

# **The “Architecture of Participation”**

## **For Citizens or Consumers?**

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Towards Critical Theories of Social Media.**

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# **Web 2.0 and "Social Media"**

Technological preconditions of Web 2.0 and/or "Social Media" (Tim O'Reilly):

- "lightweight programming"
- "the web as a technological platform"

Social and cultural "effects" of Web 2.0 and/or "Social Media" (O'Reilly):

- "richer user experience"
- "harness collective intelligence"

This results in "An Architecture of Participation"

# **“An Architecture of Participation”: For Whom?**

For corporations (and capitalism more generally):

“Corporations in the Internet economy make use of gifts, free access, and free distribution in order to achieve high numbers of users, which allows them to charge high advertisement rates and drive up profits. Especially Web 2.0 platforms make use of this model.” (Fuchs 2008: 343)

“Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 [...] can support grassroots’ journalism and activism and participatory democracy. But these phenomena are not automatic implications of technologies; they need to be self-organized in social relations that change the overall competitive character of society.” (Fuchs 2008: 136)

# **“An Architecture of Participation”: For Whom?**

For corporations (and capitalism more generally):

”Yet, far from signalling a democratisation of media production and distribution ‘prosumption’ is all too often incorporated within a system of commodity exchange controlled by existing elites [...] the imaginative labour of ordinary people is appropriated for the benefits that accrue to those companies [...] who hope to sell the personalised content generated by users to advertisers and marketers.” (Freedman 2012:88)

# **“An Architecture of Participation”: For Whom?**

For consumers/prosumers:

“Today, millions of ordinary people have the tools and the role models to become amateur producers. [...] Because the means of production have spread so widely and to so many people [...] the talented and visionay ones, even if they are a fraction of the total, are becoming a force to be reckoned with.” (Anderson 2009: 65)

# **“An Architecture of Participation”: For Whom?**

For consumers/prosumers:

“Convergence of market and social capital” – means that companies need to build their social capital by allowing customers to participate (Hunt 2009)

“[c]onsumers are now empowered to interact with brands and other consumers [...] leading to a more participative approach...” (Christodoulides 2009)

# **“An Architecture of Participation”: For Whom?**

For citizens:

“The use of information and communication technology and new media in the everyday life of citizens enables unconventional expressions of participatory culture” (Burgess et al. 2006: 5)

“[...] the internet’s interactive, open character, its multi modality, and global reach create new and hitherto unseen political opportunities, especially for young people.” (Olsson 2008)

# **“An Architecture of Participation”: For Whom?**

These are all rather strong positions.

There are also, very obviously, strong tensions between them, even unsolvable ones.

Which of them is right? The empirical world of everyday production of digital applications tends to make one rather humble and not so sure.



# **Organized Producers of Web Culture**

Ethnographically inspired studies into different web producing organizations:

View of users? View of their web applications?

View of the Web 2.0? View of “participation”?

Production practices?

1) [ungilund.se](http://ungilund.se); 2) [moderskeppet.se](http://moderskeppet.se); 3) [stallet.se](http://stallet.se)



Lyssna



English



Om Lund



Kartor

Sök



UNGILUND.SE

Till startsidan

Mitt Lund

Lunds Ungdomsting

KulturCash

Wickmanska

Ungdomsombud

Arkiv

Kontakt



## Välkommen till ungilund.se hemsidan för och av unga i Lund

Ungilund.se är hemsidan för dig som är ung och bor i Lunds kommun. Hemsidan grundades år 2002 och tanken är att den ska vara öppen för förnyelse och förändring och att alla som vill delta ska få den möjligheten. Har du något du vill visa upp, skriva om eller göra reklam för här på sidan? Tveka inte att kontakta oss. Vi är glada för alla tillskott.



### Litteralunds Ungaprogram

Nu är Litteralund fullt igång. Du missar väl inte alla aktiviteter på fredag, som är för unga?

☞ [Litteralunds ungaprogram](#)



### Storting 26 april

Med knappt två veckor kvar till stortinget vill vi berätta mer ingående vad det kommer handla om!

☞ [Stortinget den 26 april](#)



### Nya ungdomsombud sökes!

Nu söker vi dig som vill arbeta som ungdomsombud under läsåret HT12-VT13!

☞ [Sök tjänsten ungdomsombud](#)



### Årets Ungdomskommun: Borås!

Ungdomskommunen Borås tog hem pris för sin unika metod.

☞ [Årets Ungdomskommun: Borås!](#)



wickmanska

[Wickmanska - kulturhus för unga](#)

Ett kulturhus för och av unga, där Ungdomspolitiken och Ungilund har sitt huvudsakliga kontor.



Följ ungdomstinget på facebook:

[www.facebook.com/LundsUngdomsting](http://www.facebook.com/LundsUngdomsting)

Det händer att vi twittrar!



# **Ungilund.se – for young citizens by young citizens**

Lund's youth council – since 2002

Funded by the municipality, but completely managed by young people themselves (12-25 years)

Organizes "Big meetings" to decide on funding for youth projects.

Ombudsmen for the young in Lund.

Role model for similar initiatives in other parts of Sweden.

# **Ungilund.se – for young citizens by young citizens**

The website: designed, created and maintained by the young citizens themselves.

Trusted with total freedom.

The young people involved in the production of the site are amateurs learning web design as they go.

Anyone can make contributions to it, and any young person in the municipality may publish material on it.

(Miegel & Olsson 2012a; Miegel & Olsson 2012b)

# **Ungilund.se – for young citizens by young citizens**

“The architecture of participation” as a space for actual participation.

“The architecture of participation” as a space for civic practices and identities.

Interactivity – both on- and off-line.

Moderskeppet - Om Photoshop, bildbehandling och digitalfoto - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.moderskeppet.se/

Arkiv Redigera Visa Favoriter Verktyg Hjälp

Moderskeppet - Om Photoshop, bildbehandling och di...

Våra sajter: Moderskeppet Photoshoprecept Rawbilder Kreativ Retusch Bildbehandla CS5 Pixelplaneten Vår Facebook

Praktikantbloggen Kontakt Ladda ner För lärare Webbarta Om Moderskeppet

**Moderskeppet.se**  
Det är skoj att lära sig Photoshop

Hem Webb-TV Snabba tips Blogg Guider Grundkurs Högskolekurser Köp DVD-kurs Sök:

## Vi lär dig Photoshop

Bli en bättre bildbehandlare med vår hjälp

**Rawbilder.se**  
Alla bilder förta i raw

Lär dig raw från grunden  
På rawbilder.se visar Mattias dig varför raw är det bästa alternativet. Här får du också möta andra fotografer som visar hur de bildbehandlar sina bilder.

**facebook.**

**Bli vår vän på Facebook**  
På Facebook har vi våra bilder och tipsar om det som händer i vårt universum.

**Lär dig Photoshop - se vår Webb-TV**  
Nu över 40 avsnitt. Se vår Webb-TV och lär dig coola trick för dina bilder.

**Sveriges största webbplats om Photoshop. Är du ny här?**

[Vad är Adobe Photoshop?](#)  
[Så lär du dig Photoshop](#)  
[Detta är Moderskeppet.se](#)

[Vad är Photoshop Elements?](#)  
[Vad är Lightroom?](#)  
[Så köper du Photoshop](#)  
[Spara upp till 80% med studentrabatt](#)

**Moderskeppets nyhetsbrev**  
Med vårt nyhetsbrev missar du inga nya guider. Din e-post:

[Vad är nyhetsbrevet?](#)

Lär dig bildbehandla från början!

Kunskap på ett perfekt sätt!

Klar

Internet 100 %

Start Moderskeppet - Om P...

10:40

# **Participation as a positive connotation**

The commercial company Moderskeppet makes good rhetorical use of notions of "participation", but a look into their web practices reveals a different story.

They make strategic considerations regarding their "production of participation" – treat "participation" as a strategic part of their branding.

# **Participation as a positive connotation**

## **Allowing for reactive rather than active user contributions:**

We create all the content and then we offer the users the opportunity to comment or give us feed-back on that content. Consequently, they don't actually contribute with anything new, besides reflections. We set the agenda and then the users are free to contribute, complying with that agenda and conforming to existing regulations of the communication standard (Olsson & Svensson 2012).



# **Participation as a positive connotation**

## **Creating a sense of participation:**

We've got the blog and several of these “web 2.0-exciting things”, like Facebook and Twitter. But, actually, what we offer to the users is a comment-function. We don't offer them very much in terms of active content creation. Even if they are few, comments on the blog posts and Facebook messages create an impression of a frequently ongoing discussion [...] (Olsson & Svensson 2012).

# **Moderskeppet – Using participation as a positive connotation**

“The architecture of participation” as a space for consumer relations.

The “architecture of participation” as a space for branded participation.

# PONY BLOX

Upptäck Pony Blox, ett spännande ponnyäventyr i 3D!  
Samla ponnys och bygg en egen magisk ö tillsammans.



## Stallet.se

Bli medlem · Kom igång · Logga in

Till föräldrar · Kontakt · Annonsera på Stallet.se

» Logga in

» Logga in som delägare

» Glömt lösenord

### Designa och bygg stallplaner

Du skapar din drömvärld på Stallet.se precis som du vill ha den!

Där sköter du om dina hästar, hundar, katter och kaniner som du också kan **sälja** till andra stall på **auktion!**



# **Stallet.se – A commercial community with civic potential**

“[Stallet] enables members to navigate between designing stables, training horses and taking care of crops.” (Lund 2012: forthcoming)

“[M]embers can publish their own short stories, launch newspapers and establish photo galleries. The members can also [...] enter a marketplace for digital horses and horse products as well as initiate discussions on horse-related topics.” (ibid.)

# **Stallet.se: A commercial community with civic potential?**

Originally started by a small company – Sudd AB.

As it attracted users, it was bought by Egmont, a large, Nordic media corporation.

Both membership for "free" (advertising) and payed membership.

Stallet.se is, in essence, making money out of the "architecture of participation".

# **Stallet.se: A commercial community with civic potential?**

A look into its discussion forums, however, reveals interesting tensions:

“What I found during my visits to *The Stable* was that this online community seems to be a space for social criticism and democratic integration, as well as a space for dealing with entertainment and lifestyle issues. [...] the members do not know each other in real life, they start discussions on issues that transcend their interest in horses in a respectful and responsible way, revealing what I call civic potential” (Lund, A. 2012, forthcoming).

# **Stallet.se: A commercial community with civic potential?**

Discussion threads on, for instance (Lund 2012)...

...school and teacher authority

...dealing with housing situations

...animal rights

# **Stallet.se: A commercial community with civic potential?**

“The architecture of participation” as a commercial community.

“The architecture of participation” as a space for civic discussions.



# **For Citizens or Consumers?**

For Citizens? Yes, sometimes.

For Consumers? Yes, sometimes.

For Corporate interests? Certainly, sometimes.

# **For Citizens or Consumers?**

Rather unsatisfactory: What should we, as scholars, make of this?

Remain open to the varying outcomes of specific applications of “the architecture of participation”.

In a way, it might very well be precisely our job to disentangle the messy realities of various configurations of technological opportunity and social and cultural practices.

# **For Citizens or Consumers?**

How do we do that?

By being contextually sensible and contextually critical.

By keeping our eyes open for varying – and sometimes even surprising – appropriations.

**Thank you!**

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