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What is there behind Web 2.0?

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A continuous development of communication tools have triggered some changes in the way people relate to each other.

Everybody knows these tools and what people can do with them.

I am referring to My Space, Facebook, Blogs, Second Life, and the like. All of them are softwares people can find in Internet and use "freely". However, people have to pay for them, not with their money but rather with their personal data.

It is interesting to analyze the content of these communication tools and how people use them.

It is also crucial to reflect upon the aims of the enterprises that have developed and introduced these tools into the market.

For the first part of this analysis it is necessary to see the difference between "natives" and the rest.

"Natives" are young people who have been born in the 90s or late 80s. They use computers and internet as something natural. I have read and analyzed the results of the "Online Tool Use Survey" undertaken by the Joint Information Systems Committee.

This report shows a large list of this kind of online tools and the percentage usage of services across age bands.

It can be seen that ,with only one exception, natives use this kind of communication more frequently.

"Natives" who use Web 2.0 share music, photographs, videos, etc.

The exception is Wikipedia, where people can introduce new knowledge or modify some concepts of the data base.

Focusing on my own city, Rosario, I have made a small research:

- Universities: We have 13 universities, all of them have an internet site, but only 3 have blogs to add some comments. However, we can only find very few comments in there.
- Government Offices: there is not a place where you can interact.
- Newspapers: You can make comments about some articles. Most of them also offer people a site to publish their own blog.

It can be concluded that this new kind of communication is mainly popular among young people in informal communications.

Statistics about the blogs always refer to the number of visitors, the quantity of comments the site has, how many people are registered.

They seem to be a race of numbers. But, what about the quality?

To introduce the second part of the analysis (which are the aims of the enterprises that have developed and introduced these tools?) I would like to go back to my Murcia paper : *Analyzing the step before*. In that opportunity I made some interesting questions:

- Whose ideas create innovations?
- What innovations are thought for?
- Which are their aims?

These questions offer another start point for the analysis of the effects of Web 2.0.

First, we accept the new communication technologies and begin our research observing the effects those technologies have on the society.

If we analyze a step before, answering the questions above, we will analyze the causes, not only the effects.

The new communication technologies we are talking about have been thought only by few people.

We can take Facebook as an example.

At first sight, it seems that our young Mark Zuckerberg had in mind two aims:

1. What can I do to connect people, to make new friends, to share their feelings?
2. What can I do to earn money with internet?

However, I do think that his sole purpose was to earn money.

We can see it clearly in these examples:

- The competition is seriously affecting the progress of many of us engaged in the business of blogs ... very low traffic figures correspond very low incomes. (en Redes de blogs, el 12/12/2008, <http://loogic.com/redes-de-blogs-cantidadcalidad/>)
- "Hang videos on YouTube, an increase in business". You can make money by adding ads to your videos. (Diario La Nación, 20/12/2008)
- "Facebook has annual sales of \$ 150 million and earnings of only 30 million, but is worth 15,000 million ..." (Diario La Nación, 21/12/2008)
- The social nets are a real paradise for publicists. Through these nets they can know the profile of the people to offer them what they like.

These examples show us the interest of (very few) people that have developed and introduced these communication tools.

We may also analyze people who use them and how their behaviours have been affected .

I have watched on TV and read in newspapers that some people have an "addiction" to these tools: they use them most of the day,

more time than what they should. They share photographs, chat, write email, see videos, play games, etc. (Diario La Nación, diciembre 22 de 2008, en <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/>)

Another interesting issue is the mythic rule of 1%. It is claimed that out of 100 people who use this service, 90 % consult something, 9 participate, and only 1 creates some content using these tools. Usually the content introduced is for their own benefit.

However, everything is not negative. The possibility to interact and share information is really important in scholar activities, enterprises, and work groups. People can also write and publish some texts including their personal ideas.

To sum up, I am not interested in discussing the positive side of these tools because it is not necessary, the world already knows the advantages. I would like to talk about "the dark side of the moon". I would like to highlight there are some negative aspects such as economic interest, negotiation of personal data, addiction, low participation, etc.

Last but not least, I would like to focus on one aspect: We, the sociologists, should have a wider point of view. That is to say, we should include in our analysis not only the effects of the tools introduced, but also the reasons why these tools have been introduced (the step before).