

Abstract

Social media platforms enable, offer, and encourage certain types of uses and behaviours to their users, but fail to keep them within the boundaries of what is offered. Users often leave the prefabricated patterns or creatively tailor them to their needs, creating bottom-up innovations and giving new meaning to the functions and use of a platform or device, or simply customising it to fit their everyday lives. This often involves new ways of using communication and media tools that were not planned or assumed by the creators, and which will be incorporated into the technology over time.

This book explores the *appropriation* and *hijacking* of the social media app Instagram, which takes the app, originally designed for taking and instantly sharing photos and videos on social networks, in creatively new directions.

To explain the forms this can take, several examples of appropriation and hijacking are analysed through case studies, focusing on three areas. The first case study examines the role of Instagram as a locative medium, i.e. one with spatial aspects, in the visual representation of places. The visual content shared on the app can relate to real geographical places in a variety of ways, from simple and explicit mapping to many more complex and strategic forms of representation. The strategic moments of these different types of representations highlight the role of the platform in meaning-making, that is, in the cultural production of places.

The second case study focuses on the appropriation of the visual medium for literary purposes. A current trend in recent years has been the emergence of various vernacular literary genres and their amateur practitioners among Instagram users. *Instavers* as a quasi-literary genre has spread like a fashion wave, bringing the reading of short, minimalist, and sentimental lyrical texts into the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of users. This trend then paved the way for the spread of other literary-related content, such as literary popularisation, creating a middlebrow literary medium within social media for the distribution and consumption of literary texts and new mechanisms of lay literary criticism. The use of this

visual social network to share textual literary content is also based on radical gestures and practices of appropriation and hijacking.

The third major unit of the book explores not new forms of grassroots appropriation, but industry strategies that respond to appropriative uses, examining the production and distribution of news by traditional and electronic news media on Instagram. The digital transformation of journalism is increasingly shifting news dissemination to social media sites preferred by readers, while encouraging the emergence of new social media news formats, transforming content production techniques and the various norms and rules of the profession.

In examining how spaces are managed through the affordances of Instagram as a locative medium, the reader is presented with both an overview of spatial user data collection by media platforms and a rich repository of often tricky, hijacked representational solutions by users. In many ways, the use of image-based social media for literary purposes is a testimony to the creative attitude of users. Creating and publishing explicitly text-based content in a medium optimised for visibility can be seen not only as appropriation but also as innovation, and the artistic nature of the works (poem, diary) is an imprint of the creativity of expression. Considering the phenomenon of Instagram journalism, we can already observe a stage where user appropriation and hijacking are beginning to be reinscribed into dominant, institutional modes of use. Recognising the popularity of user-generated and distributed news content and responding to the prominence of news consumption on social media, news media themselves are beginning to adopt the technique of appropriation.

As major actors in contemporary media technology, platforms are based on industrial, institutional, and profit-oriented strategies, but within their framework, alongside dominant uses, hijacking, and grassroots uses emerge over time, which also become mainstream and institutionalised through the mediation of profit and institutional actors. In this way, bottom-up, appropriative practices and top-down, dominant, and institutional modes of operation are linked in a single circular process.

Readers of this book will gain insight into this process through a series of illustrative examples.