

INTERMEDIA: SURVEILLANCE, TECHNOLOGICAL AND MEDIA CONVERGENCE

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Abstract: Intermedia is an effervescent field, with various approaches that render some of its representations confusing. There is also a wide variety in terminology in use, illustrated by a simple enumeration of the concepts employed: new media, digital media, postmedia, convergence media, electronic media, cross media, interactive media, innovative media, network(ed) media, participatory journalism, citizen journalism, global media, collaborative media etc. These are all terms that sometimes overlap with the same media phenomenon designating, at least to some extent, common areas of communication. They all imply at least two essential elements: 1) the use of digital technology; 2) co-participation in generating communication contents. Intermedia is a term explaining how media convergence is carried out in relation to technological convergence, as well as the relationship between mainstream media and digital (interactive) media. It also brings other issues into discussion, issues that are not directly linked to media communication, but, which, nonetheless, represent major realities and concerns in contemporary society. This analysis mainly focuses on four areas of interest: 1) characteristics of communication in social networks; 2) surveillance boundaries; 3) enabling interaction by means of web.2 and web.3. The discussion follows the elements of traditional journalism and the metamorphoses imposed by the new social reality and the virtual sphere, with reference to perceptions in the public sphere, as well as in the general critical and cultural context generated by postmodernism.

Keywords: media convergence, co-participation, biopower, security, web 2.0, web 3.0, technological control

Introduction or thoughts on co-participation

Interactivity and co-participation are essential characteristics of digital communication. Intermedia is the term used for this change of paradigm, which sets itself apart from the claim of the definitive singular creation, with only one author. Naturally, contents subject to copyright (artistic literary works), inventions and patents have a specific regime and cannot be used by others without certain conditions. But most messages in the public sphere aren't subject to this rule, particularly when their authors wish to expose them to interaction. This phenomenon is manifested at an organizational level, as well as at an individual level of communication. Moreover, an efficient co-participation is established between the information provider, the social media professional and the consumer (Deuze, 2008). A person can exist in all three hypostases. When various people are involved, the differences (and divergences!) of approach can be settled by expressing one's own points of view within the same communication product.

The interaction is thus manifested under the impact of media convergence, expressed by co-participation in creating contents. A communication product is created not only when two or several users collaborate, but also when they are in a dispute, expressing contradicting opinions. Controversies in the digital environment are favored by the presence on the same media platforms at the same time, the simplest interaction being that of placing remarks in the form of comments. To the other users, who can bring their own interventions to the debate or not, the communication product can be seen in its integrity and can be analyzed in all of its details, including the incorporated images. Co-participation was also possible due to technological convergence, manifested by the shift from web 1.0 to web 2.0 (at present there are numerous discussions regarding the emergence of web 3.0). Users taking action is thus enabled by the emergence of media platforms. The change was noticed by Bolin (2012), who pointed out the transformation of the readers, listeners and viewers, i.e. a distinct audience for each type of media up until then, into media users. Another direction is that of the technological convergence recorded in the new equipment available (telephone, laptop, PC or tablet). These would also enable the development of surveillance potential. At this point, the limits of surveillance are again brought into discussion, i.e. what are necessary measures to avoid attacks on state and

citizen security and what is unnecessary intrusion in an organization's activity and in the lives of private people.

Diversifying the media environment has also lead to diversifying the work processes. As John Postill and Sarah Pink (2012) point out, it is necessary to distinguish between two procedures (coined basic „methods”), i.e.: 1) web content analysis; 2) social network analysis. This virtual space trait of being homogenous and diverse at the same time was also captured by Matthew Powers and Rodney Benson (2014), who have analyzed the differences and similarities in mass-media, focusing on the print and the digital.

Methodological and historical reference points

The methodology behind this qualitative research has implied close observations of the practical use of new work equipment in the field of communication, of the influences exercised by the digital media on the users and on their activity, focusing on professional communicators. Literature was also researched regarding these changes in the profile of media communication, revealing the fact that there are numerous researches concerned with understanding this extremely complex phenomenon that is interactivity in digital communication, against the background of challenges posed by the media and technological convergence, in overlapping that characterize the field of intermedia and its understanding (Szabo, 2014).

Interactivity is closely related to the concept of convergence. This takes place on two levels: media convergence and technological convergence. At present, using electronic (digital) devices to a great extent tends to mask this differentiation between the two fields of convergence. Yet, media convergence in journalistic communication is an element that has to do with professionalism and is manifested in the way the topic is chosen, in information gathering (at the site of the event) and in editing. It is a process in which the communication products can be created using current advanced digital equipment, as well as older methods, on paper. Editing and publishing is lately done by mostly using digital technology, therefore rendering technological convergence necessary. Not only the publication in electronic press, on websites, blogs or social media platforms, but also the printing of traditional newspapers call for the use of new technologies.

The old printing houses, greasy and filled with lead, were closed. New rotary presses, more silent but just as large, were put into operation. Even if certain activities (composing the

text and correcting it) were moved from the printing house into the editorial office (which has gradually become a virtual editorial office), pressmen are still needed for the printing stage. It is a traditional collaboration between journalists (editors) and pressmen. Although the media and the printing industry collaborate on creating the same product – the newspaper, their activities remain separate. Technological convergence is not digital only. Digitization is manifested in the present, but human activity has known this leveling phenomenon in the past as well, particularly for easing work and increasing productivity. Kodama (2014) would review these aspects for the 19th and 20th centuries, proving that digitization is just a technological component (particularly in industry).

Media and technological convergence are distinct processes, although it is obvious that at present they greatly overlap. We can use mobile phones, laptops, tablets, video cameras to gather information (including images) and to edit these, but media convergence is manifested in the way these data are arranged into professional media products. Technological convergence is manifested in the way an electronic device can be used to carry out several technical operations, some of which, in the past, implied separate technologies. Thus, the current tablet can replace the voice recorder (or other recording devices), can fulfill the role of a camera (photo and video), and has sufficient memory and space for archiving, offering sufficient applications for editing.

Postmodernist complications and new technologies

Accepting the outlook that any older media was once new media, we bring a historical aspect into the discussion. There are, however, current studies that exceed the simple chronological approach, citing publications, prominent journalists and technical innovations. To a certain extent, the traditional approach is also exceeded, that of the press as a mirror for society, in the sense of reflecting the events of the time. Research inspired by the postmodernist movement will underline the reciprocal challenges of the media system in the public sphere (generally including the political, economical, social and cultural fields) and the way disputes and influences are solved. Second, this type of approach would place mass media on the same level of importance in research, undermining the explicit or implicit hierarchies supported in the modern era. It would be a gain for in-depth understanding of certain events, current ones as well as ideas from various periods of time in the past, as prejudices would be discarded regarding the

simplistic way of approaching facts in media communication. This pattern of approach argues for the understanding of current debates on mass information such as intermedia.

If new media is, paradoxically, always a stage concept, always succeeded by other meaning configurations, we need a reference point that collects all of these meanings and circumscribes their applicability. It is a perspective that, apart from a historical approach, also allows a comparative one. Comparative follows two approaches. The first is historical, i.e. identifying the common elements and the differences from one stage to another. The second direction enables the comparison between types and elements of synchronic identification, within the same analyzed period of time. It is the perspective that sets post-media apart from contemporary new media, mainly understood as digital media. Reference to technology is essential from a historical perspective, an aspect noticed by Thorburn, Barrett and Jenkins (2003: vii). In this context it is important to point out that technical inventions, quickly applied in the field of communication, have always exercised a great attraction for the larger public, but also inspiring a certain degree of fear.

In Curran and Seaton's opinion, one can only speak of new media after the year 1980, i.e., television's days of glory, when it would come to dominate the media market. Satellites and the means of transmitting signals through cable would be the two technical components to favor the ascent of television from a technical point of view. The two authors would also point out the changes taking place under the impact of new technologies generally, not only in the audiovisual field, by using PCs on a large scale. As is usually the case, among the first users of new equipment and technologies would be the media institutions (Curran and Seaton 2010: 238). From a technical viewpoint it is necessary to notice the nuances or even the differences between digital and digitization. Bowen and Giannini (2014) argue in the favor of digitization as a genre and link between the various forms of digital, present in various areas of manifestation. For the two authors, the technological convergence seems to prevail, the communication contents actually created having more to do with talent, a hard-to-quantify element, of course.

Surveillance and Biopower

The discussion on media expansion (in all of its integrated forms: mass media, new media, social media and multimedia) also needs an approach from the perspective of real assertion of fundamental citizen rights. The fear of *Big brother* is much greater than the model

provided by George Orwell in the world-famous novel *1984*. Surveillance becomes a philosophical concept and ground for debate, given the current media development. Big brother seems to settle, by means of subtle infiltrations, into the industrial societies, conventionally referred to as the West. The tacit invasion has already taken place, according to certain researchers. *Biopower* is the term used to denote the phenomenon of surveillance and technological control of the individuals and the society, as proposed by Paolo Bellini, based on the theories belonging to Hardt and Negri (2000). Bellini would mention, referring to the meaning of the concept: „We can interpret *biopower* as a form of social and political organization that does not necessarily cancel individual rights and freedom formally, where these are present. It rather keeps them down and absorbs their effects, which can potentially destabilize the order and the geometry that the worldwide ruling classes have decided to imprint in the planetary technological civilization and in the political body made up of the individuals and the multitudes that are subject to them” (Bellini 2011). The step towards the control of the society and its individuals (which, almost imperceptibly, are dispossessed of certain attributes in their citizen armor) is also manifested through the surveillance and limitation of the media offensive.

Although these concerns are contemporary, debates, on just how public certain aspects, which used to belong to the private, should be, aren't new. In fact, as shown by Ginny Whitehouse (2010), they have a rather long history. The debate can be held on the way in which, in the less democratic societies, the government encourages the surveillance of its own citizens in order to control them, but also on the offensive in the traditional private space currently recorded in the democratic states by means of the expansion of online journalism, of social media, through new multimedia tools. The insecurity triggered by the absence of any predictable limit to intrusion adds to the usual concern related to this phenomenon that brings about numerous changes. It is a fact that many people post information by themselves on social networks, making certain information generally available to the circle of friends with whom they share the domain. Ethical issues may rise when media professionals use this information in elaborate journalistic products. The private or semiprivate (when posted only for the accepted circle of friends) information can be used by journalists (but also by other people, even ill-intentioned) against the owner.

Private aspects in social media

Social media can be an important source of information for mass media, helping to verify information: „Facebook provides an excellent opportunity for triangulating sources and should be considered publicly available information as are all sites not encrypted” (Whitehouse, 2010). If, in the case of a politician, using such data doesn't seem to pose great problems, the situation changes in the case of people less familiar with mass communication, and who, perhaps, don't even wish for it. But not only social networks (social media) turn out to be weak sources of information, particularly due to their difficult to discern what is truly important and what ought to be verified. Such is the case of the free encyclopedia Wikipedia. It is a media platform extensively researched for various data, which, however, can only be used as a rough guide at most. As underlined by various researchers, despite the abundance of information, in concrete cases it is necessary to call on more secure, specific sources (Matei and Dobrescu, 2011).

It is interesting to see how the new technologies and media convergences favor the mobilization for reaching a common goal, which can sometimes be rights and freedom, as in the African revolutions of 2011, citizen offensives for democracy or for overthrowing authoritarian or even dictatorial regimes. The evolution towards democracy isn't straightforward and certain. Sometimes, it doesn't even take place, or at least not in a controlled time interval. In 2013, the democratic reforms had come to a stall in Egypt. Following the massive citizen protests in 2011 and 2012, the power was taken over by a president and a government leaning towards Islamic conservatism. They had come into power through free elections... In 2013, President Morsi was removed following a new wave of protests and with the support of the military leaders. The transition towards a stable democracy remained difficult, denoting a profound breach in Egyptian society. However, technology also favours an increase in surveillance. The socializing and mobilizing effort is opposed by the ability of governments, of authoritarian regimes, to survey citizens and to block, from initial phases, the mobilizing attempts for an open society, with righteous laws, where fundamental rights and liberties are respected. This way of employing new technologies would be captured by Smith Pfister and Soliz (2011) with regard to the actions of the Iranian regime, undermined by the appeal to digital media under the cover of anonymity.

From web 1.0 to web 2.0, and on to web 3.0?

The shift from web 1.0 to web 2.0 implies radical and, especially, irreversible changes regarding convergence. It is a shift from the institutions' and mainly the network and website administrators' ability to fuel the virtual space with content to the users' ability to react, to place information and content or to alter already existing ones. The process took place in 2004, signifying a change of paradigm, although postmodernism rejects such pretentious labels. But the terminological disputes cannot hide an important change of offer, possibilities and behavior for the users in the virtual space. Applications run in web 2.0 have given them the opportunity to step out of passiveness, out of a state of mere receivers of messages (products) in the electronic environment. The web 2.0 concept was introduced and explained by Tim O'Reilly (2005). Subsequently, the concept would be developed towards implications generated by collective intelligence (O'Reilly and Battelle, 2009). Subsequent studies would mention its specificity, but the approaches would not lack exaggerations or confusions. As early as the web 1.0 era, some products could be received, copied and archived. Web 2.0 would allow interaction, and, right away, interactivity. This means 1) a reply, a stand regarding the content already posted; 2) carrying out common operations, in succession or simultaneously, on an existing product or on an idea, in order to create a new content.

There was a boom in comments as a form of interaction right after 2004, when the new applications were available. Taking over content, altering it to be used according to personal options and reposting it in various forms had very quickly become an intense activity. The platforms have become very popular, allowing interaction in the form of personal posts for the use (or only feedback) by others, adding new content that allows the creation of a great variety of media products, structured, however, by affiliation to the respective platform. Researchers dealing with this extremely interesting and dynamic phenomenon have unanimously underlined the system's capacity to take the user out of isolation and place him/her in a group, virtual activity somehow becoming similar to the responsibility of a member of a team. It doesn't matter that the connections to the other members or to the leaders are weak. By means of the sheer adherence to the platform one enters such a team, no matter the extent to which one interacts with the others. However, web 2.0 only seems like an environment easy to access and use.

Thus, we are approaching the professional field, where all the tools, skills and abilities are first of all used to maximize gains (financial, as well as of other types: scientific acknowledgement, innovations, social prestige etc). It is field where relaxing (entertainment) and digital socializing play a small part. It is, however, obvious that using digital networks at work isn't forbidden, in principle, but it is best that such opportunities to interact and spread information and products be used with a professional aim. Thus, another challenge arises, related to running existing applications, some with a high degree of complexity, as well as suggesting new ones, capable of better reflecting the communication options and needs. These are findings that allow one to see a different face of web 2.0. Interaction, the users' coming out of isolation, represents a particularly important aspect. At the same time, due to the multitude of suggested applications, and to the capacity to run new ones, web 2.0 offers a gateway to multi-specialization. And sometimes even demands it.

The 3.0 universal journalist?

The latter years have been marked by the need of organizations and institutions to reduce costs, an aspect also visible in the field of mass-media. Keeping up with the standards is possible, when discarding certain employees and collaborators, as well as large head offices requiring great costs or costly productions, only by employing new technologies and management formulas. In this context, the journalist will have a different evolution from the traditional one. A classical path, seen in its essential data, meant being a reporter during the first years of activity, then an editor, and then, when gaining the necessary experience, taking a leading job, even as editor-in-chief or manager. Nowadays, one speaks of a universal, complete and complex journalist. A reporter's work is simultaneous with that of editor (Szabo, 2013). Information gathering means an operation simultaneous with editing, posting on websites, live radio or television broadcast. He/she must take photos, record, film and process everything. These are complicated situations that call for the use of adequate technical tools, meaning that the journalist must cope with intense strains.

Some researchers already speak of a shift to the web 3.0 concept. There are certain authors who have wanted to see their name related to this concept, but, who so far haven't managed to produce valid arguments for a clear differentiation, at least theoretically, from web 2.0. The specific elements for web 3.0 are still relentlessly searched for, attempts to define it also

proving interesting. The separation opposes two concepts: 1) *user participation* for web 2.0 and 2) *user cooperation* for web 3.0. If we understand participation and cooperation as interactivity, a concept intensely developed by numerous researchers, and in the current paper as well, one can see that the differences between the two domains fade away. It is a reservation that Barassi and Treré would formulate (2012). The authors would find three specific elements that could contribute to a future defining of web 3.0. One is the possibility that from human interaction new meanings are born, different from the initial ones. The model provided is Wikipedia. A sustained development would be that in the field of business, a cultural-business pattern that would benefit from the opportunities offered by technology. Barassi and Treré (2012) bring forth the challenges offered by a third direction of development, one that is a sensitive subject in democratic societies: surveillance. It can be accompanied by corporate control, as well as by the *assimilation* and exploitation of contributions and results obtained by the users. But all this is already possible in the web 2.0 eras.

Intermedia, an adequate term

Of greater help in outlining the particularity of web 3.0 seems to be an idea put forth by Tim Berners-Lee, the creator of www (World Wide Web), who claimed (Floridi, 2009: 27) the potential for contents with a high degree of originality to emerge from the computer-computer interaction. There are possibilities of evolution imagined by the science-fiction literature, with challenges going in two directions: 1) the already mentioned machine-machine (computer-computer) relationship and 2) the human-machine (computer) relationship. In both cases, the computer firstly implies the ability to create and transmit contents with a high degree of novelty and originality. Interaction and interrelating are enabled by already existing programmers'. Some are expected to become extremely sophisticated and comprehensive, so as to simulate rational processes, formulating solutions and taking decisions based on quantitative analyses. One can, however, estimate that the qualitative emotional distillations are in the far ...and fictional future. In this context, one can agree with the suggestions made by Barassi and Treré (2012). They have shown that among the three types of web (1.0, 2.0 and 3.0) there aren't any obligatory differences to set them apart as unique, but several connections that allow one to see their evolution as a succession. The web, in general, comes into discussion, with certain identified stages of development. The authors would even explain the fact that the analysis contains a

concept of great complexity, designating a composite reality, identified in the current paper under the general term intermedia: „It is a complex socio-technical environment that is created by a variety of different and often conflicting technical applications, platforms, texts, discourses, cultural, political and economic processes, practices, stories, lived experiences and human relations. Understanding this is of pivotal importance to starting to address future technological and social developments and come to terms with the fact that the notions of Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 are in fact cultural constructs” (Barassi and Treré, 2012).

Conclusions and new directions

All this gain from intermedia, representing the actual functioning mechanism of new communication, is verified in significant situations, in some cases crisis situations. Communication possibilities are under enormous pressure at such times. The participation and cooperation of users, particularly when hot topics are discussed, that capture the attention of a significant number of people, all the elements of interactivity are used almost simultaneously and in a sustained manner, leading to the emergence of viral. These are easy to recognize in the sphere of citizen journalism, where protests take place, actions of denouncing measures or policies considered wrong by the participants. Virtual opposition is just as efficient as traditional opposition in the street, sometimes even more efficient. Especially in closed or semi-open societies the consolidation of online opposition proves its efficiency, political leaders being unable to subject to direct physical reprisals a large number of opponents. Naturally, the creation of virals plays a distinct role in both stages: 1) mobilizing; 2) actual protest. It is obvious that in these cases reaching the set goals is enabled by a large media convergence (well edited and efficient messages), as well as by technological convergence (equipment, applications and networks that convey these contents to a large number of potential participants). As John Postill (2014) indicates, one does not only speak of a viral, but of a virtual epidemic, spread in the electronic environment, but with maximum effects in the sphere of the factual public, media epidemiography being not only a new concept in communication, but also a key element in explaining the phenomenon.

In this field of complex manifestations, the conclusion that arises implies several directions: 1) technological convergence, materialized in new devices and applications, contributes decisively to the development of communication, allowing professionals and non-

professionals to evolve freely in the field. Thus, media convergence also takes place, but there are also challenges, generated by the somewhat suspicious adaptation of media professionals to the new climate, against the background of the non-professionals' assault, less observant of ethical and deontological rigor; 2) Technological and media convergence widens the window of possibilities for surveillance even more, the challenge here arising from imposing limits. It is a field of action in a state of conflict (camouflaged or open) between the benefits of surveillance to protect and surveillance as unwelcome intrusion into private life. Intermedia is this virtual space of interaction, interactivity and convergence, with actual effects in the public sphere and in everyday life. Uneven, and sometimes incoherent and inconsistent, it calls for investigations into each of its components.

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