

# **Is Netflix a Form of Television?**

## **An Affordance Analysis on the Connection Between Television's Post- Network Era and Netflix**

Name (student number): Bente van der Hulst (4284704)

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First Assessor: Dr. Chiel Kattenbelt

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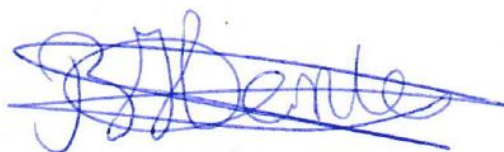
**Naam: Bente van der Hulst**

**Studentnummer: 4284704**

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## **Abstract**

Central in this affordance analysis is the connection between the post-network era of television and Netflix. For this reason, the research question is: how do the affordances of Netflix relate to the affordances of the post-network era of television? According to Amanda Lotz, the post-network era of television is the third and most current era of television and according to Mareike Jenner, Netflix is a video-on-demand service where people can watch films and television series. The affordances are based upon the definition of James Gibson and more specific on the affordance types of Matt Bower. The affordance types by Bower that have been used are the media, temporal, navigation, emphasis and technical affordances, since the other types are not relevant for this analysis. These affordances were used to examine the connection between flow and the post-network era of television and the connection between media mobility, the post-network era, and Netflix. The definitions of flow by Raymond Williams and William Uricchio were used to see the relation with the affordances of the post-network era. So, this means the definition of flow by Williams and the types of flow, viewer-centered flow and metadata protocols flow, by Uricchio. The definition of media platform by Chuck Tryon has been used, especially the subdivisions of platform, spatial, and temporal mobility. The results are repeated at the end of the analysis, where concluded can be said that there are more resemblances between the post-network era of television and Netflix than differences. After this conclusion, also a prediction is made for the future of the post-network era of television and Netflix, and a suggestion will be given for future researches.

Key words: Affordances, Flow, Media Mobility, Netflix, Post-Network Era Television.

(283 Words)

# Is Netflix a Form of Television?: An Affordance Analysis on the Connection Between Television's Post-Network Era and Netflix

## Introduction

*Television – once the most familiar of everyday objects – is now transforming at such rapid speeds that we no longer really know what TV is at all*<sup>1</sup> – Lynn Spigel

The above quotation shows that in Spigel's opinion, television is changing at rapid speeds. But how did television develop over the years and what are the greatest changes? To explain this, Amanda Lotz talks about three different eras of television development on subjects like technology, creation, distribution, advertising and audience measurement, whereby each era has its own new developments that separates it from the previous era. The first era is known as the "network era" and talks about the first years of television, where one could only watch television on the television-set, having but one to three channels with a standard television programming that was live broadcast. With the invention of VCR, the remote control and analog cable, Lotz talks about the "Multi-channel transition era" from roughly the mid-1980s. Since the mid-2000s, television is in the "post-network era" according to Lotz, because there are more ways to watch television, like on portable devices, but also because of the arrival of digital cable and nonlinear access to television content.<sup>2</sup> As Ben Sassen puts it, post-network refers to a change. Television is not a network in itself anymore but is now part of a much broader network and that is why it is called the post-network era.<sup>3</sup>

For Spigel's quotation, the post-network era is the most relevant. Television's developments are going faster and are bigger that scholars question themselves whether we are still in the post-network era or that we have reached a new era. One of these questions is about the coming of video-on-demand (VOD) services like Netflix, and if they are related to television, or a medium on itself.<sup>4</sup> As Mareike Jenner explains it, Netflix

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Spigel, "Introduction," In *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition (Ebook)*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Amanda Lotz, "Introduction," In *The Television Will Be Revolutionized, Second Edition* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 8 – 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Sassen, "Television as Network – Network as Television: Experiments in Content and Community," In *Travel in Intermediality: ReBlurring the Boundaries*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (Hanover and New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2012), 243.

<sup>4</sup> Video-on-Demand means the ability to choose what to watch via interactive television or via the computer.

started in 2007 with a VOD service and by 2014, it not only offers a large online library of film and television content (originally produced for cinema and television) all over the world, but Netflix also offers original content featuring numbers of stars.<sup>5</sup> But is Netflix a form of television's post-network era? Lotz does think that Netflix is a form of television which belongs to the post-network era, because of the ability to watch Netflix on different devices and because of the ability to stream television content.<sup>6</sup> But, according to Jenner, we could only see Netflix as a form of television if we introduce a new era of television, since there are too many differences from the television as we know it in the post-network era.<sup>7</sup> In their book *The Age of Netflix*, Cory Barker and Myc Wiatrowski explain Netflix as a streaming platform that uses television content and films to exist, but they do not define it as a form of television.<sup>8</sup> And Stuart Cunningham and Jon Silver see Netflix as an alternative-to-television.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, according to Sassen, one of the characteristics of television is the dynamic membership. This means that viewers are not able to only watch television via the television-set, but they have multiple options. For that reason, memberships should provide different possibilities to watch television to let viewers keep their membership.<sup>10</sup> For example, in the Netherlands, members who have a membership of KPN can watch Netflix if they have the right subscription and interactive television.<sup>11</sup>

To provide more information about this question whether Netflix belongs to the post-network era of television or not, this analysis will be a contribution to this discussion. It will be based upon my interpretations of what different scholars have already written. To research this topic, the analysis will focus on the following research question:

### **How do the affordances of Netflix relate to affordances of the post-network era of television?**

According to James Gibson, affordances focus on what an object or technology provides/furnishes for the people, but does not focus on what the people are doing with

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<sup>5</sup> Mareike Jenner, "Is this TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and Binge-Watching," In *New Media & Society*, 18.2 (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2016), 257 – 258.

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Lotz, "Introduction," 8.

<sup>7</sup> Mareike Jenner, "Is this TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and Binge-Watching," 269.

<sup>8</sup> Since there are different meanings of what a platform could be, it is necessary to specify that in this analysis a platform will be seen as a device on which people could watch Netflix or television. Other definitions of a platform are not included in this analysis. AND Cory Barker and Myc Wiatrowski. "Introduction," In *The Age of Netflix: Critical Essays on Streaming Media, Digital Delivery and Instant Access (Ebook)*, ed. Cory Barker and Myc Wiatrowski (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017), 1 – 20.

<sup>9</sup> Stuart Cunningham and Jon Silver, "The Players, Part Two: Rivals in Online Distribution," In *Screen Distribution and the New King Kongs of the Online World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 91.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Sassen, "Television as Network – Network as Television: Experiments in Content and Community," 243.

<sup>11</sup> KPN, "Netflix kijk je nu met gemak via Interactieve TV van KPN," accessed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018, <https://www.kpn.com/televisie/netflix.htm>.

the technology.<sup>12</sup> Since it provides more work to find out why consumers use Netflix and this analysis not focuses on why they use Netflix, but just on how it could be used and how it could be related to television, an analysis of the affordances will give the right information. So, the analysis will be qualitative. To get a more broader view of affordances, Matt Bower has elaborated Gibson’s concept of affordances by distinguishing several types of affordance. These types are especially defined for media use and for that reason relevant for this analysis.<sup>13</sup> Since not every affordance type of Bower is meaningful, the spatial, synthesis, access-control, usability, aesthetics and reliability affordances will not be used, since their meanings are not useful for this specific research. Their meanings are for example too much focused on the audience or they are not related to television but to other media forms. The ones that are relevant for this analysis and that will be used are stated and explained in the table below.

Table – Affordance types by Bower<sup>14</sup>

<b>Media Affordances</b>	The type of input and output forms, such as text ('read-ability', 'write-ability'), images ('view-ability', 'draw-ability'), audio ('listen-ability', 'speak-ability'), video ('watch-ability', 'video-produce-ability').
<b>Temporal Affordances</b>	Access anytime anywhere (accessibility), ability to be recorded ('record-ability') and played back ('playback-ability').
<b>Navigation Affordances</b>	Capacity to browse other sections of a resource and move back/forward ('browse-ability'), capacity to link to other sections within the resource or other resources ('link-ability'), ability to search ('search-ability'), and sort and sequence ('data-manipulation-ability').
<b>Emphasis Affordances</b>	Capacity to highlight aspects of a resources ('highlight-ability'), explicitly direct attention to particular components ('focus-ability').
<b>Technical Affordances</b>	Capacity to be used on various platforms with minimal/ubiquitous underlying technologies, ability to adapt to bandwidth of connection, speed and efficiency tool/s.

By using the above types of affordances, the research question will be answered, but also by using two sub-questions:

- How could “flow” be seen in the post-network era of television?
- What is the connection between the “media mobility” of the post-network era of television and Netflix?

The first sub-question focuses on the concept of flow defined by Raymond Williams. This means, that television consists of several ‘text parts’, but because of how the broadcasting

<sup>12</sup> James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Human Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 127.

<sup>13</sup> Matt Bower, “Affordance Analysis – Matching Learning Tasks with Learning Technologies,” In *Educational Media International*, 45.1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 4 – 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 6 – 7.

system works, watching television still feels like looking at a unit.<sup>15</sup> Flow will be used to see how this concept works within the post-network era of television. In this way, the sub-question aims to examine if Netflix could be seen as a part of television's flow and thus to investigate if there is a connection between television and Netflix.

The second sub-question focuses on the combination of television and Netflix by using the concept of media mobility. According to Chuck Tryon, media mobility consists of platform mobility, spatial mobility and temporal mobility.<sup>16</sup> This concept could show if the affordances of television and Netflix have resemblances to see if Netflix could be a form of television's media mobility. And hence, to explore if television and Netflix could be connected using this concept.

To answer the research question and the accompanying sub-questions, the analysis firstly looks at the affordances of post-network television and Netflix separately by broadening the definitions of the post-network era and Netflix, and by analyzing what affordances are visible within these definitions and why. Afterwards, the affordances of the post-network television will be used to examine how they are connected to flow. This will be done by further exploring the concept of flow by Williams and by elaborating the concept according to William Uricchio. The following part focuses on how the affordances of television and Netflix are connected to media mobility. The subdivisions of media mobility (platform, spatial, and temporal mobility) will be explained and the definition of media mobility will be elaborated to be compared to the affordances of the post-network era and Netflix. In the end, the results will be repeated shortly before showing that the resemblances between the post-network era and Netflix are bigger than the differences and providing a prediction of the future of television and Netflix and suggestions for further research.

## **The Affordances of Television's Post-Network Era**

As said in the introduction, according to several scholars, we are in the post-network era of television, because of the ability to watch television on multiple devices, the arrival of digital cable and the ability of nonlinear access to television content. Michael Strangelove says that post-tv does not mean the end of television, "but it does refer to the end of a particular way in which broadcast television structured viewing and the beginning of new

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<sup>15</sup> Raymond Williams, "Programming: Distribution and Flow," *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, ed. Ederyn Williams (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 86 – 87.

<sup>16</sup> Chuck Tryon, "'Make Any Room Your TV Room': Digital Delivery and Media Mobility," In *Screen*, 53.3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 289.



ways of participating in television.”<sup>17</sup> This section will give a broader explanation of the post-network era by combining it with the affordance types of Bower.

### Affordances of the Post-Network Era

The first point that Lotz made is that, in the post-network era, viewers have the ability to watch television on multiple devices. So, not just on the television-set, but on computers and smartphones as well.<sup>18</sup> This is in line with the technical affordances of Bower, since Bower literally says “capacities to be used on various platforms” within the definition of technical affordances.<sup>19</sup> And this meets the ability to watch television on the television-set, but also on the computer and/or smartphone screen.

Second, the arrival of the digital cable means that television programs can be viewed in HD and that more channels are available to watch.<sup>20</sup> Sassen explains this as the characteristic of ‘decentralization’, since consumers are not obliged to just one or two channels.<sup>21</sup> Media affordances focus on elements like read-ability, view-ability, listen-ability and watch-ability, and this is possible when watching television through digital cable. Content being viewed in HD, means that viewers have the view- and watch-ability, the sounds that are broadcast make sure that they have the listen-ability, and if the television content includes subtitles, then the read-ability is met as well. Besides the digital cable, the media affordances are also aligned to the type of television content. According to Lotz, in the post-network era, viewers do not only have the possibility to watch professional television content, but also amateur content that is shown on the internet.<sup>22</sup> Because of the amateur content, the write-ability, draw-ability, speak-ability and video-produce-ability of the media affordances are met as well. Thus, all the aspects of media affordances are met in the definition of the post-network era of television.

Another aspect of the post-network era is the nonlinear content access. This means that consumers are not obliged to the standard television programming, but they also have the possibility to skip, pause or record television content and in this way, to make their own schedule.<sup>23</sup> Dan Harries calls this “viewing” (viewing + using). Meaning that viewers not only can watch television, but they are also able to use the television by controlling its

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Strangelove, “Introduction,” In *Post-TV: Piracy, Cord-Cutting, and the Future of Television* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Amanda Lotz, “Understanding Television at the Beginning of the Post-Network Era,” In *The Television Will Be Revolutionized, Second Edition* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 29.

<sup>19</sup> Matt Bower, “Affordance Analysis – Matching Learning Tasks with Learning Technologies,” 7.

<sup>20</sup> M.J. Robinson, “Chapter 1. Rites and Rituals of Transformation and the Television Industry/ies,” In *Television on Demand: Curatorial Culture and the Transformation of TV* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Sassen, “Television as Network – Network as Television: Experiments in Content and Community,” 243.

<sup>22</sup> Amanda Lotz, “Understanding Television at the Beginning of the Post-Network Era,” 32.

<sup>23</sup> Amanda Lotz, “Understanding Television at the Beginning of the Post-Network Era,” 29.

programming for example.<sup>24</sup> In Sassen's opinion, in this way, more interaction and/or cooperation between television producers and consumers is necessary, because television producers are more dependent on what consumers would like to watch than when they were obliged to watch what was broadcast.<sup>25</sup> Three of the five affordance types are met in this way, namely the navigation affordances, temporal affordances and the emphasis affordances. Since viewers have the ability to make their own television programming, the record-ability and playback-ability by the temporal affordances have been met. For similar reasons, viewers also have the highlight-ability and focus-ability, because they can choose to only watch the programs they prefer, and this is aligned to the emphasis affordances. Finally, this also means that viewers have the browse-ability and search-ability of the navigation affordances, in this way they are able to look in the TV guide for their favorite programs to record for example.

Furthermore, according to Spigel, in the network era viewers were "broadcasting" television, but nowadays she defines it as "narrowcasting". With broadcasting she refers to the period that television was a mass medium and people were watching television all together and narrowcasting is more watching television individually.<sup>26</sup> This is in line with Sassen's self-organization and self-deployment, whereby consumers have more control and are not dependent on the networks.<sup>27</sup> Lisa Parks defines narrowcasting as "flexible microcasting", and explains it as personal television whereby viewers can make own selections of television programs that can be preselected or preordered.<sup>28</sup> With this definition of narrowcasting, viewers have the ability to highlight certain content or to focus on specific content by making their own lists of series to watch for example. This means that the emphasis affordances are met within the definition of narrowcasting, because those affordances are about the highlight-ability and focus-ability.

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<sup>24</sup> Dan Harries, "Watching the Internet," In *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), 172.

<sup>25</sup> Ben Sassen, "Television as Network – Network as Television: Experiments in Content and Community," 243.

<sup>26</sup> All together means with the entire family looking to the same content on the television-set. Individually watching, on the other hand, refers to having the ability to watch alone via the computer for example, while other people could watch the same content at different places and different times. AND Lynn Spigel, "Introduction," 10.

<sup>27</sup> Ben Sassen, "Television as Network – Network as Television: Experiments in Content and Community," 243.

<sup>28</sup> Lisa Parks, "Flexible Microcasting: Gender, Generation, and Television-Internet Convergence," In *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition (Ebook)*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 214 – 215.

## Conclusion

The five affordance types of Bower, that have been selected to be used in this analysis, are visible in the characteristics of the post-network era of television. Because of the digital cable and the content being from amateurs and professionals, the media affordances are met. The temporal, navigation and emphasis affordances are met, because of the concept of viewings and the nonlinear access. And by switching from broadcasting to narrowcasting, the emphasis affordances are met as well. Furthermore, the technical affordances are met, since consumers have the ability to watch television on different devices.

## **The Affordances of Netflix**

As said in the introduction, Netflix will be analyzed to examine if it is related to the post-network era of television. To do so, it is important to know how the affordances of Bower are visible within Netflix. By naming the affordance type, an explanation will be given of how types are related to Netflix, and at the end a summary of the findings will be given.

The overall type of affordances are the media affordances. Of these, the read-ability, view-ability, listen-ability and watch-ability are relevant for Netflix. As explained by Jenner in the introduction, Netflix is an online library with film and television content, but it also has original content.<sup>29</sup> Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey agree with Jenner by saying that Netflix's content is a combination of old and new media content.<sup>30</sup> An example of old content is that films by director Hitchcock, like *Vertigo* (1958), are on Netflix as well. This diversion of content means that viewers have the view-ability and watch-ability of this content. But they also have the read-ability and listen-ability, because of the possibility to use subtitles and the sounds that the content produces.

The main affordances which are visible within Netflix, are the temporal affordances, especially the accessibility part. The accessibility is about having access to content at anytime and anywhere. According to McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, Netflix is precisely the program to watch content whenever and wherever people want.<sup>31</sup> As Justin Grandinetti says it, watching content anytime is possible, because Netflix releases entire seasons at once and this gives the change to "binge-watch" television series.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, with

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<sup>29</sup> Mareike Jenner, "Is this TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and Binge-Watching," 257 – 258.

<sup>30</sup> Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey, "Introduction," In *The Netflix Effect: Technology and Entertainment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Daniel Smith-Rowsey (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Justin Grandinetti, "From Primetime to Anytime: Streaming Video, Temporality and the Future of Communal Television," In *The Age of Netflix: Critical Essays on Streaming Media, Digital Delivery and Instant Access (Ebook)*, ed. Cory Barker and Myc Wiatrowski (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017), 2 – 6. AND Binge-watch means watching several episodes (or an entire season) all at once without taking a break.

Netflix, viewers can download a film or episode and watch it later without being connected to the internet. This also shows that one can watch Netflix anytime. Watching Netflix anywhere is possible, since the application can be used on various platforms, e.g. on a smartphone.

Secondly, the playback-ability of the temporal affordances are met as well. Consumers are able to pause the film or episode, or they can fast forward or rewind the film or episode. Besides, they even have the ability to watch content repeatedly, if the content is available on Netflix.

The navigation affordances are met as well, since Netflix provides the browse, link and search-ability to its users. Viewers have the browse-ability, because they can look for the film or series that they would like to watch on Netflix. They have to option to choose between different genres, e.g. comedy or romance, but viewers also have the ability to leave that section and enter a different genre.<sup>33</sup> The link-ability is in line with the browse-ability, because if one chooses a film or series, other similar suggestions are given. Besides, clicking on one of the genres is a link to another section of Netflix. Finally, if users know a specific film or series they would like to watch, they can enter the title in the search area, which ensures that people also have the search-ability.

Both the highlight-ability and focus-ability of the emphasis affordances are met. Partially this is done by Netflix itself. As Sarah Arnold explains, Netflix makes a list of recommendations for each individual user based upon what they have already watched.<sup>34</sup> But, users themselves have to choose series they like when making a Netflix account. Furthermore, when already having an account, members can create their own list by adding their favorites to that list. This shows that viewers have the highlight-ability, because in this sense they choose which films or series they think are important. The focus-ability is connected to the highlight-ability, because people could add lots of genres within their list, but they could also focus on one specific genre for example.

According to McDonald, Netflix has a cross-platform accessibility, because it can be used on various platforms, e.g. the computer or mobile devices.<sup>35</sup> This means that the technical affordances are met as well, since these affordances focus on the "capacity to be used on various platforms".<sup>36</sup> Moreover, viewers can start a film on their smartphone and continue watching on their computer without any complications.

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<sup>33</sup> Sarah Arnold, "Netflix and the Myth of Choice/Participation/Autonomy," In *The Netflix Effect: Technology and Entertainment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Daniel Smith-Rowsey (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 56 – 57.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, 49 – 51.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin McDonald, "From Online Video Store to Global Internet TV Network: Netflix and the Future of Home Entertainment," In *The Netflix Effect: Technology and Entertainment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Daniel Smith-Rowsey (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 204.

<sup>36</sup> Matt Bower, "Affordance-Analysis – Matching Learning Tasks with Learning Technologies," 7.

## Conclusion

As shown, Netflix provides all the affordances of Bower which were selected for this analysis. The content makes sure the media-affordances are met, because of the readability, view-ability, listen-ability and watch-ability. Especially, the accessibility of the temporal affordances is visible, because Netflix can be watched anywhere and anytime. Furthermore, the playback-ability is also visible, since people could watch a film repeatedly as long as it is on Netflix. By being able to browse through Netflix, using various links by clicking on different films, and by having the ability to search for specific content, the navigation affordances are met as well. Also do people have the ability to create their own list with their favorites, which provides the highlight-ability and focus-ability of the emphasis affordances. Finally, the temporal affordances are met, since people could watch Netflix on different devices.

## **Flow and television**

As explained, flow according to Williams means that watching television is looking at a series of sequences that are comprised as a whole unit. In this part, the explanation of Williams will be elaborated by his own definition, but also by using the definition of Uricchio. This is necessary, since Williams's definition focuses on the network era and the beginning of the multi-channel era, and Uricchio also has a definition for the post-network era.<sup>37</sup> Besides just broadening the definition of flow, the definition of flow will also be compared with the types of affordances that are visible within the definition of the post-network television era. This will be done to show how flow could be seen in the post-network era of television. The results of flow and the post-network era will be summarized, and afterwards the results will be analyzed in how Netflix could play a role in this connection between flow and the post-network era of television.

### Williams's Flow and the Post-Network Era

Within his definition, Williams has three categories of flow that could appear, and these three categories will be compared with the affordances of television. The categories are based upon programming on macro, meso, and micro levels or as Williams puts it, long-range, medium-range and close-range analyses.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> William Uricchio, "Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow," In *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 255 and 272 – 275.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, 255.

In other words, the long-range analysis is the programming or listing of programs that will be broadcast.<sup>39</sup> The reason therefore is to get viewers in at the beginning of a flow and to keep their attention directed to this flow.<sup>40</sup> Second, the medium-range does not just focus on the programming, but also looks at the items within and between the published sequence of units. Or in other words, the medium-range also focuses on the advertisements that are shown and these advertisements are loosely related to the sequence of units.<sup>41</sup> To deepen the focus, the close-range analysis goes a step further than the medium-range. It still looks at the programming and the advertisements, but in this sense, it is a planned combination of programming and advertisements. Or as Williams says 'the actual succession of words and images.'<sup>42</sup> This is in line with what Williams defines as "planned flow", since the focus is not just the sequence of programming anymore, but of the so-called "real flow", namely the flow of programming and advertisements.<sup>43</sup> Another important thing to note is that 'the flow is always accessible, in several alternative sequences, at the flick of a switch'.<sup>44</sup> So, even though viewers will zap, if they turn to a specific channel, they could easily follow the flow of the channel.

The affordances of the post-network are sometimes in line with Williams's definition of flow, but sometimes they are disrupting the flow. By the media affordances, for example, people have the view-ability and listen-ability to look at the programming that the sequence of units has made available. However, it is more difficult to stay focused on watching just one channel, since the arrival of digital cable and so the arrival of more channels to watch. On the other hand, this also gives more possibilities to choose a flow that is a composition of interests.

In the post-network era of television, the possibility of watching television on multiple devices ensures that the technical affordances by Bower are met. This creates a new option to keep focused to a specific flow. E.g., viewers could start watching television on the television-set and continue watching the same program on their smartphone. In this way, the flow is not interrupted by zapping and viewers have the ability to keep following that specific flow when they have to move to another room.

The nonlinear content access and the transition from broadcasting to narrowcasting provide the most complications with the definition of flow by Williams, since the temporal, navigation and emphasis affordances help to break through the flow. This is done by their highlight, focus, record, playback, search and browse-ability, because then users can select their own preferences and do not have to wait until it is broadcast.

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<sup>39</sup> Raymond Williams, "Programming, Distribution and Flow," 97.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 94.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 94.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, 91.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 95.

Thus, the technical affordances make it possible that viewers could stay in the same flow, since they have the ability to watch television on multiple device. The media affordances are more difficult, since the digital cable provides an internal conflict: viewers can select a flow that is in line with their interests or they will zap sooner, because viewers know there are numbers of other channels they could choose to watch. With the nonlinear content access, the navigation, temporal and emphasis affordances make it hard for viewers to keep following the same flow of sequence, since they have their own highlight, focus, record, playback, search and browse-ability to watch television. This is also a result of the transition from broadcasting to narrowcasting.

### Uricchio's Flow and the Post-Network Era

Uricchio starts by stating that the definition of flow by Williams is still applicable to television nowadays, but there are some changes that are of relevance for a redefinition of flow according to him.<sup>45</sup> The above results show that some of the features of Williams's definition are indeed met, but there are also some complications. That is why the definition of Uricchio will be used as well, to examine if this definition provides more connection with the affordances of the post-network era.

In the beginning, the flow organization was in hands of the programmers, but in Uricchio's opinion, this changed with the arrival of the remote-control device (RCD). This gave one the ability to zap through channels and break through the flow sometimes. That is why Uricchio talks of a transition from programming-centered flow to viewer-centered flow. This means, that viewers create their own flow by switching channels and programs, so they only see what they would want to see.<sup>46</sup> Only nowadays, television is more and more connected with internet and this resulted in a new type of flow as well. Because now, metadata protocols keep in track what kind of programs viewers watch and give them suggestions of what they also might like. So, 'nor the viewer, nor the television programmer dominate the notion of flow', because that part is now filled by the metadata protocols.<sup>47</sup>

Even though Uricchio says the viewer-centered flow is replaced by the metadata protocols, the viewer-centered flow is still relevant for the post-network era of television. Because narrowcasting means a more personalized style of watching television and this is possible because of the highlight-ability and focus-ability of the emphasis affordances. Also, the navigation and temporal affordances of the nonlinear content access provide ways to personalize watching television. This means that the viewer still has the control to create

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<sup>45</sup> William Uricchio, "Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow," 274.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, 262 – 264.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, 272.

his own flow and that the viewer-centered flow is still visible in the post-network era of television. Furthermore, the definition of the post-network era does not speak of metadata protocols providing recommendations and in that sense, the metadata protocols flow of Uricchio is not met within the post-network era of television.

In short, the viewer-centered flow by Uricchio is visible within the post-network era of television, because of the temporal, navigation and emphasis affordances. On the other hand, the newer version of flow, the metadata protocols flow, is not visible within the definition of the post-network era.

## Conclusion

As written above, the definition of Williams has still some relevance within the definition of television in the post-network era, since viewers can still follow television programming with the media affordances. Only it is more complicated than in the network era, because of the arrival of digital cable, narrowcasting and nonlinear content access. This involves the temporal, navigation, emphasis affordances and they make it harder for viewers to keep their attention focused on the same flow. But the technical affordances help a little to stay in the same flow by ensuring that viewers can watch television on multiple devices.

The elaboration of Uricchio ensures that the temporal, navigation and emphasis affordances are in line with the viewer-centered flow. This concept namely focuses on what the viewer does with the content and how it makes its own flow. The newer version of flow by Uricchio is not met, since the definition of post-network era does not talk about the use of metadata protocols and that is relevant for the post-network era to meet the metadata protocols flow.

So, the post-network era consists of the definition of flow by Williams and of the viewer-centered flow by Uricchio. Netflix's affordances differ in this sense, because Netflix does not have a standard programming that viewers can follow to stay in the same flow. Thus, the definition of Williams is not visible within the affordances of Netflix. The viewer-centered flow is met within Netflix, because, just like within the post-network era, viewers have the ability to use their navigation, temporal and emphasis affordances when using Netflix. But Netflix does use metadata protocols to follow what their users are watching and give recommendations to watch. This is in line with the metadata protocols flow of Uricchio. Hence, the post-network era of television has the flow by Williams and the viewer-centered flow, whereas Netflix provides the viewer-centered flow and the metadata protocols flow by Uricchio. Does this mean that Netflix is a step further than the post-network era or is there still enough resemblance between the two? Before judging too soon, the next part will look at how the affordances of the post-network era and Netflix are related to the concept of platform mobility.



## The Role of Media Mobility

In the introduction has been said that media mobility is divided into platform mobility, spatial mobility and temporal mobility. This part will explain the subdivisions of media mobility and combine them with the affordances of television and Netflix. This will be done to investigate if Netflix could be considered as a form of media mobility of the post-network era of television. At the end, a conclusion will be made by analyzing the results. The media, navigation, and emphasis affordances will be set aside in this section. These affordances focus namely on what is happening at one singular device, whereas mobility is about using different devices.

### Platform mobility

According to Tryon, platform mobility refers to the possibility to watch films and television series on multiple devices without or with minimal interruption. He adds that it is not just about switching between screens, but also about the availability of internet for example, because internet should make it possible to switch between platforms. This also means that the individual viewer needs access to enough on-demand content.<sup>48</sup>

Since platform mobility is about switching between screens, it is in line with the technical affordances. The technical affordances namely focus on the possibility to be used on various platforms. With the post-network era, the technical affordances are met, but they do not meet platform mobility as much. Most of the television content is still available through the television-set's programming and if one would like to watch a program later or earlier, one has to go to specific websites. There might even be the possibility that one has to pay to watch the specific content (e.g. [www.rtlx1.nl](http://www.rtlx1.nl)). There are also providers that offer the possibility to download an application to watch television 'everywhere', e.g. Ziggo and XS4ALL, but the issue is that an internet connection is required and one has to be in the Netherlands to use the application.<sup>49</sup> So, the post-network affordances have too little on-demand content, are hard to use without internet access, and switching between platforms is not that easy. Thus, the technical affordances are met, because there is a switch between platforms possible. But the platform mobility is not quite met with the technical affordances, because there are some obstacles.

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<sup>48</sup> Chuck Tryon, "'Make Any Room Your TV Room': Digital Delivery and Media Mobility," 289 – 290.

<sup>49</sup> Ziggo, "Online tv-kijken met Ziggo GO," accessed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018, <https://www.ziggo.nl/televisie/online-tv-kijken/>. AND XS4ALL, "Hoe werkt de XS4ALL Televisie App?," accessed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018, <https://www.xs4all.nl/service/diensten/televisie/gebruiken/xs4all-televisie-app/hoe-werkt-de-xs4all-televisie-app.htm>.

Netflix, on the other hand, does also provide the technical affordances, but also meets the platform mobility. Netflix can be used on various platforms and easily allows to continue watching an episode that users have already started watching. Besides, Netflix offers the possibility to download content, to let one still watch the content, even when one is not connected to the internet. Thus, the content of Netflix is easily accessible when switching between platforms and even without the use of internet. This means that the technical affordances provide enough to let Netflix also have platform mobility.

In short, the development of the technical affordances of the post-network era are not far enough to ensure a possibility for platform mobility, because of not enough on-demand content and not enough ease to access the content. The technical affordances of Netflix do have the possibility of platform mobility, because with Netflix switching between platforms is not hard and with the option of downloading content, it is not necessary to be connected with the internet and this means that content is easier to access.

#### Spatial mobility and temporal mobility

Spatial and temporal mobility are closely connected to each other. Spatial mobility focuses on the ability to watch television in different spaces (e.g. in the house) and not just the living room where the television-set is. And temporal mobility provides the possibility for viewers to create their own schedule, since they can choose on what time they want to watch specific content.<sup>50</sup>

So, spatial- and temporal mobility are about switching between spaces to watch and deciding when to watch. This means, that the temporal affordances are of relevance in this case, because of the accessibility, the record-ability and the playback-ability. As stated before, the post-network era provides the record-ability and the playback-ability of the temporal affordances. In other words, the content of the post-network provides the opportunity to choose own content and to make an own schedule, so to watch anytime the users wants. This is in line with the temporal mobility, and this means that the temporal affordances of the post-network era meet the temporal mobility. As shown above, providers like Ziggo and XS4ALL, provide the option to watch television wherever consumers are if they are connected to the internet and in the Netherlands. This is of relevance of the spatial mobility, because this shows that it is possible to watch television in the post-network era at other places than just the room with the television-set in it. Besides, KPN also has the option to watch recorded content on different devices and thus in different spaces.<sup>51</sup> But this is only possible within the house that uses that specific KPN

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<sup>50</sup> Chuck Tryon, "Make Any Room Your TV Room': Digital Delivery and Media Mobility," 289.

<sup>51</sup> KPN, "Overal programma's en series opnemen," accessed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018, <https://www.kpn.com/televisie/extra-diensten/opnemen-pakket.htm>.

account. Still, this is also a form of spatial mobility, because watching television is not only possible in the living room. Thus, the affordances of the post-network era meet both the spatial and temporal affordances.

The temporal affordances of Netflix also meet the spatial mobility as well as the temporal mobility. This is because of the accessibility of Netflix. As explained in the affordances part of Netflix, Netflix can be used in any place and at any time consumers want, if they have the application. Users do not even necessarily have to be connected with the internet, as long as they have downloaded the content when they were connected. Besides, Netflix could also be used in different countries, so this makes it even more accessible anytime and anywhere. Thus, the temporal affordances of Netflix meet the spatial- and temporal mobility.

In short, both the post-network era's and Netflix's temporal affordances meet the spatial and temporal affordances. The difference is that watching television in the post-network era is restricted to a specific home or country and viewers need the accessibility to be connected with internet. With Netflix, when users have the Netflix application they can watch Netflix and they do not necessarily need an internet connection.

### Conclusion

There are some differences of having media mobility between the post-network era and Netflix. The post-network era does have the spatial and temporal mobility but does not possess the platform mobility. Whereas Netflix has all three subdivisions of media mobility. What does this say about the connection between these two media mobilities? The post-network era of television is still dependent on the specific provider consumers use, which makes it hard for the technical affordances to meet the accessibility and so the platform mobility. For Netflix this is different, because Netflix is a worldwide phenomenon and in this way easier accessible. In general, there is a connection between the media mobility of the post-network era and Netflix, since both are accessible at more spaces and places and at different times. Besides, some of the content, e.g. the television series *Friends*, is broadcast on the television-set and later available on Netflix and this also shows a connection.

### **Conclusion**

This affordance analysis focused on the research question: how do the affordances of Netflix relate to the affordances of the post-network era of television? This part will repeat shortly what has been done in this report and especially repeat the findings, so the research question can be answered. Finally, a prediction of the future will be made about the

relationship between the post-network era of television and Netflix and suggestions will be given for future researches.

## The Results

First, the affordances of the post-network era of television and Netflix were analyzed to see that within both, the media, temporal, navigation, emphasis, and technical affordances are available in their own specific way. To continue, the affordances of the post-network era were used to analyze in combination with the concept of flow by Williams and Uricchio. This showed that the flow of Williams is visible, because of the media affordances, but the temporal, navigation, and emphasis affordances make it hard for William's flow to exist, whereas the technical affordances of the post-network era help William's flow to exist by being able to switch platforms. Furthermore, the viewer-centered flow of Uricchio is visible within the post-network era, because of the temporal, navigation, and emphasis affordances, since these affordances are about what the people could do with a medium. But the metadata protocols flow of Uricchio is not met, since the post-network era does not use metadata protocols. This resulted in the conclusion that Netflix's flow differs from the post-network era, because Netflix does not have William's flow, but does have the viewer-centered flow and the metadata protocols flow.

The analysis continued with analyzing the affordances of the post-network era and Netflix and their connection with the subdivisions of media mobility. This showed that the post-network era is connected with the spatial and temporal mobility, whereas Netflix is also connected to these two mobilities, but to platform mobility as well. Still, this does not mean that the two differ too much, because content of the television is sometimes later used on Netflix.

What do these results say about the connection between the affordances of the post-network era and Netflix? Both have all the selected affordance types by Bower, kinds of flow and parts of media mobility, still there are some differences. These differences exist, because Netflix is different from the post-network era of television. Does this mean Netflix is not television or that we should redefine television? I think that Netflix could still be a part of television and still be a form of post-network television to be exact. The resemblances between the post-network era and Netflix are namely bigger than the differences in my opinion. So, my suggestion would be to broaden the definition of the post-network era, whereby VOD services could be included. This means that the affordances of the post-network era should be adjusted, so that they are able to also have the metadata protocols flow and the platform mobility. Even though Netflix does not have Williams's flow, this does not mean that this should not be a part of the post-network era.

Williams's flow could still be a part of the post-network era, if Netflix will be seen as a form of post-network television and not as post-network television itself.

### Prediction for the future

At the moment, Netflix is becoming more and more popular, although watching television via the television-set is still popular as well. Rhiannon Bury and Johnson Li have investigated the use of broadcast viewing, online viewing and mobile viewing. Broadcast viewing means watching the live broadcast television or the time-shifted television (watching recorded content) and online- and mobile viewing focus upon watching television via internet, whereby mobile viewing specifically focuses on watching television on mobile devices, like smartphones and tablets.<sup>52</sup> Their survey showed that broadcast viewing is still popular, but in decline, that online viewing is uprising and that mobile viewing is still done by a limited number of people.<sup>53</sup> I think that the online viewing will become more popular at the end than broadcast viewing. So, I think that VOD services like Netflix will be more attractive than watching television via television-set. But, as McDonald and Smith-Rowsey also say, the future of Netflix is still not clear.<sup>54</sup> The competition is arriving more and more with other VOD services like Videoland in the Netherlands and Disney developing its own VOD service planning to be released in 2019.<sup>55</sup> This might be crucial for the existence of Netflix.

But for now, Netflix is a popular VOD service that provides that ability to watch films and television series anywhere and anytime and will stay popular for quite some time. And furthermore, watching television via a television-set is also still popular and will for now continue to exist.

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<sup>52</sup> Rhiannon Bury and Johnson Li, "Is it Live, or is it Timeshifted, Streamed or Downloaded? Watching Television in the Era of Multiple Screens," In *New Media & Society*, 17.4 (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2015), 593 – 595.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, 606 – 607.

<sup>54</sup> Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey, "Introduction," 11.

<sup>55</sup> Jacob Kastrenakes, "Disney to End Netflix Deal and Launch Its Own Streaming Service," last edited on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, <https://www.theverge.com/2017/8/8/16115254/disney-launching-streaming-service-ending-netflix-deal>.

For further research, I would suggest to investigate the competition of Netflix. What does the arrival of multiple new VOD services mean for the existence of Netflix? Furthermore, I focused solely on the connection between television and Netflix, but as seen, television is a broad concept, which could be investigated more as well. For example, an analysis of what people see as television in comparison what television nowadays means. Moreover, when watching television via the television-set, viewers will see advertisements, and this is not the case with Netflix. So, the use of advertisements and the way viewers watch television could also be an interesting topic to investigate. Hence, there are still enough subjects to analyze when it comes to television and Netflix.

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