

# Television: a question of spaces between proximities and distances

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## Abstract

Over the last 25 years, television has evolved at such a speed that the categories used to understand it have become partly out of synch. This lack of synchronisation is not only a question of time but also space. This article attempts to analyse this last dimension to describe the place where both the figures of television co-exist that legitimise the omnipresence of the market as well as the new players and dynamics of social emancipation and citizen empowerment. Based on the context of the Latin American scenario, the article presents a reflection on the new complexity brought into play by the experiences of local television, which help new players to take shape through these new types of communication that connect and redesign what is offered globally with local demand.

## Key words

Local television, citizenry, mediation, proximity, globality, community television.

## Resum

En els darrers vint-i-cinc anys la televisió ha evolucionat a una velocitat tal que les categories per entendre-la han quedat, en part, desfasades. Aquest desfasament no és només una qüestió de temps, sinó també d'espai. Aquest text pretén analitzar aquesta última dimensió per intentar descriure el lloc en què conviuen tant les figures de la televisió que legitimen l'omnipresència del mercat com els nous actors i les noves dinàmiques d'emancipació social i poderament ciutadà. L'article planteja, a partir del context de l'escenari llatinoamericà, una reflexió sobre la nova complexitat que les experiències de la televisió local posen en joc i que faciliten que nous actors prenguin forma a través d'aquestes noves modalitats de comunicació que connecten i redissenyen les ofertes globals amb les demandes locals.

## Paraules clau

Televisió local, ciutadania, mediació, proximitat, globalitat, televisió comunitària.

I must begin this article by explaining the reasons for the reflective horizon I have chosen. And the first of these is that, for at least twenty-five years, television has been moving much more quickly than the categories we use in our attempt to understand it and the lack of synchronisation of the last few years has proven to be not only a question of time but also of space. This can be seen in the names we use for television - *state, local, regional, proximity* - but in very few studies this dimension is tackled in all its disconcerting weight, what is delocating and relocating the meaning and value of what we still call *televisión*. It is this dimension that I propose to analyse in order to roughly map out the *place from which* we think, both the figures of television that legitimise every day the market's mediating omnipresence and the perversion of policy, as well as those other figures in which we can make out new players and dynamics of social emancipation and citizen empowerment.

The second reason is that my long and dense relationship with Catalonia was where I found not only pioneering research into the processes and means of regional and local communi-

cation but also encouraging research into the design and implementation of public policy to regulate and promote the expansion of community and citizen media. So that, in my research on the Latin American experiences, the studies of De Moragas, Prado, Gifreu and Guimerà, the pioneering local TV stations of Cardedeu, TV Clot (of Barcelona) and the Catalan local television network (XTVL) have been a point of analytical, political and strategic reference. That is also why, rather than an analysis of the experiences of local television, what I am proposing here is a reflection on the new complexity that these experiences bring into play, obviously based on a different geographical context, namely Latin America, its particular history of the struggle to democratise communication.

## 1. What is global does not come from the international but from another way of being in the world

In a radio talk in 1967 (but which, strangely, was not published until shortly before his death in 1984), Michel Foucault

proposed a radical challenge to western thought when he stated that, while modern thought of the 18th and 19th century was built on a basis of categories of time, we were at the dawn of a new era in which space had started to take on a perceptive relevance and strategic policy. Foucault actually says (1999, 15-19): "The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world", and states immediately afterwards: "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed"; and he reinforces this idea by stating that we are at a time when "our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein". The connection between this conceptualisation and terminology cannot be more significant [as he doesn't talk of what is *real* or of *reality* in the philosophical sense but of *the world*] with a thought whose axis is an analysis of the reorganisation of the conditions of existence and the exercising of power. Foucault was thinking of *the world* in terms of *power space* long before social sciences took the category seriously, warning us that the relevance of space would become an inevitable source of conflict between "the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space".

By the middle of the 1990s, the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos saw, in the challenges proposed by the *world* category for social sciences, the breaking point to understanding what is emerging with globalisation, as the new meaning of the world can no longer be derived from what, until recently, was one of the central categories in social sciences, namely that of state-nation. And if globalisation cannot be thought of as a mere quantitative or qualitative extension of national society, it's not because that category and that society are not valid (the expansion and exasperation of nationalism of all kinds proves this), but because the knowledge garnered of what is national is according to a paradigm that "can no longer explain, either historically or theoretically, all the reality in which individuals and classes, nations and nationalities, cultures and civilisations are inserted" (Santos 1996, 215). The resistance of social sciences to accept that this is a *new object* is very strong, hence the tendency to subsume this object in the classic paradigms of evolutionism and historicism, which allows us to focus only on partial aspects (economic or technological) that still seem to be *studiable* and understandable from a continuity, without traumas, with the idea of what is national.

The connection of this approach with the sense of the first far-reaching transformation to the initial model of television has been analysed by Eliseo Veron in these terms: what, in Eco's text (1983) is called *neotelevision* is a change whose exponent is not named in this text, when what is essential to understand

is precisely what is actually changing, to which Veron answers "the *extratelevisual* socio-institutional context [...] is the *national localisation* of mass television. This is the reason why, both under state monopoly in Europe or under the private ownership system typical of the Americas, the role of television was essentially the same" (Veron 2009, 233 and 237). And that role was basically *pedagogical*, as the communication contract was established between the nation and citizens-TV viewers via a "structuring programming grid" not only of the time of day and week but of *forming* the citizenry-of-a-nation. Much earlier, Daniel Bell (1969, 1977) had already pointed out the structuring role of the mass media in *forming* the North American nation and the visible crisis of this function as from the end of the 1960s. What is therefore called *neotelevision* is the rough draft of the exponent *nation* by *institutionalising* the medium itself, namely television, which thereby becomes a source of a new kind of communication contract, breaking, and with increasing clarity, with the political field that shaped the previous model: now the communication contract is taken out between the *medium/television institution* and *its audiences*, a contract that very soon became *formal* by means of the contract to pay for services, first via satellite and then via cable TV subscription.

The model of mass television, which disappears as from the 1980s, is the reincarnation of the communication model put in place by national-cinema, which Carlos Monsivais (1976, 434) had characterised thus: cinema connects in Mexico with the hunger of the urban masses by making them socially and nationally visible, as "most people go to the cinema not to have fun but to learn to be Mexicans, they don't go to dream but to see themselves and to see a country represented in their image". Consequently, beyond the reactionary content of many films and of the schemata of form, this cinema legitimised gestures, faces, voices, ways of speaking and walking that had previously been unknown socially and culturally, and in a movement of recognition that was vital for the urban masses who, via cinema, diminished the impact of the cultural shocks that made them such. And concerning the rupture introduced by television, I wrote, summing up Benjamin (1982): "While cinema catalysed the experience of the crowds in the street, as citizens exercised their right to the city in a crowd, what now catalyses television is rather the domestic and domesticated experience: it is from the home and through television that people now exercise, every day, their connection with the city. While the relationship was transitive and conserved the collective character of experience between the *people* that would take to the street and the *public* that went to the cinema, the shift from the cinema public to television *audiences* signals a profound transformation: social plurality subjected to the logic of disaggregation makes difference a mere rating strategy; and as it's impossible to represent in policy; the fragmentation of the citizenry is taken on by the market. Television is the main mediator of this change" (Martin-Barbero 1987, 181).

Now we can go back to the thoughts of Foucault, as an extraordinary capacity for anticipation leads him to shift his reflection and move from *utopia* to what he calls *heterotopias*. This shift is, firstly, between the singular and the plural and especially in the shift from a *project of society "without location"* to others that can be located, that have a location but whose sites "are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted". To aid understanding he uses the concept of place in terms of a mirror: that place *where I see myself there where I am not*, that, nonetheless, is a place that really exists but which I have to be outside of in order to be able to see myself. The key to heterotopia is that "it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (Foucault 1999, 19). Heterotopias are then *other-places*, which make it possible to question the place where we are, showing us where we are not. Heterotopias are the place of tension between territories and counter spaces. If *territory* is the place marked by the time we are born, grow and the rituals that outline the anchors and transits, then *counter spaces* are those places whose relation with time is precisely that of interrupting it, disturbing it or inverting it, like that of a party, a children's hiding place, a garden, cemetery, brothel. Socially denounced places because they enunciate, in highly diverse ways, the questioning of and counter-examples to the normal course of social life.

To a large extent, post-television or hypertelevision is not only related to what the market and the state do or stop doing but also to "its place" in this triple spatiality: of networks, territories and heterotopias, i.e. delocations, anchors and relocations. At the same time and in such a way that any dualism, such as those that tenaciously continue to oppose space/territory or global/local, is dislocated both due to economic reality as well as to cultural life. Hence an analysis per se of television requires a new language such as that used by Imbert (2008, 80 and 85) in his last book, also introducing the idea of "transgenre" or "porous places". From his *Hermes I* (1984) and *Atlas* (1994) to *Hominescence* (2001), Michel Serres has been the communication expert who has most helped to renew categorising language and the first to locate and space these studies by talking precisely of how the membrane or pores are not either exterior or interior but space-from-in-middle, i.e. that which is non-linear, since it like *circulation* which, like a change in direction on a road, requires me to exit on the left in order to reach the lane on the right, as I can only go right via a detour. It's the language that resounds politically in that other paradox opened up to us and facing us, namely of feminism with its "what is personal is political", when women make a decisive break visible: that of the incapacity of policy as exercised today to *mediate* between the space of situations and the practices that make up the network of identities and o structures that govern the macrosocial.

## 2. The local: between levity of space and thickness of place

Perhaps one of the most radical questions posed by *society-network* is that of identities when they evidence the profound rupture between the world of economic *reason*, based on the light flows of finances, technology, information and power, against the thick, heavy world of *identities* rooted in territories and traditions. Aware of this rupture, Manuel Castells devoted the second volume of his *Era de la Información* [Information Age] to the power of identity, where we can read: "But there is something else, shared by men, women and children. A deep-seated fear of the unknown, particularly frightening when the unknown concerns the basis of everyday, personal life. [...]. [They are] terrified of solitude and uncertainty in a wildly competitive, individualistic society [...]" (Castells 1998, 49). Here are the coordinates of a fundamentalism that is made up of both raging resistance and feverous searches for meaning. Resistance to the process of social atomisation, to the intangible nature of flows that, in their interconnection, blur the limits of belonging and destabilise the space and time contextures of work and life. Society-network is not, then, a pure phenomenon of technological connections but a systemic disjunction of the global and local by fracturing their temporal frameworks of experience and power: against the elite that inhabits the timeless space of global networks and flows, the majority in our countries still inhabit the local space/time of their cultures and, against the logic of global power, they take refuge in the logic of communal power. That's why politics has ended up without language, because it doesn't know nor can it talk about what it should talk about, hence it has no other option than to dress itself up in the language of surveys and advertising.

On the other hand, David Harvey (1989) places at the start of the 1970s the fundamental changes in the meaning of spatiality, related to the new conditions of capitalism: those of a *flexible accumulation* made possible by the new production and organisational technologies leading to a *vertical disintegration* of the work organisation and to a growing financial centralisation. Moreover, at this time the "new mass markets" appear that introduce democratising styles but whose products are the clearest expression of the rationalisation of consumption; and something crucial for the field of communication: according to Harvey (1989, 226), "capitalism is now predominantly concerned with the production of signs, images [...]. Competition in the image-building trade becomes a vital aspect of inter-firm competition. [...] investment in image-building [...] becomes as important as investment in new plant and machinery". When the restructuring of space leads to a profound change in its social meaning: "We thus approach the central paradox: the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital" (Harvey 1989, 327). Local identity there-

by becomes a *representation of the difference* that makes its sellable and to this end it will be subjected to the whirlwind of collages and hybridisation imposed by the market, reinforcing its exotic nature and the hybridisation that neutralise its most conflictive traits. Because the aim is no other than to inscribe identities in the logics of flows: a mechanism to translate cultural differences into the *lingua franca* of the techno-financial world and the volatilisation of identities so that they can float freely in the cultural *indifference*. A large part of the celebration of diversity (a secret code that has much to do with discourse about what is local) plays this game in its most globalising version, turning difference into mere fragmentation recoverable by, and legitimising, the deregulation of the market.

Today we cannot talk of the local without understanding the density of its contradictions. And in this we are helped by the strategic reflection of Arjun Appadurai (2001) on the relations between globalisation and localisation. His starting point is that both movements, which structure the multiplicity of processes that make up globalisation, are *the flow of images and information by electronic media and the displacement of migrant populations*. It's obvious that each one of these two movements has its own logic and dynamics but what makes them crucial is precisely their interpretation and the corrosive, overwhelming effect of this overlapping on what was hitherto the axis of convergence of the economy, politics and culture, the state-nation. Globalisation means, then, that the convergence made possible by coupling a territory-nation and a state no longer works and that (albeit strongly structured by the economic sphere) politics and culture are no longer going at the same pace as the economy, or in the same direction. Divergence on this plain entails a qualitative growth in social, political and cultural instability but also a multiplication of interrelations, certainly asymmetric, between *the flow of images*, whose direction is north-south and whose new *value* includes communication in the logics of production, and the *mass exodus of populations*, whose direction is south-north: be it Turks in Germany, Mexicans and Koreans in the USA, Ecuadorians in Spain or Sub-Saharanans in Italy. Exoduses of hope, of despair or terror, whose images and stories, both those that force people to emigrate as well as those that enable survival in other lands, are forged in the *social imagination* of these populations that combine their fears and dreams with scenarios and models that circulate via the electronic media. A "work of the imagination" that overwhelms the evasive function and dodges the implosive temptation of groups, becoming inscribed in a collective desire to survive, both socially and culturally. An imagination that works both with the resistance and anger as well as with initiative and irony, basis of the mobilisation of collective identities. Appadurai then talks of a *grassroots globalisation* as "it is in and through the imagination that modern citizens are disciplined and controlled — by states, markets, and other powerful interests. But is it is also the faculty through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge". (Appadurai 2001, 46).

In this perspective, the local stops being something provided by the territory, identity, neighbours and relations and becomes something *to be constructed between* populations and images. Against the old, dense and implosive sense of local (an 'us' that delimits what's inside and is defined by opposition to what is outside, made up of all the 'them', be they enemies, foreigners or both), *what is local in a global society* means a project of recognition and socio-cultural creativity based on an everyday commitment exercised by citizens. And this because, until now, the local has formed an indivisible part of the "national-state" project, which impregnated it with its uniformities and its entropies, its obsessions of permanence and raising of boundaries in all senses, i.e. of exclusions. Similar to the nation-state, the region and municipality were flat and homogeneous, the result of passive, obedient citizens. Of course this contains differences in the Anglo-Saxon world, more decentralised; the Latin world, making it much more uniform; and the Scandinavian world, much more inclusive. But even so, it is the national-state model that the local needs to free itself from in order to take on the far-reaching transformations that today reshape its meaning (its memory and its future) and therefore the fragility of the new players and figures that are giving shape and strength to territorial communities, be they regional, municipal or district.

### 3. Local television: new citizen visibilities

If *place* constitutes our primordial anchor (embodying what is everyday and the material nature of action, which form the basis of human heterogeneity and also of reciprocity) the sense of *what is local*, however, is not unequivocal: one is the result of the fragmentation produced by the delocation imposed by the global, and the other, quite different, is assumed by *the place* in the terms of "practised space", as coined by Michel de Certeau (1980, 208), who applies to space a concept inspired by the linguistic distinction between language and speaking: while *space* is defined by the intersection of vectors of direction and speed and, therefore, as operational, *place* is the equivalent of word, a sphere of appropriation and of practices, either to live in or to pass through. Space therefore results from the use made by citizens, in its most physical sense, just as those who walk and leave marks with their steps and journeys construct a different city to the one of architecture and engineers. It is the space that is no longer exterior to the subject, as it is the result of his or her own practices, a *place* that introduces *noise* into networks, distortions in the discourse of global flows, a noise that makes us listen to the word of others, of the many others.

And what the *between* is referring to is precisely *mobility*. And we owe this to Zigmund Bauman (1999, 128) a good interpretation of *mobility*, that key figure in globalisation that has ended in such a misleading exaltation of nomadism that it makes emigrants appear as mere nomads of a planet around

which everyone can walk as they wish. Bauman shows that mobility has two faces: that of the tourist and that of the tramp. The *tourist* inhabits a despatialised world, without territories, hence their mobility is instantaneous, without waiting, and theirs is a world *in which standing still is dying*, and living is incessantly moving, accumulating “new” experiences, sensations and emotions: the world of the tourist is, in short, that of the *consumer*. The *tramp* inhabits a thick, slow world, a space full of territories with boundaries and visas and, therefore, full of despairing waits and painful uprootings. There’s only one territory the tramp belongs to and all others are remote and hostile. But the biggest difference when compared with the tourist is that tramps cannot remain still even in their own territory, as they are forced out from there, starting a journey that does not guarantee another territory will be found that they can make their own, as travelling for tramps is leaving without arriving anywhere: it’s the world of the *emigrant*. But the most important aspect of Bauman’s thoughts is that this differentiation is not transmuted into mere dualist opposition with its too easy denouncement and easing of conscience, since these are not two distant worlds that are exterior to one another but one single world with two kinds of traveller that, no matter how little they communicate with each other (and certainly it’s becoming less and less) they are nonetheless connected structurally, they are *globally complementary* and so much so that *a world without tramps is the utopia of the society of tourists*.

What does this world, whose global mobility interweaves tourists and tramps, consumers and migrants, have to do with the future for local television stations? At least two features. One, the insertion of television into digital convergence transforming the hitherto tranquil intermediality of genres or programmes into powerful “viruses” of flows, which infect television and deprogramme it. Obviously this process is going to take some time but the breadth of the spectrum opened up by DTT is displacing “television” and is initiating a plurality of television stations whose peculiarities are going to be closely related to how TV production is inserted in the internet and vice versa, to how the crazy and confused but also rich and diverse audiovisual production on the internet is put on television. And again, what is truly important here is not what is happening in each world (that of television and that of the internet) but which is going to be the face of local television penetrated by and inserted within the global. Or what global will mean and imply in truly citizen-based television. Questions that cannot be answered *technologically* but from a new sense/undertaking of policy; which is what Appadurai is getting at when he gets us to think of globalisation not only in terms of techno-imagination flows but also population flows. Because it is precisely this other flow, also global, the flow of emigrants, which is leading to a strong frustration with identity even in the most democratic countries and to a reinstatement of boundaries. As if, with the weakening of the walls that had marked the different niches of civilisations for centuries,

the different political ideologies, the different cultural universes (by the joint action of media imaginaries and migratory pressure), the contradictions had been revealed of the universalist discourse the West had felt so proud of. And then each one, each country or community of countries, each social group and even each individual, will need to avert the threat posed by the closeness of the other, of the more other that, according to G. Simmel (1977), is not the enemy but *the foreigner*, restoring exclusion not only in the form of *borders* but also *distances* that once again “put everyone in their place”.

Which is requiring us to accept that *identity* today means and implies two different dimensions that were hitherto radically opposed. Until very recently, *identity* meant talking about territory, roots and the long-term, of symbolically dense memory. But *identity* today also implies (if we don’t want to condemn it to the limbo of a tradition disconnected from the perceptive and expressive mutations of the present) talking about de-anchoring and instantaneity, of networks and flows. English anthropologists have expressed this new identity through the splendid image of *moving roots*. For much of the substantialist and dualist imaginary that still permeates anthropology, sociology and public policy, this metaphor is unacceptable but, nonetheless, in it we can make out some of the most challenging and fertile-disconcerting realities of the world in which we live. As noted by the Catalan anthropologist, Eduard Delgado (2000, 32), “we cannot live without roots but a lot of roots prevent you from walking”.

The other feature that characterises the insertion of television (especially local) in global mobility is that the process of connection/disconnection, of inclusion/exclusion, on a planetary scale entailed by globalisation is turning culture into a strategic space to express the tensions that break up and recompose what it means to “be together” instead of linking its political and economic crises to religious, ethnic and aesthetic crises. That’s why it’s based on the *cultural diversity* of stories and territories, on experiences and memories, where one not only resists but also negotiates and interacts with globalisation and from where it will end up transforming this. What galvanises identities today as the battle engine is inseparable from a *demand for recognition and meaning* (Martin-Barbero 2002), and neither one nor the other can be formulated in mere economic or political terms, as both refer to the same core of culture in the sense of *belonging to* and *sharing with*. This is why identity is constructed within one of the forces most capable of introducing contradictions in the hegemony of the instrumental reason with which the market dominates us.

If something characterises and distinguishes local television, it’s the presence therein of grassroots democratisation movements, which find in digital technologies the possibility to *multiply the images* of our societies to make diversity visible: at the level of region, municipality and neighbourhood. Although for some critics of television the inequality of the forces in play is overwhelming, I am one of those that believe that underestimating the convergence of technological transformations with

the emergence of new types of citizenry (already advanced individually by Benjamin when analysing cinema's relations with the emergence of the urban masses in its potential to transform) can only lead us back to the short-sighted Manichaeism that has paralysed the gaze and action of the immense majority of the left in the field of communication and culture for years. Of course, the sense of the local or regional in television varies hugely as it ranges from mere business to the best of what is meant by community. But there are *new players* who, in no few cases, are taking shape through these new types of communication that *connect* (redesigning them) what is offered globally with local demands. There are new strategic tensions that force the media to *change* tensions, between its predominant commercial nature and the emergence of new figures and expressions of freedom and independence, among its tendency towards inertia and the transformations imposed by technological changes and some new demands by the public.

People are rediscovering the communicative capacity of everyday practices and alternate channels allowing society to discover *communication competition* as the capacity to mobilise and strengthen *civil society*. Every day there is a closer relationship between what is public and what can be communicated, and here the *mediation of images* is increasingly memorable. But this centrality of image cannot be reduced to an incurable illness of cultural and political life, to a concession to the barbarity of these times that use images to cover up their lack of ideas. And the issue is not that there isn't much of this in how today's society and politics use images, but rather what we need to understand goes beyond denouncements: towards what is socially produced in the mediation of images. And what is produced in images is, firstly, floating to the surface, the emergence of the crisis suffered, from its very inside, by the *discourse of representation*. Because whereas the growing presence of images in debate, campaigns and political action makes this world more spectacular to the extent of emptying it of true deliberation, it's also true that *the social is visually constructed* through images, where visibility includes the shift of the fight for *representation* to the demand for *recognition*. What the new social, minority movements (ethnic groups and races, women, young people and homosexuals) demand today is not so much to be represented but to be recognised: *to make themselves socially visible in their difference*. Which gives rise to a new way of exercising their rights politically. Proof of this is the growing proliferation of citizen *observatories* and *inspectories*. This is much more significant than phonetic closeness, semantic structure, between the *visibility* of the social, which enables the constitutive presence of images in public life and *inspectories* as a contemporary means of citizen control and intervention.

So community television becomes a *decisive place to inscribe new citizenries* where social and cultural emancipation acquire a contemporary face. So *recognition policies* (Taylor 1998) highlight the difficulties faced by liberal-democratic institutions to include the many different figures of citi-

zenry that, given socio-cultural diversity, stress and disrupt our institutionalities at the same time as not finding any kind of presence that is not denigrating or excluding in most of the programming and advertising on private television stations. This rupture can only be repaired with a policy to extend *citizen rights* to all segments of the population that still do not enjoy this right to any great extent, such as ethnic minorities or women, evangelists or homosexuals. Given the citizenry of "the modern", which was designed and exercised *ahead of the identities* of gender, ethnic group, race or age, today democracy requires a citizen-based idea and force that is responsible for identities and differences. The appeal that calls up/forms citizens and the right to exercise citizenry find their *own place* in citizen television, thereby converted into a sphere of participation and expression. In the midst of the experience of *uprooting* experience by so many of our people, talking of *participation* is inextricably associating the right to social and cultural *recognition* with the right to express all sensitivities and narratives in which both the political and cultural creativity of the municipalities and urban neighbourhoods takes shape.

And the fact is that, at this disillusioned start of the century, proximity between technological and aesthetic experimentation is leading to the emergence of a new parameter to evaluate technique, different to its mere economic instrumentalisation or political functionality: evaluating its capacity to result in the most far-reaching transformations of the epoch experienced by our society and *deviating/subverting* the destructive fatality of a technological revolution directly or indirectly dedicated to increasing military power. The *art/communication* relationship then reaffirms cultural creation as the very space of that minimum of utopia without which material progress loses its sense of emancipation and becomes the worst of alienation. Rather than to a particular type of content, what is cultural on local television refers to the strengthening of what, on this medium, in its languages and expressive possibilities, *connects with* the accelerated, fragmented urban life of today. And this through the flow of images, this being understood both as the continuity stretched between fragments of information and aesthetic shock, of knowledge and play, as well as the assembly of the strangest discourses and genres, one compared with the other. It was Raymond Williams (1994), one of the first to call our attention to this correspondence and the possibilities opened up for television to translate expressively and reflexively in its fragmentation and flow, one of the most strongly significant "traits of the epoch". With the consequent requirement to make this experience both a chance to provoke as well as to reflect.

Only by accepting local television as a new cultural experience can the path be opened up to help all society become literate in the new languages and writings of the audiovisual media that form part of the specific cultural complexity of today. This is a resocialisation based on the new forms of knowledge, to which are associated the new mental, professional and work maps, and also to the new sensitivities and lifestyles. This is therefore related to a crucial kind of mediation

that can be performed by television: the conversation between generations via which the empathy of young people can dialogue with the information technologies and the reticence/resistance which a large number of adults still show towards them. The democratisation of new knowledge and languages will then go hand in hand with the recognition of the special creativity of young people to design and produce television. Taking away the negative images held of young people by our disconcerted and fearful society, local television can offer young people the chance to find themselves again creatively with their society.

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