



## The online forum as a digital space of curation

Johan Jansson

Dept. of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University, Sweden



### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Curation  
Intermediation  
Consumption  
Value creation  
Online forums  
Narrated purchase

### ABSTRACT

This paper focus on the concept of curation that emphasizes intermediary processes sorting and filtering the information overload that characterize contemporary digitalized society. The paper has two overall aims. The first aim is theoretical and the ambition is to identify practices and processes distinctive to curation in digital spaces. From this literature the paper argues that contemporary digital curation is characterized by (a) digitally produced and mediated processes, (b) de-professionalization, (c) a combination of productive and consumptive modes, (d) space as a 'quality stamp', and (e) an increasingly underlying and/or everyday practice. The second aim is empirical and, through a case study of an online forum dedicated to hi-fi and high-end audio equipment, the ambition is to identify curatorial practices and processes taking place at the forum and to understand how the online forum functions as a curatorial space. More specifically, in the analysis of the empirical material three themes are highlighted. First, personal consumer experiences are expressed through narrated purchases in which the constant pursuit of the 'perfect audio reproduction system' is materialized as these narratives involve with the explanations and motivations behind personal reflections and experiences of purchase decisions. Second, the online forum has clear power structures. Third, the online forum deals with geographical dimensions in several ways, e.g. by functioning as a space for legitimization where the lack of distance and the use of (partially) anonymous profiles generate both advantageous and disadvantageous dimensions.

### 1. Introduction

Intermediation constitutes important processes in culture and economy, and intermediary actors such as gatekeepers and taste-makers, are said to perform crucial roles in-between producers and consumers. Through digitization, access to products and related information have increased significantly, and while consumers need help to filter 'information overload', intermediaries are recognized as having increasingly vital positions in these value creating processes (Glückler and Sanchez-Hernandez, 2014; Turkle, 2015). Consequently, the role of intermediation is changing as well as the spaces where these powers are executed.

To help nuance our understanding of the role of intermediaries in a digitized economy and bridge the gap in the literature on intermediaries, research (and industry) has turned to the traditional concept of curation. In this literature, curators are said to actively, critically and strategically sort, evaluate and ascribe economic, symbolic and cultural value to products in both physical and temporal spaces, and increasingly in virtual spaces (Balzer, 2014; Jansson and Hracs, 2018). "Curation is a key mechanism of sociality in a digital era. With an abundance of information, sifting, sorting, selecting, hiding, and standing out become laborious tasks" (Davis, 2017: 770).

This study highlights an understudied form of curatorial space and related processes; online forums. In this context, online forums are platforms for information dissemination, knowledge building, discussion, evaluation and interpretation of various types of products and thus an important source for numerous consumers to make (more informed!) purchases (Joose and Hracs, 2015). Online forums provide spaces with specific discourses and hierarchies, and similar to traditional and physical intermediaries, the knowledge, information, feelings and prejudices that exists in at the online forum forms a microcosm that in various ways influences interpretations and ultimately the choices made by consumers (Jansson and Hracs, 2018).

The paper has two overall aims. The first aim is theoretical and the ambition is to, from a review of existing literature on curation, identify practices and processes distinctive to curation in digital spaces. From this literature the paper argues that contemporary digital curation is characterized by (a) digitally produced and mediated processes, (b) de-professionalization, (c) a combination of both productive and consumptive modes, (d) space as a 'quality stamp', and (e) an increasingly underlying and/or everyday practice.

The second aim is empirical and, through a case study of an online forum dedicated to hi-fi and high-end audio equipment, the ambition is to identify curatorial practices and processes taking place at the forum

E-mail address: [johan.jansson@kultgeog.uu.se](mailto:johan.jansson@kultgeog.uu.se).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.08.008>

Received 11 December 2018; Received in revised form 5 August 2019; Accepted 6 August 2019

0016-7185/ © 2019 The Author. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

and to understand how the online forum functions as a curatorial space. In general, this paper shows how the online forum shape understandings of consumer products and how values are negotiated in online contexts. The curatorial processes and practices taking place in the online forum constitute crucial parts in value-creating processes, and not only economic value related to the products discussed at the forum, but also social and cultural values that relate to specific products as well as communities. More specifically, in the analysis of the empirical material three themes are highlighted. First, the practice of personal consumer experiences or *narrated purchases* is identified as characteristic to the curatorial processes taking place in the online forum. In the narrated purchase, the constant pursuit of the ‘perfect audio reproduction system’ is materialized as these narratives involve with the explanations and motivations behind personal reflections and experiences of purchase decisions. Second, the digital forum has clear power structures, though they can be more difficult to detect than in the context of traditional intermediaries. Although the online forum is open to everyone, it has a clear *hierarchical structure*, partly through how much and how often individual profiles/signatures comment, and what response their comments generate. The status received is legitimized both by visibility online and offline as well as the degree of initiated knowledge in the field. Third, the online forum deals with *geographical dimensions* in several ways, partly by functioning as a space for legitimization where the lack of distance and the use of (partially) anonymous profiles generate both advantageous and disadvantageous dimensions. The forum also serve as an important link between virtual and (still very important for the industry) physical spaces and thus function as a supplement to traditional physical spaces as it allows contacts between buyers and sellers in a way that traditional intermediaries previously have not been able to present. Thus, possibilities to also mediate physical experiences crucial in establishing insights and opinions in an industry characterized both by measurable and non-measurable dimensions are created.

**2. From (cultural) intermediation to curation**

The role of cultural intermediaries has been a subject of studies in a range of disciplines (Bourdieu, 1984; Negus, 2002; Maguire, 2014). Cultural intermediaries circulate and ascribe meaning, between moments of production and consumption (Woo, 2012; Powers, 2015), but also that they are responsible for “bringing a range of cultural things to market: goods, images, taste, and aesthetics” (Entwistle, 2009:15). Intermediaries construct “repertoires of cultural legitimacy” (Maguire, 2014: 21) through the professional status of the intermediary (Bourdieu, 1984). Cultural intermediation has become an umbrella term for a number of different types of intermediary functions, actors and processes such as brokers, gatekeeping, taste-making, selectors, match-making, co-producers or co-promoters (Negus, 2002; Foster et al., 2011). These functions are executed not least in relation to cultural products which values rests on their symbolic, aesthetic or semiotic characteristics (Power and Scott, 2004) and as such, cultural intermediaries are vital to manage the omnipresent uncertainty in the cultural industries (Caves, 2000; Foster et al., 2011). Consequently, intermediaries become important authorities, and part of the literature stress the political-economy aspects of power relations in cultural intermediation, and thus its potential for structuring and restructuring industrial and policy relevant dimensions (Jakob and van Heur, 2015), or more specifically as key actors in the processes of both the ‘culturalization of economy’ and the ‘economization of culture’ (O’Connor, 2015). In addition, while Bourdieu (1984) emphasized the role of the professional intermediary actor, much of the later literature focus on the intermediary process (Maguire, 2014; Davis, 2017), relating the idea of ‘product as process’ (Callon et al., 2002) as well as local and global value chains and ‘value making ecologies’ (White, 2002).

Connected to increasing digitalization, the roles and importance of intermediaries change; more efficient production methods combined

with the inherent logics of capitalism assuming ‘unlimited’ product alternatives which imply (with the exception of the continued digital divide) that consumers have increasing access to available products in the marketplace. Related to this, consumers increasingly facing situations that demands conscious or unconscious choices (Delaroccas et al., 2016) and, ‘unlimited’ access to information on available options results in increasing need of intermediaries in selecting, filtering and contextualizing these goods and services (Lange and Bürkner, 2013; Jansson and Hracs, 2018).

However, the exact nature of the positions that intermediaries hold within value chains and networks, and the functions they perform remain ambiguous (Foster et al., 2011) and there is a need to further stratify and differentiate actors involved in intermediation (Nixon and du Gay, 2002; Jansson and Hracs, 2018).

One potential subfield of intermediation is the concept of curation (Balzer, 2014; Hendricks, 2015; Joosse and Hracs, 2015; Hracs and Jansson, 2017; Jansson and Hracs, 2018). So far, curation has been used to describe a range of activities, functions and processes in industry, politics and a growing academic literature (Balzer, 2014; Jansson and Hracs, 2018), and there is an emergent need to better understand what curation is, what curators do and how curation-related processes are shaped by specific contexts including location, scale and industry, and what distinguish curation from traditional (cultural) intermediation Hracs and Jansson (2017).

In their literature review on curation, Jansson and Hracs (2018) find more than 80 concepts relating to curatorial processes (Table 1) that they distil into a set of actions and operationalized outcomes.

The ultimate outcome of these processes is the creation of various values (cultural, social and economic), or as Balzer (2014:32) puts it: “The curator is someone who insists on value, and who makes it, whether or not it actually exists”. Beyond mere buying advice, these ‘curators’ offer valuable knowledge about how to evaluate, interpret, translate, understand and use specific products (Shultz, 2015; Hracs and Jansson, 2017; Jansson and Hracs, 2018). Bhaskar (2016) emphasize that curators cut down complexity by overcoming ‘information overload’ (Glückler and Sanchez-Hernandez, 2014).

Not surprisingly, most research on curation and curators has been conducted in art and art market studies (Balzer, 2014). More recently, however, the concept of curation has expanded into a number of different industries such as music (Atton, 2014; Hendricks, 2015; Hracs, 2015; Morris, 2015; Hracs and Jansson, 2017; Jansson and Hracs, 2018) and food (Joosse and Hracs, 2015; Concha, 2017), as well as other types of activities e.g. co-working spaces (Brown, 2017), NGOs (Fotopoulou and Couldry, 2015) and public institutions (Kinahan, 2017). In general, these studies show that traditional or professional curators, such as magazines and cultural institutions, are being challenged and complemented by new and less formal actors like bloggers,

**Table 1**  
Curatorial actions and outcomes (reiteration of Jansson and Hracs, 2018).

| Actions         |             | Outcomes   |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Search          | Discover    | <i>Assemble</i> a range of products which may generate value                                     |
| Find            |             |  |
| Filter          | Evaluate    | <i>Legitimize</i> and <i>add value</i> to products by adding ‘quality stamp’                     |
| Sort            | Select      |  |
| Evaluate        | Arrange     | <i>Frame</i> and <i>contextualize</i> products but also <i>legitimize</i> and <i>add value</i>   |
| Determine value | Display     |  |
| Recommend       | Organize    | <i>Collect, organize</i> and <i>preserve</i> products music and information and curated content  |
| Organize        | Catalog     |  |
| Care            | Archive     |  |
| Discover        | Communicate | <i>Promote, legitimize</i> and <i>add value</i> to products.                                     |
| Interpret       | Recommend   |  |
| translate       | Match       | Educate consumers. Establish/enhance trust and loyalty through recommendations and interactions. |

algorithms, amateur users and social media platforms (Aspers, 2010; Ashton and Couzins, 2015; Brydges and Sjöholm, 2018), and e.g. Morris (2015) argue that algorithms, or so called 'intermediaries', are increasingly responsible for shaping how audiences encounter and experience cultural content. In addition, curators are often driven by a combination of economic and psychic rewards that range from the intrinsic reward in the pure joy of 'creating' to more explicit achievements in being recognized by colleagues and peers (Joosse and Hrac, 2015; Jansson and Hrac, 2018). Thus, curators are more than their occupational title as legitimacy is established as much in the actors' personal engagement and investment in their work (Maguire, 2014; Jansson and Hrac, 2018; Hrac and Jansson, 2017;).

Spatially, analyses of curation have moved beyond the confines of museums and galleries to include e.g. homes, high streets and mobile phones (Ashton and Couzins, 2015; Hawkins, 2017). Thus, traditional curation cannot easily be distinguished from digital spaces as they are overlapping. Consequently, omnipresent virtual environments such as digital music recommender systems and other channels including apps, websites and social media platforms needs to be considered in understanding how curation is performed and experienced (Jansson and Hrac, 2018).

However, there are reasons to critically reflect on curation as a concept explaining contemporary intermediate processes in a digitalized world. First, several definitions and connotations exist simultaneously, depending on the focus of attention - from art markets and museums to curated selections of restaurants or retail stores (Concha, 2017; Hawkins, 2017; Leslie et al., 2015). Also, similar to any type of intermediation, curation is involved with the *discriminate* filtering or selection of products (Davis, 2017) as well as the role of curators in shaping moments of acquisition and appreciation or in diminishing value through comments as elements of consumption (see Evans, 2018). Thus we need to learn more about the new power dynamics and discursive power of curation (Törnberg and Törnberg, 2016), both in commercial activities and in the 'politics of curation' in state institutions (Cwynar, 2017) as well as in computational, algorithmic or 'automated curation' (Lambert et al., 2018). Finally, the de-professionalization of intermediary actors associated with digitalization has meant that new groups of individuals and, in particular, consumers have been able to take on curatorial roles through various forms of e.g. co-creation (Lange and Bürkner, 2013).

### 3. The distinctiveness of curation in digital space

While the concept of curation has reached increasing attention, few studies are focusing on curatorial practices and processes in primarily digital contexts. While the literature on curation highlights a number of general defining qualities, this paper emphasizes four dimensions that are arguably distinctive to curation in digital spaces:

First, contemporary curation is both a consequence of digitalization and mediated by the same (Willson, 2006; Davis, 2017). As already argued, digitalization results in increased access to (almost) unlimited products and alternatives, and thus need for curatorial activities and processes. In addition, automated recommendation systems driven by algorithms occupy a central position in contemporary circulation of media and cultural products (Morris, 2015). Digitalization thus establish an infrastructure that enables participation, access and, arguably, democratizes conversation. From a curatorial perspective, digitization constitutes a framework for all of the actions and outcomes identified in Table 1. At the same time, digitalization provides a basis for new power structures and hierarchies.

Second, while the need for curation intensifies and the number of curators grows, there are several processes indicating that curation is de-professionalizing, that is, the functions previously performed by professional intermediaries today are increasingly performed by a set of various actors such as initiated amateurs (Brydges and Sjöholm, 2018). This also contributes to a heightened individualization in such a way

that technological tools (such as social media) allow individuals to diffuse information and influence their environment to a larger extent than previously, e.g. increasing DIY movements (Hrac, 2015). Through de-professionalization, assembling may become more efficient as more actors are involved. At the same time, less professional curators may not have the same access to products and information (e.g. new releases). However, on the positive side, increased number of curators may lead to an increased range of perspectives. Also, on the one hand, legitimacy processes are adversely affected as professional curators traditionally have been able ascribe products with a 'quality stamp', on the other hand, peer reviews among amateur users may give a different dimension of legitimacy.

Third, according to Davis (2017) curation is a combination of 'productive' and 'consumptive' curation, i.e. how curation occurs both in how the individual presents herself and how he/she filters the flow of information that he/she is constantly consuming. Furthermore, productive curation points to what individuals' document, share and with whom, as social media allows the user to choose to whom a specific content is shared. Hence, productive curation facilitates identity performance. Consumptive curation, on the other hand, is about how individuals allocate their attention to the large flows of information and content and "navigate pools of data in discriminating ways", thus creating what Davis (2017:773) calls "particularistic windows on the world" in an online forum context.

Fourth, space in itself may function as a 'quality stamp' in the way that physical and virtual space efficiently frame and contextualize products and consumption (Hrac and Jansson, 2017; Jansson and Hrac, 2018). Not least, digitalization means that new hybrid and overlapping physical/virtual spaces emerge. Digital infrastructures also facilitates individual networking in a way that was not previously possible (at least not on an everyday basis). Among many things, these connections facilitate legitimizing processes and lessen uncertainty in situations of acquisition.

Fifth, following from the above four dimensions of digitalization, de-professionalization, the combination of a productive and consumptive curation and space as curator, curation should be seen as an increasingly underlying and/or everyday practice than traditional intermediation (e.g. how algorithms control our choices in a relatively invisible and seamless manner) (Fotopoulou and Couldry, 2015; Davis, 2017). As will be shown below, digital technology enables continuous and frequent updates (unlike traditional media and intermediaries). This is accentuated by the fact that contemporary digital devices are mobile and allow updates on the go.

### 4. Researching virtual communities/online forums

As the ambition of this paper is to increase our understanding of curatorial processes in a digital contexts, the empirical focus is on so-called virtual communities or more specifically online forums. This is not in itself a new study area and new ways of communicate, share information, interact and build identity, both of individuals and brands, organizations, etc. have spurred research, in various disciplines, to focus on virtual communities and online forums (Kendall, 2000; Markham and Baym, 2009; Kinsley, 2013; Baym, 2015; Törnberg and Törnberg, 2016). Although the concept of virtual communities often involves geographically dispersed people sharing common interests that they practice and discuss based on mutually accepted rules in a voluntary membership (Hercheui, 2011), existing and emerging digital communication tools and devices involves a complex set of new possibilities, but also boundaries e.g. while online communities are making communication, searching and discovering more efficient and inclusive, it may also amplify feelings of exclusion, loneliness and disruption (Wellman, 1999), or lead to devaluation of products and practices (Evans, 2018). More specifically, Grabher and Ibert (2014) identifies 'hybrid communities' which represent a specific type of community, encompassing the realm of professional expertise as well as the

ordinary world of regular users, and enthusiasts. The hybrid dimension thus treats the range of community contributions from professional actors to amateurs and everyday users of a specific product.

This study contributes to the literature on the intermediate functions of online forums and how they shape the understandings of consumer products and how values are negotiated in online contexts. In addition, it relates to literature that deals with mediated identities and how online spaces redefine and transcend social and spatial boundaries (Markham and Baym, 2009). However, identities and distance are affected by the capabilities of the devices through which we experience online interaction, such as the interactivity a device offers, the temporal structure (i.e. synchronous and asynchronous communication) and the relatively lack of social cues available in online contexts (Baym, 2015).

#### 4.1. How the study was conducted

This study use a single case study method (Flyvbjerg, 2006) focusing on the particular: an online forum. In this context, online forums should be understood as a vital part of the curatorial processes that create and recreate the structure and values (cultural, social and economic) of high-end audio equipment consumer markets. Specifically, the focus on online forums opens up possibilities to understand how consumers, or users, participate in curatorial processes through the channels of online communication.

The point of departure in the empirical work has been to collect quantitative and qualitative data from an online forum that explicitly discuss products related to high-end audio equipment. Primarily, qualitative content analysis has been applied to the collected empirical material (Krippendorff, 2013). Preferably, content analysis is used to identify e.g. attitudes, views and interests of specific groups or individuals (Drisko and Maschi, 2015) in various context, such as online communities (Versteeg et al., 2018). Secondary, relevant in informing overall ideas of the research project was the use of observation, or netnography (Kozinets, 2010).

In the first stage of the analysis focus was on mapping Swedish online forums specializing in discussing hifi and high-end audio equipment and to find information about e.g. number of members, extent and number of comments as well as the type of discussions being conducted. This information have been gathered and compiled to measure and describe the type and scope of the activities taking place at the online forums. In particular, this stage informed the process of selecting the specific online forum that this paper is focusing on: the online forum *Faktiskt.se*.

In the second stage, the qualitative content was analyzed and the comments collected from various threads were coded into representative themes. The process of analyzing the interviews involved a systematic process of coding and recoding (Crang, 2005). Each thread and post at the online forum was analyzed phrase by phrase. Along with this process thematic codes, annotations and reflective notes were added. Subsequently, in this 'open coding' (Crang, 2005), the data were organized into categories which corresponded to the terms and concepts related to curation.

The single case study approach obviously comes with a number of limitations, and like Weijo et al. (2014) point out, today's digital consumer communities are highly fragmented and the subcultural capital and hierarchies identified in single online forums should be understood as multi-contextual. Also, implementing a netnographic approach requires specific ethical considerations (Kozinets, 2010). The extent and structure of an online forum makes it difficult (or impossible) to reach consent with each individual participant in the online discussion forum (in this study several hundred individuals have contributed to the conversations analyzed). Consequently (and in line with Maliepaard, 2017), where direct quotes have been used all participants are anonymized (all quotes used are originally in Swedish and translated into English by the author).

In addition, there are reasons to critically reflect on the use of digital

empirical sources such as online forums. Leszczynski (2018) points out that, for example, activities and statements made on social media do not always correspond with socio-spatial practices, processes and related phenomena. At the same time, the possibility of generalization is questionable; to what extent do they represent the group (individuals, organizations, etc.) that they claim to represent (Markham and Baym, 2009).

## 5. Hifi and high-end audio equipment and the sample online forum

Hifi or high fidelity equipment are products that aim to reproduce sound as accurate as possible and high-end audio equipment is a segment of hifi that is marketed to audiophiles and characterized by their high price and sound quality. However, as noticed by Waxell and Jansson (2013) sound quality is a highly complex concept involving both measurable (material/objective) and non-measurable (immaterial/subjective) aspects.

Characteristically, the hi-fi industry is a highly specialized niche market oriented towards dedicated consumers willing to invest a substantial amount of time and money in order to find and purchase audio reproduction devices delivering (arguably) superior sound quality (see Milne, 1991; Branch, 2008). Influenced by both technological and historical developments and the nature of the hifi market, the hifi industry is permeated by different ideas on how the perfect reproduction of sound is created, and they differ both between producers and consumers, as well as between intermediaries such as online hifi communities (Branch, 2008). Hence, it is a universe of its own characterized by debates and conflicts concerning opposite views (or 'philosophies') on e.g. analogue vs. digital, tubes vs. transistors or vinyl vs. any type of digitized music. Perlman (2004) distinguishes between what he calls 'golden ears', highlighting their identity as music lovers, and 'meter readers', focusing on the technology involved in reproducing music.

Intermediation processes in the hifi and high-end audio equipment industry have traditionally been executed by professional actors in well-defined spaces where these actors have possessed high status and legitimacy. First, actors within retail constitute important intermediaries and one type is characterized by large retail chains competing with extensive stocks and low prices. For the average consumer, these large retail chains represent perhaps the only interaction with a consumer electronic intermediary. On the one hand, these retailers are crucial in equipping mass markets with sound reproduction devices. On the other hand, they often lack the knowledge and/or incentive to inspire the wider audience to develop their interest in authentic audio reproduction. The second type of retailers represent a more niched and specialized type of consumer behavior. These, mainly independent, retailers do not compete on price, but by emphasizing passion, quality and by developing in-depth relationships with their customers. These retailers not only just mediate the product, in addition they educate their customers in how to handle and take care of the equipment, as well as mediating the dimensions of audio reproduction.

Other important traditional intermediary actors for establishing interest and knowledge in the hifi and high end audio equipment has been dedicated hifi magazines/journals and hifi trade fairs. Also, dedicated societies, communities and 'fan clubs' constitute networks of hifi-interested people and are crucial for establishing communities outside formal channels and arenas. These communities often involve in local meetings and events where concrete experiences of hifi are shared and where conflicts and dividing interests are debated. In addition, there are numerous informal meetings and events dedicated at practicing DIY.

### 5.1. *Faktiskt.io*

In this paper, the online forum *Faktiskt.io*<sup>1</sup> is used as a single case study. Studying an online forum dedicated to hifi and high-end audio

**Table 2**  
Statistics from Faktiskt.se (Website accessed 20180124).

| Name                   | No. of members | No. of threads | No. of posts | Type of forum                        |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| MinHemBio.com          | 455,601        | 252,702        | 4,302,107    | General (audio and video)            |
| Faktiskt.io            | 10,332         | 40,140         | 1,191,009    | General (focus on audio)             |
| HiFiForum.nu           | 5833           | 14,850         | 362,248      | General (audio and video)            |
| Component.se           | 4794           | 15,432         | 213,313      | General (audio and video)            |
| Euphonia-audioforum.se | 2506           | 12,001         | 217,176      | Esoteric (focus on audio)            |
| CarlssonPlanet.com     | 1812           | 3164           | 24,114       | Esoteric (focus on a specific brand) |

equipment is motivated by primarily two reasons. Today, many curatorial processes increasingly takes place online (like many other industries) and important in the communication of specific products and knowledge about hifi is today conveyed in online forums (Waxell and Jansson, 2013; Waxell and Jansson, 2013). Also, it is relevant to understand how the measurable/non-measurable aspects of the industry translates into online contexts. Using this particular online forum is motivated by the fact that that it is an actor that was established in 2003 and currently the second largest Swedish speaking online forum discussing hifi equipment (see Table 2).

Faktiskt.io is an independent *specialized product online forum* or 'hybrid virtual community' (Grabher and Ibert, 2014). The forum has a well-defined and clear focus, discussing primarily hifi-related issues and only to a limited extent discuss other products e.g. video (photo/TV/DVD etc.). It is an open forum that anyone can visit and take part in the information and discussions provided by the website, however, to upload posts to the different threads at the website, membership is required. At the time of this survey, January 2018, the total number of members was 10332. The forum is organized in 5 overarching groups which are then divided into 12 specific themes, each consisting of thousands of threads discussing various topics (see Table 3). In total, the forum consists of 40,140 threads and almost 1,200,000 posts.

As the total number of threads and posts is too large to handle for a qualitative analysis a sample was made driven by primarily two criteria. First, as the focus of this paper is themes that explicitly discuss issues connected to the actual purchase of hifi and high-end audio equipment, the group 'HiFi' was chosen, and from this group the theme name 'buying advice' was sampled. This theme was chosen because of the focus on advice in connection with purchases, which to some extent excludes discussions that do not explicitly relate to the curatorial role of the forum. From this theme a sample was made of threads that was commented on during the last 6 months from the sampling date. During this period, a total of 2447 comments were posted in 112 threads by a total of 278 profiles/signatures/members.

## 6. The online forum as curatorial space

The online forum Faktiskt.se function as digitally mediated platform where legitimacy of highly specific products, processes and practices are negotiated and competing opinions, 'ideologies' and values are contested. These divides spur ideas of 'right' and 'wrong' which are both negotiated and reproduced in the online forum and different individuals (signatures) engaged in the forum run 'their' heart questions in and between different threads. The signature 'Fredrik':

"So called 'neutral speakers' are perhaps more for technicians that evaluate the properties of the components or those with a greater interest in measurement values and design principles, than in experiencing the music in itself".

<sup>1</sup> In March 2018, the domain name of the online forum Faktiskt.se changed to Faktiskt.io. The original domain is currently owned and used by an association of Swedish news agencies (DN, SvD, SR and SvT) which constitutes one network out of approximately 150 working under IFCN's (International Fact Checking Network) 'code of principles'.

**Table 3**  
Statistics from Faktiskt.se (Website accessed 20180124).

| Groups              | Theme name                    | No. of threads | No of. posts |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Information         | Information from editors      | 20             | 491          |
|                     | HiFi                          | 9953           | 474,044      |
| HiFi-Technology     | Buying advice                 | 5193           | 97,362       |
|                     | Member presentations          | 708            | 81,068       |
|                     | Technology forum              | 5308           | 107,265      |
|                     | DIY forum                     | 7193           | 191,592      |
|                     | Faktiskt.se speaker challenge | 16             | 1498         |
| Music & Music Media | Music discussions             | 4062           | 75,257       |
|                     | Record recommendations        | 1584           | 17,740       |
| Enthusiast forum    | Carlsson Illuminati           | 1369           | 33,761       |
|                     | Vintage Hifi                  | 2580           | 40,020       |
|                     | Friends of Ino                | 2160           | 70,911       |
| Total               |                               | 40,140         | 1,191,009    |

Also frequently occurring is discussions on the relationship between price and quality. The majority of these discussions approaches the question focusing on whether the price is matching the quality of the product. Significant to these arguments is the idea that a product may be of good quality 'for its price range' (Waxell and Jansson, 2013). Based on this principle, it is not the price in itself that is high, but only in relation to what you get for this investment. The signature 'Erik' formulates this:

"It is not the price tag that determines if something is expensive or cheap".

Most parts of the forum Faktiskt.io are accessible without membership, however, membership is required when commenting an already existing thread or opening up or initializing a new thread (here called the OP or 'original poster'). Receiving a membership requires no specific efforts more than contacting the forum, completing a standard form and adding contact details. However, some sections (themes) does require specific membership and are thus not accessible to occasional visitors. In general, virtual communities are encompassed by both formal and informal rules and norms on how to interact between members (Laud and Karpen, 2017). An example of a more formalized regulation is the guideline constructed by the forum founders and moderators to those who want to post new threads within the theme 'Buying advice' (Fig. 1).

The empirical analysis identifies a number of discussion topics frequently appearing in the various threads of the theme 'Buying advice' (Table 4).

Hence, the examined threads range between general inquiries and consumer information of hifi and high-end equipment (speakers, amplifiers, media players, headphones etc.), and more narrow questions on specific type of products, brands as well as audio reproduction 'philosophies'. It is common to share pictures of products (and links to links to products, manufacturers, dealers, reviews, tests, test results, and other forums and magazines) and images of products in their own homes.

The language used at the forum may in parts be perceived as

Dear audiophile,

There are often many follow-up questions when make an inquiry in 'Buying advice'. Below I will present some tips on the topic. Please feel free to add information to help build an informative 'Buying advice FAQ':

Scenario 1; "I need a new component for my current hifi system.  
It might be a good idea to include the following information in your inquiry:

- 1.1 What are you looking for?
- 1.2 What is your budget for this purchase?
- 1.3 What type of components does your current hifi system consist of?
- 1.4 Do you have any specific models/brands you prefer or any other things you have put on your "to-evaluate" list?
- 1.5 What is your ideal way of listening? (This may be very difficult to express, but please do try, often it is enough to use words like 'neutral', 'warmth' or the like).
- 1.6 How big is the room where you are going to listen to sounds?
- 1.7 What type of music do you prefer?
- 1.8 Would you consider second hand purchases?

If you want suggestions about where to purchase, by forum member recommended components, please add information on which part of the country you are living in.

Do not forget that this theme only applies to hifi or hifi-related issues, e.g. a server or a projector is not hifi. However, a server that is used to store a music collection can be hifi (if it is its main task)."

Fig. 1. Instructions to member starting a thread at the theme 'Buying advice' at Faktiskt.io (translation by author).

Table 4

Frequent topics for discussion within the theme 'Buying advice'. The figure indicate the percentage of threads where specific topics occurs.

| Topics                    | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Brands                    | 88         |
| Retailers                 | 66         |
| Practical tips            | 47         |
| Functionality             | 60         |
| Price                     | 61         |
| Aesthetics                | 21         |
| Sound quality             | 81         |
| DIY                       | 31         |
| Measurements              | 12         |
| Furnishing                | 4          |
| Fake/Counterfeit products | 5          |
| Product quality           | 11         |
| Second hand equipment     | 18         |

complicated (a specific hifi lingo), both in how technological functions and solutions are described and talked about, but also in how feelings and perceptions of sound and sound quality is expressed. This makes the forum esoteric to outsiders as it takes a certain level of technological terminology pre-knowledge to fully benefit from ongoing discussions. At the same time, and evidentially, there are pedagogical tendencies that reveal a willingness to be inclusive and involve in explaining, in a consistent way, the logic of different components, their functions and how quality sound and euphony can be achieved.

6.1. The online forum as a digital space for a narrated purchase

The constant pursuit of the perfect audio reproduction system is an inherent quality of the hifi community, i.e. how the interest for hi-fi is manifested in a willingness to invest and assemble a system that meets objective and/or subjective demands on sound quality. In the online forum this pursuit is commonly materialized by members formulating narratives describing their purchases. In these narratives, personal reflections and experiences of a purchase are explained, motivated by the OP and commented and confirmed by community members.

Generally, the narrated purchase is introduced by a member sharing his wishes and experiences from his pursuit of specific products. This

wish is normally contextualized by also sharing an idea (or 'philosophy') of how a euphonic hifi system should be assembled or how a new device would fit into an already existing hifi system. When initializing a thread, the OP requests advice, support and recognition from the online community. In other words, this is a legitimization process where the forum constitute a space for justification of ideas and purchase decisions and where purchases is to be approved, based on criteria such as sound quality, construction as well as price level.

When the desired purchase is presented, discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of a product is carried out, and commonly alternative products are suggested and discussed. The OP may then receive encouraging comments (in this case from signature Ivor):

"Great ambition to invest in such wonderful speakers. I hope you will fulfil your dream and stay happy with the sound for a long time".

Commonly, the narrated purchase are concluded by the OP submitting a statement of what was decided to purchase (or already purchased), or a reflection/summary of the experiences drawn from browsing new products and the considerations made. An additional way to conclude the purchase narrative is to provide a review of the chosen device, either an immediate response when plugged in for the first time and/or an updated review reflecting on the impressions after a few weeks of careful listening.

It is often the actual pursuit of a device that interests the members of the forum, as this relates as much to their own pursuit as to follow how other people proceed with their pursuit. The pursuit is about finding the personal and individual way through the range of available products. The signature 'John' is advising an OP to "think for yourself" and make "your own discoveries" stating:

"I would advise you to make expeditions into various hifi stores and listen to as many different products and brands as possible. Read online reviews carefully of the devices that is of interest...".

Thus, the actual rumination appears to be an important part in the pursuit of the 'right' device. To think through different solutions and scenarios when arriving at a highly personal solution to their 'needs'. In the narrated purchase, the reasons of a purchase is reflected upon and the OP tries to explain how the 'need' emerged. The signature 'Kendrick' explains:

“[...] it is impossible to relax and enjoy the music through the NAD now when I know there is such an obvious improvement within reach. The pursuit of a new amplifier has now begun“.

Motivations are often pronounced in terms of a drive or a longing after upgrading their hifi system and the purchase of new devices. The constant pursuit of the perfect hifi system implies a latent need to upgrade. This leads to a kind of Pavlovian pattern; when someone announces their purchase plans, other members join in to support and encourage the purchases and seem to be genuinely interested about the process and how the OP argues his upgrade. This works as a kind of alibi to start thinking about one's own presumptive and upcoming upgrades.

However, several members are worried about the costs and the ease of spending more money than originally budgeted. The signature 'Lennart' writes:

”Actually, it's quite insane to pay so much money for a pair of speakers, but I have, since I was at 12, been interested in hifi. Also, I see it as a one-off cost. Have you bought a pair of really good speakers, you'll be satisfied for quite some time. It is a significantly worse investment to buy a new car for a few hundred thousand [SEK], which will lose most of its value only after a couple of years.”

However, regularly there are more critical voices questioning the reasoning behind a suggested purchase, e.g. asking the OP why he is not satisfied with his hifi system. Normally this concerns avoiding hasty purchases and making sure the OP makes well-reasoned purchases, i.e. is the purchase made for the sake of purchase only or does the purchase really add to the quality of the sound reproduction. These critical voices appear to be sensible and somewhat opposed to the general supportive atmosphere of the forum that, in the normal case, rather argue pro-purchase than the other way around. On the other hand, these critical comments may also be interpreted as making sure the purchaser always ask the question of whether the new device ultimately is worth the investment. The signature 'Magnus' defend his behavior although calling for caution/reflection:

“Just because you think it's fun to try out new devices in your setup, you do not need to be diagnosed with 'audiophilia nevrosa'? My advice is to neglect your first impressions, and listen to the new device for at least a week, then switch back. It takes some time for impressions to sink in. Good luck with you trying out new devices, but be cautious with the hausse of the first impressions – these will change.”

Repetitive in these discussions is the word 'satisfied', i.e. to be satisfied or not with your hifi system. However, while some members claim that one can be satisfied with their system, others state that this is not possible and that the pursuit of perfect sound reproduction is a constant effort. In relation to this, a term that occurs in both the studied sample and on other online forums is 'upgraditis' (or sometimes 'audiophilia nervosa'), which refers to a fictional diagnosis aimed at describing which in principle refers to a fictitious diagnosis aimed at the perceived 'needs' that the idea of upgrading triggers.

## 6.2. A hierarchically structured online forum

A visitor on the online forum clicking on a randomly selected thread may get the impression of temporary ongoing discussions involving relatively neutral arguments for and against particular processes or products (e.g. analog vs. digital or transistor vs. tubes). However, the quantitative empirical analysis show that some members might be considered more committed than others.

As mentioned, the 2447 comments in the sample have been made by a total of 278 profiles/signatures. In average, a thread contains almost 20 comments and have approximately 1700 views (varying from a hundred to more than 12,000 views). 85 of the forum members/

signatures (appr. 30% of the sample population) are figuring as OPs. A majority of these have initiated only one thread, but some members/signatures have started up to three or even four threads in the sample. In addition, the number of comments per member in the sample varies between one up to over 70. Consequently, a proportionately large number of posts are assigned to a relatively few members: the 25 most engaged members have contributed with approximately 46% of the total number of comments in the sample. This influential group of members engage in a large number of threads, also those they have not started themselves, and about ten members have engaged in 20 or more of the total 112 threads examined in the sample.

The qualitative analysis of the material also indicates a distinct hierarchy and it is evident that some forum members have a stronger mandate than others in formulating issues and deciding what is discussed or not. The signature 'Erik' is claiming his space at the forum:

“Just wanted to say that much of what has been said about this specific amplifier in this thread is incorrect. It is an extremely capable amplifier. Those who suggest something else is probably only guessing, based on esthetics and price. Or maybe they have experienced a broken amplifier?”

In addition, the analysis shows that some signatures have their own 'corner' (e.g. technical expertise and/or previous product experience) to protect. The signature 'Anders' reprehend another member by addressing his alleged possible knowledge deficiencies:

”It would be better if you respond to things that you know anything about. I know you want to be helpful though, but where is your help in your post?”

The level of involvement is also a matter of what 'topic' a thread addresses and clearly certain types of products or topics render more posts than others. This is in line with the argument made by [Grabher and Ibert \(2014\)](#) ignoring some posts can be viewed as an efficient 'selection environment'.

The hierarchies are primarily structured on the members' reputation gained at the forum as well as outside the forum (previous 'real life' experience etc.). It is also apparent that discussions are taking place in between and overlapping several different threads and topics.

In addition, previous studies have shown that interest in hifi and high-end audio equipment is highly dominated by men and, although signatures and profiles in the material are constituted by non-identified individuals, nothing in this material contradicts these insights ([Waxell and Jansson, 2013](#)). This group of individual may be referred to what [Woo \(2012\)](#) identify as 'alpha nerds' – people that spend a lot of time within and outside their work to promote, educate and trying to make people enjoy their activities within a specific (and usually esoteric) activity.

## 6.3. The role(s) of space

Although the online forum is clearly situated in the virtual world, space has several roles to play. The first two points indicate the importance of the forum itself for the interaction between members as well as the form of interaction. The third point relates to what type of products that are discussed and how they are discussed based on where they are produced/designed.

First, there are various needs to meet physically, outside the online forum. Here the forum functions as a network of people who exist outside the borders of the online forum. In line with [Kendall \(2000\)](#), it is possible to see that the people behind the different signatures are familiar with each other (to varying degrees) also beyond the context of the online forum.

Meeting physically fills important needs in the field of hi-fi; the possibility to listen and personally experience a hifi system/device. There are several possibilities to meet and experience products in the field of hi-fi and common meeting points are physical stores and

temporary trade fairs that take place both nationally and internationally. When an OP requests the opportunity to listen to a product themselves, other members commonly offer them to come and listen in their own homes, conducting a demonstration in 'home environment'. The signature Thomas writes:

“About an hour from where you live, you find some of the suggested speakers available for listening. Have a look in my profile. Then we can decide on a day when we meet.”

This is comparable to Grabher and Ibert (2014), describing how members in online forums organize 'in real life' meetings to facilitate e.g. purchases or exploring products. Not least, spatially proximate curation function as a way to reduce uncertainty through the establishment of trust (Leamer and Storper, 2001).

Second, similar to other studies on virtual communities, the lack of physical interaction render a number of advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it can result in open and honest discussions. On the other hand, it may also lead to rather rough comments and aggressive debate climate. However, distance may also function as an asset (Grabher and Ibert, 2014) as interaction in online forum settings may enable a range of skills and competences to be available to members in one single space. Hence distance is bridged and enables a variety of responses to the issues posted at the forum and that normally would not have been possible in a physical space.

Third, another aspect of space that is realized the online forum is the question of the country of origin of the products being discussed. Issues of quality in relation to country of origin are commonly discussed in hifi and high-end equipment contexts (Waxell and Jansson, 2013) and a relatively common opinion is that some countries may be questioned regarding the quality of the products being produced there. In these discussions, positive connotations are usually given to traditional design and production countries, such as the U.K., Germany and the U.S. (as well as brands originating from Sweden) and lingering negative associations are related to products produced in countries such as South Korea and China. Signature Steven writes:

“A couple of years ago I bought HDMI cables from China [...] I had to throw them away because of loose connections after a while. Then I bought new cables at this Swedish retailer (the cheapest I could find) and they've been working ever since”.

Another example was in 2016–17 when the South Korean corporation Samsung made acquisitions of a large number of previously European and North American owned hifi brands. This spurred discussions on eventual production quality problems of these products.

## 7. Processes of curation in online forums

This paper has presented analytical themes identified as characteristic to the empirical material studied. The question now is how the processes taking place at the online forum relates to the curatorial practices and processes discussed in the literature on curation.

First, curation is about *assembling*; to search, find and discover products, processes or other phenomena and material artefacts. To someone interested in audio reproduction, the forum is an essential space to search, find and discover hifi and high-end audio equipment. In general, the hifi community is identified as being occupied by processes of exploration and the pursuit of the perfect hifi system and the forum is a platform where its members can share these experiences of this pursuit, but also the discoveries and findings they make in this pursuit. In addition, as much as the forum is a space to find and display their material findings, it may be a space to find and discover different opinions related to hifi and high-end equipment. However, the forum should not be seen as a neutral platform for discussions, rather it is a highly contested playground for conflicting interpretations and values.

Second, curation is about *framing and contextualizing*; to evaluate, determine value, recommend, arrange, display, and organize

information, knowledge and ideas related to different products. The forum itself constitutes a context in which different values are discussed. As shown in previous paragraph, the forum is a display for different views and ideas about hifi. However, sound quality and the related concept of 'value for money' provide the basis for the evaluations, values in which framing and contextualization of hifi and high-end equipment takes place.

Third, curation is about *legitimizing*; by filtering, sorting, and select from almost infinite product choices value is added to products through a 'quality stamp'. The legitimization processes taking place at the forum are closely linked to highly engaged individuals. Also, these processes relate to the different perspectives on hifi that are constantly discussed and negotiated. In practice, the legitimization processes are realized when a forum member asks a specific question about a product or problem that he wants help solving. However, without previous knowledge and having followed the forum for some time, the unexperienced visitor or member may not be aware of the different groupings and hierarchies that tend to steer the interpretive schemes in most threads.

Fourth, curation is about *collecting, organizing and preserving*: to care about hifi, sound quality and understanding sound reproduction, to catalog and archive information and knowledge about products, technological developments and hifi practices. On the one hand, there is a great interest in preserving hifi practices and processes, as well as maintaining knowledge about technology development and specific devices. There is a limited educational interest in teaching how to understand hifi, but also how different practices (e.g. practices of listening) are to be implemented. However, like all archiving and museum activities, there are different ideals contrasting each other. On the other hand, the forum itself is an extensive digital archive containing thousands of themes, threads and comments that discuss a range of topics. However, even if the archive is divided into themes, there is a lack of both ambition and strategy in managing this archive in a way that preserves and makes available the content in an educational and summarizing fashion.

Fifth, curation is about *promoting and recommending*: through the interpretation and translation of available information and the communication of the information that these processes emerge in. Consequently, recommendation does constitute a major activity at this online forum. However, it is not just specific products and type of product that are discussed and recommended and the forum members discuss and compare their experiences of different retailers, both in physical stores and online as well as new and second hand products.

Finally, all curatorial dimensions, from assembling and contextualizing to legitimizing, organizing, preserving and recommending, is part of a value adding process. However, what is negotiated is not only commercial economic value, but cultural and social values related to the understanding of both ideas and practices associated with hifi and high-end audio equipment.

### 7.1. Analyzing the distinctive dimensions of curation in digital spaces

The above-mentioned processes are clearly linked to intermediation and curation. In the analysis of the literature on curation, this article claim that there are a number of processes that are distinctive to curation in digital spaces

First, the studied online forum is both a product of digitalization and at the same time digitally mediated. On the one hand, its infrastructure, technology and essence is digital; comments, pictures and links shared in the forum are digital. Also, the emergence and development of the forum (to some extent) is a result of the diversity of products which, in turn, is caused by digital and global markets and, as a consequence, the insurmountable amount of information (product information, reviews etc.) circulated in relation to these products. The forum constitute a structure for searching and finding information about various products, both using strictly technical "correct" information as well as highly

personal “narrated” experiences. On the other hand, the digital infrastructure means that the media itself affects the communication that is taking place at the forum in several ways. Communication within the online forum is the result of a variety of factors that are based both on institutional/structural dimension and the individuals' previous experiences and historical contexts (Willson, 2006). At the same time, technological possibilities and limitations constitute the framework in which communication is performed.

Second, increasing access to communicative means, i.e. the ‘democratizing aspects’ of digitization (Graham, 2014) have had the effect that intermediate processes are changing. Traditionally, intermediation has been exclusively executed by educated, authorized and professional actors. Contemporary intermediation on the other hand, involves traditional intermediation although complemented by entrepreneurial, knowledgeable, committed and engaged individuals. The empirical material clearly shows that it is a contrasting mix of qualified experts and committed amateurs that share their experiences on the forum. What makes the forum so complex to interpret from a power perspective is the lack of (or the limited supply) of what Baym (2015) calls social cues that used to serve as a stabilizing factor in traditional intermediation.

Third, the curation processes taking place at the online forum is resonating with Davis (2017) theoretical assumption of productive and consumptive curation as the main purpose of the forum is to share information, knowledge and experiences of different products as well as being selective in what is shared and to whom. Connected to this practice, forum members present (or curate) themselves in specific ways, thus claiming the right to curate the range of products discussed, or not discussed.

Fourth, the online space is in itself a curator and Factiskt.io should be understood in relation to other forums that discuss similar phenomena. More specifically, specific threads should be seen in relation to other threads on the forum as there may be different people involved in different threads and themes. In addition, the empirical material shows how physical and virtual space overlap in hybrid forms and where products and processes are discussed in overlapping synchronous and asynchronous communication (Baym, 2015).

Fifth, related to the above discussions, increased access to digital media and channels, de-professionalization and productive and consumptive curation is the idea that curation could be interpreted as being increasingly underlying and/or everyday practice. On the one hand, it is hard to identify who has the ‘right’ expertise and who to trust in a ‘buying advice’. On the other hand, the overlapping spaces between physical individuals and physical and virtual spaces shows us that trust is built up in the interaction between these. Certainly, action is required to enter the forum (i.e. it is required to log when initiating a thread or to post comments in existing threads) and certainly curation is sometimes explicitly stated on the forum. At the same time, curatorial processes is also taking place in the numerous and everyday conversations on the forum. One such underlying and everyday practice identified at the forum is the ‘narrated purchase’ where curatorial processes of assembling, framing and contextualizing, legitimizing, collecting and preserving, and recommending is taking place.

## 8. Conclusion

Societal and economic developments and changes, not least digitalization, leads to new intermediary practices, processes and spaces and this paper have focused on a particular form of intermediation: curation. The paper discuss whether curation can be viewed as different from established theories of ‘cultural intermediation’. Interpreting the growing literature on curation, the paper more specifically raises five distinct dimensions related to curation in digital spaces; a) a digitally produced and mediated process b) de-professionalization c) a combination of both productive and consumptive modes d) space as a ‘quality stamp’ e) following the above, curation could be interpreted as being

increasingly underlying and/or everyday practice than traditional intermediation. The empirical material is focusing a single case study of an online forum specialized in hifi and high-end audio equipment.

The result shows that the forum is characterized by ‘narrated purchases’, i.e. how the members of the forum share their thoughts and experiences in the pursuit of the perfect sound reproduction system. The forum is largely dominated by a limited number of individuals who more or less run their own agendas (whether commercially or personally initiated). Without physical presence, the forum and the individual members constitute a ‘real’ curator, with real hierarchies and power allocations. This generates insights into how we understand these actors and its impact on consumption behavior and individual (consumer) choices. On the one hand, curation could be viewed as an essential ingredient in enabling and opening up new markets through the unprecedented contextualization of products - without socio-spatial historical anchors that previously restricted opportunities for new target groups and markets. On the other hand, more knowledge about incentive factors and spatial dynamics is needed as virtual applications are further developed and applied.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the reviewers and journal editor. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 7th European Colloquium on Culture, Creativity, and Economy in Stockholm, and I am grateful to the participants and especially my discussants Mariangela Lavanga and Anders Rykkja for constructive feedback. This article is an outcome of the research project “Intermediation, place and value creation: Exploring the processes and spaces of curation” which is funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in Sweden (project ID: P14-0547:1), and I want to thank my fellow investigators Brian Hraacs (University of Southampton), Dominic Power (Stockholm University), Jenny Sjöholm (Linköping University), and Anders Waxell (Uppsala University).

## References

- Aspers, P., 2010. *Orderly Fashion: A Sociology of Market*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Ashton, D., Couzins, M., 2015. Content curators as cultural intermediaries: ‘My reputation as a curator is based on what I curate, right?’. *M/C – A J. Media Cult.* 18 (4).
- Atton, C., 2014. Curating popular music: authority and history, aesthetics and technology. *Pop. Music* 33 (3), 413–437.
- Balzer, D., 2014. *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else*. Couch House Books, Toronto.
- Baym, N.K., 2015. *Personal Connections in the Digital Age: Digital Media and Society Series*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Bhaskar, M., 2016. *Curation: The Power of Selection in a World of Excess*. Piatjus, London.
- Bourdieu, P., 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge, London.
- Branch, J.D., 2008. Postmodern consumption and the high-fidelity audio microculture. In: Belk, R.W., Sherry, J.F. (Eds.), *Consumer culture. Theory*, JAI, Bingley.
- Brown, J., 2017. Curating the “Third Place”? Coworking and the mediation of creativity. *Geoforum* 82, 112–126.
- Brydges, T., Sjöholm, J., 2018. Becoming a personal style blogger: Changing configurations and spatialities of aesthetic labour in the fashion industry. *Int. J. Cult. Stud.* 1–21.
- Callon, M., Meadel, C., Rabeharisoa, V., 2002. The economy of qualities. *Econ. Soc.* 31 (2), 194–217.
- Caves, R., 2000. *Creative Industries: Contracts between Art and Commerce*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Concha, P., 2017. *The curation of the street food scene in London*. PhD thesis. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.
- Crang, M., 2005. Analyzing qualitative materials. In: Flowerdew, R., Martin, M. (Eds.), *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Cwynar, C., 2017. NPR music: remediation, curation, and National Public Radio in the digital convergence era. *Med., Cult. Soc.* 39 (5), 680–696.
- Davis, J.L., 2017. Curation: a theoretical treatment. *Inform. Commun. Soc.* 20 (5), 770–783.
- Evans, D., 2018. Rethinking material cultures of sustainability: commodity consumption, cultural biographies and following the thing. *Trans. Inst. Brit. Geogr.* 43 (1), 110–121.
- Delaroccas, C., Sutanto, J., Calin, M., Palme, E., 2016. Attention allocation in

- information-rich environments: the case of news aggregators. *Manage. Sci.* 62 (9), 2543–2562.
- Drisko, J., Maschi, T., 2015. Content Analysis. Oxford Scholarship Online.
- Entwistle, J., 2009. The Aesthetic Economy: the production of value in the field of fashion modelling. *J. Consum. Cult.* 2 (3), 317–339.
- Faktiskt.se, 2018. [www.faktiskt.se](http://www.faktiskt.se) (Website accessed 2018 01 24). From April 2018 the site changed form .se to .io as main domain.
- Flyvbjerg, B., 2006. Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qual. Inquiry* 12 (2), 219–245.
- Foster, P., Borgatti, S.P., Jones, C., 2011. Gatekeeper search and selection strategies: relational and network governance in a cultural market. *Poetics* 39 (4), 247–265.
- Fotopoulou, A., Couldry, N., 2015. Telling the story of the stories: online content curation and digital engagement. *Inform., Commun. Soc.* 18 (2), 235–249.
- Glückler, J., Sanchez-Hernandez, J.L., 2014. Information overload, navigation, and the geography of mediated markets. *Ind. and Corp. Change* 5 (1), 1201–1228.
- Grabher, G., Ibert, O., 2014. Distance as asset? Knowledge collaboration in hybrid virtual communities. *J. Econ. Geogr.* 14 (1), 97–123.
- Graham, M., 2014. Internet geographies: data shadows and digital divisions of labour. In: Graham, M., Dutton, W.H. (Eds.), *Society and the Internet: How Networks of Information and Communication are Changing our Lives*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Hawkins, H., 2017. *Creativity: Live, Work, Create*. Routledge, New York.
- Hendricks, J.M., 2015. Curating value in changing markets: Independent record stores and the vinyl record revival. *Soc. Perspect.* 59 (2), 479–497.
- Hercheui, M.D., 2011. A literature review of virtual communities. The relevance of understanding the influence of institutions on online collectives. *Info., Comm. Soc.* 14 (1), 1–23.
- Hracs, B., 2015. Cultural intermediaries in the digital age: the case of independent musicians and managers in Toronto. *Reg. Stud.* 49 (3), 461–475.
- Hracs, B., Jansson, J., 2017. Death by streaming or vinyl revival? Exploring the spatial dynamics and value-creating strategies of independent record shops in Stockholm. *J. Consum. Cult.* <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540517745703>.
- Jakob, D., van Heur, B., 2015. Editorial: taking matters into third hands: intermediaries and the organization of the creative economy. *Reg. Stud.* 49 (3), 357–361.
- Jansson, J., Hracs, B., 2018. Conceptualizing Curation in the Age of Abundance: The Case of Recorded Music. *Environ. Plan. A: Econ. Space* 50 (8), 1602–1625.
- Joesse, S., Hracs, B., 2015. Curating the quest for 'good food': the practices, spatial dynamics and influence of food-related curation in Sweden. *Geoforum* 64, 205–216.
- Kendall, L., 2000. "Oh No! I'm a Nerd!": hegemonic masculinity on an online forum. *Gender Soc.* 14 (2), 256–274.
- Kinahan, K., 2017. Collections of industrial and product design: a pathway for improved economic development connections among cultural institutions. *Int. J. Cult. Pol.* 23 (3), 372–389.
- Kinsley, S., 2013. Beyond the screen: methods for investigating geographies of life 'online'. *Geogr. Compass* 7 (8), 540–555.
- Kozinets, R., 2010. *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. Sage, Los Angeles.
- Krippendorff, K., 2013. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, third ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Lambert, A., Nansen, B., Arnold, M., 2018. Algorithmic memorial videos: contextualising automated curation. *Memory Stud.* 11 (2), 156–171.
- Lange, B., Bürkner, H., 2013. Value creation in scene-based music production: the case of electronic club music in Germany. *Econ. Geogr.* 89 (2), 149–169.
- Laud, G., Karpen, I.O., 2017. Value co-creation behaviour – role of embeddedness and outcome considerations. *J. Service Theory Practice* 27 (4), 778–807.
- Leamer, E., Storper, M., 2001. The economic geography of the internet age. *J. Int. Bus. Stud.* 32 (4), 641–665.
- Leslie, D., Brydges, T., Brail, S., 2015. Qualifying aesthetic values in the experience economy: The role of independent fashion boutiques in curating slow fashion. In: Lorentzen, A., Schröder, L., Topso, L.K. (Eds.), *Spatial Dynamics in the Experience Economy*. Routledge, New York, pp. 88–102.
- Leszczynski, A., 2018. Digital tensions I: Wicked tensions. *Progr. in Hum. Geogr.* 42 (3), 473–481.
- Maguire, J.S., 2014. Bourdieu on cultural intermediaries. In: Maguire, J.S., Matthews, J. (Eds.), *The Cultural Intermediaries Reader*. Sage, London.
- Maliapaard, E., 2017. Bisexual safe space(s) on the internet: analysis of an online forum for bisexuals. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 108 (3), 318–330.
- Markham, A., Baym, N., 2009. *Internet Inquiry: Conversations about Method*. Sage, Los Angeles.
- Milne, S., 1991. Small firms, industrial reorganization, and space—the case of the UK high-fidelity audio sector. *Environ. Plan. A* 23 (6), 833–852.
- Morris, J.W., 2015. Curation by code: infomediaries and the data mining of taste. *Europ. J. Cult. Stud.* 18 (4), 446–463.
- Negus, K., 2002. The work of cultural intermediaries and the enduring distance between production and consumption. *Cult. Stud.* 16 (4), 501–515.
- Nixon, S., Du Gay, P., 2002. Who needs cultural intermediaries? *Cult. Stud.* 16 (4), 495–500.
- O'Connor, J., 2015. Intermediaries and imaginaries in the cultural and creative industries. *Reg. Stud.* 49 (3), 374–387.
- Perlman, M., 2004. Golden ears and meter readers: the contest for epistemic authority in audiophilia. *Soc. Stud. Sci.* 34 (5), 783–807.
- Power, D., Scott, A., 2004. A prelude to cultural industries and the production of culture. In: Power, D., Scott, A. (Eds.), *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture*. Routledge, London.
- Powers, D., 2015. Intermediaries and intermediation. In: Bennet, A., Waksman, S. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Popular Music*. Sage, Los Angeles.
- Turkle, S., 2015. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Press, New York, NY.
- Shultz, B., 2015. The Work Behind the Scenes: The New Intermediaries of the Indie Crafts Business. *Reg. Stud.* 49 (3), 451–460.
- Törnberg, A., Törnberg, P., 2016. Combining CDA and topic modeling: analysing discursive connections between Islamophobia and anti-feminism on an online-forum. *Discourse Soc.* 27 (4), 401–422.
- Versteeg, K., Amoli, T., Cao, M., Chin, M., Bigelow, P., Yazdani, A., 2018. Mixed-method analysis of truck driver health knowledge using an online forum. *Safety Sci.* 102, 51–59.
- Waxell, A., Jansson, J., 2013. Sound affects: Competing with quality in the Swedish hi-fi industry. *Indust. Innovat.* 20 (4), 316–335.
- Weijo, H., Hietanen, J., Mattila, P., 2014. New insights into online consumption communities and netnography. *J. Bus. Res.* 67 (10), 2072–2078.
- Wellman, B. (Ed.), 1999. *Networks in the Global Village: Life in Contemporary Communities*. Westview, Oxford.
- White, H., 2002. *Markets from Networks: Socioeconomic Models of Production*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Willson, M., 2006. *Technically Together: Re-Thinking Community within Techno-Society*. Peter Lang, New York.
- Woo, B., 2012. Alpha nerds: cultural intermediaries in a subcultural scene. *Eur. J. Cult. Stud.* 15 (5), 659–676.