

**GENDER AND WOMEN'S
STUDIES '19
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

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THE EDUCATION OF RESPONSIBLE DESIGNERS IN A MALE-ORIENTED SOCIETY

VALERIA BUCCHETTI

Phd, Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design

FRANCESCA CASNATI

Research Fellow, Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design

Abstract

This paper aims to provide a disciplinary contribution concerning the role that Communication Design has and could play in Gender Studies, focusing on the university educational context. The starting point is the issue of the women representation in the media and the resulting need to promote actions aimed at media alphabetization. From this scenario the urgent need to “focus more on vocational training - of the communication designer - and on education activities as a vehicle to fight discriminations and promote gender equality” (*European Parliament Resolution, April 2018 - 2017/2210(INI)*) emerges.

The environment in which we live and form ourselves is full with communicative artifacts (advertising, information, web, TV...) that convey and promote degrading stereotypes towards women, feeding gender inequalities. Media images act on thought, influencing the construction of individual and social biographies and consequently the way they relate to themselves and the community.

In this context, the Communication Designer takes on a role of social and cultural responsibility and has the duty to act towards a socially “sustainable” communication.

The media message acts in a vicious circle, it draws on and simultaneously influences social reality by orienting thoughts and behaviors of individuals. Communication Design can therefore operate on this circle through communicative actions aimed at increasing the sensitivity and awareness of the designer himself as well as of the potential user.

Our contribution is based on these assumptions, focusing on the work carried on by the research group DCXCG — Communication Design for Gender Cultures — in the field of university education. Specifically, the aim is to highlight the need to intervene on design thinking starting from the training of conscious designers,

documenting the group's experimentations in the field of education. The aim of the experimentations is to provide tools for a critical reading of the communication project and contribute to the training of responsible designers, able to design and relate themselves in a society still intensely unbalanced and male-oriented.

The DCXCG group is located at the intersection of Communication Design and Gender Studies and works in a multidisciplinary perspective to provide a critical view of the forms of representation of gender and develop new communication models able to act on the quality of the media message – both form and content - as well as on the modalities of distribution and consumption of the same.

1. Introduction – Communication Design and Gender Cultures

The paper addresses the issue of the representation of women from the point of view of Communication Design, with a reflection on the roles and contributions that the discipline can give in training future designers. Particular attention is given to the disciplinary contribution that communication design can offer, and to the opportunities of relationship and integration between the field of visual cultures and that of social sciences represented by gender studies.

The contribution finds place in a wider scenario, *“where gender issues involve perspectives of discrimination and where through them is set the objective of sharing issues affecting women in the globalized world, in order to make visible and strengthen research and reflection on women’s rights, gender equality, the representation of women’s identity”* (Baule & Caratti, 2017).

This context is characterised by a series of essential points of reference which have laid, since the 1970s, the foundations for facing gender discrimination and ensuring women’s rights. Starting by the Cedaw Convention (*Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Woman*) adopted by the United Nations in 1979, which represents *“the most important international legally binding instrument on women’s rights”*; the World Congress Women’s World; the Instambul Convention of 2011, to protect women and fight against all forms of gender violence; until the UN Agenda 2030, which places gender equality at the top of the objectives for sustainable development, to *“achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls [...], end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere”*; up to measures that directly involve the Communication Design, by focusing on the forms of representation of women in the media. One of the main examples is represented by the work of the Gender Equality Commission in relation to the issues ‘Media and the Image of Women’ (Amsterdam 2013) and the resolution of the European Parliament of April 2018 (2017/2210 (INI), and the resolution of 3 September 2008 on the impact of marketing and advertising on equality between women and men - 2008/2038(INI)) which reaffirms the role of marketing responsibility, advertising and media images and *“highlights the importance of promoting media literacy [...] so as to encourage young people to develop critical thinking skills and to help them identify and denounce sexist representations and discrimination [...]. Stresses the need for preventive measures [...]; points out that advertising can be an effective tool for questioning stereotypes [...]; therefore calls for more attention to be paid to vocational training and education activities as a means of combating discrimination and promoting gender equality and equality of LGBTI people”*.

We live in an environment where media messages are characterized by the persistence of sexist stereotypes. Those stereotypes have negative effects on the construction of individual and collective biographies. The media models - as Camussi and Monacelli reaffirm in *Questioni sul corpo in psicologia sociale* - contribute to activate gender stereotypes which are responsible in turn for the definition of the patterns of self, going so far as to condition “*both cognitive resources and emotional reactions in the face of sexist statements*”.

In this context Communication Design — through the designed artifacts — is able to guide the behaviour and choices of the beneficiaries and to act indirectly on their perception of the reality in which they live, act and relate to others, influencing points of view and opinions (Baule & Bucchetti, 2012)

The education of future designers — as well as future media professionals — takes on a role of primary importance in order to prevent the negative effects produced by the reiteration of stereotyped images. The educational system has therefore the duty to develop tools that foster critical thinking towards media messages and to provide future designers with communication tools that allow them to project responsibly and consciously within a society that is still oriented towards men (Bourdieu, 1998; Fletcher Stoeltjie, 2007; Ngozi Adichie, 2014; *Global Gender Gap Report* 2018).

2. Gender stereotypes and visual communication, a vicious circle

Media images, as a vehicle for messages that must be immediately recognisable to the social groups to which they are addressed, need to draw on “collective cultural heritage” - a stock of practical-cognitive knowledge shared within a given social group (Ghisleni, 2004). For this reason, they work with models and stereotypes that are derived from the culture of common sense, which are able to gratify the expectations of the recipient.

Media communication therefore draws on a collective cultural basin, making use of already established and consolidated models and returning them amplified. In *Anticorpi Comunicativi*, Amalia Ercoli Finzi recognizes advertising communication more than the place that creates stereotypes, the place that amplifies the existing ones “*strengthening them in an instrumental way and riding on the sensibilities of the cultural climate in which they are placed*” (author’s translation). In this perspective, social reality and media representation become part of a vicious circle in which the media assume the role of *both faithful and deforming mirror* (Baule & Bucchetti, 2012) of reality. The means of communication and the images that pass through them are in line with the sensitivity of the moment but at the same time have the power to shape it. In this way, a short circuit is created - outlined in the image below - in which the *hyperseductive* nature of the media (Volli, 2008) and the continuous overexposure to certain models, inevitably leads to a process of habituation and therefore to assume these models as “normal”, despite the fact that these are often exceptions that do not faithfully reflect the complexity of reality, rather contributing to providing a vision of it which results static and distort.

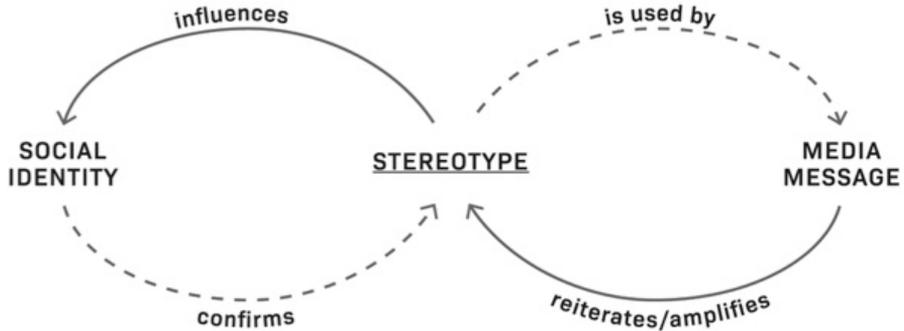


Figure 1.

The term stereotype in fact denotes the generalization of a simplified image of reality, due to limits of knowledge. It is configured as a commonplace (Capecchi, 2008) and what makes it effective is *“the evidence of the (already a thousand times) heard; it follows that a very coded form, like a proverb, may seem original to me, if I don’t know it yet. The “cliché” and the “stereotype”, [...] insisting on the mobile character of the production, denote the repetition of the form rather than that of the content”* (Barthes, 1964).

According to the definition that Salvatore Zingale provides in the essay *Immobili Visioni*: *“Stereotype is a way in which the opinion manifests itself - or our beliefs, judgments and values. According to etymology it generally represents the meaning of things that are fixed in our mind and memory as a basic meaning, as an obvious denotation. The issue is that it is not a denotation at all, but an ideologically oriented connotation. The stereotype actually requires: (i) an arbitrary generalization, because a particular character is elevated to a general value; (ii) a social sharing, because it is assumed by a social/ethnic group against another group, (iii) a semantic rigidity, because when it imprints itself on the consciousness it is difficult to modify it”* (Zingale, 2012; Ewen&Ewen 2006/2009).

In figure 1 the stereotype is placed at the centre of the scheme, while social identity and the media message represent its poles, allowing the resulting self-feeding or positive feedback mechanism to be highlighted. When a stereotype is repeated and takes root, it turns into prejudice, determining expectations towards certain groups of individuals and consequently shaping social identity.

3. The involvement of communication design

In this context communication design has the duty to intervene as a discipline that deals, as reiterated in *Design è traduzione*, to make the contents usable by helping to determine their articulation. The communication designer has *“specific skills and transversal knowledge that are implemented in the interpretation and organization of content, in their transfer from one context to another, in the invention of new interpreters and social habits that renew our relationship with things, but especially the relationship with and between people”* (Baule & Caratti, 2017 – author’s translation).

Returning to the above schematization, it is possible to identify two main moments in which the communication designer can and must intervene in order to

interrupt the short-circuit and break the scheme.

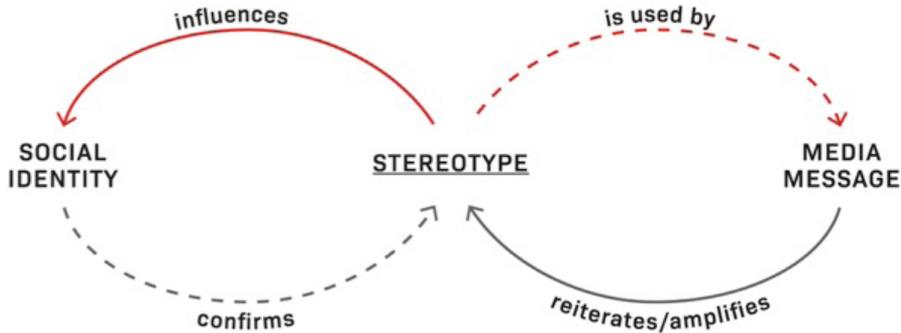


Figure 2. Scheme of the vicious circle - the red parts highlight when the communication design can intervene

3.1 Through the critical design of media messages

The first area of intervention concerns the choices and design methods used in order to reach the definition of the communicative artifact itself. The choices of the communication designer, whether they are conscious or not, have inevitable repercussions on the perception that the recipient has of himself and of the reality in which he lives.

Hence the need to train responsible and aware designers, able to understand and manage the complexity of reality in order to “cheat” the stereotype (Zingale, 2012), experimenting with new forms of representation that take into account pluralism, and the need for a critical reflection on the use of “*their own* (the designers) *expressive registers, rhetorical models, tools that the theory of directing construction and staging make available to designers*” (Baule in Baule & Bucchetti, 2012).

3.2 Through the education, to a critical reading of media messages

The second area concerns specifically the actions that the communication designer can take in order to raise awareness and educate the recipient to a critical reading of the media messages.

The visual literacy of the recipient is essential to be aware of the images that characterize the environment in which he lives and to be able to exercise a critical view of the media message.

As Nicholas Mirzoeff states in *How to see the world* “*Seeing is something we do, and we continually learn how to do it. [...] the point here is that we do not actually ‘see’ with our eyes but with our brains. [...] Seeing the world is not about how we see but about how we make of what we see. We put together an understanding of the world that makes sense from what we already know or think we know*”.

Taking as reference the notion of *antibody*, the designer is able to act on the culture of the subject who benefits from the message by providing the tools that make it *immune* to forms of stereotyped representation. In this direction, visual cultures can give their contribution in terms of criticism, awareness and information, as well as responses to the need to rethink the formats and rules of visual communication.

In both cases it is essential, first of all, that the designer himself is aware of his own role and of the translation practices he implements (*Design é traduzione*). Each visual configuration can be considered as a text: the place where its signification materialises and manifests itself; that place, in other words, where two levels may be recognised and distinguished, belonging to each language, to each sign system: the level of the signifier and the level of the signified; the level of expression and the level of content.

The designer should first of all take on the tools which are necessary for a critical reading and re-examination of the images that characterize everyday life. It is important to bear in mind that the designer is himself part of the environment in which he works, a designer but at the same time a recipient influenced by stereotyped and sexist forms of representation.

Roland Barthes reiterates that we are ourselves involved in the language (visual language in this case) that we claim to observe, and *“the commonplace, first seized by others with disgust, and about which I am about to speak, returns to me, conquers me, forcing me to always take my word elsewhere to escape it: it is no longer an object of study, it is a sneaky force with which I fight”*. We are all involved, designers and planners, *“in the object we are trying to seize, we have incorporated, in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and evaluation, the historical structures of the male order; we therefore risk turning, to think of the male domain, to modes of thought that are themselves the product of that domain. We can only hope to get out of this vicious circle if we find a practical strategy to carry out an objectification of the subject of scientific objectification”* (Bourdieu, 1998 – author’s translation). What Zingale then calls *cheating*, circumventing the stereotype. In order to do this, the designer-translator must be an expert *“in the thought of others and in the ways of expressing it”*, he must be aware of the borderline between his own way of seeing the world, his *“personal cultural heritage”* and the point of view of others. The translator, writes Bruno Osimo in *Il manuale del traduttore*, is *“an expert in difference, and in the difficulty of communicating it. The translator is an expert in the nuances of meaning”* (Osimo, 2015; Baule & Caratti, 2017).

Different levels of complexity emerge from this framework, the designer has to face and cross the plurality and multiplicity of points of view. According to Morin, as stated in *Design è traduzione*, the designer *“must have theoretical concepts that, instead of closing and isolating the entities, allow them to circulate productively. He also needs a method to access the meta-point of view on different points of view, including his own point of view as a subject inscribed and rooted in a society”*.

4. The education of responsible designers – experimentations in the didactic field

Starting from the considerations on the social and cultural responsibility of communication design, the research and experimentation activities of the DCxCG (*Communication Design for Gender Cultures*, Design Department, Politecnico di Milano) group are based. The group carries out a process of systematization of research about the representation of women in the media and a work of experimentation on activities that can stimulate the social responsibility of Communication Design also in the educational field. The aim is *“to point out several aspects of the research: the assumption of different methods and methodologies;*

the value of experimental activities as an integrative part of basic research; the need of building tools for reflection and media education beyond stereotypes and reconstituted visual models. The premises begin from different considerations: a critical vision of Communication Design's role in our society; the awareness of the need of a media education, of a visual alphabetisation of the receivers (in term of gestaltic and semantic competences); the awareness that, in order to make real changes, Communication Design has to co-operate in a multidisciplinary dimension with the domain of humanities and social sciences" .

In 2015, at Scuola del Design – Politecnico di Milano, the course *Communication Design and Gender Cultures* was introduced, aimed at students in the areas of communication, product, fashion, interiors and pssd (product service system design). The aim is to raise the awareness of future designers on gender issues from the communication design perspective, using a multimodal educational approach (blended learning); for instance activities aimed at strengthening the critical capabilities of students and equipping them with tools that encourage deconstructive processes and responsible design processes.

In line with the above-mentioned, the course aims to provide future designers with the tools for a culturally and socially sustainable project. In line with these objectives, we worked to create a dimension of experiential learning, capable of integrating theory and practice (Kolb, Experiential Learning Theory). The output of the course consists of a communicative project/artefact aimed at raising awareness about a specific aspect of gender stereotypes and the unequal representation of women in the media. Starting from a comparison with the pyramid of active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), the course has been structured in different modules, associated with different purposes and methods.

4.1 Lectures (remember, recognize and learning facts; understand, understanding what the facts mean)

The lectures are designed to provide the theoretical basis for a critical reading of media images and tools to deconstruct gender stereotypes. The student understands the context and, from the integration of theoretical contents and practical activities, develops those *antibodies* useful to the designer-who-design but also to the designer-who-consume, to develop a critical look on the communicative landscape.

The lessons provide a state of the art situation and context, with vertical insights on specific issues or case studies which may be useful to learn research methods and have an overview of different design solutions, in terms of objectives, language and rhetoric as well as structure. A particular point of attention is the method of analysis and re-examination of the media messages, through the presentation of case studies and the related design processes - from the research method to the design output.

4.2 Personal observation (to apply, analyze, evaluate)

The personal observation activity is aimed at stimulating self-reflection and careful observation of the context in which we live, calling into question the "designer-consumer". It is a first work of horizontal analysis that assumes the assumption of a critical point of view on the media messages that characterize

the everyday life of the student. In the specific case of the course held during the academic year 2018-2019, it was requested to identify and note the cases of unequal and stereotyped representation of women. This first observation-in-the field stimulates the student to pick up and decode representative stereotyped models that without *antibodies* are assimilated as *normal*. In this phase the point of view adopted is mainly subjective and it is required to note down and return what has been found through a diary.

The individual observations are then merged into an activity of guided comparison within the classroom, aimed at mapping and systematizing what has emerged, outlining a state of the art of the situation and identifying the critical points.

4.3 In-depth field observation (to apply, analyze)

The phenomenological observation and analysis of the context of reference is aimed at investigating more specific and circumscribed aspects concerning the modalities and forms of representation of women in the media. From the horizontal observation conducted individually (B) points of attention are identified which become the object of a “core drilling” operation aimed at deconstructing the stereotype, isolating representative recurrences and similarities.

This is a structured research activity (conducted in teams) that refers to the following items: (I) taxonomic collection of the ways and forms by which the media return and feed the stereotype of reference; (II) collection of data about the subject (e.g. statistics...); (III) collection of positive case studies and contrast actions; (IV) literature.

This allows the adoption and implementation of vertical research methods on very specific issues, then applicable to other fields.

4.4 Design output (to evaluate, create)

The last activity of the course involves the project of a communicative artifact through which to reassemble what emerged from the research phase. The objective is the production of a communicative action in the form of syntheses/critical restitution. The resulting artifacts exploit the potential of their own communicative dimension to promote processes of sensitization and awareness. If they are communicated to the community of designers and future designers, the communicative actions can trigger reflections on the design thought itself.

5. Developing antibodies through the project

To better understand the objectives and modules of the course it was decided to present the work done during the academic year 2018-2019, focusing on four case studies meaningful from the point of view of the approach and the final result. The course was structured using the *call to action* mode, in order to involve students and collect in a systemic way the project outputs. The title of the call was *We want to say stop to...*

After the first individual observation activity (4.2) the students were asked to share what they had observed with the class group, in order to draw up a summary document of the points to which to “say stop”, stimulating them to an operation of mapping the state of the art and synthesis. The points emerged in the manifesto

-listed below – were the starting points of the research work.

We want to say stop to: the improper use of the female body as a rabbit hole in marketing strategies; the production of content that reinforces gender stereotypes, guided by the 'male gaze'; the pink/blue chromatic polarization; the production of communicative artifacts that promote a vision of social roles rigidly associated with gender; the representation of symbolic violence through a patriarchal ideology of images.

Each working group took on the task of vertically deepening (4.3) one of the points formalized in the document, focusing on a very specific aspect of the theme under investigation. The research work then laid the foundations for the project of a communicative artifact (video) of counter-narrative. The choice to provide a constraint on the format of the final output allowed a greater experimentation with languages and rhetoric of visual restitution, leaving more room for the operation of critical re-reading and reassembly.

The outputs obtained are a series of videos that, for their objectives and format, respond to a system logic, while they are heterogeneous in terms of rhetoric and construction of the narration. It was decided to take 4 of them as case studies, in order to highlight different modalities and outputs obtained from a similar project path. In the first two cases (5.1; 5.2) the media images at the centre of the review (collected through desk research) become part of the final output, through an operation of deconstruction and reassembly of the fragments. The point of interest from the design point of view falls on the methods of restitution, the rhetoric and the value assumed by the video editing.

In the other two cases (5.3; 5.4) the unconscious bias constitute the fulcrum of the work, in order to highlight how the designers themselves are unconsciously influenced by gender stereotypes in their design actions and how unconscious prejudices emerge during the elaboration of the design thought. Points of interest are the methods of observation used and the point of view taken.

5.1 *We want to say stop to the endoscopic gaze of the camera*

In the first case, the way in which the male-gaze is explained on Italian public television is investigated, focusing specifically on the types of recurrent camera framing for women and men.

The work was carried out according to the following scheme:

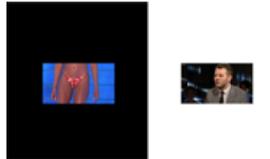
- collection and analysis of audiovisual material (tv programmes on the main Italian television networks);
- isolation of the scenes in which female and male conductors and guests have the word;
- identification and taxonomy of recurrent representative models - kind of framing and director's rules used - from which a strong imbalance and a sexist point of view emerged. While the most recurrent shots for men are half-length or close-up on the face, the recurrent shots for women are mainly focused on physical characteristics (legs, neckline, lips...), clothing, posture.

Starting from what emerged, the students worked through a way of reassembling

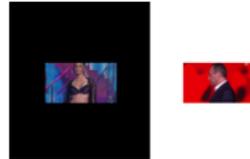
the collected materials themselves to build a counter-narration that highlights the ways of misogynist representation. The final video consists of a blob-style montage and uses the contrasting picture between the shots of the female and male figures to bring them to light and denounce their differences. The increasing rhythm contributes to a climax effect that culminates in the exhorting closing phrase “let’s rebalance our gaze”.



a. First frame of the video – *Voyeuristic syndrome. Through the male gaze.*



b. Some keyframes from the video, highlighting the unbalance in the representation of men and women.



c.

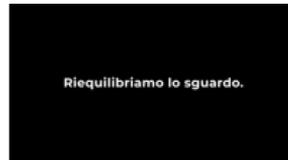


Il 92%
dei registi
televisivi
italiani sono
uomini.

d. 92% of Italian television directors are men



e.



f. “let’s rebalance our gaze”

5.2 May contain inappropriate for children

In this case the working group had the task of reacting to the point — *we want to say stop to the improper use of the female body as rabbit hole in the marketing strategies* — of the starting manifesto. Specifically, they focused on the hypersexualisation of female figures in video games. The object of study were the trailers of the best-selling videogames in the last year, following the scheme below:

- trailers collection and analysis;
- isolation of scenes in which female characters are represented;
- identification and taxonomy of recurrent representative models and of the roles covered by the characters (relevance between role and representation);

This desk-type research brought to light how female characters in the main videogames respond to expressive codes closer to the field of pornography (clothing, exasperation of traits, expressions, poses and attitudes).

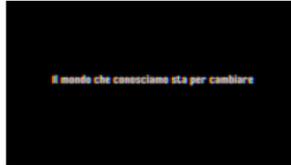
In this case the final output is the result of a mixing of materials from different sources (videogames and *porn anime*). The video is an autonomous text that follows the modalities and the feature codes of the same object of analysis, simulating the narrative structure of a trailer of a video game with female characters.

The video was built using and mixing scenes partly from the analyzed trailers, partly from *porn anime* videos. It is based on a mechanism of final overturning. The recipient is therefore oriented by recognizing a familiar model and he is surprised at the end, when the origin of the images is revealed - *only 10% of these images come from porno video* - and a final sentence declares the position of the designers - *we want to say stop to the hypersexualisation of women in video games*. Unlike

the previous case, in which the viewer is accompanied along a linear path, in this case the designers are looking for a breakage effect and final displacement, which denounces the abnormality of models of representation that we usually see as “normal”, highlighting the inappropriateness and similarity to expressive codes belonging to very different fields.



a. First frame of the video simulating the trailer of a videogame.



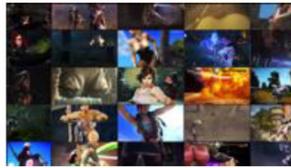
b. The video is built like a fake trailer of a videogame with only female characters.



c. Alternation of frames from trailers and porno videos.



d.



e.



f. only 10% of these images come from pornos

5.3 We want to say stop to the stereotypical representation of families

This case focuses on the unconscious bias acted by designers during the development of design thinking. The project starts from a first phase of reconnaissance that had as its object the collection of television commercials representing families. Once the issues were identified and isolated, the attention shifted to the designer himself, in order to qualitatively investigate whether and how stereotypes unconsciously influence younger designers.

In order to respond to the objectives, a participatory observation activity (repeated twice with different participants) was designed, involving students with a master's degree in communication design. The table reading of a commercial spot was then recreated. Each activity involved 4 students, one of whom was asked to identify with the role of director and, following an *ad hoc* stage script, build the scene by establishing the roles for the 3 actors played by the other 3 participants. In the script no genre characterizations have been attributed to the characters.

In this case, the activity was the founding part of the project and the emphasis was given mainly to the director's interpretative plan. From the shooting of the activity, the debates triggered by the attribution of roles were analysed, from which it emerged how effectively the two directors (man in one case and woman in the second) are influenced by gender stereotypes in making their own design choices.

Here are some emblematic excerpts of conversation:

“you do the character 2 (boy) because I imagine, as the script says, that you can work late so you are very tired and you have to rest. While I imagine you (girl) preparing breakfast for your children in the morning”;

“Chiara you should be the character 1, because you're the one who handles the

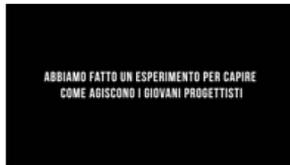
situation, right? Look how you always have control of the situation [...] because you are a careful mother who has to guide everyone, manage everyone..."

*"...the reassuring man who manages to solve all the problems";
"I think the woman is usually more careless, she needs to be protected".*

The next step was to create a video aimed at translating the table reading experience into a concise form, for the purposes of awareness raising and reporting. The documentation material has been reassembled, isolating the significant components in order to highlight the unconscious bias and the involuntary use of gender stereotypes during the design of communication artifacts. The viewer is initially introduced to the theme by the title and by a short montage that shows fragments of commercials collected in the first phase, to highlight the stereotyped representation of family roles. In a second moment the activity conducted is presented, anticipating its objectives and bringing out, through the editing of the activity, the issues. The video ends with a message of denunciation and a stimulus for designers to reflect on their role and responsibilities.



a. The video starts with some fragments from tv commercials showing stereotyped representations of family.



b. The participatory activity is introduced by a short text.



c.



d. Most significant dialogues from the activity.



e.



f. One of the ending messages, *the designer is responsible for what is broadcasted.*

5.4 *I solit* ignot - we want to say stop to the fixed gender roles in advertising communication**

The case is similar, in method and objectives, to the one illustrated above and follows the scheme:

- participatory observation activities;
- deconstruction and analysis of the participants attitudes;
- isolation of recurrent behaviours representative of gender differences;
- reassembly of the results through the design of a communication artifact.

In this case is called into question the designer as a designer but also the designer-consumer. The subject of study are the unconscious stereotypes concerning the roles/professions attributed to women and men, in order to highlight how much gender stereotypes are also anchored in the younger generations.

Hybrid methods of cultural anthropology and those characteristic of communication design were used, recreating a playful dimension that exploits the dynamics of *memory* game or *Guess who*. To encourage debate, the participants “play” in pairs and are asked to attribute a series of faces of men and women to as many professions. The object of the analysis work is the dialogues and motivations that lead to attribute a certain profession to a man rather than a woman (e.g. fireman-man, nurse-woman and so on). The resulting output is a synthetic video-documentary of the activity, which highlights and isolates the most interesting dialogues and in which the reference to unconscious stereotypes is more explicit.

The viewer follows the same path as the participants, only at the end are the correct associations revealed face-profession, arousing surprise and inviting reflection. The off-screen voice guides the game and helps the viewer to understand and contextualize. Unlike the case study previously illustrated, the spectator (and the participants of the activity itself) is invited to reflect by exploiting the final displacement. The video does not have an explicit text message at the end but a final message open to the interpretation of the recipient.



a. The video starts with a brief introduction to the conducted activity (with no anticipations about the objectives).



b.



c. The dialogues and reactions of players are placed at the centre.



d. Shots of the playing board alternate with shots of the players.



e.



f. The ending remains open, stimulating an autonomous reflection in the recipient.

6. Conclusions

The four cases reported above are representative of different approaches that put in place methods of observation and communication strategies that are based on different effects of meaning. These are recurrent models of project output which exemplify the practical experimentation carried out in the educational field, in order to provide useful tools towards a conscious project path. The aim is to train future designers able to make conscious and responsible design choices not only in the academic field but also, and above all, in the professional field, where the planned communicative actions have a real large scale impact, unconsciously influencing the thought of the individuals who receive the message.

The paper intends to focus on the work that the DCxCG group carries out on the methodological dimension of the communication project, which lays the foundations for a broader reflection on design thinking. “*Methods create frames, paradigms within which design decisions take place*” (Frascara in Baule & Caratti, 2017).

The importance of training designers capable of confronting and managing the complexity of reality and the multiplicity of points of view is evident, working towards a socially and culturally sustainable communication design. Design can and must give its contribution towards the elimination of gender inequalities, starting from the visual dimension.

The quality of the impact that communication design inevitably has on social identity is fundamental. A systematic educational model shows how it is possible to act and equip designers with tools that allow them to move towards a sustainable design model. The activity of the DCxCG research group can be therefore considered a first step towards a socially sustainable design model. It is intended to provide a contribution on the educational level with the development of activities aimed at building a solid and conscious visual culture.

It is therefore a contribution that, through a process of modelling, can be proposed as a reference to develop further educational “actions” within its own community, and, in a wider perspective, to develop moments of confrontation aimed at consolidating methods and experimentation with tools that communication design can put in place to facilitate the achievement of gender equality.

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