

AGUADO TERRÓN, J. M.; MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ, I. J. (coord.) *Sociedad móvil: tecnología, identidad y cultura*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008. 330 p. ISBN 978-84-9742-875-0

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An extensive portrayal of the mobile

The mobile telephone has unleashed a radical change in society's rituals of interaction and daily life, in managing groups and organisations and in how different personal spheres interact (Katz and Aarhus 2002). It also affects leisure consumption, the management of individual identity and even in initiatives of organised social action (Sampedro 2005). This book brings together different perspectives related to cultural studies and considers the relevance of the mobile telephone as a technological object, as an area of market strategies, and as an everyday cultural object, looking at everyday communication and new technologies. And it does so through dialogue, providing a space for debate about the trends, methodologies and themes of research into the mobile phone, going beyond the macroeconomic discussions and consumption forecasts that abound in this area.

Seventeen researchers from Spain, Australia, Germany, the USA, the United Kingdom, Italy and China are involved in this volume, providing an extremely enriching international dimension. The work's coordinators, professors Juan Miguel Aguado and Immaculada Martínez, have promoted two research projects from the Research Group of Social Communication, Culture and Technology (E-COM) at the University of Murcia. The first is "MOVILSOC. The social impact of the mobile phone in Spain: managing identity, mediatization and consumer patterns". In the second project, "MOVILIZAD@S: the mobile mechanism as a tool for equality in the information society", the universities of Alicante, Extremadura, Rovira and Virgili and Rey Juan Carlos worked together with the support of the Institute for Women.

In the last three years, Aguado and Martínez have published a series of articles (2006, 2009a, 2009b) that tackle the evolution of mobile technology and its implications for culture and communication. The term "mobile society" doesn't just refer to the functional impact of technological gadgets that offer connectivity and ubiquity but also to the mobile nature that affects identities, personal habits and social relations, and to the way

in which individuals communicate and behave. This volume brings together contributions from a wide network of researchers and provides a brilliant portrayal of the state of affairs.

This work is divided into three sections. The first – "Mobile culture" – reflects on the most recent research. The director of the Centre for Mobile Communication Studies at Rutgers University, James Katz, summarises a global view of a phenomenon which, until recently, was studied in a very fragmentary way or as a mere addition to research on the internet and digital technology. Related to this, different contributions debate the theories of "domestication" by Silverstone and Haddon, the appropriation of technological objects and the validity of ethnographic and transcultural perspectives in the study of the mobile medium.

The second section ("Technologies of identity") analyses the way in which the mobile phone has become a cultural object through its influence on how individual and collective identity is created, be it by interrelating public and private spaces, spreading roles through social uses, adopting behaviour associated with the capture and distribution of images and their implementation in a range of cultural contexts. There are ethnographic studies on the practices and rituals of mobile phone consumption amongst young Italians (pp. 243-261) and sociability in the way mobiles are used in Chinese society (pp. 144-160), reflecting how the mobile phone is "a resource that serves the need to nourish life-worlds and build social relations" (p. 261).

The third section ("Towards a new medium") examines technological developments and market strategies, together with the configuration of the mobile as a multimedia consumption platform, generating changes both in the brand image of the sector's players and in consumer habits and content. In the chapter "The fourth screen: cultural industries and mobile content", Aguado and Martínez describe the convergence between the mobile and its connectivity with other devices, while also analysing the transformation in business models. According to the authors, individuals appreciate the sociability values inher-

ent in the consumption of mobile content, such as showing and sharing experiences with others “as a kind of shop window of preferences, tastes and values in the construction and presentation of the user's identity” (p. 199). The chapter concludes with an interesting list of different mobile content drawn up around four main categories: journalism, entertainment, internet and information management, and marketing and advertising, as well as a conceptual map (p. 215) which includes the benefits of mobile technology as perceived by users and experts (multifunctionality, ubiquity, adaptability, involvement...). Aguado and Martínez claim that “the hybridisation of its private nature, related to identity, and the tendency towards standardisation of this link on conventional media, places the mobile medium in a privileged position in the development of the media ecosystem”(p. 218).

In this section Gerard Goggin (University of South Wales, Australia) intervenes, with his broad investigative trajectory on the mobile telephone, highlighting “Cell Phone Culture. Mobile Technology in Everyday Life” (2006). Goggin argues that, paradoxically, mobile content have undergone an “atrophied” development (p. 235) because firms are unable to satisfy the potential wide range that users demand. And that the recent developments in products and services have focused mostly on digital images, together with connectivity between devices and the capacity to produce and broadcast their own content.

The book ends with two chapters of a more descriptive nature: Feijoo, Gómez and Martín offer a panorama of mobile content, its strategies and expected evolution in Europe, while Adelantado looks at the current scenario of mobile entertainment in Spain.

As Hartmann states, there is a “split between academic and commercially funded research that is quite evident and that leads to research on the future” (p. 82). Prospective studies of the sector are often limited to describing economic opportunities and the degree of technological take-up in different countries. This work, however, constitutes a valuable contribution to the small amount of academic literature that rigorously examines the evolution of mobile communication.

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