

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES REVISITED

JOANNA ZALEWSKA
The Maria Grzegorzewska University

Practice Theory Revisited: How Flexible Meta-habit Complements Habitus

Abstract: This article seeks to understand why it is relatively easy for today's individuals to acquire new behaviors, how the mechanism behind such acquisition developed, and how it is socially coordinated. Empirical findings reveal that new behaviors are mostly acquired unthinkingly. Hence, revisiting practice theory, I propose the concept of meta-habit to help us understand the blind and automatic acquisition of new behaviors. According to Pierre Bourdieu, habitus acquired primarily in childhood generates practices and contributes to the reproduction of the social order. Meta-habit includes disposal toward being open to situational context, toward inquisitiveness, and toward reading the external clues of behavior. Meta-habit generates practices on the basis of influences in the symbolic community: in this way practices are coordinated socially. Meta-habit is responsible for the reproduction of the social order in situations when the social space is very dynamic—this being the case of late modernity, which is a system comprising myriads of fields.

Keywords: Bourdieu, habit, habitus, practice theory, practices, sociality, symbolic community

Introduction

Practice theory was introduced into sociology by Pierre Bourdieu (1977 [1972]). Emphasis is on the physical and not the reflective aspect of actions; on the immersion of activities in routine operations; on objects rather than their perception as a result of abstract thinking; and on the social origin of the meaning of actions rather than individual creation of identity (Schatzki 2001). Today, habitus—the key concept of Bourdieu's theory—is ever more warily treated. Bourdieu (1977)—on the basis of research conducted on the traditional community of the Kabyle—indicates that practices are an expression of a deeply instilled worldview of the given community and contribute to the recreation of the social order, and occur with the use of internalized structures of disposition—that is, the habitus acquired primarily in childhood as second human nature, something that henceforth generates their responses.

Today we are dealing with mutability in both practices undertaken by individuals, as well as rapid social changes. Despite controversies in the social sciences about the existence of social classes, the empirical evidence shows that positions in social space are relatively stable (Atkinson 2010; Goldthorpe 2007) and there is still distinction in the cultural practices between divergent positions (Bennett, Savage, Silva et al. 2009). It follows that the Bourdieusian notion of field is still valid and applicable in sociology. However, there are

debates about the applicability of the concept of habitus. Bourdieu himself observed that, while there is persistent distinction in the practices performed by students of higher education institutions with different status, the distinctive practices change over time (Bourdieu 1998: 181). The question remains as to whether habitus is a structure flexible enough to generate constantly mutable social practices. After all, some scholars perceive habitus as a deterministic structure which therefore cannot operate in today's reality (Archer 2007; Jenkins 1992) or must be supplemented by either reflexivity (Adams 2006) or internal conversation (Sayer 2012). Others perceive habitus as a generative structure (Farrugia and Woodman 2015; Lizardo 2004; Sweetman 2003), because the actual practices are creative and cannot be predicted despite being generated on the basis of a set of dispositions. These scholars claim that habitus includes dispositions for thinking, calculation, and internal conversation, and that excluding these practices from habitus results from a narrow reading of Bourdieu's work (Farrugia and Woodman 2015). I agree with this interpretation. Bourdieu (1977) claimed that individuals have a disposition toward particular ways of thinking, and not that they do not think while acting or deciding (however, he stressed that many actions are taken beyond or despite conscious calculations). Paul Sweetman (2003) claims that the reflexive habitus (i.e., which includes the disposition to reflexivity) has developed in late modernity. In this text I will take this a step further and not focus on the debates surrounding the relations between habitus and reflexivity. Instead, I shall argue that reflexivity is no longer necessary to adapt to new situations: it is meta-habit that is responsible for automatic acquisition of new behaviors. Furthermore, nowadays meta-habit complements habitus and together they are the structures responsible for the individual's acquiring a position in social space.

Why is there a need to introduce a new concept—meta-habit—into sociological theory? Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2001) writes that Bourdieu's concept of habitus is based on Aristotle's concept of customs—a person's second nature, which is an embodiment of social memory in the individual. According to Kaufmann, Aristotle's customs have two aspects: 'hexis', which is responsible for persistent capabilities, and 'ethos'—the active ability to adopt new schemas of behavior. The word 'habitus' is a Latin translation of the Greek word 'hexis.' Thus Kaufmann concludes that Bourdieu's habitus relates primarily to the first aspect of Aristotle's customs. Meanwhile, Omar Lizardo (2004) claims that the concept of habitus was founded on Jean Piaget's conception of knowledge acquisition, although Bourdieu explicitly related to Wittgenstein and Aristotle's thoughts. For Piaget knowledge acquisition consists of two processes: 1) assimilation of new information, as when the child applies schemas developed in a previous context to new environmental stimuli, and 2) accommodation of schemas developed earlier when faced with sufficiently new environmental configurations that require a revision of preexisting knowledge. We can see the correspondence between hexis and assimilation: both concepts refer to applying previously incorporated schemas. Along with ethos and accommodation, these concepts refer to modifications of the schemas of behavior or the adoption of new ones. Thus for Lizardo Bourdieu's habitus includes both aspects of customs—the stable and the active. In my opinion, the stable aspect of customs for Bourdieu is routinely present in everyday practices, while the adoption of new schemas needs much more effort: particularly, reflexive work (secondary pedagogical work) or secondary training (conversion) (Bourdieu 1977, 1984;

Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). This may explain why Bourdieu referred to the ‘hexis’ part of Aristotle’s customs. Loïc Wacquant (2016) also finds the roots of habitus in Aristotle’s notion of ‘hexis’ as elaborated in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1998): “meaning an acquired yet entrenched state of moral character that orients our feelings and desires, and thence our conduct” (Wacquant 2016: 65). In accordance with such an interpretation of Bourdieu’s habitus I propose the term meta-habit for the opposite situation: when the active aspect of customs becomes routinely present in everyday practices.

In his *Pascalian Meditations* Bourdieu (2000) sees the limits of the notion of habitus. Those limits appear when behavioral change predominates over the reproduction of practices: “Habitus changes constantly in response to new experiences. Dispositions are subject to a kind of permanent revision, but one which is never radical, because it works on the basis of the premises established in the previous state. They are characterized by a combination of constancy and variation which varies according to the individual and his degree of flexibility or rigidity. If (to borrow Piaget’s distinction relating to intelligence), accommodation has the upper hand, then one finds rigid, self-enclosed, overintegrated habitus (as in old people); if adaptation¹ predominates, habitus dissolves into the opportunism of a kind of *mens momentanea*, incapable of encountering the world and of having an integrated sense of self” (Bourdieu 2000: 161).

We can find overintegrated habitus not only in old people, but also in pre-modern traditional communities. In modernity, habitus becomes more flexible. In this article, I am interested in the situation when habitus dissolves when faced with fluidity as the main characteristic of late modernity. I assume that habitus takes some part in generating practices, because social existence is not possible without social memory. However, it is predominated by a new structure which helps in forgetting old schemas and rapidly developing new ones. As habitus modifies behavior driven by instinct, but instinct has never disappeared, similarly the new structure which has developed during the transition from traditional to late modern societies does not replace habitus but complements its mechanisms. I call this structure meta-habit, referring to the notion of meta-habits (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2004), which contains such mental strategies of modern individuals as: rationality, planning, flexibility, openness, and spontaneity. Altogether, they are “ordinarization” of the constant mutability which is the main characteristic of today’s reality. I understand meta-habit, meaning the structure generating fluid social practices, as an internalized disposition to seek and master new practices—that is, to read procedural clues coming from the environment.

In this article, I will reflect on how meta-habit—the structure generating today’s practices—operates in comparison to habitus in order to understand important transformations in generating social practices from traditional societies to late modern societies. Next I will concentrate on the first crucial moment of the historical process of the formation of meta-habit, reinterpreting the process of civilization analyzed by Norbert Elias (2012 [1939]).

¹ Here Bourdieu mistook Piagetan terms. When he wrote “accommodation,” the explanation suits for “assimilation”—applying schemas developed in previous context to new stimuli; while when he wrote “adaptation,” the meaning of this word is close to Piagetan “accommodation,” which indeed means adapting schemas developed earlier to new contexts and revision of preexisting knowledge.

From Practices Generated by Habitus to Fluid Social Practices

According to Pierre Bourdieu (1977) practices are specific sequences of actions developing along with time, connected together by their bonding importance, for example: the ritual fight in the Kabyle community. The aim of Bourdieu's theory of practice is to build "the theory of the mode of generation of practices, which is the precondition for establishing an experimental science of the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification" (1977: 72). He therefore poses a fundamental question about the socialization of human activities. Undertaken practices are—in his opinion—individuals' improvisations limited by the structure (habitus—incorporated dispositions) and the specific circumstances. The individual feels ever more free, the more the external situation gives rise to a smooth implementation of internal disposals. The individual's habitus is produced by the system of social positions, constituting the space for social relationships. Positions in social space depend on the amount of various forms of accumulated capital and their symbolic legitimization (Bourdieu 1988). Symbolic capital is a form of capital of particular value in the given social space. In complex modern societies, social space is divided into many fields: a field of political and of economic power; a field of cultural production; as well as a religious field. The symbolic capital is different in each field: it is money in the field of economic power and knowledge in the field of cultural production. Bourdieu believes that in general the rivalry for capital in all of the fields, and between fields, comes down to prestige and respectability. In each field, and in different positions of the given field, various habits are being created (Bourdieu 1977). Practices are determined by the circumstances of their creation, thus they seek to reproduce objective structures, of which they are the product. The intermediary here is the habitus, which as a generator of strategies is able to cope with ever new situations, ones unforeseen by individuals. Habitus containing both perceptual and conceptual schemes and action schemes gives a matrix of perceptions, assessments, and activities that are adjusted to the requirements of the situation. In traditional communities the same living conditions give rise to similar systems of dispositions, and the resulting homogeneity of habitus lies at the objective basis of the harmony of practices and the perception of social life as obvious and self-evident.

Theodore Schatzki (2001) reviewed contemporary approaches to social practices and proposed a synthetic definition: social practices are streams of human activity embodied and mediated by objects centrally organized around a shared practical understanding (2001: 11). Practice theorists (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996) distinguish the practices as a whole or a unity as separate from other practices (entity) and the practices as execution (performance). The first one is a pattern, and it consists of many interdependent components: forms of bodily activity and mental objects and their use, hidden knowledge, skills, emotional and motivational states, and at the same time it is an indivisible whole, because the components of an activity have a shared logic, e.g., cooking (Shove et al. 2012). Speaking of practice as a performance, theorists of practices mean that via actions the pattern provided by the practices as a unity is completed and reproduced. However, in this way, theorists of practices reenact the old structuralist opposition between culture that holds patterns and actions which update patterns. Pierre Bourdieu in his theory of practice tried

to overcome this dualism. Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson (2012) write that even though the title of Bourdieu's book includes the word 'practice,' he did not create a coherent theory of practice, but focuses on habitus. A deeper reading reveals that the concept of an embodied structure of dispositions allows a creative generation of practices of which a particular course cannot be predicted. As used by these authors, the distinction between practice as a pattern and practice as an execution reduces human activity to filling out some existing pattern.

In traditional societies the whole group and its symbolically structured environment provides children with practice and through practice shows how to master the given practice: instilling does not enter the level of discourse (Bourdieu 1977). The children pick up what is right and present in all series of perceived behaviors (a principle), and then assimilate it, without presenting it to themselves thematically. In addition to such adaptation, inculcating practices occurs through structural exercises, where everything happens as a game of pretending: puzzles, games, ritual duels, which require one to launch schemes of generating strategies to accumulate symbolic capital.

In early-modern society the original habitus, produced in families occupying a certain position in the social space, is subjected to secondary pedagogical work in schools, which produces the secondary habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). The original habitus underlies the formation of any subsequent habitus. The degree of productivity of secondary pedagogical work depends on the distance between the habitus, which it seeks to implement, and the habitus which has been instilled by (perhaps) previous pedagogical work and (always) the primary habitus, which contains the principles of cultural arbitrariness connected with the origin. Schooling easily achieves success regarding children from families with high cultural capital, because the school implements the habitus characteristic for the position with a high cultural capital. The teaching held in schools allows secondary symbolic mastery of practices, after the primary socialization in which they have been practically mastered. However, for children with a low cultural capital, this is difficult, because they possess a different habitus. Effective implementation of secondary habitus over a different primary habitus requires a conversion—that is, a complete replacement of one habitus with another. This requires techniques of deculturation and reculturation, which are implemented in closed institutions—barracks, monasteries, prisons, shelters, and boarding schools. In such places it is very typical to place meaning onto the body without reflexivity, as with military training or self-mortification, to allow the mastering of practices. As we can see, Bourdieu describes the ability to change the habitus and learn new practices, something his critics do not recognize, among them Kaufmann (2001). However, for Bourdieu belief in the all-powerful influence of schools and the mass media is unthinkable. Instilled schemes are difficult to change, it requires a secondary 'training,' a time-consuming implementation of new patterns into the body, for which relative spatial isolation is needed. Habitus determines the cultural boundaries of the world perceived as one's own. Practices generated by one's own habitus are judged to be relevant, understandable—and when something is seen as vulgar, pretentious, or just inappropriate, it is because it is produced by a different habitus (Bourdieu 1984).

In current practice theory this strong opposition between the familiar practices generated by the habitus of the given group and the practices foreign to the group vanishes.

Ann Swidler (2001) claims that Bourdieu's theory does not explain the recently emerging new practices, being created before our eyes, and within which people undertake new actions². Research indicates that not all practices are generated based on the structure of the disposal internalized in childhood and adolescence; on the contrary, in some cases the visibility of some practices is sufficient for its incorporation by individuals (Swidler 2001). Swidler gives an example which she drew from Elizabeth Armstrong's research (2002), on the changes in the homosexual community in San Francisco. The 'Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade' changed the rules for the functioning of the homosexual community from a group defined by common interests to a community consisting of different subgroups. The parade is a public ritual practice which anchors a shared common understanding of the practice of being gay or lesbian in this community. In this way, shared understanding is located in a public event, which is visible to all and is therefore a point of reference, but it is not verbalized.³ The establishing of a new social practice happens here through a "public performance of new patterns" (Marody 2014: 233).

Fluid Social Practices in Stable Social Space

Claiming the constant mutability of social practices, I do not mean that they arise in a socially mobile, fluid, "liquid," or network society. I do not neglect the stability of social structure and the class⁴ regularity of social practices (Goldthorpe 2007). As empirical studies from Great Britain show, individual reflexivity is in fact faux reflexivity, which is "nothing more than mundane consciousness operating within the subjective field of possible given class positions and dispositions but masquerading at the narrative level as action without limits or history" (Atkinson 2010: 114). In other words, the interviewees typically rationalized their actions regarding job changes and careers, though they were all effects of structures of class differences. For the respondents from the dominant class, higher education was a natural thing. They possessed high cultural, social, and economic capital which allowed them to look for attractive jobs without the pressure of economic necessity and with help from within their social networks. As far as the dominated class is concerned, the dislike of school and the pressure to earn money made them accept less demanding jobs (Atkinson 2010). In Britain, there is still a distinction in cultural practices between the dominant and dominated classes (Bennett, Savage, Silva et al. 2009).

However, what is fluid and changing are the very practices—and Pierre Bourdieu was aware of this. For example, he wrote that in the 1960s the students of the prestigious *École*

² Ann Swidler's (1986) concept of culture as "tool kit" (a repertoire of habits, skills and styles from which people construct strategies of action), similarly as Bourdieu's habitus, refers to Aristotle's 'hexis,' which is responsible for persistent capabilities and not for routine adoption of new schemas of behavior.

³ Thomas Mathiesen (1997) wrote about a structure of Synopticon, parallel to Michel Foucault's Panopticon, noticing that the mass media, especially television, maintains control over souls. Millions of people watch and admire the few, emulating them. In this way people control themselves through self-control, so as to fit into modern society. Mathiesen does not elaborate on this, but synoptical processes also demand the ability to rapidly and easily acquire practices seen on the screen, which is possible due to meta-habit. Meanwhile, Panopticon demands a process of conversion of habitus—I will elaborate on this further (p. 36).

⁴ For Bourdieu there are theoretical social classes: a class consists of agents located near each other in social space; they do not have to be aware of similar interest and usually they are not.

Normale distinguished themselves by reading the journal *L'Humanité*, while in the 1980s they distinguished themselves by playing tennis (Bourdieu 1998: 181). We can also find evidence of the fluidity of social practices in the above-cited work of Will Atkinson (2010). He interviewed individuals from the dominated and the dominant classes. Several of them had unsteady and unpredictable careers. As mentioned above, these changes had structural causes. In spite of this, they had to deal with new tasks and challenges in their new professions and occupations. Atkinson claims that, in their subsequent new jobs, they all continued or developed practices which they had acquired earlier. The new careers did not need any conversion, the new practices were generated on the basis of their habitus. However, Bourdieu wrote that preparation for every profession is very demanding:

The process of transformation through which one becomes a miner, a farmer, a priest, a musician, a teacher or an employer is long, continuous and imperceptible, and, even when it is sanctioned by rites of institution (such as, in the case of the academic nobility, the long preparatory separation and the magic trial of the competitive examination), it normally excludes sudden, radical conversions. It starts in childhood, sometimes even before birth (...). It generally carries on without crises or conflicts—though this does not mean without psychological or physical suffering, which, as a series of tests, is part of the conditions of development of the illusion... (Bourdieu 2000: 165).

As we can see, for Bourdieu acquiring an occupation, either in a dominant (as an employer or a musician) or dominated (a miner, a farmer) sector of social space, is a lifelong process of developing specific dispositions. Each institution is for Bourdieu a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) where a particular habitus is shaped, and the forming of each particular habitus starts in childhood. Conversely, Will Atkinson perceives retraining and multiple jobs as relatively easy; he finds this easiness of retraining to be novel, and he claims that a new occupation does not change the position of his interviewees in social space. It seems that the positions of the agents in the social space do not change much, but their social practices do change more than in the past.

We can consider changing practices within the same occupation, for example the practice of writing a sociological article by a sociologist. This practice has been changing rapidly over last years. Let us compare several shifts in the practice of writing an article in 2005 and today:

- 1) the technological changes: A) in 2005, writing took place on a desktop computer, thus it had to take place in one location; now it is written often on a laptop, which is much more mobile. B) Nowadays it is even possible to use smart phone to read texts and make small changes in manuscripts. C) It was necessary to send it by post not the internet, thus the time spent on various elements of the practice differed.
- 2) The influence of the global scientific field on the local scientific field: A) Polish sociologists used to write mainly in Polish, nowadays it is demanded that they write primarily in English; B) there were different criteria for considering a journal a suitable target; nowadays the most important is having an “Impact Factor” by a journal, but this can change very soon due to the legal reform of science, which will deprive the scientific field of some of its autonomy;
- 3) The autonomy of the scientific field and the influence of the field of power: nowadays the legal reforms of science are more frequent than in the early 2000s.

The changes in the practice of sociological writing have been rapidly underway for several years. This does not ignore the stability of social structures; sociologists still remain

in similar positions of social space. However, those who do not adapt can lose their position in the field of sociology in favor of those who adapt better, because the practices involved in being a sociologist change. Of course, we can say that this is because it is a profession which requires high cultural capital and reflexive habitus.

However, in the case of a manual worker, the conditions of work and of everyday life change as well; there are legal reforms, technological revolutions, and novel trends in popular culture which lead to constant change. In order to maintain their positions in the social space, agents have to adapt to these changes. For example, in order to increase their share in the market, employers introduce new technologies, and the workers have to acquire new practices just to stay where they are in social space. Those who become experts on this technology can take advantage of it and improve their position in social space. The state establishes new procedures of behavior in the workplace and the workers have to adjust to stay where they are in social space. Or a new outlook is presented in a popular TV series and the workers try to emulate it to increase their attractiveness and obtain a better position in social space. These are examples of the causes of the fluidity of social practices. Habitus as a structure of disposition ceases to be an adequate mechanism for understanding the constant changes of practices.

The Individual Pole of Fluid Practices: Internalization and Incorporation

Theorists of practices are looking for tools to capture the mutability of currently undertaken practices. Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove (2004, 2007), in examining the development of new practices, have developed an easy to apply empirical operationalization of the concept of practices, one used later by Elizabeth Shove, Mike Pantzar, and Matt Watson (2012). The authors put emphasis on the three basic elements in Schatzki's definition: 1) incorporation, 2) mediation through objects 3), and a shared practical understanding. To investigate the undertaking of practices, the researchers reduced practice to a whole consisting of these three elements: 1) the abilities inscribed in the body; 2) material objects; 3) and discursive meanings—all shared mental representations of the given practice: standards, ideologies, feelings, beliefs. These authors avoid focusing on the subject, but examine the trajectories of individual elements, namely: how they arise, where they come from, how they are linked together to form a practice, how they remain related to each other, and then—how they separate and how the practice changes or disappears. In this perspective, we get a tool allowing us to study social change. However, descriptive research—e.g., what was the design of a car and how it changed, how it was related to the transformation of the skills and discursive meanings of practices of driving (Shove et al. 2012)—will let us capture the change in this practice. But in fact this tells us very little about the mechanism of the mutability of practices and how it was developed.

Kaufmann (2001), on the basis of his empirical research, analyzes how new practices are incorporated nowadays and why it comes to individuals more easily than to traditional societies. He argues that the concept of habitus well conveys the compatibility of the social structures and mental structures of individuals in traditional societies. However, this does not adequately explain the links between the social structure and mental structures in late-

modern societies. Kaufmann tries to break away from the term *habitus* by reaching back to the Aristotelian notion of habit, which he also calls an incorporated operational scheme (2001) or an embodied scheme (2008). Kaufmann concentrates on the habits or embodied schemes on an individual's pole, because he believes that nowadays it is in the bodies of the individuals that competition takes place and arrangements are made between different logics hailing from diverse social environments. He pays little attention to the societal pole of social practices. However, his analysis of habit can be treated as a precise description of the individual pole of social practices generated by meta-habit.

Kaufmann (2001) analyzes the operation, internalization (interiorization), and conscription (embodying, incorporation) of habits. He bases his work initially on the findings of André Leroi-Gourhan (1965, from: Kaufmann 2001), who perceives habits as interconnected links and calls them operating chains. Chain links are fully embodied elements of social memory, whereas the role of consciousness is to match links and create longer chains. The involvement of profound consciousness can be described by a sine wave, whose vertices correspond to the conscious adaptation of the series to the conditions of the operation, and the basins to the automatic series of gestures. Kaufmann criticizes the metaphor of the chain claiming that the transitions between unconscious automatism, awareness, and reflection are today more flexible: you can observe situations in which even the most fully embodied link can be opened and transformed by reflection. Furthermore, in the case of frequent actions a tendency exists to prolong routinized sequences. Reflexivity appears as a result of the termination of the order of things, such as an unforeseen event, a change of the frame that defines the situation, or a sudden thought.

According to Kaufmann (2001), today's people have a lot of internalized schemes, but only some become incorporated. The interiorized-internalized scheme is the one that is stored in memory; the process of acquiring the scheme often runs unknowingly and the scheme is stored in hidden memory, but it can also be recorded with the participation of consciousness. The incorporated scheme is the one that organizes activities so well that it occurs automatically, without thinking. The interiorization of the scheme occurs relatively easily: countless images besiege people from all sides, advertising or scenes on the street leave traces in subconscious memory. Most of these captured bits of information are quickly erased from the hidden memory. However, these images can remain in it a long time, creating a reference point, carrying some certain knowledge. Many different images, snippets of conversations, and reflections gradually shape the outline of an alternative scheme, which starts to become a filter for the new incoming sensations. After a certain limit has been reached for the formation of an alternative scheme, a coup follows and the scheme becomes a grid of readings and a recording of images, selecting and accommodating received information. The new internalized scheme is in conflict with the previously incorporated habits. The new scheme makes the formerly incorporated scheme undergo implementation with greater difficulty, there is a sense of fatigue, a reflection on the meaning of the scheme adhered to, along with the thoughts and ideas belonging to the new scheme. The interiorized scheme becomes available to the consciousness as an alternative and blocks the actions set by the earlier schemes. However, it might never become an operating scheme and might disappear from memory. When the individual tries to put it into action, and it fails, the scheme disappears. The scheme is incorporated when it directs action, perception,

feeling, and thinking in a given situation and alternative schemes do not interfere. However, Kaufmann indicates that this situation is rare today. People have a number of schemes incorporated and even more interiorized: therefore, in operation there contradictions and/or anomalies are always present. In these cracks reflection appears, which can play its role by choosing between specific schemes.

What is the difference here with the functioning of habitus? Kaufmann says that nowadays the grid of perception (which allows for saving new materials, from which are built new schemes and those already interiorized are enriched) changes continuously. In traditional societies the sets of myths and personal paradigms were relatively unchangeable (at least throughout one generation). Traditional culture, through the defined holistic view of the world, was eliminating some possible behaviors, ones not conforming to that vision, and because of the relatively constant lifestyle and relative isolation from other communities, it was not heavily exposed to alternative habitus.

Trying to relate the individualist pole to the societal pole, we can say that we are embodying a new practice, when it ‘fits’ our habits, incorporated or even interiorized operating schemes, to which incorporation it contributes, overwhelming contradictions in the schemes in their favor. The constant struggle between operational schemes explains the mutability of practices—their constant transformation, the disappearance of some practices, and the birth of new ones. However, is there some structure explaining how the individuals’ actions are coordinated on the social level: what is the societal pole of social practices?

The Societal Pole of Fluid Practices: Symbolic Communities and Influences

Since the habitus offers an adequate grasp of how practices in traditional societies are coordinated, but its power to explain practices in today’s societies fails, we might want to look at the differences between these types of societies. Émile Durkheim ([1893] 1997) introduced a distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity as different types of social ties underlying traditional and modern societies; and Ferdinand Tönnies (1887), to differentiate the forms of sociality characteristic of these two types of societies, proposed the concept of community and civil society. Mirosława Marody and Anna Giza-Poleszczuk (2004) continue the approach of the classics, looking for different mechanisms of socialization underlying traditional, modern, and late-modern societies. The basic and universal form of sociality is, according to those authors, the Tönnies’ community, in which the process of socialization occurs, that is, the production of social bonds marked by emotional ties, ones connecting the individual with a wider collectivity and transforming their motivations, so that their actions are subordinated to the common good of the community. Emotional bonding of individuals is based on guilt and liability (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2004). The belonging to a community stems from the unconscious natural will, based on the emotional unity of inclinations, complementarity of habits, and a memory of living together (Tönnies 1887). It is in complex societies, followed by a loosening of interpersonal bonds that a new form of sociality emerges: civil society. From the natural will springs the arbitrary will, or rational will (Tönnies 1887): on the basis of inclinations conscious goals are created, resolutions are made based on habits, and reflective thoughts are based

on memory. Relations, which are a form of social ties characteristic for civil society, are based on calculation and anticipation of equivalent input of individuals and arise from the arbitrary will of individuals. Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk (2004) add to Tönnies' classification a new form of sociality, one shaped in the process of transition from a modern society to a post-modern. They call the new social ties influences based on similarity, because people identifying themselves with the same idea can influence each other—meeting at a concert, at a demonstration, or recognizing each other's likeness during random glances in a public place. Above all, such influences relate through the mass media, in which individuals can see and hear a person similar to themselves. This thesis is consistent with Manuel Castells' results (1997), who notes that today communities are built on the basis of accepting the same identity, which is a source of meaning and significance for people. Thus, the absorption of ambient elements of action schemes as described by Kaufmann (2001), in Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk's terminology—is characteristic for the present socialization mechanism, which makes people engage in the same practice. Similar individuals influence each other, ones whose behaviors 'fit' to each other's incorporated schemes and thus there emerges a form of sociality that groups individuals holding the same identity.

I think that the form of sociality in which individuals are related by influences is that of symbolic community (in the same way as communities were related by bonds and civil society by relations in Tönnies' concept). The basis combining the symbolic community is symbolic meaning (Cohen 1989; Gergen 1991). Symbolic communities provide people with meanings with which they can identify, and which give them a cultural identity. The two-sidedness of communication is not necessary here. Simply adopting a specific identity to become a member of this community is enough, which brings alike people together. In the symbolic community of lesser importance is co-being, the individuals are trained—through mediated communication—in imagining similar community members. New communities exist so individuals can mutually confirm their identity on the basis of mechanisms of projection and identification (Olcoń-Kubicka 2009). Thinking of symbolic communities as a societal pole of social practices can resemble the reader of symbolic interactionism. However, let's remember that George Herbert Mead analyzed conscious actions, and here I stress (after practice theorists and Kaufmann) that reflection plays a secondary role in the process of incorporating fluid practices, the initial stages occur without awareness.

How have these influences evolved? Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk suggest that, just as arbitrary will was created on the basis of natural will, from the arbitrary will emerges the reflective will, meaning the transition from thought to reflection, from resolutions to the strategy of action, and from the purpose to the project. Its function is not to enlarge the effectiveness of actions that defined the arbitrary will, but to increase the authenticity of the act, so that it is consistent with the individual's own identity. The individual undergoes interactions with others, from which they derive in order to build their identity.

A huge role in shaping influences was played by technologies of social saturation (Gergen 1991). These technologies enable mediated communication to rapidly overcome distances. Such communication makes each individual's time more densely filled by numerous and intense relationships with others. These technologies accelerate 'relations' not only with real people, but also with the heroes of films or television programs. Kenneth Gergen calls this the process of populating the self: it lies in the fact that individuals carry in their

heads inner voices, internalize egos of both real and imaginary characters whom they have encountered. People in their memory store behavioral patterns of others. In this way they themselves undergo influences and at the same time they ‘populate’ the heads of others. Gergen describes the same process of interiorization of new action schemes which Kaufmann (2001) shows through detailed empirical analysis. Reflection in this process plays a secondary role, the initial stages of acquiring new practices occur without awareness, only the conflict with other interiorized schemes raises reflection.

Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk (2004) stress that we are not dealing with the evolutionary transformation of the forms of sociality, from bonds, through the relations to influences. Rather—along with the increasing complexity of societies, the development of technology, and capabilities of mediated communication—the set of social relations connecting people is becoming more complex. Bonds still exist—in nuclear families, or in relatively self-sufficient communities. Relations bring people together in the workplace, and with more distant family members. Influences in turn connect people on the basis of a selected common identity.

Regarding the forms of sociality to changes in the structures generating practices, we may note that bonds induce practices inscribed in a particular vision of the world of a given community. Therefore, there is a strongly felt distinction between one’s own and foreign practices, which increases the coherence of the community. The stage of relations is harder to relate to the practice theory, relations are reasonably taken individual actions, rather than practices centered around a shared practical understanding. Influences allow for a formation of personal identity of a late-modern individual (identification) and at the same time grouping on the basis of similarity in symbolic communities (projection) by fulfilling practices characteristic of the given symbolic community. Identification is never complete and permanent, messages reaching the individual build alternative identities along with alternative schemes of actions, appurtenant to the competitive practices of symbolic communities. Let’s take a closer look at the structure, an alternative to the habitus, which is responsible for generating fluid social practices.

Meta-habit as a Source of Fluid Social Practices in Stable Social Space

Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk (2004) claimed that the factors of the change in the forms of sociality, are ‘peripheral devices of the human mind.’ This concept comes from the philosopher Daniel Dennett (1997), who argued that human intelligence is based on the ‘unpacking’ of the contents of the mind into the environment—saving it in language, tools, environment, and other people. Peripheral devices of the human mind thereby become a media of social memory. Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk focus on language, tools, and habits—in which we are the most interested—which they understand as embodied, fixed action patterns and identify them with the habit analyzed by Kaufmann (2001). The first feature of the peripheral devices is that they are open due to their structure: for example, habits have the ability to attach new links of activities and are ‘opened’ by the counter-habits of other people. The second feature of the peripheral devices is their mutual interdependence. The conversion within each of the media leads to a change in the other. The third feature is that

of qualitative leaps in the historical process of the transformation of the media of social memory. Concerning language, a very significant change was the appearance of the letters which enabled the transition from a language of action—that functions as a link in the chain of human actions—to a language of thinking that acts as a tool for reflection. The authors call language in its second function metalanguage. Metalanguage began to spread with the invention of printing, that is, in the second half of the fifteenth century in Europe. An important qualitative leap in the metabolism of tools was the transformation from tools produced by practitioners to tools that are derived from the development of science (stimulated by the development of metalanguage). Inventions emerging at the end of the nineteenth century were the result of the introduction of new materials, energy sources, and application of scientific knowledge to industry. A qualitative leap concerning the third medium of social memory is the transition from the habits stabilizing social activities to meta-habits, such as rationality, planning, flexibility, openness, spontaneity, ‘coolness.’ Meta-habits ‘are a specific “ordinarization” of the main characteristics of reality, which is the constant mutability, and even fluidity of today’s social world’ (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2004: 133). We can conclude that meta-habits allow taking up practices that go beyond what can be generated by the structure of dispositions of one habitus. Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk do not give the nature of meta-habits any further reflection.

Referring the concept of meta-habits to Bourdieu’s habitus theory, one can hypothesize that they are the equivalent of the habitus as generators of practices and are different from it in the sense that these are dispositions to continuous openness to the situational context, the inquiring attitude and analysis, to ‘read’ the importance of the situation from the environment: human behavior and the construction of objects. Therefore, the meta-habits mentioned by Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk (2004): rationality, planning, play, mutability, spontaneity, I would reduce to different aspects of a single mechanism—searching and reading the outer tips on conduct, which I call meta-habit (in singular form). With such a ‘construction’ of the mechanism generating practices a child would be inculcated since childhood with certain practices (differing depending on the local context, depending on local habitus). However, important others would put emphasis on reading the external context, showing with their attitude and deploying the child to cross and change already implemented practices under the influence of different types of stimuli: new scientific ‘discoveries,’ new practices undertaken by friends, or new technologies in the household. Practices are generated by meta-habit automatically—as Kaufmann shows in the description of embodying new practices—the role of reflexivity is secondary, it occurs in specific situations, but more often than in the case of habitus. Referring to Dennett’s terminology, one can say that when reflexivity occurs, the meta-language supports the meta-habit in undertaking new behaviors. However, it is not so that the individual operates either on the basis of a habitus or an individual reflection—as Matthew Adams (2006) claims. The mechanism called here meta-habit escapes sociologists’ notice, which, like the habitus operates automatically and like reflexivity—allows the incorporation of new behaviors.

My thesis here is not that the meta-habit replaced the habitus. Rather, I believe that the habitus is still functioning and, as Bourdieu thought, it is an internalization of their position in the social structure. The functioning of the meta-habit can be described as a mechanism analogous to the habitus, but the dispositions contained therein are an internalization of an-

other feature of social life than social structure—namely, the dynamism of modernity. The features of modernity described by Anthony Giddens (1991), including the separation of time and space and disembedding mechanisms, result not only in an increase in reflectivity as he claims, but also in the creation of a mechanism enabling an automatic absorption of new practices—the meta-habit.

In complex societies the relations between fields in social space are dynamic. The agents struggle with each other not only to achieve a better position in social space, but also to establish which form of capital will be of the highest value in the field of power and what the relative value of various forms of capital will be in a given field. This is why the forces operating in the fields change their relative value.⁵ Every time when the relative value of different forms of capital in the field changes, the agents have to adjust and for example convert their accumulated capital so as to maintain their position in the field. Bourdieu (1988) claims that the conversion of capital is the easiest for these agents who have dispositions (in their habitus) that can be suitable in new situation that is connected with a form of capital that is easily convertible to the desired form of capital. However, taking into account that in complex societies, where social space consists of several fields, a balance between fields is always dynamic—by definition, it happens that the agents have to change their practices just to maintain their positions in the field whenever there is a transformation of relative value of forces operating in the given field. This means that in modern complex societies it is not rigid habitus that localizes the agent within the field. Habitus must be flexible (using Bourdieu's terms—see p. 67) to allow adapting to new practices. In global late modernity, when social space consists of myriads of local fields (in each state there is a field of power and many subjected fields), the dynamics of the system is so fast that the flexible habitus it is not enough. Whenever it is possible, the agent acts upon her/his dispositions. However, this is the situation when habitus dissolves, and meta-habit takes the leading role in localizing the agent in the field.

The functioning of the meta-habit we can describe as a changing grid of saving schemes which catches something new from the environment every time and is sensitive to new scenarios and images that 'fit' the rivaling action schemes pursuing competing identities of the individual. In the end, the incorporated practices are those which are coordinated with the meanings produced by the symbolic communities, with which members identify emotionally. As Bourdieu shows, those with whom people identify emotionally, are those who undertake the same practices, which means those with whom we share the same sector within the given field (Bourdieu 1984). In other words, meta-habit is responsible for the reproduction of the social order in the situation when the social space is very dynamic, as during in late modernity, which is a system comprising a myriad of fields. It allows for automatic acquisition of new practices from the individuals sharing the same identity and belonging to a symbolic community, and localized nearby in the social space.

If we apply Elizabeth Shove and her co-authors' (Hand and Shove 2004, 2007; Shove et al. 2012) analysis of practices, left practically on the descriptive level, to a broader theoretical context, we will understand why the distinguished components of practices have

⁵ In physics, when forces operating in the field change their strength/value, then the field is dynamic: the objects in the field change their place depending on the transformations of relative values of operating forces. I thank Dariusz Jażdżyk for this insight into the theory of fields in physics.

such a potential for empirically studying the social change. They recognize the peripheral devices of the human mind which are the factors for the transformation of forms of sociality (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2004): the discursive meanings refer to the meta-language—a tool of reflection on reality; material objects—tools and meta-tool; skills which easily undergo changes relate to the meta-habit.

The emergence of the meta-habit (allowing people to exceed implemented dispositions and dynamically filling them with new logics) was extended in time and lasted as long as the transition from traditional through modern to contemporary societies. Among the inter-connected factors behind the emergence of the meta-habit and the formation of fluid practices we may include:

- an increase in the complexity of societies: the social space consisting of myriads of fields what increases the dynamics of the system (described above) and differentiation of positions and social roles, resulting in an increasing number of habitus; which ever more often overlap each other, and individuals struggle with competing schemes of activities available on their social levels (Kaufmann 2001);
- repeated conversions of the habitus due to the numerous changes in living conditions in the modernizing, mobile society, as a result of which more and more new schemes of action are incorporated (Zalewska 2015);
- development of technologies of social saturation (meta-tool), which caused that a single person has at the same time in front of her/his eyes many schemes of action referring to different principles—thus the pool of practices possible to incorporate is growing (Gergen 1991).

At this point I would like to focus on the factor so far analyzed only to a lesser extent and especially important at the initial step of the emergence of meta-habit—namely, the impact of meta-language.

The Shaping of the Meta-habit: Psychologization and Rationalization

The mechanism allowing the transformation of the habitus is the secondary pedagogical work shaping the secondary habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). It involves reflection on the logics which steer primary practices and subjects them to further transformations through the conscious shaping of his own behavior, that is, the use of meta-language to reflect on its own practices. In these categories we may also include what Norbert Elias (2012) describes as the formation of customs around the concept of politeness (*civilité*) in the emerging courtly aristocratic class in sixteenth-century France. Politeness emerged on the basis of the courtesy of medieval knightly aristocracy, when the dominant class of knights was being replaced by the courtly aristocracy. Both were some kind of principles organizing the manners of the aristocracy, that is, the behavior of people in the company of others, including in particular the external bodily manners (Elias 2012). Therefore, we can call courtesy and politeness a habitus, just as Pierre Bourdieu (1977) calls the sense of honor among the Kabyle a habitus. If in this way we approach courtesy and politeness—as principles organizing schemes of perception, feeling, thinking and acting—we can say that what sets them apart is the way they are implemented: courtesy is the primary habitus and

politeness is the secondary habitus. The rules of courtesy had a simple, rhymed form, and the transmission occurred through oral tradition; memorizing played a special role as an educational method and a way of learning (Elias 2012). The rules of courtesy are reminiscent of the tools of social transmission in traditional culture, which include concise, terse formulation of verses, through which are passed practical messages or religious-moral indications (Dobrowolski 1958). This is a way of implementing social practices characteristic of the primary habitus—extra-discursive. If we refer to the peripheral devices of the mind, language will be serving as a link in the schema of practices, that is the language of action. A completely different thing applies in the case of the politeness of a courtier. Here, the same recommendations, previously passed on orally, were written down by Erasmus of Rotterdam in the treatise “*De civilitate morum puerilium*” printed in 1530, and in which the author added some new recommendations concerning activities. Teaching politeness is an example of using meta-language to transform habits. The meta-language weakens durable dispositions, contributing to the formation of a labile meta-habit. When giving the rules on how to behave, Erasmus of Rotterdam always justified them in terms of consideration for others. As Norbert Elias notices, in the Renaissance people shape themselves and look at others in a more aware way than in the Middle Ages. This phenomenon Norbert Elias calls psychologization—the perception of the other person—becomes richer in shades and is freed from the influence of the immediate emotions. The man begins to think about the emotional structure of another man, about his motives and calculations directing his behavior. The psychologization is accompanied by rationalization—“the farsightedness habit.” Rationalization involves the suppression of incorporated schemes of action, thought, and emotional reactions, and to use in their place cogitation—characteristic of the arbitrary will—in order to decide what gesture to make.

In sixteenth-century France, the emerging modern society experienced significant changes, and people of different origins entered the emerging courtly aristocracy, though mostly those hailing from the knighthood. It can be assumed that secondary pedagogical work was necessary to unify the nascent courtly aristocracy. It was the easiest for the representatives of chivalry to enter this class, because its habitus—courtesy was the basis for the secondary habitus—politeness. The usage of meta-language to reflect on their activities allowed a relatively quick assimilation of certain changes that distinguish this new class from the populace, as Erasmus of Rotterdam repeatedly distinguishes, from the point of view of politeness, a noble human’s behavior to that of a course peasant’s. Mastering the secondary habitus of politeness by part of the new aristocratic class coming from other social background was possible because life in a completely new environment allowed conversion. Norbert Elias focus on the growth of human relationships—all the people at the court were related and exerted pressure on each other, which thereby strengthened the learned logic of politeness. Learned habits were undergoing automatization.

In the next generation of courtiers politeness was implemented extra-discursively, thus it became the primary habitus for the children. Then, in the process of raising children they were taught more sophisticated rules of politeness, which developed over the modern era. Subsequent generations underwent secondary pedagogical work, shaping the secondary habitus of increasingly sophisticated politeness, containing many social and cognitive competencies (e.g. epistolary art). In the modern era—between the sixteenth and the twentieth

century, subjecting the primary habitus to changes and implementing practices that differ from the original was the established practice of the upper classes. On the basis of subjecting the primary habitus to multiple and conscious changes through reflection the meta-habit began to emerge.

At the gates of modernity the split between the habitus of the upper classes—the aristocracy and its rivaling middle class—and the habitus of the populace was very large, because, as described above, the upper classes were subjected to the process of transforming practices. The attitude of the modern nation’s elites towards the population is one Zygmunt Bauman (1991) compares to a gardener and his relation to a garden, attempting to create order. Just as shaping the habitus of the lower classes, so that they can be incorporated in the structure of the emerging national states, one can understand the disciplining of the body described by Michel Foucault (1975), taking place in prison, the army, the factory, and in school. They were closed institutions, in which the habitus was converted by exercises and exams, new movements, and gestures were incorporated into the body. Disciplining occurred in accordance with the principle of the panopticon—that is, the individual subjected to the discipline never knew when the “guardian’s” eye would rest on him. Therefore, he had to be constantly alert, behaving in accordance with the imposed requirements.

In summary, in the modern era, subjecting the primary habitus to changes and implementing practices that differ from the original was the established practice of the upper classes, but it was a difficult process to carry out, demanding constant intellectual work—that is, a meta-language. Secondary pedagogical work was done in every consecutive generation, which made the modern era a period of changes in Europe. In turn, the primary habitus of the lower classes was changed by way of conversion in early modernity. On the basis of subjecting the primary habitus to multiple and conscious changes through reflection (the work of the meta-language) the meta-habit began to shape; this means a disposition to a continuous openness to new information and in accordance transforming their action schemes. Technological development (the work of meta-tools)—especially technologies of social saturation (Gergen 1991) gave access to a myriad of new action schemes that can enrich the already implemented schemes. Nowadays, incorporating and implementing a new action scheme does not require time-consuming conversion or secondary pedagogical work—it is no longer strictly dependent on the conscious effort of the individual. Today’s incorporating new practices could be better described by a model of the synopticon, where millions of people watch and admire the few, emulating them (Mathiesen 1997) than panopticon. Meta-habit operates mostly automatically, outside of conscious reflection, thus undertaking new practices has become relatively easy.

Conclusion

Trying to describe meta-habit—the mechanism of undertaking new behaviors—I have used the basic thesis of the precursor of the practice theory, Bourdieu, for whom the practices of individuals at the same time reflect the characteristics of the society, and on the other hand, they create and produce those characteristics. While habitus generates practices recreating the social structure in traditional societies, meta-habit—a structure that has implemented

dispositions for continuous openness to the situational context, to the search for and reading the outer clues of conduct—is responsible for the reproduction of the social order in situations when social space is very dynamic—as in late modernity, which is a system that consists of myriads of fields. The emergence of the meta-habit was extended in time and lasted as long as the transition from traditional through modern to contemporary societies: one of the first factors was subjecting the primary habitus to multiple and conscious changes through reflection among the upper classes in the modern era. Meta-habit allows the individual to quickly adjust to the social environment due to the continuous transformation of the grid of perception and constant assimilation of new materials from which operating schemes are built. Reflection plays a secondary role in this process, the initial stages of adoption of new practices occur without awareness. Thus meta-habit is responsible for the continuous formation and disappearance of practices, since the individual involves themselves into those that fit his so far incorporated or internalized schemas which—on the societal pole—are the practices shared within various symbolic communities to which the individual belongs. It is through undertaking constantly new practices that the agent is able to maintain her/his position in social space. The practices of different symbolic communities compete with each other inside the individual. Identification is never complete and permanent, messages reaching the individual build alternative identities along with alternative schemes of actions. Also within each symbolic community practices change and compete with each other because the grid of perception is changing in each individual in the community due to their competing identities. In this way practices, meanings, and members of symbolic communities change dynamically while the positions of the agents in social space are relatively stable.

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Biographical Note: Joanna Zalewska, Ph.D., assistant professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, The Maria Grzegorzewska University. She is interested in social change, practice theory, consumer culture, everyday life, later life and ethnography. She was rewarded by Polish Sociological Association with Stanisław Ossowski prize (2016) for the book *Człowiek stary wobec zmiany kulturowej. Perspektywa teorii praktyk społecznych* (Scholar, 2015). Recently she has published in such journals as *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *Polish Sociological Review*, *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, *Studia Socjologiczne*, *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej*. Presently she is realizing a grant from National Science Centre Poland, “Consumer Revolution in Poland” (NCN/HS6/04811).

E-mail: joanna.marta.zalewska@gmail.com