

Mutation Magazines - The media out of medium

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Author

José Neto de Faria - Teacher
Instituto de Letras e Artes - ILA
Universidade Federal de Pelotas - UFPel
Pelotas - RS - Brasil
Telephone: + 55 53 2271036
Email: josenetodesigner@yahoo.com.br
joseneto_designer@hotmail.com

Abstract

Magazines that before were confined to their own medium have now migrated to other vehiculation mediums, winning liberty and versatility in their new forms. Changes are imposed by technology and by time, but above all they are revigorated by the new possibilities given by the new mediums.

The changes of medium for the publication of magazines might give us in the first moment the false impression that there's a structural change in the media. But, a closer analysis will reveal that the structural elements that characterize the magazine are maintained constant and unaltered. It's the medias that de-characterize the magazines, giving the idea that we are dealing with a new media.

Key words: Magazine, communication, medium, media.

State of mutation

“The interest for the new, for novelty, for here and now, and the discarding of the “old”, the traditional, are manifested in all part and needn’t be emphasized. But the technological and economical acceleration is such that even the actual becomes overshoot: everything that is... once was... the attention is concentrated not on what is, but on what will be. The eye is directed on the future; better saying: on the anticipation of the future.”

Santos (2000: 7)

The projected obsolescence and the Second Industrial Revolution governed by automation, following the logic of accumulation, compulsive consumption and the improper appropriation of natural resources are absorbed and consolidated occurrences. The established political and economical systems make pressure over social relations, using the communication mediums and the new technologies to reorganize the human habitat, defining how man must perceive and interact with the world, determining and orientating the way we live.

The mass communication mediums and the new technologies, in service of the Cultural Industry, organized and doctrinized society, predicating consumption and ephemerality, consolidating the society of consumption and the era of metamorphosis. In this process the mass communication turned possible the increase of public circulation and, consequently, the accessibility to symbolic forms in time and space (Thompson, 1990: 290-291).

With the utilization of languages and techniques that modulate time and space, the communication mediums turned possible the acceleration and contraction of time. Transformed space in a living organism, extremely dynamic, but, by the other hand, left humanity exposed to the impact of descharacterization of space, leaving us in an eternal interval – navigating in a revolted ocean of immaterial signs, produced by the diverse information systems. This state of

mutation that the communication mediums and cities in their pulsation characterize, defines the amorphous state of space and, consequently, of society.

In Mc Luham's (2001: 42) opinion, the communication mediums are extensions of our body and culturally characterize our society and the period in which they were developed and used. In this manner, between the communication mediums, the one that best illustrates the actual moment probably is the digital medium. In Levy's (2000: 27) words: "if we are interested in everything for it's signifying for men, it appears that the digital, fluid, in constant mutation, is unprovided of any stable essence."

Thus, the major characteristic of contemporaneousness maybe the state of mutation in which we are immerse, in which the established system – in a symbiotic relation with communication mediums – defines the use of techniques and technologies in the configuration of physical and virtual space (See figure 01).

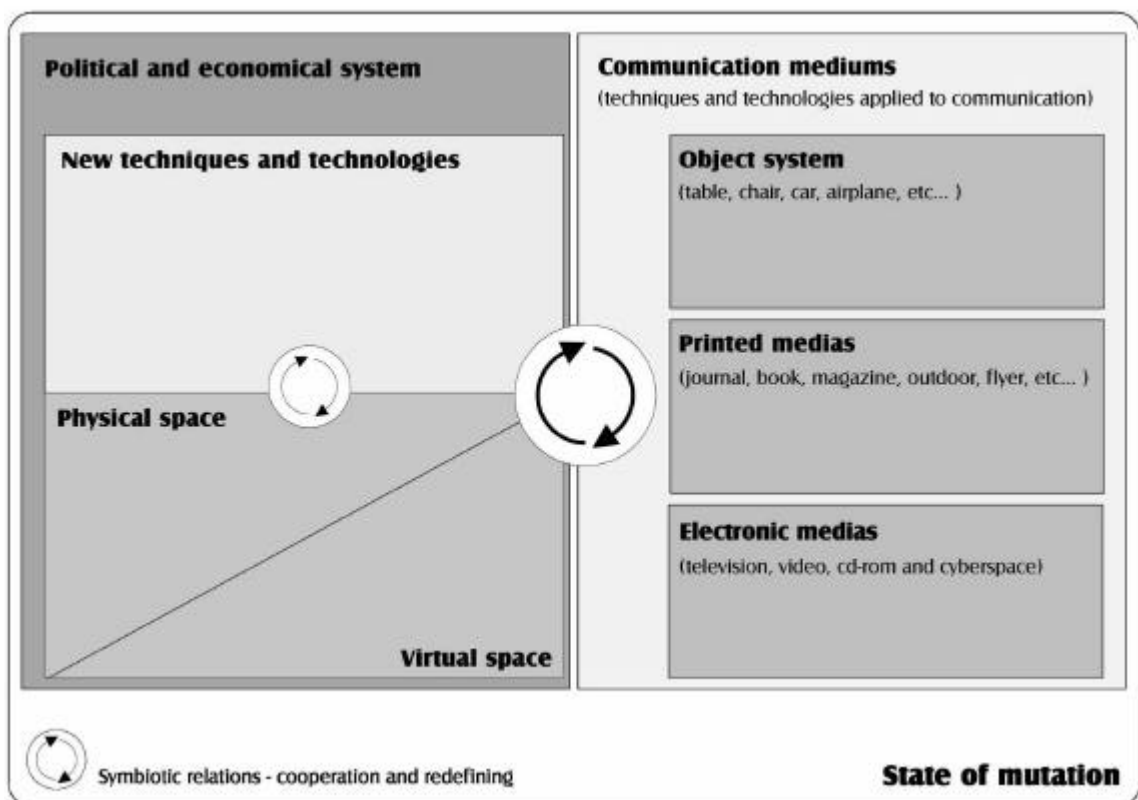


Fig. 01 – State of Mutation.

However, the exacerbate acceleration, the permanent state of mutation, ironically created a moment of inherence – an impossibility of changing what is in permanent movement.

Communication, medium and media

“Taking the terms reader and text in the most ample sense possible, we will say that the objective of any text is to provoke in the reader a certain state of excitation of in the heterogeneous network of memory, or orientate his attention to a certain region of his internal world, or then discharge the projection of a multimedia display in the imagination screen.”

Levy (1993: 24)

The act of communication comprehends the production and the descodification of the message, which in the process of transmission, depends on the interpretation capability to be understood and to give sense to the message received.

McLuhan (1970: 23) says that “the medium is the message, because it’s the medium that configures and controls the proportion and form of human actions and associations”. In this way, the act of communication understood by Pignatari (2002: 20) as “the partition of elements of life style and behaviour, by virtue of the existence of set of rules”, is only possible due to the existence of adequate mediums giving support to the message. These mediums are then, the active metaphors capable of comporting the varied forms of language that turn possible the existence of the communication act.

According to Rabaça and Barbosa (1978: 310-311) the term “medium” designates the channel where messages take place or the medias are transmitted, and the term “media” refers to the mass communication means of transmission conformed to one medium. However, in actuality a media can no longer be defined simply by the qualities and characteristics of the medium. It must be understood by

its proprieties of media, that is, by the elements that compose and characterize it as a media. The characteristics determined by the medium should not be considered as components of the media, but as conformations suffered in means to adequate it's self to the medium in which it exists.

When a media migrates to other mediums we must perceive that only the real component elements maintain the structure and links between its parts, consequently, these are the elements responsible for characterizing the media – independently of the medium at use. The means used in the transmission of information can redesign the message, aggregate new elements, but it can't change the form of a media.

The appearance of new mediums doesn't implicate in the disappearing of the existing mediums, but makes necessary the reformulation of medias so as to guarantee the conformation to the new realities. In this way the medias are reformulated in their traditional mediums and in the adequation to the new medium to were they migrated. Another possibility with the new mediums is the arising of new medias with possibilities not yet explored.

Actually the progressive virtualisation of traditional medias generated by the possibilities of digital communication mediums assigns in the direction of an accelerated process of digitalizing and a consequent integration of all medias in a unique medium.

In the present moment the cyberspace generated by Internet is probably what we can call a "non medium" because of its virtual, fluid and mutation characteristics. On the other hand, it's these characteristics that turn possible this medium a propense one for the development of extensions for all medias. Cyberspace permits the existence in potential, without ever in fact needing a concrete physical space. Thus, arises the medium that was missing to aggregate the diverse medias, even if for such these have to be superficially descharacterized.

Magazines

“Where ever exists a group of people interested in a certain subject, and an individual or organization with sufficient motivation to communicate with them, exists a magazine that establishes the connection between both.”

Foges (2000: 7)

Since the beginning in XVIII century England, the magazine can be understood as a periodic publication, a media of mass communication, which transmits ideologies and values to society in the form of information. Magazines, as a media, always needed a medium where they can figure and interact and in so doing guarantee their proper existence. Independently of the medium in which they are transmitted, magazines always organize meticulously the different types of information.

Magazines, independently of the medium used, like other medias inserted in the mutation state, living in complete metamorphosis, interact in cooperation with the reorganization of the political and economical system on the construction of physical and virtual space (See figure 02).

Magazines like all object in the real world, “based on the more ample comprehension that objects are defined by their interface” (Boonsiepe: 1997), that is, by the idea that they form in the mind of the interpreter, must be defined by the relations they maintain with the minds affected. This fact explains why magazines, when changed from one medium to another, are commonly interpreted as another kind of media. The characteristics of the medium, as they configure the media, are generally much more visible than the proper structuring elements.

Seen that “the magazines are living pictures of the period in which they were produced, the essence of an epoch” (Foges: 2000, 11), inserted in post-modernity and comprised in cyberspace – a virtual world, fluid, pluralistic and in constant mutation, traditional magazines have been contaminated by the spirit of transformation.

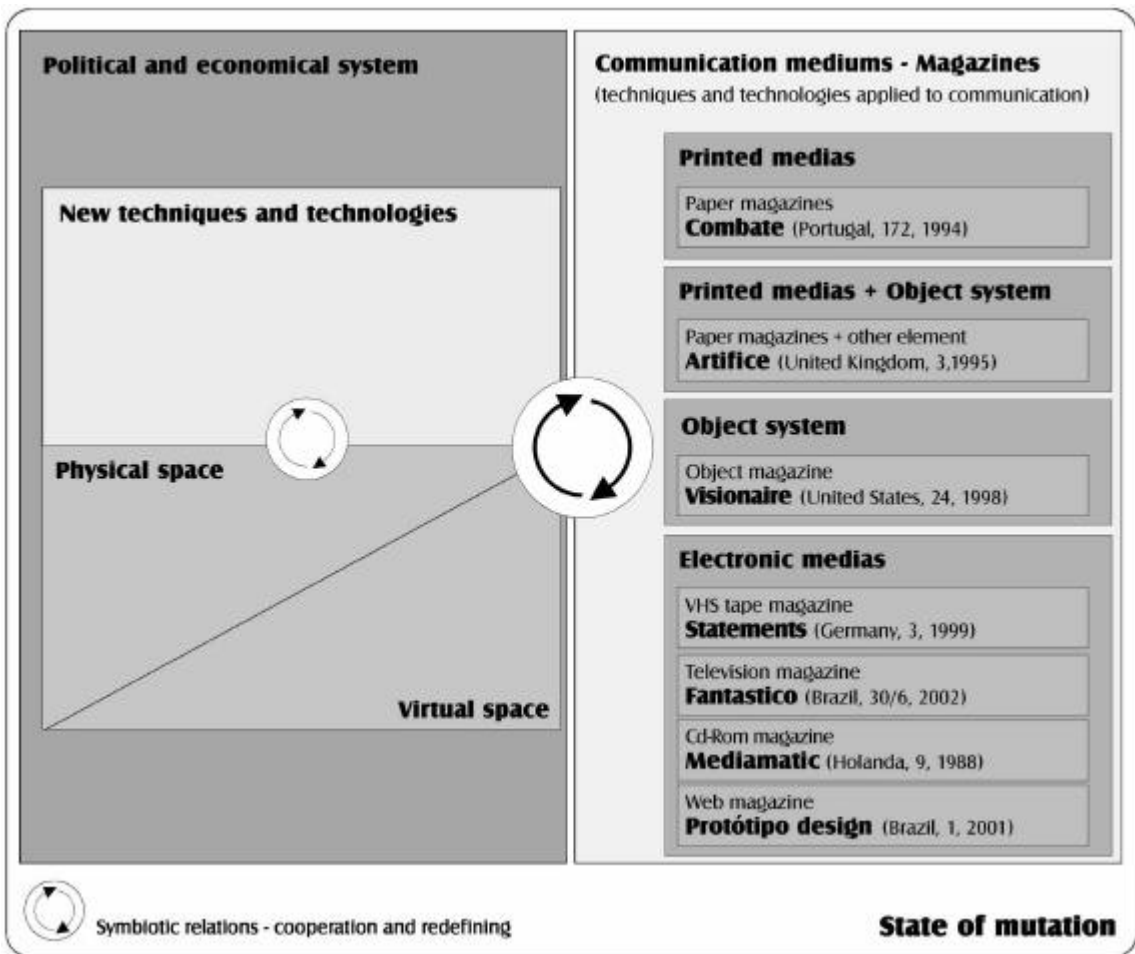


Fig. 02 - Magazine, media and medium.

Digital technologies, so utilized to fasten globalisation and reproducibility, also turned possible the manipulation and generation of magazines with a liberty never explored before. This facility and rapidity in the manipulation and combination of typographies and images propitiated, besides the dissemination of magazines in other mediums, that images gained the status of the most important element in the communication scene.

Today magazines can be found in nearly all mediums – as long as these can comport their parts – which makes them appear in press media, in object system and electronic media. So we can find magazines in press form, as objects, videotapes, television programs, in the interactivity of a Cd-rom or as a Web page.

When the media magazine stops existing in one unique medium, it maintains as a connection with the original medium the non-palpable elements that structure and compose the media. As these elements are sometimes refigured by the adequation to the new techniques and technologies, they give the impression of not being the same. In reality, these elements were simply re-dimensioned so as to adequate to the new form. This causes on the interpreter the illusion that he's interacting with another media. But, as the magazine hasn't lost its component elements, it continues to be the same media, even if not in the classical form of paper press. In any medium the magazine media must have the same elements or it will be something else.

Mutation Magazines

"A magazine is not an only thing, it's many, it's defined by the periodic publication and little more, in no means by its content and each time less by its form."

Blackwell (2000; 8)

The word "magazine" comes from the Arab word *'mahzar'*, which means store or warehouse. As the proper origin of the word suggests, magazines store a collection of elements joined and arranged in a certain manner in space. The etymological origin of the word may lead us to the false idea that magazines can only exist in their physical form. And the physical form of magazines we tend to associate with cover, inside cover, logo mark, index, articles, photographs, illustrations, info graphics and advertising. But this idea of a magazine is fixed to the characteristics of the press medium, in which were made the first exemplars.

However, it is necessary to see beyond this, or any other conformation in which the magazine media can be expressed, in order to identify and understand the real components. The adequate identification of these components can help establish what really is the magazine media, and by this means, open different

possibilities in the ways of developing and actualising magazines in the most varied mediums.

In the quest of separating and understanding what characteristics are given by the utilized medium and what characteristics belong to the proper media (component elements), seven magazines published in distinct mediums were studied: “Combate”, “Mediamatic”, “Visionaire”, “Statements”, “Fantástico”, “Artífice” e “Protótipo Design” (Figure 03).



Fig. 03 - Magazines.

During the investigation the following elements permanently appeared constantly and unaltered and, in this way can be considered the characterizing components of magazine media: form, opening, written message, aesthetic message, compositive agglutinate and technical union (Figure 04). It's important to

point out that it's an abstract idea of parts; they don't have to exist in the material world.

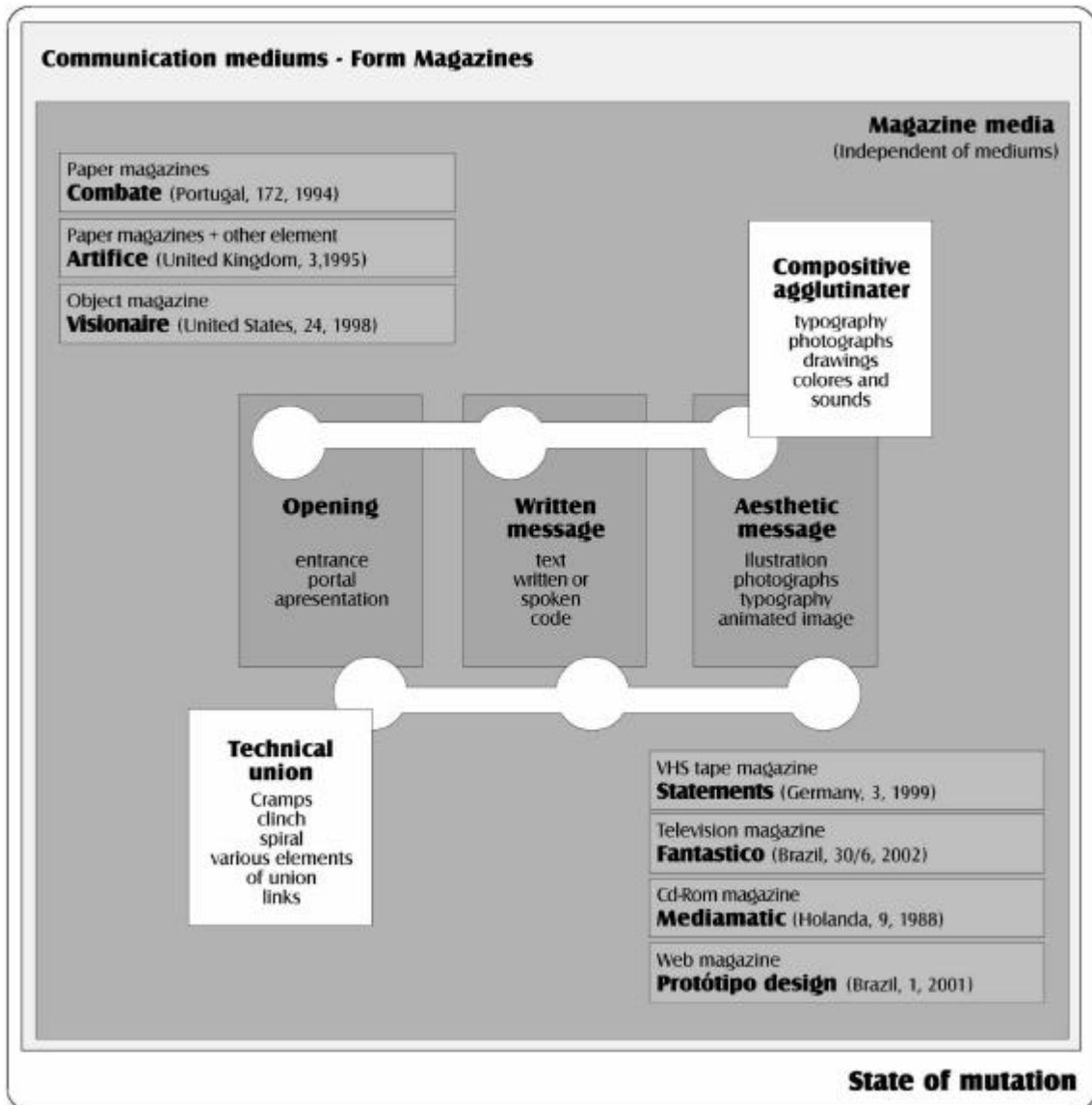


Fig. 04 - Components of magazine.

We can define each component element as:

Form – as affirmed by Dean (2000: 10), the magazine is “one of the few mass communication medias whose form responds to the designer’s wishes” as the

physical or virtual form of magazines can be changed in or out of the same medium attending the intentions of the communicator.

The form is intrinsically connected to the characteristics of the medium and thus determines how the other elements of the magazine will behave. Independently of being a Webzine (reproducing the printed version) or being an entirely original adventure, the “solution of design will inevitably engage the reconciliation between the necessities of magazines in any format with the exigencies of the chosen medium” (Foges: 2000, 145).

Opening – refers to the entry gap or magazine presentation. Objects, static images, logo mark, texts, sounds or animations can compose this component.

Written message – composed of a text in the form of a written or spoken code. Generally it contains the principal information referent to the subjects broached by the magazine.

Aesthetic message – appears as the message in the form of sounds, static or animated images in which are presented the subjects broached by the magazine and that are generally related to the written message. Many times the proper typographic types can be used in this way, being manipulated like images.

Compositive agglutinate – refers to the union element that helps to connect and give rhythm to the diverse parts that compose the magazine. It can be present in the form of sounds, colours, drawings, illustration, photographic, typographic and composition style.

Thus, Swilligham (2000: 148), characterizing the union of all parts in a printed magazine says that “magazines are always a mix of words and images. The two elements are combined in different ways to create singular aspects at each publication”.

Technical union – is the element that joins technically all the physical or virtual parts of the magazine. It appears in the form of craps, clinch, spirals, links or any other object that serves the purpose of joining the different parts of the magazine.

Thus it was possible to evidence that the magazines by the fact of existing in all mediums, even seeming that they were losing their form or being descharacterized were, in reality, adequating themselves to the new times, being transformed in an amorphous thing, with no proper pre-determinate form but without losing its essence (Figure 05).

Media Magazine							
	Combate	Artifice	Visionaire	Statements	Fantastico	Mediamatic	Protótipo design
Form	X x Y	X x Y x Z	X x Y x Z	X x Y virtual	a moment virtual	X x Y virtual	virtual ciberspace
Opening	cover	cover and container	light box	bag and entrance animation	opening animation	cover and animation	opening animation of logomark
Written message	text	text / written and spoken code	text	text / written and spoken code	text / written and spoken code	text / written and spoken code	text / written and spoken code
Aesthetic message	images static	imagens static, animated images and sonds	imagens static	imagens static, animated images and sonds	imagens static, animated images and sonds	imagens static, animated images and sonds	imagens static, animated images and sonds
Compositive agglutiner	colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style	sounds, colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style	colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style	sounds, colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style	sounds, colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style	sounds, colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style	sounds, colours, illustration, photographic, typographic and composon style
Technical union	cramp	cramp and box	box	line tape	sequent transmission	cramp and links	links

State of mutation

Fig. 05 - Media Magazine.

As the magazine media can be composed in distinct ways, in the same medium or in other, we can cite Gutiérrez (2000: 76) and expand the concept that:

“there’s not just one way of transiting though a magazine, with makes the designer’s work a difficult task, as he has the obligation to guide the reader and organize the content” in the different mediums.

The media out of the medium

“Our electrically – configured world has forced us move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition. We can no longer build serially, block-by-block, step-by-step, because instant communication insures that all factors of the environment and of experience co-exist in a state of active interplay.”

McLuhan (2001: 63)

All act of communication “presupposes the existence of a repertory and code common to transmitter and receptor. All new sign, external to the code, is ‘unintelligible’ ” (Pignatari: 2002, 65). If we add to this the fact that each individual apprehends the world based on the repertory he possesses, and that the public has a different code from communicators, in general much more simpler, we can believe that the simple change of the medium is sufficient to descharacterize the media in the eyes of the interpreter.

The receptor, in the elementary activity of interpretation and giving sense to an object, is not capable to connect the various texts in the construction of the hypertext that characterizes the magazine in other mediums. For the interpreter the characteristics of the medium are more visible than the components of the media, as the first are more easily referenced in the physical space.

Another factor that turns more difficult the interpretation of magazines out of their traditional medium is the adaptations that occur in signs when put in the new support. In general these signs tend to allude or refer to themselves, creating their

own referential system. And this way, they terminate absorbed as new elements of a new media.

In a first contact, the transposition of a media from one medium to another creates difficulties in the decoding process of the message, and in general, the interpreter presents “great difficulty to discriminate between the original messages and the elaborations associated with them” (Levy: 1993, 81). Consequently its more difficult for the interpreter to mentally distinguish the magazine that’s not paper pressed. Based on the lack of referents, the auto-allusion of signs and the difficulties to mentally discriminate what’s the medium and what’s produced by the mind, we can say that process of signification and recognition of the media for a magazine out of the traditional medium is nearly impossible.

In the actual moment of complexity we need to change the way we interpret the world. Advances in the new technologies, and consequently in cyberspace, have modified and descharacterized the objects that before were mostly physical. In this untouchable world, only interpretable by more complex and elaborated abstractions we must search for the essence of this and no longer be contented with what’s on the surface. It’s necessary to modify the way data are classified in a way that permits the recognition of existing patterns in the abstract ideas that organize the world. The construction of an idea by summarizing one moment after the other has become insufficient. This attitude doesn’t take in consideration the actual state of communication: instantaneous, fluid, structured in immaterial space and therefore virtual and transitory.

We are living a moment of interpretation and interaction structured on a “non-medium”, this is, mediums that exist momentarily and in the sequence return to exist only as a potential come-to-be.

In this situation magazines are no longer in one unique medium, but in various, being ready to actuate in the most diverse materiality’s. With the world-wide tendency to turn virtual all medias, bringing them to a unique medium, the magazine media has lost its physical reality, existing and accommodating its self in any place.

The magazine media is out of the medium, existing in a state of mutation, as a potentiality, only present in human minds. The mutation magazines no longer have a material form that enslaves their development – they are out of their medium. They still exist in their classical configuration, but gained freedom and versatility, as they're no longer physically imprisoned to a pre-established medium.

Never the less, the mutation magazines haven't yet reached their apex. They have been transformed in objects and in the sequence immaterialised by digital mediums, but as Foges (2000: 143) affirms, most magazines still “operate in agreement with the model of book publishing rather than the television model, to which they are much more near in many aspects”.

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