Mass Media in an Age of Mass Participation

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STRUCTURE OF TALK

1. The good old days
2. The participatory turn
3. Why there is no need to worry, or is there?
The good old days: the magnificent role of the mass media

The media system used to be really simple: Mass media on the one hand and personal media on the other hand.

Mass media as a marvellous source of information and entertainment.

Made us feel part of communities

Facilitates the maintenance and construction of imagined and real communities
The good old days: the magnificent role of the mass media

Adorno and Horkheimer on the one hand: the deception of the masses, or rather people as active agents in their own duping.

The ritual role of mass communication – relies on audience identification and recognition.

Mass communication is not inferior to interpersonal communication!

The participatory turn

Are we approaching the end of the professional mass media system?

NO!

But yes, we are witnessing a participatory turn.
The participatory turn is:

“a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It’s about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people’s network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It’s about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes” (Time Magazine, 2006).
The participatory turn

“These new forms . . . enable firms to harvest external knowledge, resources, and scale that were all previously impossible. Whether your business is closer to Boeing or P&G, or more like YouTube or Flickr, there are vast pools of external talent that you can tap with the right approach. Companies that adopt these models can drive important changes in their industries and rewrite the rules of competition.”

The participatory turn

"What the Web2.0 revolution is really delivering is superficial observations of the world around us rather than deep analysis, shrill opinion rather than considered judgment. The information business is being transformed into the sheer noise of a hundred million bloggers all simultaneously talking about themsevels. (...) Instead of more community, knowledge, or culture, all that Web2.0 really delivers is more dubious content from anonymous sources, hijacking our time and playing to our gullibility”.

Recommended comment by Lawrence Lessig
http://www.lessig.org/blog/2007/05/keens_the_cult_of_the_amateur.html
The participatory turn – WHY?

- Technological development
- Easy to use social software
- Personal, social and creative desires
Participatory turn: Technological development

"Technologies are not mere exterior aids but also interior transformations of consciousness, and never more than when they affect the word" (Walter J. Ong).

The participatory culture that has emerged over the last few years is inevitably connected to the technological development

← Improvements in capacity (broadband, storage, speed)

Participatory turn: Easy to use social software

Participatory turn

Digital network media comply with personal, social and creative desires

http://www.kodakgirl.com/
A participatory turn long predicted

"[t]he technologies used for self-expression, human intercourse and recording of knowledge are in unprecedented flux. A panoply of electronic devices puts at everyone’s hand capacities far beyond anything that the printing press could offer" (Ithiel de Sola Pool in 1983).
Why there is no need to worry?

Interaction

Mediated interpersonal forms of communication - "real" interaction

vs.

Mass communication – "quasi-interaction (Horton and Wohl)

“But quite apart from the dubiousness of its functions, radio is one-sided when it should be two. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers. Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction.”
Why there is no need to worry?

**Participation**

Audience participation used to be formatted: non-professional participants expected to meet the requirements of the mass media format.

A participatory turn implies citizens are given a number of opportunities to take part in mass mediated discourses.

Less editing, formatting and control with audience expressions.

Participation ≠ interaction

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Why there is no need to worry?

**Social integration**

Participation ≠ interaction

As the interactional roles and relationships differ between interpersonal and mass mediated forms of communication, the ritual significance is also likely to differ.

Mass communication is an essential part of the symbolic process of constructing and maintaining reality and the representation of (sometimes illusory) shared beliefs.
Daglig mediebruk: Hovedtall

Figur 3. Andel av tid brukt til massemedier en gjennomsnittsdag som går med til ulike medier. 2007. Prosent


| År   | Avis | Fjernsyn | Radio | Plate/ 
|      |      |         |      | kasett/ 
|      |      |         |      | CD/MP3/ 
|      |      |         |      | lydfiler | Uke-
|      |      |         |      |          | blad | Baker | Tidsskrift | Tegneserie-
|      |      |         |      |          |      |        |            | -blad | Hjemme-
|      |      |         |      |          |      |        |            |      | PC | VHS/DVD/ 
|      |      |         |      |          |      |        |            |      |    | harddisk-
|      |      |         |      |          |      |        |            |      |    | -opptaker | Internett |
|      |      |         |      |          |      |        |            |      |    |          |          |
| 1991 | 84   | 81    | 71    | 43   | 21   | 24   | 18   | 11   | .. | 10  | .. |
| 1992 | 84   | 80    | 65    | 38   | 20   | 21   | 14   | 10   | .. | 10  | .. |
| 1994 | 85   | 82    | 67    | 44   | 22   | 18   | 16   | 9    | 11  | 11  | .. |
| 1995 | 84   | 84    | 66    | 38   | 20   | 19   | 11   | 8    | 8   | 12  | .. |
| 1996 | 82   | 82    | 59    | 37   | 18   | 19   | 16   | 12   | 9   | 9   | .. |
| 1997 | 84   | 84    | 61    | 41   | 17   | 17   | 15   | 9    | 13  | 9   | 7 |
| 1998 | 81   | 83    | 59    | 42   | 16   | 18   | 14   | 9    | 17  | 8   | 10 |
| 1999 | 81   | 84    | 60    | 44   | 15   | 19   | 15   | 9    | 21  | 9   | 18 |
| 2000 | 77   | 82    | 57    | 50   | 17   | 20   | 14   | 9    | 25  | 10  | 23 |
| 2001 | 78   | 85    | 56    | 47   | 14   | 22   | 13   | 8    | 33  | 9   | 35 |
| 2002 | 77   | 85    | 58    | 49   | 16   | 23   | 14   | 7    | 31  | 10  | 35 |
| 2003 | 77   | 84    | 58    | 45   | 16   | 23   | 13   | 7    | 36  | 9   | 42 |
| 2004 | 75   | 83    | 58    | 47   | 17   | 23   | 12   | 8    | 36  | 10  | 44 |
| 2005 | 74   | 85    | 55    | 45   | 16   | 25   | 11   | 7    | 47  | 9   | 55 |
| 2006 | 74   | 83    | 54    | 43   | 16   | 24   | 11   | 7    | 51  | 10  | 60 |
| 2007 | 72   | 82    | 53    | 43   | 14   | 23   | 11   | 7    | 56  | 11  | 66 |
Conclusion

Yes to an increasing focus on user-generated content and initiatives to invite the audience as co-producers of content.

BUT, that is not the only, or not even the most successful strategy for the future:

WHY NOT FOCUS ON WHAT MASS COMMUNICATION HAS ALREADY PROVEN TO BE GOOD AT?

Provide stories for imagining and enacting social worlds.
THANKS