



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## **Blogging about climate-friendly soups and twittering about eco-cleaning: Practicing environmental information in social media**

Haider, Jutta

2011

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Haider, J. (2011). *Blogging about climate-friendly soups and twittering about eco-cleaning: Practicing environmental information in social media*. Abstract from *Information: Interactions and Impact (i3)*, 2011, Aberdeen, United Kingdom.

*Total number of authors:*

1

### **General rights**

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00



Jutta Haider  
Senior lecturer, Postdoctoral research fellow  
Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences  
Lund University, Sweden  
jutta.haider@kultur.lu.se

Abstract for presentation at 'Information: interaction and impact', Department of Information Management, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK. 20-23 June 2011.

---

## **Blogging about climate-friendly soups and twittering about eco-cleaning: Practising environmental information in social media**

### **Introduction**

This paper discusses construction, production and distribution of environmental information in social media. More precisely, the focus is on people's accounts of their everyday live practices aimed at leading what are considered (more) 'environmentally friendly' lives in social media. In these often short accounts certain sets of everyday life practices are continuously aligned with environmental destruction and protection. This paper seeks to establish how through the repeated reproduction of these alignments situated information on the environment is constructed and made available. Furthermore, it asks if this could contribute to our understanding of what makes environmental information meaningful and what it could imply for our framing of information practices as productive as tools for change. Studies of practices are currently a highly topical area within information studies (e.g. Kjellberg 2010, Lloyd, 2010, Lloyd & Talja, 2010; McKenzie 2010, Pilerot & Limberg 2011; Savolainen 2008; Sundin & Francke 2009, Veinot 2007). Environmental information on the other hand is a lot less prominent in the field. An indirect aim of this paper is therefore to stimulate a discussion on what information studies can contribute to environmental research.

### **Background**

Environmental information is often abstract and badly anchored in people's experiences in their everyday lives. This contributes to the disconnect that exists for most people between what they know about environmental destruction and protection and how they act (Bartiaux 2008; Haider, in press; Hobson, 2003, Shove 2005). However, when talking about environmental information, the focus is often on information campaigns carried out by various organisations. Peoples' stories and accounts of what they actually do, amongst themselves in non-official contexts, on the other hand, are rarely considered. Yet, these are rich and very diverse sources of environmental information, more precisely of experienced practices that are considered environmentally relevant.

### **Theoretical frame**

The paper unites an interest in two theoretical perspectives. Firstly, it is informed by theories of practices. Here, a starting point is taken in an understanding of practices as series of routine-based activities that are performative (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki 2001). Yet, since in many cases environmentally responsible practices are about doing things in different ways this focus on routines is balanced by considering the disruptive potential of practices of and for change (Knorr-Cetina 2001). Secondly, the paper is guided by an interest in the internet's role in mediating or supporting civic engagement in matters of societal relevance. Here, it draws on the notion of *subactivism*, "small-scale, often individual decisions and actions that have either a political or ethical frame of reference (or both) and remain submerged in everyday life" (Bakardjeva 2009, p.92).

### **Material and method**

The internet is full with suggestions for reducing ones impact on the environment. Many, especially those in social media, are published and produced by people in the course of their everyday and often domestic lives. People use social media to tell about their experiences with acting more environmentally friendly. Very concretely they talk about what they do and sometimes they provide information on how to do as they. Examples are myriad and include practices such as recycling, composting or choosing certain products. Cycling or avoiding flying are on the list, using less electricity, avoiding plastic, eating vegetarian are further examples. The forums for accounting for these practices are many. Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube are used amongst other similar platforms. Often, taking advantage of social media's architectures, different platforms are woven together in diverse ways. Importantly, in these notes and stories information on the environment, its destruction and protection is being created, re-negotiated and spread.

This study is based on a qualitative, interpretative analysis of content, materiality and form of 10 Swedish language blogs, dedicated specifically to aspects of environmentally friendly everyday life. The blogs were selected from a set of 60 interlinked environmental blogs, active during January/February 2011. The analysis looks specifically at accounts of routines related to environmentally relevant practices; how they are established, maintained, questioned or disrupted. This is complemented by an analysis of the mash-up architecture of the blogs. This concerns if and how the integration of other social media applications (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Delicious) works to situate these blogs within a *network of practice* (Brown & Duguid, 2000 p.141-142) and if this can make *subactivist* engagement more visible.

### **Preliminary Results and Discussion**

The short narratives on environmentally relevant practices people generate, publish, comment on and re-distribute in these blogs are a type of personalised environmental information, very concrete and down-to earth. They are inseparable from the story that is being told on the person's daily life and its practices. This is in line with how much of social media works. Most applications build on the idea that everybody is at the centre of its own constantly shifting and growing network – of interest, of social contacts or similar (Baym, 2010). This ego-centredness fosters a strong focus on self-display, which in turn lends itself to making public (in addition to other things) seemingly mundane everyday life practices. Moreover, it is very easy to generate content either from scratch or through copying or forwarding and to link into a web of already existing content and relations. Since search engines, specifically Google, rank social media content high, they are also easily found.

Routinisation is essential to environmentally relevant practices. Likewise, the routinised alignment of certain practices with the environment is indispensable for environmental information to work at all. At the same time, breaking with routines, dismantling and re-arranging practices is what makes them possible in the first place. Hence, the visible *re-normalisation*, accompanied by constant negotiations, is probably what makes the stories told in the blogs studied meaningful and informative, in the most pragmatic of ways.

These accounts of seemingly ordinary, often domestic practices are many things, but at least three are important for our purposes – on different levels: Firstly, for us as researchers they are rich accounts for studying the situated-ness of environmental information. They let us see some of the stories people tell about the strategies through which practices are aligned with environmental protection, but also destruction, and how these are being popularised and routinised. In addition, we can frame them as information in two different ways. They are of course valuable information on enacted environmental protection and destruction that can be found on the web. Furthermore, if we think of information practice as an analytical tool rather than a fixed category, they can also be looked at as stories of information practices. In fact, if we want to think of information practices as being able to be disruptive and involved in

change, it is this that makes them especially relevant. In order to be that, it is necessary to see them as embodied (Lloyd, 2010) and situated (Anderson, 2007; Haider, in press) and I think importantly also as productive.

## References

- Anderson, T.D. (2007), Settings, arenas and boundary objects. Socio-material framings of information practices. *Information Research*, Vol.12 No 4.
- Bakardjieva, M. (2009), Subactivism: Lifeworld and Politics in the Age of the Internet. *Information Society*, Vol. 25 No. 2, 91-104.
- Bartiaux, F. (2008), Does environmental information overcome practice compartmentalisation and change consumers' behaviours? *Journal of Cleaner Production*. Vol.16 No.11, 1170-1180.
- Baym, N.K. (2010), *Personal connections in the digital age*. Polity: Cambridge & Malden.
- Brown, J.S and Duguid, P. (2001). Knowledge and organization: A social-practice perspective. *Organization Science*, Vol.12 No.2, 198-213.
- Haider, J. (in press), The environment on holidays or how a recycling bin informs us on the environment. *Journal of Documentation*.
- Hobson, K. (2003), Thinking habits into action: the role of knowledge and process in questioning household consumption practices. *Local Environment*, Vol.8 No.1, 95-112.
- Kjellberg, S. (2010), *Forskarbloggar: Vetenskaplig kommunikation och kunskapsproduktion i bloggösfären [Scholarly blogs: Scholarly communication and knowledge production in the blogosphere]*, Lund University, Lund.
- Knorr Cetina, K. (2001), Objectual practice. In: Schatzki, T. R.; Knorr Cetina, K. and Savigny von, E. (eds), *The practice turn in contemporary theory*, Routledge, London & New York, 175-188.
- Lloyd, A. (2010), Framing information literacy as information practice. Site ontology and practice theory. *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 66 No. 2, 245-258.
- Lloyd, A and Talja, S. (eds) (2010), *Practising information literacy. Bringing together theories and information literacy practice*, Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, Australia.
- McKenzie, Pamela (2010), Informing relationships: small talk, informing, and relationship building in midwife-woman interaction. *Information Research* , Vol 15 No 1.
- Pilerot, O. & Limberg, L. (2011), Information sharing as a means to reach collective understanding: a study of design scholars' information practices. *Journal of Documentation*. Vol. 67 No.2.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002), Toward a theory of social practices. A development in culturalist theorizing, *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5 No. 2, 243-263.

Savolainen, R. (2008), *Everyday information practices: a social phenomenological perspective*. Scarecrow Press: Lanham, MD.

Schatzki, T. R. (2001), Introduction. Practice theory. In: Schatzki, T. R.; Knorr Cetina, K. and Savigny von, E. (eds), *The practice turn in contemporary theory*, Routledge: London and New York, 1-14.

Shove, E. (2005), Changing human behaviour and lifestyle: a challenge for sustainable consumption? In: *Consumption - Perspectives from ecological economics*. Elgar: Cheltenham, 111-132.

Sundin, O. & Francke, H. (2009), In search of credibility: pupils' information practices in learning environments. *Information Research*. Vol. 14 No 4.

Veinot, T. (2007), The eyes of the power company”: Workplace information practices of a vault inspector. *Library Quarterly*, Vol. 77 No 2, 157-179.