

Web 2.0 - The 'Social' Web?

MS 3305 Information, Knowledge, Power

Web 2.0 - The 'Social' Web?

Web 2.0 a buzzword, part of the rhetoric around the resurrected Web

The social Web? Refurbished, debugged, attractive, and inclusive?

What's different to Web v1.0 or v0.97 beta?

MS 3305 Information, Knowledge, Power

"It's not a real concept. It has no meaning. It's a big, vague, nebulous cloud of pure architectural nothingness. When people use the term Web 2.0, I always feel a little bit stupider for the rest of the day."

Joel Spolsky, chief executive of Fog Creek Software and an eager blogger, cited in Schofield 2005

This lecture:

1. Revisiting Web 1.0
2. A "Hi-Tech Gift Economy" (Barbrook)
3. The mixed economy of today's Web
4. Unraveling Web 2.0
5. Web 2.0 - The inclusive Web?

Bibliography see handout!

Revisiting Web 1.0

Web visionaries:

Ted Nelson [Xanadu]
extreme hypertext

Howard Rheingold [Virtual communities]
creating the global village

Tim Berners-Lee [WWW, Semantic Web]
empowerment through standards

Revisiting Web 1.0

Some notions of Web 1.0:

- The Web as universal public access medium ('public sphere')
- The metaphysical Web
- The sober Web

Revisiting Web 1.0

The Web as universal public access medium

"The magic [sic!] of the Internet is that it is a technology that puts cultural acts (...) in the hands of all participants; it radically decentralizes the positions of speech, publishing, film making, radio and television broadcasting, in short the apparatuses of cultural production."

Poster 1995

Revisiting Web 1.0

The metaphysical Web

" (...) the cyber world as a process of personal and communal unshackling, a journey that frees us from traditional constraints on our intelligence, our communities, our meager physical selves. We become free-floating netizens in a more enlightened, almost angelic, realm."

Carr 2005

Revisiting Web 1.0

The sober Web

"The utopian vision of a worldwide agora which would revitalize democracy has to confront the harsh reality of lawsuits and regulations of commerce and entertainment, of political parties, organized interest groups and political activists, and most importantly, of masses of bored and indifferent citizens."

Resnick 1998

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

Barbrook 1998: The Web as a Hi-Tech Gift Economy

A gift economy is an economic system based on "doing a favour for a favour"; a society that lives by (free) contributions that members give to each other

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

Barbrook identifies three major players (in the US) shaping the gift-economy of the Internet:

The New Left of the 60ies
Academics
The Hacker Subculture

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

The New Left of the 60ies ("anarcho-communists")

Gift Economy proves that individuals neither need the state nor the market

Motor for powerful DIY media movement: alternative press, community radio stations, home-brew computer clubs and video collectives.

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

The New Left of the 60ies ("anarcho-communists")

"(Encouraged by McLuhan's predictions ...) the creation of the electronic agora was the first step towards the implementation of direct democracy within all social institutions."

Barbrook 1995

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

The Academic Realm

A gift-economy 'par excellence': academics contribute ('freely') to the body of knowledge built on work of colleagues; in turn, these academics acquire intellectual respect by being cited and referenced in the academic debate.

The 'Hi-Tec Gift Economy'

The Hacker Subculture *

The free flow of information was essential for progress of computational media

"From its earliest days, the technical structure and social mores of the Net has ignored intellectual property."
Barbrook 1998

* S. Levy (1984/1994)
Hackers: Heroes of the
Computer Revolution

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

The Hacker Subculture

"Unix (...) is not so much a product as it is a painstakingly compiled oral history of the hacker subculture."

Stephenson 1999[331]

The 'Hi-Tech Gift Economy'

Barbrook:

Hippie radicalism
+ conservative libertarian economics
= Californian Ideology

Door-opener for commodification of
computational media and
... the Web

The status quo of today's Web

Activities on the Web are embedded in
different, often contradictory,
contexts of interests, values, and
networks.

The Web today:
The universal public access medium
The mirror site of society
The stage for big business (as part of
the Culture Industry)

The status quo of today's Web

The universal public access medium
Worldwide community of electronic
'giving and taking' using

- Websites
- Blogs
- Newsgroups
- Forums
- Peer2Peer
- Chatrooms

The status quo of today's Web

The universal public access medium

Excluded from this medium:

- people without access to the network
(no computer, no telephone)
- people living in countries with
controlled access (e.g. China, Burma,
Iran, Saudi-Arabia, Singapore, Yemen)*
- computer-illiterate people

* see: OpenNet Initiative,
<http://www.opennetinitiative.net>

The status quo of today's Web

The mirror-site of society
Reflecting societal structures,
inequalities, and representations (e.g.
gender, race), reinforcing existing power
relations

Thomas and Wyatt 2000

Loader 1998

Sterne 2000

The status quo of today's Web

The stage for big business and the Culture
Industry

Operations on the Web according
to capitalist strategy:

colonising ground > infiltrating networks >
creating syndicates (e.g. annexing start ups) >
maximising profit

"Digital Capitalism", Schiller 2000

"Hypercommercialism", McChesney 2000

"Cybernetic Capitalism", Robins & Webster 1999

The status quo of today's Web

Today's Web: a mixed economy

"In 2005, the dotcom commodity economy and the hi-tech gift economy are at one and the same time in opposition and in symbiosis with each other."

Barbrook 1998 (commented upon 2005)

Unraveling Web 2.0

Web 2.0 - what's the difference?

Web 1.0		Web 2.0
DoubleClick	-->	Google AdSense
Ofoto	-->	Flickr
Akamai	-->	BitTorrent
mp3.com	-->	Napster
Britannica Online	-->	Wikipedia
personal websites	-->	blogging
evite	-->	upcoming.org and EVDB
domain name speculation	-->	search engine optimization
page views	-->	cost per click
screen scraping	-->	web services
publishing	-->	participation
content management systems	-->	wikis
directories (taxonomy)	-->	tagging ("folksonomy")
stickiness	-->	syndication

From: O'Reilly 2005

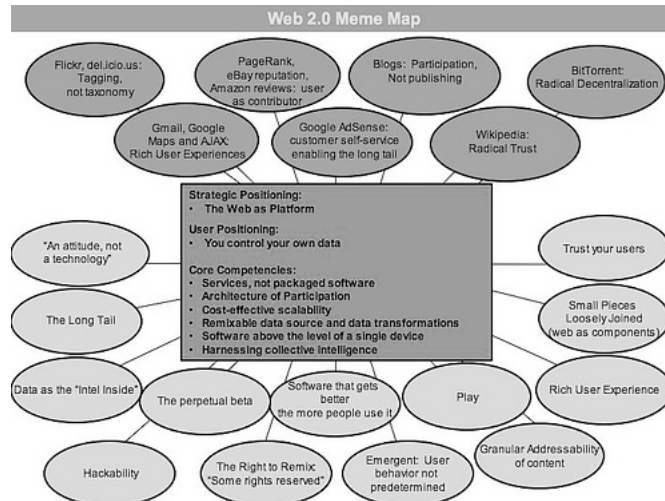
Unraveling Web 2.0

The lowest common denominator:

"The idea of a new, more collaborative internet"

Singel 2005 (Wired)

Unraveling Web 2.0



From: O'Reilly 2005

Unraveling Web 2.0

Some instances of Web 2.0:

- del.icio.us
- Wikipedia
- flickr
- livejournal
- myspace

- lastfm (playlist generator)
- tadalist (list editor)
- writely (text editor from Google)

Unraveling Web 2.0

The layers of Web 2.0:

Appearance
Technology
Ideology
Economy

Unraveling Web 2.0

Appearance

blogging, wikis, feeds, tagging,
social bookmarking, mapping, photo
and video sharing ...

- Wikis
- Folksonomy
- Blogs

Unraveling Web 2.0

Appearance

Wikis

“A website that allows the visitors themselves to easily add, remove, and otherwise edit and change available content, typically without the need for registration. This ease of interaction and operation makes a wiki an effective tool for mass collaborative authoring.”

From Wikipedia

Unraveling Web 2.0

Phenomenology
Folksonomy

Neologism derived from 'taxonomy'

Collaborative categorization of content
using freely chosen keywords, often
referred to as tags

Authors of tags are the main users
and sometimes creators of the content
to which the labels are applied

Unraveling Web 2.0

Appearance
Folksonomy appears

"Organization appears
spontaneously through the actions
of the group"
Singel 2005

Unraveling Web 2.0

Appearance
Blogosphere

Neologism:
web + log + sphere = blogosphere

A blog is a personal home-page in form of a diary; blogosphere is the universe of (interlinked) blogs and bloggers

Unraveling Web 2.0

Appearance
Blogosphere

Common features of blogs:

- reverse chronology
- unfiltered, personalised, opinionated style
- open for comments
- Heavily hyperlinked
- Copy and paste approach
- template design

Unraveling Web 2.0

Appearance
Blogsphere

"If Web 2.0 is harnessing collective intelligence, turning the web into a kind of global brain, the blogsphere is the equivalent of constant mental chatter in the forebrain"
Singel 2005

Unraveling Web 2.0

Technology
e.g. XHTML, RSS, CSS, Ajax ...

Web-based Applications working with
(latest generation's) HTML browser

Highly dynamic, highly standardised

Desktop functionality
(e.g. bookmarking) moves applications
from a local computer to a network

Unraveling Web 2.0

Ideology
The Rhethoric of Web 2.0

"Web 1.0 was commerce. Web 2.0 is people."

Ross Mayfield, CEO of SocialText, a company that sells collaborative wiki software to enterprises, cited in Singel 2005

Unraveling Web 2.0

Ideology
The Rhethoric of Web 2.0

"Harnessing collective intelligence"

"Architecture of participation"

O'Reilly 2005

Social software
Social networking
Rich user experience
The wisdom of crowds

Unraveling Web 2.0

Ideology

The Rhetoric of Web 2.0

The 'early' Web (no version number):
cumbersome, diverse, contested, never
considered for marketing

'2.0' signifies complete product,
remoulded, homogenous, shiny and
state of the art - as prepared for initial
public offering

Unraveling Web 2.0

Economy

The new business model

"Web 2.0 is shaking up the status quo in
web publishing, and feeding a surge of
dealmaking"
Singel 2005

Internet giants snap up start-ups, e.g:
Flickr & del.icio.us > Yahoo
Myspace > Murdoch
Writely > Google

Web 2.0 - All inclusive?

Web 2.0 apps contribute to establish the idea of the gift-economy; however: Internet has always been an open-access medium

Web 2.0 applications contribute to the diversity of narrative genres on the Web ("participatory media") Blood 2005

Web 2.0 apps. contribute to eroding borders between 'public sphere' and 'market place'

Web 2.0 - All inclusive?

David Wilcox (2006), 'Digital divide in the era of social networking'

Social inclusion by digital inclusion:

- easy participation, engagement through interaction (biggest benefit)
- personalisation
- networking (social and digital)

"Go with the Web 2.0 flow!"