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**BYGGFORSK**  
Norges byggforskningsinstitutt

Siri Nørve

# **The Home - materialized identity and household technology**

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# *The Home - materialized identity and household technology (1)*

## **Introduction**

To be able to say something about technology, I need a frame. In this paper I have chosen the home as this frame, as a frame of understanding the human identity and the mediation of human activity. And the role of technology is the process of mediation.

I see the home, not as a building or something we have, but as something we do - create. We build our homes inside the building. To understand the depth of this process I introduce the concept of the socio-material world (as it is worked out by the Norwegian sociologist Dag Østerberg). He says that the social world is mediated by material things, the products of human work. I see the home as a special socio-material frame, a frame of everyday life and of individualizing process. We produce ourselves in this context of individualizing process. We produce ourselves in this context of the home, and in a way build ourselves to the walls. The product of this labour, the material home, then makes us hold on to our own identity.

My argument may be furthered through referring to another Norwegian sociologist Tom Johansen. He asks: What kind of activities are possible in a material world, in a ready-made world? Are strategic actions the only left? And if so, what are the consequences to the modern identity? To struggle with these issues, I will introduce the topic of aesthetics and social differentiation, leaning on the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. My point is to see the home and material home as an esthetic differentiated, and similarly the identity. This points to the esthetic dimension of housework and the role of the technology in this respect.

As my final point, I will introduce some issues regarding the impact of household technology. Here I discuss the technology in a strictly material sense. What kind of matter are these things, and so they mediate in the field of action in special ways? I do not think so. They give us new possibilities, and this "newness" raised some problems of normative control. The old norms and standards of housework cannot control the situation. But do not blame the technology!

It is possible to study household technology in many different ways. I have chosen to use the home as a frame of reference for such a study. In my view, it is difficult to regard the home as collection of functions or as a purely emotional community. The home concerns meaning in everyday life. It is a vital part of people's life projects. It is the framework surrounding the maintenance of identity and the individuals striving for individuality.

My interest was awakened by Rita Liljestrøms assertion that everyday life is split up into "part-time worlds" and her pointing to the individuals difficulty in harmonizing both her life and her person (Liljestrøm, 1974). And I believe that it is here, in this personal and social project, that the home has something to offer - something that is lacking in the more transient arenas. In this connection I do not regard the home as a purely socially and materially. My reasoning is also based on the work of the Norwegian sociologist Dag Østerberg, concerning the socio-material as an expression of practices, and as a force (Østerberg, 1985). Tom Johansens work within the same tradition has also inspired my study of these problems (Johansen 1985a, 1985b).

## **Identity as play acting - a vulnerable identity**

Let us first consider identity and management in general. My starting point is the symbolic-interactionistic tradition, where I draw a line from Mead to Goffman. This tradition regards identity as being created and maintained within social relationships, as a purely social process - an interspsychic theory. This tradition has many disciples. In this connection I shall comment on one of them, Ervin Goffman. The point of his presentation is that we are not dealing

here with abstract, generalized processes but with situation-determined interactions, which thus resemble the conditions comprising the framework for interaction on the public stage. Goffman's participants are play actors, and the play is acted on the public stage. The settings are fairly open or unspecifically defined. His theory attaches great importance to the participant and the level of practice, and thus less to the system and the norms. In his role theory (Goffman 1961), gives the individual good opportunities to act out his preferences and interests, and reduce the (determining) influence of the normative level on his practices. It is not only the level of practice that is focussed, but the idiosyncratic aspect of the role playing.

He regards the person as floating in a social stream where he is always able to choose, choose whether he will play the game, make a special effort, loose or win, or stay as he is, which would give no profit. But in order to receive confirmation, we are sometimes forced into a game - an open game where the identity is set free. In this way the identity appears to be of one's own choosing - one has oneself chosen what one will take upon oneself through the game. And the identity seems to depend on time and space, because the structural features of society recede into the background. Therefore Goffman is often cited in support of views which regard the individual as disintegrated, as something unreal and without the type of consistency and stability assumed by ordinary reasoning.

This has not been my interpretation. I have rather interpreted Goffman's theory as being a criticism of the role theory's simple and over-directed actors, and the consequent reduction of society's level of practice to the commonplace. In my view, Goffman considered identity as something fundamental, as a sort of motive or stable preference which selects which interests/aspects of ourselves we choose to "sell" in a given situation. As socially educated, and without strong and stable guides in social life, we are forced to act constantly new parts in order to maintain this brittle identity. The social elements of life are not very durable and have to be continually confirmed, because the normative in social life is to some extent conflicting and to some extent unclear.

## The socio-material world

It is here that I believe that the identity creates its home, a home that does not rest on social interaction alone. A setting that is more stable, more distinct, and more easy to control. And it is here that I believe the concept of the social life must be extended.

One of the problems of symbolic interactionism is that it totally ignores that the world is also physical. That the physical frameworks set limits for our practices, and that these frameworks also have an important communicative aspect. The materiality of the world is particularly evident when working with the dwelling or the home, and the whole of this symbolic, familistic project. In this connection, when formulating concepts about the material life, I base my reasoning on the Norwegian tradition, on Østerberg's works (Østerberg, 1975, 1978, 1985).

His starting point is work. The material life comprises the man-made physical surroundings and products - in contrast to nature in which no labour has been exerted. The material life is a product of work, a product that is externalized and objectivized in relation to the working human being. It becomes independent and lives its own life. Østerberg supports perspectives from the classicists of sociology that have been poorly followed up. Durkheim states, for example, that: it is not correct that society consists only of individuals, society also includes the material things that play an important part in our common life. Social truth is sometimes materialized to such a degree that it becomes part of the surroundings. A specific type of architecture, for example, is a social phenomenon. Nevertheless it is just as much embodied in houses, in all kinds of buildings which, when they have first been built, take on an independent reality, unconnected to persons. The same applies to communication lines and means of transport, to the instruments and machines used in industry or in private life ??? It is as if social life is crystallized and tied to material expressions. In this way it has been externalized and influences us from outside. (Østerberg 1978, p. 193).



The material life has two aspects:

- pure materiality, with its mass and inertia. This changes slowly and keeps us firmly tied to what we have already created. It is the invisible force of the completed. It fixes physical limits and conditions for our practices.
- significant - or communicative influence. The material is not only a silent mass, it tells us something. According to Østerberg it consists of different levels of texts - a sedimentary text. All kinds of material express something, but the expression can be to a lesser or greater degree massive, clear and unambiguous.

The material leads us. It gives us clues to the past and indicates what future practices are possible. In this way, the material comprises the framework for social practices and, consequently, the practices of the different actors cannot be considered independent of the material field. This means that neither can our striving for identity and maintenance of identity be considered as work without material lines to follow. And what role do we give to the material in this respect?

## **Stage settings as producer**

Johansen (1985) draws up a material-deterministic perspective of the interaction between material, practices and identity. He states that anonymous processes, produced by material stage settings, empty the sociality of content. Sociality, or direct human interaction, always takes place in a specific interrelationship between nature and material, where the material share is constantly increasing. This part consists of tools, roads, money, buildings.

The life we live will always be marked by our material environment and the way we use tools and means of communication. And our social contact is now determined to an increasing degree by the material apparatus than by direct face-to-face contact. The social life is becoming increasingly dominated by the material life as stage setting. Our continual work with the material life is making the world more and more ready-made. Practices which at one time expressed a choice are now incorporated as frameworks for future practices. The material only indicates traces of what has happen before, it demonstrates a frozen

purpose. In relation to this world, our actions are not creative. We have become merely users. We use even without understanding - directions for use are incorporated into the material. This is the opposite to exerting labour on pure nature. We can do something with this. This is the substance for cultural treatment and interpretation.

Thus in a modern society, reality is almost ready-made, and in such a society knowledge becomes a knowledge of directions for use. We follow the material-related rules of the game that are incorporated into society. These fundamental limits are society's constituting rules and the actors are not aware of the rules. They are internalized through socialization, and we inherit them as part of our social heritage. The way in which these limits are fixed implies that they are not a topic for social negotiation, nor can they be re-negotiated. These constituting rules appear to us to be Nature.

An increasing number of our everyday practices take place within this material organization of society. This means that they become part of already established applications, and in this context consist of a choice between given alternatives. In Johansen's opinion, what we carry out are mainly strategic and instrumental practices: We have ready-made goals for our practices, and the consequences are predictable. He further draws the conclusion that the purpose of the guidance from the material is to routinize the consequences of our practices in order to control their progress. (As far as it goes, this is a material parallel to Habermas' idea of system rationality and the intervention of instrumental reasoning in the life-world, and its destruction).

Such conditions do little to promote the process of individualization. Only few can create something new. In such a society, with a ready-made set of rules, only strategic practices remain on the agenda. This means that the process of individualization is forced over to the strategic level. A person achieves something only by acting creatively within the given framework. This is the situation for most of persons living a life of routine. Johansen says that in such a society there will also be an objective lack of individuality, of the potential to rediscover traces of oneself in reality. Thus materiality also forces us into a strategic game, into a sort of Goffmanic reality. Does this mean, in other words,

that this is where we end up anyway, irrespective of whether we choose a traditional symbolic-interactionistic starting point or socio-material theory?

## **The home as socio-material practice**

In my opinion, Johansen's deductions about how the material life limits our potential for action seem correct, particularly if one thinks in abstract and general terms. But as Habermas points out, the development is not always uniform. Is it possible to find other tendencies? Or will the consequences appear to be different greater emphases is put to other aspects of the material concept than those emphasized by Johansen.

What Johansen emphasized was pure materiality, the rigid frameworks which we accept as predetermined - goals which cannot be renegotiated. As a consequence, the level of practice is impoverished, and there are only the strategic practices left to choose. The result will be a real lack of individuality. In a strategic game, everyone cannot win. This concerns the nature of individuality. But it also concerns the possibility of maintaining a specific identity when one is continually forced to play a strategic game, in different settings. Maintaining a particular identity easily crumbles to dust in the shift between different roles, situations and arenas. The modern picture of the complete and "real" person disintegrates.

The problem of individuality is thus two-fold;

- to find frameworks broad enough to allow creative practices
- to change from being a "situational" person to being whole and undivided.

I shall try to examine the ambiguousness of society by discussing more specifically what a home is, and what we do when we live in it. As far as the concept of material is concerned, I shall place more emphasis on the significant aspect. Is it necessarily the case that the materiality of the home is the most

important indirect or invisible force that empties life in the home of content? Or is it possible that the home provides room for another kind of practice?

I distinguish between two categories, Home and Dwelling, and intend to show that materiality influences these two categories or levels in different ways.

What then is a home? We often say that we have a home. We say of young people that they are establishing a family and creating a home. It was not unusual in the Scandinavian countries a generation ago to build one's own home, in the direct meaning of the term. Today the words are used to rather more figuratively. But in my opinion, if we examine the situation more closely, the meaning is still correct if we regard the home as creative practice, something that we do. We still build, to a larger or lesser extent. We equip out the home, give it colour, maintain it and arrange patterns. We give the rooms function and expression. We put work into our communication with the surroundings, with windows and entrances. What we communicate is not always so clear - the relation to having an audience or the way we express ourselves in aesthetic codes may both vary considerably. We create something different, another expression, another arrangement of the material structure that has been delivered to us. If we do not do this, then the dwelling is not a proper home in the general meaning of the term. It is instead a dwelling, a structure. Most people can see that it is not alive, that no person has been involved in it. The dwelling does not comply with the cultural category, home.

But the dwelling, the building, is after all a material structure with strong, built-in rules, with a logic and a predetermination which must be a truly typical example of rigid frameworks? Undoubtedly, yes. But I maintain that this can be interpreted at two levels:

- The town planning structure and the purely physical building, where the main aspect is the silent material
- What we create within these frameworks, the home as a socio-material product, where the main aspect is signifiivity.

To some extent it is an empirical question just how determining the dwelling, as material structure, is. I suggest that the modern, functional dwelling is not particularly domineering. The most important structurization imposed by a dwelling consists of the signs of how the dwelling is programmed or how it predetermines the everyday life of the household. Upon entering a modern Scandinavian dwelling, most people would be able to say immediately that here is the sitting-room, there is the kitchen and there are the parents' and the children's bedrooms. At this level the text is simple, uncomplicated and clear - but how massive and unambiguous is it?

In fact, in previous works on layout and use of dwellings (Guttu, Jørgensen and Nørve, 1986) we found great variation in the way one and the same dwelling was used. Within the most strongly programmed layout, the least flexible from the point of view of a housing analysis, as many as 7 out of 10 had deviated from the proposed plan or had used the available space in varying ways. The users felt less tied than we had expected by the signs given by the dwelling in regard to distribution of functions. The most restricting limits are set by how the rooms are designed, not just walls and ceiling, but where the windows are placed, and the connections between rooms. These factors produce volumes with a certain distinctive character, and impose principles for arrangement of furniture etc. or limitations on how the rooms can be furnished. Which wall is long enough to take a sofa or a three-unit bookshelf? And: If I choose the L-shaped sofa that I want, will I be able to open the door out to the veranda?

One may also find that the dwelling has so few signs that it is difficult to work with. In spacious dwellings, with rooms that are generally useful and are devoid of classic decoration, there is almost nothing to go on. One has to make all the choices oneself as regards material and organization of everyday life. There are many choices to make, and much work to be done before the house arranged adequate to enable the various practices to be habituated in space and in patterns of objects.

I interpret this as an indication that, at the level of the individual dwelling, the material is not particularly "deafening". It is stronger in the case of small dwellings with restricted space and a detailed layout, than for more spacious

ones - especially within a certain planning ideology. In order to create a home that we can manage to live in, we are dependent on other norms and sources of knowledge than incorporated into the material.

Actually, we know neither the end nor the means. We are continually finding new ways to live, depending on developments in the standard of living and on new products. Traditions can only help us a small distance along the way. We are constantly developing new sources of knowledge and of setting norms. There is a large flora of magazines, "Bo Bedre", "Bonytt", various "do-it-yourself in the home" journals, etc. They do not communicate any set recipe. They communicate aesthetic expressions and show what we can do. It is clear that we can copy their ideas, but in this case we would not only fail creatively but also strategically.

## **The home, taste and social differentiation**

Creative actions and social differentiation glide over into the field of aesthetics, an idea which should be well known through the works of Bourdieu. (Bourdieu, 1984). He and his colleagues have studied how taste and lifestyle are connected in different social groups.

The Danish ethnologist Edna Hvidberg (Hvidberg, 1984) has carried out similar studies in the field of Scandinavian home life. She found that the dwelling and its objects are an important link in a differentiated sign system. The objects are not only important as an expression of social affiliation. Certain objects also signal the owner's personality, and her attitudes concerning politics and values: they have a specific style, and also mean specific things.

But if the connections are so clear, surely it is possible to simply buy the proper objects to suit the person we wish to be - there is an aesthetic recipe-type knowledge? Yes and no! Østerberg says about the signivity of the material that this is sometimes clear and unambiguous, sometimes less so. The text is sedimentarily structured. And Bordieu imagines lifestyle and aesthetics as an hierarchically arranged condition. "Everyone" can read the layout of a house, but after that the language of the material begins to be more indistinct. The

higher one rises in the aesthetic hierarchy, the more subtle is the communication. The higher the cultural competence that is needed to recognize the differences.

Hvidberg's studies show how clever people are at reading the code. The better they are, the nearer they are to their own environment.

Can one copy one's way to a material identity? What does one do if one wants to change group and lifestyle? If one comes from the wrong group, and does not have the necessary cultural competence, one will lack important knowledge about the code. One can go into the right shops and buy things in colours that are "right" individually. But one does not manage to express oneself through this code. One does not manage to produce the personal expression that shows that the resulting home is personally created. If one tries nevertheless, there is every reason to fail - something which the nouveau riche clearly demonstrate in each and every housing area. What was intended to be attractive and obviously high-priced, easily becomes ludicrous. But it is possible to play for a no-loose situation - one can turn to designer-label products and renounce personal expression.

This is mainly a matter of cultural sub-groups and the identity of a group or level of affiliation. Each individual or family thus has its project within this framework: To express what is special to me. Through special things, arrangements, colours. It is the special things that make a special person. This is where the different sides of the symbol functions make themselves felt, pictures and mementos, heirlooms and affiliation. This is where one creates one's own frameworks, something that is given unusually high priority in the Scandinavian countries. We use considerable sums of money every year on rebuilding, altering and equipping our dwellings. And this is something most people do themselves, through their own effort, as labour.

To return to the problem of identity. This anchorage in the material, and this anchoring and working on the person through the material life, provides the individual with the possibility of seeing continuity in his own life and his own person. We firmly hold on to self-created frameworks. One can change

dwelling, but, as Ruesch and Kees (1956) have shown, the atmosphere that one has once created will follow one throughout one's life. It is just as characteristic of a person as his name or fingerprint. Divorce is obviously an exception or a disruption. One does not only change dwelling, but to some extent part of one's history. This has to be reinterpreted in the light of the future. In the case of people who remarry, it is remarkable how not only the present changes character, but also the past. In such situations the material obviously has to be re-established. What woman would move into a home created by her predecessor? To create a home is to create identity and history, continuity and stability.

But the home has yet another power in relation to the Goffmanic settings. The Goffmanic settings are open ones, you do not know who you are playing with or against. However, as an arena the home is controlled. It is you who is the producer, and who has control over the scenes. You choose who may enter and when. You can open or close certain parts of the arena as you wish.

For this reason I regard the home, and all the sorts of work connected to the home, as a potential for the individual's efforts to create a more permanent and stable identity than what the social arenas can offer, and I look upon the aesthetic field as a field for not only strategic practices. I therefore look upon the home as a refuge for the modern identity.

Seen at the social level, the work in and to create a home also represents the individual's effort to become integrated in and influence, and be influenced by, the social order. And in this way maintain the social, aesthetic and economic differentiation of society. Thus work connected to the home contributes towards social stability. The home is thus an important contributory factor to the "putty" of society - perhaps a good conservative project, but with a slightly different meaning than imagined by the Christian conservative parties. The important thing is not morals, but the work put into the material.



## When technology enters paradise

I have discussed various aspects of the home, identity - practices and mediation of practices - stability and integration. What, then, is the role of technology in this picture? What is it that characterizes technology - what is it?

Johansen (1985 b) defines technology as materially determined ways of doing various things. To him, technology is interesting because of its role as mediator of practices. And what happens to this mediation of practices during technological development? Yes, the development of technology is a kind of simplification and unification of the tool/object in so far as it tries to develop products where the rules of practice are incorporated in the material itself. The machine, as distinct from the tool, prescribes its own uses. Knowledge about the use of the tool was included in a work tradition and tools tradition where the person using the tool had to mediate between general rules and norms in the situation and in his personal practice. The fact that the technical products unambiguously decide rules and personal use makes us individually independent of the normative and integrating aspects of tradition and mediation of tradition. In this way, technologically mediated practices will isolate individual practices from the total range of application, and technologicalization will be synonymous with fragmentation and reduced normative influence. Applied to life in the home, the hypothesis will be that technology in the home will replace normative and binding practices by technical and non-binding practices. This will in turn weaken the social or institutional level and thereby the social integration. Technology in the home could in this way break down important elements of the function of the home - either at the individual or the social level.

In this perspective, technology, as I have described its function, would seem to be a "serpent in paradise". But can a washing machine really be so dangerous? Or a mixer? and all the other things I should like to keep? It might be a healthy exercise to bring the reasoning down to a more concrete level in relation both to practices and technical products.

The salient point in Johansen's reasoning is whether, in fact, it is generally the case that the rules of practice are incorporated in the material? Let us first consider laundering clothes and the washing machine. Is it the case that the rules of practice are incorporated into the machine? We do not understand the machine, as technology. But the rules of use are to some extent located in buttons with symbols, with supporting directions for use. Operating the machine is thus the prototype of recipe-type knowledge. But this is not really the point. Can you launder clothes only by being able to push the buttons? My son of 18 months can start the machine if he wants to, but no-one believes that small children can do the laundry? Laundering is not a matter of knowing the rules for operating the machine, but of knowing the rules for how the clothes are to use the machine. The clothes must be sorted by colour. The machine must be filled and programmed with different considerations in mind -creasing, degree of centrifuging for spin drying. Stains must be pretreated. It is necessary to take into account the risk of the colours running at high temperatures, and transfer fluff. Some textiles lose their pre-texturing with wrong washing (too hot), a fact which must be weighed against hygiene. The machine does not make these evaluations for us. It is the launderer who, through his practice, mediates between general knowledge and the specific situation, where the machine in principal is only a substitute for muscular force. Knowledge about laundering is part of a work tradition. How many have not rung home to mother to ask for advice on removing difficult stains? Laundering is closely embedded in a female work tradition and not in the technical material. As I understand it, laundering is one of the most qualified jobs left in the household. This is obviously why so few men do the laundry. Norwegian studies have shown that no household activity is so monopolized by women as laundering - only about 15% of the men who were asked did the laundry. The explanation is that men have stood outside this work tradition and the washing machine, as technology, has not, in fact, split up and simplified the washing process by putting it together again as dequalified work.

Another example is the mixer and the cream cake. The rules of practice for operating the mixer do not produce a cream cake, not even a sponge base. We find one set of rules in the directions for using the mixer, and another in the

cookery book. But in practise, it is found that it is a good thing to have some mediation of tradition, if the sponge is to be really high and set.

I shall be cautious in drawing general conclusions from a couple of examples. But they show first of all that the general tendency of technological development need not necessarily be valid in our particular sub-area of technology. It is possible that technology in the home lags behind in relation to the general technological development -or that perhaps the development does not take the same course within all areas, depending on what connection the technology is used in. The logic for control and direction of the production worker cannot be transferred without reservations to the sphere of use production, to unpaid work. But we observe that certain branches of production are probably underdeveloped - such as building and construction. The knowledge of the processes/expert knowledge lies with the builder, and is not incorporated in the house building technology. A large part of the building is still produced at the site, using mechanical/hydraulic/electronic tools.

Johansen believes that the technology has an impact first and foremost at the institutional level, at the level of the home, where binding practices are replaced by technical steering.

From here a process of diffusion takes place - just like osmosis - to the rest of society and spreads the uncertainty about when it is legitimate to act instrumentally as against morally. Technology comes between people and leads to a greater technical regulation of practices - in the meaning of goal - means - reasoning. In this way, household technology tends to undermine both the home and social life.

It is easy to be concerned about the spread of this instrumental type of practice, or that the system world will colonize the life-world, as described in Havermas' perspective. But there are two comments to this point of view. In the first place the home is not a purely communicative community, and nor is it comparable to Habermas' concept of life-world. The home represents a large share of what is immediate, seen from the perspective of the individual, that which we call everyday life. Naturally, everyday life contains more than the home, it includes

work, travel and anything else included in a person's range of activities. Consequently, all kinds of practices will take place in everyday life, in home life.

The second point is that it may seem unreasonable, at today's level of technological development to give household technology the role of "nigger in the woodpile".

## **Technology and new possibilities**

But does the home remain unaffected by household and information technology in the home? No! These technologies obviously create new possibilities and new problems. And these problems are to be found in the span between the normative level and a person's actions.

Let us take another look at laundry and the washing machine. The machine saves me a lot of work, but in spite of this I spend just as much time as before on our laundry. The phenomenon can be described as differentiation or raising of standards. But is this the "fault" of the machine? Has the machine caused this situation?

I am faced with the problem that the machine gives me several choices. It presents me with several ways of achieving - or overachieving - the norm of "whole, clean and tidy" that is implicit in the woman's role in the family situation. It does not matter if the children's clothes are not new, that they are in fact worn, so long as they are clean and tidy. If one has clean and tidy children, one is also a long way to being a good mother. But with better laundering facilities, the children become constantly cleaner and tidier, with no more time spent on the laundry. At the same time, the new laundering facilities allow greater choice of textiles and therefore greater choice of style (they need not only wear jeans). So a mother's work can be turned towards raising the aesthetic value of the children's appearance. This means running full tilt into changing the norms for the children's clothing, and changing the importance of the work put into clothes. Hygiene becomes less important. The work put into clothes becomes more and more a presentation of self. Mother, through the

work she puts into clothes, creates small Carl Larrson girls (or Laura Ashley girls), small romantic dreams which modern laundering technology, given the right choice of textiles, can recreate every day. Particularly in the areas where the mothers do not "have to" work. Laundering technology provides opportunities to further extend the area of aestheticization.

Alternatively, it may be that technology has reduced the time spent on the laundry. But if one chooses the first, norm-changing strategy, it will be difficult to apply the strategy of rationalization. The original choice that technology gave us has been changed over time as a result of the interaction between a person's practices and what is normative. It is thus the person's practices that create "problems", the individuals' way of doing a job where the content changes underway.

Another example is TV. A TV-set that receives only one channel, Norwegian Broadcasting, presents only one choice - to watch or not to watch. Gradually, we are able to receive several channels and have more TV sets in the home. And we soon begin to worry about the impact of TV on the children. The TV channels give the children new potentials to choose, and this represents a problem for the parents. The parents have to guide and control the children's choices. They have to establish norms and enforce these norms. New possibilities impose demands for both new norms and increased normative control.

The choices presented by laundry technology on the one hand and entertainment technology on the other are not the same. And nor do these two technologies present us with the same problems. But both examples point to certain things in common - it is at the behaviour level that things "start to slide". Older norms do not necessarily hold good in new situations. The normative too has to be renewed in order to establish limits for individual practices. Thus, the potentials of technology impose a greater demand for reformulation of the social level of society. If this does not take place, individual practice will be isolated, and will neither be able to obtain nourishment from or support the institutional order. And it is here that the seed of social disintegration is to be found. If the social level is to keep up with technological development and regulate practices in

different situations, the pace of the development will obviously be important. It takes time to build up the social order.

## Notes

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