

It is the midgits that win on the Internet

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"I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member." **This is how Michele Mezza introduces himself on Facebook**, with a quote from **Groucho Marx**. Michele Mezza is fifty eight, he was born near Naples, and studied in Milan, he teaches in Perugia and lives in Rome. He is the founder of *Media senza mediatori* (*Media without mediators*), a group of over 100 that include students, teachers and media observers, who gathered around the Professor of Theory and Technique of the New Media, of the degree course in Communication Science at the University of Perugia. The Internet was, and is, the object of their considerations.

A journalist, university lecturer, researcher, writer, and **certainly one of the great experts of the Internet**, Michele Mezza works for the Italian television company **RAI**, as the assistant director of new media.

He will be in Varese on Monday 14 February, to present his new book *Sono le news, bellezza! Vincitori e vinti nella Guerra della velocità digitale* (*That's the news, love! Winners and losers in the digital speed war*), published by Donzelli.

How did this book come about?

"It's the result of ten years' work. I put together my experiences of working for the television channel 'RAI News24', and at the University. This season, we've seen some profound changes. The Internet has brought us into a new era. It's not a product innovation, but a radical, process innovation. We can talk about the Internet as *social listening technology*, as an extraordinary system of relationships that enables an individual to climb onto the backs of an infinite number of midgits."

On the website *Media senza mediatori*, you claim that "on the Web 2.0, it is not the giants that help us to see far, but a infinite number of midgits that help us to go more quickly." The fact remains that in Italy, only 50% of people access the Internet. What about the others?

"That's true, but it is also true what Negroponte said in 1994: change is brought about by the people, as new generations come. Since the birth of the digital era, we have already reached the fourth generation, and the number of people is increasing all the time. There is a turning point, already now, with mobile and social networks. We are the top users of these instruments in the world. Does this mean anything?"

But there are those who complain about how far behind we are in terms of technology and infrastructure ...

"Of course, there's no plan to transfer services to the Internet, but I wouldn't tear my hair out because of the lack of broadband. The Internet is more a social, than a technological phenomenon.

On this matter, you've suggested a plan in your book, that starts out from the territories. What does that mean?

"I speak of territory as a publisher, because I'm convinced that it is there that the technological standards have to be protected. In the United States, it's the mayors that are concerned about Internet access, because they consider it to be an essential utility, like water, electricity and gas. Georeferencing is how the Internet will develop. Creating a regulatory plan on Google Maps is an exercise in transparency that would allow managing important services; just think of traffic. In this way, town councils become a fundamental partner for every operator in the field, helping them compete in the global market."

A central theme of your book is journalism. Many books are published that talk about change, but what do you think is happening?

"There's a transition from paper to the electronic bit, and this is clear, but there are also a lot of problems. To understand what's happening, you only have to consider the two groups involved: readers and journalists. For the first time in history, the readers are ahead of the journalists. They're better equipped, in every sense of the word, and there's a shift towards them. To illustrate how things are evolving in this field, I always like to use the metaphor of the level crossing keepers. When all of the railway lines and level crossings had been automated, if the keepers went on strike, even their mothers failed to notice."

The meeting with Michele Mezza is in the Morselli Room of the Public Library in Via Sacco 7, Varese, on Monday 14, at 6 p.m.

He defines himself as being "integrated" into the Internet. He studies and uses it, but he is not fanatical about it. In order to understand him, you need only read his profile of the most popular social network. "I was one of the last to go on Facebook, after thinking about it for a long time. Maybe this is emblematic of a personal contradiction: I hate those who are nostalgic for the good old days, but I'm a part of them. For good, and very much, for bad. I'm saved by Inter. For Good."

Milan and Juventus supporters beware!

The video.

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