CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Symposium on Contemporary Issues in Knowledge Production:
Identities, Mobilities, and Social Media

Organized by the Sudanese Knowledge Society [SKS]
18 - 19 February, 2015
Khartoum, Sudan

In the past, the concepts of **identity** and **mobility** were used in limited ways. Identity was conventionally used to refer to ethnic, racial, linguistic, regional, gender, and class categories; mobility generally referred to the migration of people from one place to another or to changes in class strata. However, the 21st century has brought major changes in the ways we interpret identity and mobility, as well as presenting new complexities as we shift between our multiple identities and locations. This is due in part to changes in technology, business practices, transnational knowledge transfer and collaboration, and the more sophisticated use of people identification processes (e.g., electronic passports, subscriber identity modules, etc.), not to mention the high penetration rate of mobile telephony. The Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) for example, is dubbed the world's largest "identity management system"[1] while **social media**, by and large, offer ways, virtually, to reproduce much of what people do (e.g., feeling, chatting, buying and selling, playing, learning, publishing, organising, governing, etc.) but they also generate new concerns (e.g., ethical, legal, existential) and topics such as the digital divide, open access, people journalism, etc. These innovations raise questions about the role that technologies play in society and business life and their economic, socio-cultural and governmental consequences, and more fundamentally, how our derived (and partial) identities or movements (in cyberspace), change the ways we think and act and whether they shape (or shield) the content and structure of the knowledge we produce.

These concerns may seem far-fetched for countries where non-literacy and electricity are still issues, and the internet is a long way from being a mainstream medium. However, based on experience in developed countries, this is the perfect time for such considerations. Ultimately, the public will benefit from this forethought, especially if (1) civic awareness is raised; (2) appropriate technologies are utilized; and (3) the implemented policies are made available for critical analyses in order to provide guidance for co-creating innovative responses to development problems, as well as to an understanding of how we shape (and are shaped by) the global society.

MOBILITIES AND IMMOBILITIES: In this symposium we address a fundamental social issue: the impact of identity, mobility, and technology (especially social media) on knowledge production. A number of schools of thought have addressed the issue of identity and mobility: e.g., the socio-historical approach that describes a shift over the last century from place-based (prescribed) identities to mobile (achieved) identities; recent theories in sociology that see identity as mobile, dynamic, hybrid, and relational; recent theories in geography that consider the relationship between place and identity; and recent theories in information society that deal with digital and mobile identities in the (online and networked) world. In this symposium we argue that both mobility and place (including the concept of "home") are

essential components of identity construction [2] (on the ground and online) which is, then, an essential component of knowledge production.

Over the past decade, a new, more inclusive and transnational approach to the study of mobilities has emerged which involves research not only on the movement of people, but also of animals, objects, ideas, and information, and involving complex networks, relational dynamics, and the redistribution or reification of power generated by movement and displacement. We must also add a consideration of associated **immobilities**: borders as well as border crossings, isolation as well as connectivity, forced settlement as well as nomadism, disability as well as ability, incarceration and occupation as well as expansion and freedom. It thus encompasses both the embodied practice of movement and the representations (including the arts), ideologies, and meanings attached to the mobile and immobile [3].

ELECTRONIC MOBILITIES AND IDENTITIES: The past decade also saw the emergence of e-commerce and e-government where identity or mobility is exercised in virtual space through the capabilities of modern day information and communication technologies to manipulate vast amounts of data with high speed. The implementation of these systems not only involves technical aspects (e.g., authentication and authorization, system interoperability and security), but also social, legislative and ethical aspects (e.g., trust, accountability, personal liberty, and privacy). For instance, how do practices like profiling and exchanging information across organizational or national boundaries use our digital identity and move our location? Where, if any, can a line be drawn between creative and controversial uses of social media websites? New work models like the "mobile worker" have a variety of communication contexts (e.g., fixed versus flexible hours, employer versus employee control or communication device ownership) whose implementations also differ in the ways they impact the identity of the mobile worker.[4] For example, we ask how technologies (e.g. Mobile Identity Management System (MIMS), Location Based Services (LBS)) are utilized for controlling personal reachability in the organization. How do telecommunication policies affect the private sphere of the individual? Which ones are more conducive to national prosperity? Which choices of implementation make our e-systems less intrusive and more inclusive?

DESCRIPTIVE IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL FORCES: For some time, identity as social scientists have described it, seemed essentialist and fixed. Identity was identity, period. With the exception of class analyses and some migration studies, usually only lip-service was paid to how identities change. However, as mentioned above, some powerful social forces have come to bear on various forms of identity. In addition to disruptive economic forces, among the powerful social forces are migration, transnationalism/globalization, and diaspora. All of these have challenged concepts of place and "home."

The symposium on "Contemporary Issues in Knowledge Production: Identities, Mobilities, and Social Media," with its emphasis on how identities move and change, not only through migration and various forms of movement, but also through social media and other forms of technology, is relevant to our thinking about education, art, health, governance, business, development, etc., as well as being a foray into knowledge production and co-production that has not been ventured into before in thinking about Sudan.

References Cited:

[1] Royer D., Denkar A., and Rannenberg K., *The Future of Identity in the Information Society: Challenges and Opportunities.* Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2009. pp. 196.

[2] Easthorpe H. "Fixed Identities in a Mobile World? The Relationship between Mobility, Place, and Identity," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 16 (1), 2009, pp. 61-82.

[3] Paraphrased from a Mellon postdoc call: Wesleyan Post-doc – "Mobilities" (Spring 2015). Available at: http://www.wesleyan.edu/humanities/fellowships/mellon.html

[4] Royer D. (Ed.). Collection of Topics and Clusters of Mobility and Identity – Towards a Taxonomy of Mobility and Identity. FIDIS (Future of Identity in the Information Society) Consortium (2003). Available at: http://www.fidis.net/resources/deliverables/mobility-and-identity/int-d111000/doc/58/

Coordinators: *Dr. Gada Kadoda* *(Sudanese Knowledge Society)* [SKS] & *Professor Emerita Sondra Hale* (University of California, Los Angeles) [UCLA]

SKS Organizing Team *(Affiliations are for identification purposes only)*:

Uz. Ahmed Sirelkhatim *(Accountant, DAL Foods)*
Uz. Fatima Salaheldin *(Intern, National Population Council)*
Uz. Hana Mohamed *(Admin. & Finance Manager, Epidemiological Laboratory)*
Uz. Mai Bashir *(Researcher, National Population Council)*
Eng. Marwan Adam *(Dot. Energy, Energy Consultant)*
Uz. Nada Mahmoud *(IT Student, University of Khartoum)*
Uz. Rawan Sharfi *(Project Management Analyst, E-Learning Sudan Project)*
Eng. Wigdan Seedahmed *(Chemical Engineering Graduate)*
Uz. Yahia Holi *(Law Student, University of Neelain)*

_____

Information for Presenters

Submissions:

- Please send your abstracts and a short bio (100 words) to submit@sksociety.org by **12 October 2014**.
- Notification of acceptance will be sent to authors by **9 November 2014**.
- Submitted abstracts should be 300 - 500 words.
- English is the primary language of the symposium. However, a translation service for presenters who prefer to use Arabic is available upon request, but on a limited basis.
- Symposium will be held on 18 - 19 February 2015 (Venue to be confirmed).

Registration:

- Online registration will start on **1 December 2014**.
- Free registration is our goal, but even if we do not get adequate funding, we will keep registration fees to a minimum.

Updates on this symposium will be posted at http://kpimsm.blogspot.com/

_____