COMMUNICATION DESIGN FOR DIGITAL CONVERGENCE.
A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM.

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ABSTRACT:

Digital technologies are deeply changing the media system. In fact, production and distribution are getting less expensive, communication channels are spreading out and platforms are consistent. Moreover, users could have an active role producing, archiving, using and uploading contents. The phases of the process are more ore less the following ones: content production, content packaging, network providing and devices delivery. A growing trend towards the outsourcing of the concept and the production phases makes many actors in the value chain getting the role of editors and producers.

''*Convergence refers to a process, but not and endpoint*'' (Jenkins, 2004).

The convergence process develops into two directions: top-down, which is corporate-driven, and bottom-up, which is consumer-driven. The synergy of those inputs can considerably improve the entire communication system and its quality.

This complex and unsettled situation aids the widespread of TV. In fact, 'the televisual' appears to be the most pervading model because of its aesthetics, language and also from the economic and political point of view. Indeed, platforms are consistent, but the real convergence deals with the cultural, productive and entertainment industries, which are all merging into 'the televisual'.

'The televisual' is used here to name a relational domain that constitutes an ever expanding immaterial environment created by the interaction of all electronically inflected visual media — digitized film, TV (in all its transmission modes), video/DVD, computers/the internet, cell phones. […] So what can be done in the face of the force of the televisual?' (Fry, 2003).

The paper identifies one main problem: which relationship exists between broadcasting and Web 2.0? Our hypothesis is that, facing digital media convergence, communication design has to deal with writing for the 'intermedia storytelling' (Jenkins, 2004) and strategic design of bottom-up contents. Design has the role of promoter and mediator for the building and the improvement of a participatory TV, which is consistent with the collaborative nature of the digital. TV 2.0 (Mizzi, 2006) is the actual challenge of communication design.

The paper highlights some best practices of bottom up strategies in tv communication.

Keywords: digital media convergence, audiovisual communication system, web 2.0

The analysis sets out to define a participative television system as a desirable synthesis of the relation between broadcasting and Web 2.0. Starting from the convergence of digital media, first of all a "value constellation" (Normann & Ramirez, 1998) will be defined, highlighting from the outset the complexity and fluidity of the current economic and technological system. Next, the concepts of strategy, tactics and business model will be outlined, essential to the understanding of the role of the "prosumer": in terms of content production and consumption, communication strategies and business models in the content industry must take into account bottom-up communication tactics and rely on the collaborative systems which are typical of the second-generation Internet. Two best practices will be briefly presented, in which the broadcast model is complemented by user participation, e.g. Community TV (Buntes Fersehen, Austria) and the multichannel strategies of traditional broadcasters (QOOB TV). The analysis of those cases comes from desk research. In fact, people I got in contact with kindly expressed their interest for our research activity, but in this paper I don't refer to the questionnaire they filled via e-mail. It's due to a restraint purpose until we get official agreement.

Finally, a definition of "weak television" will be suggested for the audiovisual communication system, highlighting the collaborative nature and role of design as mediator and promoter of participative television.

1. CONVERGENCE OF DIGITAL MEDIA: TOWARDS A NEW TELEVISION SYSTEM

"Managers of tv and telecommunication societies seem to ignore that their technologies are dead." (Gilder, 1994)

More than ten years ago Gilder said: "the telecomputer or teleputer will be the new system". He understood that the power was shifting from centralized institutions and broadcasting to distributed systems of communication. He used to think about the convergence of all media into the computer, because the computer technology is conquering all fields of communication and entertainment. On one hand, in this paragraph I refer to the spreading out of computer technology as "interoperability" (Fanchi, 2005) of digital media, wich underlines their consistency and the "scalability" of digital contents; on the other hand in the next part of the paper I argue that the language, the aesthetics and the strategies of television are still alive and still represent the main reference for communication formats. While communication technologies are computer-based, communication formats converge into television.

In the initial stages, the lure of an increase in and a diversification of digital distribution platforms triggered a number of acquisitions and mergers among companies working at different levels of the audiovisual chain, as a result of a willingness to establish new synergies between available contents and technologies. At a later stage,

it was television that invaded every single platform (ADSL, IPTV, UMTS, podcasting, etc.), bringing about a radical change in consumption types and conditions and introducing *desk* and *mobile* models – respectively, laborious and interstitial consumption (Di Chio, 2006).

The proliferation of channels and the portability of devices have enabled the media to invade every aspect of daily life, providing users with the tools to exchange and re-elaborate the contents anywhere, with anyone. The risk is that convergence may not lead to an integrated system, but simply to different channels that overlap and send out competing messages. Another risk is that the digital divide may never be filled, thus cementing the separation between those who have access to technology and those who do not, both in terms of individuals within a society and of whole nations.

The innovation brought about by the communication network in peripheral areas of the communication system and markets is at odds with the will of the broadcast system to consolidate its position. Despite these frictions, an opportunity arises to build new relations and modes of cooperation between broadcasters, network providers, content producers and the consumers themselves. The convergence process takes place in two opposing directions: top-down (corporate-driven), when originating in the business system, and bottom-up, (consumer-driven) when starting from the users. The integration of these two approaches can make a huge contribution to reinforcing the whole system, the quality of relationships and supply.

All this leads to a set of interesting dynamics between the processes of audiovisual content production and the main value chain they enter. Audiovisual content production processes are highly structured and consolidated in stages of pre-production, production and post-production, deriving actions and professions from the cinematographic pipeline (Galbiati, 2005) (Fig. 1).
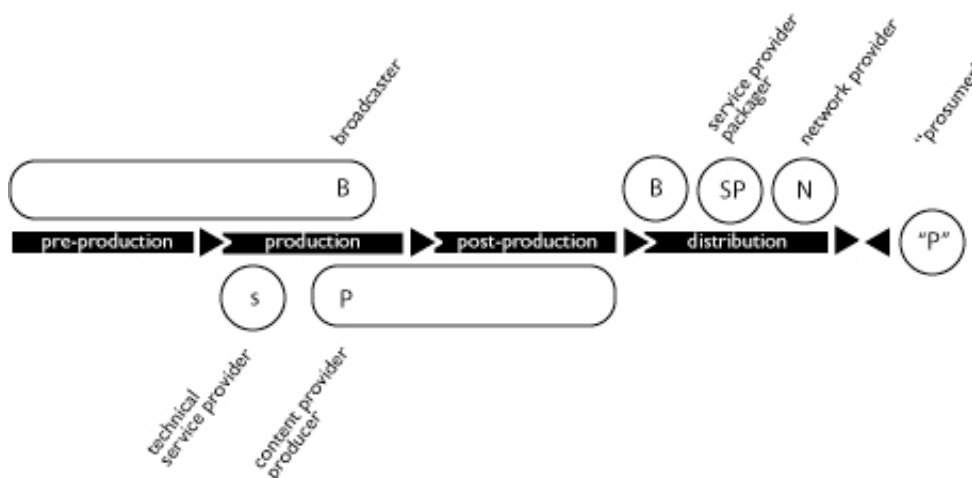

Fig. 1: Value chain. Processes and actors involved in the audiovisual communication system.

In the digital era digital tools, devices and networks are more accessible and creativity is more diffused as well as technical skills. It means that on one hand further fragmentation of the activities, roles and skills occurs in each stage of the whole value chain of communication (from concept to distribution), and on the other hand all the actors involved could potentially define their positioning from time to time as content provider, broadcaster, service provider, network provider and "prosumer" as well.

In the current situation, reference tends to be made to the concept of "value constellation" (Normann & Ramirez, 1999) (Fig. 2), precisely because of the opportunity for actors to combine functions and skills, change strategies and business models to respond to market fluidity and the emergence of new needs. Communication professionals in the audiovisual industry should be able to shift from strict specialisation to a more comprehensive understanding of ongoing phenomena. In this respect, the culture of design constitutes a sort of toolbox, unique and essential. It is not a matter of gaining thorough skills for each stage or activity of the audiovisual processes, but rather of being able to network to combine the necessary knowledge and know-how, by negotiating activities and skills on the basis of needs and resources available.

Users can thus be actively involved, depending on interests shown and skills developed, thanks to greater accessibility to digital instruments and content.
It is precisely within this aspect that a remarkable innovation potential may be identified, which indirectly contributes to redefining also the role of design within the audiovisual communication system.
Audiovisual communication design deals with the product[1] itself and the whole audiovisual system, as well.
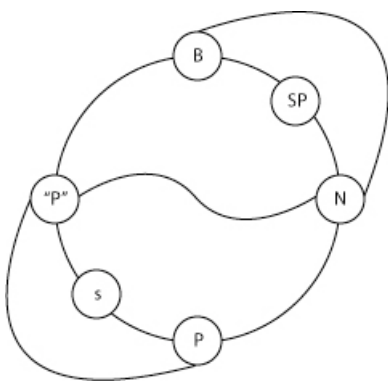

Fig. 2: Value constellation of the audiovisual communication system.

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[1] The "product" is intended as an audiovisual and multimedia artefact, which is the item of consume in the communication market, the supply of communication industry and the outcome of communication design process. Elsewhere in this paper we also call it "content".

"'The televisual' is used here to name a relational domain that constitutes an ever expanding immaterial environment created by the interaction of all electronically inflected visual media — digitized film, TV (in all its transmission modes), video/DVD, computers/the internet, cell phones." (Fry, 2003)

The pervasive nature of television language informs the way we view and experience the world and therefore has become so widespread and complex that it has the power to reconfigure our needs. Tony Fry strongly criticises the "television" simulacrum, in the wake of Baudrillard and his radical criticism of the *society of the spectacle* (Debord, 1967). What is certain is that digital technologies are increasingly redefining languages, aesthetics and communication processes.

1. 1. BUSINESS MODELS

A business model is a conceptual instrument that contains a number of strategic elements and relates them in such a way as to represent the business idea and logic of a company. It is the description of the value it offers to the consumer segments identified and of the structure of the partners' network which the company becomes part of.

In a market as complex as the one that is being redefined by digital technology, the variables available for the development of activities are infinite and, within the sector itself, it is necessary to come up with widely different strategies in order to be competitive and open to constant innovation.

Strategy, business models and processes aim to solve problems and to pursue goals. They do so by acting at different levels compared to the complexity of the actions undertaken by the company (Osterwalder, 2004).

Over time, the Internet has used and integrated several existing business models, from the sale of timed online connections (the *carrier* model) to the sale of advertising spaces (the broadcasting model), from the integration of product communication and marketing (the editorial model) to integrated models.

As of today, the whole media system is organised according to two main economic models, which are quite different especially as far as the user's point of view is concerned: on the one hand are the *advertising based* models which, consolidated with regard to mass media, assert the broadcasting model on digital platforms and offer free content; on the other hand are *videos on demand (VOD)*, in free or pay mode, a model characterised by a wide variety of contents and different access modes.

The definition of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005), a second generation Internet based on the sharing of interests and materials, provides new participation-oriented models that, in line with the vocation of digital, involve all communication media.

1. 2. STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

"Strategy" means "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject can be isolated from an 'environment'" (De Certeau, 2001). A strategy assumes an area that can be circumscribed to become one's own and thus serve as the basis for managing relations with the outside.
Conversely, a "tactic" is not calculated on one's own territory, but on another's. A tactic insinuates itself fragmentarily. It has no base at its disposal where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare to expand, and secure independence according to circumstance. Tactics depend on time – not place - always ready to seize possible advantages, and constantly forced to manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities". The discipline of rhetoric offers models for differentiating among the types of tactics, meaning ways of changing (seducing, persuading, making use of) the will of the target of communication (De Certeau, 2001).

A company's communication strategy moves across a complex territory – the media system. To reach particular targets or meet specific communication objectives it can also use alternative channels. As a matter of fact, it is often necessary to extend the action of an advertising campaign. In these cases, synergic use is made of tactics and instruments, such as Direct Marketing (DM), Public Relations (PR), promotions, sponsoring, merchandising, events, in-store communication and the new media: the web, Business Tv, Product Placement, DVDs and multimedia installations. Through these actions, the high cost of advertising space in the mass media is avoided, while the message is conveyed in a more selective way, reinforced or completed (Lehman, 2003). With reference to the traditional distinction of communication actions between Above The Line (ATL) and Below The Line (BTL), the present scenario of digital media seems to channel expectations towards the potential deriving from the application of BTL tactics in the new lands of multimedia. On the other hand, broadband and improved image quality guaranteed by rapid technological development risk making this distinction increasingly blurred: productions for the new media now reach the same quality standards of television, and the *remediation* (Bolter and Grusin, 1999) of languages and aesthetic models makes this landscape increasingly *liquid*. So far, companies have been able to develop innovation by using ICTs, for instance by implementing IT systems for the management of goods and services at stores and service points. However, they are a long way from understanding that it is possible to define their stance also in terms of content. Communication technologies have always been perceived as foreign to or independent of the contents they produce and convey.

A design standpoint as regards brand communication strategies and tactics thus means identifying the experiences which are closest to the translation of users' ways and practices, in the attempt to abandon the worst part of self-referential marketing once and for all.

The so-called *collaborative marketing* constitutes an important step forward in this direction. It means providing consumers with the possibility of interacting with the resources of the brand, which shares materials and contents (e.g. its archives) with users and makes them available for their re-processing and for the co-production of scenarios, products, new uses and new markets.

1. 3. THE "PROSUMER"

"*Analysing the social change which has in itself the* 'broadcast yourself' *message is completely different from examining the advertising perspectives of a similar model or the impact that the growing ability of individuals to dominate the language of images will have on public expression once the enabling technologies are available.*" (Granieri, 2007)

The new role of target as both consumer and producer of communication is based on two fundamental concepts – content *editing* and *publication*.

The first one, i.e. the possibility to manipulate and reshape the cultural material available, corresponds to the concept of "use", meant as the expression practices strictly linked to the context. Thus, using communication materials means producing artefacts through the practice of expressive languages; acquiring the languages themselves; establishing relationships with the actors involved in the discourse being developed. These practices therefore include publication activity, which is a necessary precondition to making contact, exchanging or sharing materials. For this reason, because of the need for distribution channels and space to publicise artefacts, De Certeau (2001) asserts that practices and contexts of use present a controversial nature as compared to the interpersonal dynamics of power established between the system or reference order (the strategic dimension) and the customisation which remains possible (the tactics). These "*unrecognized producers, poets of their own personal spheres, discoverers in the jungle of functionalist rationality*" move along different and apparently unconnected trajectories among the preset libraries made available in the media. "*Like foamy waves of the sea*", they seep in or exploit the syntaxes of the wider digital system. Use types are at least as interesting as the original contents produced. The analysis of bottom-up production should take into account the construction of underlying relations, rhetoric and tactics as well as what kind of products or materials are used and consumed. In brief, in addition to defining taxonomies of consumptions oriented to differentiate the supply, the companies operating in the contents industry may adopt an attitude allowing the definition of business strategies and models starting from the use and relations that are triggered by the consumption of images and communication products.

From the point of view of the user, an aesthetics of *assembly* and *composition* (Manovich, 2002) is taking shape, determining a compulsive production of images as a widespread expression form. As such, these images and the underlying practices cannot be included in an overall (strategic) project.

If "prosumers" cannot capitalise on the innovations produced in a space of their own (a space of production and distribution like the Web), then they have no chance of adopting a strategic outlook or the ability to see far ahead and foresee. If the use of communication material is limited to the tactic dimension, then the user is left in a weak position, which reduces the flexibility and the swiftness to the dimension of interstitial reactions. In this respect, Palmer (2003) condemns the deceptive aspect of an active role on the part of the user. The "*paradox of user control*" emerges when participation in the media system is not only possible but compulsory. "Customisation" represents the form of social relation brought about by digital media: the consumption of communication is increasingly private and taylored. The expansion of access technologies seems to create fragmentation and proliferation in communication practices, as if the tactics chosen by users became operational within a homogenous strategic space, like almost imperceptible movements in a tightly-woven texture of pre-packaged discourses.

Interactive Tv addresses all users as reactive consumers, forced to perform a constant construction of the self. In relation to the television model, the interactivity principle can take on a double interpretation: Interactivity as *selection*, meaning the choice of a number of options and contents offered by the broadcaster, and Interactivity as *interaction.* The latter refers to a social process of participation that has so far been translated into *call-in* formats (users contacting the editorial office by telephone or mail to express their views), but that – thanks to the contribution offered by the second generation Web – could be transformed in the construction of value by networks that constantly update contents and services, using them (and guaranteeing that they are used) in a creative way.

Intellectual property obviously constrains re-use and experimentation. The liberalization of certain rights, as advocated by the Creative Commons licenses, can favour the construction of a critical mass of contents (documents, images, videos, music) that can stimulate a real bottom-up production culture.

Discussing the Internet and the effects it produces on innovation, Lessig (2001) underlines the importance of creative "commons", meaning those "common goods" belonging to "us all" that constitute the raw material of all forms of expression. According to this key principle underpinning social interaction, the commons represent a resource that we are all entitled to (possess, use, and benefit from). The communication system consists of *strata*: the *physical stratum* (wires and infrastructures through which communication is channelled); the *logical stratum* or *code* (protocols and softwares supporting the hardware); the *content stratum* (images and data being transmitted). Lessig argues that each of the above strata can be controlled or free, i.e. owned or organised on the basis of commons. With regards to digital cable television for instance, all the three strata (wires, code and contents, protected by copyright) belong to the telecommunication company, while in the framework of the traditional telephonic network at least the contents (the conversations) are free. The

Internet mingles controlled and free strata and it is in this very mix that the potential for innovation production resides.

2. BEST PRACTICES

The field of investigation is WebTV, which allows us to analyse a reasonable degree of interaction and to study a television model which is potentially different from the traditional one, for instance in terms of the conception of ideas, the organisation and use of programme schedules. Though WebTV is still in its infancy, it does represent a field open to innovation, both in terms of processes and business models and experimental content. In more general terms, digital television seeks channel integration and communication strategies that take into account a change in the value chain of the television market produced by digital technology. This aspect should be viewed along with a particularly interesting feature: the role of the consumer or "prosumer" - "assembler" (Liscia, 2003), who produces his or her own content and schedules.

Case analysis in the field of the television market was performed according to a number of fundamental criteria:
- focus on WebTV;
- multichannel strategies, where applicable;
- the role of three basic players: broadcaster, producer, user;
- contents and possible declinations: type, format, language.

The cases identified were *Buntes Fernsehen* (Austria), an example of community TV taken to mean participative television and QOOB TV, an example of a multichannel strategy of a broadcaster like MTV. As I already pointed out, the analysis of those cases comes from desk research. In fact, people we got in contact with kindly expressed their interest for my research activity, but in this paper I don't refer to the questionnaire they filled via e-mail. It's due to a restraint purpose until we get official agreement.

The cases chosen are particularly significant of a trend towards the redistribution and redefinition of roles and skills, with increasingly more importance given to the strategic management of content and genres.

2. 1. COMMUNITY TV: PARTICIPATIVE TELEVISION

The role of the public is even more active when they themselves become producer and broadcaster, communicating directly with the *network provider*. The case presented in this section shows examples of how

digital technologies and audiovisual multimedia production can become real instruments of dialogue and participation, developing the social and political side of communication.

At present, several forms of participation and activism, many of which deeply rooted in history, are now evolving and finding a new form of expression, breaking away from the area of counter-culture. *Community*, artists, cultural and political activists and even the average citizen carry forth the philosophy and visionary spirit which drove the early development of the Internet; they are redefining the borders of a 'protected' and 'private' communicative territory, establishing themselves as new multiple centres.

Henry Jenkins (2004) underlines how these emerging forms of community are characterised by forms of voluntary or transitory associations or tactics that, arising out of common initiatives of intellectual and emotional involvement, become consolidated through the production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge. On another level, *peer-to-peer* technology radically modifies existing systems of distribution founded on ownership. Jenkins defines as *grassroots media* those communication systems that allow and encourage the bottom-up production of content, meaning guided by the user/consumer.

Individuals become in some ways the makers of their own social identity, which is confirmed by selecting knowingly the resources and contents available to produce new and highly personalised ones. The social tissue then represents a system which develops according to pathways defined gradually from the bonds between each single skill. Reciprocity fuels *network-to-network* connections.

In the case of television on the Web, an interesting integration between the local dimension of the community and the social and operative model of the network would seem to be appearing.

It is about inter-media formats, capable of transverse declination between generalised television and the Internet.

Prior to proceeding with the analysis, it is necessary to specify what we mean by *Community TV*:

- *videoportals*, which could represent a strategy of integration between traditional broadcasting (programme schedules) and broadband infrastructure (database and interaction). In this case an association of interests is determined as regards topics or genres approached with audiovisual language, closer to the network model;

- formats deriving from civic networks, emanating from local administration; or community networks, which arise out of the initiative of a single citizen or association (Colombo, 2005). They explicitly connect with the territory and real society, setting themselves up as a further channel of expression for the identity of a place or its people. In this case, the rights and contracts which regulate the day-to-day life of individuals (residence or citizenship, for instance) may influence the way in which

content and services are accessed.

2.1.1. BUNTES FERNSEHEN (AUSTRIA)[2]

Tools	
desk research	
Web TV content	
• citizen journalism	• short fiction
Main players involved	
• Telekom Austria	• Sonovista[3], to whom Telekom Austria entrusted the
• Local community	concept and realisation of the project.

The citizens of Engerswitzdorf, just outside Linz, in northern Austria, are producing their own local television channel. The channel deals with politics, sport, events and anything local residents may wish to film. It is a local television service on broadband (via cable) supplied by Telekom Austria, as video on demand.

The project began in 2004, as a net-based television broadcaster, reaching the 8.000 residents of Engerswitzdorf. Telekom Austria provided the hardware and software necessary for video acquisition and editing, so that after 4 training seminars the video cameras were made available to the locals. The degree of training is actually very basic, especially since 'experimenting' in the field is learning-by-doing. All the programmes produced by residents are uploaded to the portal "Buntes Fernsehen" (literally: "TV full of colour" or "Multi-Coloured TV"), so that each member of the community can watch and download any material.

The pilot broadcast has been so successful that Telekom Austria is thinking of extending the project to other areas.

In the course of the first 4 months residents filmed 60 short videos and reports on local topics and information. Some material is *factual*, other rather 'creative'. Rudolf Fisher has defined it as a sort of "democratisation of local TV".

2. 2. MULTICHANNEL STRATEGIES OF TRADITIONAL BROADCASTERS

Certain broadcasters, ever present in the television market, use the role of "prosumer" to give rise to a business model which saves production costs by selecting already existing material and making it the focus of its activity.

The multichannel package is characterised by gearing its content to a genre or target. In this context, abandoning the generalised model means that it can cut production costs and choose from *pay* or *free*

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[2] www.buntesfernsehen.at

contents. One particularly widespread formula is that of the *slave channel*, i.e. spin-off channels of generalised broadcasters offering content derived from successful programmes, at different times to traditional TV or with fresh content made ad hoc for a specific target, in the sense of a real extension of the brand to other sectors of the market of television content.

Adapting a format for digital Tv may be considered a case of extending it to a different medium compared to the original as it offers a richer mode of use. This aspect makes it necessary to work on a restricted audience compared to the traditional viewers of the programme, since many might not be predisposed to the use of more advanced technology like the Internet. Investigating audience profile thus becomes fundamental for identifying possible models of use and consumption: individual and collective, participative, 'serious' or entertaining. In this sense MTV is aimed at a particular and precisely profiled viewing public. That is why in this case the Web represents a specialised channel in terms of what it offers and how its target is segmented. It suggests the definition of new strategies and business models but also the creation of new formats.

2. 2. 1. QOOB TV[4]

Tools		
Desk research.		
Web TV content		
• Art		• Animation
• Music		• Video
Main players involved		
• MTV		
• Users		

The Web is a slave-channel for MTV, meaning a further declination of the content of the analogue channel, adapted for a specific target. It represents a sort of brand extension, which uses the channel brand to exploit the potential of already available content.

Founded as a thematic channel, characterised by schedule of music videos, MTV has progressively adopted a generalised thrust, broadcasting films, animated films (shorts and feature films), variety, reality and self-productions of entertainment, aimed, however, at an original viewing public which MTV itself has contributed to building up through its own editorial plan. It is a young audience, curious and trend-conscious, extremely appetising for advertisers, who try to adapt their advertising to the schedule and layout of the channel in terms of both visuals and tone.

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[3] www.sonovista.com
[4] www.qoob.tv

Users can upload their material (audio, video, photo) making them available to all. The material is voted, commented on and assessed by QOOB staff for viewing, through both DTT and live streaming on the site. In addition to *user generated* content is material acquired from outside companies (animation, film shorts, motion design), material produced by QOOB (interviews or series thought up by talented users and produced by QOOB) and music videos.

2. 3. A SYNTHESIS

The growth of content supplied by digital Tv has added a series of proposals to those few large generalised channels aimed at a distinctive positioning. Many small producers and *content providers* have put themselves forward as independent broadcasters, at the risk of being squashed by large international producers, broadcasters and operators. The examples I have presented demonstrate how, especially in Europe, participative television is possible when broadcaster or *network provider* are involved directly and possess the financial and political will to invest in a project: Telekom Austria and MTV are working precisely in this direction to define an audiovisual "ecosystem", grounded within the territory or upon communities of interests. In this sense, training clearly has an important part to play.

This also demonstrates how similar co-operative strategies have a basis.

If we accept that stories do represent a real need for the digital television system, just as creative ideas, these television formulas define a participative model of the research, collection and production of innovative forms of expression. Innovation is produced, in these cases, especially in the processes and business models, while more widespread skill and growth is needed as regards content.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3. 1. THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN STRATEGY AND PRODUCTION

This context confirms the hypothesis according to which design takes on a fundamental role in the audiovisual arena, bringing with it a visual and design culture, particularly bound to language, to the tools and the processes of new digital media that had so far been left outside the television industry.

The role of design in the audiovisual sector therefore ranges from *broadcast design* – meaning the *corporate image* of a broadcaster, channel or format – to real production of content, to the definition of strategies and expressive forms for the sharing and use of the content itself. Communication design is also involved with the acquisition of skills through the tools made available by digital networks, where production and use coincide in a single sustainable project.

Latour (1995) aspires to a situation where all may shift from the role of *intermediary* to that of *mediator*. While the former lack skill and autonomy and set up ties having no means to define or understand them, hand content having no means to process it, the latter are capable of *translating*, redefining and re-positioning what they handle, "without betrayal. *Servants gained their freedom*" (Latour, 1995).

Actually we, as designers, have to face the challenge that comes from a widespread attitude to design. Thus communication is taking on a central role for sharing, for dialogue and cooperation. As consumption and production coincide, *use as transformation* represents a practice of participative design.

This is where the relationship between the players involved and their roles within a context takes on more importance. The chain tends to dissolve on connections, focusing the centrality of the process on the user and making the sequence of each phase less evident.

The urgency of a more open and systemic approach suggests, then, a *design-oriented* approach. The responsibility of audiovisual communication design at this time is to encourage the involvement of the user. Audiovisual communication design is strategic because it is capable of building value for both the company and the user, of realising the immense potential of cooperation among the various players, of a concept of value as *value of use*, ethical in the sense of social, aesthetic because it is part of the practices of expressive production.

3. 2. *WEAK* TELEVISION.
THE ROLE OF TV BETWEEN PERSONALISATION AND PARTICIPATION

"*Key developments are: the growing diffusion of IPTV, p2p video streaming, vlogs (i.e. a blog that includes video), and a flurry of social software programs that have made possible the blossoming of online communities and Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs). There is a growing use of these horizontal networks of communication in the field of mass communication. Certainly, mainstream media are using blogs and interactive networks to distribute their content and interact with their audience, mixing vertical and horizontal communication modes. But there are also a wealth of examples in which the traditional media, such as cable TV, are fed by autonomous production of content using the digital capacity to produce and distribute*". (Castells, 2007)

Unlike traditional television, digital formats make possible multiple and diverse types of communication. Integration of programming with the database enables people to use the television according to a hybrid model which is compatible with the innovative potential of second generation Web. Rather than a television 2.0 (Mizzi, 2006) however, the hypothesis of a *weak* television is to be preferred, giving positive meaning to the process of continuous modification and implementation of knowledge which follows "a natural logic, widespread but not concentrated processes and reversible and self-balancing strategies" (Branzi, 2006).

The use of Tv is no longer the same: the editorial approach based on the organisation of time through the programme schedule, organised according to time and season, is now coupled to one which is based on the organisation of space through interfaces and database searchability. This way of mapping contents makes it possible to use the medium to research, play, chat, make transactions, store and publish. The viewers become increasingly active in their use of Tv, while segmentation is replaced by customisation.

From this perspective, Web TV can be likened to blogs or videoblogs. Blogs are made up of reflections and thoughts, images or clips, which are arranged in chronological order beginning with the most recent. Blogs offer an inherent system of feedback and interaction between author and reader, which allows for comments to be posted up and there are links to other blogs and sites. Micro-publishing, which is a kind of halfway house between individual communication (oral) and transmission to a huge audience, is an example of the application of the social power of peer-to-peer communication.

Rather than its inherent intimacy, what is interesting is the mechanism by which people become involved which is based on trust. On the occasion of the *BlogTalk Downunder* Conference, Adrian Miles (2005) spoke about "*embeddedness*" to define the condition of the log author's "total immersion" on the theme under discussion: he records and writes about an issue he is versed in, and it is precisely this aspect that involves the blog's audience, because they appreciate his expertise and are encouraged to take part in the discourse production.

As far as audiovisual content is concerned, videos are conceived and handled by most videobloggers as closed objects which are not editable and have to be viewed from beginning to end. Yet software and tools exist which can give information about the date of publication, location, authors and other metadata which gives access to other smaller meaningful units. Despite this, most audio and video clips are conceived as closed artefacts or, at best, as extracts from a larger work, though complete in themselves. Miles, on the other hand suggests that videos should be seen as a fragment of the network, which would thus require a change to the author-artefact-user paradigm, whereby the way in which the artefact is used is fundamental and comes before watching or listening.

For a better understanding, it is therefore possible to draw a comparison between videoblogs and film footage, which represents a narrative thread, used particularly in documentary films. They are audiovisual tales based on archive footage, often filmed by amateurs, as is the case with the work of director Peter Forgacs who, in a recent interview, stated that "*home movies these days can be sixty hours long to film just in one year whereas, before, five hours of film would be recorded in a whole lifetime*" (Lissoni, 2005). If before, the lack of ready-made images meant that a director's work revolved around the arduous task of finding sufficient material to use to tell his/her story, their role today is more one of conceiving and giving shape to the disproportionate amount of images around. Storytelling represents a key asset. Images have been set the task

of witnessing to recorded events, failing to realise that memory is made up of stories not simply bits of information.

In *The language of the new media*, Lev Manovich (2002) points out that media technology, right from its beginning in XIX century, developed along two distinct lines. The first was that of *representation technology* (films, audio and videocassettes, digital formats), which led to the development of artistic forms (cinema, video). The second corresponds to *communication technology* in real time (telegraph, telephone, television). Where television is concerned, the two lines intersect in that the television was originally used primarily as a means of distributing pre-recorded content. This content therefore preserved its status as a finished aesthetic object, constructed prior to transmission and therefore quintessentially a representation.
Subsequently, with the Internet, telecommunications took on a primary role, making it necessary to actually revise the aesthetic object paradigm. It became therefore possible to isolate the aesthetic element beyond the confines of the representation and merge art and communication together.

On the one hand, the interfaces and their *remediation* (Bolter & Grusin, 2002) continually remind us that they are essentially channels of communication. On the other, telecommunication, that is the transmission of content in real time, eliminates distance and depth. The result is an *immediate* communication space.
Yet another aspect is that relating to the interaction which electronic telecommunication allows for: a bi-directional communication which, at this point, is accessible to all users.
The status of television is thus being continually redefined. Diverse factors, both social and economic, have contributed to a progressive de-institutionalisation of the television. In terms of production, there are more and more companies in operation and, in terms of consumers, the personalisation which the new technologies have made possible, has been transformed into a marketing tool. Supply is increasing and the viewing public is tending towards a less ritualised and more fragmented use of the television with specialised genres, topics and interaction patterns.

The aesthetics of *de-intermediation* could be an interesting field of research into communication design, especially where the television system is concerned.
The new media will not easily replace the traditional media unless awareness is raised about the complexity of the relationship between the network infrastructure and the social networks. Design will take on the role of mediator for the de-intermediation of communication and for the encouragement of participative strategies.

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