

## TECH3022-18 Social Media Practice

### Lecture Twelve: Social Production Communities

#### 1 Introduction

- Consider the social of social media.
- Theoretical approach to defining social production.
- But theory should always be incorporated in practice as 'critical technical practice'

##### 1.1 A Social Network Site is

"A networked communication platform in which participant;

- have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by others, and/or system-level data;
- can publically articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and
- can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site" (p.158)

Elison, N.B. & Boyd, D. M. (2013) Sociality through social network sites; The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies, 151.

#### 2 What is social about a social network?

- Stream of User Generated Content that people produce, consume and/or interact with.
- Content profiles that users-supply to other users and/or systems-level data.
- Making public connections that are viewable and traversable.

These are participatory, networked communication platforms.

##### 2.1 In Social Terms what is being produced?

What platforms, spaces and places are being utilised to accomplish:

- A life online?
- Build an Identity?
- Act as a stage for participation?
- Operate as a socio-technical enterprise?

What tools to people utilise to enable:

- Functional visits?
- Cultural contexts?
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##### 2.2 What is the Social in Social Media?

- What does it mean to make, use or consume media 'socially'?
- What are the skills, techniques and technologies of social production?
- Relations with others
- Interaction between people
- Collective co-existence
- A process of association between individuals creating society
- Two-way communication and social interactivity
- Facilitating organisation, communication between individuals and groups, social consumption and production of media

#### 3 Critical Knowledge

'Now more than ever, we need to understand social media - the good as well as the bad.

We need critical knowledge that helps us to navigate the controversies and contradictions of this complex digital media landscape.

Only then can we make informed judgements about what's happening in our media world, and why.

Showing the reader how to ask the right kinds of questions about social media, Christian Fuchs takes us on a journey across social media, delving deep into case studies on Google, Facebook, Twitter, WikiLeaks and Wikipedia.

### 3.1 What is Social Media?

- What is Social about Social Media?
- Information and Cognition
- Communication
- Community

Collaboration and Cooperative Work

Information, Communication, Collaboration and Community Are Forms of Sociality.

But What is Now Social About Facebook?

### 3.2 Christian Fuchs

- From a media production perspective, just being able to understand or analyse the media is insufficient.
- Digital technology has been used to close the gap between theory and practice.
- We are users/producers of media as part of the routines of everyday life.
- We have to put the theory into production, allow the theory to be part of the practice.
- Digital literacies and critical technical practice.

## 4 Critical Literacies

Learning how things work, such as language and the influence on our opinions or the way software works to influence our behaviour and relationships with others.

### 4.1 Literacy

- The ability to read and write.
- Taught and learned at school, and informally elsewhere.
- Because that's a good thing?

But what about being able to use other media?

"When we talk about being able to use media... as the ability to creatively engage in particular social practices, to assume appropriate social identities, and to form or maintain various social relationships, we use the term 'literacies'" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 12).

### 4.2 Theory and practice?

'The digital dialectic goes beyond examining what is happening to our visual and intellectual cultures as the computer recodes technologies, media, and art forms, it grounds the insights of theory in the constraints of practice' (Lunenfeld 2000, p.xix)

## 5 Technology as Experience

'We don't just use technology; we live with it. Much more deeply than ever before, we are aware that interacting with technology involves us emotionally, intellectually and sensually' (McCarthy and Wright 2004, p.ix).

### 5.1 Being critical

Can involve being self-aware and reflexive about language, assumptions or values that are often designed into technical work but taken for granted.

### 5.2 Values

- Everything we do is informed by what we feel or value, what we need or would like
- We make evaluative judgments about things and values are coded in the things that we use and what we do with them
- For instance, when you choose a new mobile phone, what do you value the most – cost, functionality, fashionability, ethical production and sustainability?
- We react emotionally to values and emotions and feelings (such as belonging, pleasure and status) are an important part of thinking about media culture.
  
- Values are the principles, standards and qualities that people regard as being worthwhile or desirable.
- Values can be social, moral, economic, political, technological and so on.

- Everything we do is informed by what we feel or value, what we need or would like.

### 5.3 Six theses about making things in a digital world:

1. The internet is ancient (in other words: the internet has affordances which connect with ancient, great aspects of humanity).
2. A world with lots of interesting, creative things is always better than a world which offers a small number of popular, smartly-finished things.
3. People doing things because they want to is always better than people watching things because they are there.
4. The distribution and funding possibilities of the internet are better than the traditional models.
5. Small steps into a changed world are better than no steps.
6. The digital internet is good, but hands-on physical things are good too.

What are Gauntlett's values about social media?

### 5.4 Tom Standage – Writing on the Wall

- What is mass about mass media?
- What is social about social media?

## 6 Boulders & Pebbles

"Twenty years ago looking at the media industry was like looking at a large open beach strewn with a few very large boulders. These boulders were the big media companies." David Weinberger: *Small Pieces Loosely Joined*.

'This is the new media business: a beach of pebbles. The big new media companies – Google, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace – deal in pebbles: they aggregate them, navigate you through them, link them together... From a distance they look very big; it's only up close that you can see they are actually made up of lots of pebbles... You have to be beachcombers' Charles Leadbeater (n.d.).

### 6.1 What is the web for?

'We are the true "small pieces" of the Web, and we are loosely joining ourselves in ways we're still inventing' (Weinberger 2002 p.xii)

- How is the web both familiar and strange?
- It is interesting that Weinberger emphasises the social aspects of the web prior to 'Web 2.0' since he is writing around 2001, several years before that phrase emerged.

'A new world is opening up, a world that we create as we explore it' (Weinberger 2002 p.25).

'Space, time, perfection, social interaction [togetherness], knowledge, matter and morality [hope] – this is the vocabulary of the Web, not the bits and the bytes, the dot-coms and not-coms, the e-this and B2That. The Web is a world we've made for one another' (p.25)

Time, Space, Hope, Matter, Knowledge, Togetherness, Perfection.

### 6.2 Space

What kind of place is the web?

- A page in a book is physically next to the adjoining page
- A page on the web is hyperlinked – no limit to the distance between linked pages or what page can be put in a relation with another
- 'Every hyperlink expresses someone's interests and recommendations... The Web shows what we have chosen to care about. And that's exactly what's so special about the Web place. It is made not out of mountains, oceans, deserts and forests. It is made out of humans caring about things together' (Small Pieces, 2002).

### 6.3 iNterest

- When a site or page hyperlinks a number of sites together, it creates nearness based on interest (of the person linking) – 'On the Web, nearness is created by interest' (p.49).

- 'The Web place is defined by interest the way the real world is defined by the accidents of geography. Interest on the Web is, like Web space itself, explosive, out-bound, digressive' (p.55).
- 'What holds the Web together isn't a carpet of rock but the world's collective passion' (p.56).

#### 6.4 eMotion

- Lived space has character – full of things with emotional resonance
- 'Things make space. Things present themselves in terms of their emotional quality. Put things together and you're beginning to build places that have their own affective qualities. Lived space consists of places' (p.47) and
- 'The space of the Web is itself full of places...full of character and meaning. The Web is a place' (p.47).

#### 6.5 Space

- 'Why does the Web – accessed through a computer that shows us a 2-D screen of coloured bits – seem so resolutely spatial when it's not spatial at all?' (p.32).
- 'The Web is a space, but it's different from normal space' (p.41).
- 'not a container waiting to be filled; it is more like a book that's being written' (p.45).
- 'Web pages create Web space' (p.45).
- Hyperlinks are 'the geography of the Web' (p.49).

#### 6.6 pLace-ial

- 'The Web feels spatial because it's "place-ial" (p.50)
- 'The author, and the reader, enjoy the freedom that comes from the liberation of place from space. The Web is in this sense, like a collective, global work of literature. Or a dream' (p.51)
- In other words, the virtual reality of 'cyberspace' – imaginary travel and mediated co-presence of distant others.

#### 6.7 Time

Compared to the time-dominated routines of deadlines, schedules, meetings and work the Web 'reminds us that the fundamental unit of time isn't the mere proximity of moments but our interest in the story' (p.59)

#### 6.8 Threads

'Web time is threaded' (p.60) - 'The different forms of Web conversation are in fact distinguished by the different temporal nature of their threads' (p.60) – communication across time, hyperlinks across space

'It turns out that because real-world space is so hard to move around in, it provides continuity to our stories of ourselves: our story tells of our day's journey. Hyperlinks, on the other hand, enable our attention to fly off and provide no unifying theme beyond what seemed interesting for some reason, any reason. ...The Web's hyperlinked threads are tied together by interests untethered from their usual constraints' (p.64).

#### 6.9 Perfection

- Or rather lack of it – imperfection – the Web delivers an important element of humanity – it's fallible, 'a little bit broken', like us (p.76), enabling us to 'jump around like monkeys without diapers' (p.94)
- A badly designed website, a useless search result, links that don't work
- Slightly chaotic and messy, but necessarily so, otherwise it may never have happened.

#### 6.10 #fail #lol

- 'The sense of freedom on the Web is palpable. The Web is profoundly permission-free and management-free, and we all know it' (p.82)
- 'The Web works because it's broken' (p.83)
- And 'being broken is often a source of delight on the Web; it sometimes even becomes a positive value. The Web actually revels in mistakes, errors, howlers, slips and foibles' (pp.84-85).

#### 6.11 All your base are belong to us'

- Bad translations, 'you suck' exclamations, graveyards of failure, flaming
- Celebration of 'an infinite number of ways to be lopsided' (pp.92-93), informal, released,
- 'The Web isn't just informal. It's informality is in-your-face. In it we hear ourselves being released from impossible ideals of behaviour. We get to kick in the teeth the idealized and constricted set of behaviours known as

professionalism. And we get to shed the limits imposed by whatever level of “political correctness” we think has gone too far’ (p.91).

### 6.12 Liberation

- While we expect some parts of the Web to be perfect – such as shopping sites:
- ‘Imperfection is our shibboleth on the Web, the sign by which we know we’re talking with another human being. Crudeness testifies to our escape from the world of permission...’ (p.94)
- The Web is ‘ a genuine reflection of our imperfect human nature, and a welcome relief from the anal-perfectionism imposed on so much of our real-world lives’ (p.94).

### 6.13 Togetherness

- ‘The Web place is made of humans caring about things together. That last word is important: "together." The Web is in fact a new place for us to be humans together. On the Web, we can be together in new ways’ (Small Pieces, 2002)
- The Web public is a different kind of public to the broadcast public
- People can become famous in the sense of well-known to others through community ‘defined by interest, not geography’ (p.104)
- But more importantly, ‘the Web is about groups’ and ‘Groups are at the heart of the Web’ (p.105)

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