Course Description

Web and Society Project

Contents

The Big Idea

In 1973 Daniel Bell [1] coined the notion of a post-industrial society in which computer-linked technology supports an information-based economy. The importance of information and communication in so-called post-industrial societies is now widely accepted. The impact of this information and communication technology on this kind of society and the interplay of technology and society in terms of changes is matter of the debate in this project. For a clearer understanding we would like to refer to Alistair Duff's [2] paper from 2008.

In web science's every day professional life projects are essential. What characterises web projects is their multi-perspective and multi-disciplinary nature. Participants of this course will acquire experience with this by conceptualising, running and evaluating their own project with a clear focus on social aspects.

In this course the students experience this approach to a project that puts the focus on the society-and-the-web perspective as it has been offered in the courses of this module. The main objective of this project is to elaborate the interdependencies, bilateral effects and interactions of technical web-based systems on the one and groups of humans (groups, communities, societies...) on the other hand. Thereby the project has to cover several aspects like relevant social structures and social facts as well as a discussion of short-term and long-term effect on affected social groups.

The project work is being accomplished in groups. Due to the set up of the master programme, the students work from their homes and the work has to be organised based on web tools.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Attending the course, students will become acquainted with the development of web projects with the focus on society-web interrelations.

The students have learned about **Social Structures**, **Social Practices**, **Social Institutions**, **Social Stratifications** and **Social Change**. Some of the relevant concepts are society, culture, socialisation, social groups, norm and deviation, ageing, race and ethnicity, gender, stratification, global poverty/global inequality, family, health and medicine, politics, education, collective behaviour, social movements, demography etc. (for more details please see: [3]).

In addition the students have learned to integrate concepts, approaches or aspects from the other Courses of this module into their project to cover a more comprehensive view.

They will be able to discuss and critically judge the interrelations between web based systems (especially by taking privacy, media psychology and standards and recommendations into account) and societal aspects.

Structure of the Course

Warm-Up

In order to get a better understanding of concepts and terms of sociology the students at first choose a topic from the list below and elaborate a written report in form of a summary based on the basic reading [4].
Topics are:

- **Foundations of Society (From Macro to Micro)**: Societies; Culture; Groups, Organisations and the Rise of the Network Society; Micro-Sociology: The Social Construction of Everyday Life.
- **Social Structure, Social Practices and Social Institutions**: Economies, Work and Consumption; Power, Governance and Social Movements; Control, Crime and Deviance; Families, Personal Life and Living Together; Religion and Belief; Education; Health, Medicine and Well-Being; Communication and New Media; Science, Cyperspace and the Risk-Society.
- **Social Change and the Twenty-First Century**: Populations, Cities and the Space of Things to Come; Social Change and the Environment; Living in the Twenty-First Century.

In coordination with the Module Representative every student picks up a topic from the list and prepares a written report in form of a summary and presents his findings to the plenum. This shall ensure that all participants share the same basic knowledge about basic concepts, approaches, theories and methods of sociology as a social science.

Kick-Off

During the course the students develop projects in groups of up to three members. The objectives of the projects will be defined by the students themselves. For the project the groups define a collaboration infrastructure based on current Web 2.0 collaboration tools[5].

The focus of the projects is the society-and-the-web perspective as it is offered in the courses of this module. The main objective of this project is to elaborate the interdependencies, bilateral effects and interactions of technical web-based systems of one and groups of humans (groups, communities, societies...) on the other hand.

First Phase

The Students form groups of up to three participants.

In the first phase of the project:

- either an existing web-based system is to be chosen (**Case Study**) which is perceived to have some significant impact on (or interplay with) societal groups, structures, facts or values, from which a **problem** could be identified,
- or a **Problem** is to be formulated, in terms of a social situation which could be modified/ improved by a web-based technical system.

The groups will develop an **Exposé** for their project based on a detailed research on their topic.

Second Phase

The groups develop a **Draft Paper**, containing:

- a detailed problem statement (based on a Case Study or a Problem, respectively)
- a detailed set of objectives for their project
- related works
- an outline, what aspects the project will cover and first conceptualisations of possible problem solutions (definition of the scope)
- an impact analysis of the sketched solutions
- a discussion of project risks and a constructive discussion how the group will manage these risks
- a detailed project schedule.

The groups decide to have two of the lecturers of the other courses of the module as supervisors covering the respective view on the project. The groups will plan for two reviews of their project by each of the supervisors.

The groups continue to refine their solutions. Conceivable artifacts might be a conceptual model, a number of proof-of-concepts in order to evaluate existing software systems as candidates, or may lead even to an initial prototype.

Third Phase

In a third phase the project results should be evaluated.

The essence of the project will be presented in a poster session (please see: [6]). The project groups should research the established rules for the design of posters for the presentation of scientific work.

Didactic Concept, Schedule, and Assignments

The overall schedule envisages a *kick-off workshop during the on-site weekend*. During this workshop the objectives of the course will be discussed, organisational issues will be resolved, and the establishment of a infrastructure of web applications for the project work will be picked out as an issue. Then potential objectives for exemplary projects will be discussed and the formation of the groups will be initiated.

The actual project is then performed during the semester based on the concepts presented in the other courses of the module. During the project work, *on-line workshops* are scheduled for

- presentations of the results from the warm-up phase
- status reports based on the project planning of the groups and the results of reviews,
- issue resolution and - of course -
- group work on the project.

The project work is concluded with a *on-site workshop*, where the project results will be presented and discussed. This workshop is organised in the form of a poster session. Each project is presented in the form of a poster in the format A1. The concept for the poster should conform to the established rules for scientific presentations (see for example the handout provided by Cornell University[6]).

A special emphasis will be given to discussing the conclusion of the project work particularly with regard to the lessons learned for the module *Web Project Development* in the fourth semester.

Examination

Basis for the Evaluation

The project groups describe their research, concepts, and development work in a *project document*. This document should include a discussion of the organisation of the project work (project setup) and a description of the project planning. This project document is the main basis for the project appraisal which is provided by the Module Representative and the lecturers of the other courses of the module.

In addition to the project document each student delivers a *log* of the individual project work, which documents the own research and contributions (including those that do not make it into

the project document), the own reflections on the web assisted teamwork and a individual conclusion.

For the concluding workshop each project group prepares a *poster* in the format A1 to display the essence of the project to a scientific community.

The individual logs and the poster are also a taken as a base for the appraisal.

Criteria for grading

The grading will be based on the quality of:

- the problem definition (completeness, evaluation of criteria, ...)
- quality of research of related solutions and work (completeness, relevance)
- suggested problem solution (reasoning for chosen approach in relation to 1 and 2)
- integration of at least two views/perspectives/disciplines into your overall approach (web science is a multidisciplinary discipline)
- expected impact of the solution (why would which impact be achieved in relation to 1 and possibly 2)
- Indication and measurement of successful approach (how will the solution be achieved, how do we know that the approach worked, etc. based results of 4)
- overall quality of the **Exposé** and the **final document** (according to quality criteria for Academic documents)
- project process (handling of reviews, audit, project challenges, group work, ..)
- presentation (short clear presentation of which problem will be addressed how and why is it expected to work).

References

1. ↑ Daniel Bell. Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting. 1973.
2. ↑ Alistair Duff. "The Normative Crisis of the Information Society". Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 2(1), article 3, 2008. http://www.cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2008051201&article=3.
3. ↑ "Introduction to Sociology, WikiBook". http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Introduction_to_Sociology. Retrieved 27 December 2012.
4. ↑ John J. Macionis (Autor), Ken Plummer. *Sociology. A Global Introduction*. Prentice Hall; 5th revised edition. (24. August 2011).
5. ↑ "List of collaborative software". Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_collaborative_software. Retrieved 2012-12-10.
6. ↑ 6.0 6.1 "Scientific Poster Design". Cornell University. http://www.cornellcollege.edu/LIBRARY/ctl/ats/pdf/sciposterdesign_2012.pdf. Retrieved 2011-12-30.

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