Book review

Transgenerational Technology and Interactions for the 21st century

Centred around the idea of "transgenerational technology", this book written by Marston, Shore, Stoops and Turner, explores the process of technological innovation, as well as the use of digital technologies by different cohorts. Questioning the current generational research focus on how older adults use digital technologies, the authors argue that research in ageing and technology should take into account a transgenerational approach to explore how existing and future cohorts of older adults are engaging in a digitalised world.

The introductory chapter outlines a broad history of technology development, ranging from the first implementations of telemedicine to the invention of the internet and more current technologies of the 21st century, such as video games. Locating the history of technological innovation within a societal context, the authors connect specific historic events, for example the miners' strike in the UK to current societal challenges, such as digital poverty or the COVID-19 pandemic. This introduction is followed by a chapter on the current state of technology with critical perspectives on digital games and ageing, technology deployment as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, assistive technologies, virtual reality, augmented reality and extended reality, a history of app development and wearable and implantable devices. Even though this chapter with its wealth of information on different technologies is quite extensive and seems unsystematic at points, it actually frames different generational use of technologies within the concept of "transgenerational technology" very well. In fact, rather than exploring the concept in-depth, it highlights the many possible applications of "transgenerational technology" in research and technology development with a real-life impact on different generations – a line of thought that might sometimes have been lost in subsequent chapters.

Moving from the broader theoretical overview of the first two chapters into empirical work, chapter 3 presents an interesting mixed-methods study conducted in Northern Ireland, exploring how adults of different ages used technologies during the pandemic. The authors present findings from focus groups and a questionnaire developed in collaboration with a community stakeholder, Age Northern Ireland, touching not only on the many nuances that digital life entails, but also on (intergenerational) support networks and experiences of older adults who are ageing without children. The authors highlight older and younger people's experiences with technology throughout the pandemic alike, which I assume reflects the "transgenerational technology" approach. Despite touching on similar experiences between generations and highlighting the need to explore a transgenerational perspective in future research, the actual concept of "transgenerational technology" was slightly under-developed in this chapter and felt like an afterthought, as the chapter was initially framed around the community stakeholder's role in a co-research process. This in itself, however,

was done very well and offered rich findings.

Moving on to a hybrid chapter of conceptual approaches and city case studies, chapter 4 explores "transgenerational technology" in various eco-systems, such as the age-friendly cities and communities, social enterprises and industry. The chapter begins with a very in-depth overview of how the field of gerontechnology was established. The authors then proceed to share visuals of different implementations of dementia- and age-friendly features in the cities of Dubai and Barcelona, illustrating some scenarios of transgenerational living cities and communities. I really enjoyed reading this chapter. Overall, the photos and reflections on age-friendly features and the COVID-19 pandemic reminded me of a time capsule, capturing a specific moment in time and positioning technologies within that context. This chapter also touches more deeply on wider social problems and technology, for example discussing the potential of Zoom meetings to increase democratic participation in meetings due to the possibility of having voice and chat features and the "flat hierarchy" of the video squares. I got the impression that this chapter really embraced the novelty of the concept of "transgenerational technology", which is yet to be explored within a societal context.

Another chapter I appreciated was chapter 5, a researcher's personal account of working in the field of co-design and ageing. Centred around empathy as a key factor in technology design, this chapter served as a reminder of preserving humanity within innovative technological developments such as robotics or exosuits. Chapter 6 is a combination of critical takes on digital poverty in the 21st century more generally and case studies that highlight how the digital divide affects specific communities. The case studies illustrate different takes on combatting digital poverty, for example by enabling access, creating opportunities for skills

development within communities, or co-research. It is the examples of real-world projects like in this chapter, that make this book an interesting read. However, the links between case studies and the theoretical idea of a transgenerational approach are not as strong. Chapter 7 is a broad chapter about the research environment in general and the authors critically discuss wider structural issues in research landscapes, but also personal struggles such as the imposter syndrome. Again, case studies are used to illustrate challenges such as conducting sensitive research, conducting international research, co-production and lastly and probably most importantly for this book: conducting intergenerational research. This chapter offers many valuable insights of importance for early career researchers aiming to engage in interdisciplinary research environments, but I am unsure about its role in the book with regard to the overarching theme of "transgenerational technology". Ending on a high, the authors share their manifesto or collective statement on "transgenerational technology as a well-being and innovation opportunity for the 21st century". This manifesto is an actionable tool that can be used to implement a transgenerational thinking in research and practice and ties together some of the loose ends of the book. A particularly nice touch are the authors' biographies in chapter 9, which really made me understand some of the thinking that prompted the writing of this book and I appreciated this a lot.

Overall, **Transgenerational Technology and Interactions for the 21**st **century** is a collection of standalone chapters, which outline a variety of conceptual frameworks and practice examples on the topic of technological innovation across the life course in their own way. Each chapter explores the theme of transgenerational technology from a different standpoint

and has its unique contribution. The book is written in a very accessible way and therefore transcends the boundaries between different fields of research. Once I understood that the authors themselves are still exploring the novel idea of transgenerational technology research, I felt that I too can use the manifesto to embrace the process of exploring what transgenerational technology means in my own research.

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