THE ‘PARTICIPATORY CULTURE’ BY HENRY JENKINS: AN EMPIRICAL REFLECTION ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

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Individuals and groups ‘perform’ themselves using social network sites (SNSs). Their profiles on SNSs give them the opportunity to ‘put to the test’ their identity and their representations of themselves. But the social network space is not only a space for representation, it is a space of performance that means construction, it is a space of social construction of one’s identity, it is a relational space in which, primarily, ‘we act’ and ‘we produce’ (examples of acts and its products: texts/speeches, photos/memoirs, videos/actions, audios/preferences). I use the term performative to put the accent on the dynamic and processual aspects that arise in such contexts. (For the discussion on the theoretical frame of the performance studies, see Loxley, 2007 and Auslander, 2003). The ‘we act’ bit of the performative side of everyday life finds in the social networks of the Web a ground for experimentation and creativity. My contribution focuses on the framework that Henry Jenkins defined as ‘participatory culture’ to better explain the new socio-cultural frame in web 2.0. Starting from this concept, my text will present the initial results of an on-going empirical research conducted on social network spaces. The research is being conducted inside the PRIN-National research project “CoOPERARE-Content Organization, Propagation, Evaluation and Reuse through Active Repositories”, supported by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (Research groups involved: Politecnico di Torino, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Università della Tuscia, Università degli Studi Roma Tre. National Scientific Coordinator: Professor Mario Ricciardi)

Summary

1. Some important and emerging issues
2. Methodology of the research
3. First results of the research on the Flickr pictures
4. Heuristic hypothesis towards an interpretation

References