Herzlichen Willkommen im Proseminar

Open Access, Open Content, Open Source – Open Media?

HS 382 | 14:00 – 16:00

:: Kurze Wiederholung: CivilMedia

Civilmedia 09:
Social & Technological Innovation in Open-Access Media
Salzburg, November 5 - 7

- Brings together „international and national alternative media practitioners, researchers, policy makers, activists, and community development workers“
- Reviews the importance of community media and Web 2.0 in fostering social as well as technological innovation.

:: Kurze Wiederholung: CivilMedia

Civilmedia 09:
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- **In which way is open access media socially innovative?**
- Which technological developments have been developed in this field and how are social and technological changes related?
- Which models for future action can we develop?

:: Hausübungen

1. **Bis zum 11.11. 2009**: Überarbeiten der PS-Arbeitskonzepte hinsichtlich der Frage
   a) nach der (teil-)gesellschaftlichen Relevanz. Welche sozial- bzw. kommunikationswissenschaftliche Aspekte spielen eine Rolle? Wen betriffts? Wie? Inwiefern?
   b) welche Rolle spielen Offenheit, Transparenz, Zugang, Partizipation/Kooperation in Ihrem gewählten Thema?

2. **Bis zum 18.11. 2009**: Feedback zur CivilMedia (s. Anleitung)

:: Kurze Wiederholung: Theorie, Konzepte

:: Openness and Political Activism

Characteristics of F/OSS:

- Openness
- Transparency
- Participation/Cooperation
- Integration in decision-making
- Access
- Freedom

F/OSS depict on ethical issues like freedom, openness, and inclusion and can **contribute to the emergence of a cooperative and inclusive society**.

:: Political Activism and the Internet

The new perception and use of the Internet promise to enable:

- decentralized actions,
- a range of possibilities to share and exchange information open and free of charge
- to collaborate equally, and
- to foster intercultural understanding and participation.

These new possibilities have the potential to lay the foundation for a **new way of political participation and social movements to emerge**, but there are also limits because of existing social structures and increasing commercialisation of the Internet.

:: Political Activism and the Internet

Characteristics of the Internet that are relevant for participation and political activism:

1. the foundation for community building,
2. the interrelation of the real and the virtual space,
3. digital divide and social inequalities, and
4. the influence of globalisation.

(cp. Neumayer/Raffl 2008; Neumayer/Raffl/Bichler 2009)

:: Political Activism and the Internet

"Networks include nodes and links, use **many possible paths** to distribute information from any link to any other, and are **self-regulated** through **flat governance hierarchies** and **distributed power**."

Rheingold, Howard (2002). Smart Mobs. The next Social Revolution, p. 163.

Flat hierarchies are essential for political processes since they foster grassroots activities and give civil society the opportunity to engage into political participation **without guidance of institutions or organisations**.

:: Political Activism and the Internet

- Blogs, wikis, and social networking sites provide a technological basis for grassroots action to **coordinate** and for activists to **communicate**.
- Technologically not always FLOSS (conceptually)
- The Internet can support the organisation of topic-oriented pressure groups, protest organisations, and ideological movements (outside the mainstream).
- Development from “build it and they will come” to “they will come and build it” (Birdsall 2007)
- This can support the **emergence of a „participatory culture“**: Henry Jenkins (2006). Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century

:: Participatory Culture (Jenkins)

- Relatively **low barriers** to artistic expression and civic engagement
- Strong support for **creating and sharing** ones creations with others
- Some type of **informal mentorship** whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices
- Where members believe that their **contributions matter**
- Where members feel some degree of **social connection** with one another

:: Example: #unsereuni

Aktuelles Beispiel: #unsereuni

Die Hauptforderungen des Protests sind:

- Bildung statt Ausbildung
- Freier Hochschulzugang
- Ausfinanzierung der Unis
- Gegen prekäre Dienstverhältnisse für Uni-MitarbeiterInnen

from “build it and they will come” to “they will come and build it”

:: Example: #unsereuni

Aktuelles Beispiel: #unsereuni

- Rasche Vernetzung über das Internet und mobile Technologien („ad-hoc Activities)
- Koordination („smart mobs“)
- Kommunikation (Chats)
- Kooperation (Wiki)

:: Participatory Design

- Communities that emerge in cyberspace can lead to enhancement of political activities, but there are certain **disadvantages** as well, that are **inherent in the technology**.
- The outcome, political orientation, and methods for online political activism and participation are **dependent** on the users, developers and producers of technologies.
- **Technology design is a social act** and technicians should be understood in their social role as experts, hackers, laymen, and common users that adapt to their technical needs.

:: Participatory Design

- **Constructing technology is per se a social act.**
- People have the ability to **shape** technologies.
- At the same time technologies **influence society**, they are both, **enabling and constraining**.
- The architecture of technology is **designed by an elite** and by private companies that usually do not consider grassroots activism as a desired goal.
- Very often people tend to **arrange** themselves with technologies, rather than **changing or adapting** them.
- By including users in the design process, users' needs for political participation and grassroots democracy can be considered as a **valuable design guideline**.

:: Social Inclusion

- Although the Internet can **potentially** connect people all over the world, **limitation** in Internet access, lack in computer skills and literacy make the political forum it offers less inclusive.
- Cultural **differences** can lead to **misinterpretations** when political mobilisation enters a global arena through digital social networks.
- The so-called **digital divide** still excludes many people especially in the developing world to use the Internet for political engagement.

:: Social Inclusion & Power Structures

- Social structures are projected on the virtual space.
- This can be discussed in terms of **Bourdieu's understanding of capital:**
- **Economic, social, symbolic, and cultural capita**l, such as education, are important concepts regarding the use of web technologies and (inter)actions in the virtual space.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1997). 'The Forms of Capital'. In: Halsey, A. H./ Lauder, H./Brown, P./ Stuart Wells A. (Eds.). Education: Culture, Economy and Society, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

:: Social Inclusion & Power Structures

- Power relations are transferred as inequalities into the virtual space:

> “Who owns access to your devices, either to push information at you or to pull information from you? Some of the answers will emerge from political processes, but many of them are sensitive to technical design decisions. In that regard, the designs that dominate early in the growth of a technology can have disproportionate power over the way the technology will affect power structures and social lives.”

Rheingold, Howard (2002). Smart Mobs. The next Social Revolution. Perseus Books Groups, Cambridge, p. 96.

:: Social Inclusion & Power Structures

Two extreme perspectives in terms of power relations:

- ICTs can help to increase **control over users**, and privacy would diminish.
- At the same time the Internet (Open Source, Social Software) is associated with a **more powerful role of users** and increasing self-determination regarding content.
- This leads to an enforcement of collaborative democratic possibilities and influence on design.

:: Social Inclusion & Power Structures

These two perspectives are based on **two contrary policy making approaches**:

- On the one hand, one can identify a **top-down approach,** which is characterized by mental disappropriation, loss of control, and surveillance.
- On the other hand a **bottom-up approach** enables the opportunity for self-determined life-styles, participation and protection of personal rights.

:: Social Inclusion & Power Structures

- Current societies are based on **many contradictions**, e.g. between **self-determination and heteronomy**, or **inclusion and exclusion**.
- ICTs foster **cooperation and competition** for rationalizing the accumulation of economic, political, and cultural capital.
- ICTs do not follow predictable, mechanically determined, and one-sided effects, but a set of multiple antagonistic economic, political, and cultural tendencies, and therefore cause both, **opportunities and risks**.

:: Living in Information Societies

- Information and knowledge are central forces and became a **strategic economic resource**.
- Knowledge production is inherently social, cooperative, and historical.
- The **creation of knowledge** usually requires collective efforts, hence it becomes a public good.
- Individual authorship is still considered as the basis of individual property rights and copyrights, although knowledge production becomes more and more networked, interlinked, and collaborative.

:: Living in Information Societies

- The Internet enables **reproduction and free global distribution** of information with the help of technologies, e.g. peer-to-peer-networks.
- Information is a non-rival and intangible good (different with their physical carriers).
- **Physical property can only have one possessor**, whereas information goods can be shared without loosing the possibility of re-using it.
- With the help of intellectual property rights information is **artificially transformed into a scarce resource**. A monopoly for selling and licensing information is established in favour of the information-owner.

:: Living in Information Societies

- Intellectual property rights do not support public goods, but **private accumulation of profit**.
- Benkler concludes that strong intellectual property rights reduce the chance of cooperation, user integration, and user-generated content.

> "The strength of peer production is in matching human capital to information inputs to produce new information goods. Strong intellectual property rights **inefficiently shrink the universe of existing information inputs** that can be subjected to this process"

Benkler, Yochai (2005).'Coase's Penguin, or Linux and the Nature of the Firm'. In: Aiyer, Rishab A. (Ed.). Code. Collaborative Ownership and the Digital Economy, MIT-Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 197.

:: Living in Information Societies

- Apart from a participatory technology design approach real world context has to enhance participation, the emergence of bottom-up discussion and social movements.
- Cultural, political and societal context have to be considered, e.g. current intellectual property rights do not enhance collaboration and participation, on contrary:

  ”the entire universe of peer-produced information gains no benefit from strong intellectual property rights.”

  - **Benkler, Yochai (2005)**.‘Coase’s Penguin, or Linux and the Nature of the Firm’. In: Aiyer, Rishab A. (Ed.). *C*ode. Collaborative Ownership and the Digital Economy, MIT-Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 197.

:: Conclusion

- **Support from conventional media** is needed, in particular to reach audiences without Internet access.
- Requires support from **opinion leaders**.
- **Participatory technology design** (including users in the design process)
- Interrelationship between open content and open access
- Assurance of respecting privacy and avoidance of surveillance technologies
- Societal structures and political concepts are transferred from the offline to the online world.
- “Cyberspace” is a **social space**, on- and offline spheres cannot be seen independently from each other.

:: Theory & Concepts

- The possibilities of the technologies can be used in different ways and the future direction it takes depends upon its actors.
- Civil rights and political freedom cannot be guaranteed by a capitalist system that makes social actions possible only if they are adjusted to their ideologies.
- Commodification of the Internet hinders grassroots/ bottom-up activism which is not directed according the rules of the market, economic benefits and capitalist ideas.
- Open source based technologies can lead to more inclusive ICTs and can support grassroots democracy.

:: Ausblick

Wir sehen uns wieder am

18. November 2009