

CHAPTER 1

THE UNIVERSE CREATION

It all starts with a story, in transmedia too. But stories live and float in the sky. They result from mysterious gas mixtures, and accidental relationships. They are built on conflicts and internal evolutions and contaminate themselves and continuously evolve. They result from processes of assimilation and hybridization and it is exactly for this reason that – even before the story itself – the most crucial issue is the *imaginative universe*. When you start working on a transmedia project or work the first thing you learn is that you need to establish the primitive universe of the story before focusing on the plot and deepen into the characters' psychology or emotions. Designing the imaginative universe of the tale is the first step of the creative process in transmedia. The fundamental role of making a given universe depends on two essential causes:

- because within the imaginative universe different narratives shall come to life – all those distributed by the different media involved in the process;
- because all the possible contaminations in the different platforms involved in the project, including those produced by the public within the narrative, recreating parts, characters or settings, all shall depend on creating the proper imaginative universe.

And it is not just that. A full development and deepening of the *complex universe* of the narrative also allow a transmedia work to express at its best the emotional power of its story worlds and its capacity of adaptation to the different assets of the communication system.

Transmedia narratives live in increasingly complex imaginative universes. These are *transmediaverses* which can encompass heterogeneous audiences, camouflage using the language of all the media involved, envisage narrative galaxies which alternate and juxtapose, with characters popping out from anywhere, realistic or totally imaginary settings.

Each story is set in an imaginative universe, and each universe ruled by its own laws. First, the imaginative universe is inhabited by one or more story worlds which contain more stories developed on different media and connected to each other. Moreover, differently from traditional narratives, in transmedia imaginative universes the told stories are paired with untold stories, which can be used in case the project became particularly successful or, conversely, should it prove ineffective, thus in need of some extra narrative fuel, or in case it should add more media assets to its original communication system.

In Figure 1.1 it is clearly shown how creating a story world can be crucial although it does not represent the final step of the different narrative opportunities an imaginative universe can offer.

For this reason, before moving to the creation of the story world, we need to design the imaginary universe where all the narratives shall be set. Those narratives shall be spread over the different platforms in the planned communicative time and space, and then assigned to two main type of macro-content: *artworks* (video, images, text, soundscape...) and *experiences* (real world, virtual, immersive, installation...).

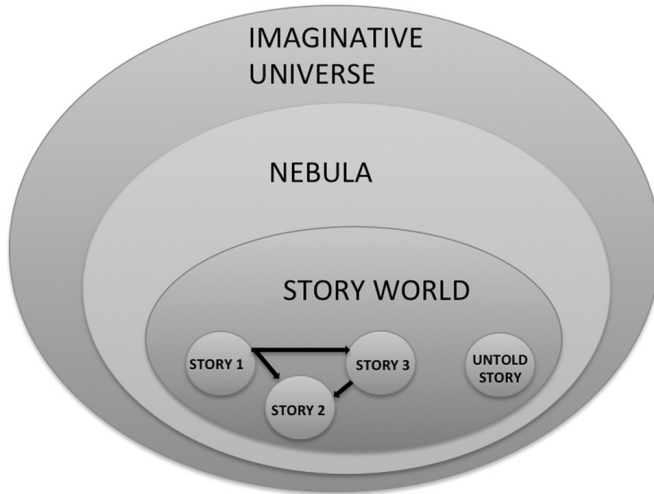
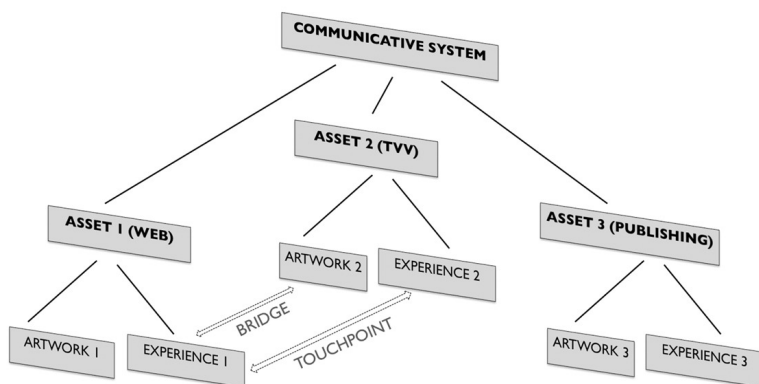


Image 1.1. Imaginative universe, Nebula and Story World in a transmedia project.

The “tree” model for communicative systems, which is typical for cross-media projects, cannot completely comply with such a complexity. Structuring a transmedia project by merely organizing it into different media assets developed into artworks and experiences connected to each other, does not appear to be the most effective option any longer. For instance, the interaction between the artwork of an asset of a project with that of another project (thus creating a *touch point* between the two media), or, conversely, the interaction of the artwork of an asset with the experience of another asset (thus creating a *bridge*¹) may show satisfactory results if the content to move on to different media is identical, or if the transmedia project is not complex. This process shall definitely not be adequate to manage complex

1. For example, the interactions between the images published on a website and on a social network would create a touch point, whilst the use of a video on you tube used to promote a contest related to a thematic park could create a bridge between different kind of contents on different media platforms.

imaginative universes such as those we will deal with later in this chapter.



Img. 1.2 Basic Communicative System in a cross-media / transmedia project.

This is the reason why the old idea of cross media communicative system in transmedia has been replaced by media clusters, universes organized into “islands”, “neural networks” or content clusters. The transmedia designer, more than the creator of any traditional kind of narrative, needs to become a cultural activator and a catalyzer of different narratives, a story architect, a fan correspondent and a keeper of stories and user experiences created by both authors and – as much as possible – by the public. An example?

In 2009, tv broadcaster Discovery Channel was to launch the 22nd edition of one of the most successful docuseries of its schedule: *The Shark Week*. They may have gone for a traditional advertising campaign, such as newspaper ads, tv spots, online banners. The audience of the series was there already as for them it was a must see. Success was therefore guaranteed. The broadcaster, though, was in need of lowering the average age of the audience, in order to secure the series longevity, and, at the same time, of making the image of the protagonist of

the story (the white shark) less repellent to the public eye. The campaign was created by *Campfire*, a New York agency directed by Mike Monello, one of the authors of *The Blair Witch Project*, who defined it “a transmedia experience that used influencer outreach, Facebook Connect and a website to bring the visceral terror of a shark attack directly to its audience²”. The web, social networks, satellite tv and the real world all shared one of the most atavistic fears of contemporary collective imagination in a project that planned different stages for the involvement of audience, namely:

- the creation of a number of stories (text, videos and documentaries) about people that died because of shark attacks (from the Second World War until today), any single user could identify with;
- the creation of glass containers of clothes remnants, written pages and other proofs of victims’ lives until the fatal attack, sent to influencers, entertainment press, movie bloggers and radio personalities to make the messages and the brand identity viral with an ironic perspective;
- the viral dissemination of glass bottles with messages in eleven U.S. beaches, in order to popularize the campaign;
- the victims’ profiles activation on Facebook, that can be signaled and shared on the social network before the program’s broadcast.

Frenzied Waters ruled all the essential aspects of transmedia *emotional competency*, as we are going to see. More particularly, in the advertising campaign digital and physical space were working sequentially and in different interactive forms which were yet “playing the same music altogether”, in a crescendo whose role was to inform, puzzle and involve the audience more

2. <http://www.campfirenyc.com>



Img. 1.3 Frenzied Waters (2009). Short TV documentaries, tin can kits to be spread over eleven U.S. cities and online ads of the campaign.

and more while waiting for the show to be broadcast. The result? The creation of many short stories of fiction sharing the same imaginative universe (which was dealt with scientifically in the series) that made the direct and sanguinary image of the story's main object (the frenzied waters rippled by the menacing presence of sharks before their dreadful attacks) a marginal element, thus following the broadcaster's request.

Now that this quick overview on the main characteristics of narrative universes is complete, we shall proceed with the more specific analysis of the three essential imaginative levels of any transmedia project: the *imaginative universe*, the *nebula* and the *story world*.

The portrait of the perfect universe for a transmedia project is a world where the person experiencing the story can't tell what parts of it are "real" and what parts are "fictitious"... and more importantly, they don't care. Complete immersion! I use transmedia storytelling to expand my experience of a story I already love as opposed to a bridge into a story I haven't yet experienced. In this perspective, I start scaling the world so that it's not too big. Transmedia is like life... it can be overwhelming. And keeping it as simple as possible at first is critical. — *Daemon Lindelof* – *transmedia creator for TV (Lost) and cinema (Star Trek, Prometheus, Star Trek Into darkness)*

THE IMAGINATIVE UNIVERSE

Entering the imaginative universe of a transmedia project is for the public always an articulate and complex experience, made of platforms, stories, content, experiences... This is the reason why the public needs, straight from the beginning, narrative elements able to play the role of amplifier of meaning and facilitator of the user's experience. This is the space for what, in transmedia theory, I have defined "the nuclear power of the imagery³", a concept that states as, in a narrative universe, the combination of forces able to unleash the narrative energy over the different plans of interaction with the public depends on three basic semantic elements:

- *universal synthetic structures*;
- *imaginary isotopes*;
- *the story's archetypal figures*.

3. I have first defined this theory (*The Nuclear Power of the Imagery*) during a TED event which took place in October 2011 in Rome.

Universal synthetic structures, imaginary isotopes and archetypal figures represent three interpretative levels and three cross spaces for creative intervention, essential for the author and the audience involved in their communication within universes spread over diverse media. The question is how to manipulate them, how to use them. In order to explain it in a simple way, let us start from an example taken from transmedia “prehistory”.

The Truth About Marika (*Sanningen om Marika*) is the title of an original and effective case of transmedia storytelling created by The Company P. for the Swedish SVT TV broadcaster and winner of an Interactive Emmy Award for the best Interactive TV Service Category in 2008. Presented as a “participation drama”, it was a TV series which, during its broadcast, changed from a traditional fiction into an *alternate reality game*⁴ that became very popular in Sweden. To that end, *The Truth About Marika* involved TV, radio, web, social networks, mobile phones and most importantly... the Swedish at all. During this tale’s fiction, in fact, the first alert of the system was a woman’s appeal to the audience in order to find her friend, who had just gone missing. News spread on the web and the hunt soon began throughout the whole country. Was Marika one of the 20,000 people that are still missing in Sweden today? Each news broadcast, each report and each reconstruction had public space in a panel discussion, which was reconstructed through some actors of the same broadcast, simulating an actual disappearance. Meanwhile, the hunt involved online associations, search engines, online games, GPS, chat rooms, conflict rooms, a QR code, an official website (*Conspirare*) and a secret society (*Ordo*

4. “Alternate Reality Games use real-world technology, devices, locations and sometimes people to create an engaging story-driven experience for their players. There are always one or more mysteries to be solved and a long, involved chain of clues scattered around the world (or real world accessible) that as unveiled tell the story of the game. [...] A key element of an alternate reality games is that the players of the game often act cooperatively to solve the mystery”. Ref. to: Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds. Transmedia for creatives and producers*, 2013, pp. 19-20.

Serpentis), mysteriously linked to the disappearance. Fear, anxiety, desire to act: considering the success of the project, the most important parameter, on which the emotional sharing was based, was the audience's unconscious and subconscious satisfaction. In this phase of the imaginative process, the most important aspect was that all information and implications of the tale passed invisibly through the cognition of the common *pidgin*⁵ shared by the author and the medium (witnesses or the project itself), the story (in the fabula, plot or scenes) and its receivers (the multiple audiences) in all the settings (the media versions) of the story.



Img. 1.4 *The Truth About Marika* (2008). Website and screenshots of different transmedia experiences of the participation drama.

The example of *The Truth About Marika*, one of the first successful cases in European Transmedia history, allows us to deal with universal synthetic structures, imaginative isotopes and archetypal figures of the story in transmedia universe in a clear yet sufficiently articulated manner. Therefore.

5. *Pidgin* is an ancient language that comes from the mixture of languages spoken by different people, who came into contact because of immigration, colonizations, or trade relations. Considering the transmedia communication, it expresses a communicative code that is shared between the sender and receiver of all the messages and the contents within a publishing project.

UNIVERSAL SYNTHETIC STRUCTURES

Universal synthetic structures are the basic coordinates of the narrative universe on which a transmedia tale is based; they are the signs and dimensions able to catch and transmit to the audience the reference situational context of the project. For example, Aristotle's three unities (space, time and action) or the characters' ways of expressing themselves and all the other conditions that structure the ordinary and extraordinary worlds of the story⁶. Those structures operate at a conscious level on the perception of the audience, and it is through them that the public is stimulated into sharing the *anthropological route*⁷ undertaken by the protagonist of the story in a more direct and loyal way. These are universal coordinates, shared by the audiences of all the media participating in the project, and they are also synthetic, that is ready to be developed in different forms of experiences. In the case of *The Truth About Marika*, for example, the universal synthetic structures were represented, at the beginning, by the processes of feedback and notifications (written, broadcast or televised) developed for the audience; and, after, by the urban quest activated by the authors involved in disseminating clues day and night (with QR codes that could be photographed by smartphones, for instance) all around the national urban fabric and the digital space on the web.

IMAGINATIVE ISOTOPES

Differently from the synthetic structures, imaginative isotopes are iconic elements directly addressed, in terms of point of view and interpretation, to the subconscious of the user. To explain them easily, they are like symptoms of other realities, different from the ones on the surface of the story, or which are hidden

6. In order to better analyze the imaginary as an instrument for knowledge, ref. to: Anderson, J. R., *Cognitive psychology and its implications*, 1980.

7. Gilbert Durand defines the *anthropological route* as the imaginative exchange between the subjective plan of the users and the objective plan of the setting of a story comparing it to a kind of adventurous route made by the public. In G. Durand, *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*. cit.

beneath it, and they are important mainly because they can grant the user's interpretative cooperation and facilitate the audience's movements from a story to the other within the narrative universe. In chemistry, isotopes are nucleus of the same elements with the same number of atoms but a different number of neutrons, which can interact more easily with the biosphere and stabilize some natural biological cycles; similarly, imaginative isotopes are a sort of *passe-partout* allowing us to enter in the universe of a story. They do not enter the story on an upper level, but it is like they have always been there. Just mentioning them, the result is to give the audience the impression of the right track, to properly face the challenge of use and, thus, be part of the game. The use of imaginative isotopes in transmedia project is essential also with the aim of finding some sort of contact between one medium and the other. The directness of the action on the subconscious can grant easily turns into a sense of presence, thus involving the user in first person, with high probability of success. In the case of *The Truth About Marika*, the imaginative isotopes used were all the key-words repeated on the TV show and in the online pass-the-word developed by the authors, particularly during the young lady's and her husband's appeal, due to their desperation to find their missing friend. They were short messages that indirectly talked to the audience about one of its worst fears: disappearing or not having one more day (as happened while you were reading the tale) with the person that was beside you on the couch.

ARCHETYPAL FIGURES

While universal synthetic structures are the first available "bridge" to start the conscious involvement of the audience, and isotopes have to get the users' subconscious involved, archetypal features provide the project with the main emotional connection in order to have the unconscious participation of the audience, both on the personal level and the collective imagination level. The existence and use of archetypal figures, that is, the primordial symbols shared among several cultures on the

imaginative level, correspond to a crucial area in the communicative systems and the *homination*⁸ of their stories. Describing in full all the archetypal figures identified by psychology is not obviously among the purposes of this book, and yet transmedia authors should really study them in detail.

In the case of *The Truth About Marika*, for example, the archetypal features used in the tale were: the shadow, the messenger, the shapeshifter and the con, archetypes elaborated by Carl Gustav Jung⁹, the “double identity” theme and the biblical prototype of the Original Sin (also represented by images through the emblem of *Ordo Serpentis* and the name of one of the official sites of the project: *Conspirare*). As an example what follows is a table containing a scheme of the most popular archetypes in contemporary film and storytelling narratives.

After having completed the analysis on *The Truth about Marika*, let us focus on another case, a more recent and complex one, much different from the previous one. Let us leave TV journalism and transmedia prehistory to look at its present.

Mr. Robot (2015) is a pluri-awarded USA Network thriller series written by Sam Esmail, and the launch of its second season has been one of the most effective example of transmedia project for promoting, in 2016. *Mr. Robot* is a psychological thriller which follows Elliot Alderson, a young programmer who works as a cyber-security engineer by day and as a vigilante hacker by night. Recruited by the mysterious leader (Mr. Robot) of an underground hacker group (fsociety), Elliot starts working for him to destroy the same megacorporation (E Corp) he is paid to protect.

8. About relation among time, imaginary and *homination*, ref. to: Lévy, P., *Collective intelligence...* cit., 1994.

9. For a comprehensive overview of mythology and recurring Jungian archetypes in audiovisual narratives, as well as for the basic matrix of the scheme in this paragraph, see P. W. Indick, *Psychology for Screenwriters*, 2005.

Archetype	Function	Example
Hero	Primary and positive symbol of the self	Ezio Auditore in <i>Assassin's creed</i>
Persona	Public masque of the character	Clark Kent in <i>Superman</i>
Shadow	Secret and obscure part of the self	Voldemort for <i>Harry Potter</i>
Goddess	Female mentor or mother	Galadriel in <i>The Hobbit</i>
Wise Old Man	Male Mentor or father	Obi One Kenobi in <i>Star Wars</i>
Soul	Feminine side of the male identity	Edward Cullen, in <i>Twilight</i>
Shadow Soul	Dark feminine (femme fatale)	Catwoman in <i>Batman Returns</i>
Animus	Masculine side of female identity	Bella Swan in <i>Twilight</i>
Shadow animus	Dark and violent masculine	Hannibal Lecter in <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>
Con	Con, hero or fake divinity	The Joker in <i>Batman</i>
Shapeshifter	Transformer (antagonist)	Dracula

Img. 1.5 The Archetypal Figures – Scheme.

The series' imaginative universe is very complex. Its situational context is that of nerd culture, hacktivism and Anonymous Movement and uses the language of programmers, developers and hackers with an anti-consumerist and anti-establishment spirit. References shift from the show to the web and back, in all the possible media variation of the brand. The broadcaster's website, for example, contains news and previews, emojis, gifs and easter eggs, while in the platform it is possible to find an ebook with relative access and a game app the user can download for free. These elements give a significant contribution into the creation of the imaginative universe's synthetic universal structures. The first, Elliot's journal (*Red Wheelbarrow*) is written

by show creator Sam Esmail and show writer Courtney Looney. Before and during the events of season two, Elliot recorded his most private thoughts in this journal. The notebook holds curious artifacts and is full of sketches. The aim of the journal is to help the audience discover the story behind *Mr. Robot's* season two. How? With hacking the mind of the main character of the series. On the contrary, the game app of the project (ROBOT:1.51exfiltratiOn) is set in the first season. The story is very simple: you find a smartphone on the ground outside the Fun Society Arcade at Coney Island. The phone belongs to Darlene, a hacker ready to commit a huge cybercrime. In order to do so she needs her phone back, to succeed! The goal is to deep into Elliot's fractured personality and temporarily assume the point of view of the fsociety, using the app to communicate with characters from the show and making choices that affect the story.¹⁰

The series' main website, hosted by the USA Network broadcaster, is paired with another one, whoismrrobot.com, which contains references the audience can use as imaginative isotopes in order to penetrate deeply into the universe of the story. In the platform content we can find: different artworks, the form of an online psychological test designed to see if you can hang with fsociety (logging via Facebook), a puzzle game, a footage of the aftermath of the hack plus references to Deflategate and Bernie Madoff, the link to a film referenced in Season 2 (*The Careful Massacre of the Bourgeoisie*), QR codes and bridges between the show and some online experiences (for instance, reproducing the commands 'Darlene dictated to Angela' in one of the episodes¹¹). The narrative isotope also

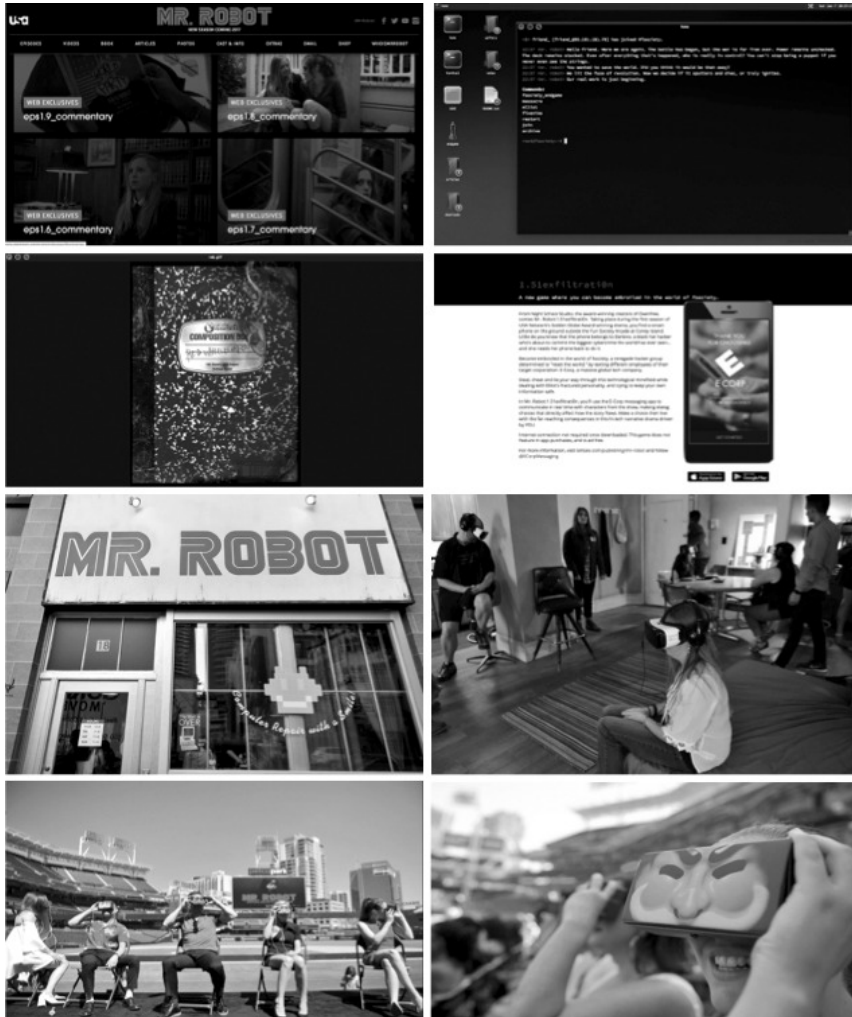
10. <http://www.usanetwork.com/mrrobot>

11. As Lili Loofbourow writes in: Loofbourow, L., *Mr. Robot isn't a TV show anymore. It's a videogame*, accessed august 12, 2016, theweek.com : "You can go deeper: If you click on "My Briefcase" on the "desktop", you'll find articles documenting the arcade's violent past (including an obituary for a Mary Meghan Fisher). You can access Romero's list of FBI agents, which apparently got him killed. And that's not all! These aren't just cute archives. If, for example, you read the "README.txt" file on the desktop, you'll learn enough basic programming lingo to list the directory contents in

represents the website layout, which feels familiar to '90s and Telnet, and ALF wallpaper as well as the use of the leet speak and the citation of movies like *Fight Club*, *American Psycho*, *The Matrix*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *V for Vendetta*.

Referred to the narrative isotopes of *Mr. Robot* is also the project created by ISL agency with Twitch, the largest social gaming platform in the world, titled *Mr. Robot Live Debt Deletion* (2016). ISL built a real-world hacker lair and created a three day live-stream event. "Through carefully choreographed vignettes and an artistically designed set, viewers reaped the benefits of our fsociety's digital corporate takedown as we deleted over \$100,000 of the people's debt in real time. ISL built the *Mr. Robot* hacker lair from the ground up. They knew they wanted to maintain fidelity to the *Mr. Robot* lair on the show, but didn't want to create an exact replicate; so, they decided on a creative direction that it should have resonate as familiar, yet curious. ISL landed on combining elements from the actual show, like the fsociety logo and print-outs of the characters, with more custom touches, like a graffiti and object selection. In order to seed awareness and build excitement for the live-stream, they produced 13 scripted vignettes that ranged from 5 seconds to 2 minutes in length that would cut into the E3 Twitch channel; these gave the appearance that there were legitimate hacks into the stream. The results? 309,651 email entries, 63,363 twitter

Telnet and (among other things) play a game of Snake. If you want to explore further, try opening telnet and typing in "Is recycle bin", then "open ch347c0d35" to see a kernel panic log (a reference to the third episode this season). If you keep your eyes peeled for IP addresses (they pop up in the unlikeliest places, like freeway signs), the might lead you to a BBS called TV TODAY where you can type in commands to see ANSI art of ALF or Bart Simpson and read bulletin boards about *Doogie Howser*, *The Simpsons*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Full House*, *Step by Step*, *Head of the Class*, *Dear John*, and *The Cosby Show*. If you want to see some other things in the BBS, try typing in the following commands: A P B P A P B. One of the images there is on Angela's desk in the episode. And hey: if you want to look up what "MARBLECAKE" means, that's up to you".



Img. 1.6 Mr. Robot (2016) and its transmedia partner. The tool on the USA Network platform, book and game app, the whoismrrobot.com website and the VR experience launched at the San Diego Comic-con.

entries, 1,562,280 total views, 17,367 max competitors, and 8,549,422 million minutes of video watched.¹²

12. <https://isl.co/case-studies/mr-robot/>



Img. 1.7 Mr. Robot Live Debt Deletion (2016) Launch Campaign, transmedia project made by ISL for Twitch. The studio broadcasting live shows and intrusions into the platform during E3.

In order to provide a deeper insight into the archetypal figures of Mr. Robot's imaginative universe, were eventually set two transmedia experiences, both focusing on the protagonist, Elliot, seen both as a hero (and anti-hero) and as a shadow and shapeshifter in the course of the narrative: *Hacking Robot*, a live aftershow aired after the season two premiere (with a weekly web-only aftershow titled *Mr. Robot Digital After Show* premiered on The Verge and on the broadcaster's websites after the third episode) and the 13 minutes long *Mr. Robot Virtual Reality Experience* written and directed by Sam Esmail himself. The experience was available during the San Diego Comic-Con, including white Uber vans, an event with the cast at Petco Park and a pop-up installation based in downtown San Diego reproducing *Mr. Robot* repair shop run by Elliot's late father in the show. In the building: mid-1990s era computers, circuit boards and other familiar stuff of Elliot's cove. As Kendall Whitehouse reports: "After taking a seat and putting on a Samsung Gear headset and a pair of headphones, the real world is replaced by the virtual. The virtual environment you initially

enter is Elliot's apartment – essentially identical to the physical location in which you're actually sitting. As you turn your head, Elliot is sitting beside you. While narratively working as a flashback – the video covers events that occurred before the time frame of show's first season – it is, in fact, a contemporary memory. The voice we hear is the voice inside Elliot's head. As he does in the TV show, Elliot is simultaneously thinking to himself and narrating his inner thoughts to us. He is about to go on a first date with Shayla (a character we know from the first season of the show), Elliot's friend, drug supplier and occasional lover. In the VR experience, Elliot is recalling their first encounter. As Elliot smokes a joint, the camera floats upward toward the ceiling and we now view the scene from this more disengaged perspective. We follow Elliot and Shayla on their date to Coney Island and join them as they ride on a Ferris wheel. As their relationship grows closer, the scene melds into an abstract sequence with the two characters dancing in silhouette against a color-shifting background. Finally we return back to the "reality" of the apartment in the virtual world – and, again, in the real world. Aside from being a compelling VR experience, Email's piece also an example of the power of transmedia storytelling. While based on what we know about the television series, it expands the narrative into new territory. It offers new details on the relationship between Elliot and Shayla and adds emotional depth to his feelings of loss and guilt, and adds additional depth to television episodes"¹³.

The nuclear power of the imagery and the strong consistency of the imaginative universe of the tale, together with the dissemination of all these contents, have enriched and made the series' imagery more powerful, thus granting *Mr. Robot* its older audience engagement and establishing a new narrative pact (*fictional pact*) with a different target, one younger, more

13. To watch the official VR experience 360° video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2Jc1wHlhEU>. For Whitehouse's report, ref. to: Whitehouse, K., *The Mr. Robot VR Experience, Storytelling and the Future of Immersive Media*, accessed July 31, 2016 ontechologyandmedia.com

demanding and more expert on online consumption and *open world narratives*¹⁴ rather than on the TV ones. However, after having set its initial imaginative coordinates, how can we build up a transmedia narrative universe?

THE NEBULA

Following the 1957 theory elaborated by physicist Hugh Everett which focuses on quantum mechanics, transmedia uses multiverses in which several parallel dimensions co-exist, which in our case are designed by the transmedia producer to serve as an actual *nebula* of content, references, and imaginative hooks. The nebula is the combination of narrative suggestions drawn from the collective imagery via cinema, videogames, comics, TV series, live experience, social networks, web, news and all the possible semantic basins chosen to be quoted, hinted at, directly – or metaphorically – embedded into the narrative. They are meant to be our universe’s imaginative heritage in terms of meaning, image and sense. A network of references crucial for the contemporary audience’s “hive mind”¹⁵.

In order to clarify the concept of nebula – a concept theorized here for the first time – I shall give another example: the story of two gangs of kids fighting each other, every year, in the same place, fighting each other to death on the Brooklyn Bridge, New York. Their story is told in a reality TV show and at the same time in a videogame which interact one another and give the public, through the social network, the possibility of siding and changing the story in real time. The imaginative universe is that of the Bildungsroman, the class fight, the classical myth, the American frontier and it might as well seem a case of parallel narratives, rather than a transmedia project. And yet, while the

14. *Open world, free roam* or *sandbox* are videogames terms describing spaces and environments where the player can move and is given considerable freedom to act and interact with other characters and objects of the tale. Open world-based games examples are: *Elder Scrolls*, *Fallout*, the *Grand Theft Auto* series. etc.

15. Rose, F., *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generations Is Remaking Hollywood*, 2011.

traditional writer usually focuses on the main narrative line of a story, then goes deeper into it, and through it faces various issues (the relationship between characters, the protagonists' arc and all the possible emotions) without diverting from the core of their narrative, transmedia producers must go further. Go forward. Broaden meaning. They will have to dive deep into the collective imagery in search of works and meaningful references for the multiple audiences they will address to. They will then actively use those references in their narratives, both in a direct and in an indirect way, ruling out all the other possible sources and *before* starting the real work on the narrative. In this view, possible references to – for instance – videogame and superheroes shall serve to catch the younger target, while references to *Saturday Night Fever* might give an older audience more appealing suggestions. On the contrary, all that shall not be part of the nebula is not to resound into the narrative and we shall call it *Outer Space*; for instance, on the brooklyn Bridge neither Woody Allen nor Godzilla will appear, as well as there won't be any space for the apocalyptic world of *I am Legend* or episodes from famous pop comedies like *Brooklyn Bridge*.

The nebula is the main imaginative cement keeping any transmedial project joint together. It guarantees engagement and loyalty from different audiences and represents one of the most effective *transmedia tentpoles* to ensure a transmedia project longevity and memorability. The nebula is what makes setting, geography, hierarchies¹⁶ and all the inner rules of that ecosystem actually tridimensional. It builds itself around the whole of the imaginative universe to define it, it preserves it and at the same time gives the author the imaginative and emotional hooks to hang on to when the rhythm of the story or the audience's response are not satisfying. Everything an author can put into the nebula to make it work as a meaningful recall shall in fact play a

16. The use of internal hierarchies is a daily experience in the *foundational narrative*, as defined by Brenda Laurel, which is based on legends, narrative cycles and plots written in order to explain the roles of each group of characters and audience's *simulacra*. Ref. to: Laurel, B., *Design Research: Design and Perspectives*, 2004.



Img. 1.8 Nebula (up) and Outer Space not part of the nebula (below) for the transmedia project connected to the Brooklyn Bridge example.

significant role, differently from all other recalls. This is why you will not find two identical nebulas. You will not find two authors interpreting a concept in the same way, unless they are teaming with each other or working in a shared modality. It is thanks to the nebula that one can reach the deep audiences of transmedia projects in an easier and a more direct way, thus creating more intense and long term relations between stories, characters and the public.

The goal for a storyteller is to reach the audience where they live and where they are. The ability to tell story in an accessible and frictionless way becomes not only advantageous, but mandatory today if you are going to reach the widest audience. Using

transmedia methods to reach an audience on multiple platforms, allows you to exchange that broad audience for a “deep audience”. A deep audience is one who is passionate enough to seek out any content pertaining to your narrative, no matter where it is. They will evangelize for you, create content around your narrative, and participate in social media. They will fight for your story and defend it if needed. In short, they will keep you alive through challenging times. — *Tim Kring – transmedia creator and showrunner (Heroes, Crossing Jordan)*

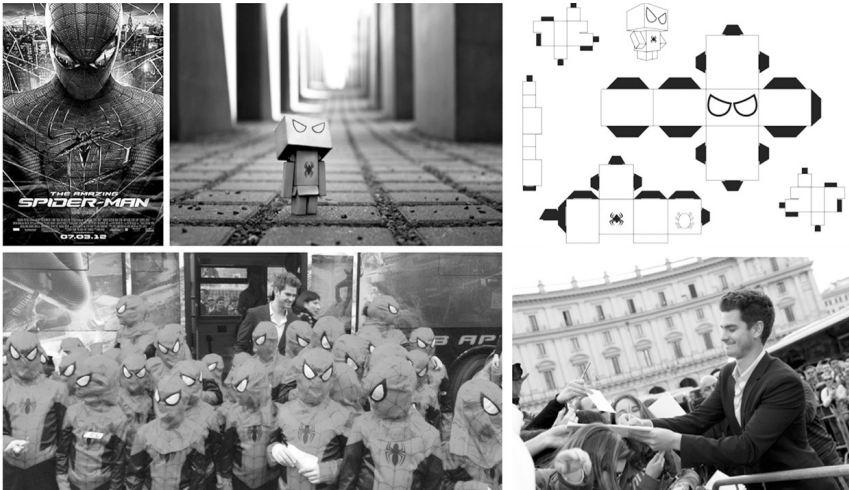
What are, then, the most important features necessary to the creation of an effective imaginative nebula?

- The *personas* and the target audiences of the media assets involved into the project’s communicative system (seen as both horizontal and vertical targets).
- The *milking*, that is the whole made of references and contaminations, assimilations and analogies which can refer to diverse narrative universes, either past or present, to be exploited fishing into their own mythologies and narrative patterns. Those universes will have to be readapted in different forms in order to be given to the audience for fruition.
- The project’s *genius loci*, that is the local identity of the project in its genesis, characters, history, tone and mythology.

To make things more clear I shall use an example taken from my own personal experience: the transmedia project I have created for the Italian launch of the 2012 movie *The Amazing Spider-man*, a reboot of the Sam Raimi saga for the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Stan Lee superhero¹⁷. The objective was to create an advertisement campaign to be added to the world

17. Project coordinated for Warner Bros. Entertainment Italy and IED Rome. Contributors (Video Design, Sound Design, Interaction Design): Michele Baldi, Matteo Bendinelli, Giulia Graziosi, Andrea Iannelli, Antonio Labbro Francia, Emanuele Macri, Matteo Mannarino, Jacopo Panfili, Giuseppe Rizzuto, Livia Salvatorelli, Niccolò Salvetti, Gabriele Sanfilippo and Flavio Vallocchia.

one, one which could exploit the added value of the Italian genius loci and which was to be made of actions addressed to geeks, young creatives and millennials. The occasion was the Italian road show for the launch of the movie, when Andrew Garfield, the protagonist, was to be in Italy. The trigger of the whole campaign was called *The Adventures of Spider Box*, and was implemented creating an assemblable toy made of paper, which could be downloaded online and fully customized. It was left in sensitive areas of the city, to be rescued by its owners via pics and news shared on the movie's non official social network profiles and become the movie's urban testimony. Aimed at lowering the audience average age of the campaign on traditional media, Spider-box was however not an easy tool in terms of interaction with other platforms, and its image was not associated to that of the hero as it appeared on the new movie, that is a younger Spider-man than the past, more faithful to the comics, more problematic and borderline character in his motivations.



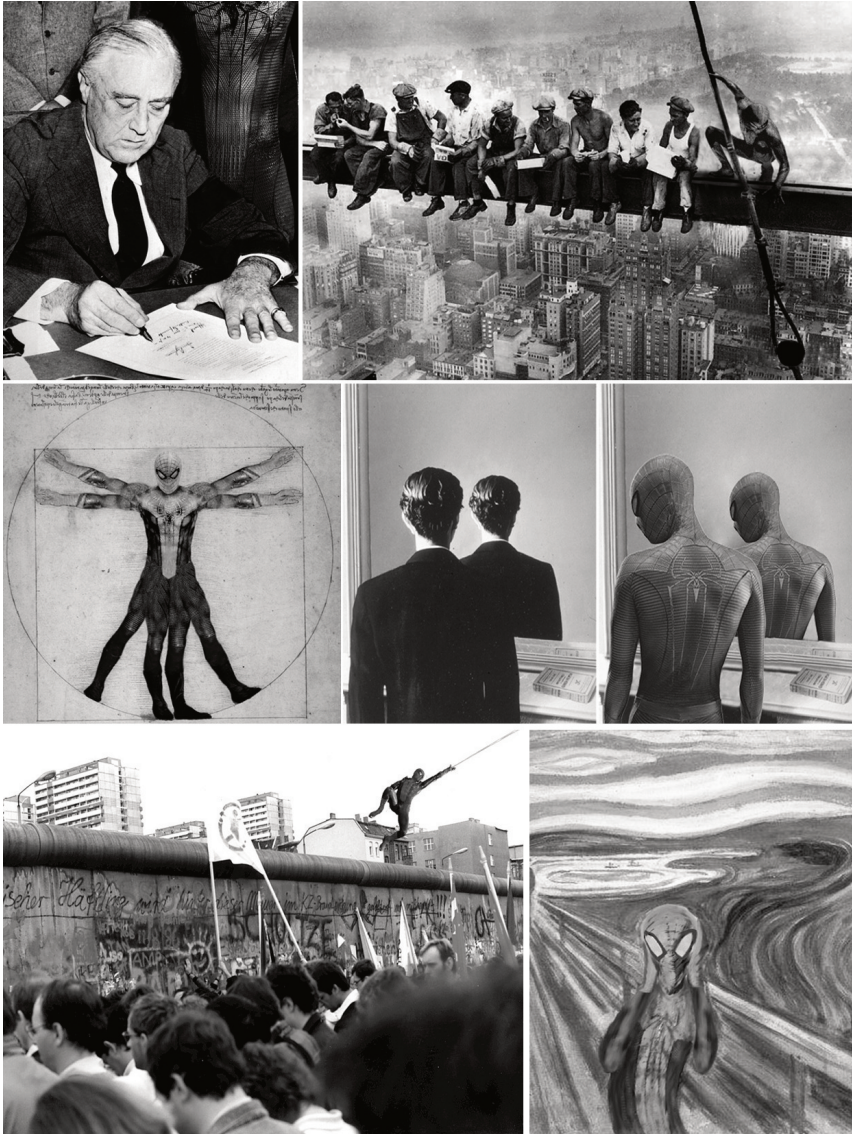
Img. 1.9 The Amazing Spider-man (2012) Spider-box layout to be downloaded and assembled, produced for the Italian road show of the protagonist.

Hence the use of the nebula for the creation of a second project, *Happy Birthday Spider-man*, and the occasion was the anniversary

of the creation of the hero. We chose to celebrate its icon (updated with the new suit and true to the style guide produced for the film) with two parallel campaigns to be launched on Facebook; the first was imagined to integrate the image of the hero with those of the greatest masterpieces of figurative art of all times. The second to make the character the protagonist of the most important events of contemporary history, merging his image into photographs famous all over the world. An example of particularly effective marketing strategy for the genius loci of Italy – a country extremely rich in terms of culture – the creation of the nebula had in this case very wide grounds, shifting backward and forward in time and space, hunting for content which might result particularly inspiring for the public.

A last venture with reference to Spider-man's nebula was eventually implemented with the project called *Spider-mapping*, a night projection to be held on Rome's Hotel Excelsior's facade (the Hotel where the protagonist was staying). The projection recalled in an indirect, fascinating and metaphoric fashion the Spider-man/Lizard duel of the movie.

In the video that was shot for the projection a giant spider was running on the hotel's tower, then entered the building and, once inside, fought, his DNA altered, the lizard's altered DNA in a furious battle at the end of which the vibrations and the blows resulted in the collapse of the hotel facade. The movie's logo and its release date would eventually emerge out of the destruction of the facade. Such idea was meant to widen the metaphoric dimension of the movie, calling forth its two traits d'union the two protagonists share: an altered DNA which forces the hero into a destiny made of loneliness and diversity, and the constant alternation of good and evil, developed throughout all the platforms of the communicative system. An installation which connected the nebula of the whole project to the universal synthetic structures and the imaginative isotopes of the narrative's imaginative universe.



Img. 1.10 The iconographic imagery of Spider-man, merged with that of great painter and famous photographers of all times, inside and outside the nebula of his first 50 years.

The making of the nebula is clearly a very complex authorial action the transmedia producers needs to share with all the other



Img. 1.11 Rome's Hotel Excelsior and the perspective of the projection planned for its angular tower: the giant spider, Spider-man who fights Lizard and the collapse of the facade revealing the movie's logo and release date.

authors in their team (film directors, screenwriters, writers, art directors, editors...) in order to increase at its best the value of what already is there in the imaginative universe and at the same time to make it rich and richer. It is not a case that, perhaps because of a need for higher autonomy with the stories and characters they create, directors and authors who have contributed the most to the creation of our collective imagination often choose to play a role in the transmedia transpositions or adaptations of their work via mobile, comics or books, on the web or as videogames, leading to a "freshness" and a compelling experience of their imaginative universes. George

Lucas cooperated for the animated TV series made out of *Star Wars*, for example. Peter Jackson ruled the realization of the videogame made from his *King Kong* and created a personal vlog diary for *The Hobbit* saga. Not to mention the Wachowski brothers, who even cooperated with their audience to create the script and direction of short animations, and the storyboard of comics that drew inspiration from the movie and the *Matrix* videogame.¹⁸

THE STORY WORLD

The imaginative universe of the tale is ready and complete. The nebula with its references is ready too. Now what? Now it is time for the story, or, better, to the story world or the story worlds which will host all the stories told by the different media involved into the communicative system of the project. Before moving forth, though, it is necessary to make three introductory remarks.

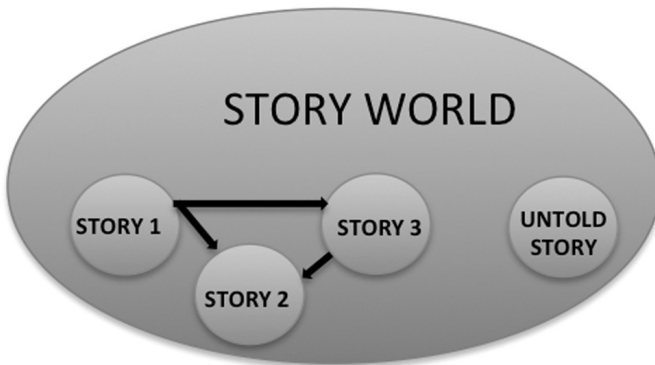
Firstly, not all ideas and all stories possess the necessary characteristics and energies to fuel transmedial story worlds. Even the most complex structure, the most gripping plot and the most 'alive' characters in some narratives might not be enough to make the public love a story to the point of wanting to live it over and over in digital otherwheres. We shall need more than that and we shall soon see what.

Secondly, it is important for a transmedia tale to create story worlds which empower the continuous dialogue between the involved publishing platforms and the consideration of creative and consumer spaces belonging to each of them, necessarily starting from the audiences, at all times. In transmedia projects, in fact: the authorship is often more hidden than shown, and the responsibility for the tale is disguised in the story and its different uses, in order to consider – since the beginning – the 'what' and 'how' of the tale as a function of the audience, more

18. M. Giovagnoli, *Cross-media. Le nuove narrazioni*, 2009.

than the creator (storyteller, producer, promotions manager). Transmedia storytelling works with invisible screenplays and the ‘paradox of the author’, that is their invisibility inside and outside the narrative, becomes a *condicio sine qua non* for writers, editors and transmedia producers. No name in the opening credits, albeit the source of satisfaction comes from elsewhere.

Thirdly, storytelling techniques evolve and refine quick and quicker, imageries renovate and the ‘time zero’ of communication transforms them into a liquid flow, a disjointed universe, but in continuous expansion, structured in systems and galaxies made by active and yet non communicating particles. This is the reason why, in order to “make transmedia” it is crucial to have a story world, to begin with, one which can operate progressive re-distributions of the audience’s imagery within the project’s communicative system.



Img. 1.12 Story world made of three narratives, with an extra untold story left to the audience’s imagination or told independently and furtherly.

WORLD MAKING

The creation of the story world of a transmedia project goes through a process called *world making*¹⁹, which aims at the development of the dense compound of settings, characters, hierarchies, conflicts and rules within the imaginative universe of the narrative. World making is a step of the creative process writers, screenwriters and producers use on a regular basis in their work of storytelling on a single medium, although it takes a much more complex and consistent importance when dealing with narratives spread over different media at the same time. The distinctive elements of transmedia world making are:

- Concept;
- Narrative genre / genres;
- Characters (portraits, internal hierarchies and roles);
- Location & arenas (with their internal rules);
- Narrative patterns;
- Charting;
- Media system solutions.

Some of these topics will be deeply analyzed in the next chapters of the book, but is it important here to shortly describe them (leaving the concept for the end of the comment).

As for the genre or narrative genres of reference, it should be observed how transmedia makes an extensive of them and considers them absolutely privileged tentpoles. Narrative genres with their rules and their recurring themes can provide the authors with cosy shelters, definite rules for their narratives and imaginative basins easy to be recognized for multiple transmedia audiences to such extent that in a project it is even possible to contaminate two or more narrative genres, but never shift

19. *World making* is referred to story worlds while *world building* is related to the universe creation, in transmedia theorization.

them from one platform to another, unless one wants to risk the overall solidity of the nebula of the narrative and thus irritate the most dramaturgically active and cunning fans. In this view, we might, for instance, use classic science fiction in an asset of the narrative and give psychological thriller priority onto another platform (as is the case with the TV series *Black Mirror*), but not develop settings and atmospheres taken from traditional science fiction shifting them simultaneously on steampunk or cyberpunk in the different media of the communication system.

For what concerns the characters – a subject we will deal with in the following chapter – taking for a moment their portraying, conflicts and arc aside, it is of crucial importance in the process of creation of the story world to pay a peculiar attention to their inner hierarchies and to the role they play. The minor character of a given asset of the project might be able to become, for example, the primary mouthpiece (spokesperson) in another platform. A protagonist might as well remain so in all the stories of the communicative system, or an antagonist may take the most important role in a future chapter of the story.

The same can be said about locations in the story world, that in transmedia becomes *arenas* where the producer can arrange characters and, at the same time, priority settings of a given platform, both in terms of artworks and in the experiences the communicative system can provide. In this context, for example, on two different planets, day and night might have a different duration or not exist at all and one can propose the audience to experiment the former through an app and the latter in an urban game with teams set in a real city reproducing metaphorically the city of the narrative. In transmedia, therefore, unlike in traditional storytelling, the *charting* of the narrative universe (through maps, diagrams, and forms of static display, in motion graphics or interactive), the narrative pattern used to tell the single tale (which shall be the subject of the next chapter of this book) and a first definition of media channels activated by the

basic communicative system of the project are an integral part in the creation of the story world. An example?

The series *Glee* is one of the most relevant TV shows and teen phenomenon (2009-2010) and the first example of “music storytelling” spread by a transmedia bouquet. The story is focused on the evolution of a group of smart, talented teenagers who try, thanks to the efforts of some professors, to become famous singers in their college choir. The communicative system consists in a TV series aired by Fox, a *Glee* Live tour in 2010 and 2011 in the US and Canada, an app and two video games, an official website and social network profiles, music editions and fan-branded activities.

In the world making of the series, all turns around the central role of music used as an integral part of the narrative construction. As Orange transmedialab.org reports, in fact, in *Glee*: “the music represents an original way of enriching the narration: strong emotional moments are told through song, the music highlights the key moments of the story. For example, a mystery is played out in a song in one episode, in another, the resolution is revealed through a music video. The characters interpret hundreds of familiar tunes with talent. An approach that brings a third layer of signification for the audience of *Glee* is the internalization of the music interpreted by the key characters of the series. Ryan Murphy, the series’ creator, declared that the music is an integral part of the script’s development: “Each episode has a main theme; just after writing the story, I’ll choose the songs that will help me move ahead”.²⁰

Each platform, even those who didn’t contribute to the storytelling of the series, were involved in the world making of *Glee* and respected this fundamental rule. *Glee Karaoke Revolution*, for instance, and the two video games (for Wii and Nintendo) don’t enriched the story but represent a new entry points into the series’ musical universe. Players, as the characters of *Glee*,

20. <http://www.transmedialab.org>

could face the dream of being the stars of a show, and the same happened with the application *Glee Karaoke* produced by Smule for apple devices. The player sang and the app slightly adjusted his voice to give the illusion of being a pop star. Players could share their songs with their friends on Facebook, Twitter or through email, too.



Img. 1.13 *Glee* (2009-11). Platforms, content and visual of the TV series.

The official website of *Glee* was the main asset of the world making of the series and hosted quizzes, behind the scenes, games, tutorials, virtual photo booths, bonuses and catch up episodes. A world which created as sort of music epidemic on Facebook, Twitter (each character had his own Facebook and Twitter profile), Youtube and Hulu. Part of the world making were, finally, the compilation: *Glee: The music* and two special

editions *Glee: The Music Presents The Warblers* and *Glee: The Music. The Power Of Madonna*, edited by Columbia Records.

Although it is not considered as an example of pure transmedia²¹, *Glee*'s story world did exploit all its platforms with the aim of creating transmedia interactions in its multiple audiences, and has – over time – fostered the creation of communities (the gleers) and flashmobs presenting choreographies shared and used all over the world. The centrality of music itself has worked as a technological blender, a universal synthetic structure and a narrative and participate language.

ORIGINAL, COMBINED AND TRANSCODED CONCEPTS

Every imaginative universe has a *trigger* (primer), a *theme* and a *tone* which find their expression as a whole in the concept of its story world. The concept of a narrative, of a campaign, a product or a service contains in itself the germ, the narrative urgency and the basic message of a transmedia project. In this sense we can define three forms of concept from which as many story worlds derive:

- *original*;
- *combined*;
- *transcoded*.

In the original concepts, the authors create concepts and story worlds drawing them exclusively out of their own imagery. Original 'narrative ecosystems' grant their creators the widest degree of freedom and yet, at the same time are very demanding towards the public in terms of faith and interpretative cooperation²² with the narrator. How is it possible to buy such a strong and immediate faith? First of all creating an *imaginative pidgin* to be shared between medium and audience, that is to say

21. Pullman, S., *Glee: positive associations and fan evangelism*, accessed August 30, 2010, transmithology.com

22. Eco, U., *Lector in fabula*, 1979.

simultaneously with all the media and all the multiple audiences of the project. Then filling the narrative with trials and rewards, imaginative hooks and interactive spaces, in all the media which make the communicative system. Spaces, moments and actions the consumers' imagination shall devote to the reconstruction of the universe of the narrative. An example?

In January 2011 the news of a weird pandemic spreads throughout Park City, in the snow-capped mountains of Ohio. The city is hectic for at that time of the year, just like every year, it is about to become the home to Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival. One of the short films screened during the festival has sent a warning, though: there's a virus infecting adults and the youth will have to eradicate it! With only 120 hours left...

Pandemic 1.0 is an example of immersive transmedia storytelling created by independent filmmaker Lance Weiler. It played out for 40.000 festival attendees during the event itself and for over 250.000 online players all over the world. Film, mobile, online, social gaming, print and real world interactions, so many were the possible access points enabling the audience to enter the universe of the story although there is one point which soon reveals itself to be the most important: 50 golden objects and 50 bottles of water that are vital in order to succeed in such a venture were hidden in locations close to the festival. Online players and festival attendees had to co-operate in order to find the items, on the ground of clues present in the movie and using a mobile phone part of customized kits. The task was to shoot a photograph to people who have their eyes shut, build a story around it and bring it to the "Mission Control" set up in town, where an interactive board was to store all the content created by the players. Participants' role was to contribute to the reduction of the number of people infected, while the pictures with eyes shut were to be stored in a virtual cemetery and associated to each single story by those who knew the victims who, in their turn, will have helped save a life. Four special toys were distributed at the location: they look like plastic bears but they

Those, on the other hand, deriving from pre-existent universes, called *matrix*,²³ are defined combined concepts and story worlds. Combined concepts do not replicate the same narrative formulas of their predecessors, but they hybridize it until they create a new narrative form which can be spread both over the same media and on different ones. Depending on how close the matrix is to the original narrative we can in this case speak of *adaptation*, *extension* or *expansion*. As it synthetically stated in *Storytelling Across Worlds* (2013): “Adaptation retells the story told in one medium in another, with applicable changes depending on the requirements of the new medium [...]. Extension draw from the narrative element of the original source story and includes new narrative elements that build directly on the pre-existing material, but does not extensively introduce new story elements. [...] Expansion broadens the story, introducing parallel or companion narratives that often provide new perspectives, insight or clarity to the existing story. As a process, this is developing new story material that’s inspired by the original narrative universe”²⁴. In transmedia history we can find countless cases of adaptations; many of them successful, some others not. For example, in the transmedia bouquet of the franchise of *Mass Effect* the videogame, the novel *Mass Effect: Deception* written by William Dietz anticipated the release of the videogame *Mass Effect 3* but was immediately condemned by the franchise’s fans which created a 16-page Google doc to list and correct all the biological, technological and cultural mistakes done by the writer. The continuity of *Mass Effect* itself was damaged by the situation, and both the publisher of the video game (Bio Ware) and of the novel (Del Rey) had to apologize with their multiple audiences for that disastrous adaptation.

Moreover, combined concepts can more likely lead to the creation of transmedia portmanteaux, rather than actual

23. It is important not to confuse the *matrix* and the *canon*, which stand for the sum of all the official contents of a transmedia franchise/property

24. Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 22-23.

franchises. In this case too I shall present with an example drawn from personal experience.

By crossbreeding French TV format *Camera Café*, one made of short comedy sketches shot with a fixed camera, the famous American sitcom *Friends* and in-depth news programmes for motorbike lovers, in 2010 I created the transmedia portmanteau *Monster Caffè*, targeted for lovers of motorbikes and *bon vivre*. The primary asset of the project²⁵ was a multistrend TV series²⁶ made of 12 episodes 15 minutes each with 8 fixed characters, that is unrepentant singles and young professionals struggling with everyday problems all staged at Rome's Monster Caffè, owned by the protagonist, a goofy young man leveraged to the hilt. The TV series was paralleled by 12 episode, 2 minutes each web series dedicated in particular to expert motorbikers and focused on the story of one of the characters, an ex-pilot "frozen" by a nasty accident. Secondary assets of the portmanteau: a website with games and soundbites (noises of different engines by brands), an iPhone app, an online puzzle game on Facebook, an artbook and several events with VIP and guests from the Superbike world set in Rome's Ducati Caffè, the true location of the series. An example of combined concept and at the same time the first portmanteau especially thought for Italian motorcycle lovers who were single.

The outcome of the transformation of ideas derived from other areas of communication, concept and story world may be transcoded and modified in the transition between a language and another, or between a reality and another, and this can happen thanks to the use of different media. The result is an hybrid form (*complex*) between franchise and portmanteau: the

25. According to Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse experience on the *LOST* transmediaverse, the primary asset of the transmedia bouquet is called *mothership*. It is the most important content delivered by the most important asset of the communicative system of the project (for example, for *LOST*, the mothership was the TV show).

26. *Multistrend* is meant to be a narration containing in itself more narrative registers at the same time such as, in the example of *Monster Caffè*, comedy, drama, *melò*.



Img. 1.15 Monster Caffè (2010) Screenshots from the opening theme and the backstage of the first episode of the portmanteau.

editorial shift that results from such transformation appears to be peculiarly powerful in terms of advertising. Let us come forth with two examples here too.

2012 London Olympics were called the first transmedial 'social olympic games' in history because of the interaction of three projects created on the social networks by the games' main sponsors: Coca-Cola, Samsung and Visa. Let's analyze them in a sequence, although they went "on stage" simultaneously. Coca-Cola created a campaign called *Move to the Beat of London*, which was made of more than 100 multiplatform contents which celebrated the city in its longstanding musical and multi-ethnic tradition. This was made through video and jingles connected to the athletes; there was also the possibility to play it live as if it were a musical instrument, a multimedia installation (the BeatBox Pavillion) implemented inside the olympic village. Visa,

in its turn, created the *Go World* campaign, aiming at connecting fans to the more unknown athletes of the games. They created a Team Visa, published video and content on social networks which were tailored on the single athletes who were then to be 'adopted' by the public on Facebook, just like actual characters of a story. Last but not least, Samsung focused on the technological aspects of the Olympics with its *Samsung Genome Project*, a Facebook game which was questioning the fans on the issue of whether they were an 'olympic type' and to what extent. All this after having followed live online the passage of the torch in the city and having published – always on the social networks – people made videos and content during an urban quest.

The result? A very effective example of transcodification of the old live TV Olympics with real time communication on the social networks and the web, with images and messages spread all over different technological platforms and real life experiences translated differently according to the brand and the medium chosen by the user.

The second example is that of *The Walking Dead*, the action/horror TV serial drama developed in 2010 by director Frank Darabont, based on Robert Kirkman's successful comic book series. The story tells about an American sheriff who wakes up from a coma in an post apocalyptic future to find the world infested by dangerous zombies. In his desperate search for his family he gets in touch with a bunch of survivors, joins them and start a deadly open war against the living dead, and not only. *The Walking Dead* became "a transmedia storytelling property with the release of Episode 1 of the episodic video game series in april 2012. The story presented in the videogame parallels the start of the comic and television series and provides a somewhat different perspective on events".²⁷

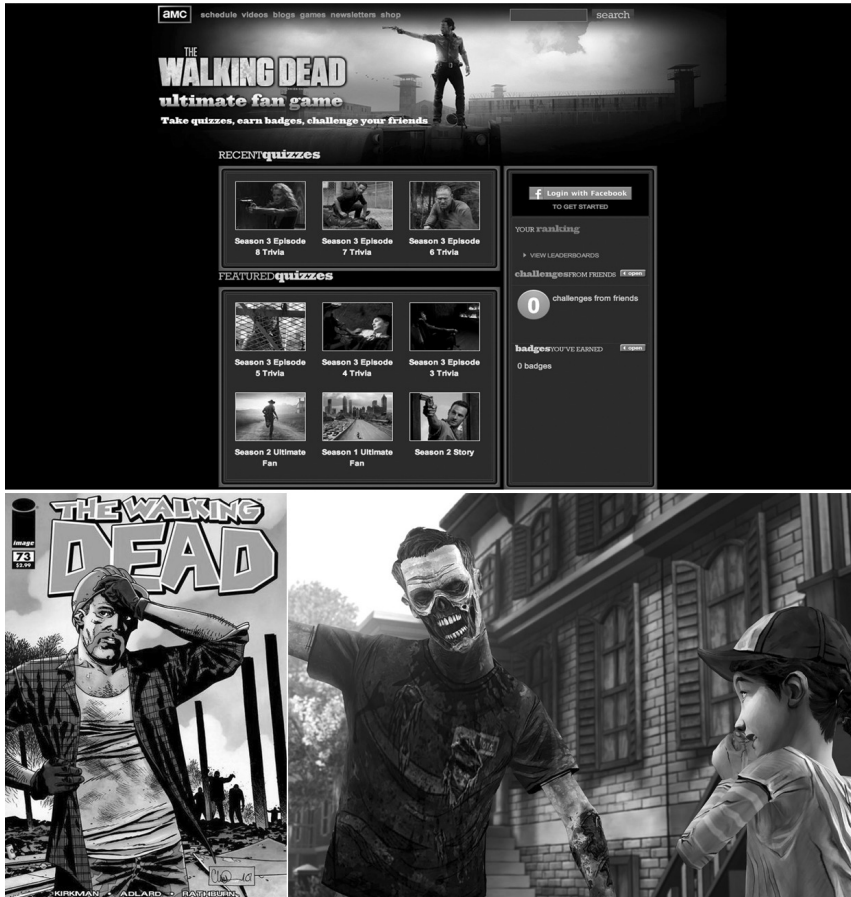
The TV narrative tended to expand the series' transcoded concept by adding new characters and different locations which

27. Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 193.

weakened the universal synthetic structures that could be found in the comics (i.e. the strategies used to kill zombies, the borderline spaces between humans and non-humans, the narrative Zero Time, and so on...). The result was that two webseries (*The Walking Dead: Tom Apart* and *The Walking Dead: Cold Storage*) were created during the first two seasons; they narrated the mysterious spreading of the epidemics and were aimed at strengthening the imaginative isotopes of the story, giving them a “Romero flavour”. A talk show, *Talking Dead*, where presenter Chris Hardwick hosting fans and part of the technical and artistic cast of the series in his studio, and a fake zombie invasion performed in 26 big American cities and broadcasted live simultaneously in 120 countries were also created during the first two seasons.

Archetipal figures of the narrative were obviously its characters, perfectly fitted into Jung’s archetypes: the Hero, the Shadow the Con and the Shapeshifter, and at the same time awakened the most intimate, sadistic and open pulsions of the series’ ‘participants consumers’²⁸ who were made akin by quoting a common movie imagery inspired by the title (which recalled the 1936 Michael Curtiz movie, death walking towards the audience and towards the entire mankind) and by spreading on all the media platforms involved into the project (TV, web, comics, physical space and video games). All the language and narrative transformations, the use of integrated platforms and simple and yet very powerful imagery suggestions have granted *The Walking Dead* a major success still today, making it one of the most successful transcoded story worlds of the planet.

28. The involvement Kozinets refers to is expressed both in terms of active participation and of capacity of proposing novelties in relation to a brand’s imaginative universe, as we can read in Kozinets, R.V., *E-Tribalized Marketing. The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Consumption*, in: “European Management Journal” (1999), pp. 252-264.



Img. 1.16 The Walking Dead (2010). Transmedia materials. Above, the page with quizzes and games for fans in the series' official website. Down, one of the comics which inspired the narrative and a screenshot from the video game.

WORKSHOP 1 – UNIVERSE CREATION

Choose a story to be transformed into a transmedia project. Set the imaginative universe of your narrative, its nebula and start panning down the story world. Verify whether your concept is an original one, a combined or transcoded. Verify its structure and all the narrative variables we have seen in this chapter. Deepen the story's imaginative dimension checking on its universal

synthetic structures, the imaginative isotopes and the archetypal figures. Then put all aside to be used at the end of the following chapter.