

## Reviews

**Moving Data: The iPhone and the Future of Media.** Edited by Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau. NY: Columbia University Press. 2012. Paperback: 347p. £20.50. ISBN 978-0-231-15739-1. English.

The volume under consideration explores the iPhone as a complex technological, social and cultural phenomenon. It demonstrates how the mobile device has revolutionized the ways in which we communicate, produce and consume culture, and how this iPhone-enabled communication has transformed the ways in which we understand culture and subjectivity. ‘This book investigates the iPhone as a media *dispositif* or apparatus: as emblemizing a radical shift in the relationship among the technological affordances, modes of address, and subject positions that once marked such “old media” as television and cinema’ (p. 7). Indeed, the analysis of the iPhone as an element of visual media dominates the discussion. The book also focuses on the analysis of interactive screens and haptic experiences of data, and, in doing so, it contributes to the wider discussion of the moving image as well as the moving screen. The latter refers to the practice of projecting data on moving surfaces, for example, water, smoke and clouds. Known as projectionism, the practice enhances our understanding of visual culture and screen culture, and *Moving Data* annotates emerging products and practices of projectionism used in specialized environments as well as mundane circumstances.

The essays in the volume are divided into five sections. In the first one, entitled 'Data Archaeologies', the contributors contextualise and historicise the iPhone by exploring the connection between the technology, object and practice, and other forms and types of engagement with visual culture, for example, cinema and installation art. In this section the iPhone is conceived primarily in visual terms, as a device that enables a new experience of the moving image. Francesco Casetti and Sara Sampietro discuss the iPhone as a phenomenon of relocation of the moving image, which multiplies ‘the possibility of living a situation in contact with a medium outside of its traditional conditions’ (p. 20). Nanna Verhoeff conceives



the iPhone as a screenspace which is also a layered interface bringing together the actual arrangement of applications as well as the relation of the iPhone as an object to the social space. She contends 'the mobility of the device makes it a visceral interface: the entire body of the user is incorporated in mobility and space making' (34). Other chapters in this section contextualise the iPhone in relation to other media and art practices, for example installation art. The final chapter entitled 'Hard Candy' written by Kristopher Cannon and Jennifer Barker puts forward a psychoanalytical framework for the discussion of the iPhone by comparing it to candy and the process of interaction with the device to eating chocolate. The comparison with *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* might appear strained; however, it sheds some light on behavioural aspects of mobile phone use.

The second section of the volume—'Politics of Redistribution'—includes five essays that interrogate the platforms and politics of the digital economy with the iPhone being an ideal type of commodity form in the era of post-broadcast capitalism. Goran Bolin's 'Personal Media in the Digital Economy' examines the transition from mass media to personal media, whereby digitization of media results in complex media commodities with pure traffic being the basic commodity for mobile digital media. Although this essay makes an explicit reference to various regions in the world, including the CIS countries, the discussion lacks cultural contextualisation and reads as a survey of digitalisation and 'mass customization', a concept borrowed from Joseph Turow (p. 101). The ensuing two chapters continue the discussion started in the first section of the volume: Alisa Perren and Karen Petruska theorise iPhone as a small screen in the era of big screens of Hollywood, and Chuck Tryon revisits the idea of portable video and associated pay-per-view culture. In her 'Platform, Pipelines, and Politics: the iPhone and Regulatory Hangover', Jennifer Holt examines the contradictions between the ever-increasing convergence culture, which enables unlimited circulation of media products across various platforms, and the existing regulatory framework. She argues for a shift of power from delivery systems to devices and identifies areas where the regulatory language needs to be developed and rewritten for a convergent, intermodal era. Pelle Snickars continues the argument in the final chapter in this section where he analyses the iPhone as part of the larger Apple empire, which, on the one hand, celebrates openness of new digital networks, and, on the other, creates and functions within closed environments of production and consumption.

The third section of the book—'The App Revolution'—consists of six essays that theorize iPhone applications. This is perhaps the most exciting part of the book as it provides an authoritative critique of the new 'app culture': the authors in this section explore apps as elements of the digital culture of interactivity; they consider the ludic aspects of iPhone usage and the ways in which the iPhone has challenged traditional forms of knowledge accumulation such as reading. Three chapters in this section—'Ambient News and the Para-iMojo: Journalism in the Age of the iPhone', 'Party Apps and Other Citizenship Calls', and 'The iPhone's failure: Protests and Resistance'—present a cluster of ideas concerning citizenship journalism, data journalism and other forms of participation facilitated by the iPhone. These chapters consider both empowering and disempowering aspects of mobile media. The contributions subscribe to technological determinism as they argue for the transformative power of new media: 'I suggest that where mobile media exist, there is also some sort of liberal rule'

(p. 246). These ideas are, of course, inspiring; however it would be fantastic to see more in-depth, contextualised analysis of such empowering function of the iPhone.

The concluding section of the book—‘Mobile Lives’—revisits the main concepts outlined in the preceding chapters. However, this is not a matter of reiteration but rather of re-articulation and re-examination of the key concepts that govern our perception of mobile technology—redefining space and communication, digital DIY culture, the combination of computation and ludic experiences, and co-dependence of technology and human activity. Lev Manovich’s article stands out in this cluster in that he considers the aesthetic parameters of the iPhone revolution. He puts forward the concepts of aesthetic integration, experience economy and the aesthetics of disappearance to account for the new stage in digital modernity.

The edited volume consists of 22 contributions, which means that although each contribution is relatively short, it advances a particular aspect of the concept of moving data, thus making reading the book an enjoyable and productive experience. As the essay authors glide over products, issues and concepts, the volume achieves the qualities of a moving, flexible enterprise. The essays are written by a wide range of contributors, scholars of interactive media, students of communication studies and researchers of social media. While aiming to put forward an interdisciplinary framework for the analysis of moving data, it is perhaps unfortunate the volume does not include contributions from industry representatives or media practitioners. I believe their voices would have enhanced the multifaceted discussion by providing a professional and user-level perspective and, in doing so, enlarging the potential readership of the volume.

VLAD STRUKOV is Associate Professor of Cultural Studies and World Cinemas at the University of Leeds, UK. His research on film, animation, new media, television and popular culture has appeared in a number of publications. [e-mail: v.strukov@leeds.ac.uk]