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Työn nimi-Arbetets titel-Title Maintaining and Extending Social Networks in IRC-galleria			
Oppiaine-Läroämne-Subject Social Psychology			
Työn laji-Arbetets art-Level Master's thesis		Aika-Datum-Month and year 2007-05-14	Sivumäärä-Sidantal-Number of pages 97 s., 12 liites.
<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>The photo galleries of the internet have raised quite a lot of public discussion, but academic research is just beginning to pay attention to the issue. This research grabs the subject by finding out the meanings given to IRC-galleria concerning its members' social networks. The theoretical framework consists of theories of social networks and communities applied to the context of the internet. Moreover, in analysing the construction of social networks, the research material is analyzed through the concepts of ritual and performance.</p> <p>The research material was generated with 13 semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The interviewees were registered members of IRC-galleria, aged 12–25. Participant observation was conducted by acting as a registered member of IRC-galleria during the course of the research. The interview material was analyzed with theory-bound qualitative content analysis. Meanings given to IRC-galleria were understood as interpretations the interviewees give to their subjective experiences, and therefore also bounded to cultural meaning structures. The rituals of maintaining social networks were approached from a social constructionistic perspective: the interest was on how the social networks are reconstructed in social interaction.</p> <p>The central finding of the research was that already established, “offline” networks play a significant role in being a member of IRC-galleria. IRC-galleria can be interpreted as a way to maintain both local and dispersed networks in a society where group identities are not self-evident. New friendships can be established in IRC-galleria, but personal interests are significant in this, not the possibility to act anonymously, which instead was the claim of previous research. Different interaction rituals are performed for reconstructing the established social networks. IRC-galleria should not therefore be seen solely as a stage for self-promotion, but also as a medium for promoting social networks.</p> <p>The most central references: for social networks: Wellman, B.(Ed.): Networks in the Global Village (1999); Granovetter, M.: The Strength of Weak Ties (1973) and The Strength of Weak Ties: Network Theory Revisited (1983) and for ritual view on communication: Rothenbuhler, E.W.: Ritual Communication. From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony (1998); Carey, J. W.: Communication as Culture (1989); Goffman, E.: Interaction Ritual (1967), Behavior in Public Places (1963) and The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959).</p>			
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords social networks virtual communities Internet interaction rituals youth blogging			
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited			
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information			