Explorer la Micro Web TV italienne: comment les bricoleurs de high-tech redéfinissent-ils le public?

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Résumé : Le processus de numérisation et de diffusion de l'information par internet montre un paysage médiatique en pleine mutation radicale. Les canaux de communication par le web se multiplient ainsi que les dispositifs d'accès, tandis que l'expertise nécessaire pour les produire devient moins importante. Dans ce nouvel environnement multi-canal, la diversification et l'hybridation des médias sont en train de révolutionner la télévision.

Pendant cinquante ans la façon dont la télévision était regardée et produite n'a pas beaucoup changé. Aujourd'hui, ce qui change est surtout la nouvelle imbrication entre les rôles de producteur et de public car les utilisateurs sont en mesure de télécharger leur contenu indépendamment des intermédiaires traditionnels, et de créer leurs propres plates- formes Web TV d'une manière peu coûteuse.

Claude Lévi Strauss, en 1962, a développé le concept du bricoleur en l'opposant à la notion d'ingénieur. Selon l'auteur, le bricoleur est capable d'utiliser tous les outils

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[1] The paper has been conceived and discussed entirely by both the authors. However, paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10 have been written by Emiliano Treré, while paragraphs 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 have been written by Valentina Bazzarin.

disponibles stockés à partir des anciennes expériences pour mener à terme un projet, même si ces outils n'étaient pas destinés à l'objectif spécifique. Drusian et Riva (2010) ont appliqué ce concept dans le contexte numérique, en décrivant les caractéristiques d'un nouvel acteur de la communication : le bricoleur high-tech. Dans cet article, en nous appuyant sur le concept du bricoleur high-tech, nous allons étudier deux expériences différentes de Web TV en Italie: CrossingTv, une micro WebTV créé à Bologne en 2008, et FEMI, la fédération italienne des Micros web TV créée en 2008. Les deux initiatives exigent le bricoleur, mais elles diffèrent en ce qui concerne le but et les résultats.

Grâce à l'exploration de ces deux études de cas, l'article montre quelles sont les différences entre la Web TV et la télévision traditionnelle, plus précisément, comment ces nouvelles plates-formes TV brouillent la distinction entre les producteurs et les consommateurs des médias. Nos résultats mettent en évidence un changement de paradigme dans la façon dont la télévision est produite: le contenu est généré de façon collaborative à travers des feedbacks récursifs entre les producteurs et le public. Nous concluons en exposant certaines des orientations futures pour l'étude de ce moyen d'expression.

Mots-clés : WebTV, Italienne, producteurs, consommateurs, public, collaborative

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Exploring Italian Micro Web TVs: how high-Tech bricoleur redefine audiences?

Abstract: The media landscape is undergoing radical changes, especially related to the process of digitalization and information circulation through the internet, which increases the number of web channels and the opportunity to access them using multiple devices, and decreases the expertise needed to produce them. In this new digital, multi-channel environment, radical innovation, diversification and media hybridization are revolutionizing television. For over fifty years the way that television is watched and produced has not changed significantly. Today the roles of producers and audiences have blurred because users are able to upload their contents independent of traditional intermediaries, and to create their own Web TV platforms in an inexpensive way. Claude Lévi Strauss in 1962 developed the concept of the bricoleur opposed to the concept of ingénieur. According to the author, the bricoleur is able to use any available tools stocked from previous experience in order to complete a project, even if these tools were not intended for the specific goal. Drusian and Riva (2010) have applied this concept to the digital context describing the features of a new communication actor: the bricoleur high-tech.

In this paper, drawing on the concept of the high-tech bricoleur, we will investigate two different Italian Web Television projects, CrossingTv, a micro WebTV created in Bologna in 2006, and FEMI, the Italian federation of Micro web TVs created in

2008. These initiatives both require the bricoleur, but they differ with regard to aim and results. Through the exploration of these two case studies, this paper shows in which ways these Web TV experiences differ from traditional television, specifically, how these new TV platforms clouds the distinction between media producers and media consumers. Our findings highlight a paradigm shift in how television is produced: content is generated collaboratively through recursive feedback between producers and audiences. We conclude by outlining some future directions for the study of this medium.

Keywords: Web TV, bricoleur, audiences, user generated content, media producers

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1. The evolving television ecosystem

Strong processes of innovation and diversification are contributing to reshape the current framework of television. While this medium has had, for more than fifty years a precise and relatively stable status (Scaglioni & Sfardini, 2008), the actual television scenario, mainly because of the process of digitalization, appears nowadays as complex and extremely fragmented.

This complexity can be found at a global level, but national/local peculiarities still remain and in this qualitative research we are going to focus on the Italian Web TV producers.

At a general level, we can speak of an augmented television, which is developing through the diversification of platforms and through the diffusion of contents in a cross-media way (mobile TV and the Internet). Television experience is therefore broadening and multiplying, both in quantitative terms (becoming more available) and in qualitative terms (through a process of personalization). In the present TV scenario all these different kinds of TV cohabit: the 'traditional' analog TV, the digital terrestrial TV, the IPTV, time-shifting technologies (Personal Video Recorder and Video on Demand), mobile TV and Web TV.

The overcoming of the analogue television, the experience of the digital terrestrial TV (Treré & Sapio, 2009) and the opportunities offered by the Internet and by mobile devices (Colombo, 2004) have rapidly changed the possibilities to access, produce and watch audiovisual contents.

The present media context is not undergoing a revolution, as some authors (Gilder, 1994; Negroponte, 1995) prefigured in the past, but rather a multi-faceted evolution, a powerful transformation where the 'old' and the 'new' coexist. We have thus to avoid the traps of technological determinism, which can lead us to think that new technologies are somehow 'killing' the past ones to generate a new kind of audience. Rather, we should try to frame this new television scenario in the light of media convergence (Jenkins, 2006), a process based on the technology of digitalization located at the interstice among markets, institutions, cultural and social forms and ways of consumption/appropriation. The last decade has been characterized by an evolution of the relationship between new media technologies, creative industries and popular culture. The actual media scenario is composed by multiple communication technologies and platforms, with several cross-overs and influences existing among the Internet and 'traditional media' as television. We may thus frame the actual TV scenario inside a continuum: on one side the traditional broadcasting, in the middle different enhanced forms of television until the other side where TV hybridize with the Internet (Scaglioni & Sfardini, 2008).

After having discussed the common characteristics of the changing global television scenario, we will now focus on the Italian context and, in particular, on the Web TV environment and on the new generation of actors that are able to mix the languages and tools of traditional television with the opportunities supplied by new media.

2. A brief overview of Italian anomalous media scenario

It is useful to provide a brief overview of the Italian media scenario, in order to be able to put our topic of investigation in context. Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi owns and controls the largest Italian media-empire including the biggest commercial television group, Mediaset, and its three national television networks (Canale 5, Italia 1, Rete 4), the largest Italian publishing house, Mondadori, and the movie distribution house, Medusa Film. We can affirm that the last two decades of Italian history have been characterized by the strong presence of Berlusconi both in the political scene and in the media scene. Gomez and Travaglio (2004) have pointed out that since 1984 in Italy almost all the laws in matter of media have been approved safeguarding or helping Berlusconi's interests. These laws have strongly influenced the languages and the ways to produce and make use of television contents.

The Italian situation has been regarded as an anomaly by different commentators and by several organizations. For instance, Reporters Sans Frontières in 2003 affirmed that:

"Berlusconi's combination of media empire and political power is unique in Europe. The conflict between Berlusconi's business interests and government functions is especially flagrant and problematic as regards the media. The need to resolve this conflict of interests has posed a major challenge for Italian democracy since Berlusconi first became Prime Minister in 1994. Now, almost 10 years later, this "Italian anomaly" is worrying the international community".

Nowadays Italy is at 49° position of its Press Freedom Index. Cinzia Padovani in 2007 highlighted how:

"With Berlusconi, the closeness between the media and the political sphere has reached unprecedented levels. [...] The broadcasting market has evolved in a condition of duopoly that has prevented other operators from entering the competition. [...] Indeed, the Italian market is characterized by the highest level of concentration in Europe".

Gomez and Travaglio (2004) have pointed out that this Italian anomaly is strictly connected to the role played by Berlusconi who is able to dictate the agenda to the audiences. In Italy, according to the statistical organization CENSIS, in 2009, 91.7% of people had at least once per week accessed the traditional national television and 97.8% television in general including DTT, satellite, Web TV, IPTV and mobile TV. We should also take into account that among the channels used in acquiring information to choose who to vote for in the 2009 elections, 69.3% of Italians said they had used the television news, 30.6% television programs, and 25.4% newspapers. Additionally, this media regime is able to demonize journalists and citizens who try to provide different representations of society.

In this anomalous situation, the experience of Italian Web TVs represents a point of shift: most of the content is in fact produced by users whose aim is to shed light on local actualities neglected by traditional television. These Web TVs can thus work towards a democratization of the Italian media system, because, using the possibilities provided by the Internet, they do not stick to the rules of Berlusconi's media empire.

In the next paragraphs, using excerpts from our interview with Giampaolo Colletti, a professional bricoleur founder of the FEMI, the federation of Italian Web TVs, we will first describe the most important characteristics of Italian Web TVs and we will outline the main differences in relation to traditional television. Then, we will conceptualize the users and producers of these Web TVs as high tech *bricoleur*. Drawing on an interview with the founder of the Crossing TV project, Silvia Storelli, we will then explore the relevance of this online television project, focusing in particular on the role played by high tech *bricoleur*. Eventually, we will

draw some conclusion from our investigation and outline some future direction for the study of television.

3. The emergence of Italian Web TVs

In 2004 a team coordinated by Giampaolo Colletti started the AltraTV observatory in order to monitor a series of online experiences which were taking place in Italy linked to the audiovisual world. Thanks to the possibilities provided by the process of digitalization, in particular the opportunity of lowering television production costs and pushed by the spread of broadband connection, many Italian citizens and local communities had started to build their local Web TVs in different contexts and for multiple purposes.

These online experiences differed from so-called telestreets, a particular form of local TVs which flourished in Italy from 2002 to 2005. While producers of telestreets broadcasted their signal on radio waves using the free 'holes' in the spectrum that other television stations were not occupying (Barca, 2007), these new Web televisions were instead taking advantage of all the possibilities offered by the Internet to broadcast for free their contents without any third party mediation as in traditional media.

Colletti (2010: 14) has defined these micro Web TVs as "the multitude of online channels created by different kinds of citizens with a passion for video-making who, while not specifically working in the audiovisual sector, have decided to spend their time and money to create their own webcasting channel". These micro TVs emerge in specific local contexts, but thanks to the possibilities offered by the Net, engage as well in a fruitful dialogue at a more global level.

Morever, as Colletti recalls in the interview[1]:
"these experiences were not just those of isolated video-makers or creative individuals", [but] "there were something new under three aspects: first of all, there were some kind of seriality, it was not about some videos uploaded once in a while; secondly, those people were using all the possibilities provided by the digitalization, i.e. using cheap digital cameras and home connections to the Web; third, there was this geolocalization aspect, i.e. they all addressed their local contexts".

These local Web TV experiences were thus based on a more structured user generated content. They were not just the result of individual using the Internet to

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[1] All the excerpts from now on will be our translations from the interviews we carried out in Italian.

upload and share their videos, but they were originated from local organized communities, cultural associations, civic movements, no profit organizations, universities, etc. In addition, they were uploaded on a regular basis (not necessarily every day but with a certain regularity) and they all focused on topics related to local realities, addressing specific themes neglected by mainstream television.

From 2004 with the AltraTV observatory Colletti and his team have monitored the emerging Italian Web TV environment. This has lead to the creation in 2009 of the FEMI, the Italian Federation of Micro Web TVs. The aims of the federation are: to organize courses and meetings with professionals in the television field; to deploy monitoring activities of Web TVs and identify best practices to be shared, organizing an annual meeting at the Milan IULM University; to create an online sharing platform to strengthen individual Web TVs; to lobby with private and public institutions and citizens and to promote the activities of Web TVs.

The AltraTV observatory continues with its monitoring activity: in 2010, its "Netizen: Report on the situation of micro-citizen journalism and bottom up participation" counted 436 micro Web TVs, a 52% increase from the 286 channels of 2009. Web TVs are still spreading: at present, they represent an important part of the Italian media scenario that needs to be investigated.

4. Italian Web TVs and traditional television

These bottom up televisions, with few exceptions, do not rely on business models: they are organized horizontally and their aim is to turn over the vertical model of mainstream television (Colletti, 2010). The engine that drives the producers of these televisions is not profit, but passion and enthusiasm: they are motivated to cast light on local and particular portions of realities, which are usually neglected by mainstream media. They originate in the need for communities to autonomously self-represent themselves trying to overcome the mediation of traditional media.

The main problem of these online experiences is that they still represent a very small part of the overall media scenario and their influence remains really low in terms of numbers. It has already been underlined that these Web TVs experience financial and fund-raising problems that prevent them from being real competitors in the media arena (Treré, 2008; Farinosi & Treré, 2011). But on one side, some of these experiences are becoming more interrelated to business activities: some of the people who are producing these Web TVs are becoming professional *bricoleur*, not just fans (Jenkins, 1992: 12) and users who like to create their TVs in their spare time. Some of these experiences might lead to build real jobs and get important funding, although this trend is still in its infancy. On the other side, we should not

look at these Web TVs as something in competition with traditional television, but as something alternative or integrative.

As Colletti pointed out in the interview:
"these channels win over traditional media when they narrate lateral stories, local stories. They cannot mediate information at a global level, but they are important local accounts, an alternative which does not substitute, but integrate".

Moreover, while the audiences of these Web TVs are numerically inconsistent if compared to the traditional television, Colletti highlights that these audiences are quantitatively low but qualitative high.
"Maybe there are only 17 users watching montiTv but these users are those we define as active users, surfing the Internet in an active way, not as just passive recipients… It's the same kind of people that can become opinion leaders".

The audiences of these bottom up web-casters are constituted by very active users part of local niches, who sometimes overlap with the public of traditional television. The absence of a Web TV powerful network has also been regarded as one of the cause of their weakness in front of traditional media (Treré, 2008). FEMI was launched also to join local experiences together and build a strong network that could leave a deeper sign on the media scenario.

De Biase (2010) has rightly pointed out that the strength of these TVs lies in their network, not in each of them at an individual level. While these Web TVs taken separately can count only on few hundreds daily contacts, when they broadcast as a network they can count on almost one million of contacts per month. FEMI organizes online events that are broadcasted simultaneously on all the Italian MicroWeb TVs, in order to overcome the problem of fragmentation. For instance, in July 2010 Italian Micro Web TVs joined forces and created the LiberaRete (FreeWeb) event to affirm their importance and communicate their mission to Italian and international audiences. FEMI has also launched the Rita101 TV in honor of Italian Nobel Prize Doctor Rita Levi Montalcini, a Web project whose topics are related to research that every year organize a live broadcast connecting with other Web TVs. These kind of webcasting events are made possible by the cutting down of costs of digitalization: with cheap HD cameras, laptops and using the Skype software to make video-interviews and receive calls from audiences, the different teams of FEMI are able to coordinate and broadcast creating an 'alternative' online TV network.

5. The High Tech Bricoleur

Today the roles of producers and audiences have blurred because users are able to upload their contents independently from traditional intermediaries, and to create their own Web TV platforms in an inexpensive way. Among the many definitions of those who produce content for Web TVs we chose that coined by Lévi-Strauss in 1964, the *bricoleur*. The *bricoleur* of the twenty-first century is high-tech, because his toolbox includes several digital tools more and more affordable at low cost.

So far the main perspective about audiences highlighted the passive status of the recipients. Consumers of audiovisual texts were mainly defined as lacking any degree of autonomy in symbolic interpretation, appropriation or production. Jenkins (1992) started from De Certeau's (1984) definition of 'poaching':

> "Far of being writers [...] readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves". (ibidem p. 174 cited in Jenkins, 1992: 24)

And gave an ethnographic account of particular media fans that are textual poachers. Anyway, according to Jenkins:

> "[...] de Certeau describes readers who are essentially isolated from each other; the meanings they 'poach' from the primary text serve only their own interests and are the object of only limited intellectual investment". (1992: 45)

Common experience and further studies suggested that fan reading is a social process. In fact, Jenkins (1992) enriched de Certeau's definition, explaining that during this process

> "[...] individual interpretations are shaped and reinforced through ongoing discussions with other readers. Such discussions expand the experience of the text beyond its initial consumption. The produced meanings are thus more fully integrated into the readers' lives and are of a fundamentally different character from meaning generated through a casual and fleeting encounter with and otherwise and unremarkable (and unremarked upon) text." (ibidem: 45)

This description fits perfectly with the consideration emerged from our investigation and it is strengthened by the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 and new online platforms on which audiovisual content could be distributed. Fans, like the poachers of old, in recent past operated 'from a position of cultural marginality and social weakness' (Jenkins, 1992: 26). Now they constitute a more active and local

community of consumers whose activities drive attention both in the process of cultural appropriation and in the one of production.

To clarify how these active audiences are composed and operate, we refer to Lévi-Strauss who developed the concept of the *bricoleur* in opposition to the concept of *ingénieur*.

> 'Le bricoleur est apte à exécuter un grand nombre de tâches diversifies; mais, à la différence de l'ingénieur, il ne subordonne pas chacune d'elles à l'obtention de matières premières et d'outils conçus et procurés à la mesure de son projet: son univers instrumental est clos, et la règle de son jeu est de toujours s'arranger avec les "moyens du bord", c'est-à-dire un ensemble à chaque instant fini d'outils et de matériaux, hétéroclites au surplus, parce que la composition de l'ensemble n'est pas en rapport avec le projet du moment, ni d'ailleurs avec aucun projet particulier, mais est le résultat contingent de toutes les occasions qui se sont présentées de renouveler ou d'enrichir le stock, ou de l'entretenir avec les résidus de constructions et de destructions antérieures. L'ensemble des moyens du bricoleur n'est donc pas définissable par un projet (ce qui supposerait d'ailleurs, comme chez l'ingénieur, l'existence d'autant d'ensembles instrumentaux que de genres de projets, au moins en théorie); il se définit seulement par son instrumentalité, autrement dit, et pour employer le langage même du bricoleur, parce que les éléments son recueillis ou conservés en vertu du principe que "ça peut toujours servir"' (Lévi-Strauss, 1962).

According to the author, the *bricoleur* is able to use any available tools stocked from previous experience in order to complete a project, even if these tools were not intended for the specific goal.

Since the second half on the 70s, Paul Lévy (2000) noticed that *bricoleur* have a high-tech toolbox. The author provides some examples of how in a Silicon Valley garage young *bricoleur* like Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniac where able to design technological artifacts (I.e. Mac, iPod, iPhone and iPad) using this digital repertoire. These artifacts are symbols of what is changed about communication in our daily life (Drusian & Riva, 2010).

Beside the new tools available for *bricoleur*, Lévy discussed the future of new media. He had insights on how 'collective intelligence' (1991) could influence a television and he anticipated that

> 'Omnivision will replace television: no matter where we may find ourselves, we will be able to use cyberspace to direct our gaze to any part of the world which we choose. And the intensity of that gaze, just

like the insistency of our questions, will give rise to an infinite amount of new details.'2

The philosopher added that this change is driven by the widespread desire to know, to learn everything it is possible to learn, from constellations to social situations, from scientific experiments to interactive fictions. The perfect and actual example of how this desire is translated in TV programs are thematic channels on sharing platforms like YouTube, TEDs, Vimeo, and other thematic Web TVs.

Drusian and Riva (2010) have deepened the concept of the high tech *bricoleur* suggesting that young people are able to recognize the symbolic meaning of the technologies they use. They know how to choose the object in the toolbox most suitable to convey a message at any time. Then, shifting the discussion about the risks of digital communication, Drusian and Riva (2010: 11) add: 'the risks of digital communication are commensurate with the familiarity, technological literacy, as well as in other areas of everyday life'. Knowledge and skills that are acquired through experience are the key resources used by the high tech *bricoleur*.

We conceptualized Web TV content producers as high tech *bricoleur* with different levels of expertise. We distinguished between professional *bricoleur* and recreational *bricoleur*: the former are people who have experience related to media production or in the field of journalism, the latter are actors who do not possess the skills required for media production, but have the will to exploit the opportunities offered by the internet to spread their visions.

CrossingTv is the good practice we choose to describe how a group of adolescents with no previous experience in content production are able to create a followed and awarded Web TV. Interview with Silvia Storelli, founder of Crossing TV, sets under discussion Drusian and Riva's (2010) assumption. In her experience, high school students who have chosen to participate in the first edition of a Web TV project knew the symbolic meanings of the traditional TV, but did not know how to use the tools available and how to share their points of view. Only thanks to the experience of the director and the hard work of the editorial staff the participants have actually acquired the linguistic tools and technological skills necessary to convey their messages.

The CrossingTV project is part of the FEMI and represents a particularly significant example to highlight the features and the relationships between the professional and the recreational *bricoleur*. In the next paragraphs we will investigate this case study drawing on our interview with CrossingTV founder, Silvia Storelli.

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2 Retrieved on 13 April 2011 from http://www.mit.edu/~fca/levy/Collective_Intelligence.html

6. Crossing TV: history, aims and numbers

We portray a Web TV case history to describe how a group of recreational *bricoleur*, lead by a professional *bricoleur*, could cooperate in a project. CrossingTV was created in 2008 and is the first user generated content experience planned and realized by an intercultural board composed by teenagers (up to 16 years old) living in Bologna. Silvia Storelli, a professional *bricoleur*, is the young video-maker who founded this Web TV project.

CrossingTv does not have any commercial goal and therefore it is not conditioned by the number of visitors or by sponsors' commitments. It does not have a target in marketing terms, but it was "imagination" oriented. According to Storelli's words the main goal was to change the common imaginary about youth and interculturality in the contemporary Italian society in a specific city (Bologna). CrossingTV promotes activities in 3 sectors: information, education and training. All the activities are based on six keywords:

1. youngster
2. auto-representation
3. intercultural approach
4. active citizenship
5. multimedia
6. Web 2.0.

The shared general aims are:

- Discover the world and understand our society putting together different points of view.

- Exploit youngsters' approaches, languages and attitudes, like as exploration and knowledge, game and amusement, creativeness and sense of adventure

- Create a digital place in which is possible to live new professional experiences and share different points of view

- Build a cultural and emotional network of peers

- Set up a permanent laboratory of ideas in which it is possible experiment new multimedia and audiovisual languages

- Promote an open space in which it is possible to learn techniques and improve skills to work in the new media sector.

Recently CrossingTV became a radio program in which different generations and cultures are compared.

In numbers this project involves 35 editors, 211 online videos, 30 radio episodes, 10000 single accesses per month to the Web site, 550 Web pages visualized each day, 63 mentions in newspapers' articles or TV programs, 30 conferences or events in which the editorial board explained the experience, 5000 Facebook 'friends'.

This project has had an important impact both in terms of followers and in terms of media coverage. For instance, Bill Emmott, the British journalist who recently published a book about best experiences and practices in Italy, interviewed Silvia Storelli about the project. Moreover, the President of Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, invited a group of CrossingTV editors at the presidential palace to recognize the importance of this experience.

7. Crossing TV in the words of its founder

The starting point of CrossingTV lies in the will to give a signal of change. Storelli has 'an uncommon vision' about youngsters, especially if they are foreigners. According with this insight she decided to give them the digital tools useful for their self-representation. Three years ago, when the project started, these technologies were more 'new' than now and their strong potential had not been fully explored.

Storelli undermines the desired target of this project explaining that:
"[...] the possible audiences of this project were other youngsters who were supposed to be engaged by peers. However, we have understood that the production of audiovisual contents does not work in this way. It is not easy to find the right language to communicate even if you are sharing the same experiences and you belong to the same socio-cultural context. [...] Youngsters need help to find the right words and to use digital tools to communicate. During this process many other high school students were involved and also adults. Many of these adults are educators, social workers or parents. They were not exactly our target but the same audience helped us to understand what was wrong in our strategy."

She continues:
"We would have liked to reach citizens, not 'experts'. [...]. We succeeded in creating a good core (the editorial board) and a wide network, whereas we did not succeed in reaching and involving our desired audiences."

Regarding the skills required to manage this project and to participate into the editorial board, Storelli told us:

"My role was and still is both technical and educative. As a video-maker, I helped the editorial board editing and producing all the videos and teaching them the no-fiction languages. As an educator, I helped them in finding the right words to express properly their thoughts and to build the network of relationships inside and outside the editorial board. I pretended a high level of attention on terminologies because I wanted to give a different representation of what was happening in Italy, especially when we treat topics like interculturality or immigration. I wanted to give a different vision about how Italian society was and is changing."

Storelli continues clarifying the features of the recreational *bricoleur* selected to be part of the editorial board:

"[...] The process to choose the people involved in this project started with a laboratorial activity in high schools in Bologna. There were a dozen of students with a great talent in conveying their feelings, and the strong desire to share their ideas. We remained in touch after the project in the schools ended. Accidentally, these students were equally distributed among males, females, Italians, foreigners, homosexuals and heterosexuals. They were not skilled in using new media to communicate with the public, even when the public was composed by peers, but they were smart and motivated. [...]".

She was not interested in having an equal number of Africans, Asians, Italians or Latinos, but she was looking for people able to reflect about the society in which they live. She gave them a microphone (i.e. access to technological tools) and method to express their emotions and to deepen their interests, both by writing their thoughts and by interviewing other people. Some of them now are able to edit the content they generate even if none is autonomous in producing videos. At present, most of the youngsters who participated in the project are university students and they do not have enough spare time to acquire the skills needed to independently produce audiovisual content.

8. Citizens, netizens and the importance of the offline context

Storelli describes the youngsters participating in the project as aware citizens, skilled netizens (Hauben & Hauben, 1997) and critical audiences of the traditional media. Also Colletti defines "the actors who develop and watch Italian Web TVs as netizens", a word originated from the fusion of the concepts of 'citizen' an 'net' which refers to a new kind of active citizenship using digital tools to spread their messages on the Internet.

The recreational *bricoleur* who joined CrossingTV witnesses that also the use of new media can be characterized by passiveness. The approach with new media remains in this case the one used for more than a century, despite of the opportunities for interactivity provided by the Internet. Recreational *bricoleur* as well as audiences separate the use of the Internet as entertainment device (e.g. online game as video-game or Web TV as television) and as instrument of communication (e.g. Skype as telephone). On the contrary, the *bricoleur* who generates content should explore all the options offered by the new media. This ongoing process is not finished yet. During Crossing TV weekly meetings, participants have had the opportunity to discuss about the knowledge and the skills they were acquiring. Storelli also admits she understood the importance of the new media during the project. For instance, when CrossingTV started, Facebook was totally new in Italy and the group explored the visibility option guaranteed by the social network together, step-by-step.

Contrasting Drusian and Riva's reflections on the high tech *bricoleur* (2010), we argue that being able to communicate in 2.0 environments is not so simple and 'automatic'. Recreational high-tech *bricoleur* need to be driven by professional ones. Most of these professional or experts are still *bricoleur* because most of the tools are new for them as well and, to be effective, the process of adaptation of new media languages requires time, trials and feedback analysis.

CrossingTV does not explore only the online context but also the offline dimension, i.e. Bologna, the city in which the project started. The youngsters had the opportunity to become active citizens and not only passive inhabitants of the town. Storelli considers this aspect as one of the best results achieved by the project. Part of the participants came from professional high schools, other from lyceums. Socio-cultural and economic differences among the editorial board were relevant but through constant dialogue and teamwork they were finally able to become a group. The starting differences remained just as different points of view and enriched the project with a high number of traits, feelings and perspectives. They were then able to look at the city with different eyes and crossing multiple perspectives. Participants become friends and they 'crossed' their heritage, their belongings, their knowledge, and their experiences. The processes, which developed inside the offline group, were those ones that Storelli had expected to happen on the Internet. In fact, the main impact of this project was that of creating new forms of offline aggregation and to give to the participant instruments to describe themselves and the context in which they live (city and society).

9. CrossingTV as best practice

CrossingTV represents a format both as a best practice to replicate in different cities and as a model to apply in other communication contexts or with other goals. For instance, in Bergamo, i.e. in a socio-cultural context different from the ground in which CrossingTV grew up, the PolarTV explicitly replicates and adapts CrossingTV. PolarTV founders came in Bologna to meet the editorial board and they decided to purpose the format in the Northern city. The editorial board of PolarTV is composed by young people of foreign origins who use the Web TV as an arena in which people can share their points of view using audiovisual content.

According to Storelli there are other projects inspired to CrossingTV which represents a landmark in the Italian scenario. Many national magazines and newspapers wrote about the general project or about specific initiatives related to it. The traditional media coverage is continuous and massive. As already anticipated this model is reproducible using different tools or to communicate with and involve different audiences. For instance, CrossingTV reached youngsters with foreign origins mixing conventional and no-conventional strategies. However, Storelli during the interview highlighted that the Internet is not always effective in communicating with this specific target. The group is still working on this aspect and is looking for a way to exploit the thick information provided by foreign citizens about the city itself. To relate with foreigners and immigrants Italian society still needs mediators. Youngsters and especially foreign youngsters are perfect bounds and translators both in linguistic terms and in interpretative strategies. Storelli points out the lack of opportunities to access the information arenas for foreigners:

> "there are a lot of competitors when your target are 'youngsters', while you are a soloist when in Italy you explore the niche of foreign citizens as audience. CrossingTV gave us the skills and the perfect network to take advantage of this general lack of attention".

However Storelli's project is successful and significant and in Italy we have witnessed an increasing number of initiatives somewhat similar. After a decade of random and spontaneous growth, the network of Web TVs is finally becoming an important part of Italian media scenario.

10. Conclusions and future directions for research on television

In this paper, after outlining the most relevant characteristics of the actual television ecosystem, we have provided a brief overview of the Italian anomalous media scenario. We have then explored the emergence and significance of Italian Web TVs. Relying on an interview with Giampaolo Colletti, founder of the Italian Federation of Micro Web TVs (FEMI), we have analyzed the features of these new

televisions and compared them to traditional TV. We have then conceptualized the actors who produce these Web TVs as high tech *bricoleur* and investigated which role these actors played in the CrossingTV project, drawing on an interview with its creator, Silvia Storelli.

We have highlighted that these Web TVs constitute a point of shift towards a democratization of the Italian media anomalous environment. Moreover, while these bottom up televisions do not rely on business models and cannot compete with mainstream media in terms of audience, we argued that we should look at these TVs not as substitute but as alternative or integrations to traditional television. Their aim is to shed light on particular local topics neglected by generalist TV and their audiences are low in quantity but high in quality, because they are constituted by active Internet users who may become opinion leaders.

CrossingTV case history helped us to develop the concept of high tech *bricoleur*, introduced by Drusian and Riva (2010). We pointed out two levels of expertise in being a bricoleur, distinguishing between a recreational *bricoleur* and a professional one. Besides drawing the features of these actors as well as the specific skills, we also described their roles and the collaborative relationships among them. *Bricoleur* produce quality content and have the opportunity to share them in cheap, massive, effective and democratic ways. The emergence of these new actors produces a shift in the anomalous Italian scenario and in television production and promotion paradigms. This shift is not exclusively online, but it has an impact on the offline: city inhabitants who become netizens can be better citizens. This improvement can be assigned to a mix of many factors and practices: sharing experiences, ideas and feelings with people belonging from different socio-cultural contexts; experiencing team work in a democratic and meritocratic way; handling both the freedom and the accountability of the information production process.

Further research is needed to investigate a series of questions related to the Italian Web TV environment: which kinds of local communities comprise these Italian Web TVs? Which topics do Web TVs address? Which actors and which kind of high tech *bricoleur*? Which effects does the Web TV networking have on traditional media? Future research might also address the study of Web TV environments in other countries in a comparative perspective. It appears clear that the study of these new forms of television is acquiring more and more importance: while traditional television remains one of the most important media, the actual scenario is comprised by multiple and emerging actors that need to be placed in context and deserve much more academic attention.

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