

Tatiana Smirnova (PhD student, STS Lab, University of Lausanne)

Governance by infrastructure of social media platforms: the case of the Fête des Vignerons



Holding festivals in the modern world is closely related to the use of various infrastructures and information systems, for example, to control the passage of visitors, to sell tickets, food, drinks, access to services and many other elements. It seems to me that despite the various standardizations of processes (although even standardization is understood differently by everyone) an analysis of digital infrastructure governance can tell us about the event itself and some social characteristics of its holding.

The program of Fête des Vignerons attracts masses of visitors from different countries and from different Swiss regions. Included since 2016 in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage, the Fête des Vignerons is a traditional festival that is unique in the world. This festival celebrates the profession of winemaking and wine culture. The last edition took place in summer 2019. The program for each day included concerts, performances, spectacles, and other events. The highlight, however, is the theatrical show which takes place in the arena, build for the occasion on Vevey main square. Many resources were mobilized around this show. Professional actors were invited, and hundreds of volunteers were trained. One of the important features of the Fete is that it allows us to trace the evolution of technology and its use for this event. With 25 years between each edition, the reinvention of the festival is obvious in terms of the techniques of the show, but those with which the spectators are equipment. In 2019, for the first time, the festival was celebrated in two distinct but closely linked spaces, the territory of the town of Vevey and the vast territory of the Internet and the platforms that dominate it. During the festival, a certain infrastructure was configured around social media. This infrastructure provided some connections and communications between these spaces. This infrastructure was not formed anew but deployed in the already prepared space of social media.

What is infrastructure of social media and around it? What governance practices can be seen there? In general, it is quite difficult to unambiguously outline the infrastructure of social media. Studies in the social sciences show us different approaches and problems in the understanding of social media infrastructure: different levels of invisible and visible elements (Farman, 2015; Packer & Wiley, 2013; Sheller & Urry, 2006); content and interface, e.g. affordances studies, looking at how default options and buttons constrain practices (Hayes et al., 2016; Jorge, 2019); user strategies and practices (Wagner, 2018; Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020); participation different infrastructures that make platforms possible including fibre optic cables, mobile switching centers, air conditioning units, data centres and data exchange points, servers that connect people and data (Farman, 2015); hybrid elements that migrate from virtual-space to physical-space (chats, multiuser domains, online role-playing games) (Souza e Silva, 2006).

Methodology. At the level of research methodology, the first issue we encountered was access to the web space and to the infrastructure of social media. My attention was drawn to the importance of volunteers. The Fête des Vignerons is, among other things, an event organized by volunteers including 5,500 actors, choristers, and musicians, a few thousand helpers and a few hundred «commissioners» working within a series of specialized commissions (costumes, IT, communication, marketing, security, etc.). On September 13, 2018, I registered to be a volunteer at the Fête des Vignerons, and I was approved as a volunteer with the role to analyze social media. The role of volunteer permitted me to be integrated in specific team reducing the distance in communication. All these communications helped me to understand what were in social media online and onsite.

The emergence of the project and intergenerational conflict. Official pages of the festival in social networks appeared in 2017, however, regular and massive content began to be published in 2018 with the advent of a special social media team. In the beginning the organizers worked on content on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, as well as on the local social network notreHistoire.ch, which focuses on Swiss content of historical interest. Gradually, the interest of the organizers goes to Facebook and Instagram, and even more to Facebook. There were

good statistics of reactions and views that was motivated for organizers. The social media team was part of the Communications Commission, which was a media department and was supposed to ensure the adoption of key management decisions on the policy of the organizers. On the organigram, the infrastructure sector for the organizers was associated with the construction and installation of buildings and structures (construction, premises, internal accommodation, catering). IT services were related to exploitation. Social networks are related to Management and Communication. That is, social networks were part of the media space and were not officially associated with IT or the concept of infrastructure.

Distribution of roles. From an interview with the social media manager in May 2018 we understand that there were two people involved in social media during this time. Moreover, they had numerous other tasks related to the work of the media, as well as technical support for users on some other information systems. In the interviews, we clearly see many tasks and responsibilities for them and the unclear distribution of roles. We see the situation, which is often characteristic of festivals, the presence of a «man-orchestra», on which many services and tasks are closed. Gradually, with the arrival of volunteers and the allocation of budgets, the situation improved slightly, and the roles began to be distributed more evenly. At the level of the organigram, we also did not see any transformations and a clear distribution of roles. The group was not presented as a separate block and remained invisible on the organigram. It should be noted that already at the beginning of its journey, the team is faced with a lack of constructive discussion and support from older colleagues. I would call this a generation gap, although it's more accurate to call it a conflict of social media stakeholders and disinterested members. Despite the bright at first application for the use of social media for the first time in the history of the festival, there was a certain indifferent position of the main leadership towards their development throughout the entire period of organizing and holding the festival. For example, more detailed attention was paid to the creation and publishing of the paper journal of the festival.

Planning. When talking to the team in 2018, it was immediately clear that the production of publications was going according to the plan and planning was an important element of management. Therefore, all channels were built around this process. When describing this planning, they usually relied not on the subject, but on the quantity. For example, on average, in the first half of 2018, it was planned to make two to five publications per week. This recommendation came from the social media agencies with which the collaboration was built. Based on the numbers, some stories were selected for publication. In mid-2018, a publication plan was formed, which was shared with the members of the group on Google docs. During 2018, the group's meetings to discuss the plan were regular. In September 2018, there was also an understanding of the form of analytics. Analytical work was secondary for the team, but they understood the need for it. The decision was made to produce a social media report every two weeks before the festival. In essence, this planning work was the main thread between the various members of the team (content creators, administrators, analysts) and allowed everyone to understand what needed to be done.

What part of the infrastructure was a to observe? The infrastructure will be seen differently depending on the angle or role we enter from. If you enter from the point of view of publishing content, then we will not turn to Facebook Analytics or Hootsuite, which are not required during the publishing phase. If you go from the point of view of an analyst, then these elements will be very important. What infrastructure elements can we observe through the analyst role? What visible and invisible elements are present here? The team I worked for the platform monitoring through the preparation of an analytical report.

- To prepare the report, **we used the data/content that we saw on the interface of analytical systems.** It's primarily Facebook Analytics or Hootsuite, statistics from Instagram and Twitter. The report was the result of this infrastructure, its observation and analysis. The difficulty was that even the paid Hootsuite analytical system did not allow you to see all the necessary indicators. The report was not automated, it contained data from different analytical systems, plus we calculated something manually.
- To access **the social media account**, we logged in as an administrator. If on Facebook Business roles were distributed, then in other social networks (for example, Twitter or Instagram) we had just a username and password to enter, one for several employees. This sometimes did not allow tracking who exactly did what in the account. Passwords were often changed without warning, and this often confuses the work of the team.
- Both **a computer and a smartphone** were used to access the data. We, volunteers, used our personal devices, and they became part of the public space of the festival. Employees could use work devices in the office. It is noteworthy that we could not see all Instagram statistics data through the computer screen, so we copied the data in the form of a screenshot on the smartphone screen.

- The person responsible for social media indicated the parameters that needed to be provided in the reports, and we prepared this data. Also, to finalize the reports, we received comments **by e-mail or WhatsApp**, which, in fact, are also part of this infrastructure. The lack of live communication was observed even before the pandemic.
- To store and exchange data, including reports, the organizers created **the information system** «fdv2019.dunegestion.com», which was actively used at the beginning, in 2018. Later, little archive was placed there, and the data was transmitted in each case differently, by e-mail, via WhatsApp or via Skype. This information system had a block of social media materials, photographs and the first analytical reports, but later it was very poorly updated. Requests to post photos to the public often did not receive a response, even after repeated requests. A lot was based on personal contacts and sometimes it was easier to come with a USB than to request material by mail from the archivist.

Conclusion

Thus, observing the preparation of the festival and the analytical work of the social media team allows us to see some elements of the social media infrastructure, as well as their capabilities and functionality. We observed certain strategies and practice, as well as management features. As part of the festival, a ready-made infrastructure of social networks was used, and the organizers have adapted their work to this infrastructure. It is difficult to define social media infrastructure boundaries. Using the example of creating an analytical report, we see that the two territories (online and onsite) were interconnected and complemented each other, and not all processes are visible without immersion. The digital elements overlapped with the physical elements. Digital clicks and manipulations intersected with physical actions and manipulations. We can see social processes around social media infrastructure. We see that some details of this infrastructure and its governance illustrate the festival in general, especially their intergenerational features. We see that proportions of visible and invisible elements change depending on infrastructure viewpoint. All these details allow us to talk about the complexity of the festival's infrastructure, which requires further study and possibly comparison with other socio-cultural events.

Bibliography

1. Arriagada, Arturo, et Francisco Ibáñez. «[“You Need At Least One Picture Daily, If Not, You’re Dead”: Content Creators and Platform Evolution in the Social Media Ecology](#)». *Social Media + Society*, vol. 6, no 3, juillet 2020, p. 2056305120944624. *SAGE Journals*.
2. de Souza e Silva, Adriana. «[From Cyber to Hybrid: Mobile Technologies as Interfaces of Hybrid Spaces](#)». *Space and Culture*, vol. 9, no 3, août 2006, p. 261 78. *SAGE Journals*.
3. Farman, Jason. «[Infrastructures of Mobile Social Media](#)». *Social Media + Society*, vol. 1, no 1, avril 2015, p. 2056305115580343. *SAGE Journals*.
4. Hayes, Rebecca A., et al. «[It’s the Audience: Differences in Social Support Across Social Media](#)». *Social Media + Society*, vol. 2, no 4, octobre 2016, p. 2056305116678894. *SAGE Journals*.
5. Jorge, Ana. «[Social Media, Interrupted: Users Recounting Temporary Disconnection on Instagram](#)». *Social Media + Society*, vol. 5, no 4, octobre 2019, p. 2056305119881691. *SAGE Journals*.
6. Packer, Jeremy, et Stephen B. Crofts Wiley, éditeurs. *Communication Matters : Materialist Approaches to Media, Mobility and Networks*.
7. Uldam, Julie. «[Social Media Visibility: Challenges to Activism](#)». *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 40, no 1, janvier 2018, p. 41 58. *SAGE Journals*.
8. Wagner, Anna J. M. «[Do Not Click “Like” When Somebody Has Died: The Role of Norms for Mourning Practices in Social Media](#)». *Social Media + Society*, vol. 4, no 1, janvier 2018, p. 2056305117744392. *SAGE Journals*.