in the event. As Goffman’s theory of frames and ‘keyings’ was developed in a society and an everyday structure less permeated by the media, his focus lies upon the social interaction of people, and on the lack of interaction in the back regions. Today, from the horizon of our modern media culture, it is important to keep two things in mind.

First, we must consider that our everyday media cannot be regarded as empty artefacts, without cultural meaning. There is always a kind of cultural relation constructed between the television, radio or book and the individual involved in consuming it. John B. Thompson refers to this cultural relation as ‘mediated quasi interaction’, as a way of experiencing an interaction with the media although no two-way communication is actually taking place (Thompson 1995:84 ff). Another dimension of this is articulated by French philosopher Bruno Latour, who argues that our everyday artefacts must be regarded as agents in relation to which we measure and create our daily behaviour. This assumption takes as its standpoint the fact that human culture has never been constructed around social interaction alone. Instead, and in opposition to almost all other living

beings, human beings have always relied on material artefacts to communicate and express meaning as well as to orient in the world and to understand the milieu in which they are acting within (Latour 1992, 1991/1993).

Second, we must also consider the fact that the material conditions of everyday life can be easily reconstructed by adding or changing the media environment that accompanies them. Thus, the materiality of a situation can be subtly changed, for example by turning the radio on and off, and hence the possibilities to act, to embody a signifying practice within the situation is also changed. In everyday life in modern culture, these kinds of material 'keyings' are often mediated; signifying practices are accompanied by particular kinds of media moods, constructing everyday understanding about places (cf., Connell & Gibson 2000:6).

The frame of a situation is, thus, an abstract category and may be useful as an analytical tool when examining every kind of social situation. A particular situation acquires its characteristics in relation to many different factors: whether it is a private or a public event, whether the particular room in which it takes place has been constructed for public or private occasions and the kind of people the situation involves at the moment. In this respect, spaces can have many different kinds of profiles, including and excluding individuals by particular means (Stockfelt 1988:148 ff). The profile of a situation creates frames for what kind of behaviour is appropriate in the particular situation and the different kinds of exclusivity generate norms that the individuals involved in it must consider. Personal exclusivity excludes individuals according to who they are, and the home as arena is a place with a high degree of personal exclusivity (cf., Frykman & Löfgren 1987, Campbell 1987). If you were to find someone making breakfast in your kitchen who does not belong to your family, you would certainly be utterly surprised. Acting like you are at home in someone else's home (for example changing the TV channel without asking first) is a severe transgression of the exclusivity of the situation. The same kinds of mechanisms are also developed in classrooms, offices and other places where access is delimited on a personal basis. Social exclusivity instead restricts access to a particular place by regulating behaviour. A strong profile creates strict rules for behaviour, like churches, cinemas, mortuaries or concert halls. A less strict profile is that of a shopping mall, where it is regarded odd, but not at all forbidden, to speak to yourself (which is not accepted at church or during a classical music concert). Stockfelt argues that music, and thus other kinds of media milieus, can be used to create different kinds of exclusivity. In the shopping mall, easy listening music is played to embrace many different kinds of music tastes that can be represented by the potential customers. When obscure avant-garde pop music is played in a tiny music club, the medium is likewise used to profile the place, but in this case to exclude those who are not welcome. The media is thus involved in creating the degree of social exclusivity of a place and thereby its frame. But different kinds of profiles, at the same time, also create different kinds of spaces for media use. Listening to a piece of music or watching a particular film is a different kind of act depending on whether it takes place alone at home or in the company of others at a music or film festival.

Thus, it is clear that media use and other kinds of human behaviour are profoundly dependent upon the frames that regulate the situations in which the media are used, but also that these frames are changeable. The frame of a situation is important for the way we use the media (texts, genres, etc.). By introducing a new element into the situation (another human being, a different kind of media content), the character of the situation may be fundamentally changed, and thereby also the frames of social acts and interac-

tion we have to consider in order to stay within the social norms of behaviour. These elements can be materially (the radio is switched off to mark that breakfast time is over) or mentally defined (“Now let’s do something useful”). The changing frames also change our possibilities to act individually and socially.

Goffman’s theory of the presentation of self was developed to analyse everyday life in a broad sense, and was also developed in a society where mediated communication was a less fundamental part of human life and interaction. Accordingly, some important aspects of Goffman’s theory ought to be discussed. It is impossible to neglect the impact of the media on human interaction and experiences of the self, as we, for example, know that modern media have loosened up our former ‘natural’ relation to, and ties between, time and space (cf., McLuhan 1964/1999, Meyrowitz 1985, Thompson 1995, Giddens 1990). But less substantial aspects are also important for our understanding of modern life. According to Goffman, the distinction between front and back regions describes two kinds of regions that differ both geographically and in terms of function. They differ geographically because the back region was formerly understood as a place where the individual could retire, withdraw from the eyes of others and from the behaviour demands created by the public sphere (even though back regions, Goffman points out, could also be used by groups of people preparing a common performance). Today, however, the back region – the place where the individual can withdraw and rest, prepare for future actions on the former arena or engage in intimate matters – can at any moment be produced with support from modern media. Walkmans, Ipods, mobile phones all construct barriers between the individual and the world around him; within these barriers, private spaces and, in some respects, back regions are developed. The blurring of the private and the public, and the back and front regions, due to modern media has opened our eyes to many intimate details of the private lives of others. Another aspect of this is the individualization of culture exemplified by the extended use of mobile phones. Many different kinds of media consumption activities are today taking place in solitude, which certainly affects the user’s behaviour. Although it would be naïve to believe that loneliness demolishes all social rules and all norms for behaviour, it is still interesting to focus upon the kinds of rules of behaviour that solitude creates. What kinds of frames do we construct for ourselves? And how do we organize space when no one can see us?

Jussi, Per-Fredric and Sarah: Everyday Lives at Home

I will deepen this discussion and go further into the analysis by putting forward the three individuals under study and their media use in everyday life, particularly regarding the relation between work and leisure at home. These three individuals are all representatives of the new labour market in that they work with different kinds of symbolic meaning production, all of them have flexible working hours (at least in relation to an employer – none of them actually have one) and a great deal of independence regarding how to organize work time and leisure time in everyday life. Despite these apparent similarities, the analysis will also point at some evident differences between them. The most interesting part of the analysis will focus upon how the media, as they are included in creating the frame of (everyday) space, contribute to creating a symbolic room within everyday life in which a particular kind of behaviour is appropriate at the same time as other kinds are not. The persons in focus here are now to be presented.

Jussi is an autodidact artist in his early fifties, a married man and the father of three girls (aged 2-10 years old). He lives together with his family in a small house in the countryside near the sea. Ever since he decided to become an artist in his early twenties, he has managed to survive economically on his art and therefore few other (job-related) activities compete for his time. Sometimes he must leave home to overview some part of his artistic production (for example, his sculptures are moulded in a foundry a day-trip away) or to discuss exhibitions with museums, art galleries, etc. But most of the time he stays at home to work in his newly built studio in the garden, just outside the family house.

Per-Fredric, a single man in his early thirties, works as a freelance journalist. He lives in an apartment in a suburb just outside a larger city. Per-Fredric is an educated pharmacist who added journalism to his education and thereafter changed his profession. One day a week he still works in a pharmacy, but the rest of the week he stays at home to develop his freelancing. Per-Fredric's apartment has a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom, a living room and a room where he works. He enters the office every morning at about nine o'clock, takes a proper break at noon (when he eats and listens to the radio for approximately an hour) and then returns to his office and stays there until six o'clock in the evening.

Sarah is in her mid-twenties and studies humanities at a university. She shares an apartment together with a female friend, but also spends many nights at her boyfriend's, and sometimes he stays over at her place. Nowadays, Sarah's time is more strictly structured than before, as the university course she is taking at the moment contains more lectures, seminars, a larger amount of group projects, etc. than her former courses. Still, this does not mean more than a maximum of two hours a day. Besides this, she usually works as a waitress in a restaurant during weekend lunches and sometimes (but more seldom) also on weekday evenings. As Sarah and her friend share a very small apartment, the few rooms must make space for many different tasks. Sarah's friend sleeps in the kitchen, and Sarah's bedroom is at once living room, dining room, TV room, and also the place where Sarah works. She usually spends a few hours at the university every day and then goes home to study in the afternoon.

In the following text, the role of the media in creating frames of work space and leisure space at home will be discussed with the three individuals as a point of departure. The core of the analysis will be the ritual aspect of the media in creating frames between work and leisure in both material and mental respects, i.e. constructing particular work rooms and leisure spaces in everyday life, and also the creation of mental frames of acceptable everyday behaviour. Besides this, the role of the media in the production of everyday regions will also be analysed.

Media Use and Everyday Structure

In a broader perspective, it is easy to acknowledge differences in the overarching structures of the lives of the three individuals. For Jussi, who has young children, the social responsibility for the children and the rest of the family is a factor that generates frames for the use of space and time in his everyday life. The times structuring the children's school hours, kindergarten and free-time activities are rarely negotiable, and the rest of the family life must try to adapt to these fixed time spots. Per-Fredric and Sarah have different social situations. Because both of them in some respects live by themselves (although Sarah has a female roommate as well as a boyfriend), their social obligations

at home are less strict. They both live active social lives outside home; they meet many friends, go to the cinema, bars and (more seldom) theatres. Many of these activities take place in the evenings, something that certainly affects their everyday structure. Per-Fredric must make different kinds of considerations in his work; on the one hand, he is dependent on the time structure of those people he is involved with in his work – papers and magazines that he works for, interviewees he needs to get in contact with, etc. On the other hand, he is free to work whenever he wants and could easily write all his articles at night if he felt like it, not least thanks to all the different kinds of information now available 24 hours a day on the Internet. Because Sarah has regular lectures and other school-oriented activities, her time is, in a way, more structured. But these activities do not usually require more than two hours a day, leaving her considerable free time to spend as she pleases. The time structure of these two people shows an interesting difference. Sarah tries to create spaces for particular kinds of activities, TV viewing, for example, is only allowed after five o'clock in the afternoon, as the earlier hours are dedicated to studying. Nevertheless, she feels an obligation even during the evenings to engage in her university literature, and often has to read for another hour to be able to watch television without feeling guilty. Per-Fredric organizes his temporal life more strictly. He has firm working hours (from nine a.m. to six p.m. and a proper lunch break at noon), even though he admits that he sometimes leaves his office earlier in the afternoon to watch the American sitcom *The Simpsons* or other similar TV shows. His evenings are free, available for private social activities.

The frames of everyday life and the symbolic rooms they create, thus, must be understood as constituting, in many respects, a mental aspect. Jussi, who due to his family really strives not to work during evenings (i.e., after six o'clock p.m.) or at weekends, has severe difficulties separating his artistry from other parts of his everyday life (he often returns to the studio after dinner and transforms the weekend family trips into occasions when he can gather material for his paintings and sculptures). Per-Fredric finds it much easier to turn work off at the end of the day, even though his profession too is a fundamental part of his identity and a great source of pride.

Media Changing as an Everyday Ritual

For all three persons discussed here, home has a core position in everyday life, as it is an arena for work as well as rest, social gathering and moments of peace and quiet. Home is a place marked by a strong profile of personal exclusivity in that not just anyone can walk into it or be expected to appear there. For those who work at home, like Jussi, Per-Fredric and Sarah do, this strong exclusivity is loosened up. Jussi is visited by customers, collaborators, journalists and others, all of whom are invited to come to his studio at home. Per-Fredric's telephone is used for private as well as job-related phone calls, and Sarah and her university mates regularly meet at home for their group projects. The profile of the home is thus changeable and dependent on the present activity taking place within its four walls as well as on the people who are spending time there at the moment.

To make everyday life work and to provide opportunities for all of life's necessary tasks, the three individuals all have their own ways of making space for the diverse spheres of the everyday, where the media are important in the symbolic transformation of the everyday. In even more symbolically significant events – marriages, baptisms, etc. – particularly symbolically loaded artefacts are used, e.g. the ring, the holy water, etc.,

that state beyond doubt that a ritual transgression has taken place, from one state to another (Turner 1977, Rothenbuhler 1998:Chapter 1, Couldry 2003:22-25). In a more ordinary situation, the media can also be used for a parallel transgression of space from one kind of profile and into another.

For the three individuals presented here, the most important everyday transgression deals with the relation between work and leisure. The transformation is shown in three different shapes, three dimensions that can be combined in different ways and with individual variations: one geographic dimension, one intermedia dimension and one intramedia dimension. The geographic dimension is the truly material dimension; how the room or rooms are constructed at home and how moving from one room to another means leaving leisure time for work time. The intermedia dimension describes how the changes in media accompaniments are symbolic signs involved in the transformation of everyday space. The intramedia dimension, finally, deals with the changing of channels, programmes or genres within the same transformation.

Geographic Dimension

The geographic dimension is evidently dependent upon the actual character of the physical milieu. Jussi might be said to have the most manifest division of everyday spaces (but not of everyday spheres, as he is the one respondent who is the least capable of separating work from other parts of his life). He has his studio in a separate house in the garden, where most of his artistic production takes place (other parts; moulding sculptures and constructing frames for his paintings are still made in the basement of the family house). Jussi's workday naturally begins about eight o'clock in the morning when the rest of the family leaves home for work, school and kindergarten. Jussi usually watches the morning news on TV, first in his home and later on when he has moved to his studio. The studio is the base of his work even though he sometimes has to run back and forth to check the hot wax pots on the stove. The studio is within sight of the family home and within reach for the rest of the family. Nevertheless, it is a separate building and entering it includes a true physical transformation.

In Per-Fredric's apartment, one of the rooms is his office. His home includes a great many kinds of media: books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, video and DVD-player, telephone and mobile phone, computer and different kinds of computer games. There is a clear division between work media and leisure media, as the TV, video- and DVD-player, radio, daily paper, magazines and books are gathered in the living room, bedroom and the kitchen, while the work-related media (scientific magazines, books, a tape recorder and his computer) are in his office. The computer, on which he also listens to the radio while working and plays games in his spare time, is thus the only transgressing medium (besides his telephone) in Per-Fredric's everyday life. His workdays also involve a physical movement, as his morning routine includes eating breakfast in the kitchen but also watching the morning news on TV in the living room. He works from nine o'clock in the morning in his office where the computer, tape recorder and all his papers are gathered. Per-Fredric takes a proper break at noon and then leaves for the kitchen (and listens to the public service talk channel on radio while eating). Moving from one room to another creates and loosens up frames for acceptable behaviour, time for work and time for leisure.

Sarah, who recently moved into a one-room flat together with a female friend, cannot make any such manoeuvres. Movements in space are prohibited by the restricted

space available. Another important fact is that the many places in the apartment already have a strict profile, which diminishes the possibility for other activities (as the bed, for example, is a place for rest and sleep). Sarah longs to have a computer at home, something she is used to have, and perhaps a computer would work as a marker of a proper work place, which she currently lacks. Instead she is referred to different spots in the apartment when studying: the dining table, her bed, or even the floor. As a university student, Sarah could very well spend her days at the university library, something she dislikes as the (alleged) silence and sounds are far too annoying. She does most of her studying at home, or more seldom at a café.

Intermedia Dimension

The intermedia dimension adds a symbolic dimension to the physical movements in the room, and with help from the media transforms space from leisure to work. Both Per-Fredric and Jussi manifestly use the media in this way. Jussi watches the morning news on TV both at home before leaving for the studio and when he has entered the studio but not really started to work yet. This short period of time is an everyday liminal condition in between work and leisure, as the material surroundings connote work (the studio) but the media surrounding connotes leisure (the television).¹ Work truly begins when the TV is switched off and the radio instead turned on. Jussi usually starts his working day with the public service talk radio channel on, a channel he is very fond of. Per-Fredrik has a comparable morning ritual; he too strengthens the physical movement by changing the media; switching off the TV, turning on the radio (although the public service classics channel). Sarah, who finds it hard to concentrate in the wrong kind of sound environment or in silence, does not accompany her studying with any kind of media. On the other hand, she accentuates the transformation of her home from leisure space into work place by folding up the daily paper. Sarah usually takes a lunch break and (re)reads the morning paper after her lecture has finished. She describes that reading as “a legitimate way to keep off the books”. After that, no other kinds of media (besides university literature) are allowed until five o’clock in the afternoon. Even though she sometimes finds it hard to concentrate and cannot study with expected efficiency, this period of time is reserved for work, and her home is not transformed back into a private place until five o’clock when the leisure media are allowed again. Despite this, Sarah is not as strict as the other two when making time barriers in everyday life. She often feels that she has not worked hard enough and tries to study for another hour in the evening to ease her bad conscience. Only after that can she fully enjoy her TV viewing.

Intramedia Dimension

The intramedia dimension works in the same way. Jussi has the most evident transformation in the form of a three-step model where the physical movement into the studio is emphasized by a changing of media (from television to radio). He finally enters his professional self by also changing radio stations; the talk-oriented public service channel is changed into the classics channel, whose instrumental sound is regarded as less disturbing. This intramedia change of space indicates that he is now completely on duty (after this he also dissolves time structure and takes no breaks, not even a lunch break).

All three of them also use the media to retransform space from work space to leisure space and time from work time to spare time again, and the television is the marker of recreation for all of them. Jussi, who usually stays in his studio until six o’clock in the

afternoon, changes back to his morning media habits when television broadcasts the afternoon news at five p.m. There he gets an intermediary hour in between work and leisure. Per-Fredric turns on the six o'clock news on television, and Sarah turns on any TV programme at five to mark that today's work has been done and that evening time has now started.

Everyday Framing

The transformation of Goffman's temporal ritual conditions in everyday life has here been manifested in terms of physical movements and changes in different media forms and channels. We have also seen how these acts are 'keyings' in defining situations for particular purposes. These ritually organized states can be understood as regions in which we are determined to act and interact in certain ways that are defined by the fundamental characteristics of the situation (the frame), rules regulating performance (the kind of profile) and the social norms of behaviour in that particular situation. The media, thus, contribute to framing the everyday in at least two ways: both as material artefacts that, in various combinations, structure space and the way we act in it, and as symbolically significant signs that offer and restrain different kinds of social behaviour. This perspective also points to the question of how the media help to profile space, i.e. how norms of behaviour are linked to certain mediatized milieus.

To further understand the significance of the media in organizing everyday life, we will here take a closer look at how the organization of the physical room, together with the media, allows certain kinds of acting. Because the situation is defined by the frame, constructed by significant characteristics and elements as well as the profile concerning rules and regulations for behaviour, it is important to look both at the material conditions of communication as well as the cultural conventions restraining our thoughts and behaviour. Jussi's, for example, is constructed to make way for certain kinds of behaviour, but not others. His work room is actually a small house of its own, constructed with an open inner roof that creates a particular kind of open space familiar from the art world (museums, art galleries, etc.). It has also been decorated according to a familiar artistic norm; walls, roof and the wooden floor all painted in white, very few pieces of furniture – an armchair, a small pedestal painted in white and with some flowers in a vase, the television on its stand (the mentioned radio was never seen), a bookshelf with a few (artistic) books and a slanting drawing desk. Another dominating part of the studio is the window that covers a large part of the long side wall, letting nature come close; horses in a muddy pasture with a glimpse of the sea behind them, all drenched in sunshine. This place only has room for art and the artist. Everything else has been taken away, and it is easy to imagine how the studio only allows the creative artistic work it has been built for. Newspapers, magazines and books (except for a small number of art books) are excluded from this milieu. The television is the only odd item, but as we have seen its primary function is as an intermediary sign between work time and leisure time. In this ascetic environment, there is no stationary telephone (although Jussi carries his mobile phone with him), and words and singing are also forbidden (by the change from talk radio to instrumental classic radio).

Per-Fredric's occupation as a freelance journalist is far more dependent on new media technology. He is online all day long, and spends a great deal of time talking on the phone. The media also allow regular daily contacts with his friends; one morning ritual is to phone a few friends, who just like him are self-employed, and to check some in-

teresting websites (mostly news and football sites). He also checks the news on the web repeatedly during the day. Per-Fredric's office is not detached from the outside world like Jussi's, but has a constant link to the surroundings through the media. Whereas Jussi's studio is sacral and free from connections with the surrounding world, Per-Fredric's is filled with media technology and ways to communicate with others. His profession is also much more dependent on contacts with others, and even though Per-Fredric has created his own time constraints for his working hours, these borders are more blurred than Jussi's, as he constantly leaves his job mentally (to check the news, search for football scores, etc.). The profile of his office is thus defined by its media equipment: a computer, a telephone with recording ability, papers and files with work material. This media milieu is much unlike the other rooms in the apartment, which contain daily papers, video- and DVD-player, fiction literature, etc. and allow for different kinds of (media) behaviour.

In Sarah's home, a small number of square metres have to hold many different activities, and thereby the room (the one and only in the apartment) determines behaviour less strictly. The apartment is neatly cleaned and everything seems to stand in its correct place (perhaps because they had only lived there for a short period of time). Sara's (work) room, thus, does not have the clear profile of labour that Jussi and Per-Fredric have created with help from (and lack of) certain kinds of media technology, making space for particular kinds of acting. Neither can she emphasize the ritual transformations of her everyday by moving physically from one room to another. The only room in the apartment holds many different functions; TV, radio, video, all kinds of literature and newspapers, and soon also a computer are ever-present and only her mental structures set the limits. Hence Sarah's organization of time is less strict than that of the others, and her leisure media use and time for work are often blurred (as she often feels obligated to study during evenings as well).

Thus, the media, and their different kinds of texts, are connected by the respondents to different kinds of socially constructed demands that to various degrees are related to work and leisure. Different combinations of media artefacts in the everyday lives of the respondents accordingly create certain kinds of socially accepted behaviour. These preconceptions are expressed by imaginations of different kinds of media (texts), but are also organized in relation to the surrounding social context. This is most evident in the strong connection between television, leisure and lack of duties – even though Jussi's and his wife's strict regulation of their children's TV viewing also sheds light on other moral notions of everyday life (cf., Morley 1986, Jensen et al. 1993, Andersson & Jansson 1998). Sarah's complicated relation to reading – the fact that she both enjoys it and finds it legitimate, but at the same time feels guilty about reading and not studying her university literature – also illustrates this.

Media Use at Home in Post-industrial Everyday Life

What does the above tell us about the role of the media in constructing post-industrial everyday life? For the three respondents, the media are involved in everyday life construction in at least two ways. On the one hand, they create boundaries in physical space. By combining different kinds of media in different material rooms, certain norms of behaviour are recommended. Per-Fredric's different media milieus in the rooms in his apartment thus make space for social behaviour. Another example is the lack of mediated links to the outside world that signifies Jussi's studio and at the same time keeps

distracting thoughts away. These combinations and constructions of mediated space thus make way for certain kinds of social behaviour, but they also create borders between the symbolic rooms of everyday life. By accentuating transformations in space as a ritually significant sign, as in the everyday lives of Jussi, Per-Fredric and Sarah, spaces are opened for different everyday ritual states: work, play, rest, etc.

Besides this, the media also work as links between the material rooms at home as well as to the world outside (cf., Larsen 2000:165-190). The continuous use of websites, e-mail correspondence, telephone and web radio that signifies Per-Fredric's work-days in that way keeps him in constant contact with the outside world, just as his stationary telephone also transgresses borders within the household (as his private phone calls are linked by the same numbers as his official calls). The symbolic rooms of everyday life are also linked in a similar manner; Jussi's liminal news viewing in his studio is an example of such a connection, as are Sarah's difficulties reading fiction literature because it makes her feel guilty about not studying.

Everyday life in post-industrial society, as illustrated by the three individuals analysed here, is a socially peculiar situation. According to Goffman's theory of presentation of self in everyday life (1959), the frames of a situation are mainly created through social interaction with other people. It is in relation to other individuals and social groups that we construct our selves and thereby chose to act and perform in particular ways (see also Giddens 1991). The above analysis, however, points at situations that are framed, and thereby profiled, by individuals acting in (physical) solitude. By using external factors, such as various combinations of media artefacts and texts and the material construction of space, the correct framing of a situation (and its correct behaviour) is produced despite this solitude.

This framing, thus, is constructed in different ways by the respondents; Jussi and Per-Fredric act for example in relation to a manifest material frame, where physical boundaries within the home contribute to symbolic frames between work and leisure. But there are also symbolic keys to the frame of the situation, and thereby to our understanding and judgement of it, here accentuated by different kinds of media. The intramedia changes that Jussi uses to gradually transform his home from leisure to work in the morning (and back again in the afternoon) constitute such a keying, just as Per-Fredric's afternoon session with *The Simpsons* confirms a definitive and automatic end of his working day.

The mediated profile of behaviour within the material as well as the symbolic rooms thus regulate the behaviour of the three individuals even when no one else can see them. Thus, the modern separation of public and private spheres does not mean, even on a microanalytical level within the household, that the private sphere – which is perhaps most private when we are also alone – can be characterized by any kind of lack of social norms (cf., Elias 1994).

The symbolic significance of the media in everyday life, thus, maintains as well as loosens up the strict boundaries between private and public spheres in modern everyday life. The maintenance of boundaries, thus, is accentuated by these three individuals' desire to keep strict temporal as well as spatial borders between work and leisure in everyday life. The linking character of the media at the same time contributes to loosening up these borders by offering micro-pauses during work time, as does Per-Fredric's computer or his telephone.

An important difference is nevertheless accentuated between the organization of work of the three persons analysed here and pre-industrial production when everyday life (as

well as society at large) lacked a separation of the public and the private. In the above analysis, strict boundaries between private and public, between work and leisure at home, are accentuated (even though they are not always strictly followed by the respondents). These boundaries are organized individually, as are their accompanying norms for acceptable behaviour that organizes life within the walls of home.

Note

1. Here the more subtle version limioid (liminal-like) could have been used instead (Couldry 2003:33). My choice to still use the term liminal here does not indicate any mixing of the religious and the everyday ritual.

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