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News and Information Media in the Informational Economy: In Search of a Framework for Aesthetic Network Analysis

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Abstract
How can prosumers, crowd-/cloudsourcing and collaborative intelligence form the basis of economically sustainable business models in the short-, medium- and long run? A point of departure is a working title: Aesthetic Network Analysis. Aesthetic experience is a determining factor for so-called "Web 2.0 users," also when engaging in such network activities as prosuming and crowdsourcing. A framework for Aesthetic Network Analysis must be developed in order to understand the so-called "Enterprise 2.0." Such a framework must be based on the philosophy of the aesthetic experience rooted in Baumgarten's aesthetics, i.e. a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to aesthetics that includes a metaphysical idea of "added value."

Keywords: Web 2.0, aesthetic, invetion, prosumer, crowdsourcing

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News- and Information Media in the Informational Economy
– in Search of a Framework for Aesthetic Network Analysis

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> *The future is already here. It's just unevenly distributed.*
> William Gibson

> *The other is what is never inventable and will never have waited for your invention.*
> *The call of the other is a call to come, and that only happens in multiple voices.*
> Jacques Derrida

The increasing use of Web 2.0 technologies – emergent social software platforms – in companies, between companies and their partners or customers announces radical changes. The Enterprise 2.0 is emerging.

The border between producers and consumers is blurring, customers become *prosumers* and traditional IPR owners have to adjust to the conditions of open network collaboration, (free) open licenses, copying, remixing and even hacking. Traditional divisions between and within industries are replaced by new global premises in the networked information economy. The competitive or *innovative* advantage in this scenario is: Who can create a rich community, where users interact with each other in order to improve products. And thus, the billion dollar question seems to be: How can *prosumers*, *crowd-/cloudsourcing* and *collaborative intelligence* form the basis of economically sustainable business models in the short-, medium- and long run?

However, as Web technology develops unbelievably fast, will not soon Enterprise 3.0 or Organization 4.0 emerge from the horizon? New technologies that connects intelligence implies a Web 3.0 and the combination of such with increased social connectivity already point at a Web 4.0 – a metaweb of potentially infinite informational and social connectivity or so-called 'intelligent agents' – a *less evil* Web, says some. And, when one gives all this some (extended) thought, is not the very idea of competitive advantages on the basis of open network collaboration a contradiction in terms?

What should we prepare for? What is mere hype and what is essential to (business) innovation and strategy? And what is – and this might be the right question to ask – essential to the (Web n.0) user?

Questions like these have led me to the preparation of a business PhD prospectus with one of Denmark's two leading media vendors, Jyllands-Posten/Politikens Hus; an (in principle) non-profit, public-service-like, private organization with a normative fundament for its publishing and news/advertising as its core business model. I am in the midst of writing the funding application and what follows synthesizes on the main ideas behind the prospectus.

In 1987 in *Psyche: Inventions de l'autre* Derrida wondered: "Why is the word *invention*, that tired, worn-out classical word, today experiencing a revival, a new fashionableness, and a new way of life?" And to elaborate: "A statistical analysis of the occidental *doxa* would, I am sure, bring it to light: in vocabulary, book titles, the rhetoric of advertising, literary criticism, political oratory, and even in the passwords of art, morality, and religion. A strange return of a desire for invention: "One must invent". Not so much create, imagine, produce, institute, but rather invent." To respond to his wonder, Derrida argues that the techno-epistemo-anthropological discourse dominating since late 17th century has *authorized* but two types of invention: Stories and machines - and equaled both to production. One can invent either by producing narratives or by producing a new operational possibility - a new technology. However, this "invention-production" only discovers or reconfigures existing material; it does not create anything *new*. By deconstructing the dominant (invention) discourse Derrida reveals that the appearance of something genuinely *other* is a (logical) impossibility unless one deconstructs the concept 'invention' within an onto-theological horizon. This leads Derrida to the conclusion that a metaphysics for techno-science and humanism is called for. Even when leaving out the complexities of Derrida's analysis, the main point remains clear: The late Eighties' *occidental* desire to re-invent invention pointed at insufficiencies in the *legitimizing* frameworks for invention and, more generally, at insufficiencies in the Cartesian-Kantian-based frames of reference.

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Time changes and human concepts change. In 1999 D. Attridge corresponded with Derrida's text inquiring into the now fashionable word *innovation* – and with similar results: Though etymology ties innovation to slightly different semantics, at the turn of the millennium the desires of the West was unchanged and so was the occidental doxa; efforts to re-invent or innovate 'innovation' remained meaningless. And yet, when I – in these very early days of 2009 – ask my new friend Google about invention and innovation, she gives me 67 million and 126 million different clues, respectively. For "Enterprise 2.0" I get 2.100.000, approximately.

I am as puzzled as Derrida was twenty years ago: Why this ubiquitous desire for innovation? When I look at my three search words and the number of hyperlinks they produce, immediately another question comes to my mind: What is it we desire to encounter on the Web? And then – keeping Derrida's conclusions in mind – comes the question: What kind of reference framework can help me find meaningful answers?

The Other[1] is an ethical term – and somewhat overworked. Nevertheless, a new framework should account for both the individual and the organizational encounter with the other – be it the singular experience of subjective creation or the ambient *electronic* doxa of the new millennium. Unless it can make such accounts, it cannot possibly account for the innovative potential of *collaborative intelligence*, and neither can it possibly answer the "how...?"; the inherent dilemmas of Enterprise 2.0 business innovation strategy.

Derrida rejects even the pre-secular (techno-onto-anthropo-theological) frame that formed the concepts 'invention' and 'innovation'. So, where can we find footing? I would suggest that a hermeneutic phenomenological approach rooted in Baumgarten's philosophical aesthetics is what is needed in the informational economy. Aesthetic experiences might very well be what the Web 2.0 user desire; that is, experiences of a kind of 'added value' that is unfamiliar to (most) economists, including so-called 'creative economy' theory. Disregarding experiences of value- or *purpose*-in-it-self and the potential *more* – be it the common *good* or simply *wisdom* – is disregarding human *being*. Thus, with the "human factor" as the only "scarce resource", enterprises hoping to engage users in open networks – for competitive or other reasons – need to be aware that the "how...?" of network engagement presupposes a "what...?" and a "why...?". And therefore, searching for such a framework must be an integral part of network studies.

A point of departure is a working title: Aesthetic Network Analysis. Other such points are the following hypothesises, which form my position at this moment of writing:

1. Web technology develops fast towards still greater informational and social connectivity at still lower costs; towards infinite collaborative intelligence.[i]

2. The so-called 'Enterprise 2.0' engages prosumer networks to increase learning- and decision making capacity in order to gain competitive advantages by "harnessing collective intelligence".[ii]

3. The individual user's motivation for participation in network activities depends on the degrees of *experienced* informational and social connectivity. High degrees of both move the "motivation balance" away from private ownership and towards the common good.[iii]

4. Hypothesis 2 and 3 are potentially paradoxical.[iv]

5. Aesthetic experience is a determining factor for so-called 'Web 2.0 users', also when engaging in such network activities as *prosuming* and *crowdsourcing*.[v]

6. A framework for Aesthetic Network Analysis must be developed in order to understand the so-called 'Enterprise 2.0'.[vi]

7. Such a framework must be based on the philosophy of the aesthetic experience rooted in Baumgarten's aesthetics, i.e. a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to aesthetics that includes a metaphysical idea of 'added value'.[vii]

8. A European-based search for a framework for analysis of the co-called 'Informational Economy' must take into account:
   a. The existence of non-western doxas and traditions – be it Oriental, African, South American or simply *other*;
   b. the possibility that such exotic, alien ideas could have greater potential than the ones accumulated in the West;
   c. the possibility that no Web search engine – not even specialized ones – will reveal such potentials.

These hypothesises have been conceived while I, two colleagues from CBS and the newspaper publisher, Jyllands-Posten, have been engaged in a Nordic project on e-business and media conducted in 2007-08. Critique and suggestions that could help in maturing the hypothesises would be most welcome.

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[1] Derrida uses the word much like Levinas, to whom the Other is the another human being. However, this does not imply that 'other' is equal to 'human' or 'being'. Ethics is *first philosophy* in Levinas' thinking, i.e. prior to both ontology and epistemology. Thus, the other is a metaphysical concept; something genuinely other that I am responsible *to,* because I am responsible *for* it's coming-into-being.

[i] Castells (1996), Benkler (2006), Tapscott & Williams (2006), Spivack (2006, 2008), Davis (2008)
[ii] McAfee (2006), Prahalad & Krishnan (2008), von Hippel (2006), Christensen (2008)
[iii] Hart (2007), McMurtry (1991, 2002), Jonathan (1997), Wippler (1987)
[iv] This should be self-evident.
[v] Jørgensen (2001, 2006a+b, 2008), Hohr & Pedersen (2001), Kirzner (1999), Benkler (2006)
[vi] Jørgensen (ibid.), Kahane (2001), O'Reilly (2005, 2006), Gordjin & Akkermans (2001, 2003)
[vii] Jørgensen (ibid.), Levinas (1961, 1982), Kemp (2006), Puett (2001), Eldridge (1994)

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