

Collaborative Digital Media

Prepared by Dr. Shereen Kedwany

Lecture 7

جامعة الجميع الذكية

تسعى لتكون الكيان الأول الذي يتبنى مبدأ المجتمع التعليمي
التعاوني ويقدم العلم مقابل العمل لتنمية وبناء المجتمعات.

DGM 711

Introduction to Digital Media

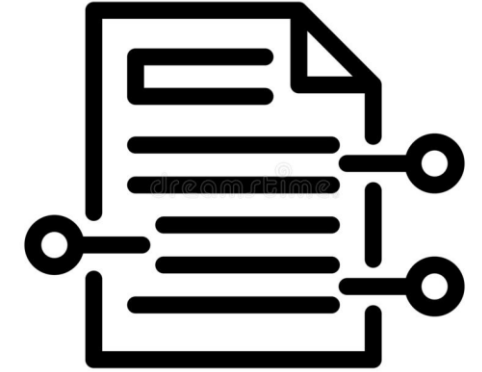


جامعة الجميع الذكية
EVERYONE'S SMART UNIVERSITY

- **Digital media**, and **social media** platforms in particular, are important instruments through which individuals implement active strategies of **identity building**.
- **social media** are one of the “**stages**” from which individuals represent their own **identity** and perform the continuous work of **identity construction**
- The so-called “**digital afterlife**” can create a kind of “**immortality**” in which the **digital identity** of the deceased **survives** his **death** .
- The use of digital media as **social spaces** is **not neutral**, but rather influenced by **social factors** such as **age, gender, ethnicity, or class**, Like “**digital natives**” and “**digital immigrants**”.
- **Algorithms** reinforce **inequalities**.
- The “**algorithmic identity**” based on algorithmic evaluations of our **online behavior**.
- Forms of **sociality** mediated by **digital technologies** have been faced with many **critiques**.



- I. Digital Collaboration .
- II. Culture of Participation .
- III. Examples of Collaborative Digital Media.
- VI. The Dilemma of Participation.
- V. Conclusion.



- **Digital technologies** facilitate the active **participation** of **individuals** in media **production** .
- The **content** generated by internet **users** is critical to the **success** of web **corporations** and has **transformed traditional** mass media.
- **Free software, open-source applications, and Wikipedia** are examples of **digital collaboration** that rely on a **culture of participation**.
- Yet the **value** created through collaborative processes is often appropriated by **digital corporations**.





- Among the technological, economic, and organizational transformations of **information society**, an important place is occupied by the **increased user participation** and **active collaboration** in **content production**.
- This evolution is part of the trend toward broadening **access to information** and using it to **democratize productive and political processes**, a core element of the **information society** project.
- In its most recent incarnations, such expansion has repercussions on all areas of **cultural production** and beyond, from **journalism to science**, from **software production to marketing**.

- [illegible]

Chapter 07

I. Digital Collaboration :

- **Wikipedia** is written and edited by its **users**;
- **Instagram** would not exist without the **content** produced and posted by its **public**.
- **Hotels** are ranked on **TripAdvisor** thanks to an aggregation of their **clients' reviews**.



- Tools such as **social media, blogs, video streaming services, wikis**, tagging systems, and resources for information sharing represent the **technical basis of this transformation** which, however, relies on a set of **legal and cultural changes** too (Benkler 2006).
- **Legal systems** have adapted **copyright laws** to facilitate the spread of **self-publishing platforms** such as **YouTube**.

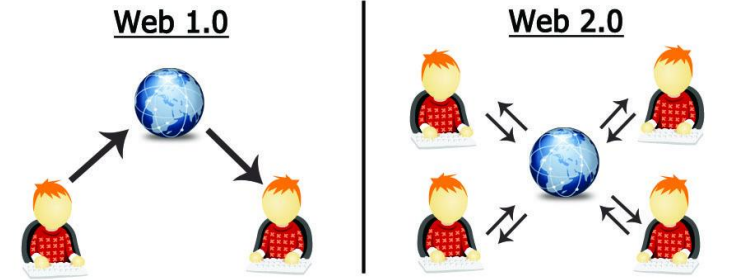


- [illegible]

- According to theorists like **Henry Jenkins** (2006), a **culture of participation** via **digital media** is based on the removal of barriers to the expression of creativity, on willingness to share content, and on the feeling that one's contribution is valuable to a community.
- One of the most common definitions of the outcome of these processes is **user-generated content**.



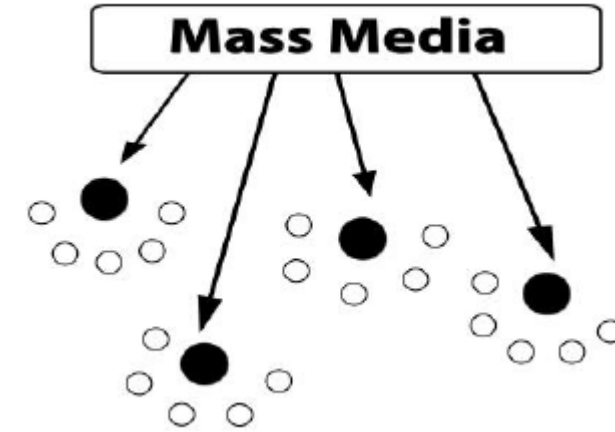
- [illegible]



- However, **technological and economic changes** related to **digital media** have furthered these forms of interaction with the **media industry**.
- In fact, the phenomenon has exploded since the **2000s**, with the transition from static forms of **one-way digital communication** to **more collaborative web services**, which deeply changed the **media and cultural industry** (Harrison and Barthel 2009).



- The **content** of broadcast media such as **television and press** is **directed** from a **central hub** that produces and sends the message to many peripheral **receivers**.
- The **audience** of broadcast media **can choose** what **content** to read or watch, but **cannot contribute** personally or provide direct **feedback** to content producers.



- In **the early years** of the emergence of the **commercial internet** many online services had **similar features**.
- They widened the range of **choices** available to the **public**, but **did not provide new possibilities to become an active part of communication processes**.
- **Today**, however, **digital applications and services** enable a **higher level** of **interaction** between **users** and the **service** itself.
- The **user** assumes a **central role**, as everyone has the opportunity not only to **enjoy** content, but to **create** and **edit** it too.



III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

- Examples of **collaborative applications** are many and very different, but all emphasize **participation, content creation, and information sharing**.
- **Blogs are online diaries or journals**, which compose what has been called the **blogosphere**, that is, an **environment** made up of blogs in communication with each other.
- This is strongly intertwined with **social media, rating systems,** and **microblogging platforms** such as **Twitter**.



III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

- Thanks to **blogging platforms** such as **WordPress**, producing a blog does not require specific technical skills.
- Therefore, **writing for a public** is no longer reserved to **journalists** and other **professional writers**.



- **Wikis** are **collective writing softwares**, which allow multiple **users** to simultaneously work on the same text or document:
- The best-known example of a wiki-based service is **Wikipedia**, the **non-profit online encyclopedia** written collaboratively by thousands of **users** around the world.



- Commercial services like **YouTube or Instagram** allow **users** to **publish, tag, and share** videos and photos, respectively.



III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

- The **success** of these **services** is due not only to the use of software for online publishing, but also to the **spread of low-cost equipment** such as **cameras**, as well as **software** for **video or photo editing**, which can be installed on most personal **computers and phones**.



III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

- **Online marketplaces and stores**, such as **eBay** or **Amazon**, use the **information** produced by their **users** to improve their **service**.
- On **Amazon**, customers write **reviews** or **rate** commodities, thus providing valuable **information** which the platform aggregates and uses to present its products to other clients.

The eBay logo, featuring the word "ebay" in a multi-colored font (red, blue, yellow, green).The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in black with a curved orange arrow underneath.

III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

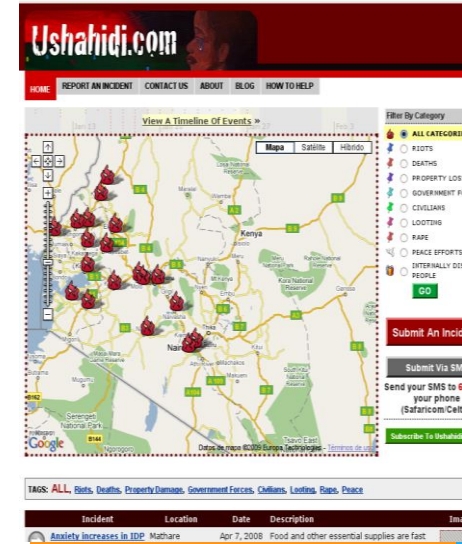
- **Mashup services** are not too different, as they facilitate **the aggregation of information** from different sources to create a site or application.
- A popular example is **Google Maps**, an interactive map **service** to which **users** can add information, thus creating customized maps that **aggregate information** from **users** and other **websites**.



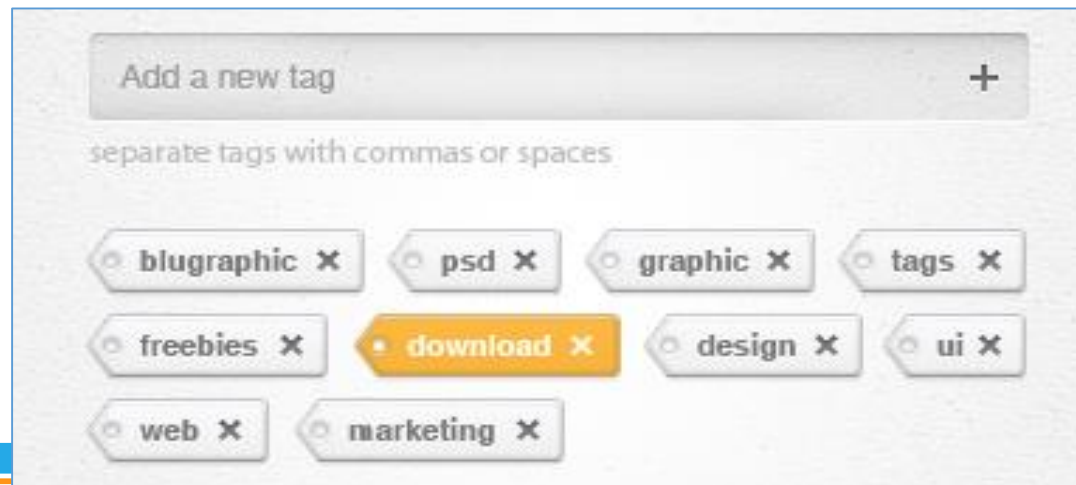
Google Maps



- Another **mashup platform** that takes advantage of the possibilities opened up by the spread of smartphones is **Ushahidi**, a **non-profit** service that creates interactive **maps** by **aggregating information** sent via **email** and **SMS**.
- **Ushahidi** has played a crucial role in events in which **traditional media** were **blocked** or rendered inoperable by **natural events**, as in the case of the **earthquake in Haiti** in **2010**.
- In both cases, **Ushahidi** used the **information** and **evidence** provided by its **users** to create **maps** that anyone could consult and contribute to, making them evolve in real time (Okolloh 2009).



- Through **tagging technologies**, **users** can associate **content** with a **label** that allows other users (or software) to understand what type of **content** it is, to what it is **connected**, and so on.



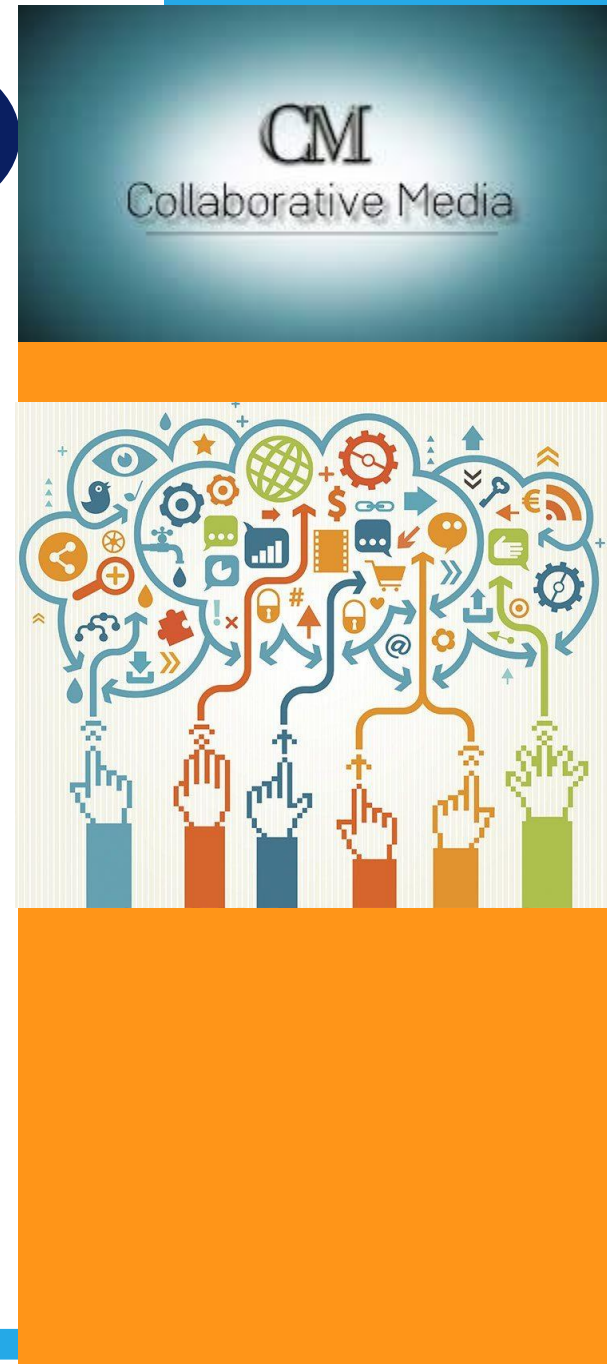
III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

- **Rating systems** permit individuals to **vote** on, or rather provide a **numerical rating** to, a certain piece of content.
- This is how **Amazon** works, but many other platforms for **reviews** have integrated **rating systems**.
- Think of how **ratings** are produced for **restaurants** on **Yelp**, or for **university teachers** on **RateMyProfessors.com**.
- **Rating systems** work when many **individuals** assess something, and therefore the overall “**grade**” attributed, for example, to a restaurant on **Yelp** is an **aggregate result** rather than a single **review**.
- The **participation** of many **users** makes **rating systems** more **reliable** and limits the effect of **incorrect or biased reviews**.



III. Examples of collaborative Digital Media:

- The emergence of **collaborative media** is not just a matter of **technology**.
- Together with the birth of collaborative software and platforms we have witnessed the **emergence of a culture of participation** that leads **consumers** to contribute more directly to **information production**, breaking out from the canonical dynamics of the **cultural industry**.



- Early research on **collaborative media** and **participatory cultures**, especially in the **2000s**, tended to paint these **collective production** processes via **digital media** as forms of **democratization** of the media environment, in line with recurrent promises of the **information society**.
- However, this idealized vision was soon **criticized** for its lack of attention to the underlying **dynamics of power**.
- The very use of the word “**participation**” can be seen as **problematic**.





- In **political theory**, the concept of **participation** implies a redistribution of power to citizens through democratic decision-making processes and egalitarian social relations .
- If we accept this view, however, we must realize that **digital media users** contribute only **marginally** to **decision-making** processes.
- Indeed, the cultural industry and interactive digital services **are not fully participatory.**

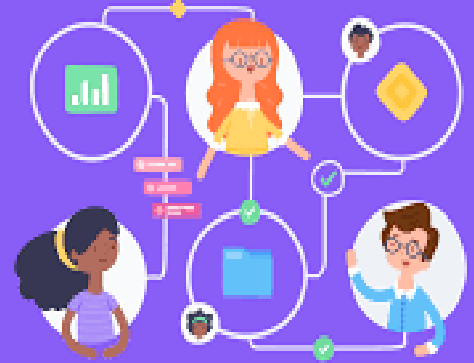
- For example, **authors** who have used **democratic theory** to analyze **collaborative media** have stressed the **difference** between **access, interaction, and participation** (Carpentier 2012).
- In this model, the simple ability to **access information** through **digital media** is **different** from the opportunity to interact to **exchange or produce content**, which happens every time.



- We **rate** on **Yelp** or use a **hashtag** on **Instagram**; instead, forms of **participation** characterize services such as **Wikipedia**, whose users may at least **partially** contribute to deciding about the evolution of the encyclopedia, or decision-making platforms .
- Let us analyze more in detail some of the **organizational and political factors** that determine the **difference** between simple **content sharing or production and forms of collaboration** that fulfill the idea of participation in a collective project .



- 1) **Intentionality**: are participants aware of taking part in a partnership and do they share an interest in the collective goals or is the content they create simply aggregated or managed by others?
- 2) **Control of modality**: can users question the rules of participation, or must they accept them passively?
- 3) **Ownership**: who owns the result of a collaboration and derives a profit from it?
- 4) **Accessibility**: who can participate and how?
- 5) **Equality**: are there hierarchies or do all participants have equal weight in decision-making?



- Analyzing processes of **digital sharing and collaboration** according to these variables permits a distinction between **democratic participation** and cases in which the individual and collective work of users is **aggregated** for **profit purposes** by private **companies**, removing **power and decisions** from the **users**.



- [illegible]

- Creativity and participation in **collective digital production** processes, however, are part of an ideology that is geared toward specific **commercial purposes**.
- In fact, most **social media companies** are based on the exploitation of **user-generated content**, such as **photos** (Instagram), **videos** (YouTube), or **reviews** (Yelp).
- Presenting themselves as **platforms for free expression and communication** is therefore functional to the **economic goals** of the companies that run these services.
- In addition, these services use this rhetoric of **neutrality** to avoid being held responsible for any **illegal content** published by **users**, such as **pirated movies** or **hate speech** (Gillespie 2010).



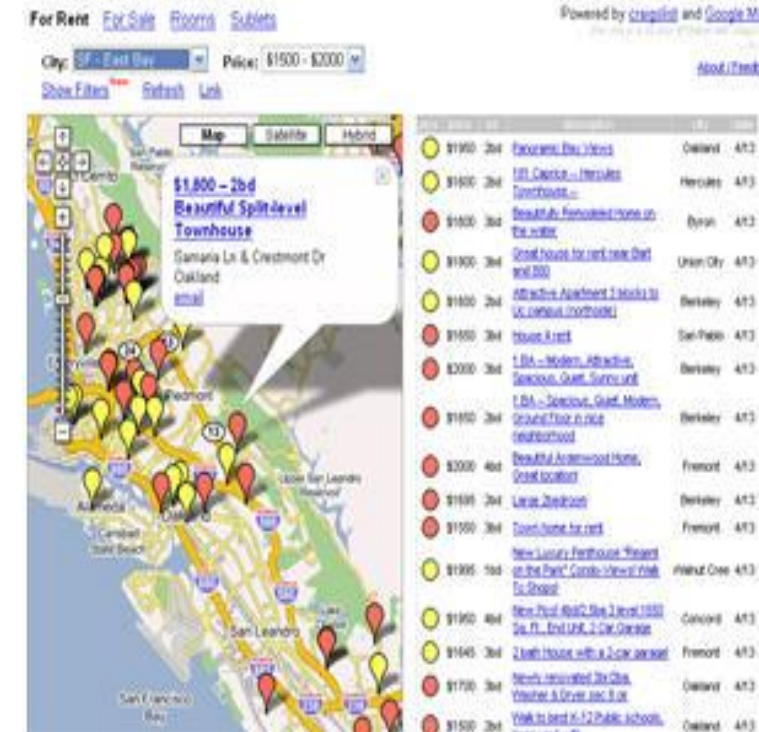


- **Platforms** based on **users' collective participation** thus allow the emergence of new forms of collaboration among masses of **users** for **non-commercial** purposes, but the latter can also be used by **corporations** within their **business model**.
- In the case of a **commercial service** such as **YouTube**, **users** may retain **ownership** over a piece of **content** they produced, but the **company** has specific **rights**, for example the ability to **couple** a user-produced video with a **commercial**.

Chapter 07

VI. The Dilemma of Participation :

- In a **mashup map** such as **Google Maps**, **users** of **Android phones** generate the **data** used to update the map and make it relevant for other users, but their contributions are merely **aggregated algorithmically**: **users** have **little power** over the processes underpinning Google Maps.
- Processes of **data capture and surveillance** engendered in **social media** services mean that **users** **passively participate** in improving a platform but **do not** have the **power** to decide on the **purpose** of their role.



- Furthermore, researchers who have focused on other factors, such as **gender, language, or ethnicity**, have questioned the accessibility and equality of **collaborative media**.
- Anyone can write or correct a **Wikipedia** entry or become an editor, but this does **not** mean that the online encyclopedia is perfectly **democratic**.
- On the contrary, it is **gendered** so as to **favor male participation** (Ford and Wajcman 2017).



- For example, the majority of its **editors**, who have veto power on new entries and can ban a participant or remove a piece of content, are **white men**.
- Because of this **imbalance**, **Wikipedia** has proved relatively adverse to such topics as **feminism** (Reagle and Rhue 2011).



- These examples call into question the idea that **open technologies** and **collaborative media** per se ensure the development of **democratic forms of mediated collaboration**.
- Finally, **participation** entails a tension between the idea of increased **individual autonomy** on the one hand, and belonging to a **collective process** on the other (Kelty 2016).





- **Digital technologies** facilitate the active **participation** of **individuals** in media **production**.
- **Digital collaborations** rely on the **culture of participation**.
- **Digital platforms** offer possibilities for **users** to become **content producers or** contribute to **assessing** and **improving** the **content** provided by a service.
- **Wikipedia, social media and mashup services** are examples of **digital collaboration**.
- **Legal systems** have adapted **copyright laws** to facilitate the spread of **self-publishing platforms** such as **YouTube**.
- **Digital media users** contribute only **marginally** to **decision-making** processes.
- The work of users is **aggregated** for **profit purposes** by private **companies**, removing **power and decisions** from the **users**.

Thank you for listening

جامعة الجميع الذكية

تسعى لتكون الكيان الأول الذي يتبنى مبدأ المجتمع التعليمي
التعاوني ويقدم العلم مقابل العمل لتنمية وبناء المجتمعات.

DGM 711

Introduction to Digital Media



جامعة الجميع الذكية
EVERYONE'S SMART UNIVERSITY