ARTE: FRENCH-GERMAN EXPERIMENTS IN CROSSING THE BORDERS

'ONE MEDIA – THREE SCREENS' CONVERGENCE AND INTERACTIVITY AT ITS FULL POTENTIAL?

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Abstract: This contribution is aimed at discussing different current policies of convergence as well as questioning whether these exploit the opportunities of digital media to their full potential, especially with regard to transmedia storytelling, interactivity, participation and networking.

Taking the portfolio of the 'European Culture Channel' ARTE as an example, I draw a sketch of existing and emerging industrial strategies as well as of new formats and user practices. In the second part of the article, I examine one specific genre within this context I look at the collaborative, networked transmedia documentary *Prison Valley* to consider transformations at both the *macro* and the *micro* level. Last but not least, I question whether ARTE fulfils its promise to be the first "100% bi-medial channel" (according to ARTE's mission statement), or whether it promotes an 'extended side-by-sideness' of devices and practices, which would constitute the first steps towards the synergetic potential of media convergence.

Keywords: Convergence; second screen; transmedia storytelling; web documentary; interactivity; participation

1 Prelude: A Futurist Vision

Sitting on the sofa in the evening and enjoying a thrilling documentary on TV – not only *watching* it but *participating* in it – is no longer a futurist vision, but already common practice, at least according to the mission statements of many European programmes. Following a show, a film or live broadcast and simultaneously exchanging comments with friends on the programme's blog, *liking* the programme on Facebook or becoming a follower on Twitter seem to be pervasive practices; although options such as e.g. exploring a programme further online in the form of a game or an interactive web-documentary are not that widespread, these incentives to get engaged with a programme can be regarded as 'emerging practices.' The same is true if we take it one step further and look for instance, at broadcasters' invitation to viewers to use their smartphone and explore a storyline right on the spot, live, by means of participating for

example, in a real-life event and collaborating with likeminded 'viewers' and thus crossing the border from mere 'reception' and interaction *on* the screen to action *beyond* the screen.

These strategies and practices of 'convergent television' that have been emerging in the last few years have been anticipated by media theorists since the late 1980s: Henry Jenkins, Marie-Laure Ryan or Janet Murray have been addressing this by focusing on transmedia and crossmedia narration. Until now, many adjacent disciplines such as media psychology,[1] media sociology,[2] media history,[3] media economy,[4] media politics[5] have joined this discourse from their specific perspectives. Other than that, handbooks and guides – e.g. concerning convergent journalism[6] – are mushrooming both online and offline.

What once used to be a futurist vision now seems to have become real. According to the mission statements of some European broadcasting stations, we now experience immersive,[7] interactive, participatory and user-/participant-orientated forms of audiovisual entertainment and information that media research has been anticipating long before these become part of a common everyday usage.

More than 30 years after these issues emerged in media research, they are now becoming hotly debated in both academic practice and in the fields of their technological, economic and political application. Jenkins has detached himself from his initial arguments and admitted that "convergence" – a "label" rather than a coherent scientific concept – has "generated more buzz – and less honey"[8] and underlined that one should rather differentiate between technological, economic, cultural, social and global convergence. At the same time, recent publications and conference papers have questioned initial concepts of convergence. It seems therefore worthwhile to revisit these theoretical concepts as well as their actual realizations. Which of these strategies are implemented in a meaningful way, bringing an 'added value' for the user, and which are only marketing labels?

This contribution aims at discussing different policies of convergence with regard to audiovisual media. Focussing on qualitative research as well as empirical data, I am proposing – beyond advertising enthusiasm – that it is still necessary to question whether current strategies actually exploit the options of digital media to their full potential. ARTE, that claims to be Europe's first "100% bi-medial channel" presenting "one media [on] three screens"[9] to an international European audience, thus crossing not only medium-specific borders but also national borders, will serve as a showcase to explore this question both from the producer's perspective as well as from the perspective of *user* practices and experiences. I will pursue a critically informed qualitative analysis of ARTE's programming on both the macro-level (i.e. with regard to ARTE's different platforms, their functions and objectives) and at the micro-level of one selected 'emerging genre:' the transmedia interactive documentary *Prison Valley*.

1 Gary Edgerton, Brian Rose, eds, *Thinking outside the box. A contemporary television genre reader*, Univ. of Kentucky Press, 2005; Susanne Eichner, *Agency and media reception. Experiencing video games, film, and television*, Springer VS, 2014; Thomas Hansson, ed, *Handbook of research on digital information technologies. Innovations, methods, and ethical issues*, Information Science Reference, 2008; Michael J. Spector, ed, *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology*, Springer, 2014

2 Nico Carpentier, 'Contextualising Author-Audience Convergences,' *Cultural Studies* 25 (4–5), 2011, p. 517–533; Paul Levinson, *New New Media*, Penguin Academics, 2013; Virginia Nightingale, Tim Dwyer, eds, *New media worlds. Challenges for convergence*, Oxford University Press, 2007; Amanda D. Lotz, *The television will be revolutionized*, New York University Press, 2007

3 Stephen Groening, 'Convergence Media History', *Popular Communication* 8, p. 98–100; John Ellis, *Seeing things. Television in the age of uncertainty*, I.B. Tauris, 2000

4 Reema Khurana, Rashmi Aggarwal, eds, *Interdisciplinary perspectives on business convergence, computing, and legality*, AEBRbook series; John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality. Style, crisis, and authority in American television*, Rutgers University Press, 1995; Geert Lovink, ed, *Video Vortex reader. Moving Images Beyond Youtube*, Inst. of Network Cultures, 2008

5 Glen Creeber, Matt Hills, 'Editorial TV III. Into, or towards, a new television age?,' *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 10 (5), 2007, 1–4; Lynn Spigel, Jan Olsson, eds, *Television after TV. Essays on a medium in transition*, Duke University Press, 2004; Marijke de Valck, Jan Teurlings, eds, *After the break. Television theory today*, Amsterdam University Press, 2013

6 Manuel Castells, Michael Parks, Bregtjy Van der Haag, 'The Future of Journalism: Networked Journalism,' *International Journal of Communication* (6), 2012, 2923–2938; Sisi Wie, 'Creating Games for Journalism, accessible at: **http://www.propublica.org/nerds/item/creating-games-for-journalism**, last visited on 24 Septmber 2014; Ian Bogost, Simon Ferrari, Bobby Schweizer, *Newsgames. Journalism at play*, MIT Press, 2010

7 Jay D. Bolter, Maria Engberg, Blair MacIntyre, 'Media studies, mobile augmented reality, and interaction design,' *Interactions* 20 (1), 2013, 36

8 Henry Jenkins, 'Convergence – I diverge!,' *Technology Review*, accessible at: **http://pps-rcastiglione.googlecode.com/svn-history/r123/trunk/MKT/mail_6/converge_cultureJJ2.pdf**, last visited on 24 September 2014

9 ARTE,**http://www.arte.tv/de/culture-and-creativity-on-all-screens/2197470,CmC=2197458.html**, last visited 24 September 2014

1.1 Troubling Taxonomies. Interactivity, Interaction, Participation and Convergence

"Convergence? Mal nommer un objet, c'est ajouter au malheur!"
André Gaudreault[10]

Before going into depth, however, one should clarify some basic – yet under-defined – terms that will come up again in the article, such as: interactivity, interaction, participation and convergence, as applied to the emerging sub-genre of new media documentary analysed below.

Although most academic research agrees that 'interactivity' can be considered one of the decisive affordances of digital, non-linear or (questionably) so-called *newmedia*, there are numerous different theoretical concepts underlying this 'buzzword.' Thus, interactivity is mutually or simultaneously used as an attribute of technological systems, of communicational processes – and of user practices and experiences.[11] In the following, I propose to define 'interactive' media as an overarching main category that comprises interactivity (in the narrower sense), interaction, participation and collaborative networking. Interactivity (in a narrower sense) takes place in the form of feedback-loops between the user and the system database or digital artefact. Interaction is based on a 'communicational process' – thus requiring other (human) inter-actors. Participation/collaboration expands the idea of symbolic or communicational acting (as in interaction) by the fact that it is aimed at the (creative) production of new content – either in an accumulative way (i.e. participation, for example by uploading one's own video production to a shared database) or by coordinating communal action (i.e. collaboration, in form of crowd-sourcing, collaborative interface design or activist use of flash-mobs etc.).[12]

With regard to 'new media' documentaries – the one emerging genre that I am going to analyse as a case study - there are similar issues with regard to its taxonomy. Although the terms 'web-documentary,' 'interactive documentary' and 'transmedia documentary' are often used synonymously, there are essential differences between these 'sub-types' of the 'documentary family.' In order to differentiate among these different 'family-members,' I will use the term 'web-documentary' for non-fiction audiovisual material that can (only) be accessed online. This digital material may or may not be interactive: it is presented on the Web as a broadcast platform and ranges from traditional linear documentaries to highly interactive content with large paratextual components.

Interactive documentary, in contrast does not necessarily have to be web-based – the first i-docs were in fact sold on DVD or were part of museum installations. Their non-linear narrative results from the i-doc's database structure, which is based on feedback loops and 'dialoguing' with user/interactant. Their main characteristics are modularity and variability – i.e. two of the essential features of the 'language of new media,' in Manovich's sense of the word.

Narrative content that is designed to be distributed across multiple platforms (digital as well as non-digital) qualifies as transmedia documentary. Most often, these type of documentaries contain interactive components, and almost always the Internet is one of the media involved in the expansion of their (non-fictional) narration.

However, one has to admit that numerous projects exist as hybrids. As O'Flynn rightly states, an i-doc for example "can be web-based or created as a physical installation, but it is a discrete contained work encountered on a single platform, and in

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10 André Gaudreault, 'Mutatis mutandis, le spectateur est un mutant!', paper given at the international conference *D'un écran à l'autre: les mutations du spectateur*, Paris, 21–23 May 2014.

11 For a survey, see Sally McMillan, 'Exploring Models of Interactivity from Multiple Research Traditions. User, Documents and Systems,' in: Leah A. Lievrouw, ed, *Handbook of new media*, Sage Publications, 2006, 205–229

12 Kate Nash, Craig Hight, Catherine Summerhayes, eds, *New Documentary Ecologies. Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014

earlier examples tends to function as a closed database. A transmedia documentary distributes a narrative across more than one platform, it can be participatory or not, can invite audience generated content or not, tends to be open and evolving, though not always."[13]

Nevertheless, an awareness of the intricate terminology should be established right from the beginning, also in order to underline the fact that with regard to convergent tendencies, a critical and differentiated approach must be taken in order to analyse whether the basic ideas surrounding the 'buzzword' are already exploited to their full potential. In the following paragraphs, I will thus have a look at the transmedial portfolio of ARTE.

2 An Overview: ARTE's Portfolio as a 'European Culture Channel'

By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes […]
Henry Jenkins[14]

2.1 Strategic Approaches Towards Media Convergence(s)

As to strategies on convergence – not only in the sense of challenging medium-specific borders but also of crossing national and cultural borders, ARTE, a German-French broadcaster, can be considered a paradigmatic touchstone for this research. The channel proudly presents itself as the first "100% bi-medial channel" – "*the* European Culture Channel" - expanding "from its core broadcasting into a galaxy of new media" and "pioneering in the marriage of television, Internet, and mobile networks,"[15] forming "one media [on] three screens."[16] But what are the components of this 'transmedia cocktail'? Which screens, which programmes, texts, industrial production practices and 'amateur' *produsers* are actually driving this convergence process? And what are the aesthetical as well as pragmatic and experiental implications of these transitions?

2.2 ARTE's Different Platforms

First of all, there is the 'traditional' broadcasting service of **ARTE TV** with its linear programming presented on the 'traditional' television screen. Besides this, there is ARTE-web*, the* extended and elaborated ARTE online platform.

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13 Siobhan O'Flynn, 'Documentary's metamorphic form: Webdoc, interactive, transmedia, participatory and beyond.' In: *Studies in Documentary Film*, 2012, 6 (2), 141–157, accessible at: **http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Article,id=15026/**, last visited 7 November 2014

14 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*, New York University Press, 2006, 2.

15 ARTE, *Corporate Brochure,* accessible at: **http://download.www.arte.tv/permanent/u0/flipbooks/corporate-brochure-2014/index.html**, last visited 25 September 2014

16 ARTE, accessible at **http://www.arte.tv/de/culture-and-creativity-on-all-screens/2197470,CmC=2197458.html**, last visited 25 September 2014
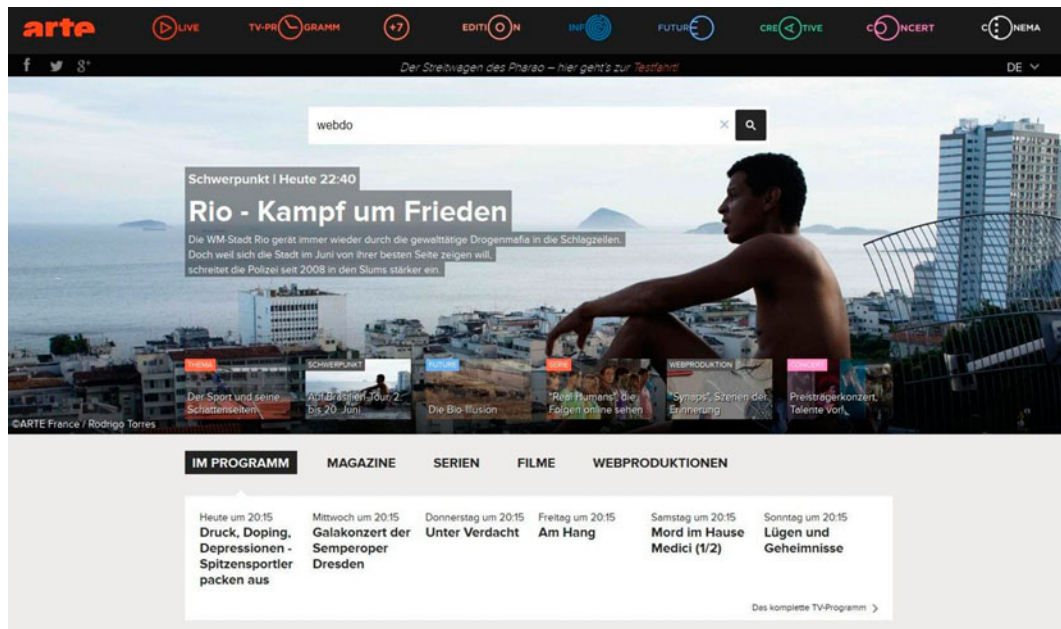
Fig. 1 Screenshot of ARTE's navigation bar presenting the different components of the broadcaster's 'transmedia cocktail'

As the navigation bar indicates, ARTE offers standard online services. By using the brand name **ARTElive**, the audience is invited to tune into the regular live streamed programme.[17]*ARTEweb* also provides a detailed online programme-guide (**ARTEprogram**), and offers the catch-up platform **ARTE+7**, where users can re-watch programmes for seven days after their first broadcast. Since 2013, these services have also been available ubiquitously on mobile screens and Internet-connected TVs. Furthermore, the similarly accessible **video-on-demand platform** presents the most prestigious documentaries and films for (paid) download.[18]**ARTEinfo** delivers the latest news – with a special emphasis on European politics and cultural issues (here again, the programme emphasizes its mission to cross (national) borders). And last but not least, **ARTEcinema** provides comprehensive guides to the film-programme of the channel – with interactive picture galleries, timelines and non-linear navigable biographies.

Although these services are certainly valuable for engaging the audience with the (broadcast) program, these practices have become standard for many channels.[19] They may offer time- and place-independent personalized audiovisual information and entertainment, yet, if one takes a closer look at the core feature of 'digital media' – i.e. interactivity in the sense of participation and collaboration – this is a mere continuation of the linear programme. So, what does ARTE's claim of being "100% bi-medial" and offering an enlargement of experience, rely on?

If we pay attention to the more web-specific affordances, we come across **ARTEfuture**, a section focused on non-fiction programmes. It is based on discussion forums and live chats and it offers extended additional material, primarily

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17 Using a special app, *ARTElive* can also be received on smartphones and tablets.

18 For iPhone-users, the films available there can be rented or purchased via iTunes. Similar services are provided for users of the French platform *Numericâble.*

19 Apart from these 'convergence' tendencies of audiovisual content and the migration of content from one screen (television) to other screens (i.e. smartphone, tablets, cinematic screens …), the company comprises two printed monthlies (one in German, one in French), presenting the latest and most outstanding productions on-air and on the Internet; *ARTEboutique* can be characterized as a 'programme related' gift shop with products ranging from DVDs, CDs, books to kitchenware and a vine-*connoisseur* equipment to products that are related to the programme in the broadest sense.

'interactive' content (in the narrower sense). In some cases, it tries to enlarge the viewing experiences by also hosting apps for simultaneous second-screen usage.

ARTEcreative - the second original 'bi-medial' and so far unique component – invites artists, filmmakers and authors to upload their work, from internet and media art to street art, design, photography and video games. Thus, artists can become part of the ARTE 'community.' If their productions get positive comments by other community members such as ('passive') ARTE viewers/surfers, and are equally evaluated by ARTE's creative consultants and programme managers, they may even get 'recruited' and be offered the possibility of joining the company. With regard to this interactive platform, ARTE provides a (moderated) space for participation as well as collaboration. More often than not, artists conceptualize and realize **joint intermedia projects** in a team, even though they are physically located all over the world.

A very specialized service is provided by **ARTEconcert**. This emphasizes once again the specific impetus of ARTE as a bi-medial *cultural* channel representing Europe's diversity of artistic performances. Presenting musical and theatre events of all genres – including opera, pop, rock, jazz, dance, drama, pantomime, cabaret and circus – **ARTEconcert** promotes new talents as well as renowned artists in Europe. Apart from just 'broadcasting' these programmes, *ARTE* tries to evoke the specifics of a *live* performance, e.g. by moving the live presentation into cinemas or concert halls. **Other productions** are 'extended' in post-production by offering specific 'interaction-points' providing explanatory interviews or commentary, behind-the-scenes material, **backstage tours** etc.

2.3 Functions and Objectives

One main objective of this diverse portfolio consists of *ARTE's* goal to foster its unique selling point: its brand-image as an innovative, transnational, European avant-garde venture. The bi-national media company also aims – as stated in their **formation contract** – at promoting "Transfrontier Television" as proclaimed in **Article 8 of the Council of Europe Convention** (DHMM 891.F March 1989). This is targeted not only at the realization of a communal televised programme, but also at further stimulating debate among Europeans.[20] However, it needs to be mentioned that so far, only a very small number of users exploit these think-tank-like projects to exchange ideas; yet, those who do so are generally long-term loyal participants.[21]

A further motivation of the company is certainly to democratize formerly elitist genres and cultural practices such as the opera or classic theatre. This concern for so far underrepresented genres and forms of artistic expression, though, stems not only from a disinterested humanist idealism. By introducing a niche audience *online* for the more 'difficult' cultural productions - as for example experimental video essays, modern opera, lengthy films – the channel tries to avoid the risk of losing too many of their 'regular' (measured) TV-audiences and hopes to stimulate new audience needs.

Last but not least, the services respond to new viewing practices such as schedule-independent, time-shifted television consumption and the user's demand for more interactivity and participation. In a nutshell, ARTE endows the audience/viewer/user with *personal* and at the same time *collective* agency – or at least, they give them that feeling.

20 See the *ARTECorporate Brochure*, 2012, and the *ARTE Foundation Charta*, 1994, accessible at: **http://download.www.arte.tv/permanent/u6/pdf/ContratdeFormationARTE_actu2009_DE.pdf**, last visited 25 September 2014

21 With regard to the following references on audience acceptance and actual usage, the data is based on the 2014 *ARD-ZDF Onlinestudie* as well as on the various case studies conducted by *Médiamétrie*, a French audience measurement and survey company, focussing on the interdependent tendency of television, radio, cinema and Internet usage. See *mediametrie.fr*, accessible at **http://www.mediametrie.fr/internet/actualites.php**, last visited 25 September 2014;*ard-zdf-onlinestudie*, accessible at: **http://www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de/index.php?id=506**, last visited 25 September 2014

3 Interactive & Participative Multi-Media Ecologies: New formats, New practices?

If we shift from the producer perspective to consumer- or rather *user*-orientated considerations, one can find different incentives for traditional TV audiences to migrate to ARTE platforms beyond the television screen. First of all, due to curated additional material and (journalistically checked) surplus of information online, the user is able to get more engaged and – more importantly – interactive[22] with issues he/she may be interested in (e.g. by means of interactive info-graphics that allow him or her to run through different scenarios and simulate alternative outcomes).[23]

More specifically exploiting the genuine possibilities of (social) networking offered by converging media, virtual online *agoras* are built around the broadcast TV programme in the form of blogs, twitter invitations, chat rooms and forums. What was formerly a rather passive, parasocial television-set-centered media reception has now been relocated into spaces of active, communicative exchanges with both other users and producers, which provides the possibility for almost immediate feedback. In some cases such as TV discussions, the audience is even invited to virtually join this communicative exchange via SMS, e-mail or Skype, having thus the possibility to intervene *live* into the screen action.[24] However, as already pointed out with regard to the discussion platforms offered by the company, the actual number of audience making use of these offers is still much lower than for example participation in simple, multiple-choice SMS-voting. Once again, Nielson's theory on the **90 – 9 - 1 Skewed Lurker–Contributor Ratio** turns out to be right. As the research group speculated, one reason for this is certainly that these forms of content-creation or persuasive participation require an in-depth engagement with the issue and the formulation of a substantial question or argument – practices that still diverge from **most television-habituated audiences' routine of 'leaning back.'**[25] Unfortunately, ARTE still partially supports this passive attitude to its (broadcasted) programmes by sticking to conventional forms of presenting for example televised debates during prime time. Here, more audacious experiments with formats might be a remedy.

A further rather recent practice that – in contrast to substantial participation – is more acceptable according to the **ARD-online-report 2014**, consists of the extension of televised content by simultaneous usage of tablets and smartphones. If one synchronizes for example their second screen-device with the broadcast programme, one gets alternative points of view, other than those on the 'regular' television screen.

Although this feature is still rare in the context of *live* broadcasting of (cultural) formats on ARTE, [26] the company experiments with it mainly in the field of fictional and documentary formats. One example in this respect is the interactive documentary **Alma – A Tale of Violence**, co-produced by *ARTE France*, *Upian* and *Agence VU*. On the television screen, Alma looks straight into the viewer's eyes and confides about her time as a member of one of Guatemala City's most violent gangs. On the second screen, **a special app** enables the user to **shift from Alma's confession, to an evocative level, in which photos blend with small drawings**. This allows the user to add a more emotional, sometimes even

22 Interactivity is defined in its narrower sense as a para-social, symbolic interaction, thus characterizing human-text, human-system interaction, respectively. See also Sally McMillan, 'Exploring Models of Interactivity from Multiple Research Traditions. User, Documents and Systems,' in: Leah A. Lievrouw, ed, *Handbook of new media*, Sage Publications, 2006, 205–229; Jens Jensen, 'Interactivity – Tracking a New Concept in Media and Communication Studies,' in: Paul A. Mayer, eds, *Computer media and communication*, Oxford University Press, 1999, 185–204; Oliver Quiring, Wolfgang Schweiger, 'Interaktivität – 10 years after. Bestandsaufnahme und Analyserahmen,' *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 54, 1, 2006, 5–24; Kate Nash, 'Modes of interactivity: analysing the webdoc,' *Media, Culture & Society*, 34, 2, 2012, 195–210

23 One example in this sense is the interactive 'time-machine' that allows the user to simulate different socio-political scenarios during WW I and to experience personal accounts of witnesses of these years, according to age, nationality, location, gender, etc. **http://future.arte.tv/de/zeitreise**

24 Admittedly, this practice has its predecessors in the first call-in shows; however, the immediacy and the reciprocity present a new dimension of audience-participation. Furthermore, the option to simultaneously follow the regular programme and to intervene via second screen (i.e. the *ARTE-app*) facilitates participation.

25 With regard to the following references on audience-acceptance and actual usage, the data is based on the 2014 ARD-ZDF Onlinestudie as well as on the various case studies conducted by *Médiamétrie*, a French audience measurement and survey company, focussing on the interdependent tendency of television, radio, cinema and Internet usage. See *mediametrie.fr*, accessible at: **http://www.mediametrie.fr/internet/actualites.php**, last visited on 25 September 2014; See *ard-zdf-onlinestudie*, accessible at: **http://www.ard-zdf-onlinestudie.de/index.php?id=506**, last visited on 25 September 2014

26 An exception (on other channels) is sports broadcasting.

poetic layer to the rather factual documentary mode of address. In a certain way, the second screen enables the user to access Alma's memories and gain (subjective) insight into her mental state at that time. In contrast to linear, mono-medial 'conventional' non-fiction programmes, however, **Alma** avoids the risk of becoming involuntarily sentimenta, a flaw of many docu-fictions or semi-documentary formats based on re-enactment.
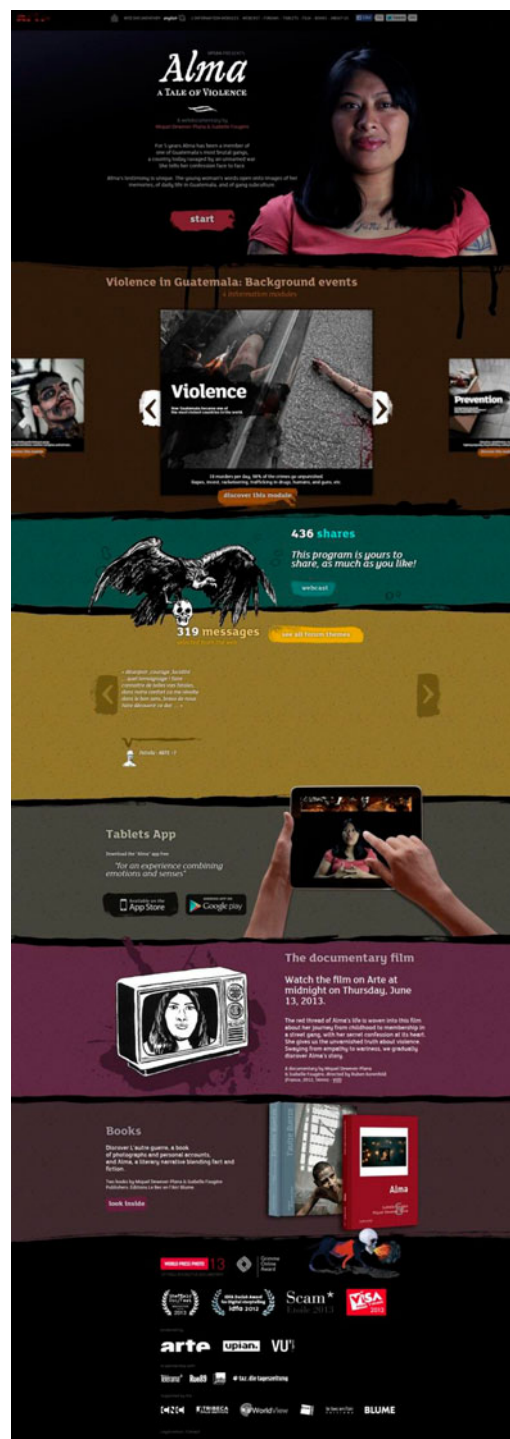

Fig. 2 Screenshots *Alma*

Fig. 3 Screenshots *About Kate* – second screen usage

Another feature is represented by the possibility of adding a *factual* dimension to a fictional programme. An app, for instance for the mini-series **About Kate**, provides more in-depth information that can be interactively modified and accessed in a customized manner. Thus, parallel to the action on screen, the user can for example fill in a questionnaire (developed in cooperation with the renowned *Frauenhofer Institute*, which makes it scientifically reliable). At the end of the respective sequence, the user is given a 'prognosis' of his or her ability to face similar challenges as presented on screen. Through this, the programme not only gains a further immersive, experiential dimension and provides more knowledge and insight, but it also stimulates self-reflection.

4 New Practices, New aesthetics?

This directly leads to the question of to which extent these new practices in media production, (inter-)active media reception and constructive feedback promote the development of a 'new aesthetics' of convergence - a hypothesis proposed among others by Thorburn and Jenkins[27] - or from a more psychological point of view, a 'new aesthetics of the interactive,' in Peacock's sense of the term.[28] In this context, one can state right from the beginning that many of our

27 David Thorburn, Henry Jenkins, Brad Seawell, eds, *Rethinking media change. The aesthetics of transition*, MIT Press, 2003

28 Alan Peacock, 'Towards an Aesthetic of The Interactive', accessible at: **http://soundtoys.net/journals/towards-an-aesthetic-of**, last visited 7 November 2014 "'Aesthetics' is used here to refer to the quality and condition of the user/player experience when engaged with instances of The Interactive. It is used without judgment about the relative qualities of that experience and its reception. It is not used simplistically to judge works based on their compliance with a set of arbitrarily imposed or evolved set of rules, or notions, of beauty or cultural worth or norms. It is used both descriptively – because describing means sharing, and experiences that are shared have a different and more compelling meaning than the ones which are not - and analytically as a way of discussing the particular features of an instance of The Interactive – because such discussion informs our understanding as audience and, perhaps even more importantly, as practitioners."

screen-programmes are becoming more and more experimental and open to hybridization. The most prominent are mutual exchanges ranging from typical online aesthetics to traditional TV-screen style. However, it is still questionable whether this enables the user/viewer of convergent programmes to experience really new aesthetic qualities.

4.1 YouTube Aesthetics and Television?

As the example of *Kate* has shown, aesthetics of amateur-film, the (likewise professional) use of mobile-phone camera or the optic style of surveillance cameras seem to have become a rather established mode of expression. Moreover, (very) short formats are becoming more and more popular. Especially the televised programme of ARTE favours such experimental forms ranging from two- to five-minute productions (e.g. **Silex and the City**). However, even longer TV productions (and I am not only referring here to avant-garde filmmaking) often adopt a rather episodic, heterogeneous style, similar to user-generated *YouTube* videos and are adapted to the the experience of clicking through a 'new flow' of infinite clips as described for example by Grusin[29] or Urricchio.[30] In this context, ARTE quite recently coproduced a number of trans-genre experiments: highly hybrid films, combining for instance (semi-) factual rhetoric and incorporating animation scenes, stylized subjective dream sequences, such as **Camp 14** or **Alma**.

4.2 From Temporal Montage to Spatial Montage

A further impact of 'converging screens' on contemporary aesthetic tendencies is certainly the remediation of so called 'database-logics.' As Manovich[31] demonstrates, we are moving from temporal montage to spatial montage, meaning that films and TV programmes are trying to evoke the impression of a navigable interface: web-browsers and multi-windowed computer- or tablet-screens, (animated) 'pop up' inserts on our TV screens and split-screens have become more or less established features of not only news or other factual programmes, but also of fiction and semi-fiction productions.[32]

4.3 Rediffusion and 'Bon Cadrage'

Technological convergence not only entail remediation and the simulation of other screens and screen practices; the availability of one and the same programme on various devices and in very different contexts leads to a revision of what 'bon cadrage' is. Production and pre-production practices already take into account the fact that programmes are not only watched on big television screens capable of displaying 16:9 or event cinemascope material, but also on mobile devices with smaller screens of other ratios (e.g. smartphones or tablets).

This requires a renewed treatment of movement, setting and character exposition in mobile- view formats as applied to the 'classic TV-programme' that has been dominant in the last few decades. Mobile screening practices for example, favour close-ups over panoramic shots because small details or movement in the background would be indiscernible on small screens, and they avoid rapid camera movement.

29 Richard Grusin, 'YouTube and the End of New Media,' in: Pelle Snickars, ed, *The YouTube reader*, National Library of Sweden, 2009, 60–67

30 In "The Future of a Medium Once Known as Television," Uricchio draws parallels between early television, the (possible) future of television and YouTube. In this context, he explores in how far YouTube can be considered as "an experimental laboratory that may have its greatest relevance for the future of the medium currently known as television, and a medium-together with film - that is experiencing its own crisis." William Uricchio, 'The Future of a Medium Once Known as Television', in: Pelle Snickars, ed, *The YouTube reader*, National Library of Sweden, 2009, 24–39

31 Lev Manovich, *The language of new media*, MIT Press, 2001

32 See the discussion of theories of perception, cognition and epistemological sense-making as proposed by Adrian Miles. In this essay "Click, Think, Link: Interval and Affective Narrative," Miles appropriates Deleuze's application of Bergson's sensory motor schema to describe the user experience of database narratives "via the cinematic interval." Understanding database cinema (and television, one might add) as an "assemblage", i.e. a system that enables the "production of affect" through various forms of media practice, he suggests that linear, temporal narrative has probably already lost its status as a unique and dominant form within media narration.Accessible online at: **http://www.dnaanthology.com/anvc/dna/click-think-link-interval-and-affective-narrative**, last visited 22 September 2014

To sum it up, it can be stated that on both 'traditional screens' and 'new screens', we find altered aesthetic strategies which are aimed at addressing different – new (?) – audiences (e.g. the so-called 'digital natives') as well as at addressing habitual audiences differently.

5 A Case Study of the Interactive Transmedia Documentary *Prison Valley*

Having browsed through ARTE's programming portfolio and touched upon some of the major impacts of convergence on production, viewing and user practices, let us now get to the bottom of our discussion. How does one experience living in a valley whose main wealth comes from prisons and the adjoined 'businesses'? What is the atmosphere like? What is the measurable 'economic surplus' of such places and what is the socio-psychological downside of that? These are some of the leading questions David Dufresne and Philippe Brault raise (and try to answer) in their prize-winning interactive transmedia documentary **Prison Valley** (ARTE/Upian, 2010).

Taking **Prison Valley** as an illustration of ARTE's venturing into 'new dimensions' of interactive broadcasting, I will first explore **Prison Valley** on the *macro*-level of the media-ensemble and then, I will consider its production at the *micro*-level by looking at its online features.

5.1 Exploring *Prison Valley* at the Macro-Level of the Transmedia Ensemble

Dufresne's and Brault's transmedia documentary 'project' about the American 'Prison Industry' consists of:

– a **linear documentary film** that was screened as a premiere in different cinemas in France and Germany before being broadcast on ARTE (and is still available on YouTube);

– an **interactive web-documentary** with the same title (which I will explore in more detail later on).

Furthermore, it comprises:

– a **blog** (that was already launched during the phase of post-production);

– an extended **facebook-group**;

– an **application for iPhone** which allows the user to 'meet' central characters from the film, to twitter and to follow tweets by other users, some of the protagonists and the authors and to access additional footage and photographs (that can be browsed through while watching the linear documentary film).

Apart from these on-screen features, the on- and offline project was accompanied by a photo exhibition and a photobook. According to the terminology of 'new media' documentaries clarified in the beginning of the article, this synergetic combination of different media classifies **Prison Valley** as a web-based interactive audio-visual transmedia documentary, a hybrid example of converging screens.

When broadcast on ARTE for the first time in 2010, the 59 minute documentary was embedded in a so-called 'soirée théma' or 'Themenabend.' This included one other documentary film about electronic monitoring of prisoners and a live discussion about prisons all over the world, featuring international experts, print/online journalists as well as the producers and authors of the (web-) documentary. In the same context, a thematically matching film was aired. As the whole 'event' was declared a prestige-experiment, it was announced long beforehand in the printed *ARTEmagazine* including a background story about the 'making-of' and interviews with the authors. Moreover, the whole evening

Fig. 4 *Prison Valley* web-doc page; iPhone app screen shot; film announcement

scheduling was promoted by trailers on the TV screen, via updates on the ARTE homepage and on the homepage of the web-doc itself as well as via social media.

These cross-media marketing strategies already provide an idea about the importance of the ensemble of these productions as they can be regarded as one of the first really 'bi-medial' manifestations of ARTE's editorial policy or 'philosophy.' As declared in its latest mission statement and corporate brochure, ARTE intends to "expand […] from its core broadcasting into a mixture of innovative formats reaching all screens. […] When television adds interactivity, *ARTE* takes viewers on an adventure through all screens, while setting European standards for culture and creativity."[33]

Thus, with regard to the embeddedness and promotion of both the documentary film and the interactive, participatory web-documentary, the programme fosters the image of an innovative programme "[i]n a radically changing audiovisual environment," engaging with discussion, standing for "creativity, commitment and openness to the world."[34]

33 http://www.arte.tv/de/culture-and-creativity-on-all-screens/2197470,CmC=2197458.html, last visited 22 September 2014
34 http://www.arte.tv/de/arte-at-a-glance/2197470,CmC=2197446.html, last visited 22 September 2014

5.2 Exploring *Prison Valley* at the Micro-Level of Online Features

How far is this goal achieved at the micro-level of the online features of *Prison Valley*, the web-documentary itself?

The user remains a viewer during the first five minutes of the opening sequences of the web-doc. The later introduction to the interactive programme is almost identical with the linear film opening. This, however, is not that unusual if one thinks of similar prologues of (online) video games and filmic 'cut-scenes' in which the players only immerse themselves into the narration; in a certain way, i-docs present a border case of the emerging sub-genre of 'serious games' or 'persuasive games.'

After the intro, the users 'are called into action.' Assuming the role of an investigative journalist, they enter a motel where they are asked to 'register' for a room – i.e. to log in with their Facebook or Twitter account. By doing this, they move into the web-doc universe of *Prison Valley* in a *personalized* way and are able to connect with other users or join the aligned Facebook group.
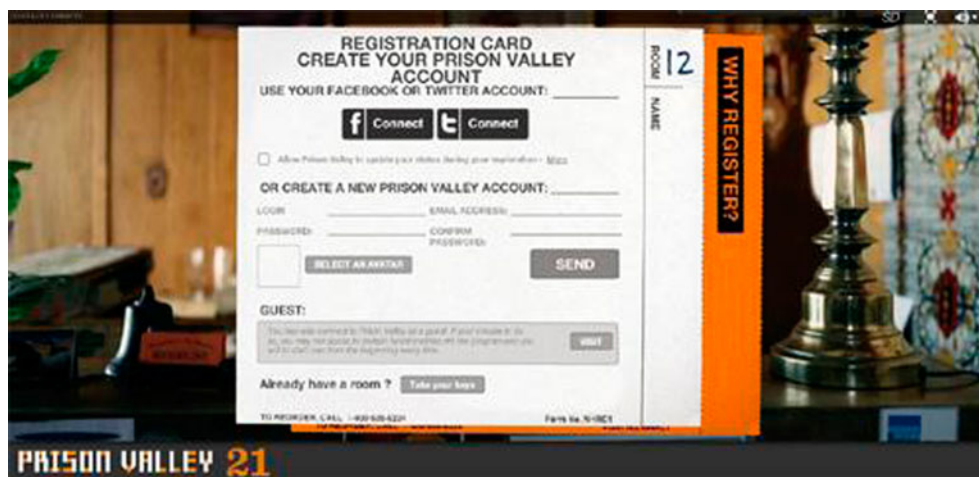

Fig. 5 Log-In/motel registration for entering *Prison Valley* in a 'personalized' way

Concerning the organization of the narrative, a great part of the documentary footage is integrated in the web-doc as well. The single sequences as such, feature a rather classical dramaturgic micro-structure. Moreover, the camera and the overarching aesthetic of these 'narrative units' (in Thalhoffer's sense of the term[35]) rely heavily on rather 'traditional' documentary aesthetics, working extensively with the *observational* and the *expository modes* of depiction (as Nichols[36] describes them). Many of the interview sequences open with an *establishing shot*, followed by a statement on camera by a presenter or a confession by the interlocutor.

The linear film contrasts these sequences in reference to **the road film**, presenting first-person, voice-over reflections in a rather *poetic mode*, for instance when the journalists continue their journey and highly symbolic shots or even stills are displayed.

The non-linear documentary, in contrast, calls for some kind of decision and action of the users at this point. Being 'thrown back' on an interactive map, they have to choose which steps to take next – i.e. which locations they want to visit and whom they will interview.

35 Kate Nash and Florian Thalhoffer, 'An Interview with Florian Thalhofer, Media Artist and Documentary Maker,' in: Kate Nash, Craig Hight and Catherine Summerhayes, eds, *New Documentary Ecologies. Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 192–197
36 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to documentary*, Indiana University Press, 2001

This implies that the users can individually fast-forward and rewind the action/narration, whereas in 'traditional' documentary, they are only able to chronologically follow the storyline.
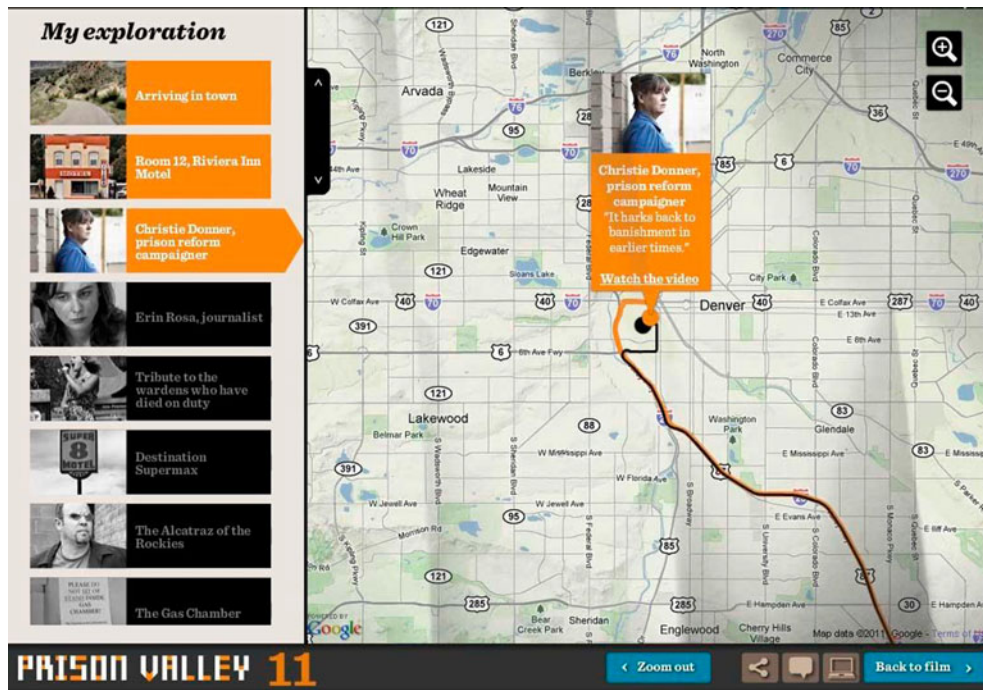

Fig. 6 Map of *Prison Valley* virtual environment – spatial montage

The interactive map illustrates how temporal montage is (at least partly) replaced by spatial montage, which is a characteristic of 'new media' (in Manovich's understanding of the word), as I've noted earlier. This entails a change in the viewer's/user's perception; thus, the epistemological 'function' of the computer screen diverges from that of the television screen:

> In spatial montage, nothing is potentially forgotten, nothing is erased. Just as we use computers to accumulate endless texts, messages, notes and data, and just as a person, going through life, accumulates more and more memories, with the past slowly acquiring more weight than the future, spatial montage can accumulate events and images as it progresses through its narrative. In contrast to cinema's [and television's] screens, which primarily functioned as a record of perception, here computer screen functions as a record of memory.[37]

I will conclude later whether Manovich's rather utopic assessment of the potential of the 'language of new media' can be applied without reserve to the transmedia format of this interactive documentary.

Another option for the users is to return to the motel. Back in the apartment, they are able to browse through their 'notes', review their photos and other material they've picked up or join a discussion on the *Prison Valley* forum. There, they can get into contact not only with the producers and other users but also with some of the protagonists: residents of Canon City, prison staff, local journalists and also relatives of the imprisoned inmates and civil-rights activists. Following the entries, it becomes clear that many users were interested in issues the authors did not directly address in their interviews or used in the documentary film.

Last but not least, the user can 'switch on' the (virtual) computer and connect to the 'real' Internet, for instance for conducting further research or exchanging opinions, findings or for opening up discussions with like-minded users/participants on Facebook.

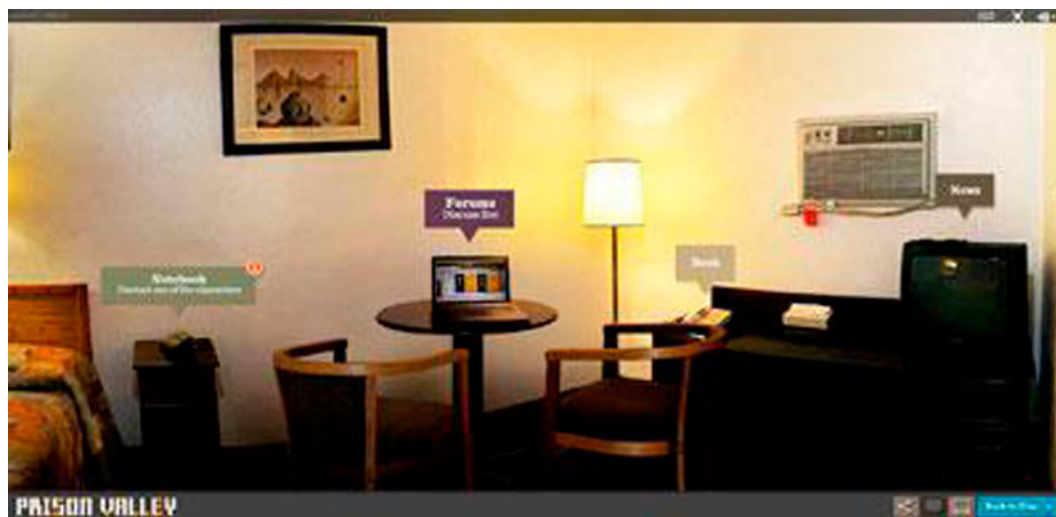37 Lev Manovich, *The language of new media*, MIT Press, 2001, 71

Fig. 7 Motel room or user's/player's 'Head Quarters' in *PrisonValley*

An event so far unique was organized by the 'followers,' 'friends' and authors of *Prison Valley*: a live-chat conference with the governor of the State of Arizona. Residents, activists and users from all over the globe joined this moderated discussion on issues raised in the documentaries.[38]

The lively debates on shared platforms (mainly Facebook) where users post newspaper articles, short videos or other 'user-generated-content;' mixing original personal accounts with subjective and even poetic reflections all this interactive networking and creative practices of content appropriation and creation could be considered as further blurring the dichotomy between the 'author' and the 'audience.'

6 Fusion and Confusion. Media convergence at Its Full Potential?

"Si l'ère numérique est un ère de fusion – c'est aussi un ère de confusion."
André Gaudreault[39]

6.1 ARTE. Converging Screens and Participatory Practices: 'One Media, Three Screens?'

At the end of this *tour d'horizon* through both the portfolio of *ARTE* as an ensemble and through one of its interactive transmedia productions, one has to critically review whether the concepts of 'convergence' and digital media's potential for interactivity are employed to their full scope. Is *ARTE* truly a 'one medium [on] three screens,' the first '100% bi-medial channel,' using the synergic potential of converging and media and transmedia storytelling? Or are we rather witnessing a form of – certainly extended – 'side-by-side' screens and practices?

38 Similar online live debates followed this initial event, among others a discussion with Jean-Marie Bockel, at that time French Secretary of State for Justice; similarly, the journalist Gonzague Rambaud, author of *Travail en prison*, discussed differences and similarities of the penal system in France, other European states and the USA.See: **http://arte.tv/prisonvalley/chat**

39 André Gaudreault, 'Mutatis mutandis, le spectateur est un mutant!', paper given at the international conference *D'un écran à l'autre: les mutations du spectateur*, Paris, May 21–23, 2014

As we have seen, ARTE definitely goes far beyond the usual online services of most European 'traditional' broadcasting companies. The majority of those still seem to regard their web-appearance as a subordinate 'addition' to their 'regular' programme, providing live streaming, VoD or background information in the form of written texts or slide shows. Thus, these sites mainly spread more or less the same information or slightly augmented material than the one they air on TV.

ARTE, by contrast, provides further online features. As was initiatives such as *ARTEcreative* or *ARTEfuture* have shown, the company tries to enlarge the scope of possibilities for the audience to engage and become (inter-)active net*working* users. However, when critically reviewing ARTE's portfolio and projects like *About Kate*, *Alma* or *Prison Valley*, it becomes clear that only *some* of the interactive and participatory potential of converging media is employed, and that transmedia storytelling and collaboration are only rarely and partly made use of.

First of all, the majority of 'community-members' of *ARTEcreative* as well as most of the more open participatory transmedia ventures have to be considered at least (semi-) professional. Their content can be labelled as '*peer-*produced content' rather than '*user-*' or 'participant-generated content.' What is also remarkable is that the number of *regularly* and *creativelyactive* contributing and networking members is rather moderate.[40]

Apart from this, many of these projects only *appear* to be transmedial. Although projects on *ARTEcreative* or *ARTEfuture* are promoted by video trailers on 'regular TV' and in the monthly *ARTEmagazine*, strictly speaking, they must be categorized as web-based or interactive but *not* transmedial, if we take into account the initial attempts in this article to clarify some of the undetermined terminological keywords.

But even if we turn to the micro-level of projects such as *Prison Valley* that is an example of a '100% bi-medial' transmedial venture usually consisting of a linear film (aired on TV) and an interactive web-documentary, we need to be reserved about their full application of the promises of 'transmedia storytelling' (according to Jenkins' understanding of the concept). Although most of these documentary programmes might be accessible on different media and offer independent points of entry, these projects are only partly successful in unfolding their 'story' on several of these different media platforms "with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" and with "each medium do[ing] what it does best".[41]

Apart from that, considering the promise of active involvement, user agency and creative networking participation, it needs to be acknowledged that most of these web-documentaries are rather *re*-active, meaning they are limited in regard to the scope and impact of users' action. Usually, all possible 'paths' through the multi-linear documentary are pre-scripted by the authors and are dependent on fixed algorithms. Most differ from open, non-linear participatory and collaborative projects and are in fact quasi-linear and thus rather 'traditional' formats.

However, if we consider interaction not so much as a technical or textual but rather as a cognitive, experiential and emotional category, such reserves turn out to be of less importance. Concerning *Prison Valley*, many users wrote that even if the web-doc did not provide much deeper factual knowledge and it took them much longer than simply watching the 59 minutes of linear film, their *experience* and the *impact* of their engagement with the web-doc was entirely different:

> I probably would have gotten the same amount of information from a one- hour video doc that I got from 5 hours and a half of being online and finding my way through Cannyon City. I also think that, had I turned on the TV to watch a documentary about prisons in Colorado, the details of the story would not have stayed with me the way they did.[42]

40 *About Kate*, for example only had a handful of (semi-)professional users still actively participating towards the end of the season, and after the end of the first screening period, it began suffering a silent death.This hints at a further challenge for formats that heavily depend on continuous user feedback or input. Most often, projects that are primarily heavily cross-promoted and much frequented are losing their attraction after the screening of their televised 'part'

41 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*, New York University Press, 2006, 95f.

42 Quoted by Stefania Bercu, accessible at: **http://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/2010/09/11/creating-documentaries-to-engage-the-viewer-prison-valley-a-webdoc/**, last visited 22 September 2014

Another user stated that although she did not feel like the co-author of the 'story' presented *within* the multi-linear web-documentary, she nevertheless felt some sort of creative and investigative agency:

I suppose the issue of the viewer as co-author is debatable […]. However, you will probably also find yourself googling and wiki-ing and conducting your personal online research, so in this sense you are encouraged to become an author for this story.[43]

6.2 ARTE. First Steps Towards the Synergetic Potential of Media Convergence

Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions…
Henry Jenkins[44]

At present one can conclude that ARTE can be regarded as 'one medium [on] three screens' and that the 'bi-medial channel' faces the challenges and opportunities provided by the diverse forms of media convergence, not only with regard to technological changes but also to various cultural implications. Concerning the promise of *interactiveen-gagement*, genuine *transmedia* 'storytelling' and participatory co-authorship with the viewer/user/prosumer, it is mainly through special 'events' and external, partly independent platforms that ARTE invites users to extend the scope of their agency from mere *on*-screen agency to agency *through* the screen. Thus, most of the small and often ephemeral communities that are built *around* transmedia projects do not achieve a larger public impact. However, such first initiatives promise to at least change viewers' expectations of audiovisual media on *various* screens.

In this sense, ARTE makes a few unquestionably brave *firststeps* towards the synergetic potential of media convergence, even though there is still a lot to be done in order to deploy the full potential of user agency.

Biography

Dr. Anna Wiehl is a lecturer and research assistant at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, Department for Media Studies. Her research focuses on the interdependencies of audiovisual and digital media, transmedia narratives, (interactive) documentary and the future of television. In 2010, she received her Ph.D. degree (summa cum laude) in the international Ph.D. Programme „Kulturbegegnungen – Cultural Encounters – Rencontres Culturelles. Interdisciplinary Studies in Language, Literature and Media at the University of Bayreuth." Apart from her academic career, she worked for several years for the French-German broadcasting station ARTE, the German public broadcaster ARD and the Bavarian television BR as author for TV, radio and Internet.

43 Quoted by Sandra Gaudenzi, accessible at **http://www.interactivedocumentary.net**, last visited 25 September 2014

44 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*, New York University Press, 2006, 3–4.