

# The Co-Production of Knowledge: Social Media, STS and ...

Three-Day Symposium to be held at  
University of York, UK  
July 18-20 2012

## Call for Papers

The ubiquitous social and cultural adoption of social media, such as *Twitter*, *Google*, *Wikipedia*, *YouTube* and *Facebook* can be seen to present a significant example of scientific and technological innovation in many contemporary societies. While some studies of social media and, more specifically, Web 2.0 platforms built around user-generated content, have made reference to the importance of the field of science and technology studies (STS) for understanding their development and diffusion, scholars working within this academic framework have yet to fully turn their focus on this area. This three-day symposium is intended to explore the intersection between STS and social media inquiry, with a specific focus on how Web 2.0 is both generative and challenging of different forms of knowledge (co-)production and the authority it commands.

- The user-centred and mass-collaboration characteristics of social media platforms have a clear affinity with recent STS models of the co-construction of technologies. Notions such as ‘prosumerism’ have been used to describe this blurring of the relationship between the consumer and producer. However, we need to ask whether this is to be seen as co-construction or primarily a re-engineering of labour relations and the locus of production? We also need to ask whether the ubiquity extends across all social media for all types of content. In other words, are new forms of expertise being inscribed, or are old knowledge hierarchies being reinforced?
- STS challenges the traditional perception of scientific ‘discovery’ and technological advancement, to demonstrate the co-production of claims to knowledge and the different forms and assemblages of knowledge this involves: how does this map onto commentaries on the importance of lay knowledge and ‘citizen science’ found in Web 2.0 as individuals and groups distribute ideas and information across their social networks? Could this provide a new impetus for ‘public interest science’?
- How do the same issues relate to the social sciences themselves: how might Web 2.0 provide opportunities for new forms of data and data analytics (for example, as ‘virtual knowledge’ via crowdsourcing, real-time data streaming, by-product

- data etc) and in what ways do these challenge conventional social science by opening up questions about what data itself constitutes and what order of being it represents?
- How might lay, amateur knowledge be mobilised as 'citizen science' and what warrant, authorisation and location in established science might it secure? How might the contribution of Web 2.0 science platforms differ from the amateur societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries?
  - It has been claimed that algorithms and code play an increasingly powerful part in shaping and constituting everyday life, it has even been claimed that algorithms are creating new rules and power structures that unknowingly come to restructure social hierarchies and divisions. How, for example, do algorithms make decisions for us? How do algorithms bypass or re-craft human agency? What are the implications of this? Exactly how do algorithms, code and metrics shape everyday life and access to knowledge?
  - Do the open source platforms and social media tools of Web 2.0 come into tension with the international standardisation and codification of global ICT infrastructures and local and global knowledge infrastructures?
  - Finally, the more celebratory characterisations of social media emanating from the marketing world typically lack a critical focus: can social media and STS analyses build a political economy of Web 2.0 to provide such a focus, by explicitly addressing issues of participatory surveillance, exclusion and control?

Papers are invited that explore these broad questions around a number of possible themes, including:

- The boundaries and future of social media as a medium of knowledge creation, dissemination, and regulation
- The co-production of knowledge via Web 2.0 platforms
- Knowledge, expertise and disruptive/disrupted authority
- Capturing social media: the commercial/political exploitation by or empowering of Web 2.0
- Ownership, dissemination and use of scientific knowledge
- E-governance and the regulation of knowledge within social media
- National practices and global opportunities
- Novel forms of knowledge creation through group processes, archiving, digitization etc.
- Public and visible science
- Scientific controversies online

**Confirmed plenary speakers include:**

Geof Bowker, University of Pittsburgh

Leah Lievrouw, UCLA

Adrian MacKenzie, Cesagen, University of Lancaster

Rob Proctor, e-Research Centre, University of Manchester

Robin Williams, ISSTI, Edinburgh

Sally Wyatt, e-Humanities Programme, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences

This conference is intended to bring together some of the leading scholars in the fields of STS, Communication and Social Media analysis, and the history and philosophy of science to critically explore these issues.

Please send abstracts of proposed papers to [sarah-shrive-morrisn@york.ac.uk](mailto:sarah-shrive-morrisn@york.ac.uk) by 29 February 2012

Registration information is available on the SATSU site:

[www.york.ac.uk/satsu](http://www.york.ac.uk/satsu)

*Conference organising committee:* David Beer, Darren Reed, Mike Hardey, Brian Loader, Sarah Shrive-Morrison, Andrew Webster, Robin Williams, Sally Wyatt

The deadline for this call for papers is 29 February 2012. If you are interested to submit an individual paper or panel including 3 papers please go to web-link or contact email [satsu@york.ac.uk](mailto:satsu@york.ac.uk)

**Conference Fees**

The ICS conference is completely funded through self-finance. *iCS* therefore needs to charge a conference fee applicable to all participating in this conference, including speakers. However, all panel organisers, speakers and moderators will receive a £25 discount on the conference fee. The conference fee covers the administration and production of the conference, hire of venue and a/v equipment, and the catering costs. The estimated conference fees for this coming year are: Full fee between £100-150; Concessions between £75-£125; Day fee between £75-125 (all fees to include lunch).