

Kjetil Sandvik**Indrek Ibrus & Carlos A. Scolari (eds.).
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For the past two decades (at least), our media landscape has been characterized both by convergence and divergence. The first inherent in new media's ability to connect and include all media forms in the same platform and the same technology; be they PCs, tablets or smart phones, they all run TV, radio, movies, and music, either in Internet browsers or stand-alone applications. The second is inherent in the ways in which different media still have their own format: the printed book and newspaper are still around, audiences still flock in movie theatres, and even though the signal or even the entire set has been digitized, the TV is still center-piece in most homes. What combines these two characteristics is the phenomenon of crossmedia: the interconnected communication on several media platforms and through several media formats, simultaneously or in series and circuits. The same media content (or versions of the same media content) is communicated across media. Political communication is moving from social media into traditional news media and back again, news production is performed on Twitter as well as in the news rooms of newspapers and broadcast companies. Entertainment consists of content communicated through books, movies, TV series, computer games, fan websites, and so on. Even if the phenomenon of crossmedia dates back at least two decades, the affordances of digital networked media have radically enriched the nature of crossmedia strategies of both users and producers.

The omnipresence of crossmedia has led to a need for research into the impact it has on media production, media consumption, and media institutions. Therefore, an anthology

on “crossmedia innovations” is most welcome, with its approach to crossmedia research as a cross-disciplinary field, thus inviting various theoretical angles on the phenomenon, such as semiotics, cultural studies, media economics, political economy, and innovation studies. The common denominator – as stated on the back cover – of the book’s various approaches is an “interest in the dynamics that lead to experiments with crossmedia and in how our cultures are innovated through such practices”. As such, the book has emerged from a specific and practical context: “The need for this book emerged within the framework of the First Motion initiative – a consortium of national and regional film funds, clusters, incubators and educational institutions from all around the Baltic Sea” (p.15) with the aim of “learning how two best facilitate the newly emergent crossmedia and transmedia phenomena”.

The book is divided into three sections (presented in its subtitle) organizing the contributing articles in relation either to textual, economic, or institutional innovations. Even though this structure seems to go against the book’s interdisciplinary point of departure, it works well and gives the reader a nice and clear way of moving through the various aspects of crossmedia production, distribution and consumption.

The first section, which is by far the most interesting and innovative part of the book, sets off with Marja Saldre and Peeter Torop’s article on “transmedia space”. This is the first of several articles particularly in this first section that talk of “transmedia” rather than “cross-media”, and even if the difference between the two is never clearly defined, it appears that transmedia relates to cultural content (narratives as inherent in Henry Jenkins’ concept of transmedia storytelling) flowing through several media. Saldre and Torop systematically analyze how this particular flow is present in JK Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and its adaptations to cinema and to the interactive online reading environment *Pottermore*, which is described as “a pathway for a new generation to enter the extensive fandom of the wizard boy” (p.27). The same type of transmedia analysis is performed in the following article by Carlos A. Scolari: “The Triplets and the incredible shrinking narrative: Playing the borderland between transmedia storytelling and adaptation”. In this article, using methods of semiotics and narratology, Scolari focuses on how the narrative world found in the famous Catalan audiovisual production *The Triplets* has over several years unfolded across different media, creating a very rich transmedia experience.

In the following article: “Crossmedia cross-stitch: Spinoff stories as transmedial and intramedial suture”, Colin B. Harvey makes the highly interesting point, using *The Green Hornet* and *Doctor Who* as examples, that spinoffs may be seen as media-production used “to stitch together holes in continuity that can appear in a franchise [...] when an Intellectual Property shifts ownership, or simply when an IP holder retains ownership but those working on the franchise forget or otherwise misremember aspects of the Property’s continuity or canon” (p.61). Thus, the article demonstrates that memory (securing consistency and continuity of a particular narrative) is of great importance when narrative spreads to various media and adds various narrators to the transmedia storytelling. In this process,

new storytelling grammars, styles and aesthetics emerge and evolve, which is analyzed in Sarah Atkinson's article "The view from the fourth wall window: Crossmedia fictions", making use of two contemporary crossmedia examples: *The truth about Marika* (Sweden) and *The Inside* (USA). She concludes that the introduction of new media technologies leads to new modes of consumption in which interaction plays an important role.

This new role of the consumers (readers, spectators, audiences...) as also active partakers in the production and distribution circuit of a given crossmedia franchise is further analyzed as "playful media" by Andreu Belsunces Goncalves. Using the sci-fi series *Fringe*, he demonstrates how this particular franchise is on the one hand "a transmedia production whose narrative core is a television series that spreads through various analogue or digital means using different languages and discourses, and responding to different narratives and/or promotion functions", while on the other hand being "audiovisual fiction that questions audiences through semi-interactive strategies characterized by a number of aesthetic features that would not be possible without the discussion forum provided by the Internet" (p.93). As a crossmedia phenomenon, this creates an experience universe which also includes a social-cultural dimension in which "the audience gets proactively involved, to the point of determining the continuity of the series" (ibid.).

The last article in this section: "The digital utterance: A crossmedia approach to media education" may seem somewhat out of context. However, Richard Berger and Ashley Woodfall argue in the line of the previous articles in favor of rethinking "media studies" by insisting on the interconnectivity between different media, suggesting that "media which were once seen as separate have always been intimately connected and that directly addressing both audiences and the texts produced by this connectivity [...] can help illuminate sophisticated interactions" (p.111).

As stated above, the first section of the book appears – at least to me – to be the most interesting, the most innovative, so to speak. The themes of the other sections have to a greater extent been discussed in other publications, be it on media law or creative industries. However, there are important lessons to be learned from these sections as well, whether the articles deal with markets or institutions. Important issues are addressed, such as the exploitation of user-created media content, as Joan Ramon Rodrigues-Amat and Katharine Sarikakis cleverly discuss in "The fandom menace or the phantom author? On sharecropping, crossmedia and copyright", applying a political-economy perspective on how platform providers or institutional content providers use legal schemes openly exploiting the contributing co-creative users. Another article worth mentioning is Göran Bolin's "Audience activity as co-production of crossmedia content", in which he – in contrast to the previous article – proposes that user's content-producing activities may be regarded as acts of "willful exploitation" (p.157) and, in relation to this, that transmedia storytelling is endorsed by both users and producers, given that both parties may feel empowered and gain from the processes of "productive consumption" (ibid.)

All in all, *Crossmedia Innovation* represents a long-awaited attempt to describe the complex evolution and state-of-affairs of crossmedia and their impact on content production (the crossmedia texts) and the crossmedia logic's impact on media systems – both producer-user circuits and economic and institutional systems. However, the book fails in providing a useful introductory chapter in which the concept of crossmediality could have been defined. It refuses to make a distinction between crossmedia and transmedia communication, other than stating that transmedia tend to be more oriented towards narratives than crossmedia (“crossmedia + narrative = transmedia storytelling”, as is stated on p.7). Crossmedia is vaguely defined as “an intellectual property, service, story or experience that is distributed across multiple media platforms using a variety of media forms” (ibid.). Therefore, we do not get any idea of how the interconnectivity of the crossmedia strategy works, which role the different media inherent in the crossmedia combo might play. Are they just mediating the same content, or are they collaborating in a coordinated manner, mediating parts of the over-all “story” according to the specific affordances of the media platforms and media forms involved? A concept-defining introductory chapter providing this information would have increased the book's usability considerably.

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