

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

Torino, 10th - 11th - 12th July 2008

Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with
Conference of Italian Design Faculty Deans and Programme Heads.

In the framework of WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL TORINO 2008 | © ICSID
An ICSID initiative of the IDA.

Maresa Bertolo, Vanessa De Luca [maresa.bertolo@polimi.it; vanessa.deluca@polimi.it]
Design Faculty, Politecnico di Milano, Department INDACO, Italy

MEME OF CHANGING

Use of memes in a situation of communication rumors

Abstract

With this paper we intend to analyze both the problem of digital rumors in the communication field and the available response strategies.

The actual situation shows a continue increasing of softwares for contents editing, easy to learn and use, easy to have on everybody personal computer. At the same time, we see the extreme easiness, both technical and economical, of these contents publication and worldwide spreading, thanks to the internet. These factors are considerable in creating a wide increasing of the amount of the digital contents produced every day. A production which, is easy to predict, will continue to increase at a similar rate in the future, too.

Moreover, these *informative objects* are fast in spreading and tend to survive for a long time in our planetary nets, digital and not. They add themselves to the evolutionary conditioning we are exposed to, meaning the whole amount of informations able to infiltrate themselves in our thoughts, able to have an unconscious rule in our decision-making processes. In the present paper, we refer to these conditioning as *memes*: informative units able to hand down and spread. We'll treat this *meme* concept as a possible convey-agent not only of the problem, but of the solution as well.

It is commonly known that we are in a very particular informative situation: we suffer for the overabundance of available data. An overabundance which is with us in every moment of our daily routine: internet, radio, television, phones, sms, newspapers, flyers, stickers, placards (real or digital). We also found information on clothes, vehicles, bags, boxes, candy wrappers, human skin. A situation in which we found ourselves unable to find out informations due to the rumors overabundance, the noise excess.

The well-informed person is no more the one able to find informations where there are none visible. The well-informed person, nowadays, is the one able to filter, to ignore, to defend her/him-self.

We are settled in a situation in which it is not possible to open our eyes without stumbling over something waiting to be read, over a communication waiting to be absorbed, over a meme waiting to leak in. A situation in which nothing protrude and, very often, the better strategy to be noted is to scream louder than the others. In such a situation, which hope can we foresee, can we figure out, can we design for the communication of contents with no enormous economical support?

A good measure of responses has been given, during the years, by artists and communication designers, to this informative situation. Seemingly, these responses are sporadic and not openly connected. In our point of view, they are rather interconnected and is possible to reference them to the same model - the same *meme* - of responsive behaviour. Single actions are not to be considered as isolated units, but rather understood in a wider perspective, in order to be able to hit their common traits and their collaborative value, even when it's not explicit. In this purpose we mention Heylighen works.

Our goal is here to analyse the idea of a link between them; the existence of a communicative meme allows us to look beyond the progresses of artists and designers in a merely individual point of view, bringing us to research about the existence of evolutionary line of this phenomenon.

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

We believe that here - as it happened in other times and contexts - a solution not only possible, but also full of potentiality, is the way of the cultural nomadism, of the sporadic, unexpected, provocative, irrational and - especially - temporary intervention.

Temporary because of the shortness of our attention ability; temporary because of the easiness of its being culturally and commercially absorbed.

We will propose examples of digital dislocations of the TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zone) concept, examples from Internet and from videogames, analysing their cultural consequences and discussing how the nomadic strategy could be the place here communication design can naturally shore. A shore where sustainable and enduring communication can exist, in a virtual space without breathing space.

We will point out how this kind of irrational communicative strategy has been successfully used in different times, different social and technological fields, by different kind of people.

Adhering ourselves to this strategy, we adopt a TAZ approach and suggest the existence of a *meme of changing*, able to culturally spread in a transversal way.

References

Bey, H. 2004. *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Autonomedia.

Banksy, 2005. *Banksy, Century - the random house group limited*, London

Critical Art Ensemble. 1998. *Disobbedienza civile elettronica*, Roma: Castelvecchi.

Da Empoli, G. 2002. *Overdose: la società dell'informazione eccessiva*. Venezia: Marsilio.

Fisher, D. R. 1998. *Rumoring Theory and the Internet: A Framework for Analyzing the Grass Roots*. Social Science Computer Review 16, no. 2:158.

Gabora, L. 1997. *The origin and evolution of culture and creativity*. Journal of Memetics: Evolutionary Models of Information Transmission 1, no. 1:1-28.

Heylighen, F. 1992. *Evolution, Selfishness and Cooperation*. Journal of Ideas: Evolution no.2:77-84.

Ianneo, F. 1999. *Meme: genetica e virologia di idee, credenze e mode*. Roma: Castelvecchi.

Kapferer, J. N. 1990. *Rumors: Uses, Interpretations, and Images*. Transaction Publishers.