



Call for Papers for volume 9, n° 2(18)/ 2016

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Social media: between freedom and utopia

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Social media (SM) is taking an increasing part in the communicative mediated exchanges. If the principle of social networks is not a specificity of the XXI century, their place on the Internet has allowed their expansion, which by length and forms has no precedent. The number of contributors is steadily increasing. The variety of SM features makes difficult to approach each support. Nevertheless, it is possible to find common features between Facebook, Tweeter, YouTube or Flickr. Public authorities, private companies, and media evoke the SM as a very positive contribution to the economic future and social mass. Others see them as tools for the expression of the minorities and cultural diversity. Considering this enthusiasm without suggesting others like Minitel in France, or IT beginnings, we propose a critical approach by assessing their usages or considering, for example, the excluded from the SM or the abuses of the system by the political powers or others.

This issue of the Journal *Essachess - Journal for Communication Studies* follows the international conference “Social Media. A space of freedom to take ownership or a stillborn utopia?” organized by the UNESCO Chair of “Journalistic and media practices”, at the University of Strasbourg on November 23-25, 2015. It will consider the consequences of the development of SM in different directions by encouraging an interdisciplinary approach. Many areas could be examined here: politics, law, international, economic, touristic, cultural, security, social.

Proposals for papers will be expected to encompass the following axes:

Axis 1: Relationships and interactions of SM in their ecosystem - Societal Impacts

SM are first examined in the context of "network (s) of network", in this case, the Internet, and more widely in the physical environment that allows access and exchange of their communications: telecommunications networks. These networks are based on a representative model - layered model (infrastructure, connections, services) - which shows the relationships and interactions at various levels and allows to understand the potential and complexity, but also the associated risks. This relational framework forms the constituent basis for a real ecosystem where exchanges grow almost exponentially mainly to their natural matrix. This ecosystem generates financial flows in relationship to the audience and communication flows that led to the establishment of a system of oligopolies worldwide. It is, therefore, important to analyze holistically the economic aspects as well as the governance aspects of SM (particularly dealt by the Forum on Internet Governance (FIG), but also subjects to the fields of legislation and international regulations) in the framework of their environment, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary. We then can examine the SM concerning their practices and their uses, including their representation in their respective societies and by converging them with the exchanged content, to identify and assess the social impacts. This review involves the consideration of some communicational problems ("information and communication") as well as sociological and behavioral problems to reinforce the validity of the identified impacts, demonstrating the relevance of the interdisciplinary approach to the research activity dedicated to SM.

Axis 2: Does the SM give way to empowerment to Internet users?

The ordinary Internet user has the right of expression and can have the feeling of being heard or read by the SM. In this, the SM are utopian, the full democracy utopia for the rich countries, the evolving democracy utopia for developing countries (DC). But we have to analyze the impact of SM on the exercise or the advent of

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democracy, by paying special attention to developing countries (Africa, as an example). The researches on the "citizen journalism" have shown the limits of this concept so that we could question the limits of Web 2.0. The SM also allow some individuals to become in a short time global players such as Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook founder. The revelators like Edward Snowden and Julian Assange of serious military acts or global monitoring actions by the United States are other examples. But as in the "citizen journalism", there may be a professionalization of SM, which can result in the drifts such as paid generator robots of "likes", a source of profits realized from the sale of personal data to third parties. How to manage data protection of SM? What consequences does it have for what some call a wind of freedom blowing on the Internet? It should also be examined why the SM are the perfect place for young people and how their uses vary among generations and world region.

Axis 3: Language, Cultures, and SM

The Linguistic diversity has undoubtedly benefited from the development of the Internet as shown in the acceptance of the use of non-Latin characters in the domain names. What about SM? Are they a favorable element for relationships within a culture and between cultures? If so, how? Do the cultural minorities benefit from it? Are there significant examples of cross-borders SM that break the barriers of the nation-state? What about Scotland, Catalonia or Egypt where the media has a vital role assigned to SM? Should we be more careful in judgments and consider other more powerful tools? What kind of help could be designated by SM to an initiative as net.lang supported among others by Unesco and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie? What are the possibilities of the expression of linguistic and cultural diversities offered by the SM? What was the role of the civil society, particularly within the WSIS (World Summit on the Information Society), to develop them? Do the SM practices differ from those of the Internet? Behind these questions is emerging another one about the cultural diversity and identities in a world that tends towards both globalization and localisation. Finally, there is the question regarding a linguistic norm. To what extent the SM allow the expression of linguistic diversity and do they weaken or strengthen the norm?

Important Deadlines

- **February 1, 2016:** submission of the proposal in the form of an abstract of maximum 2 pages. The proposal must include a list of recent references;
- Mars 1, 2016: acceptance of the proposal;
- **July 30, 2016:** full paper submission;
- October 1st, 2016: full paper acceptance.

Papers can be submitted in English or French. The abstracts should be in English and French, max. 2 pages followed by 5 keywords. Please provide the full names, affiliations, and e-mail addresses of all authors, indicating the contact author. Papers, and any queries, should be sent to:

essachess@gmail.com

Authors of the accepted papers will be notified by e-mail. The journal will be published in December 2016.