Youth Culture and Social Media

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Aim of the course

▶ The aim of the course is to introduce different Internet use practices of the youth with a special emphasis on the possible opportunities and risk when engaging in social media

▶ **After the course:**

▶ -The student is familiar with the main new media theories and empirical case studies on the field

▶ The student has an overview about the opportunities and risks when engaging in social media

▶ The student has the ability to critically analyze social media usage practices of themselves and other users

▶ The student is able to use the information in shaping one's own online behaviour

▶

Course schedule and main themes

24.04 (8.00-11.30) - Is there a "digital generation"?

25.04 (14-00-15.30 and 18.00-19.30) - Generations and inter-generational relations on social media

26.04 (10.00-13.30) - Imagined audience on social media

29.04 (10.00-13.30) - Self-presentation on social network sites

30.04 (10.00-13.30) – Social media: a tool in the fights for democracy or a surveillance mechanism?

▶

Defining the key terms for the course

Ready, set, go …

Young people/youth/youngsters

Young people/youth/youngsters:

▸ Authors argue that rather than being a "natural" category, social categories such as "the youth" or "young people" are socially constructed and defined.

▸ Not only has the term "young" been undergoing significant changes as the age range covering youth, the traits attributed to young people and their position and function in society have changed, but the interpretation of the category is also specific to the social and historical context.

▸ Usually the term is used to refer to individuals in their adolescence, the years of emerging adulthood.

▸

Web 2.0

Web 2.0

‣ **Web 2.0** - a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion. Should be seen as a platform for the evolution of social media

▶

User-generated content

User generated content

- **User Generated Content** (UGC) is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users.

- There are three basic requirements in order to be considered as such:

1) needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a selected group of people;

2) needs to show a certain amount of creative effort;

3) needs to have been created outside of professional routines and practices.

- Due to the combination of technological drivers (e.g. Increased broadband availability and hardware capacity) and social drivers (e.g. digital natives), the UGC is completely different from what it used to be in early 1980ies.

Social media

- **Social Media** - a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.

- There is no systematic way in which different Social Media applications can be categorized.

Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010)

Social presence/ Media richness	Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ self-disclosure: HIGH	Blogs	Social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc)	Virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life)
Self-presentation/ self-disclosure: LOW	Collaborative projects (Wikipedia)	Content communities (YouTube)	Virtual Game Worlds (World of Warcraft)

Generation

▸ "**Generations** are naturally occurring phenomena, which emerge simply as a result of the passing of time; but generations also produce themselves, as their members (and, presumably, non-members too) define the meanings of generational membership"(Buckingham 2006: 3).

▸ (Mediated) narratives and collective rituals celebrate the social history of generation building, the so-called "we sense", i.e. "they begin to share a picture of `their` time` or a script of the drama of their collective development in the course of `their` historical phase"

▸ (Corsten, 1999: 252).

A generation

▸ The **demographic perspective** sees generations as age cohorts of people who were born and happen to be alive at about the same time.

▸ The **cultural approach** stresses that generations are constituted on the basis of shared experience of the same formative events and collective memory.

▸ Age is a biological quality manifested by external attributes which are not optional. Generation and generational belonging are cultural uses of age, opportunities for identity building, which people can

▸ take up and enhance, or not.

▸ A generation = "a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus, hexis and culture, a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort over a finite period of time" (Eyerman and Turner 1998: 93).

▸ Culturally defined generations (such as the Beat Generation or Vietnam War Generation) cannot be fully disconnected from time – rather, they should be seen as synergies of temporal settings and cultural experience.

▸ 'Generation' refers to a collective that may be defined
▸ in relation to many different aspects, e.g. age,

- Media generations are constructed as collectively produced, shared and processed responses to the availability or pervasiveness of a particular technology, which then becomes an element of generational identity.

- Self-construction is not always identical with awareness of, or theoretical reflection on, the constitutive dimension of media technologies. However, it does not also mean that the technological conditions of becoming a generation deprive subjects of all human agency and socio-culturally grounded interpretative propensity, as those authors drawing on the technological determinist legacy often suggest.

- The cultural conception of media generations creates a bridge between two extreme positions: **demographic absolutism** on one hand and **technological absolutism** on the other.

- If demographic absolutism were correct in claiming age to be the only relevant factor in media generationing, then there would be total correlation between technological diets and age i.e. all young people would be using new media and all elderly people would read print newspapers.

- If technological absolutism were correct in putting sole emphasis on technology, then there would be zero correlation between the use of media technologies and age; the dominant technology would penetrate all generations equally.

- The key question is **how people *experience* age and technology** through their cultural environments, which include habits, influences of peer groups, memories of formative or traumatic events and many other culturally grounded variables.

Generations and media

▸ The phenomenon of media generations as a systematic and coherent response to some significant innovation in media technology appeared with the establishment of electronic media, particularly television in the 1950s in the US.

▸ Every generation grows up with its own specific style of media usage and culture, which helps to differentiate the generation from previous ones (Shäffer 2003).

▸ Some scholars have defined them using the term "media generations" (Bolin & Westlund 2009). For example, differentiations have been made between the radio/print generation (born in the 1930s), the TV generation (born in the 1950s) and the mobile technology generation (born

Media research and "age"

▸ Age is often used as a background variable

- a social parameter for distinguishing target groups

- or for describing audience profiles

▸ ***Biological age*** refers to the physical age of individuals or groups, focusing on biological factors which may be conceived of as universal.

▸ ***Psychological*** (***mental***) ***age*** signals that aging consists of different transitional life phases.

- media consumption shifts in different phases

▸ Age groups may also make up ***cultural groups***, which in turn form ***niche markets*** for cultural

▸ production

Generations and marketing

▸ Marketing started to target generations as naturally emerging markets, whose tastes and lifestyles are often specified by a combination of branding and media technologies, e.g. the Playstation Generation (Cordiner 2001), or the Google Generation (Gunter, Rowlands & Nicho

▸
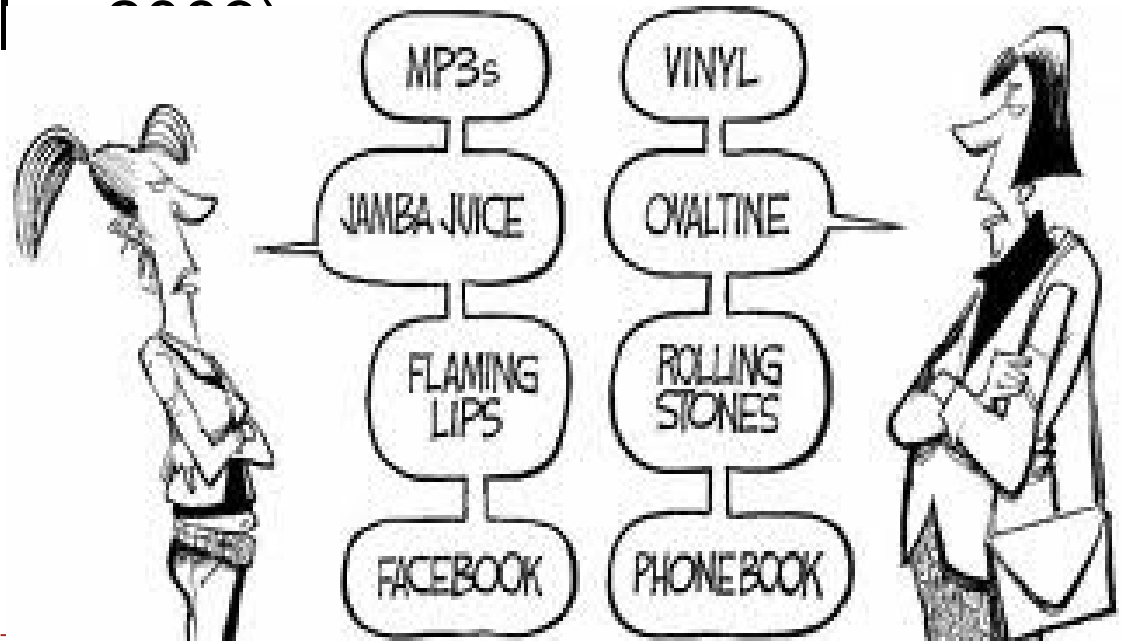
▶ In the wake of the First World War, sociologist Karl Mannheim sought explanations for social change in the continuous exchanges of generations.

Mannheim (1952) has suggested using such concepts as

➢ "**generational location**" - year of birth: all people born in the same year have a 'common location in the historical dimension of the social process' (p. 290).

▶ "**generation as actuality" -** appears when individuals who occupy the same historical location share the same experiences and become realized as a generation also *for* themselves

▶ "**generation units**" - when faced with a specific
▶ phenomenon, individuals can 'work up the material of

Digital native vs digital immigrant

Based on the description of Prensky (2001) please make a drawing of a "digital native" and a drawing of a "digital immigrant"

Manheim's concepts and the present day youth

▸ **"Generation location" -** people born during a common time period and into specific and particular social, cultural, political, economic and historical processes. The conditions, limit them to "a specific range of experiences, predisposing them to a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience" (Mannheim 1952: 291).

▸ **Net generation**: people born between 1979-1997 (Tapscott 1998; Montgomey et al 2004)

▸ **Net generation**: people born between 1980-1994 (Carlson 2005; McGrindel 2007)

▸

Who coins the labels?

▸ The present day children and young people are often defined by their relationship to technology and new media technologies in particular:

▸ Different labels are created to signify the preferences and supposed common characteristics of the new generation –

 - the "digital generation" (Papert 1996),

 - the "Net generation" (Tapscott 1998)

 - the "digital natives" (Prensky 2001),

"No, you weren't downloaded.
Your were born."

▸

▸ **"Generation as actuality" -** the members of the generation are viewed as active agents who share a common response to changes in the social and cultural context.

▸ The advocates of the concept of the digital generation regard technology as a liberating force for young people which helps to create a generation that is more open, democratic, creative and innovative than any other generation before them (Buckingham 2009).

▸

Main characteristics of the digital youth

"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"

- o Independence,
- o Investigation,
- o Immediacy,
- o Innovation,
- o The need to authenticate,
- o Openness,
- o Inclusion,
- o Free expression (cf. Tapscott 1998).

search ID: cwln1316

"My dad's teaching me how to mow the lawn, fish, and use the grill, I'm teaching him how to Google, text, and use an Ipod."

- ▸ Internet has provided young with a position of greater authority and control (Tapscott 1998, Alch 2000, and Livingstone and Bober 2005)

- ▸ Thinking patterns of the new generation have changed (Prensky 2001, Napoli & Ewing 1998)

▸

The digital natives…

▸ **Claimed to have:**

- a strong sense of immediacy,

- a desire for instant gratification,

- a low boredom threshold, due to which they tend to learn new things by interaction and doing, rather than by sitting and taking notes (Gaylor 2002:9)

- optimistic and sociable nature,

- interest in teamwork

- achievement orientation see Raines 2002)

- tend to think in a non-linear, loopy, hyperlink and hopscotch fashion (Gaylor 2002)

▸

Battle of ideas

▸ Mannheim (1952:302) has claimed that there could be subgroups or **"generation units"** formed within the actual generation.

▸ The new group of the young Internet users is called "**Generation C**", where C stands for both "content creation" and for "creativity" more generally (TrendwatchIng.com, 2004-2005).

- Seen as responsible for creating a wide array of alternatives for traditional content creation areas and have introduced user-led content creation to various online environments.

▸

▸ No longer just passive consumers, readers or users of online content but active "produsers" (Bruns 2007)

All just hype?

▸ Sternberg (1998:123): "discussions which claim to account for an entire generation's media use should be treated with a high degree of scepticism".

▸

Participation gap

▸ "Most children are not growing up digital" (Tapscott, 1998: 12).

▸ Several very powerful social and cultural factors, among which are religion, ethnicity, social class and gender, as well as individual differences, interact with the developments outlined above (Tapscott, 1998).

- Visible differences for instance also inside Europe (South vs North)

▸

Generation of lurkers?

▶ The majority of users usually prefer to "lurk around" in various online environments rather than to participate actively (Jenkins 2006)

▶ Kennedy et al (2007: 523): there is a big "disparity between the proposed and the actual use" of the new media in the area of Web 2.0.

▶ Livingstone and Helsper (2007) - a continuum of digital inclusion:

- children usually start using the Internet for plain information seeking,

- leads to the use of online games and entertainment,

- downloading music and communication purposes (MSN, SNS)

- more creative and interactive opportunities (blogs, etc)

▶

Academic hype?

▸ Not all these classifications and all the academic hype about the possible digital generation have been unanimously accepted.

▸ Susan Herring (2008) suggests that adults, especially journalists, researchers and new media producers, created the construct of the Internet Generation. Herring (2008) also problematizes the severe discrepancy in the adult constructions of this new generation:

- On the one hand, mainstream media messages often c**reate moral panic** regarding the possible dangers and risks in online environments.

- On the other hand, the majority of new media research, as well as advertising campaigns of the new media production companies, describe **the new Internet generation as novel, powerful and transformative**.

▸ McKenzie Wark (1999: 219) has claimed that "the whole idea of generationalism, the idea that there are common experiences that define an age cohort, is a media artefact". Hence, due to global mass media and the internet, people all over the world make use of the same images and stories to describe historical events and thus, as argued by Wark (1999: 21), "what a generation shares is not the same experiences, but rather different experiences read via the same image".

▸

- Edmunds (2005) - **9/11 cohort** - leading to the birth of the global generation that shares the global generational consciousness.

- **HOWEVER:** studies indicate that generations still differ in terms of their media consumption habits, i.e. even though the members of different generations make use of the same media, they tend to prioritise them according to the media system they domesticated during their adolescence.

▸ The construction of technological endowment as part of their generational identity is closely related to social meanings ascribed to new technologies in broader social and economic contexts.

▸ Lisa Lee (2005) - "**co-construction**" captures the reciprocal process in which technologies and users mutually construct each other.

▸