pointed out, e.g. the centrality of human labor for networking (Downey) and the opposite (complementary) automation of algorithms (Gillespie).

The fertile encounter between STS and media studies is evident through concepts like information labor (vs media broadcast/production); power users or superusers (vs designers/users); calculated publics (vs media audience). Such concepts emerge exactly from media technology as a cross-field convergence.

The book as a knowledge enterprise attempts to re-think about given classifications and infrastructures of disciplinary knowledge in two fields of established scholarship (namely, STS and media studies). As such, it is very much attuned with an STS sensibility, summarized by concepts like "mutual constitution", "co-construction" and "heterogeneous networks".

Indeed, as a scholar trained in Communication Studies then focused on STS, my critical remark after reading the book is that it embraces more of STS lessons than of Media Studies, despite the declared aim to make the two fields fertilize each other. This is an outcome that can be interpreted in different ways– it could be Media Studies scholars are more open "to be hybridized", or more cosmopolitan than provincial in their scholarship. It could also be that this STS-driven hybridation is the inevitable result of electing heterogeneous materiality (in an STS vein) as the starting and entry point of most contributions to the volume.

However, this leaves the main merit of the book untouched. It soundly succeeds in showing that materiality matters and is there, going beyond and against the resistant myth of immateriality and de-materialization as univocal, irresistible hallmarks of digital media technologies, eventually bringing the myth itself in the picture and connecting it to wires and cables.

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Nick Couldry
Sociologia dei nuovi media. Teoria sociale e pratiche mediali digitali,
Milano, Pearson, 2015, pp. 288 [italian translation of *Media, Society, World. Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*, 2012]

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One of the most interesting debates in the field of Media Studies is about which role social theory plays. This debate stems from the critique of postmodernism and the disappearance of the social that usually afflicts cultural studies and thereby Media Studies. Trying to solve this problem, Nick Couldry makes a very delicate as much as fascinating intellectual move: the proposal of a socially oriented media theory (9). This proposal

is very important from different points of view. Moreover, it is especially relevant that such proposal can find his way into the Italian debate about Media Studies thanks to this translation of a work of one of the most interesting authors of the great Media Studies' school deriving from the researches of David Morley and Roger Silverstone.

Couldry's proposal is very important, first of all, because media in social theory have always had a marginal role, usually considered as a useful addendum of wide social processes. A demand for a sociology with the media, and not anymore – or not only – a sociology of the media, is emerging more and more, in the same way in which, within the tension between culture and society, there is the need of a cultural sociology and not simply a sociology of culture (Alexander 2003). Secondly, the need to use the ability of social theory to go deep into media processes is getting stronger and stronger, because the study of media never has had the social theory it deserves.

In order to outline this socially oriented media theory, Couldry tries to define a social ontology based on two key concepts: the social practices and the media. The centrality of social practices makes the point inside the current debates on the importance of social phenomena considered as tools people use to makes sense of the world. Couldry is aware of the limits of a solely performative approach, thereby he uses as a theoretical support the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour and John Law to describe in which way social practices become stable and acquire an ontological solidity (56). From this perspective, the idea of considering mobile apps as a way in which this stabilization process works results interesting (57). Going further in this analysis, Couldry tries to make a taxonomy of the practices distinguish between simple forms – "searching", "showing", "presencing", "archiving" (57-69) – and complex forms: "keeping up with the news", "commentary", "screening out," and "keeping all channels open" (69-74). In this continuous research of a social ontology, media are considered as a universe of social practices (59) that became important thanks to what Couldry calls "the myth of the mediated centre" (88). According to this point of view, society would be constituted of a core of truth, a natural centre, and the media would have a privileged relationship to this centre. This privileged relationship is transformed in a series of media rituals namely condensed forms of action reinforcing the myth of the mediated centre (89). Following this argument, the media are neither artifacts, nor languages, but rituals or schematic actions recognizable in their variability (94), organized around categorical differences – like Durkheim's distinctions between sacred and profane. A classical example in this sense is the concept of the "media event", that from being exceptional – following Dayan and Katz's (1992) definition – becomes ordinary (103). To demonstrate how rituals and their categories are understandable in a wider social landscape, Couldry makes a detailed analysis of the celebrity culture (105-110).

Once described the key elements of his original social ontology, the

discourse begins to tackle some of the delicate issues of cultural studies.

The first is undoubtedly the question of the power of the media, a central theme of media studies. Keeping up with the tradition of cultural studies, the power of the media's concept is intended as symbolic power (115), however, in order to maintain the centrality of practices, power is defined as control of a property built by the media themselves. The concept used here is that of "hidden injuries" (118-123), or that sensation of absence created and resolved by the media themselves using the idea that only what appears in the media has value (119). Once Couldry has clarified the hidden injuries concept, the chapter analyzes one of the most studied issues in media studies, with relevant sociological consequences: reality media, their potential to cure the hidden injuries (126), to exercise pedagogical authority and to create social facts in their own image (131). Through this hypothesis, Couldry is able to describe in term of symbolic power the phenomena of celebrity and perceived criminality, as well as the role of gatekeeper played by search engines.

The second question is the relationship between political power and the internet, a great classic in the field of internet studies. The analysis begins with a critique of scholars considered as canonical for this issue: Henry Jenkins and his concept of convergence culture (2006), Yochai Benkler and his idea of commons-based peer productions (2006), Manuel Castells and his analysis based on the dichotomy between the net and the self (1996). What remains of this critique is the definition of the relationship between political power and the internet along three axes: the authority (as political legitimacy), evaluation (assessment of politics) and framing (the world built by politics; 156). From these results, Couldry begins a description of the impact of the digital media on new political actors, how the former can help the latter to have a role in the political debate intended as a form of organized (democratic) power, and in which digital media cannot change well-stabilized trends as the scepticism of young people towards politics.

Couldry's discourse starts to show its limits when he discusses the issue of media culture and media ethics. Media cultures are seen as ways in which media are appropriated by non-Western cultures. At the root of this process there is the idea that media cultures are thickenings of trans-local processes that are locally specific (211-212). In order to understand why there is this process of thickenings, Couldry uses the perspective of needs. Media cultures are shaped by a variety of needs such as economic, ethnic, political, religious, social, leisure and recognition related ones. Considering that the variability of media cultures is based on needs is a quite serious limitation, firstly because this idea – classical in Maslow's theory and in the uses and gratifications approach – lets the concept of social structure come back, making the explanation based on practice weaker, secondly because the list of needs is confusing and the categories ought to be mutually exclusive – how can we distinguish the political need from the need of social recognition?

The media ethics is another major weakness of the book. Despite the attempt to take distances from the ethics of journalism (245) and despite a fine discussion of the difference between the ethical systems of Kant and Aristotle, media ethics is intended as an ethical act with media, or media as ethically significant practices. This approach would not be a problem if it were not translated into an ethic of communication, which is something completely different. The question addressed is therefore articulated in the terms of what are the virtues that help to make good media practices. The response is: accuracy, sincerity, caring and knowing what injustices to avoid. However, nothing is said about the consequences of the embedding of values in technological artifacts, such as – for example – the value of sharing on social media platforms such as wikis. The great limit is that Couldry is not talking about the media ethics – in which way the media are shaping the values – but about media morality – what is a good and bad behaviour – and this is an important misunderstanding.

Couldry's work is very important for two different reasons.

The first reason is that it is an attempt to build a social ontology which refuses both realism and radical constructivism, so that it does not lose sight of the importance of processes such as the institutionalization that goes beyond individual practices. In fact, as for cases related to institutionalization, Actor Network Theory as well as a systematic recourse to Emile Durkheim (1912) are used, despite in the preface a reference to David Morley and Roger Silverstone works was promised.

The second reason is related to the fact that the book shows the need to rethink the centrality of media within social processes, knowing that today it is impossible to think about social processes detached from the role of media.

However, the excessive consideration of mass media – mainly television and print – against social media can be considered a limitation of Couldry's discourse. The technological component of social media is certainly not a circumstantial element, so that it is the point on which Science and Technology Studies would have a say, especially in relation to the social component and the link with the values associated with the use of technology.

There is also an unexpected value of the book. His constant reference to the British media culture, television and the internet, makes perfectly understandable the cultural context in which one of the great recent technological dystopian television series like *Black Mirror* (Charlie Booker, Channel 4, 2011-2014) was conceived.

Despite the mentioned limits, which in any case provide relevant grounds for reflection, it is necessary to underline again the value of the introduction of this book within the Italian debate. Mainly for two reasons: a) first, methodological ones: the attempt to bring STS and Internet studies closer to media studies carried out by Couldry has the merit to create a dialogue among different research traditions which, although share a common ground, are now extremely specialized sectors and, ex-

cept for media studies, they also find it hard to get established in Italy; b) secondly, theoretical ones: contemporary society is heavily constructed also through media, however, often the issue of the ontological status of communication and of its media technologies does not receive the attention it deserves, especially in Italy where the reflection on communication intended as social fact is very much influenced by the reflection on cultural industry.

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David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (eds.)
Keywords in Sound, Durham, Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 272

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Sound studies is a newly emergent interdisciplinary field. *Keywords in Sound* is an attempt to address some of the foundational debates underlying sound studies as well as provide thought-provoking essays on different topics to do with sound. The theme if anything is anthropological: to capture sound in its multifaceted nature globally and historically and to get away from and challenge the rather narrow conception and examples of sound prevalent in the standard Western canon. This is a promising approach. Even an entry on a staid topic like "the Body" is given new resonance through Deborah Kapchan's essay which describes a sufi singer in North Morocco and how she experiences her sounding body. In this rendition sound becomes part of a new turn to ontology. The ontological turn and posthumanism indeed provide the sounding boards for many