CALL FOR PAPERS

University of Le Havre, France
5-7 June 2012

Electronic Communications in the "information society"
Which uses, which practices?

The basic division between the public sphere and private sphere is no longer satisfactory as electronic communication, in its increasing variety of forms, is developing intermediary spheres. Thanks to IT, people converse with numerous interlocutors, express themselves publicly on social networks and make full use of the tools of technology (computers, mobile phones, pads etc). These tools foster various uses and practises that give people real freedom of expression and the power to choose how to channel that expression. Individuals can thus be actively involved in the construction of new spheres, wherever they may be and whenever they want.

Professionals who, not so long ago, used to shape our world, must now take into consideration this new deal, which is both structural and communicational. They take on board not only people's opinions and comments but also their electronic practices in order to organize their development and communication strategies. Whoever these actors may be –public institutions or politicians, businesses or service companies– they all resort to IT, in times of crisis, for their commercial or electoral campaigns, for their recruitment campaigns or for special events.

They no longer question the relevance of the media. Their main concern now is to find the form of electronic communication best suited to their particular purpose. In other words, these actors together with their fellow humans are building our contemporary societies thanks to IT and the internet. But such observations raise a series of questions:

- Will IT accessibility coupled with people's increasing electronic skills generate new uses and new practices?
- Could screen fragmentation help develop new uses and new practices?
- What answers do stakeholders and professionals of commercial, political or cultural communication come up with to encourage convergence?
- How do people respond and react to the potential that electronic communication offers? Do their reactions vary according to their status: client, citizen or user?

In order to develop these questions, we would like proposals for papers to fall within one of the three spheres that are classically defined as making up the information society: the commercial sphere, the political sphere and the cultural sphere.

Theme 1 – The Commercial Sphere

Online advertising investments have been soaring in the last few years to reach €3.3bn in 2010, the equivalent of 12% of all advertising investments in France. Online advertising is thus inescapable. This is why numerous announcers resort to it as they have in mind effective crossmedia logic. E-advertising takes various forms which have all been thoroughly studied. Those studies show that its formats are numerous, that they can vary and that, in the end, e-advertising is likely to favour segmentation. Indeed, more targeted messages will have to become the norm so as to allow the emergence of personalized communication. The stakeholders of that sphere will then favour one to one communication with their clients thanks to traditional e-mails but also thanks to conversational agents, to blogs and to Facebook. This has led Google to say that electronic communication must be "SoLoMo: Social, Local, Mobile".

Without necessarily going back over the major tools used by commercial stakeholders (such as Search, contextualized display, affiliation or price comparison sites used to develop traffic on the sites), we would like to receive proposals that deal with the identification, the analysis and the comprehension of the digital link that stakeholders develop with individuals, whether they be clients or prospective clients. Beyond the SoLoMo approach, we would like some essential questions to be broached, such as:

- How to anticipate the efficient online tools to come?
- What are the major trends and innovations?
- How to reach new prospective clients and make efficiency gains?
- How to optimize communication through the mobile channel?
- Is the mobile channel like any other channel?
- Must advertisers resort to geolocation?
- Do such IT tools lead to the emergence of new local advertisers?

This is not an exhaustive list may not be complete; this research area is an opportunity for researchers, and more widely, the stakeholders of electronic marketing (e- and -m) to reflect on this approach: what is at stake, what risks are involved for companies that organize themselves and structure themselves mainly thanks to and for IT.

Theme 2 – The Political Sphere

Whereas in the 60s the use of IT for communication was limited to the processing of political data, we can now see new notions appearing. They are linked to the increasing uses and practices of IT in the domain of political communication, such as e-government (G2G, G2C, G2B) or e-democracy (electronic ballot, discussion forums, e-petitions, pressure groups/lobbies).

IT not only gives politicians the opportunity to reach their fellow-citizens and exert some kind of influence, it also gives citizens the opportunity to lead specific political actions (mobilization, solidarity initiatives, etc.).

Does IT play a role in the reshaping of public space? Does it foster the rejuvenation and renewal of democracy? How do politicians make use of IT? What is the role of mobile IT in terms of place, uses and practices?

These are some of the issues raised by the uses and practices of IT for political communication in general. The interest in this domain in enhanced by the current political context (the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, the coming French and American presidential elections, for example).

Theme 3 – The Cultural Sphere

In modern times, the concepts of culture and heritage have been developed in the context of the democratization of society, through the creation of collections put on display to the widest possible audience. Cultural communication is thus perceived as a process enabling the general public to take ownership of their cultural heritage at some level.

Culture and heritage have a range of different institutional forms (museums, archeological sites, libraries, urban heritage) and have so far used communication and mediation channels that are considered as traditional (exhibits, publications, symposiums, etc.). Recently they have started using IT and the tools it offers to take the democratization of culture to a new dimension.

Digitization, first, is a challenge of paramount importance that mobilizes large numbers of people including the international stakeholders whether they be private or public. In addition, electronic communication will give the opportunity to contemplate other forms of cultural mediation. In other words other mediating systems may exist that would include both a policy geared towards the public and new forms of interactions.

On the one hand, they help to reveal new practices enabling the targeting of the general public that could be broken into various categories: augmented reality, applications for tablets, museums and virtual exhibits. On the other, they require epistemic and operational reflection about the unintended use of artefacts and virtual immersion as forms of interactions and representation of virtual space.

Without laying too much emphasis on labels, contributions for this particular research area will broach emerging topics that will question both the constructions of these digital systems (discursive logic, policies geared towards various publics, actors involved) as well the actors' logic behind it and their representation systems. Contributions can speculate on the complementarity or not of IT tools when it comes to electronic communication linked to culture or heritage.

The themes outlined above are not exhaustive, and papers relating to other aspects of the issue are also welcomed.

Proposals

All proposals must contain:

- The title of the paper,
- An abstract of 3500 characters maximum,
- Number of theme if relating to one of the above,
- Personal contact details and author's affiliation.

Proposals should be sent only by e-mail: soumission@colloquelehavre2012.org, by **10 February 2012**. They will be assessed by double blind peer review, by the members of the research committee. The languages of the conference will be French and English.

Important dates

- 10 November 2011: 1st call for papers
- 10 February 2012: deadline for receiving abstracts.
- 10 March 2012: response from research committee.
- 10 May 2012: deadline for conference registration; deadline too for short article (9 pages) for the conference proceedings, to be made available at the conference. Following the conference a decision will be made as to whether or not to publish a longer version of the proceedings. If this does go ahead, contributions would be subject to peer review by a specially constituted panel.

Registration fees

110 euros for salaried delegates.
70 euros for students.

Registration fee includes a copy of conference proceedings, lunch and coffee breaks on both days.

More information on: www.colloquelehavre2012.org

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