

Critique, Democracy, and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society.
Towards Critical Theories of Social Media.
The Fourth ICTs and Society-Conference.

Uppsala University. May 2nd-4th, 2012.

Call for Abstracts

Confirmed Keynote Speakers
* Andrew Feenberg (Simon Fraser University, Canada): Great Refusal and Long March: How to Use Critical Theory to Think About the Internet.
* Charles Ess (Aarhus University, Denmark): Digital Media Ethics and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society
* Christian Christensen (Uppsala University, Sweden): WikiLeaks: Mainstreaming Transparency?
* Christian Fuchs (Uppsala University, Sweden): Critique of the Political Economy of Social Media and Informational Capitalism
* Graham Murdock (Loughborough University, UK): The Peculiarities of Media Commodities: Consumer Labour, Ideology, and Exploitation Today
* Gunilla Bradley (KTH, Sweden): Social Informatics and Ethics: Towards a Good Information Society
* Mark Andrejevic (University of Queensland, Australia): Social Media: Surveillance and Exploitation 2.0
* Nick Dyer-Witheford (University of Western Ontario, Canada): Cybermarxism Today: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in 21st Century Capitalism
* Peter Dahlgren (Lund University, Sweden): Social Media and the Civic Sphere: Perspectives for the Future of Democracy
* Tobias Olsson (Jönköping University, Sweden): Social Media Participation and the Organized Production of Net Culture
* Trebor Scholz (New School, USA): The Internet as Playground and Factory
* Ursula Huws (University of Hertfordshire, UK): Virtual Work and the Cybertariat in Contemporary Capitalism
* Vincent Mosco (Queen's University, Canada): Marx is Back, but Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite? On the Critical Study of Labour, Media, and Communication Today
* Wolfgang Hofkirchner (Vienna University of Technology, Austria): Potentials and Risks for Creating a Global Sustainable Information Society

Conference Topic

This conference provides a forum for the discussion of how to critically study social media and their relevance for critique, democracy, politics and philosophy in 21st century information society.

We are living in times of global capitalist crisis. In this situation, we are witnessing a return of critique in the form of a surging interest in critical theories (such as the critical political economy of Karl Marx, critical theory, etc) and revolutions, rebellions, and political movements against neoliberalism that are reactions to the commodification and instrumentalization of everything. On the one hand there are overdrawn claims that social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, mobile Internet, etc) have caused rebellions and uproars in countries like Tunisia and Egypt, which brings up the question to which extent these are claims are ideological or not. On the other hand, the question arises what actual role social media play in contemporary capitalism, power structures, crisis, rebellions, uproar, revolutions, the strengthening of the commons, and the potential creation of participatory democracy. The commodification of everything has resulted also in a commodification of the communication commons, including Internet communication that is today largely commercial in character. The question is how to make sense of a world in crisis, how a different future can look like, and how we can create Internet commons and a commons-based participatory democracy.

This conference deals with the question of what kind of society and what kind of Internet are desirable, what steps need to be taken for advancing a good Internet in a sustainable information society, how capitalism, power structures and social media are connected, what the main problems, risks, opportunities and challenges are for the current and future development of Internet and society, how struggles are connected to social media, what the role, problems and opportunities of social media, web 2.0, the mobile Internet and the ubiquitous Internet are today and in the future, what current developments of the Internet and society tell us about potential futures, how an alternative Internet can look like, and how a participatory, commons-based Internet and a co-operative, participatory, sustainable information society can be achieved.

Questions to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

* What does it mean to study the Internet, social media and society in a critical way? What are Critical Internet Studies and Critical Theories of Social Media? What does it mean to study the media and communication critically?
* What is the role of the Internet and social media in contemporary capitalism?
* How do power structures, exploitation, domination, class, digital labour, commodification of the communication commons, ideology, and audience/user commodification, and surveillance shape the Internet and social media?
* How do these phenomena shape concrete platforms such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc?
* How does contemporary capitalism look like? What is the role of the Internet and social media in contemporary capitalism?
* In what society do we live? What is the actual role of information, ICTs, and knowledge in contemporary society? Are concepts like network society, information society, informational capitalism, etc adequate characterizations of contemporary society or overdrawn claims? What are the fundamental characteristics of contemporary society and which concept(s) should be used for describing this society?
* What is digital labour and how do exploitation and surplus value generation work on the Internet? Which forms of exploitation and class structuration do we find on the Internet, how do they work, what are their commonalities and differences? How does the relation between toil and play change in a digital world? How do classes and class struggles look like in 21st century informational capitalism?
* What are ideologies of the Internet, web 2.0, and social media? How can they be deconstructed and criticized? How does ideology critique work as an empirical method and theory that is applied to the Internet and social media?

* Which philosophies, ethics and which philosophers are needed today in order to understand the Internet, democracy and society and to achieve a global sustainable information society and a participatory Internet? What are perspectives for political philosophy and social theory in 21st century information society?
* What contradictions, conflicts, ambiguities, and dialectics shape 21st century information society and social media?
* What theories are needed for studying the Internet, social media, web 2.0, or certain platforms or applications in a critical way?
* What is the role of counter-power, resistance, struggles, social movements, civil society, rebellions, uproars, riots, revolutions, and political transformations in 21st century information society and how (if at all) are they connected to social media?
* What is the actual role of social media and social networking sites in political revolutions, uproars, and rebellions (like the recent Maghrebian revolutions, contemporary protests in Europe and the world, the Occupy movement, etc)?
* How can an alternative Internet look like and what are the conditions for creating such an Internet? What are the opportunities and challenges posed by projects like Wikipedia, WikiLeaks, Diaspora, IndyMedia, Democracy Now! and other alternative media? What is a commons-based Internet and how can it be created?
* What is the role of ethics, politics, and activism for Critical Internet Studies?
* What is the role of critical theories in studying the information society, social media, and the Internet?
* What is a critical methodology in Critical Internet Studies? Which research methods are needed on how need existing research methods be adapted for studying the Internet and society in a critical way?
* What are ethical problems, opportunities, and challenges of social media? How are they framed by the complex contradictions of contemporary capitalism?
* Who and what and where are we in 21st century capitalist information society? How have different identities changed in the global world, what conflicts relate to it, and what is the role of class and class identity in informational capitalism?
* What is democracy? What is the future of democracy in the global information society? And what is or should democracy be today? What is the relation of democracy and social media? How do the public sphere and the colonization of the public sphere look like today? What is the role of social media in the public sphere and its colonization?

The conference is the fourth in the ICTs and Society-Conference Series (http://www.icts-and-society.net). The ICTs and Society-Network is an international forum that networks scholars in the interdisciplinary areas of Critical Internet Studies, digital media studies, Internet & society studies and information society studies. The ICTs and Society Conference series was in previous years organized at the University of Salzburg (Austria, June 2008), the University of Trento (Italy, June 2009) and the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (Spain, July 2010).

About Uppsala, Uppsala University and the Department of Informatics and Media

Uppsala University (http://www.uu.se) was founded in 1477 and is the oldest university in the Nordic countries. Every year 45 000 undergraduate and graduate students enroll for classes. Uppsala is an academic and students-oriented city with old academic tradition. The Department of Informatics and Media (http://www.im.uu.se) is a newly established institution at Uppsala University. Its research focuses on understanding and designing digital media in the information society. Among its educational programmes is a new master's programme in Digital Media & Society that will start in August 2012.

Early May is a particularly nice time to come and visit Uppsala. It is the time of spring festivities and the awakening of nature and the city. The end of April has since medieval times been a time of celebrating the spring, especially in Eastern Sweden. Uppsala and especially Uppsala's students have participated in this tradition, especially on the last of April ("sista april", Valborg, http://www.valborgiuppsala.se/en) that features various celebrations and special activities all over the town.

Time Plan
February 29th, 2012, 17:00, Central European Time (CET): Abstract Submission Deadline
Until March 11th, 2012: information about acceptance or rejection of presentations
March 30th, 2012, 17:00, CET: registration deadline
May 2nd-4th, 2012: Conference, Ekonomikum, University of Uppsala, Kyrkogårdsgatan 10, Uppsala

Abstract Submission
a) For submission, please first register your profile on the ICTs and Society platform: http://www.icts-and-society.net/register/
b) Please download the abstract submission form: http://fuchs.uti.at/wp-content/uploads/ASF.doc ,
insert your presentation title, contact data, and an abstract of 200-500 words. The abstract should clearly set out goals, questions, the way taken for answering the questions, main results, the importance of the topic for critically studying the information society and/or social media and for the conference.
Please submit your abstract until February 29th, 2012, per e-mail to Marisol Sandoval: marisol.sandoval@uti.at

Organizer
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Co-organizers:
* ICTs and Society Network http://www.icts-and-society.net
* European Sociological Association – Research Network 18: Sociology of Communications and Media Research, http://tiny.cc/hpdao
* tripleC – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society, http://www.triple-c.at
* Unified Theory of Information Research Group (UTI), Austria, http://www.uti.at
* Department of Information and Media Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark, http://www.imv.au.dk/en/studies/
* Institute for Design & Assessment of Technology, Vienna University of Technology, Austria http://igw.tuwien.ac.at/
* Jönköping University, School of Education and Communication, Sweden, http://hj.se/en/about-the-university/information-material/campus-in-360-degrees/school-of-education-and-communication.html

Conference Board and Organization Committee
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Verena Kreilinger, Unified Theory of Information Research Group
Wolfgang Hofkirchner, Vienna University of Technology + UTI Research Group

Registration and Conference Fee
Registration will open in early 2012 and more information about how to make payments will follow.
Registration fees:
Regular conference fee, including the conference dinner: 130 € or 1200 SEK
Regular conference fee, excluding conference dinner: 85 € or 780 SEK
Student conference fee, including the conference dinner: 110 € or 1000 SEK
Student conference fee, without conference dinner: 60 € or 550 SEK

Hotel Booking
More information about hotels in Uppsala will follow.

Welcome to Uppsala in Spring 2012!