

3. DIALOGUE

3.1. Dialogue and mediatized debate

Let us begin with an unquestionable conclusion: “The real, persuasive and glowing entry of the debate into the public scene in Europe occurred around 1960, when the intention to promote this genre on television came alongside the rigour of having a subject or issue to discuss as well as the use of this issue’s persistent topicality and of statistics” (Brusini and James 22).

Metaphorically called a ‘round table’, in accordance with the French terminology of the school of print media, then addressed as a televised debate, the talk show has recently become a general concept employed in the field of television that refers to the filmed, in-studio interaction between a moderator and one or several guests. The shift from one use of the term to another reflects not only the various ages of the audiovisual discourse in their chronological order and in terms of the technological development, but also a gradual evolution of the editorial vision and structure.

Nowadays, in an attempt to describe this phenomenon in more adequate terms, such a form of media dialogue is perceived as creating a deliberative space where a journalist acting as a moderator alongside a variable number of guests and/or media actors, approach an issue of public interest in a conversational and convivial register. Moreover, what this form of dialogue has gained by shifting from the concept of televised debate to that of talk show - thereby merging the idea of show with that of mere talking - resides in the constant use of dramatization and sensationalism, in the exploitation of feelings, in other words, in the decentralization of a structure which threatened to become rigid due to an excess of formality had it remained at the level proposed to the audience by the televisual discourse in the 1950s-1960s. This was a time when television was intended to be perceived as ‘cultural’ and used the monopoly in order to impose on the audience certain products, which allegedly had a certain cultural value (documentaries, adaptations of classical work, debates) and which significantly impacted the taste of the audience.

In the 1990s, the televisual discourse attempted to explore and flatter such tastes in order to gain control over an audience as large as possible by offering the media consumer raw products which essentially reflected the talk show paradigm: bits and pieces of life,