



INSTITUT FÜR HÖHERE STUDIEN  
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES  
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## Public Lecture

### **Ph.D. Prof. Theodore Schatzki**

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# Practice Theory as Flat Ontology

Date: May 19, 2014

Time: 17:00 - 18:30

Place: Institute for Advanced Studies, seminar room for Sociology, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

#### **Short summery**

Contemporary theories of practice hold that practices form a plenum and that social affairs transpire in this plenum. They thereby promulgate a flat social ontology according to which everything that composes social entities lies on one level of reality. My talk first contrasts practice analyses of social affairs with prima facie similar ones in ethnomethodology and phenomenology that prioritize local situations. It then explains why a plenum of practices composes a single level. Following this, this flat plenum ontology is clarified through criticisms of two competitors: an alternative flat ontology due to Latour and a multilevel ontology developed by the Dutch Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) on sociotechnical development. The concluding section argues that the contrast fundamental to social analysis is not that between micro and macro, local and global, or activity and structure, but that between small and large. A deflating analysis of the micro-macro contrast that dissolves this contrast into myriads of contingent, unsystematic relations is presented.

#### **Short biographical note**

Ted Schatzki is Senior Associate Dean (Dean of Faculty) in the College of Arts & Sciences, Professor of Philosophy and Geography, and the former Chair of the Department of Philosophy. He is also the cofounder and former co-director of the University's Committee on Social Theory, which oversees a multidisciplinary graduate-level teaching and research

program in social thought. Schatzki earned a degree in applied mathematics from Harvard University (1977) and degrees in philosophy from Oxford University (1979) and UC Berkeley (1982, 1986). His research and teaching interests lie in social ontology, theory of action, social theory, the philosophy of social science, and 20th-century continental philosophy. He is the author of four books: *Social Practices* (1996), *The Site of the Social* (2002), *Martin Heidegger: Theorist of Space* (2007) and *The Timespace of Human Activity* (2010). In addition, he is author of numerous articles on Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and various topics in philosophy of action, social theory, and continental philosophy. Schatzki has been a research fellow of the Fulbright Commission and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Exeter, The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, the Karl-Franzens University in Graz, the Institute of Advanced Studies in Vienna, and The Charles Sturt University in Australia. As Senior Associate Dean of Faculty, Schatzki oversees all matters pertaining to faculty.

### **Selected Recent Articles**

- "Practice Theory as Flat Ontology," forthcoming in *Praxistheorie. Ein Forschungsprogramm*, Helmut Schaefer (ed), Bielefeld, transcript.
- "Art Bundles," forthcoming in *Artistic Practices*, Tasos Zembylas (ed), London, Routledge.
- "The Edge of Change: On the Emergence, Persistence, and Dissolution of Practices," in *Sustainable practice: social theory and climate change*, Elizabeth Shove and Nicola Spurling (eds), London, Routledge, 2013, pp. 31-46..
- "Activity as an Indeterminate Social Event," in *Wittgenstein and Heidegger: Pathways and Provocations*, Stephen Reynolds, David Egan, and Aaron Weneland (eds), London, Routledge, 2013, pp. 179-94.
- "A Primer on Practices: Theory and Research," in *Practice-Based Education: Perspectives and Strategies*, Joy Higgs et al. (eds), Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2012, pp. 13-26.
- "Temporality and the Causal Account of Action," in *Heidegger and Cognitive Science*, Julian Kiverstein and Mike Wheeler (eds), Basingstoke, UK, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
- "Landscapes as Timespace Phenomena," in *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies*, Jeff Malpas (ed), Cambridge, MA., MIT Press, 2011, pp. 65-89.
- "Pippin's Hegel on Action," *Inquiry* 53, No. 5 (2010): 490-505.
- "Materiality and Social Life," *Nature + Culture* 5, no, 2 (2010): 123-49.

- "Timespace and the Organization of Social Life," in *Time, consumption and everyday life*, Elizabeth Shove, Frank Trentmann, and Richard Wilk (ed), London, Berg, 2009, 35-48.
- "Dimensions of Social Theory," in *Reimagining the Social in South Africa: Critique and Post-Apartheid Knowledge*, Peter Vale and Heather Jacklin (ed), University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2009, 29-46.
- "The Time of Activity," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 155-82.
- "On Organizations as They Happen," *Organization Studies* 27, No.12 (2006): 1863-73.
- "On Studying the Past Scientifically," *Inquiry* 49, No.4 (2006): 380-99.
- "Early Heidegger on Sociality," *A Companion to Heidegger*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (ed), Oxford, Blackwell, 2005, 233-47.
- "On Interpretive Social Inquiry," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 35 (2005), pp.231-49.
- "The Sites of Organizations," *Organization Studies* 26, No.3 (2005), pp. 465-84. Reprinted in *Sage Directions in Organization Studies*, Stuart R. Clegg (ed), New York, Sage, 2009.