

social behaviour closely related to network technology, and we have to be aware of all the new developments in order to be able to analyse network culture on all possible levels.

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Book Review

Estonian Film Institute's e-publication *Estonian Film*

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This review discusses the Estonian Film app – a biannual "e-publication" of the Estonian Film Institute (EFI) with the broad aim of promoting Estonian films and film production services to an international audience. I will mainly discuss the app as a textual and technological form including its new interactive affordances. I will also contextualise and inspect the broader function of the app – i.e. to market Estonian film among the target group of film professionals internationally.

With regard to such apps being new forms with new affordances, Gerard Goggin and Caroline Hamilton (2012: 104) have argued that, "[d]ifferent cultures have used books differently over time, coming up with idiosyncratic functions in terms of use (reading left to right, up and down) and storage (pages or spines out). There is no reason to suppose that the latest innovations with the format and function of the e-book on smartphones and tablets represents any kind of "revolution", but rather, a continuation of this process of technical development."

Embracing Goggin and Hamilton's conclusion, we could add that as part of this "non-revolution" e-books themselves have evolved in relation to advances in media technologies. That is, developers of e-books have experimented for a few years now with the new affordances of digital hardware and some

of the new interactive "multi-media" solutions are starting to become increasingly commonplace. Angus MacWilliam points out how e-books have today become more than "a digital version of its printed predecessor" (2013: 3) and can be seen as "enhanced books" (Jennings 2000). Such evolution fits Robert Darnton's (2001: 158) argument that stresses, "for most people throughout most of history, books had audiences rather than readers. They were better heard than seen." Apps such as e-books and e-magazines provide the opportunity to depart from a reading-only activity in favour of more comprehensive experiences.

From a constructivist viewpoint a medium's evolution is conditioned by its designers' perceptions of its functions and the dialogues these designers have on these functions with a penumbra of potential interest groups. Flichy (1999: 34), for instance, has also explained that "the forms chosen for new media are not based on the technology; they correspond to the designers' representations of uses, and to the strategies they perceive to be most effective for marketing the product. In other words, these choices are social rather than technical." But what, perhaps, is of specific interest, is how these perceptions of uses translate from one medium to another and what such translations then tell us of the culture of the target group – in our case the film professionals of specific countries as well as internationally – as a cross-border cultural sub-system and an epistemic community?

Estonian Film, available since February 2013 both for iPads and Android, is an e-book (more specifically an e-magazine) that, according to the description in both iTunes and Google Play, aims at keeping film



FIGURE 1. *Estonian Film* editions by volume and issue number.

industry professionals updated with the latest news on the Estonian movie scene. Comparing *Estonian Film* to *Swedish Film*, a similar app, we can observe that both e-magazines are similar in features, design, and periodicity. This is presumably an attempt to recreate a magazine experience and to use features and symbols familiar to its users. In relation to Steven Johnson's (1997) original conceptualisation of interface metaphors MacWilliam (2013: 10) also suggests that "it is recognized that maintaining an intuitive display is vital to ensuring a successful user experience and that familiarity with contents is also important. This is the reason why, despite the technological progressions, there is a continued emphasis on re-creating the book metaphor on an electronic platform."

Yet, as originally suggested by Umberto Eco (1977) and recently, with regard to mobile media, also demonstrated by Indrek Ibrus (2014), over time every new medium breaks its path dependencies on earlier media, emancipates, and acquires its own representational conventions. In the case of *Estonian Film*, the first signs of this are the app's new features that offer a slightly improved user experience. When reading an article in both e-magazines, the user has to scroll down the page to progress in the text; if the reader decides to move to another article half way down the page, s/he can do so by swiping left or right either to go back to the previous article or move forward to the next page. This feature is not offered by *Swedish Film* where the reader has to scroll back up to the beginning of the article in order to return to the previous page or proceed to the next one.

When comparing *Estonian Film* to the *Finnish Film Catalogue*, we see more obvious dif-

ferences. The *Finnish Film Catalogue* does not claim to be an app as such or a full-featured e-magazine, it is an online publication available both for desktop and mobile devices, which is published through Issuu.¹ Having said that, despite the slightly different nature of the publications, the narrative of the *Finnish Film Catalogue* only uses text and images, while, as mentioned above, *Estonian Film* combines text with still and moving images. As already briefly mentioned, until the recent emergence of full-fledged HTML5 (together with mobile API; see Ibrus 2015, Visionmobile 2013), it was argued that the "native" apps, such as e-magazines, are user friendly when compared to mobile websites – they were perceived as offering a smoother user experience because they could (potentially) fully exploit the technical affordances of each individual device (Alang 2010). However, this focusing on the "native" solutions of specific devices or platforms can only turn into challenges when faced with the ongoing fragmentation of the mobile devices market (Ibrus 2013a, 2013b, 2015).

In order to introduce this challenge, a comparison between *Estonian Film* and *New Polish Films*, an app published by the Polish Film Institute since 2013, is telling. One of the differences between the two is the fact that *New Polish Films* is a native mobile app offering not only the features typical of an e-magazine, but, for instance, also a comprehensive directory of the services offered by the Polish film industry. Furthermore, since it is an autonomous app and not simply an e-publication stored (for "in-app purchas-

1 Issuu is a digital publishing platform. It allows self publishing supported by a number of tools depending on different publishing solutions. See, <http://issuu.com>.

ing”) in reader-type applications, *New Polish Films* can be downloaded to any Android or IOS tablet and smartphone (not to desktops) unlike *Estonian Film* or *Swedish Film* that are not compatible with smartphones.

Considering the fragmentation of the mobile market (including smartphones, tablets, and laptops of various sizes, all utilising various software platforms), releasing an app in 2013 that is available only on tablets represents a significant limitation on reaching potential users, especially since, starting with the first quarter of 2012, iPhone sales have steadily outpaced iPad sales by two to one (Statista 2014).

Furthermore, by only focusing on native apps, a challenge may emerge due to the fragmentation of the mobile landscape. In order to overcome this, the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the web standardisation body, has been working toward a “One Web” vision since 2004, which aims to make all web content accessible with equal ease to the users of desktop and mobile devices of all kinds (see W3C 2005, 2006, 2008; Vision-mobile 2013; Ibrus 2013a, 2013b, 2015). In the current context, the W3C’s efforts to standardise the mobile API of HTML5 has encouraged companies to turn to web apps as these offer an “architectural advantage and substantial savings when targeting a cross-device launch” (Ibrus 2015: 111).

In this context, Jiao Xu *et al.* (2014) point to an interesting aspect relevant to *Estonian Film* when arguing “the adoption of a mobile news app significantly increases the likelihood of visiting the news app’s corresponding mobile website” (Xu *et al.* 2014: 26). Yet, leading international users of the EFI website emerge as an issue for the institute. This is because the EFI’s website is

visibly static, lacks images, videos, and interactive elements, and the pages are updated approximately once every six months. Within this framework, based on the conclusions of Xu *et al.* (2014: 29), “the best strategy for news providers to attract more traffic on mobile phones is to manage two distribution channels differently, i.e. offering more news stories on the mobile website compared to the app, rather than simply devoting most of their resources to apps than to the mobile website.” Therefore, it would probably benefit the EFI’s objectives to dedicate more attention to its website.

Having said this, *Estonian Film* fully exploits the interactive affordances of tablet computers. Users can dig deeper into its content through a number of intertwined texts. The “New Film” section, for example, functions as a multilayered market window where users can not only read a short synopsis of the film, watch a trailer, and access the relevant contact information, but can also link to external sites, or send an e-mail to production companies, without leaving the app environment. The app therefore recreates what, in marketing terms, would be defined an integrated marketing communication strategy (Kotler 2011) by using a number of tools within and outside the platform to enhance communication with its target audience.

Furthermore, content itself plays a primary role in the marketing mix of *Estonian Film*. For instance, the editors have chosen an editorial strategy that adopts features and news articles in synergy to support certain films or directors within a given time and, in certain cases, across the editions. What we see in this context is a clear and systematic choice of films and directors that, most probably in the eyes of the editors, best

NEWS



Õunpuu's New Film
is in Post-Production

Veiko Õunpuu is one of the most renowned directors of Estonia's younger generation. His new feature *Free Range* (Ballad on Approving of the World) was shot in the summer and autumn of 2012 and has now made it into the post-production phase. According to producer Katrin Kissa of the production studio Homeless Bob Productions, the first market screening is planned for this year's Cannes Marche du film.

Free Range (Ballad on Approving of the World) is the story of young writer Fred (20) whose girlfriend Susanna (22) becomes pregnant, forcing Fred to reassess his position in society and decide where he belongs. How do you live with the knowledge that you may never learn to appreciate the mundane and everyday? How do you adjust knowing that the life will go on, and that it will go on for a long time? And what's worse – what if the possibility of enduring it all with dignity seems next to unbearable?

By genre, *Free Range* (Ballad on Approving of the World) is a drama. The script was written by Veiko Õunpuu and Robert Kurvit, the producer is Katrin Kissa and the director of photography is Mart Tanel. So the team is the same as the one that made Õunpuu's first two films. Õunpuu's debut, *Autumn Ball* (2007) won over 15 international awards, including the Venice Orizzonti section. Õunpuu received the European Talent Award for his script for *The Temptation of St. Tony* (2009) and the film was selected to many prestigious film festivals (Bundance, Göteborg, Hong Kong). The *Temptation of St. Tony* (2009) and the film was selected to many prestigious film festivals (Bundance, Göteborg, Hong Kong). The *Temptation of St. Tony* (2009) and the film was selected to many prestigious film festivals (Bundance, Göteborg, Hong Kong).

Free Range stars Lauri Laigle, Jaanika Arum, Peeter Volkonski, Roman Baskin, and others. The film is produced by Homeless Bob Production and world sales are handled by LevelK.

NEW FILM



Free Range Ballad on Approving of the World

Veiko Õunpuu's third full-length movie tells a story of a promising young man with exciting career opportunities and a looming mental crisis. How to live knowing that you might never know joy in day-to-day life? That you will never know the pride from your work? That there is no meaning, no goal, no hope for improvement? That the will continue and you have to get used to it and also to the idea that it might go on for a long time and worse of all it is almost impossible to put up with it in a dignified way? Shouting, housing, meager food, poverty and the extensive coarseness below and stolid indifference above. Where should we head to, cars for slaughter, and now it is possible to participate in all this, without losing our humanity and the last bits of our soul for life?

Fred (20), an aspiring writer, is thrust into the middle of these questions – his girlfriend Susanna (22) is pregnant and intends to keep the baby.

DIRECTOR
VEIKO ÕUNPUU (1972) has been a worker, a carpet salesman, a university dropout on three different occasions, a backpacker and a painter in 2006, he founded production company Homeless Bob Productions. His debut feature *Autumn Ball* premiered at...

CAST
Lauri Laigle, Jaanika Arum, Peeter Volkonski, Roman Baskin, and others.

PRODUCTION
Homeless Bob Production

INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE
September 15, 2013
Baltic Film Festival

135 min • 1.25:1 • Digital SR

NEW FILM



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FIGURE 2. Recurrence of the same author or his work by type of article, volume, and issue number.

represent the excellence of the Estonian film industry. To illustrate this, it is sufficient to point out the case of film directors Veiko Õunpuu and Ilmar Raag who are featured (or their works are featured) in four and three editions respectively out of the four published by the time of this review. In terms of marketing the Estonian film industry, is this the best possible strategy? Or is it deceptive, and gives a false representation of the Estonian film landscape?

To conclude, despite its weaknesses, and the questionable communication strategy, the *Estonian Film* app still represents an innovation in the context of how other European national and regional film industry institutions market their activities and how European films are marketed generally. More specifically it is worth noting that currently the Danish and Norwegian film institutes, and the Latvian and Lithuanian film centres have yet to release any such official apps despite having many online publications.

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