

EMPOWERING THROUGH INFORMATION CULTURE: PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, A STEPPING STONE? A THEORETICAL REFLECTION

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OUTLINE

- Empowerment through information culture: definitions, paradoxes, tensions
- Participatory culture, a potential? an « opportunity to create new possibilities »?
- Challenges for Information Culture

DEFINITIONS... PARADOXES, TENSIONS

- *Empowering through « information literacy », a new semantics developed since 1970s*
 - . put forward in the Alexandria Proclamation;
 - . renewed in the context of participatory and contributive culture, with a new challenge: bridging the participation gap
- *Many claims or assumptions about the potential of participatory culture but a lack of definitions, tensions and paradoxes*

DEFINITIONS... PARADOXES, TENSIONS

- *Empowerment, an ambiguous concept that needs to be used with caution*
 - process of emancipation, with *focus on* « *the power to act* »: (re)appropriation of power in everyday life (more control);
 - *idea of development*: capacity to have an impact on the environment, to create new possibilities (being creative), and to find within himself his own rules;
 - *but action is not enough*: necessity being conscious of the links between action, environmental conditions and experience; and risk of a normative approach

DEFINITIONS.... PARADOXES, TENSIONS

- *Power of information, a lack of definition*
 - « power » involves allocation of resources, ability to organize and use these resources (skills) and minimal information (knowledge);
 - related to information culture, various forms of power :
 - . developmental perspective, catalyst for change;
 - . emancipatory process, preoccupied with critical thinking and social inclusion;
 - . logic of shared knowledge with social media
- //facing informational capitalism

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, A STEPPING STONE?

- *“Power to act”, at the core of the reflection on media convergence*
 - an evolution « *from individual expression to community involvement* » (H. Jenkins);
 - communication relations are displaced // social development and process of thought production, at a collective level
 - . new relationship between technologies, markets, audiences; changes are cultural;
 - . new way of thinking the relations to media and information: navigating through several worlds and formats of information.

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, A STEPPING STONE?

- *Claims about the potential of new media, bearer of democracy and empowerment*
 - increase of the ability to act, via archiving, annotating, recirculating media contents;
 - creation and circulation of information on a planetary scale, from the mass to the mass;
 - beyond information and knowledge sharing, community involvement and active participation in the culture produced;
- *knowledge, not located in texts, but in networks of actors and artifacts // co-construction of situated meanings*

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, A STEPPING STONE?

- *An “opportunity to create new possibilities” or a form of “policy marketing-speak” ?*
 - an instrumental, technical rhetoric: participation intrinsically seen as a good thing; technique and tools, ensuring success and empowerment (faith in technology and resources)
 - new media seen as interactive, regardless of the activities undertaken;
 - community, conceptualized as something natural or desirable;

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, A STEPPING STONE?

- *Increased participation // digital technologies and social media; but source of dependence as well as autonomy and power*
 - confusion between “means” (technology, resources) and “end”: efficiency is not empowerment
 - action is not a guarantee of empowerment, necessary for individuals to be the “authors” of their actions;
 - confusion between consumption and community participation or contribution
 - necessary to construct “informational view ” on the participatory and contributive process;

CHALLENGES FOR INFORMATION CULTURE

- *Beyond local, contingent, providing tools for thinking in a comprehensive and generic way*
 - identifying the structuring dimensions of information;
 - developing a common language on communication, participation, and merging knowledge: “*new universal documentary grammar*” (O. Ertzscheid) about “*consulting-confronting-participating-sharing*”
 - . worldviews and value systems carried by social media;
 - . socio-technical dynamics and their effects;
 - . new discursive configuration (narrative knowledge, anthological trend...)

CHALLENGES FOR INFORMATION CULTURE

- *Towards a (re)configuration of information culture*
 - in a more cultural and holistic way (special echo in France for a cultural approach);
 - integrative dynamics// participatory practices;
 - logic of continuity, expansion of knowledge
 - . several orders of knowledge;
 - . referring to representations at a time instrumental, cognitive, social, cultural, participatory, contributive.

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