

Towards a Social Science of Web 2.0:

An Initial Call for Papers

5th & 6th September 2007

National Science Learning Centre (NSLC), the University of York, U.K.

A 2-day event organised by the Social Informatics Research Unit (SIRU), Department of Sociology, University of York in collaboration with the Taylor and Francis Journal *Information, Communication & Society* (iCS) and the ESRC e-Society Programme.

This event focuses on some significant developments in Internet culture that have emerged in the last few years. Although these developments have received widespread media coverage they have so far received little in the way of sustained investigation by the social sciences in the UK. This event is intended to work toward the development of a social science of what has come to be known as Web 2.0 – a much heralded transition in Web media characterised by social practices of ‘generating’ and ‘browsing’, ‘tagging’ and ‘feeds’, ‘commenting’ and ‘noting’, ‘reviewing’ and ‘rating’, ‘blogging’, ‘mashing-up’ and making ‘friends’.



The conference will cover the full range of Web 2.0 resources that fall into the categories that include wikis, folksonomies, mashups and, especially, Social Networking Sites (SNS). So if you are involved in social scientific or cultural research on Myspace, Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, Flickr, Second Life, Del.icio.us or other similar applications then please consider offering a paper or coming along. We also intend to use the conference to bring together those working in the social sciences with others who may be involved in developing or using Web 2.0 applications in their everyday lives as well as policy makers, designers, and so on.



The aim of the event will be to develop critical, theoretical and empirically informed accounts of Web 2.0 not just as a business model but as a complex, ambivalent and dynamic phenomena laden with tensions and of increasing social and cultural significance. The event is intended to provide opportunities for those working on a social science of Web 2.0 to

discuss their ideas and to begin to work through the processes and possible consequences of its rhetoric of 'social participation', 'communal intelligence', and 'collaborative cultures'.

Questions that might structure the event include:



- How can social science deal with Web 2.0?
- How can Web 2.0 applications be used as research tools?
- How can we conceptualise the heterogeneous spaces of Web 2.0?
- What terminology can we find to account for Web 2.0, should we even be labelling it as such?
- How can the fast and ephemeral cultures of Web 2.0 be captured by the rather slower processes of academia and the policy process?
- Does Web 2.0 allow for methodological innovation?
- What are the implications of Web 2.0 for welfare and citizenship?
- What are the implications for privacy and surveillance?
- What are the consequences for localities, senses of belonging, and everyday connections?
- What linkages can be made between Web 2.0 and other social and cultural shifts of recent times?

We are at the stage of putting a draft programme together. If you would like to present your work then please submit a 300 word abstract, including a brief biography and contact details, to Antonia Luther-Jones at alj504@york.ac.uk, by 18th May 2007. Those whose abstracts are accepted will be informed before the 1st June 2007. The cost to participants of the event is likely to be about £75 per day, with a reduced fee for students. Accommodation will be available at the University of York.

Organising committee: David Beer (e-Society Research Fellow and SIRU member); Roger Burrows (Co-director of SIRU, e-Society Programme Co-ordinator and Professor at University of York); Nicholas Gane (Reader at University of York, SIRU member and e-Society programme member); Beverley Geesin (Ph.D Student University of York); Mariann Hardey (Ph.D Student University of York); Michael Hardey (Reader at Hull York Medical School and SIRU member); Leigh Keeble (e-Society Research Fellow and SIRU member); Brian Loader (Co-director of SIRU and Senior Lecturer at the University of York).